

LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“...The Scripture Cannot Be Broken.” — John 10:35

OF THE HOLY SCRIPTURES

We teach that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God. They are the Word of God because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:21. We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called "theological deduction," but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:16, John 10:35, Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:13. Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35.

BRIEF STATEMENT Excerpt

Find out more about the *Brief Statement* on back cover of this issue

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CLC PREACHING STATIONS Pastors from several congregations serve these small groups with the Word and Sacrament on a regular basis. Visitors are always warmly welcomed. Those who are considering a move or are just traveling through the area are encouraged to contact these preaching stations and worship there with their fellow Christians.

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The Best Seller of All Time

Pastor Mark Gullerud · Bowdle, South Dakota

When people are looking for a good book or e-book to buy and read, they may look over the *New York Times* Best Seller list.

Simply because a book is on the Best Seller list doesn't mean it is worth purchasing and reading. For example, one review of the best selling book *Killing Jesus* by Bill O'Reilly reports that the author makes the bogus claim that the reason Jesus was killed by the Romans is that He was interfering with the cash flow of tax money (Read what Jesus says in the Gospel record about paying taxes to the Roman government, Matthew 22:21).

One Book has been widely acknowledged as the best seller of all time. Current sale numbers has it selling at 100 million copies a year. As of November 2012 this best seller has been translated in its entirety into 518 languages, and partially into 2,798 languages.

While there are critics who claim this particular Book should be listed in the fiction genre, there should be no question that it is non-fiction. In regard to fallacious charges that the Book is flawed and cannot be fully trusted, many evidences can be cited showing that its accuracy is so impeccable that it does not contain a single error, inconsistency, or contradiction.

The contents of this incomparable Book covers world history, the record of which predates any secular history book. It has information about the origin of the world which puts any evolutionary so-called scientist to shame. Beautiful poetry near the middle of the Book has been a source of comfort to countless troubled souls. The careful reader can also find numerous prophecies in this Book as well as the perfect fulfillment of them.

No doubt you have surmised that we are writing about the Holy Bible. This Book of books is rightly called the Word of God. Although penned by forty different men over a period of 1,500 years, this Book has only one Author—God the Holy Spirit. When we were young we memorized proof texts for this claim, such as “*All Scripture is given by*

inspiration of God..." (2 Timothy 3:16) and "*Holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit*" (2 Peter 1:21).

This precious "Book divine by inspiration given" (see *TLH* #285) has much to offer people of any age, gender, race, or nationality in every generation of time. Its message is timeless, never being outdated. No matter how much society may change, the precious truths of God-given wisdom in this Book remain applicable. In contrast to the many self-help books out there these days, the Bible provides readers with a God-help Book that strikes at the very heart of human problems, even as it supplies surefire solutions.

With the morality of society on a steady and rapid decline, the law of God (summarized in the Ten Commandments) provides a standard of living which reveals what loving God and one's neighbor is all about; as such it can only serve for the benefit of our fellow earthlings. And since our "no-fault generation" has few people who want to accept responsibility for their faults and failings, the law of God doesn't let people get away with this. Instead, like a sharp double-edged sword it cuts open and lays bare a person's innermost, utterly corrupt thoughts and feelings (see Hebrews 4:12).

Not only does the Bible expose mankind's desperately lost and helpless condition but it also reveals the only solution to this desperate condition. It reveals to its readers the Savior Jesus Christ who heals our sin-infected hearts with His most precious gifts of forgiveness and eternal salvation.

There are those who think of the Bible as only a rulebook of do's and don't's. What they fail to realize is that the Bible's central figure is God's Son Jesus Christ, and that the central message found throughout the Bible is God's eternal plan of our salvation carried out by Jesus.

What the evangelist John has written in summary of his Gospel record could be said about all of Holy Scripture: "*These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name*" (John 20:31).

There is good reason for the Holy Bible being the best seller of all time. It is a powerful Word which transforms human hearts and lives, gives true and lasting peace and hope, and finally everlasting salvation through our Savior Jesus Christ.

This is truly a Book worth reading by everyone throughout all time!



*“Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man,
but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”*

(2 PETER 1:21, NIV84)

The Holy Spirit's Perfect Book

Pastor Thomas Schuetze · Coloma, Michigan

IT CONTAINS HISTORICAL WRITINGS,
SELECTIONS OF POETRY, AND WORDS OF PROPHECY.

†

IT BOASTS A COLLECTION OF TWENTY-ONE LETTERS AND FOUR
GOSPELS TELLING ABOUT THE LIFE OF A CERTAIN JEWISH RABBI.

†

IT WAS WRITTEN IN TWO LANGUAGES BY NUMEROUS AUTHORS
OVER A SPAN OF SIXTEEN CENTURIES.

