

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

March 2, 1982



RNS Photo

AT THE MASTER'S FEET

Rev. Bruce Dalager



JESUS BECAME A CURSE

"Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us—for it is written, 'Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree'—in order that Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:13, 14).

Because of sin the entire human race as well as the world in which we live was under a curse. Law had been broken; guilt resulted. The curse of the Law was the pronouncement of guilt and the corresponding punishment which was upon those who had failed to do what the Law demanded. In God's eyes the lawbreaker is accountable.

In our first father, Adam, we all

became guilty. "God has shut up all (men) in disobedience" (Romans 11:32). But the last part of this same verse tells us this was done so "that He might show mercy to all."

To be accursed is the worst experience anyone can have. The fate of the rich man in the story related in Luke 16 gives us some idea of what is involved in being accursed, separated from God. For him there was no good. No doubt, words cannot express nor can our mortal minds begin to comprehend the horrors and anguish that must exist where God and His grace are not present. A criminal condemned feels hopelessness and frustration. How much more intense those feelings must be for the one who senses the condemnation of God.

Jesus became a curse. If man, who has sinned has lived outside of fellowship with God and deserves condemnation, suffers under the wrath of God, the anguish of soul suffered by the spotless One when He became accursed was immeasurable. He who knew no sin became sin. The curse which He did not deserve He willingly assumed. Death, which only sinners should experience, He endured. The very God who had declared, in Deuteronomy 21:23, "he who is hanged (on a tree) is accursed of God," was Himself in the person of Jesus Christ hanged on a tree.

The physical suffering, though intense, was not the hardest to endure. When the Son, who had from eternity experienced perfect, unbroken union with the Father, cried out, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken me?"

the devastating loneliness He felt is manifested.

He did it for us. By now we should sit with bowed heads and tear-filled eyes, having observed such a cruel and undeserved death. But, when we know that the sacrifice was made for *our* sake, how can we respond? What love was shown! What mercy was at work! "God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). The words of Isaac Watts express an appropriate response:

"Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a tribute far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all."

As Paul wrote in our text, Jesus redeemed us from the curse "so that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith." We, who are the sinners, who deserve the curse, who continually fall short of the glory of God, are by the sacrifice of Christ made the recipients of God's Spirit when we are brought to faith. The judgment of condemnation upon us is overturned in the court of heaven and we become the temple of the Holy Spirit. Then, empowered by the Spirit to daily claim the merits of Christ and to seek God's mercy through Him, we begin to serve God from the heart.

God, we thank Thee for Thine endless mercy. For the wounds of Jesus we praise Thee. In them we seek refuge. By them we are comforted. Through them we offer our service. Amen.✠

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PONTIUS PILATE



by Pastor
Larry Haagenson
Newfolden, Minn.

We, as a Christian Church, vocalize our faith in our worship services by confessing the "Apostles' Creed." As we do so, we are constantly reminded of Pilate by the words, "suffered under Pontius Pilate." This one thing makes Pilate's life and reign stand out. Our Savior suffered at his hands. Even pagan historians mention Pilate only in connection with his authorization of the death of Jesus.

" 'Are you the King of the Jews?' . . . Jesus answered, 'It is as you say. . . . But My Kingdom is not of this world. If My Kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting that I might not be delivered up to the Jews.' "

Pilate's Office

Before appearing on the Judean political stage, Pilate was an unknown personality. It was in 26 A.D., that Tiberius, ruler of the Roman empire, appointed him as the fifth procurator (or governor) over Judea.

Pilate's authority over all people in this area was virtually absolute. He had superiors to answer to, but the people were given little or no freedom under the system. The Jews were given a certain degree of liberty in that the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem functioned, but death sentences could not be carried out until they were confirmed by the Roman procurator. Pilate had full power over life and death and could reverse a capital sentence passed by the Sanhedrin.

He also controlled the Jewish religious system. It was in his power to appoint the high priest and to control the Temple and its funds. Even the vestments of the high priest were in his custody and were released only for festivals.

This kind of domination outraged the Jewish people, but they were quite helpless. The only hope of ending such political and religious oppression was for a Messiah to come who would lead them in a political revolt. But God's plan was different! He sent Jesus into the world to die as a "ransom for many." This is how the captive to sin found freedom and still does today.

Character of Pilate

History leaves us with the impression that Pilate was a ruthless ruler. He was strongly biased against the Jewish people and killed many with little or no cause to do so. At one point he massacred a group of Samaritans, an act for which he was finally removed from office.

The New Testament portrays Pilate as cynical and skeptical, a Roman who lacked the traditional Roman virtues of

honor, justice and integrity.

J. G. Vos aptly points out the fact that the weaknesses and faults of Pilate were those of a sinful, unredeemed or "natural" man, and that his position in life exposed him to great temptations, and made it possible for him to yield without being called to account over a period of several years.

The Trial

As we have already stated, the connection between Pontius Pilate and the trial and death of Jesus go hand in hand.

The Jewish Sanhedrin tried Jesus first, on the charge that He was a blasphemer who "made Himself out to be the Son of God." Mark 14:64 tells us that they found Him to be guilty." . . . And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death." Under normal conditions the Jews would have put Jesus to death themselves, then and there. But they had to have Pilate's approval to execute the death penalty. Humanly speaking, the life of Jesus was in his hands.

"Pilate had full power over life and death. . . ."

Spearheaded by the chief priests, Scribes and Pharisees, a riotous mob demanded that Pilate execute Jesus, or give them the authority to do so. As the Jews said, in John 18:31, "We are not permitted to put any one to death."

Before Pilate handed a verdict to the people, he carried out a low-key interrogation of Jesus. Pilate put the question to Him; "Are you King of the Jews?" Fearlessly Jesus answered his question, admitting that Pilate's words were true. "It is as you say . . . But My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would be fighting that I might not be delivered up to the Jews." Then He remained silent concerning all of the other charges the chief priests and elders brought against Him (Matthew 27:12). "As a lamb led to slaughter and a sheep that is silent before its shearers, so He opened not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

PILATE . . .

