



THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Photo by Roger C. Huebner, D.D.S.

AT THE MASTER'S FEET

Pastor Kenneth Pentti



Knowing where to run

"And he built there an altar, and called the place El-bethel: because there God appeared unto him, when he fled from the face of his brother" (Gen. 35:7).

Seasons of spiritual regression are common among Christians. There is another malady which often accompanies these arid stretches in our Christian lives, however. Sometimes we find ourselves snared in what John Bunyan would call "the Slough of Despond." As a consequence, we find ourselves in the dilemma of not knowing where to run.

To illustrate this crisis in a Christian's life, let us examine the life of Jacob, who became *Israel*, the immediate father of God's chosen people.

A pattern began to develop early in Jacob's life which affected his relationship with God and created a climate

for "running." Jacob and Esau, twin sons of Isaac and Rebekah, were born struggling together. From the beginning, they were inclined in opposite directions. Esau became a hunter, a man of the fields, and lived a rough and rugged life. But Jacob showed a quieter and more even temperament. He loved home, listened to his mother's dreams of the future, learned to control his appetites and passions and cultivated the art of patience in working toward the realization of his ambitions. He was ready also to take advantage of Esau's weakness and turn it to his own profit.

The climax of Jacob's deceit came when he allowed Esau to sell him the birthright for "a mess of pottage." Jacob's scheming was wrong, but Esau "despised" his birthright, meaning that he counted it lightly, as of no real consequence to him. Jacob's sin was compounded as, in collusion with his mother, he deceived his blind and dying father into giving the parting patriarchal blessing to him instead of to Esau. With hatred and vengeance, Esau began to plot Jacob's death. So began Jacob's running—to Mesopotamia, to find a wife among the daughters of Rebekah's brother.

A picture of God's omniscience in regard to Jacob, his patient and tender care, becomes apparent almost immediately.

God is the all-seeing and all-knowing God. Even though many years were to pass before Jacob found the right pathway, *God waited*, because Jacob belonged to Him and He had plans for Jacob's life. Jacob reached Bethel, and with a stone for his pillow, he fell into a fitful sleep. Jacob had a dream in which he saw a ladder connecting heaven with earth, with angels ascending and descending upon it. God spoke

to Jacob, assuring him that He would go with him and keep him, and bring him back to his homeland which He would give to him for a possession.

Jacob's assessment of the experience was fitting: "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not" (Gen. 28:16). Jacob's first visit to Bethel was a turning point in his life. He had come with a great burden of sin, but he left with a consciousness of having been forgiven. Bethel remains to this day a symbol of the place of encounter, where one stops his running long enough to face God and, consequently, to face himself. The road back was yet a lengthy one for Jacob, but he was *on the way!* God indeed forgives sin completely; He casts our sins away from us as far as the east is from the west.

A plan for bringing Jacob to his divinely appointed destination is revealed at the proper time.

Approximately 30 years had passed since Jacob's first visit to Bethel and his experience with God at Bethel doubtlessly had become vague. He left his Uncle Laban's home a wealthy man. Then came Peniel, where he wrestled all night with an angel and had his name changed to "Israel." Because of this experience, he was a cripple for the rest of his life. Though materially successful, Jacob was a weary and broken man. Then God stepped in. The divine instructions were given to Jacob. It is good to know "where to run"! For the unbeliever, the road is marked "repentance," and the destination is the cross. For the disobedient Christian it is repentance and back to Bethel, back to where God began a work in his life, so that he can "take up again where the interruption came" and commence afresh the molding and fashioning of his life into a vessel of honor for God's glory.

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From its inception, the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations has used the term "pietism" in its self-description. Indeed, in 1962 the AFLC gave as one of its reasons for wanting to exist the desire that it might speak for a "wholesome Christian pietism" in the Lutheran Church and beyond.

What is pietism? What are its historical roots? What is its nature? These are the main questions that we want to discuss in this article.

Defining Pietism

It has been observed that pietism is one of the least understood movements in church history. Opponents have identified pietism with emotionalism, mysticism, rationalism, subjectivism, asceticism, quietism, synergism, legalism, separatism, and other worldliness. Its defenders, on the other hand have sought such connotations as sanctification, holiness, and the *work* of the Holy Spirit.

The most frequent word for piety used in the New Testament is *eusebeia*, which is translated reverence or respect. It is used in the context of piety toward God or godliness (Acts 3:12; I Tim. 2:2). It is also used in terms of the doctrine that promotes godliness (I Tim. 6:3) or the truth that leads to godliness (Titus 1:1). However, the Bible makes it very clear that it is possible to have a form of godliness (*eusebeia*) and yet deny the power of it (II Tim. 3:5). In other words, there can be an outward display of godly behavior without a right relationship to God. It is this reality that has been responsible sometimes for the criticism leveled at pietism and it is well deserved.

Our concern as an AFLC is to work and pray for true pietism—the sanctified living that flows from being justified by faith. How that godly behavior is defined must always be in light of God's unchanging Word. How that godly behavior is manifested must always be in the strength of the Holy Spirit as He works through the blessed means of grace—Word and Sacrament.

The History of Pietism

Though the concept of pietism is certainly represented through all of history wherever God's people have been found, the term "pietism" was first applied to a movement in Germany in the late 17th century.

Philip Jacob Spener, a Lutheran pastor and church leader, burdened by the spiritual conditions as he viewed them, wrote a small book entitled *Pia Desideria* (Pious Desires). In his treatise, Spener made it clear that he felt there was a sore need for *application* of the orthodox teaching and preaching issuing from the pulpits and classrooms of the land. He did not question the soundness of the doctrine in the Lutheran pulpit and pew. Rather, in consonance with James and nearly the whole of Scripture, he had higher expectations of the practical effects of saving faith. Indeed, "faith without works is dead", he sought to remind his readers. He believed that true faith always issued in love (good works). Yes, sanctification is progressive and gradual, he said, but it is always begun when one is justified by faith. Sanctification of life always follows justification.

At heart, Spener was calling for a re-discovery of the Biblical meaning of saving faith. He wanted to point out the contrast between saving faith and mere intellectual assent to the truths of the Gospel. Even the demons are capable of the latter type of belief, he would aver.

Spener's writing produced a mixed reaction. Although the immediate response was generally favorable, opposition set in when the practical implications of his measures appeared on the congregational level. Of particular alarm to some clergy were the small group Bible studies (*collegia pietatis*) that arose in many parishes. These were viewed as a challenge to the adequacy of pastoral leadership and perhaps, in some places, they were. The best of these groups, however, simply wanted to study the Word of God for the purpose of mutual edification.

WHOLESOME CHRISTIAN PIETISM

*Pietism:
Its nature
and history*



by Rev. Francis
Monseth

A close associate of Spener was August Herman Francke. Francke taught at the University of Halle from which many young men went forth as missionaries and pastors to various parts of the world. Among them was Henry Melchior Muhlenberg who came to America to organize the colonial Lutheran church.