†

How is it then that no one has been able to honestly discover a single contradiction or inaccuracy on its pages? Every fact its writers have recorded related to history and geography is right on the money. Every future event they foretold happened in the manner predicted (as, for example, a virgin giving birth to a special Son and that birth taking place in a specific town of southern Palestine).

How can it be so?

For this to be true of a book written by such a wide variety of penman over a period of so many years, well...it would take a miracle!

And there we have our answer. All the things mentioned above regarding the Bible are true because it was given through the miraculous working of God the Holy Spirit. He empowered men of His choosing to write down the exact words He wanted them to include in their books.

Because the Holy Spirit is the Bible's ultimate author (men like Moses, Matthew, and Paul were but instruments in His hand), we are assured that everything written in it is true down to the smallest detail.

Why is this important?

If the Bible weren't the Holy Spirit's perfect book but a book written

entirely or in part by humans, what confidence could we have in its teachings? If we needed to sift through the Scriptures to discover which parts originated in God and which parts are the product of man's ingenuity, what incentive would we have for reading them, much less staking our eternal salvation on the truths they present?

If the Bible were a merely human composition, it would be like any other book put up for sale at the online Amazon bookstore; it might well make for interesting reading but be of no more value to us than the literary compositions lining the shelves at the public library.

Thankfully, our God has not left us in the difficult position of having to decipher which parts of the Bible are from Him and which are not. He has informed us that...

"...All Scripture is God-breathed"
(2 Timothy 3:16).

"...Every word of God is pure"
(Proverbs 30:5).

"...Your Word is truth"
(John 17:17).

This is why we may look to the Bible with confidence for true answers to life's great questions. We may turn to it to get good guidance for every aspect of our lives—to receive instruction, correction, training in righteousness, and to be equipped for every good work.

Above all, we may dig into its pages with eagerness because we know the Holy Spirit will use those holy words to strengthen our faith in the One who is its sum and center from Genesis to Revelation: Jesus, our crucified and risen Redeemer, the only name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.

Praise to You, Holy Spirit, for blessing us with Your perfect book! Lead us to use it faithfully in the happy knowledge that You are speaking to us there and will use its words to guide our steps reliably through this dark world of sin all the way to our Father's home of light. Amen.

*This lamp through all the tedious night
Of life shall guide our way
Till we behold the clearer light
Of an eternal day.*
(The Lutheran Hymnal, #285:6)



PERSPICUITY:

The most important doctrine you've never heard of

Pastor Paul Naumann • Tacoma, Washington

“Well, that’s *your* interpretation!”

Sadly, this is how the conversation sometimes ends when you attempt to discuss the Bible with a friend or acquaintance. For example, when you cite what Scripture says about creation, or the sacraments, or the natural depravity of man, your friend may very well respond, “That’s *your* interpretation.” The implication is not only that you are not correct but also that it is *impossible to know* what is correct. This is a very common response. It is also a tacit denial of one of the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith—the perspicuity of Scripture.

Perspicuity is a big theological term for a relatively simple teaching—that *the Bible is clear*. The founders of the Church of the Lutheran Confession echoed the historic teaching of Lutheranism when they stated, in Concerning Church Fellowship, “We say and teach with all conviction that Holy Writ is clear and makes all doctrines and precepts laid down in the inspired Word freely accessible to every reader.”

The teaching that the Bible is clear has never been argued among confessional Lutherans, but it is rejected by nearly every mainline denomination today.

It is easy to understand why. Every other area of life is open to varying interpretations—business, politics, parenting, relationships, marriage, sports, art and literature, to name a few. A fan of Ernest Hemingway may argue that the short story “Big Two-Hearted River” is about a young soldier coming to grips with his experience in war. Another may say it is just a story about fishing. One person’s opinion is just as valid as another’s. It is possible that both may be right.

That’s true about every other book in the world—but is it true about the

Perspicuity is a big theological term for a relatively simple teaching.

Bible? When it comes to scriptural teachings, is my interpretation just as valid as yours? Might it even be that we both are right? Is it in fact haughty and arrogant to insist that a certain statement of the Bible means one thing and not another?

When you think about it, all this boils down to a single question: *Is the Bible clear?* Because, in the final analysis, if the teachings of Scripture are open to varying interpretations, that means that the Bible is not clear.

What does Holy Scripture say of itself? *"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path"* (Psalm 119:105). The Bible spreads light, not darkness. God's Word illumines our understanding, it does not obscure it. It shows us the truth rather than conceals it. Ask yourself: if God's Word were not clear, how could King David refer to it as a lamp?

In the New Testament Jesus says, *"If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed, and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free"* (John 8:31-32). How could Jesus direct us to abide in His Word if it were impossible to say with certainty what that Word means? How could He promise, *"You shall know the truth,"* if that Word were open to varying and contradictory interpretations?