The Ruling Roman was quite amazed since Jesus didn't even attempt to ward off any of the unfounded accusations. Pilate asked, "Do you not hear how many things they testify against You?" Jesus didn't defend himself but turned the table and put Pilate on a spiritual trial. He answered, "I have been born and came into the world for this very purpose, to bear witness to the truth." Pilate was being given an opportunity to accept from Jesus Christ the gift of faith which would enable him to receive Jesus as Savior and Lord.

Jesus came into the world to establish a kingdom of grace and truth. When one repents and believes the truth, he is saved.

"And immediately he turned his back on Jesus and walked out."

Pilate flew the true colors of his heart through his response to Jesus. Like a cynic, he asked one more question but never stopped to receive an answer. His question is typical of smug intellectuals . . . "What is truth?" And immediately he turned his back on Jesus and walked out. The answer to that question would have brought him face to face with the *Truth*. In John 14:6, Jesus said, "I am the Way, and the *Truth*, and the Life. No man comes to the Father but by Me." John 3:21 speaks rather accurately of this type of person. "Everyone who does evil hates the light (Jesus) and does not come to the light (Jesus), lest his deeds should be exposed." It is uncomfortable to be faced with one's own sins and the unbelieving heart wants nothing to do with Jesus.

Evading the truth, leaving the praetorium, and rejecting eternal life, the Governor, Pontius Pilate, went back out to the milling multitudes. His announcement was, "I find no fault in Him." Pilate's statement was truthful, but his spineless action cancelled it out. He had the power to make a decision based on the evidence and thus overrule the Jewish Sanhedrin; but out of fear of the Jewish people, Pilate

would not administer justice.

Pilate believed Jesus was innocent but he lacked the courage to do anything. He tried several methods of wiggling out of the responsibility of freeing Jesus.

First he attempted to thrust the decision upon the Jews by means of the Barabbas scheme. It was a custom for the Jews to release one criminal every year at the Passover. This year the *best* and *worst* were put before them from which to choose. The overwhelming choice was Barabbas.

In a final attempt to satisfy the bloodthirsty mob without putting his life on the line, he took Jesus and had Him scourged. The Roman soldiers whipped Jesus on the bare back until the blood oozed through the torn flesh. The soldiers then placed a crown of thorns upon His head and arrayed Him

in a purple robe. Hoping to pacify the Jews, Pilate brought Jesus out in a mocking fashion and presented the weak and haggard man as "King of the Jews." "Behold the man" was Pilate's introduction. He continued, "I have reduced your professing king to a frail, helpless excuse of a man" (author's paraphrase).

No sympathy was aroused in the adamant mob. Their response was the same as before, but with more fervor. The city walls echoed, "Crucify Him! crucify Him!"

Attempting to claim neutrality, Pilate replied, "Take Him yourselves, and crucify Him, for I find no guilt in Him" (John 19:6). But no declaration or hand washing could remove Pilate's responsibility in executing justice. It has been said that a judge must mete out justice whether the people throw

George Hinke

JESUS BEFORE PILATE



“... what happened to Pilate is of little consequence. What happened under his authority is of eternal importance.”

mud or bouquets.

Poor Pilate became afraid again. The Jews evidently threatened to turn Pilate over to the Caesar on false charges or charges that would condemn him. They said, “If you release this Man, you are no friend of Caesar; every one who makes himself out to be a king opposes Caesar.”

Pilate's cowardice compelled him to give the Jews what they wanted. The plan of God could not be thwarted. Jesus was the lamb who was slain before the foundations of the world. Nothing could prevent Jesus from going to the cross. Jesus sets the record straight for us in His words to Pilate: “You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above” (John 19:11). Pilate was merely a tool used in the hand of God to move His lamb to the cross of Calvary. Pilate was no more guilty than those who had already condemned Jesus in their hearts.

Nevertheless, Pontius Pilate was responsible for his actions. He seems to have rejected Christ, His forgiveness and cleansing. History indicates that Pilate's life came to a tragic end. Eusebius preserves a report of Greek historians that Pilate was forced to commit suicide during the reign of Gaius.

But what happened to Pilate is of little consequence. What happened under his authority is of eternal importance. Let us always thank God that He is in control and that because He is sovereign He could use a despotic ruler to accomplish His eternal will. †



by Pastor Raynard Huglen
Neufolden, Minn.

This sermon is about Simon Peter, one of the most beloved of New Testament men. There are several reasons for that. He was so human; he was so well-intentioned; and he shows us the way back to fellowship with the Lord, and that, after all, is what Christianity is all about.

Called to be a Disciple

His brother Andrew heard Jesus speak first. He was convinced he had heard the very Messiah and so he went and told his brother Simon. We've

“The name meant a rock. No doubt Peter came to wonder why the Lord gave him that name.”

liked that, that he brought his brother to the Lord. Preachers have given sermons about that, how it is a wonderful thing if one wins his own brother or sister or parent for Christ.

Jesus gave Simon a new name. He called him Cephas (Heb.) or Peter (Gr.). The name meant a rock. No doubt Peter came to wonder why the Lord gave him that name. No doubt the disciples did also, but later on they came to see that it was an appropriate name. But that's getting ahead of the story.

PETER

Peter came to the forefront among the Twelve. It's always that way, someone becomes a spokesman for a group. Peter was that man. And he was a venturer, one who dared. It was he who stepped over the side of the boat and walked on water. He was a member of the inner core of the disciples. He joined James and John on the Mount of Transfiguration with Jesus and those three were a stone's throw from their Lord in Gethsemane when He wrestled with the Father's will.

Yes, and he was the unwitting tool of Satan when he tried to dissuade Jesus from travelling what he perceived as a dead-end road to Jerusalem.

The Denials

Some people are destined to be remembered for what went wrong in their lives. Douglas Corrigan is remembered for making a flight to Dublin, Ireland, when he thought he was heading for Los Angeles, in 1937. Mickey Own isn't remembered nearly as much for 13 Big League baseball seasons as he is for dropping a third strike in the 1941 World Series. And Peter is remembered for his three denials of Jesus and so he has become the symbol of human weakness and of impulsive man. But there is more to be said of that later.