The pietist emphasis exerted strong influence on the Scandinavian countries as well as North America. Many of our spiritual forebears were people whose lives were touched by the spreading revival accompanying pietism. Such of those who traced their spiritual moorings directly or indirectly to pietism are Erick Pontoppidan (Denmark), Hans Nielsen Hauge (Norway), Carl Olof Rosenius (Sweden), and Lars Levi Laestadius (Finland). The early histories of many Lutheran Church bodies in this country mention one or more of these men as significant instruments God used to shape their

The Reckoning that Counts

by Pastor Karl G. Berg,
Wanamingo, Minn.

Long ago now, I was given a small booklet by a friend. The name of the booklet was *The Reckoning That Counts*. I still have the little booklet in my library. At times I go back to it to have another look. I wish I had met this friend of mine years before I did. He has gone to be with the Lord now but the introduction he gave me to this

writing and similar ones left an imprint on my life. Life just wasn't the same any longer. A new excitement in being His removed the drabness of "trying to live" the Christian Life.

The act of reckoning can mean much or it can mean nothing. Reckoning has no value in itself. Our reckoning must be based on facts. That's why the Apostle Paul spends considerable time in dealing with this one word or its implications. To him it means the differ-

convictions. The Association of Free Lutheran Congregations stands in a direct line of influence from the best of Lutheran pietism. We are deeply grateful for this precious heritage.

The Nature of Pietism

As alluded to earlier, the heart of pietistic concern is for the translation or application of sound doctrine into everyday life. The expectation is that true faith always results in the desire to walk in close fellowship with Christ. That "desire" stems from the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit who not only empowers the Christian but also enlightens him as to the fruits his faith should bear. This two-fold activity the Holy Spirit accomplishes through Word and Sacrament.

A review of the practical measures Philip Spener called for in *Pia Desideria* will help in better understanding the nature of pietism. After giving his "conspectus of corrupt conditions" in which he pinpointed the defects in the church life of his day, Spener presented his "proposals to correct conditions."

1—use of the Word

As a first measure, Spener called for *a more extensive use of the Word of God*. His great confidence in the efficacy of the Word is reflected in his statement, "The more at home the Word of God is among us, the more we shall bring about faith and its fruits" (*Pia Desideria*, p. 87). He believed it

was not enough that the Word was preached and received merely on Sunday morning. It was vital that the Word of God was prominent in the everyday life of the believer. He called for Bible reading at home, more Bible reading in the public services and opportunity for group Bible studies and discussions under the leadership of the pastor. He wasn't so concerned about the form as the reality of this wider use of the Word. He was convinced that the Word "must be the chief means for reforming something" (Ibid., p. 91). He firmly believed that he was a true "son of the Reformation" in this emphasis.

2—priesthood of believers

A second proposal concerned the establishment and diligent *exercise of the spiritual priesthood*. Decrying the oft-prevailing attitude that pastors were solely responsible for the various ministries of the Word, he called for a re-discovery and re-application of the Biblical and Lutheran understanding of the priesthood of all believers. Every Christian has been entrusted with abilities and opportunities to be used for the edification of fellow believers and the advancement of the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Spener expressed his confidence that if several persons in each congregation would begin to diligently use the Word of God and practice "priestly duties," much would be accomplished. "Afterwards," he said, "more and more would be achieved, and finally the church would be visibly

ence between life and death. Between victory and defeat. And as he speaks or writes he does so from sad experience. Before he met Jesus, he reckoned with his religion to pull him through. After all, his "credit card" looked good when compared with others. After his experience on the Road to Damascus, he reckoned with the incentive of a profound experience and a newly found love to pull him on to victory. His reckonings failed because they were both based on a false premise. He had yet to see that unless a "corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone—" Victory comes only through death. Death of self-dependence, and

transformed" (Ibid., p. 95).

3—practical Christianity

A third appeal Spener made to his countrymen was a recognition that "it is by no means enough to have knowledge of the Christian faith, *for Christianity consists rather of practice*" (p. 95). He reminded his readers that Jesus said the real mark of being a disciple is love. "Indeed," he said, "love is the whole life of the man who has faith and who through his faith is saved, and his fulfillment of the laws of God consists of love" (p. 96). He encouraged his readers by saying, "If we can therefore awaken a fervent love among our Christians, first toward one another and then toward all men, and put this into practice, practically all that we desire will be accomplished" (p. 96).

4—concern for adversaries

Related to the previous proposal, Spener next admonished care in the way religious controversies were conducted. The mood of the hour tended to "hair-splitting" on theological issues but even legitimate disputation seemed also to be carried on sometimes for disputation's sake rather than for recovery and restoration of the erring one. Christ-like genuine love, Spener believed, while deeply concerned for the preservation and proclamation of correct doctrine, would manifest itself in tender regard for the conversion of the opponent. Again Spener declared his confidence if this proposal were heeded, "There is no doubt that God

total dependence on Him Who died that we might live and Who lived that we might have victory, with Him in total control.

The Apostle Paul touches, in Romans 6, on two basic facts which can change a life into a reservoir for God's abundance if reckoned with. He discovered the one on the memorable day when he had his confrontation with Jesus. He discovered his own bankruptcy and the answer to that need. The words of a dying Stephen, which he had tried so hard to suppress, came alive. His Substitute on the cross became real to him. The preaching of the cross, of the One who died for him

there, became from then on the central truth of his message. There is where *life* began and begins. He was now a "new creature" in Christ Jesus. But, as the Israelites of old, he didn't see, nor reckon with the fact that he (Paul) had died *with* Him. He had found *life* but tried, as so many others, to live that life and discovered only defeat, as he records in Romans 7. It was only after three years in the Arabian desert alone with God that he learned the secret of victory that Jesus pointed to in His parable of the kernel of corn. "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but *Christ liveth in me*—." Now his cry of defeat changed

Victory comes only through death.

to one of *continuous* victory.

God has a fantastic plan for His people of today as He had for His covenant people of the past. They "came short" of attaining to what God had intended for them as they "turned back" at Kadesh-Barnea from a walk of total dependence on God to one of their doing their best under Moses. They reckoned with a part of God's redemption: the fact that God had died for them, in their applying the blood on their individual doorpost, only to be enslaved

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would then allow us to grow more and more in our knowledge of the truth, and also give us the pleasure of seeing others, whose error we now lament, alongside us in the same faith" (Ibid., p. 102). In this respect, then, true pietism can never adopt a proud separative or isolationist stand but must carefully and prayerfully face the errors of the hour with the earnest concern to so contend in love for the "faith once delivered" that those who have been misled can be brought to a true and living orthodoxy.

5—ministerial training

Viewing pastors as in a position potentially to exert profound influence on spiritual life, Spener aimed his fifth proposal at *reform of ministerial training*. He saw the seminary professors as bearing great responsibility in this regard, particularly by their example. "If they (the professors) would conduct themselves as men who have died unto the world, in everything would not seek their own glory, gain, or pleasure but rather the glory of their God and the salvation of those entrusted to them . . . then the students would have a living example according to which they might regulate their life, for we are so fashioned that *examples are as effective for us as teachings, and sometimes more effective*" (Ibid., p. 104).