The Apostle Peter says, *"We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts"* (2 Peter 1:19). Where the Word is, there is light. It is, in fact, the only thing that can bestow the light of spiritual understanding. Martin Luther argued this very passage with Desiderius Erasmus in their famous debate about free will. Luther astutely pointed out that the real root of their disagreement lay in the perspicuity of Scripture, which Luther upheld and Erasmus rejected. Luther wrote, "I say with respect to the whole Scripture, I will not have any part of it called obscure. What we have cited from Peter holds good here, that the word of God is for us 'a lamp shining in a dark place.' But if part of this lamp does not shine, it will be a part of the dark place rather than of the lamp itself."

No, God has not given us an ambiguous Word. In fact, many passages take for granted the fact that the Bible is clear and unambiguous. *"For God is not the author of confusion but of peace"* (1 Corinthians 14:33). *"But as God is faithful, our word to you was not Yes and No"* (2 Corinthians 1:18). Thus throughout the Bible.

While the doctrine of perspicuity holds that all the teachings of Scripture can be clearly understood, frail and sinful humans don't always do so. A particular individual may be ignorant of a certain Bible teaching and

require enlightenment from God's Word. Another may intentionally distort a teaching from Scripture to suit his personal agenda. Both are common occurrences; neither means that the Bible is unclear. Just the opposite is true. Scripture is not the cause of confusion and false teaching, but rather its cure: *"The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes"* (Psalm 19:8).

As individuals we dare never say, "I cannot be wrong!" However, we can – and must – continue to say, with confessing Christians of every age, "God's Word cannot be wrong!"

A VALENTINE'S DAY DEVOTION

Real Love

Pastor Andrew Schaller · Watertown, South Dakota

It won't be long before red hearts decorate the landscape in businesses around town. It's another opportunity for kids to eat candy. It's called "Valentine's Day."

Well, truth be told, the candy isn't just for the kids. It's no longer called 'Saint Valentine's Day' and it has nothing to do with celebrating the life of an early Christian known as Valentinus.

For Americans, Valentine's Day is a day when expressions of love are encouraged—perhaps the only 'hold-over' from the original celebration—with such items as flowers, cards, and candy.

I may buy my wife flowers and maybe some candy as an expression of my love for her...but it won't be the only thing I do. What I mean is, husbands and wives shouldn't express their love for one another only one day a year, nor is that love truly expressed in cheap trinkets. Real love is of a different quality.

Here is the ultimate example of real love: *"In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation [atoning sacrifice] for our sins"* (1 John 4:10).

It's not really difficult to say the words "I love you." Candy and flowers

aren't really much of a sacrifice; they really aren't that expensive either, if we want to compare price tags.

On the other hand, the ultimate example of real love wasn't at all cheap—it was costly, even priceless. Incredibly, that's the price that God placed on you and me, the price He was willing to pay to make us His own.

God didn't just say "I love you," but He proved His love by action—by sending His only Son into this world as our Savior.

Christ's love for us was—and is—more than just words. It is more than flowers and chocolate. It involved a self-less, self-sacrificing love. Jesus expressed His love by laying down His life for the world of sinners.

So also, the Holy Scriptures teach that a husband's love for his wife is to mirror Christ's self-less and self-sacrificing love.

Don't misunderstand. It's not that we shouldn't or can't give flowers, cards, and chocolates. However, our expressions of love should be more than mere tokens. We can also show our love by speaking in a way that builds up rather than tears down (see Ephesians 4:15); by actively seeking to help those in need (1 John 3:17, James 2:15-17); by encouraging those beaten down (Isaiah 35:3-4), and by comforting those experiencing tribulation (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

We express our faith and show our love when the Spirit of God prompts us to exhibit actions that glorify Christ. Saying 'I love you' can become mere words...but real heartfelt love—like Christ's love for us—expresses itself in actions. Don't just give flowers or candy to your boyfriend or girlfriend, husband or wife...show genuine love by talking to them about their Savior and His love for them.

Real love doesn't look to feed only the body but also the soul. Real love looks out for the spiritual and eternal welfare of others, seeking to offer more than something that goes stale or melts in the heat of the sun.

Don't just give Jesus a 'one or two days a week time slot.' May the Holy Spirit move us to make the Savior the centerpiece of our plans and lives together. That's a gift of love that has lasting benefits.

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MEDITATIONS ON JESUS' SERMON ON THE MOUNT:
MATTHEW'S GOSPEL, CHAPTERS FIVE THROUGH SEVEN

“Jesus—the Way which Leads to Life”

Pastor Nathan Pfeiffer • Spokane, Washington

[Jesus said:] *“Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

(MATTHEW 7:13–14)

This past summer members of our Pacific Northwest Camping Trip toured the Cody Caves in the mountains of British Columbia. After an easy drive on a paved highway, we reached a steep, graveled mountain road. On this difficult road we got stuck and punctured a tire. Once at the parking lot, we still had to hike up to the cave on a narrow path.