For now, let us give him credit for wanting to follow Jesus after His arrest. Only he and John did so, but it brought Peter into a situation he couldn't handle. And this was the man who had boasted that though all forsake Jesus, he wouldn't. Be careful, Peter.

As he hung around the courtyard where the soldiers and others were gathered it was quite evident that he was an outsider. Perhaps he is a companion of the Nazarene? He must be a Galileean. Jesus was on trial and in all likelihood headed for execution. Here is your chance, Peter, to be strong and courageous.

Two Men

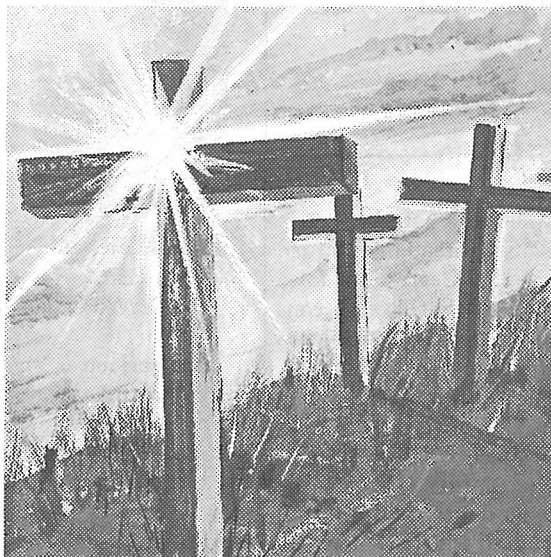
It has been said that characters make the story. And that is certainly true in the story of the suffering and death of Jesus. One Lutheran pastor entitled his book of Lenten sermons GOD IN THE HANDS OF MAN.

This Ambassador issue is featuring two figures from the Passion of our Lord. One is Pontius Pilate. The other is Peter.

You have a choice

How can any one refuse Christ's mercy? Do not make the fatal mistake of thinking that you can wash your hands of Christ, as Pilate did. You cannot push Jesus aside as easily as that. Do not lull yourself into the soul-destroying error of thinking that you can escape making a decision for or against Christ. You cannot remain neutral before the suffering Savior. You either damn yourself with the "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" or you bow before Him to say, "My Lord, my God, my Savior!"

Walter A. Maier, Sr.



PETER . . .

But Peter, surveying the situation, played dumb. "I am not one of His followers. I don't *even know* Him!" What abject denial, what failure!

Then the cock crowed a third time and Jesus turned and looked at His disciple. It wasn't an "I-told-you-so" look, but one of sorrow and compassion. Then the world crashed in upon Peter and sobs of remorse shook his body. Oh, those were blessed tears for they were also tears of repentance. Peter wasn't a hard man, but one who in weakness and self-dependence had failed the Lord.

Let us remember this difference be-

"Then the world crashed in upon Peter and sobs of remorse shook his body."

tween Judas and Peter. Judas turned away from Jesus after his deceit. Peter turned *to* Him. Therefore, at the resurrection Jesus sent special word to His disciple. At the lakeshore on the post-resurrection morning, Jesus restored Peter to his apostleship. He preached

the sermon on Pentecost. History tells us Peter was faithful and steadfast unto his martyr's death. Tradition tells us that when he was about to be crucified he requested that he hang upside down because he wasn't worthy to hang in the upright position of his Lord. Hence the name, "Peter's cross." But a mother can name her son Peter because he represents man forgiven and restored.

Our Denials

Every Christian must bow his head in shame for there have been times of faithlessness. "I don't want to be identified with Jesus; I won't be one of the group or gang if I am." I suppose that's the big reason for our denials. We want to protect ourselves. There's that big "I" again.

There may be a certain cost in identifying with Jesus. There could be some unpleasantness. A person could lose a job or the chance for a promotion. He could miss the opportunity to belong to a certain clique.

But there is a cost in *denying* Jesus, too. We must think about that also. We might place ourselves with His ene-

mies and thus come to no good end.

Peter shows us the way back from the pit of defeat. It is to be found in his penitence. No one should take comfort in the fact of Peter's denial, as though he need not take his discipleship seriously. It is dangerous to be careless. We are to be vigilant and watchful. But if one fails out of weakness, there can be a return and the believer can go on to victories and become a faithful disciple and witness as Peter was.

Hear these words from the Apostle, written long after: "Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world" (1 Peter 5:8-9).

There can be a return for any who have denied their Lord, as Peter did, if there is the humility of heart which Peter had. †

"I suppose that's the big reason for our denials. We want to protect ourselves."

Charlotte Maria Tucker

(Known as a writer by the initials
"A.L.O.E." (A Lady of England)

*Missionary to India at Her Own
Charges (1875-1893)*

The boys and girls who lived before you came on the scene, many of them now men and women, used to know the initials at the head of this chapter very well indeed. they appeared on the title-pages of interesting books for young people, and "A.L.O.E." was known and loved by thousands of readers. She was an English lady, born in 1821, but she died in Amritsar, India, in December, 1893. How did this writer of captivating stories, which made her famous, come to finish her life in that far-off land?

It was when she was 54 that Miss Tucker decided to become a missionary, and to go to India. It was love that constrained her, and she was so anxious to go that she went at her own expense. Before going out she studied Urdu, one of the various tongues spoken in the country. Almost as soon as she arrived upon her chosen field, she turned her thoughts towards the special work of writing stories for the natives. This certainly was an original plan, and it proved to be a very helpful one indeed. Her stories were often parables, by which she taught truth in a fascinating fashion. You know that the Orientals are, if possible, even more fond of stories, particularly parables with picturesque settings, than we are in this country. You can imagine how the stories of such a writer as A.L.O.E. would be enjoyed. The wonderful part of it was, that she found it easy to enter her feelings and thoughts of the people, and to adapt her stories to their language and their needs.

A series of stories explaining Jesus' parables was printed in tract form so that the poorest could buy them.