Spener believed that seminary students should have it unceasingly impressed upon them that "holy life is not of less consequence than diligence and study, indeed that *study without*

piety is worthless" (Ibid., p. 104). Though Spener himself strove for academic excellence, he recognized, nevertheless, that "a young man who fervently loves God, although adorned with limited gifts, will be more useful to the Church of God with his meager talent and academic achievement than a vain and worldly fool with double doctor's degrees who is very clever but has not been taught by God" (Ibid., p. 108).

Believing that "the whole of theology should be brought back to apostolic simplicity" (Ibid., p. 110), Spener called for attention to good devotional literature as part of seminary training. He cited Luther as an ally in this recommendation. Spener felt it necessary for future pastors to be given "concrete suggestions on how to institute pious meditations (personal devotions), how to know themselves better through self-examination, and how to resist the lusts of the flesh, how to hold their desires in check and die unto the world, how to observe growth in goodness and where there is still lack, and how they themselves may do what they must teach others to do" (Ibid., p. 112-113). He was convinced this was to use the Word of God in an edifying manner.

6—practical training

Spener's last proposal to correct the corrupt conditions of the church in his day also concerned ministerial training. He said, "it would be useful if the teachers (seminary) made provision for practice in those things with which the

students will have to deal when they are in the ministry" (Ibid., p. 115). In the areas of teaching, visitation and particularly preaching, practical experience is needed. He believed this would give excellent opportunity for the teachers to point out that edification is the chief endeavor in all ministries of the Word. Noting the lack of good preaching in Germany, he declared that the pulpit is the place to "preach the Word of the Lord plainly but powerfully. Preaching should be the divine means to save the people, and so it is proper that everything be directed to this end. Ordinary people, who make up the largest part of a congregation, are always to be kept in view more than the few learned people, insofar as such are present at all" (Ibid., p. 116).

WHOLESOME CHRISTIAN PIETISM

As heirs of biblical Christianity and as heirs of the Lutheran Reformation, the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations identifies with the best of the Lutheran pietism as enunciated by Philip Spener and many after him. It is in terms of the proposals listed above that the AFLC desires to work for "wholesome Christian pietism." The AFLC grieves over the rising tide of worldliness and secularism in the pulpits and pews of the Lutheran church as a whole and beyond. It also grieves over the remnants of a Pharisaic legalism which still tenaciously holds back the effectiveness of some

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Do We Scratch Them Where They Itch?

Many thinking men today are asking the penetrating question, "Is the Sunday School obsolete? Is it a relic of another generation, without a cutting edge in an atomic space age?"

In Acts, chapter 8, God gives us a glimpse of a man—the apostle Philip—whose ministry *was* relevant to his age. The principles Philip used to communicate with his generation are the same as the Holy Spirit wants to use in your life today. I'd like to suggest these four principles as four items that should be in every Sunday School teacher's "tool kit."

First of all, every teacher needs a good supply of glue. In Acts 8:29, the Holy Spirit said to Philip, "Go near, and join thyself to this chariot." Literally, He told Philip, "*Glue* yourself to that chariot." To me the most alarming trend in the Sunday School today is that it is becoming more and more impersonal. Sunday School teachers are building no bridges into the hearts and homes of their students. Like Philip, we desperately need to become so personally involved and identified with people in their need that our ministry is one of bulldog tenacity. The Holy Spirit wants us to "glue ourselves" to a dollbuggy . . . to a hot rod . . . to a ranch-style home, and flow into the life of a man, a woman, a boy, a girl, a teenager or university student so that by personal exposure they come to know the reality of Jesus Christ in a life.

The second thing that should be in every Sunday School teacher's tool kit is a box of itching powder. You see, the average Sunday School student has learned to throw his mind into neutral when he walks into that classroom.

And the result is that thousands of Sunday School teachers are talking to ears that do not hear . . . answering questions that nobody is asking . . . scratching people when they do not itch! In Acts 8:30, Philip asked a very penetrating question and thereby

**"Philip was
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created a desire to learn within the Ethiopian eunuch. By asking a question Philip dusted the mind of another human being with some holy itching powder. Have you done that in your classroom lately?

Another essential part of every teacher's tool kit is a bucket with a long rope. Having aroused the eunuch's interest with a strategic question, Philip was able to explain God's message because he had been drinking deeply at the well of the Word. When the opportunity came, he could minister to the need out of the overflow of a full life. That's the mark of a good teacher: he is also a good student, regularly dipping deep into the reservoir of spiritual truth that is the Word of God. Have you got that bucket and long rope? Are you using them daily?

Finally, every teacher must have a built-in magnetic compass. Philip knew Christ and in his conversation he drew the eunuch irresistibly to Him. He "preached unto him *Jesus*" (Acts 8:35). You cannot hope to impart to your students that which you do not already possess yourself. And before you can lead your students into an intensely personal relationship with Jesus Christ, you must have that relationship yourself. Your life must swing back again and again to Him. He must be the very center and focus of all that you are and do. Only then can you hope to point others to Him.

Teacher, check your tool kit. Do you have that pot of glue . . . that box of itching powder . . . that bucket with a long rope . . . that magnetic compass? Are you using them?

From an article written by Dr. Howard Hendricks, *TEACH* magazine, summer 1966. Used by permission.

Judith B. Wold, Executive Director
Parish Education, AFLC

" . . . four items that should be in every Sunday School teacher's 'tool kit.' "

RECKONING . . .

under another bondage of legalism under Moses. They failed to allow Him who had begun the good work—to *finish*. "And He brought us out from thence, that He might bring us in, to give us the land which He swore unto our fathers (Deut. 6:23).

Out but not in! Isn't that the sad experience of so many in our churches today? Trying to do the impossible. Trying to live under grace and the law. Trying to live the Christian life which only One can live in us and through us. Reckoning only with one half of God's package of redemption given us in the Son. "For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, *much more*, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10).

"How can I make this work in my heart," is the cry of human hearts here and there. How can I have the *continuous* victory that Paul speaks about? God makes things very simple. He tells us: "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus *the Lord*, so walk ye in Him." So, we have to go back to the Source of life in the first place. We went there then *with empty hands* and saw the answer to our need in those nail-pierced hands of the One dying for us. That's where we must go again, with empty hands, and ask Him to *finish* what He has begun. Ask Him to take complete control as Lord and live the Life *in us* that we cannot live. To fill our empty boat with His abundance as He did with Peter. "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Rom. 8:4). What does it mean to walk "after the Spirit?" It means walking in an attitude of total dependence on God as able to handle any situation *through us* to His glory. May I close with the prayer of one who has discovered the secret of abundance.