Finally we reached the mouth of the cave—but that was not the end of our challenges. Once in the cave, we had to squeeze through narrow passages and watch our footing on the rocky, slick floor. Helmets with lamps were absolutely necessary lest we get lost in the darkness or crack our skulls on the stony ceiling. The difficult journey and narrow passageways of our cave tour remind one of *“the way which leads to life”* that Jesus talked about in His Sermon on the Mount.

Contrariwise, Jesus pictures the way to hell as being like a wide gate in a city wall. People have no problem entering hell, for all are welcome regardless of “belief-traditions” or “life-choices.” *“Wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.”* Jesus also describes the way leading to eternal destruction as being broad. He is picturing for us a one-way highway that has wide lanes and a smooth pavement, which has only one “exit”—the wide-open gates of hell. Jesus says there are many on this easy highway. The road is flooded with unrepentant sinners. It is a road of self-indulgence and sinful pleasures. There is no self-denial on this road. It is easy to get on—just do and believe whatever you want.

The way to heaven is much different. Jesus describes it as being narrow and difficult. *“Narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.”*

The gate to heaven is narrow because Jesus IS the gate: “*I am the door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved*” (John 10:9). It is narrow because Jesus is the only way: “*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me*” (John 14:6). Jesus is the narrow gate to heaven. Only by grace, through faith in Him, is there forgiveness, salvation, and life.

Jesus also says that the way that leads to life is difficult. The word He uses for “difficult” carries with it the idea of a “pressing” or “compressing” from all sides. Someone with claustrophobia would avoid a tour of caves, for it would feel as though that enclosed, confined space was “pressing in” on him. So it is with following Christ. The unbelieving world “presses” Jesus’ disciples to join them on the broad road to hell.

The road leading to life is also difficult because it involves denying ourselves, daily taking up our cross of discipleship to Jesus (Luke 9:23). It is difficult to say “no” to the sinful desires of our flesh or to the sinful enticements of others. It is difficult to admit that we have sinned against God and against our neighbor. It is difficult to love our Christian brethren, our neighbors, and even our enemies as we love ourselves. It is difficult to forgive those who have sinned against us. Indeed, our sinful, prideful flesh makes it difficult to follow Jesus.

The journey our campers took was difficult, but we kept going because we knew the destination would be worth it. How much more our journey of faith to heaven! Jesus has already cleared the way by taking our sins on Himself. Then He broke free from the cold, dark clutches of death by rising again. He ascended into heaven to prepare a place for us.

Now as we believe in Him for our salvation, He comforts and refreshes us by saying, “*Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest*” (Matthew 11:28).

Jesus is the Way which leads to life. Enter by Him!

Thou art the Way, the Truth, the Life;

Grant us that Way to know,

That Truth to keep, that Life to win,

Whose joys eternal flow. Amen.

(The Lutheran Hymnal, #355:4)





“Come and Rest”

Teacher Josh Ohlmann • reporting

The 2013 CLC Teachers' Conference was hosted by Immanuel Lutheran Church and School, Winter Haven, Florida, from Sunday through Tuesday, October 13-15. Each Christian Day School of the Church of the Lutheran Confession was represented, as well as the two Immanuel Lutheran High Schools in Mankato and Eau Claire. Three students in the education program at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire—Naomi Bernthal, Ross Kok, and Leah Fleischer—were also in attendance.

The conference opened with a church service conducted by Pastor John Schierenbeck. It was truly uplifting to hear the Word of God proclaimed both in word and song that morning. If you can imagine a hundred people packed in a room and singing hymns at the tops of their lungs, you might have an idea of what it was like!

Teacher Sherman Carstensen opened each day with a devotion based on the conference theme, “Come and Rest.” The first devotion was based on Jesus' invitation, *“Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls”* (Matthew 11:28-29).



Our CLC Teachers enjoyed warm Christian fellowship in sunny Florida

Professor Joel Gullerud (ILC) gave a presentation entitled “Using Scripture for Classroom, Peer, and Social Issues.” The presentation stressed the importance of a strong Biblical basis for dealing with various problems teachers encounter in their classrooms. A helpful acronym was given for when issues arise: P.O.W. = Positive attitude, Others first, Work ethic. Each part of the acronym, based on a Scripture verse, can help teachers to keep the right attitude and perspective as they carry out their divine calls.

Gail Sedberry, a member of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Winter Haven, gave the next presentation titled “Behavioral Management.” It helped teachers identify why kids misbehave, and also how to handle those situations.

Title Five presentations were displayed Sunday evening by five teachers. Ann Sprengeler presented “Religious Bulletin Boards,” Gloria Wilke presented “Science Bulletin Boards,” Lane Fischer presented “New Religious Music,” Sharon Schierenbeck presented “Positive Ways to Reinforce Proper Printing and Pencil Grasp,” and



Neil Bernthal presented “Classroom Themes.” We heartily thank these men and women for their work!

Sunday activities concluded with a worship and communion service at Immanuel Lutheran Church.