Going to Batala Miss Tucker worked among the Mohammedans, the hardest class to reach. She went about among

the zenanas—or apartments where the women were shut up—and on gaining admittance would sit down gracefully upon the floor, as if she were one of the women used to such a thing, and would begin by telling a story or showing a picture. Then she would go on to teach some precious lesson of truth to the curious listeners.

The boys of the high school interested this missionary very much, and she did a great deal for them. For a while she lived in the school building, once a palace.

The Sweeper class is the lowest caste in India. (Ed.—this situation may not exist in India today). They are treated as if they had no souls at all. But Miss Tucker was greatly interested in these poor outcasts. She showed by her loving care that she not only believed that they had souls, but that she cared for them and wished to help them.

For 18 years this heroic missionary gave her life, at its sunset time, to the

women of India, and at 72 laid down the burden.

Think how long the work of the hands may live after the hands are folded. The busy pen which a loving heart kept moving, has left its traces on both sides of the sea. The fair-faced and the dark-faced boys and girls have bent above the pages which still keep alive the lovely memory of "A Lady of England." †

Julia H. Johnston,
*Missionary Heroes Every Boy
and Girl Should Know,*
Fleming H. Revell Company

OUR MEMORY VERSE

"So even to old age and
gray hairs, O God, do not for-
sake me, till I proclaim Thy
might to all the generations
to come" (Psalm 71;18).



Life's Mirror

Give to the world the
best that you have,
And the best will
come back to you.
Give love, and love to
your heart will flow,
And strength in your
utmost need.
Have faith, and a score
of hearts will show
Their faith in your
work and deed.

Madeline Bridges

I Will BUILD My Church

by Pete Unseth, Bismarck, N. Dak.

Every Sunday now, my church's bulletin reminds us, "The church is never a place, but always a believing assembly." This simple truth revolutionized my concept of what a church is.

Like most Americans, for many years I had only a vague idea what a church really was. I had lost sight of the meanings of the word "church." In the New Testament, the word we translate as "church" had two meanings. The first meaning is *the world-wide Body of Christ*, all true believers in any denomination. This is the meaning of the word "church" in verses like Matt. 16:18, "I will build MY church," and Eph. 5:23, "Christ is the head of the church, His body." When we speak of the church around the world, this is the meaning of "church."

The second meaning is one we use more commonly. This is that of a *congregation*, a local body of believers serving and worshipping Christ together. This is the meaning of the word in verses like I Thess. 1:1, where Paul addresses his letter "to the church of the Thessalonians." This is the way we use "church" when we say "First

Lutheran Church will temporarily be meeting in the Town Hall because of the fire."

In America today, we have third and fourth meanings for church. One is a *denomination* or group of congregations, such as The American Lutheran Church. Size-wise, this fits in between the world-wide Body of Christ and a local congregation.

The other new meaning, the fourth meaning of the word church is a *building* for Christian meetings. Though the New Testament never makes a reference to a building for such purposes, other than the temple, we have found it convenient to construct such buildings. We call them "churches." This gives us a name for such buildings, so we can talk about cleaning the church or painting the church. For too many years, this was always the meaning uppermost in my mind.

My failure to keep these four different meanings distinct led to confusion in my thinking regarding my church. I confused the building with the congregation and totally ignored the concept of the world-wide Body of Christ. To

What is my church?

me a church was not people, but four walls, a roof, and, of course, a steeple. As a result, I confused the fact that I belonged to the church with the fact that the folding chairs and the hymnals also belonged to the church.

Because I thought of my church as only an inanimate object, I took my membership very lightly. I did not see the other members of my church as being important in my spiritual life. They were my neighbors and friends, but little more. I saw no reason to involve myself in their needs, forgetting all about Jesus' command to "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep." I felt no responsibility to involve myself with them, neither did I know how to reach out to those in my congregation for help and encouragement.

But, thank God, through teachers, friends, study of the Bible, and others

in my church, I now have a clearer understanding of what my church is. A revolution has occurred within me and in my relationship to my fellow church members. I finally understand that my church is not the building, but the congregation. My church is people.

As a member of the church, part of the congregation, I not only have happy privileges, I also have responsibilities. Now that I have a better understanding of what my church is or rather *who* my church is, I can better fulfill my responsibilities as being toward my brothers and sisters, my fellow church members, rather than toward a building. I can participate in my church joyfully.

Now, when I think of my relationship to my church, I do not merely think of what I can get out of it, or what is the least that I can get by with. Now I can think of the things that I can do for those in my church. This means much, much more than money in the offering. It means encouraging Craig when he has a hard time singing the right part in the choir. It means taking some time with Mary's children since they have no father at home. It means spending time listening to Ken when he is facing some tough decisions about his career. It means praying regularly for the pastor. It means giving Bob and Marian a ride to church, even when they make me late.

But it is not merely a giving relationship, it is a two-way street. I also receive; in fact, I receive a lot more than I give. When I was facing frustrations with my professor, afraid that he would not let me graduate, I was able to confide in my fellow choir members and ask them to pray. When I was leaving town for a while, people encouraged me and sent letters and tapes of the pastor's sermons.

[Continued on page 10]

"Because I thought of my church as only an inanimate object, I took my membership very lightly."

editorials

SHADES OF ROME

The Roman Empire fell because of the moral decay which rotted away the fiber of the society. Sometimes some Americans wonder if the forces of corruption are not so strong in the U.S. today but that the fall of our society and government couldn't take place in the lifetime of some who are living now. There certainly are evidences of decline, in spite of an unprecedented hearing for the Gospel of Christ.

One of the evidences of decline is the trend today toward looking to gambling as a sure-fire means of solving economic problems. This is being done both on behalf of charities and government revenue.

First, as to raising money for charitable causes. The churches of North Dakota must have been sleeping when they permitted the State Legislature to pass a law authorizing blackjack for charity. Such action one could see taking place in Nevada or New Jersey or New York, but not North Dakota, where the Lutheran Church is such a powerful force. The elephant has his trunk in the tent now and won't be content until he gets all the way in.

Where there is legalized gambling unsavory elements move in. There will be pressure for more and more outlets, more and more kinds of games. Is this the way to finance worthy causes? They don't look so worthy after they soil themselves with gambling money.