"Lord Jesus, I thank You for coming into my heart. I thank You that You have shown me I cannot live the Christian life. I just can't do it. I have tried, oh, so hard. I want You to take over. All that I am and all that I have, I give to You, Lord Jesus. I thank You in advance for what You are going to do in me and through me.

HAPPY ACRES

a Page for CHILDREN

Mark Gets the Grumps

"Mark must have gotten up on the wrong side of his bed today," said Stephen to his father, one morning. "Boy, has he ever got the grumps! Nothing suits him."

It was plain for anyone to see when Mark came in and took his place at the table that he was feeling cross. So Steve was not at all surprised when Dad announced, after Grace, "We're going to play the Thank You game today while we eat. We'll start with the youngest this time."

The Thank You game was one of Dad's inventions. As each person's turn came, he would tell of something for which he was thankful—something which no one else had yet mentioned. The object of the game was to see who could keep counting his blessings the longest.

Now little Beth started the game with, "Glad I have a kitty."

Paul was next with, "Glad I have my red hen."

Melissa said, "I'm thankful for Mom and Dad."

Ann was thankful for the new dress Mom was making for her.

Mark hardly looked up from his plate as he said, "Well, I'm glad for this good food."

Dad chuckled at this. Mark, looking up at his father, almost smiled. But he couldn't help grinning when Stephen announced, "Well, I'm glad I've got my sweet brother Mark."

Mom was glad for having the whole family together. Dad was glad for home.

Around and around the table, the blessings were counted. By the time the meal was eaten, no one had dropped out of the game—not even Beth. And so, as usual, there was no winner.

(Editor's Note: In the series of stories entitled "Happy Acres," we unintentionally omitted three chapters. Even though it is quite some time since you read about the Johnson family, we are going to take you back for these three short visits with them. Here is the first story.)

But when Mark stood up from the table, he was no longer grumpy for he had counted too many blessings to stay grumpy.

Memory verse:

"In everything give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus."

I Thessalonians 5:18

FAMILY DISCUSSION

1. What was one of Christ's regular habits? (Matthew 14:19; 15:36; Mark 8:1-10)
2. Let each one of us start each day by giving thanks to God. When we get up in the morning, too, let's see how many blessings we can count—then we'll be surprised how much happier each day will be for us.

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GENERAL FUND

ASSOCIATION OF FREE LUTHERAN CONGREGATIONS
3110 East Medicine Lake Boulevard
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BUDGET RECEIPTS

Feb. 1 - Dec. 30

	Total Budget	Received to Date	% of total (Ideal—92%)
General Fund	\$104,140.00	\$ 74,275.85	71%
Schools	179,802.00	144,432.14	80
Home Missions	105,252.00	74,707.16	71
World Missions	156,636.00	107,408.09	69
Praise	36,407.00	19,587.85	54

During this past year we have designated a special benevolence promotion for each month of the year. Our objective has been that in doing so we would have an organized system of sharing the needs and goals of the various benevolences. We hope that through it our people would have a better understanding of the work and the various needs.

This January is designated "General Fund" month. To many, the "General Fund" does not do much to inspire the imagination. Perhaps we can help you to understand the purpose of our "General Fund."

The General Fund of our AFLC is under the direction of our Co-ordinating Committee;e. One of the chief responsibilities of the General Fund is to maintain our administrative offices here at headquarters. That includes the paying of salaries for the president, our office secretary, our bookkeeper, the Director of Development, the editor of the *Ambassador*, our evangelist, and janitorial service. Our accounting service, office expenses and administrative travel are also covered by the General Fund.

Schools and Missions do share in some of the administrative costs. Our evangelist's salary is also covered in part by offerings received.

The Parish Education Fund is substantially subsidized by the General Fund making possible the printing of our Ambassador Sunday School series.

Conference expenses, legal fees, taxes and AFLC promotional expenses also come from the General Fund. If some other need arises that is not budgeted for, that, too, would turn to the General Fund for assistance.

All of the above may not be as exciting or challenging as some other aspects of our work, yet they are all a very necessary part of keeping our Church a growing and healthy fellowship.

The total budget for the General Fund this year is \$104,140.00. The fiscal year ends on January 31st, and the General Fund is still considerably short of the budget goal. Your prayers and support are much needed.

R. Snipstead, president of the AFLC

PIETISM . . .

otherwise Bible-believing individuals and groups and is foreign to truly Christ-filled living. The AFLC sincerely wants to work and pray for "wholesome Christian pietism," a pietism which finds its origins at the cross of Christ, a pietism which finds its power in the blessed means of grace (Word

and Sacraments) as mediated by the Holy Spirit, a pietism which finds its direction wholly and solely in the inspired and inerrant Word of God, a pietism which expresses itself in fervent love for God, for His people, the Church, and for the lost and dying to the ends of the earth.

For the new year

What shall I ask for the coming year?

What shall my watchword be?

What would'st Thou do for me, dear Lord?

What shall I do for Thee?

Lord, I would ask for a holy year,

Spent in Thy perfect Will;

Help me to walk in Thy very steps—

Help me to please Thee still.

Lord, I would ask for a year of faith;

Give me Thy faith divine.

Taking my full inheritance,

Making Thy fullness mine.

Lord, I would ask for a year of love—

Oh, let me love Thee best!

Give me the love that faileth not

Under the hardest test.

Lord, I would ask for a year of prayer—

Teach me to walk with Thee;

Breathe in my heart Thy Spirit's breath;

Pray Thou Thy prayer in me.

Lord, I would ask for a dying world;

Stretch forth Thy mighty hand;

Scatter Thy Word—Thy power display

This year in every land.

Lord, I would ask for a year of hope,

Looking for Thee to come,

And hastening on that year of years,

That brings us Christ and Home.

Author Unknown

editorials

WHOLESOME PIETISM

In this issue we are beginning what we think will be an excellent and one of our most valuable series in the history of *The Lutheran Ambassador*. We refer to the series on Wholesome Christian Pietism which Pastor Francis Monseth introduces with his article on page 3.

The word Pietism has been variously defined. For instance, we see it in the terms "living and personal Christian experience" and "a high quality of Christian life," which Dr. Bernhard Christensen used in his excellent statement, "What is the Lutheran Free Church?", a good many years ago.

Dr. Conrad Thompson, preacher now on the "Lutheran Vespers" radio program, some years ago wrote these words of true piety: "The prayer life of the church would begin to flourish, Christians would wrap themselves around the needs of their brothers, more homes would become incubators for a vital faith in the lives of parents and their children. And a new chapter of laborers being sent forth into 'the fields white unto harvest' bearing witness of the Good News of Jesus Christ would become a reality."

It is all summed up, too, in what Georg Sverdrup used to advocate, "free and living congregations," even as we are wont to do today. There is more than a little evidence that we might understand the term better if we reversed the two adjectives and spoke of "living and free congregations," for Sverdrup would emphasize that freedom is the freedom in Christ and secondarily freedom from outside domination.