Sessions on Monday began with a paper by Teacher Chad Seybt titled “Biblical Integration in the Classroom: How the Bible Applies to All Classes.” The essayist explained both what Biblical integration in the classroom is and what it is not. He stressed not only the importance of integrating the Bible into all subjects but also explained various ways to accomplish this.

The faculty of Messiah Lutheran School, Eau Claire, Wis., researched and prepared an evaluation of the various textbooks used in our CLC Christian Day Schools. The results were presented in spread-sheet form. The information identified which textbooks our schools were using and how they rate. Teacher Seth Schaller led a discussion about the benefits of resource sharing and about conducting these surveys on a regular basis.

On Monday afternoon Mrs. Patricia Shealy of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, West Columbia, S.C., presented an overview of the Common

Core Standards and what they mean. She explained the shift in education that has brought on the Common Core Standards. She also handed out copies of Language Arts and Literacy standards for the teachers to discuss in small groups.

Monday evening break-out workshop sessions were led by teachers Jeff Karnitz and Sara Pfeiffer. A new writing curriculum being used at St. Stephen's School, Mountain View, Calif., was presented.

The session was concluded with a devotion by teacher Carstensen. Tuesday's presentation by Professor Ross Roehl (ILC) was about the benefits of having CLC learning standards. The discussion built off of the previous day's presentations. The benefits included better preparation for Immanuel High School, College and/or state university, common expectations of teachers, and accountability of teaching. Questions raised about the idea of creating CLC learning standards included, "How do we come up with the standards?" and "How can we accommodate for one-room schools versus multi-room schools?"

The final presentation of the conference was by teacher Donna Klammer, who led a hands-on workshop on *Lego* robots and how to use them in the classroom. A "heated" competition between various groups of teachers ensued (the winner of the competition is disputed).

At the business meeting teacher Matt Thurow was reelected Chairman, and teacher Jennifer Ohlmann as Secretary. Teacher Kirsten Gullerud was thanked for her four years as Secretary. We pray for the Lord's guidance on the elected officers.

The teachers were humbled by and thankful for the generosity and work of our conference hosts: teachers Neil Bernthal and Megan Rehm, Pastor John Schierenbeck, the members of Immanuel Lutheran Church, and the various presenters. The theme "Come and Rest" was fitting, as the teachers were refreshed both physically and spiritually.

Next year's conference will be hosted by Luther Memorial Church and School, Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.



Leah Fleischer and Naomi Bernthal are in the teaching program at Immanuel Lutheran College, Eau Claire

The Disinterested

(Sixth of a Series)

Missionary David Koenig

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give Me a drink." For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food. Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"

For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans. Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water." The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water? Are You greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?" Jesus answered and said to her, "Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life." The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." The woman answered and said, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You have well said, 'I have no husband,' for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly." The woman said to Him, "Sir, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When He comes, He will tell us all things." Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am He." And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, "What do You seek?" or, "Why are You talking with her?" The woman then left her waterpot, went her way into the city, and said to the men, "Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?" Then they went out of the city and came to Him. In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat." But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." Therefore the disciples said to

one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, 'There are still four months and then comes the harvest'? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors." And many of the Samaritans of that city believed in Him because of the word of the woman who testified, "He told me all that I ever did." (JOHN 4:7-39)

This is one of the most studied examples of witnessing in the Bible because our Lord's conversation with this woman is recorded in such detail. Naturally too it is an appealing study because of the immediate, positive results. Here both law and gospel are articulated.

Our Lord is casting the net of the gospel and drawing in this prospect for His heavenly kingdom. The thing to take note of at the outset is that this woman was not interested. She did not come to the well to see Jesus and to inquire of Him. But the Lord came for her.

It all started with a request for a drink of water. The Lord then moved the conversation from the physical and material to the spiritual. Here we learn from Him. How many times haven't we wondered how to change a conversation from the mundane to the spiritual?

First of all, His request took her off guard. She was not only a lowly woman but a Samaritan at that, and He talked to her. He treated her not as an inferior, for all are valuable to our God. There is joy in heaven over just one sinner who repents. God would have all people to be saved regardless of their nationality. Jesus shows this concern in His treatment of her.

How are we operating when we witness? Do we convey the idea of 'now just sit down and listen do me'? Are we pedantic or caring?

Jesus transforms the conversation from earthly water to the water of life. In our everyday surroundings there are examples galore from which to spiritualize. Our Lord's frequent use of examples from nature are well recorded and well known. Lilies of the field and birds of the air convey in image form God's preservation. The loving care of the earthly shepherd reminds us of the infinite care of the heavenly Shepherd. Bread, a door, fishing and so on were used by our Lord to illustrate His truths. The reason why we have trouble moving from an earthly example to the spiritual may be that we don't have our minds so firmly set on the spiritual and consequently can't see the corollaries and illustration examples.