We think of the sign we saw in the old Bethany Lutheran Church in Morris, Minn., long ago. "The Liquor Traffic Would Destroy the Church if it Could; The Church Could Destroy the Liquor Traffic if it Would." The churches of North Dakota can send the blackjack houses, tip jars, etc., packing if they want to.

Second, using gambling as a means to finance state government, or any level of government. Nevada has long depended on gambling revenues to operate. Everything there is tainted by it. New Jersey is into it, New York has a lottery, and perhaps other states. Minnesota is flirting with the idea of horserace betting and a lottery. Again, the churches of Minnesota can put an end to such talk if they want to. We need a man such as Governor Luther Youngdahl, who in the 1940s threw out the slot machines. We need moral leadership of that kind again.

Everyone would like to have lower taxes, but we fear for our society, in addition to all the other ills which beset it, when it looks to games of chance to exist. That is no foundation on which to live. The Bible pictures the true way as being a life of industry, responsibility and caring. Gambling is the desire to get something for nothing and whenever one

"wins" it is at the expense of others. No gainful work has been exchanged for what is received.

Gambling is very common, even where it must be underground. Like drinking, it will never be eradicated. A billion dollars or so was wagered on the recent Super Bowl football game in Detroit. Some people will bet on anything that moves, flies or sinks. If all that money is available for wagering, there must be money available for taxes and charities. Some people who don't pay taxes, the rich and the poor, have money for gambling. Figure that one out.

WERE YOU BAPTIZED?

G. H. Gerberding, in his wonderful book, *The Way of Salvation in the Lutheran Church*, writes, "Many (parents) never say a word to their children about their baptism. Many children even grow up and know not whether they are baptized or not. This is certainly un-Scriptural and un-Lutheran. 'Know ye not,' says Paul, as if he said, have you forgotten it? 'that as many of us as have been baptized into Christ have been baptized into His death?'"

Isn't there a danger that we in our church could be guilty of this? We have such a concern that no one take anything for granted, that there must be a personal and present relationship to Jesus. And it is right that we so think. But Christian parents should tell their children about their baptism, as Dr. Gerberding indicates, and tell them they are God's children. Frequent admonitions to them to love Jesus and to hate sin and to confess it to Jesus when they have sinned, are in order.

The little ones can grow up in this fellowship and relationship. Where does it say in the Bible that they must go away into sin and then come back? No, they can remain as God's children, as they grow older coming into a mature faith, which is the goal of any Christian at whatever age.

Now, if a Christian parent realizes that his child somewhere along the line has fallen from his baptismal covenant, that is a different matter and this often happens. It can become evident that a child is sinning and doesn't seek forgiveness. A barrier has come up between the child and the Lord. Nor is there the same happy and free spirit in the home because of this. Then there must be prayer for the return of the prodigal and a living witness toward the erring one.

But our point today was really this: Christian parents, bring your little ones up gently in the fear and admonition of the Lord. They were grafted into Him in baptism. Rejoice in that treasure and share the good news with them. ✠

Mark your calender

June 16-20

The 20th Annual Conference of the AFLC, at Dickinson State College, Dickinson, N. Dak.

July 8-11

Leadership School at Association Free Lutheran Bible School, Minneapolis, Minn.

July 12-18

AFLC Family Camp, Galilee Bible Camp, Lake Bronson, Minn.

July 26-Aug. 6

Summer Institute of Theology, Association Free Lutheran Theological Seminary, Minneapolis, Minn.

Aug.

AFLC Family Camp, Association Retreat Center, Osceola, Wis.

Personalities

Pastor Bill Moberg of Ortley, South Dakota, now serving Ortley Lutheran Church, has accepted a call to serve Spencer Creek Lutheran Church in Eugene, Oregon. He will assume his duties there May 1.

With our evangelist youth worker

An evangelist does not take away the need for the local pastor. Rather, he supplements that work. And thus our evangelist-youth worker travels throughout our churches, preaching the Word of God upon the invitation of the local churches, to the salvation of souls and the building up of Christian life. Here are Pastor Kenneth Pentti's coming appointments. Pray for them.

Pukwana, S. Dak.

Pukwana Lutheran Church

Mar. 14-18

Philip Featherstone, pastor

Bemidji, Minn.

Bethany Lutheran Church

Mar. 21-25

R. S. Persson, pastor

Spicer, Minn.

Green Lake Lutheran Church

Apr. 4-8

Dennis Gray, pastor

Brandon, Minn.

Chippewa Lutheran Church

Apr. 18-21

Gordon L. Grage, pastor

ATTENTION Bible Camp leaders

We want to feature the 1982 Bible Camping opportunities in our church in one of our spring issues. Please send the pertinent information to me by May 1. We would like to have your camp included, whether it is a district camp, AFLC-sponsored camp or parish camp. Pictures are welcome.

Write to Editor,

The Lutheran Ambassador

Box 128

Newfolden, Minnesota 56738

NW Minn. WMF rally date announced

The Northwestern Minnesota District WMF Spring Rally will be Saturday, April 17, 1982, at Spruce Free Lutheran Church, east and south of Roseau, Minnesota. The main emphasis will be missions with Pastor and Mrs. Connely Dyrud sharing in the program.

—Mrs. Paul Flaten, sec.

CHURCH . . .

Our common membership in this church expresses our commitment to each other, as individuals and as a group. That means we will not pout and leave the church if something does not go exactly our way. When my church elected to buy a new organ, I shouldered my share of the burden and gave, even though I had not voted for it. If we do not like the choir's choice of songs, or the layout of the new parking lot, or the way the Sunday School is run, we cannot use that as an excuse to leave. As part of our commitment to those in our church, we must lay aside the desires of self and work together for Christ and His glory.

Now, on Sunday mornings, and other times during the week, I go to be *with* my church; no longer do I simply go to my church building. This happy change all started because I started to think of my church as people, not as a building.

What can we DO in '82?