But anyway, today we begin a series of articles on Pietism. They will be written, except one, by pastors of the church. They will discuss various aspects of the subject. The writers haven't consulted with one another that we know of. How well it will all fit together, we don't know, for we haven't seen the rest of the articles yet. There will be some expression of personal opinion. Whether we will all agree on all points or not is unlikely and yet there will be a great body of consensus. The writers will approach their topics also with attacks against Pietism in mind, we can be sure, and will seek to answer the charges.

The one exception, noted above, in authorship, is that next time we will be presenting you with an article written by August Hermann Francke (1663-1727), one of the fathers of historical Pietism, and mentioned by Pastor Monseth in his article. This article is unique, we think, as it may never have been printed in English before. At least that is the hunch of the translator, Rev. Edward A. Johnson, Ohio, Nebr., who found the article, "How to Read Holy Scripture for Our Own Edification," in an old German Bible he bought at an estate sale. It is a real privilege for *The Lutheran*

an Ambassador to be able to publish this article by Francke and it will be presented to you next time.

Through this whole series we trust that members of the Association, and all our readers, will come to see in a better way our position on pietism and piety and what sort of persons we ought to be (II Peter 3:11) in these latter days.

SIGN OF DECADENCE

It is a few years ago now since we wrote to deplore the enormous salaries being paid to professional athletes in our country, baseball players especially. Now we have cause to write on this subject again as news has come of one player signing a ten-year contract for 13 million dollars.

The argument, of course, is that one is entitled to get what one can while one can. That is what the natural man will do most of the time. After all, what things are more important than money? Not very many.

We guess what galls us the most is that there is this kind of money available to pay athletes and other entertainers. Further, that it is so important to have these highly paid people to entertain us and keep us amused, soothed and thrilled.

One wonders what the judgment of history, to say nothing of God, will be against a civilization which rewards its entertainers and top corporate executives most highly while many well-educated people in the service and humanitarian sectors cannot reach the minimum wage for professional sport leagues. And a lot of other people can't either, including preachers. As to the latter, though, we think they are better off if they don't become too prosperous, for they like others are apt to lose some spiritual keenness if they become sleek and well-heeled.

And what of the masses below the poverty level and the wretched conditions in which they must live? They will have to make do apparently, while the entertainers get what the market will bear, for we can't get along without them, now can we?

This is being written by a life-long lover of sports, professional and amateur, but there is a growing disenchantment with this sort of thing. The times are, as the man said, out of joint.

WHAT HAS HAPPENED?

There is a growing trend away from having church services on Christmas Day. What used to be one of the festive days in all the year in the church is now a day for family gatherings or whatever other purpose one may choose.

In other times Christmas would find churches filled as at hardly any other time in all the year. Surely, some came then who seldom did at any other time, but many a pastor welcomed that one opportunity to preach the Gospel of Christ to them. And the regular goers rejoiced in the festival spirit of the day and the extra additions to the service.

Is it reason enough to want to be kind to people so they can plan their get-togethers without having to have guilty consciences about not being in church? It may be nice for the pastor to have the day off, perhaps to make a trip away

CRADLE ROLLS

Sedan, Minn.



Luke Huseby, Julene and Maren Berg graduated from Scandia Lutheran Cradle Roll.



Scandia Lutheran received two children into the Cradle Roll. Melissa Sue Atkinson and Nathanael Haagenson are pictured here with their mothers.

Grand Forks, N. Dak.

Trinity Lutheran received the following children as new Cradle Roll members: Jason Capes, Katie Hill, Kelly Janzen, Christopher Moen, Bryan Thompson, and Ethan Thompson. Bobby Thompson graduated.

HONORARY MEMBERSHIPS

Minot, N. Dak.

Mrs. Paul Haakenson and Mrs. Hjalmer Johnson were given Honorary Membership Pins. Both ladies are members of Bethel Lutheran.

Sedan, Minn.

Scandia Lutheran recently presented pins to Mrs. Ingvald Olson and Mrs. Bert Flaten.

Bemidji, Minn.

Bethany Lutheran recently honored their Cradle Roll members. The children honored were: Adam Carmack, Nathanael and Mary Elizabeth Janz, Erin Nelson, Jenifer Nelson, Melissa Rood, Brent and Monica Rose, and Timothy Wells.

Pukwana, S. Dak.



Elim WMF honored Ellen Hall and Ferne Graves with pins.

We regret that not all WMF Fall Rally reports were included in the Nov. 25 issue. May we encourage Spring Rally reports to be sent in within a week after the event. Continue to send all WMF news to Solveig Larson at AFLC headquarters.

WE'LL HAVE A CHAPLAIN

It is good news that Pastor Timothy K. Skramstad, recently of Minnewaukan, N. Dak., will become the AFLC's first chaplain in the military. It is only right that we be represented in this area of Christian work and witness.

Pastor Skramstad felt the call to the chaplaincy at least while in seminary. It was his desire to go into the service immediately upon graduation, but the door didn't open for him and he took a parish instead. We are sure now that he values these years of experience and they will serve him well in his new assignment.

We are also glad that the way has opened for him to become a chaplain. There is a great need for the spiritual ministry a chaplain can bring. Pastor Skramstad will be the right kind of chaplain, too. It won't be easy work; there will be many discouragements; he will find many men and women quite unconcerned. But enough people will respond to make it all seem very worthwhile. God bless him as he carries the message, the love and the care of Christ to those in military service.

At one time this writer gave some thought to becoming a chaplain, too. But it wasn't to be and things have worked out as they were meant to be. However, all the more we can rejoice in this leading of the Lord for Pastor Timothy Skramstad. Let us remember him and his family in prayer.

It would be good if the AFLC could always have one or two pastors serving in the U. S. military forces as chaplains, as military quotas allow.

EDITORIALS . . .

himself, but aren't there other days which could be better used?

Another factor to be considered is that Christmas Day is one of two days in the U.S. set aside as holidays with Christian significance. The other is Thanksgiving. It is unfortunate when the churches do not make use of them for Christian services. It would seem that this is the purpose for them. The same thing has occurred with Thanksgiving Day. Many churches stand cold and empty on the day set aside for national thanksgiving to God.

It seems to us that much of our clamor for national repentance and return to morality, etc., loses its edge when churches, evangelical ones among them, cannot work in public services on these days set aside as national religious holidays, and we might say, holy days.

We feel strongly about this. Something has happened, subtly, imperceptibly over these recent years. We're not calling for a religion of show. That would do no one any good, but we think our churches are losing a great opportunity and failing a responsibility by forsaking festival services on Christmas Day and Thanksgiving Day. (We acknowledge that in multiple parishes there may be a need for some doubling up and we do not necessarily speak against that here.)