An integral part of our Lord's encounter with the woman is the preaching of the law to convict of sin. "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and he whom you now have is not your husband..." The sinful flesh detests hearing how wrong it is. It easily bristles. We have all had times when we had to tell someone that he was doing wrong only to have him turn on us. Likely this causes us to back off lest we be, as they say, 'judgmental.'

But it is in Christian love that we rebuke, reprimand, and expose sin. As long as we approach another with humility, knowing how sinful we are, we should not hesitate to speak the law. An important point here is that Jesus said it to her privately. When she exposed to Him what religious knowledge she possessed, He then sought to correct it and expand on what she knew. We should do likewise, but in a spirit of gentleness and humility.

Jesus moved on to the end things. We too want to give people perspective on the end of all things. People get so wrapped up in their own little world that they often lose sight of beyond. As our Lord did, we too want to move the conversation to eternal life and eternal death. Jesus did just that by culminating with the gospel truth, "Messiah...I who speak to you am He."

The Lord's "hooking her as He cast the line and drew her in" is, of course, an example of the Master Fisher of men. This is a skill that we want to be working on lifelong.

Know the Bible, know the Bible, know the Bible. Then it is that the Holy Spirit will give utterance with the Word.



SERIES Backdrop

With examples from Holy Scripture we are trying to learn ways and attitudes which will better enable us to witness to our Lord. These examples, drawn from the four Gospels and from the book of the Acts of the Apostles, are by no means exhaustive.

As with the basketball strategy of one-on-one, we are looking at examples of one Christian witnessing to another individual. We are not considering what was said to individuals already in the faith, though that is also applicable. We are not considering what was said to groups, though that also is applicable as a witnessing technique. We will be considering various situations where it was one-on-one, and the one being witnessed to was living in unbelief....

The ultimate goal in all witnessing is to be like John the baptizer and point to Christ as the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world. While we want to try earnestly to develop our skills in this area, we don't want to forget John's motto, "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

No matter what spiritual gifts we have and how we develop them, we are not looking for glory for ourselves. We are looking to have another soul join us in glorifying our Savior-God.

THE EPISTLE OF PHILEMON

Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus, and Timothy our brother, To Philemon our beloved friend and fellow laborer, to the beloved Apphia, Archippus our fellow soldier, and to the church in your house: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, making mention of you always in my prayers, hearing of your love and faith which you have toward the Lord Jesus and toward all the saints, that the sharing of your faith may become effective by the acknowledgment of every good thing which is in you in Christ Jesus. For we have great joy and consolation in your love, because the hearts of the saints have been refreshed by you, brother.



Therefore, though I might be very bold in Christ to command you what is fitting, yet for love's sake I rather appeal to you—being such a one as Paul, the aged, and now also a prisoner of Jesus Christ— I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains, who once was unprofitable to you, but now is profitable to you and to me. I am sending him back. You therefore receive him, that is, my own heart, whom I wished to keep with me, that on your behalf he might minister to me in my chains for the gospel. But without your consent I wanted to do nothing, that your good deed might not be by compulsion, as it were, but voluntary. For perhaps he departed for a while for this purpose, that you might receive him forever, no longer as a slave but more than a slave—a beloved brother, especially to me but how much more to you, both in the flesh and in the Lord.



If then you count me as a partner, receive him as you would me. But if he has wronged you or owes anything, put that on my account. I, Paul, am writing with my own hand. I will repay—not to mention to you that you owe me even your own self besides.

Yes, brother, let me have joy from you in the Lord; refresh my heart in the Lord. Having confidence in your obedience, I write to you, knowing that you will do even more than I say. But, meanwhile, also prepare a guest room for me, for I trust that through your prayers I shall be granted to you. Epaphras, my fellow prisoner in Christ Jesus, greets you, as do Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, Luke, my fellow laborers. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

Yearning For Freedom

(Philemon vv. 8-16; a study of Philemon 1-7 appeared in our Nov. '13 issue)

Pastor John Klatt • Rapid City, South Dakota

A group of singers on a television program were discussing African-American spirituals. One of them said that when the slaves sang about the hope of heaven, they were really expressing a longing to return to Africa.

That may be so. We can easily imagine slaves employing code words for things they did not feel free to express openly. But knowing the power of the gospel, we can also easily imagine slaves who longed for freedom taking hold of Christ's promise of a life free from all the troubles of this life.

In the short letter of the apostle Paul to Philemon, we find two captives yearning for freedom. One is Paul himself, a prisoner in Rome. The other is Onesimus, a runaway slave.

The conditions of Paul's first Roman imprisonment were not harsh; he lived in his own rented house and was able to receive visitors there. The last verse of the Acts of the Apostles speak of him "*preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him*" (Acts 28:31).

Still Paul was not a free man. In this portion of his letter to Philemon he refers to his chains. If he had had a choice, Paul would no doubt have preferred to be free to travel and move about as he chose. There were places where he wanted to preach the gospel. There were Christian congregations he wanted to visit to encourage them.