This year marks the 20th Anniversary of our AFLC. These years, we must say, have been years of struggles and blessings. We are thankful for the struggles that reassure us that God's grace is sufficient, and the blessings to encourage us we are in God's will. The question we ask, "What can we DO in '82?" has to be answered by God's people who will continue to pray and give their lives and means to God.

The Coordinating Committee of the AFLC would like to suggest we receive a special 20th Anniversary thank offering. It has been suggested by some that we start an orphanage in India to help many needy children. Also, to use part of this thank offering for the AFLC debt retirement.

We are asking you to pray for God's

leading in your life as an individual and congregations as to what part you will DO in '82 towards these goals, and bring your gift to the Annual Conference in June.

"What Can We DO In '82?"

*Debt Retirement
Orphanage*

"I will bless the Lord at all times: His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make her boast in the Lord: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt His name together" (Ps. 34:1-3).

The Coordinating Committee
Rev. Wendell Johnson

15. Whom did Boaz portray in his strength and wealth? _____
Ruth's desire to glean in the field of Boaz to find grace in his sight represented the longing of the remnant at the end-time to seek after the Lord and to search the Scriptures to find Him in grace.

THOUGHT: To rest in the care of God is to realize the peace of God.

Birthdays of our missionary women and Children under 12. Special times when we can be an encouragement.

Jan. 24—Miss P. Wold
Feb. 24—Mrs. G. Knapp
Apr. 13—Christina Dyrud
Apr. 21—Robert Abel
Apr. 27—Mrs. C. Knapp
May 30—Victoria Dyrud
June 27—Racheal Knapp
July 5—Mrs. J. Abel
July 30—Mrs. D. Abel
Aug. 7—Mrs. C. Dyrud
Sept. 8—Chester Dyrud
Oct. 18—Tamara Abel
Nov. 9—Rebecca Knapp

APRIL FOCUS: CRADLE ROLL and JUNIOR MISSIONS

I trust that enrolling our little ones in Cradle Roll is a very special project in each of our local WMFs. This project seeks to impart spiritual truths to baptised children of the church prior to their Sunday School training. This includes an outreach to the parents with opportunities and helps in nurturing the spiritual lives of their children. Funds given to this project help support the work of Miss Priscilla Wold in Brazil.

Our continued support to Parish Ed. is vital in that this fund supplies Sunday School materials as well as the ability to purchase Portuguese translated materials.

May we be faithful in prayer and in financial support.

—Mrs. Grace Syverson, WMF Pres.

National WMF Treasurer is:
Mrs. Vernon Nelson
P.O. Box 261
Leeds, N. Dak. 58346

God's abundant blessings

Read chapter 2, vs. 1-5.

When Ruth, on the banks of the Jordan, turned her back forever upon the land of Moab and started up a steep, narrow ascent through Judean hills, little did she know what God had in store for her. Because of her wholehearted decision to serve the Lord, He began to accomplish His purpose in and through her.

1. Review chapter 1.

2. Read all of chapter 2. Can you see God's hand of guidance? _____

God has a plan for each life that is truly surrendered to Him. Rom. 8:28.

3. What is strongly emphasized in these Bible passages? Lev. 19:9-10 and Deut. 24:19-21 _____ All believers should remember the obligations laid upon them in the matter of brotherly love.

4. What was significant about her kinsman? _____

5. Why did Naomi hesitate mentioning her kinsman to Ruth? _____

6. Reread Lev. 19:9-10 and Deut. 24:19-21. _____
A great lesson is taught here if we will heed the Master's voice.

7. Do you think it was by accident that Ruth came to Boaz' field? _____

There is nothing that is pure chance in the life of God's people, for the God of the Scriptures is a great God who knows the end from the beginning and who orders all the affairs of our life. Memorize Romans 8:28.

8. Were the harvesters always willing to let them come and glean? _____

Ruth's love for Naomi was sincere and faithful.

9. How do we react when asked to fill lowly positions? Prov. 15:33 _____

Humility is a deep sense of one's own unworthiness in the sight of God and submission to the Divine will, freedom from pride and arrogance.

10. God's love never fails. Jer. 31:3. We should always remember and meditate upon the suffering of our Lord for us, and then we will be persuaded that a love which cost Him so much He will not lightly forget. Could He have so loved us and then left us at last? Heb. 13:5 _____

Ruth Gleaning Under Grace

11. Does 2:4 offer any solution to labor troubles? What an impression the greeting of Boaz must have left on Ruth! Surely there could be no labor troubles in an atmosphere like this. Instead of looking for more for themselves, the workers wished him more, "[The Lord bless thee.]"

12. What does 2:5 indicate regarding Boaz? _____

The overseer of the gleaning couldn't help but acknowledge the humility of Ruth and her diligent work. How the Lord provides if we trust and do His will! A time of testing for the Christian is often an occasion when God brings wonderful calm to the soul. If his mind is "stayed on" the Lord, he will experience His "perfect peace." Is. 26:3 and Rom. 8:28.

13. In what way did Ruth's meeting of Boaz relate to the historical event in Bethlehem? _____

14. What does the name Boaz mean? _____

THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

What is God's Plan with the World—I

Sometimes young people looking at the complexity of the modern world and the seemingly meaningless maze of things are prone to become perplexed and ask, "What is it all about? Is there any key to the explanation of existence? Has God any plan for the world? If so, what is it?" We make answer as follows:

The universe came perfect and beautiful from the hand of its Maker.

In accompaniment to the divine process:

"The morning stars sang together,
And all the sons of God shouted for joy."

The solemnity of the seas, the majesty of the mountains, the beauty of the birds, the loveliness of the lilies were unmarred by any imperfections, and as the crown of creation stood man, fashioned in the likeness of the Divine One Himself, flawless in all his attributes.

"And God saw everything that He had made, and behold it was very good."

But the scene changes. A dark and sinister figure comes before our vision. With alluring lies and fascinating phrases the arch tempter beguiles man into unbelief, pride and disobedience; and a night of anguish settles down upon mankind. Then begins the story of human woe. Fear, shame, envy, murder, lust, disease, war, sorrow, and an endless train of devastating evils, with death in the end, mark the trail of a hapless humanity.