11. It may be easier to love myself when I realize that God is still doing a creative work within me. What is that work? II Corinthians 3:18 _____
and Romans 8:29 _____

12. We are pleased when our children seem to take on our physical characteristics and others say, "She looks just like her mother." So it pleases God when we take on the character of His Son who "looks just like His Father." How can this be accomplished in me? Ephesians 4:22-24 _____
and Romans 12:2 _____

13. Real beauty starts on the inside and works its way out. What I think determines what I am and what I do (Proverbs 23:7, KJV). What feminine qualities are precious in God's sight and how would you describe these qualities in practical terms? I Peter 3:4-5 _____

These qualities are equated by many in the world with mousiness or withdrawal. If these qualities are confusing to you, try doing a Biblical word study on them!

14. Perhaps God's creative work within you seems very exciting and encouraging some days and then very slow and even non-existent in our eyes. How is this process described in Isaiah 28:9-10, and how does this encourage you? _____

15. We don't wait for perfect maturity, however, before we are effective women. Certain gifts and abilities are inherent within His original creation of you (I Corinthians 7:7). Why do you think the exhortation in I Timothy 4:14 was given? See also I Corinthians 12:7. _____

I believe the enlightened woman of God must agree that God created women with a specific purpose in mind. We will enjoy being His creation if we are in harmony with His original plan and purpose for us. Furthermore, our intimate, loving Creator designed each of us individually with His beneficial purposes in mind. I glorify God when I am happy with the way he made me. Then, to even increase my joy, He is faithful and caring enough to continue His creative work in me all through my lifetime. In the light of these profound Scriptures, I enjoy being His creation.

Close your lesson by singing, "Oh, To Be Like Thee."

Next month: I enjoy being a single woman.

WMF Bible Study

I Enjoy Being a Woman

February, 1981

I Enjoy Being God's Creation

I. A Specific Creation for a Specific Purpose.

Once a woman has seen her self-nature as it really is and has personally acknowledged her need, she recognizes that her sole ground of acceptance is in Christ alone. She is spending concentrated time in the Word of God, eagerly seeking to obey Him, and is genuinely enjoying being God's child. This is the beginning of true personal fulfillment. As her desire to please God increases, she will naturally want to become more specific regarding her purpose in life, personal direction and individual goals. God's Word has much to say about the feminine role in general and each woman in particular.

1. "In the beginning. . ." The logical starting point in our discovery must be creation. What exactly does God say about the reason woman was created?

a.) Genesis 1:26-27 — _____

b.) Isaiah 64:8 — _____

c.) Psalm 139:13 (RSV) — _____

2. Genesis 2 examines the creation in more detail. What specifics do we learn in vs. 18-22? For what purpose was woman created? I Corinthians 11:7-9

It is an awesome thought that man was not complete in himself. God saw that man needed woman. *The Amplified Bible* gives clarification to "a help meet" (note: these are two words, not one noun) by explaining that the woman was suited for, adapted to, completing for, the man. Our creative purpose was to complete and compliment man—lovely harmony.

3. Because of the Fall this perfect design did not last long. Consequently, fulfilling our role does not come naturally. It should not seem objectionable then that God gave specific instructions for Christian women in Titus 2:3b-5.

What? _____

Why? _____

Do we agree that seeking God's will as Christian women is a serious responsibility? _____

4. God created male and female with different roles, responses, responsibilities. List and discuss some of the obvious differences of which you are casually aware: physically, mentally, emotionally or spiritually.

II. Universal Purposes

A few universal reasons for our creation are clearly defined in Scripture. We do not overlook them since they apply to all women and they help us visualize God's total plan for us. Concurring with His "perfectly fitted-together" overall plan causes us to trustingly accept His more specific instructions.

5. For what main purpose did God create us, Revelation 4:11 (KJV)?

6. Sin made it impossible for us to ever fulfill our created purpose—no longer could we bring God pleasure in our fallen state. Through Christ God had one theme in mind for our existence. What is it? _____

a.) Ephesians 1:5, 6, 12— _____

b.) II Thessalonians 1:10-12— _____

c.) I Corinthians 6:19-20— _____

7. What truly brings glory to God? II Corinthians 5:15 _____

Romans 7:4 _____

Ephesians 2:10 _____

8. How can I do this? Romans 12:1 _____

Romans 6:13 _____

III. Me—an Individual

Up to this point all may agree with God's creative design for women, but in order to thoroughly enjoy being God's creation I must wholeheartedly enjoy being me—a unique creation.

9. As a new creation in Christ, self-acceptance now becomes important. God is glorified when I am content and happy with the person He made me. Find two facts to support this: a.) Matthew 22:37-39 _____ ;
b.) II Corinthians 10:12 _____

10. Our Creator is not a selfish Sovereign, pushing us around for His entertainment. His plan for me is personal and can be trusted. Why? Jeremiah 29:11. _____

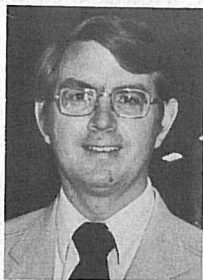
NEWS of the CHURCHES



Pastor Snipstead, Pastor Schroeder

Bismarck church formally organized

Calvary Lutheran Church, Bismarck, N. Dak., was formally organized on December 1. The charter membership was closed the day previous with 29 names on the list. Calvary is served by Pastor Einar Unseth.



AFLC Pastor is military chaplain

Rev. Timothy K. Skramstad, pastor at Minnewaukan, N. Dak.

(Trinity and Antiochia), since 1975, has resigned to accept appointment as a chaplain in the U.S. Army effective January 15. The assignment is for three years and he will be stationed first at Fort Meade, just north of Washington, D.C.

Cleveland church has ordination

Mr. Gilbert Schroeder, a 1980 graduate of Free Lutheran Seminary, was ordained into the holy ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ at Word of Life Lutheran Church in Cleveland, Ohio, on Sunday, Nov. 16. Rev. Richard Snipstead, president of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations, spoke at the afternoon service and officiated at the ordination.

Pastor Schroeder is to serve the rural parish (Norman, Beaver Creek and Scandia) at Tioga, N. Dak. Our prayers are for God's rich blessings on Gilbert and his family. We rejoice that Christ has sent forth another shepherd to labor among souls in our Association.

Emerson Anderson
Lay pastor, Word of Life Lutheran



90-year-old honored at Zumbrota

A beautiful, sunny October was the setting at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church in Zumbrota, Minn., when Harold Biorn celebrated his 90th birthday. The children of Mr. and Mrs. Biorn had arranged an enjoyable program which was highlighted by Harold sharing stories about his childhood as a pastor's son and about his 47 years as a rural mail carrier.

Many friends and relatives gathered to extend greetings to Mr. Biorn. He is the son of the late Rev. and Mrs. L. M. Biorn. A maternal uncle, Rev. Nils Brandt, is reputed to have been the first Lutheran pastor from Norway to serve congregations west of the Mississippi River.

The honored guest, right, and his wife, Laura, are shown with Pastor John DeBoer, former pastor at Our Saviour's.

His temporary address will be Chaplain (Captain) Timothy K. Skramstad, Office of the Post Chaplain, Fort George G. Meade, Maryland 20755. Telephone: 301-677-6704.

