

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

February 7, 1989

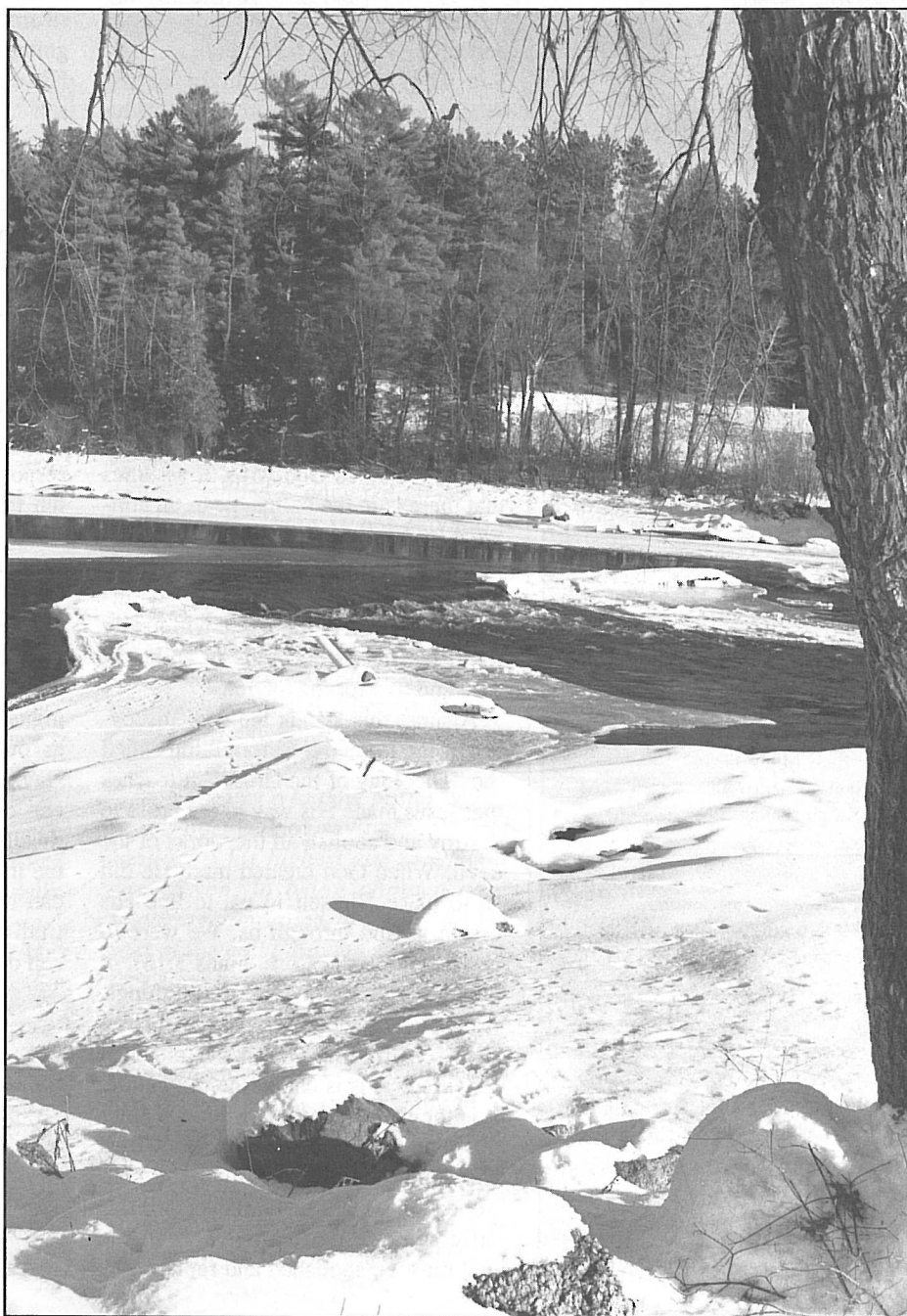
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LIGHT on the WAY

meditations on God's Word

COVER PHOTO

Signs of Spring

Roger C. Huebner, D. D. S.

Volume 27 Number 3

THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Rev. Raynard Huglen, Editor

Rev. Robert Lee, Assistant Editor

Mrs. Wayne Hjermstad, Layout Design

Editorial Board:

Dr. Francis Monseth

Mr. Sheldon Mortrud

Rev. Ralph Tjelta

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Christ, our new nature

I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live (in me), but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20a).