But God did not abandon His creatures. With a Father's anguished heart, He saw the plight of a prodigal race, and in His boundless love He determined, in harmony with the eternal counsels of the Trinity, to offer a way of escape from the terrible consequences of sin which man by his own disobedient action had brought upon himself. And, wonder of wonders! The plan was

for the only begotten Son to come to earth, to take residence in human form, to show men the way back to the Father's house, and at last to give Himself in agonizing suffering and cruel death as a ransom for all mankind.

Long centuries passed while the God of all the world prepared the ground for that sowing which should bring a wondrous and eternal fruitage. With the reins of all the nations in His omnipotent hand He directed the course of development unto the fulness of time when the world was ready for the revelation of its Redeemer.

Then came the sublime event of the ages—the incarnation of God in the Babe in Bethlehem, while angels sang to humble shepherd souls the joyous song of a Savior come to bless the world with hope and peace.

Growing into manhood's estate under the kindly obscurity of a carpenter's home, Jesus entered upon the career of a ministry which centered for all time the eyes of the world upon the land which His holy feet trod—a ministry which changed forever the aspect of human history.

Having paid the price of man's redemption with His own lifeblood, having broken the bonds of death, and being about to ascend to the Father's right hand, He delivered to His disciples the most stupendous commission that ever fell on human ears: "All authority hath been given unto Me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:18-20).

"Has God any plan for the world? If so, what is it?"

All subsequent history is to be interpreted in terms of the fulfillment of this commission. The lives of individuals and the careers of nations possess real significance only in so far as they are related in some manner to the outworkings of the plans of the kingdom of God.

Christ stands at the apex of the ages. Time is reckoned before or after His advent. In God's view all history centers on Christ, "who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation; for in Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created through Him: and He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence. For it was the good pleasure of the Father that in Him should all the fulness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him I say, whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens" (Colossians 1:15-20).

Among many others, the transformed apostle Paul caught a vision of God's great plan; and under the dynamic influence of the Holy Spirit consecrated all his great powers to the actualization of God's purposes throughout the mighty empire of Rome.

Others caught the torch as it fell from the hands of the first apostles and continued to bear it aloft for the illumination of the nations, until today some six hundred million souls throughout the world—in lowly chapel or in lofty cathedral, in secret chamber or under God's open heaven—are worshipping the Lord God through Jesus Christ, with more or less spiritual understanding and Christian devotion.

In our own day the world has witnessed the unfolding of a missionary enterprise of such an extent as has nev-

[Continued on page 16]

CAMPUS NEWS

The seminary—largest ever

Walk into the Association Free Lutheran Seminary classroom and you will find 32 desks. (The room is full of desks.)

Walk into AFLTS' classroom during the school day and you will find 30 men. (The group is the largest ever in the seminary's 18-year history.)

Walk into that classroom any day at 7:40 a.m.—before classes begin—and you will find these men in prayer. (The men are on their knees.)



Faculty member, Rev. Robert Lee visits with middler, Peter Franz.

When prayer begins, they don't just "come" to their knees—they scramble to their knees. They want to pray. They mean it. They care about each other, you can sense that. You sense a devotion in that room. Devotion to Jesus Christ and to His work.

For all those men that devotion has led to a program of three-years' study of God's Word at the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations-sponsored school. Many hope to serve in an AFLC parish. A few others aim to be missionaries. All, nonetheless, are a part of AFLTS' record-high student body, the largest assembly in the school's history. While the senior class consists of five, a number typical of past graduating classes—under-graduates amount to 25. Juniors total 12, and middlers make up 13 of that number.

Never before have individual classes ranked as high in number as this year's junior and middler classes. Only in '72,

which had nine graduates, and in '78, which had eight, were tallies ever near the present amounts. And never had back-to-back classes been even close to this year's high.

Clearly, things are happening. God is working in an encouraging way, according to the seminary's dean, Pastor Francis Monseth. "I believe people have realized a necessity for pastors. God has been answering their prayers to send forth laborers into the harvest. The Lord is stirring His people," he said.

Even more encouraging are the men whom God is sending. "We are getting groups of students who have had a real call of God in their lives," he said.

"I'm encouraged by a deepening realization of what a commitment to God's will is," Pastor Monseth said. He explained, "People are coming at cost, sacrificing worldly comforts and security."

And these are the kind of men that the Church needs today. Godly men. Men devoted to Jesus Christ.

It is men like that who are taking advantage of AFLTS' training, godly training. Scriptural training for spiritual growth. That kind of growth is the kind Mr. Monseth likes to see for AFLTS.

"I don't think of growth so much in numbers," he said, "but in the kind of men that come. 'We need godly men, men of good report.'"

This year's student body is displaying that kind of maturity. You can see that.

You can sense it. Pastor Monseth

Dean Francis Monseth lectures a class.



senses it in the seminarians' prayer life. He said, "This year there is a real caring spirit among them. For needs. You can see that in the prayer time. They have very specific concerns for each other and other needs of the church. And the students have responded quickly for each other, helping even in financial ways."

So while the concerns grow, the prayers grow, the seminarians grow, the seminary itself grows. Said Mr. Monseth, "If it continues to grow we are going to be crowded out of this place." The classroom, that is. The one with only two chairs left.

Also growing, then, are visions of an additional building at the AFLC School's campus. In light of this potential outgrowth, a study committee was organized last November to look into this possibility more thoroughly.

But as for today? The real building for the seminarians continues to take place in the study of God's Word. Finding true doctrine, gaining in spiritual maturity, and growing in pastoral gifts.

This construction takes place daily in and out of the classroom, in the Bible and on their knees. For only in this way will the Church's need for godly pastors be met, by God's grace.

Pastor Monseth described that need. "There is a real need for godly pastors. Godly servants. Men who have a love for the Word, a love for Christ, a love for his people, and a love for His church."

All the while, AFLC members pray for those leaders. And AFLTS' seminarians pray that they might meet that need by God's grace.

They want to serve. They want to meet that need.