Chaplain Skramstad's wife is Evonne and the couple has two children, Katie, age four, and Nathan, six months. The family requests much prayer as this opportunity is assumed that souls may be reached for Christ through this ministry.

From here and there

Bagley, Minn.—A Norwegian service was held at Grace Lutheran Church, Rev. Mauritz Lundeen, pastor, on Dec. 7, at 2:30 p.m. Pastor Joseph Aarhus brought the message. A supper of Scandinavian food was served after the service.

Thief River Falls, Minn.—At the New Year's Eve watch night service at Our Saviour's Lutheran, the film "Stolen Watermelon" was shown. A second film, "Flying High," was also shown.

Ferndale, Wash.—At the Mission Society meeting on Nov. 9, a potluck

supper was served. Evangelist Kenneth Pentti was a special guest. He was at Triumph Lutheran for special meetings at the time.

Stacy, Minn.—At Sunnyside Lutheran on Christmas Day, the cantata "The Prince of Bethlehem" was presented by the Senior Choir.

Minnewaukan, N. Dak.—Pastor Timothy K. Skramstad spoke on the Daily Meditation radio broadcast over KGCA, Rugby, from Dec. 22-28.

Roseau, Minn.—The Junior Youth Fellowship, at its Dec. 20 meeting, carolled at the Children's Home, Sheltering Oaks and Eventide before return-

ing to the church in Roseau for lunch and a gift exchange.

Badger, Minn.—A parish open house was held at the home of Lay Pastor and Mrs. Gustav Nordvall, Minnesota Hill, on Dec. 27. The couple announced their location as being just "south of the border" (one-half mile).

Minneapolis, Minn.—The John W. Peterson cantata, "Love Transcending," was given by the Medicine Lake Lutheran Alleluia Choir on Sunday evening, Dec. 7. The Sunday School program on the 21st was entitled "The Colors of Christmas."

CHURCH-WORLD NEWS

HYATT VOICES NEUTRALITY ABOUT EFFORTS TO MAKE HIM SYNOD HEAD

St. Louis—(LC)—Gerhardt Hyatt says he neither encourages nor discourages efforts of an ad hoc "Search for a Servant Committee" supporting him as a candidate for president of the 2.7-million-member Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

Hyatt was U.S. Army chief of chaplains from 1971-75. Since 1976, he has been president of the LCMS college in St. Paul, and, since 1979, director of the LCMS "Forward in Remembrance" \$40-million fund drive for missions and higher education.

Last September, LCMS President J.A.O. Preus announced he would not seek a fourth four-year term at the LCMS convention next July.

Referring to the LCMS presidency, Hyatt said in a telephone interview that "nobody should seek it and nobody should turn it down." In general, he added, "grassroots" efforts on behalf of possible candidates are acceptable.

The five LCMS pastors who receive

the most presidential nominations from parishes before next year's deadline become the candidates if they indicate willingness to serve if elected. "I have never said 'no' to anything my church or my country has asked of me," Hyatt says in the brochure.

'LIFE OF BRIAN' BAN IS LIFTED IN NORWAY; CHRISTIANS PROTEST

Oslo—(LC)—A ban of the film "The Life of Brian" has been lifted by censors here, and Christian groups critical of the move are not happy. The movie, made by the British comedy group Monty Python and set in New Testament times, was banned as blasphemous last January by the Norwegian Board of Censors.

The film is now allowed to be seen by people over 18 as a result of editing that adds a text asserting that "Brian" should not be identified with Jesus Christ. A few passages of English dialogue in the film are not rendered into Norwegian.

Christian groups are protesting the movie, even with the changes. They

complain that the censors seem to think that Christian viewers are less able than others to understand the English dialogue. They say that parts of the film they found offensive before, such as a crucifixion scene, are just as offensive now.

Commenting on the film, Lars Fitjar, cinema critic of the Christian daily *Vaart Land*, compared its offensiveness to a hypothetical comic movie about the Jewish Holocaust. How would people react, he asked, if someone made a film in which people were singing "look at the bright side of life," while being gassed in the showers of Auschwitz?

Norway is mostly Lutheran.

When the film was released in the United States mid-1979, Lutheran film critic Robert E. A. Lee called it "crude and rude mockery, colossal bad taste, profane parody . . . grossly offensive to those who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior." He added that it "demeaned" Christianity by "overt and perverse sacrilege."

WORLD RELIEF HAS MAJOR ROLE IN U. N. RESETTLEMENT PROGRAM

WHEATON (EWNS)—World Relief, the international relief and self-

Thy Kingdom Come

A SOLID ROCK

"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and forever" (Hebrews 13:8).

As a great rock stands in the middle of a waterfall, so Jesus stands in the midst of humanity, mighty to save. As the sun rises over the earth every day, with no demand except to be permitted to give light, warmth, and life, so the grace of Jesus Christ is new upon us each day. Outside of Him everything is night and death; in Him is light and life; in Him we find the meaning and goal of life—and only in Him! No one can understand the divine miracle that we were chosen in Him before the foundation of the world. Nevertheless it is this fact that makes salvation so unshakable, and so entirely of grace.

That which was ruined by Adam is created again in Christ. He is the Spirit that gives life, the eternal life, and He gives it to all those of the race of Adam who can be gathered out and who believe on His name. Where Adam planted the seed of death, there Christ plants the seed of life; and he who with full confidence surrenders to Him shall never die.

Let everything else fail and be destroyed. This is a solid Rock to stand on, this is light in darkness, this is life in the land of death. This is the only safe point of departure for the journey to the kingdom where life never ceases and where the sun never sets. By Him the Lord makes us entirely capable of doing that which is good, and by Him the Lord accomplishes in us what is well pleasing to Him.

"Fear not; I am the first and the last,

and the Living one; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, and I have the keys of death and of Hades" (Rev. 1:17-18).

In Jesus' name
We praise our God on high,
He blesses them who spread abroad
His fame,
And we do His will thereby.
E'er hath the Lord done great things
by His Word,
And still doth bare His arm His
wonders to perform;
Hence we should in every clime
Magnify His name sublime,
Who doth shield us from all harm.

—Ludvig Hope

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help development arm of the National Association of Evangelicals, has a key role in a massive United Nations refugee resettlement program under which 310,000 Kampucheans who fled to neighboring countries will be allowed to return to their home villages.

"We're the only nongovernmental agency involved in the operation," said Andrew Bishop, World Relief Vice President for International Ministries, who recently returned from Washington where he ironed out details of the program with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

Under the four-month long resettlement program, World Relief will provide the means to make the returnees self-sufficient (seeds, plows, fishnets, woodworking tools and family survival kits of household necessities).

"Our effort is in keeping with World Relief's commitment to provide durable solutions to the problems facing refugees," explained World Relief president, Jerry Ballard.