But Paul also found freedom during his imprisonment. He continued to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who visited him. And from his confinement he received reports that the gospel continued to be preached by others.

And the apostle's gospel witness bore fruit. Philemon's slave Onesimus who had run away to Rome found Paul and, hearing the gospel from him, became a believer. Paul calls him "*my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten while in my chains.*" Onesimus was to Paul living proof that though he himself was imprisoned, the gospel was not!

So we learn that the slave who yearned for freedom also found a

freedom higher and greater than the kind he had tried to find by running away from his master. Though still legally a slave bound to his earthly master, Onesimus was now “*the Lord’s freedman*” (1 Corinthians 7:22). From Paul he had learned that he had a Savior who had freed him from his sins and from death and punishment for his sins. He found joy in serving Christ by humbly acting as hands and feet to Christ’s imprisoned apostle.

We may not be prisoners and we certainly are not slaves, yet we may feel that our circumstances keep us imprisoned and bound. Workers may feel stuck in a job that is demanding or unrewarding. Parents may feel imprisoned by their responsibilities to their children. Teenagers may feel penned up by rules and schedules made for them by parents and teachers.

But like Paul the prisoner and Onesimus the slave, we who know Jesus Christ as our Savior know real freedom. We know that real freedom is not found in abandoning responsibilities or breaking rules. Real freedom is the freedom from guilt that comes with the gospel of forgiveness. It is freedom from worry and anxiety which comes from the knowledge that we have a heavenly Father who loves us and is both willing and able to take care of us. It is freedom from fear that comes from knowing that regardless of what may happen tomorrow, we have eternal life.



St. Stephen congregation, Mt. View, Calif., hosted the District pastors in October, 2013. A field trip took them to the Google Campus in Mt. View. Terrel Kesterson, Robert List, Nathan Pfeiffer, Paul Naumann, David Naumann, Caleb Schaller, Michael Gurath, Steven Karp, Douglas Priestap, David Reim.

PART TWO OF A SERIES ON THE SECOND ARTICLE

“This is most certainly true!”

THE APOSTLES' CREED

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

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He 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 Holy Ghost; the holy Christian Church, the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body; and the life everlasting. Amen.

Jesus is True Man

Prof. Joseph Lau · Eau Claire, Wisconsin

“Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

This passage has the distinction of being the shortest recorded in Holy Scripture.

We know that “*all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable...for instruction in righteousness*” (2 Timothy 3:16).

Why then is the short passage above so important? The fact that the Lord Jesus wept is one of many evidences of His being truly human. Jesus felt the emotions of a human being. On this occasion it was in response to the death of His friend Lazarus and the sorrow it caused Lazarus' family and friends.

Holy Scripture provides many other examples of Christ's humanity. Jesus was born to the Virgin Mary (Isaiah 7:14; Luke 2:11-12). Jesus grew in height and in wisdom (Luke 2:52). He experienced hunger and thirst

The SECOND ARTICLE Installments:

- 1) *Jesus is true God*
- 2) ***Jesus is true Man***
- 3) *Jesus has redeemed me*
- 4) *Jesus has made me His own*
- 5) *Jesus calls me to serve Him*

(Matthew 4:2; John 9:28). He grew tired and slept (Mark 4:38). He was tempted (Hebrews 4:15).

We should find comfort in the fact that Jesus experienced the same things that each of us faces daily. What better Advocate with the Father could one ask for? Jesus can empathize with us. *“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin”* (Hebrews 4:15).

Why was it necessary for God to become true man in this way? God's plan of salvation required Jesus to be true man for two important reasons.

First, He had to be ‘under the law.’ *“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons”* (Galatians 4:4-5). Unlike the mythological gods of the ancient Greeks and Romans, Jesus had to fulfill God's law perfectly. One sin on His part would have made His sacrifice worthless. The Passover Lamb had to be without spot or blemish. *“Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation [atonement] for the sins of the people”* (Hebrews 2:17).

Jesus' perfect fulfillment of God's law is often referred to as His “active obedience.” On our behalf He did what we could not do.

The second reason Jesus had to be true man is in order that He could die and rise again. God's plan of salvation required that His Son must die! He is described in Philippians 2:7-8 as *“taking the form of a servant, 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.”*

Jesus' suffering and death in our stead is referred to as His “humiliation,” part of His “passive obedience.”

Let us return to Lazarus' grave to see what this all means for us. Upon seeing Jesus weeping, some Jews said, *“Could not this Man [Jesus], who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?”* (John 11:37) We

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know the answer is “Yes.” Jesus could have kept Himself from dying just days later. But without His death as true man and God, Lazarus' death and our deaths would have been eternal.