You can sense that. †

—James Lyell Johnson

CHURCH WORLD NEWS

Lutheran views differ on creation ruling

New York—(LC)—A recent Little Rock federal court decision, striking down a bill requiring that scientific creationism be taught together with the theory of evolution in Arkansas public schools, may be a boost for creationists or may be a potential source of conflict in Christian churches.

"No group . . . may use the organs of the government, of which the public schools are the most conspicuous and influential, to foist its religious beliefs on others," U. S. District Judge William Overton said in his ruling Jan. 5.

The decision will help change the image of creationism from "a kooky thing that didn't amount to much" to "a question that is being taken seriously," according to the Rev. William Lang, director of the Bible Science Association in Minneapolis, Minn.

The Bible Science Association is "a nonprofit, educational and religious organization which attempts to stimulate interest" in the scientific creationist claim that the world did not develop through a process of evolution, but by a single and immediate act and a catastrophic flood.

Lang, a retired Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod pastor, founded the society in 1964. The organization's newsletter is sent to an estimated 20,000 people.

Biologists at two Lutheran church-related colleges, however, said in an interview that they do not believe scientific creationism is a science.

At St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minn., Dr. Eugene Bakko, associate professor of biology at the American Lutheran Church school, said he was afraid the controversy would hurt all Christians, and fears the issue may divide the churches.

"Some denominations are more conservative than others," he said, "And you don't just tell somebody the facts when it comes to things like faith, and things they have believed since they were born."

The Arkansas bill represents "another attempt to make the statement that

Unity group proposes successor

New York—(LC)—The 19-member Committee on Lutheran Unity neared the completion of its task Thursday, Jan. 21, by proposing a 70-member successor group to make plans for a projected 1987 constituting convention for a new Lutheran church.

Representatives of the 3-million-member Lutheran Church in America, 2.3-million-member American Lutheran Church and 107,000-member Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches proposed that the new planning group be called the Commission for a New Lutheran Church.

The 2.7-million-member Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod is not engaged in the discussions on Lutheran unity.

Last September, the committee released an opinion poll taken earlier at district and synodical conventions of

creationism is as valid as evolution," said Dr. Ralph Sorensen, assistant professor of biology at Gettysburg College, a Lutheran Church in America-related school in Gettysburg, Pa.

A Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod theologian who is also trained as a biologist believes in the biblical story of creation but does not think "teachers in public schools should be required to teach creationism."

"The student should be given access to materials (that present the creationist position), look at them, listen to his teacher and make up his own mind," said the Rev. Dr. John W. Klotz, acting president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.

Generally, LCMS elementary schools and high schools teach both the theory of evolution and the biblical story of creation in their classrooms. "We, of course, teach creationism, but we also teach science. However, we state that science is not absolute," said the Rev. Walter C. Maas, superintendent of Trinity Lutheran School, an LCMS elementary school in Indianapolis, Ind.

the LCA, ALC and AELC showing 77 percent favored a merged church while 12 percent opposed it.

The plans presented by the Committee on Lutheran Unity, which were released at a press conference after a three-day meeting at the Lutheran Church in America headquarters here, need to be approved by the national conventions of the three church bodies—all planned for September 1982.

The leaders of the three denominations agreed at the press conference that they have made a commitment to Lutheran unity, even if there are some delays with the timetable, which calls for the 1986 conventions of the church bodies to give final approval for the new church.

"The projected timetable is if everything goes well," said Presiding Bishop David Preus of the ALC. "If there are any problems, we'll just have to put it off further. . . . We're making the commitment to work at this until we get it done."

The committee recommended that the new 70-member group be made up of 31 people each from the ALC and LCA, with eight members from the smaller AELC.

Each denomination would use its own procedure for selecting members of the new commission, with consideration given to adequate representation among clergy and laity, men and women, and racial, ethnic and age groups.

Members of the new commission selected by the churches, according to a draft for the report, should be made up of at least half laypeople; at least half of the clergy should be parish pastors; at least 40 percent of all members should be women; at least one-sixth of all members should be from ethnic or racial minority groups; and each of four minority peoples—black, Hispanic, Asian and Native American—should be represented by at least two persons.

Magazine editor named

The Rev. James P. Schaefer, 59, has been named the editor of the *Northwestern Lutheran*, the official magazine of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Previously, Rev. Schaefer was stewardship counselor for WELS for 14 years and public relations director for 21 years. Retiring editor, the Rev. Harold Wicke, 69, has been with the magazine since 1970.

CHRISTIAN LIFE . . .

er before been recorded in all the Christian centuries. Millions of dollars and thousands of lives are being offered the Lord for the consummation of His purposes.

But a vast task still remains. About two-thirds of the world's population are still without knowledge of the Christ, and every year millions pass on into eternity without a saving hope.

Seeming to realize the determination of Christian forces, the devil is summoning all his powers and agencies to combat the influence of the cross. Captivating men by indulgences and amusements, paralyzing them by worldliness and indifference, attacking the Bible and the Church with fiendish subtlety, teaching pagan philosophies and immoral ethics, promulgating atheistic societies and godless communism, fanning the flames of race prejudice and class hatred, perpetuating international suspicions and war-breeding attitudes—these are but some of the satanic attempts to frustrate the plans of God. †

(To be continued)

—From *Problems of Young Christians* by Martin Hegland,
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THRONED UPON THE AWFUL TREE

Throned upon the awful Tree,
King of grief, I watch with
Thee.
Darkness veils Thine anguished
face:
None its lines of woe can trace:
None can tell what pangs
unknown
Hold Thee silent and alone,—
Silent through those three
dread hours,
Wrestling with the evil powers,
Left alone with human sin,
Gloom around Thee and within,
Till the appointed time is nigh,
Till the Lamb of God may die.
Hark, that cry that peals aloud

Upward through the whelming
cloud!
Thou, the Father's only Son,
Thou, His own anointed One,
Thou dost ask Him—can it
be?—
'Why hast Thou forsaken Me?'
Lord, should fear and anguish
roll
Darkly o'er my sinful soul,
Thou who once wast thus bereft
That Thine own might ne'er be
left,
Teach me by that bitter cry
In the gloom to know Thee
nigh.

John Ellerton
(The Church Hymnary)