Negotiated by the UNHCR with the Phnom Penh government, the resettlement program is the only relief operation inside Cambodia whose objective is to encourage refugees to resettle in their own country, rather than relocate in the United States or another country. The entire project will cost \$14 million. (December/80)

REACTION MIXED IN NORWAY ON NEW CHURCH-STATE PLAN

Oslo—(LC)—A mixed reaction from Norwegian church leaders has greeted a long-awaited government report that would keep the state church system here intact for at least another 20 years. Some were critical, while others welcomed the government's policy.

The report suggests no changes in the constitutional church-state relationship, but does propose that the (Lutheran) Church of Norway be able to meet in an annual assembly with the main task of working on national church matters.

The assembly, composed of the already existing diocesan councils, plus approximately ten representatives appointed by the government, would be given authority to decide on certain matters such as liturgy.

Bishop Andreas Aarflot, primate of the church, found the report "disturbingly dogmatic." He commented: "I see no future for a state church in Norway if there is no principal reorganizing, giving the church more freedom as a confessional community with final authority in central, internal questions."

As for the proposed annual assembly, Aarflot said he could not see how it would be much different from the present assembly of diocesan councils. "If the assembly is not given more to do than what is mentioned in the report, it will turn out as little more than a forum for ideas and dialogue, meeting now and then," he said.

Einar Førde, the government minister for church and education, said the government sees the need for a representative assembly of the church and thought that the report showed an attempt to meet this need. "To a great extent," he said, "it will be up to the church itself to decide the fate of the annual assembly in the years to come."

In presenting the report he said that the (Labor) government could not "comply with the most radical demands from the church." Stressing that the government does not wish to freeze state-church relationships for all time, he added that the government does not want "to be responsible for breaking a relationship which seems to have broad support in the population."

The leaders of two voluntary organizations within the church said that they see no need for a separation of church and state at this time. Gunnar Prestegaard, head of the Norwegian Lutheran Inner Mission, and Birger Breivik, head of Norwegian Lutheran Mission, said that the state church is a handy framework for their organizations as long as most Church of Norway pastors are loyal to the Bible and the Lutheran confessional writings.

Contrary views came from the past and current chairmen of the church's national council. Per Voksø, who headed the council from 1970 to 1978, said the report represents "no historic milestone for the church. It is a step forward, but only a small one." In addition to questions about the authority of the proposed assembly, he also saw the question: "What will be the eco-

nomic resources put at the disposal of the church?"

The current chairman, Ludvig J. Bakkevig, found it wrong in principle that a confessional community be governed by a political unit. He saw reasonable reforms as an absolute requirement for keeping the church together, and predicted that separation of church and state would come.

The report is to be debated by the parliament beginning this month.

CONSTITUTIONS DESIRED

The Library Committee of the Board of Trustees of the Association Schools is desirous of obtaining copies of the constitutions of the congregations affiliated with the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Pastors or secretaries of congregations are asked to deliver or send such copies to Mr. Anker Harbo, 3110 E. Medicine Lake Blvd., Minneapolis, Minn., 55441. They will become part of permanent archives.

Thank you for cooperating.

Bismarck hosts youth

Over 50 youth from four states converged on North Dakota's capital city of Bismarck for the Luther League rally hosted there October 25th. Pastor Michael Brandt, Amery, Wis., and the *Praise* Gospel team from our Bible school challenged us to live for Christ.

Representation from churches in five western North Dakota cities, Culbertson, Mont., Faith, S. Dak., and *Praise* from AFLBS met that evening for the climax of our fellowship, with Pastor Brandt preaching. He urged us to *learn of, lean on, and look to Christ*.

His morning Bible study focused on "Love for Jesus." "We can only have love for Jesus," he emphasized, "if we see our need of Jesus."

That afternoon the group toured a local TV and radio station and also viewed C. M. Russel art works worth 4.5 million dollars.

Thank you to Pastor Brandt and *Praise* for their sacrifices in coming to share their love for Christ and in drawing us to Jesus.

—Corr.

The Christian's Holding Pattern

by Dr. D. A. Portwood
Geneva, Nebraska

After the baptism of Jesus, at the beginning of His ministry, He didn't go right out and preach, but went off into the desert for a period of solitude and meditation. It was then that He clarified His mission by rejecting the alternatives the Tempter placed before Him.

Similarly, Paul after his conversion didn't go right out to preach, but "immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia" (Galatians 1). Some 17 years passed (Gal. 1:18, 2:1) before he launched out upon the missionary activity that helped spread the church around the world. (See Ed. note.)

These two, and many others, have needed time for self-examination and maybe new orientation to new directions. Such time could be called *The Christian's Holding Pattern*. Sometimes you and I fall ill or become the victims of fatigue or of a nervous breakdown, the result of not pacing ourselves properly or of having too many directions to go (or no clear direction at all). God tells us to pause, to rest, to take stock of ourselves. This is our holding pattern. Or we may be plunged into grief and sidelined from the business of making important decisions (for up to a year, if possible).

Sometimes young people find themselves in a holding pattern as the result of uncertainty about their future. It may come during high school or in college. They seem to drift, to make no progress; but they have to have time to scout around and find the place to make the right landing in regard to their life's decisions. Adults know such periods, also. For them, the holding pattern seems to be one or more plateaus—periods when they aren't falling backwards, exactly, but they aren't

making noteworthy progress either; they just stand still.

At such times our faith underscores certain truths for us:

1. *Holding patterns often are necessary and useful.* Yes, even those we wouldn't have chosen for ourselves! Where can we examine ourselves to see how we failed to regulate our lives, or to obey God, thus falling victims to fatigue? Jesus knew when to stop and rest. He knew and taught that God in the beginning intended for men to rest regularly and thus instituted the weekly Sabbath. What can we learn from this for our future life's course?

2. *Don't panic or prematurely end the holding pattern.* The pilot circling the airport has to wait for the message from the tower before he can land. He can do nothing to speed up that clearance; he has to wait, and so do his passengers, no matter what urgent business awaits them on the ground. We, likewise, can't force God to end our holding pattern for us. Some things have to be given time to heal.

In the parable of the Prodigal Son, the father could do absolutely nothing but wait out the agonizing time until his son was ready to come home. But when the lad did return, the father joyously welcomed him back to the home base. He had to "hold" till his son was ready to make his own landing.

3. *Holding patterns can be used to gain strength as well as new directions.* Consider Christ, who fasted for 40 days and was hungry afterward. After His fast and after withstanding the Tempter He had to gain strength before launching out anew. Consider our own similar situations when we face convalescence.

4. *In holding patterns we can rediscover God.* Consider Paul. Consider Elijah, who fled to the desert to battle with depression after he bested the priests of Baal on Mount Carmel. Consider our own reasons for holding religious retreats. John the Baptist, too, used his time of solitude in the desert to prepare to summon his contemporaries to repentance and to new decisions.

Some holding patterns are forced upon us. Others we can choose. That's largely what prayer and meditation are all about. But however they come to us, holding patterns are a necessary part of our ongoing life with Jesus Christ.

(Ed. note: An inadvertency here. Paul had completed his first missionary journey before Gal. 2:1. Seventeen years had elapsed since his conversion.)

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