“He [Jesus] cried with a loud voice ‘Lazarus, come forth!’” (John 11:43) Lazarus did come forth after four days in the grave. Jesus too rose again, in the flesh, after three days in the grave. He told His disciples: “Behold, My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Luke 24:39).

For this reason we are assured of our own physical resurrection so that we can join Job in confidently saying, “For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God...” (Job 19:25-26).

Jesus, true Man and true God, come quickly! Amen.



THE SECOND ARTICLE

(About Redemption)

And in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; He descended into hell; the third day He rose again from the dead; He 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.

What does this mean?

I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father from eternity, and also true man, born of the virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sin, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and His innocent suffering and death. He did this that I should be His very own, live under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and joy; just as He is risen from death, lives and reigns in eternity.

This is most certainly true.

(Martin Luther's SMALL CATECHISM, Sydow edition, 2000)

A “Letter to the Editor”

BACKGROUND:

What follows is a recent letter to the editor of the daily newspaper in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

We chose to use the public forum of our local newspaper to respond to a newspaper article by the pastor of Highlands United Presbyterian Church in our city. Regular readers of the newspaper are acquainted with this pastor’s frequent contributions to its “religion” and “op-ed” pages. Whether writing or speaking about politics or religion—he also spearheads the city’s Interfaith Council—this unabashed “liberal progressive” pastor often rubs the feathers of conservatives and/or Bible believers the wrong way.

More often than not we have chosen to keep silence (see Ecclesiastes 3) as often as we have been inclined to respond to newspaper articles which challenge and/or bad mouth the Bible. Yet “a time to speak” comes in defense of the Holy Scriptures, the very basis of our Christian belief system.

Our response is intended to give God-pleasing direction to others who, with us, do not appreciate shots taken at the Bible from a “shooter” who purports to be a Christian pastor.

By the way, the full titles of the books mentioned in the letter—helpful to explain their aim and purpose—are: *Does the Bible Contradict Itself?—A discussion of alleged contradictions in the Bible* and *Bible Difficulties—An examination of passages of the Bible alleged to be irreconcilable with its inspiration*. (We assume that these books are available on Amazon or E-bay today.)

To God and His divinely inspired Word alone the glory.

THE LETTER:

Editor—Wyoming *Tribune Eagle*, December 31, 2013

Seek to defend the words of the Bible

The Religion page column asserting that “Paul and Jesus lead us on different paths” (Dec. 28) calls for a response from one who still believes the Bible is God’s divinely inspired Word, true in all respects.

In our sound-bite era people have little inclination to digest something that is not short and quick (read “shallow”). The quick answer then to the article’s contentions would be Jesus’ assertions that “*the Scripture cannot be broken*” (John 10:35) and “*Your Word is truth*” (John 17:17). On his part, the Apostle Paul asserts, “*All Scripture is given by inspiration of God...*” (2 Timothy 3:16) and God “cannot lie” (Titus 1:2). Yes, despite its critics’ claims, the Bible is free from all errors and contradictions.

The longer (read “deeper”) response to the article’s assertions demands a book, and many exist which support in great detail the Bible’s divine origin, transmission, inspiration, and reliability. On his shelves this writer has a number of such books including: *Does the Bible Contradict Itself?* (1926) and its companion: *Bible Difficulties* (1932). Authored by W. Arndt, these classic books are as apropos today as they were eighty years ago.

The battle for the Bible is nothing new. Even eighty years ago this was said: “The assertion is made with startling frequency...that whoever at this stage of intellectual development in the world still defends the inerrancy of the Bible must sacrifice either his integrity or his intelligence; the thesis that the Scriptures contain erroneous and indefensible statements is glibly put forward as a commonplace with which no one excepting knaves and fools will disagree...yet not all have bowed to the supposedly scientific position that the Bible is a book of errors.” (Preface to *Bible Difficulties*)

“Fools” then, “fools” today. Name-calling changes nothing about the truth of the matter.

Newspaper readers do well to take any opinion articles that attack the Bible’s authenticity with a large block of salt. Preferably, seek a book written in defense of the Bible as God’s reliable Word even in our “highly advanced” 21st century.

—Paul Fleischer, Pastor
Redeemer Lutheran Church

The battle for the Bible is nothing new. Even eighty years ago this was said: “...not all have bowed to the supposedly scientific position that the Bible is a book of errors.”

FROM THE EDITOR:

About the *Brief Statement* —

In 1960 our CLC founding fathers included among the synod's confessional articles a document titled the *Brief Statement*. They did so because the document gave a clear trumpet sound on the doctrines it addresses.

First approved by the “old” Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod at its 1932 synod Convention, the document is comparatively brief with but 48 paragraphs treating 19 key Bible doctrines. On our cover is paragraph 1 which treats the divine inspiration of the Holy Scriptures—the article upon which all the other paragraphs stand or fall.

Eighty-two years later, our prayer remains, “Lord, keep us steadfast in Thy Word.”



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LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“... THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN.” — JOHN 10 : 35

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