We are now entering the season of Lent when we reflect upon the agony and pain of Jesus as He made His way to the cross. We remember His rejection and the ridicule others directed toward Him during the last few weeks of His earthly life. This is as it should be, but often it's been directed in a wrong way. Many well-meaning individuals point to the suffering Christ and say, "Consider Jesus, look at Him. See what He went through for us. Surely this great love of Christ, who went the whole way for us, should melt and move our hearts toward Him and cause us to return to Him and go the whole way for Him."

This popular form of thinking is called the "moral influence" theory of the atonement. Though it sounds good, it misses the deepest and most central truth of why Jesus suffered and died. It's superficial and shallow and does not deal adequately with our old human nature as God wills. It assumes that there is in the human heart an ability, a longing, to turn to God if only it is approached and appealed to rightly. Tell a person of Jesus' pains and sufferings and surely he or she will gladly reach out his or her arms to embrace, love and live for the Savior.

Against this stands the core discovery of the Lutheran Reformation called the "Theology of the Cross." It teaches that Jesus made His way to the cross to destroy and abolish all the works of the devil. When God created man, He did so to place Himself in us, to live His life in us and through us. We were to be His temples (I Corinthians 3:16), in total dependence on Him for all things. Against this, the devil coaxed forth a false self-life that God never intended or willed. This is called the old nature. It is the life we possess when we enter this world. We are not born God-filled and controlled but self-filled and controlled. If we are to be redeemed, this false self-life that came forth in the Fall must be abolished and replaced by

Christ in us as our hope of glory (Colossians 1:27). We are to again be filled with and controlled by God Himself and "become partakers of the divine nature" as St. Peter declares in II Peter 1:4. God Himself is to again abide in us as our sole and only inner completeness without becoming us (I John 3:9).

How does this happen? By death. "Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?" (Romans 6:3). The purpose of Jesus going to the cross was to die, so that in His death, we might die to our sinful self-life that came forth in the Fall and Christ might again come forth in us as our new life, replacing the "I" in us as our center and wholeness. Thus St. Paul could declare, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live (in me), but Christ who now lives in me." The sinful self-life is to die and not be appealed to, so that it might open itself to Jesus. It is to be destroyed by Jesus' death, not urged to think of poor Jesus and sentimentally respond to Him. The old nature is rotten to the very core. Therefore, God will accept nothing from it but instead demands its death and replacement by Christ in us as our new nature.

As we go through Lent this year, let us ask ourselves if this is happening to us. Are we daily being brought to nothingness in the old nature so that Christ as our new nature is alone our all? Have we come to the point where we can confess, "In me, the old nature, dwells no good." Christ, you replace me in me and be my all. Then true joy can be ours in Him. May this be the truth we reflect upon this Lenten season of 1989.



—by Pastor
Christian Oswood

Now when even was come, He was sitting at meat with the twelve disciples; and as they were eating, He said, "Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray Me" (Matt. 26:20, 21).

A banquet, celebrating the Independence Day of the Jews. It was a festive occasion, tempered and hallowed by a spirit of devotion. But this time the guests were not in a jovial mood. Their hearts were oscillating between timid hopes and ominous fears. The silence following the footwashing was growing tense. Suddenly the presiding host shatters the silence with the startling remark: "One of you shall betray me." It fell like a sputtering bomb in their midst. It meant, "One of you twelve men is a 'snatcher,' a secret member of a kidnapping gang, plotting to hand Me over to the authorities or the mob." The result was general consternation and dismay. No protests of innocence on the part of these honest men, but all eyes were riveted on Jesus with the alarmed and anxious question, "Is it I, Lord?" The answer lingered.

Meanwhile down the line to one side Peter signalled to his friend John, next to Jesus; and unobserved John responded with an "aside" to be informed. Jesus confided to John, "It is the one who will dip his bread in the bowl at the same time with Me." And when He had said this, He dipped His bread with Judas and offered the sop to him — on the immediate left of Jesus.

According to the oriental custom this was a sacred pledge of friendship. Judas *accepted* the token, sealing the lie of his lips and inviting Satan into his heart. In agony of soul Jesus added the solemn words, "The Son of man goeth, even as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had not been born."

Judas realized that his dark plot was no secret to Jesus, and with a sneer he whispers the general question, "Is it I, Rabbi?" To Jesus it must have seemed like the hiss of a serpent. Sadly He replied, "You said it." Filled with murderous hatred Judas walks out of the room into the darkness. John observes significantly, "And it was night." Six hours later Judas was dead by his own hand. Not a revolver this time, but the noose was the means he used to step off into a night without a morning star.

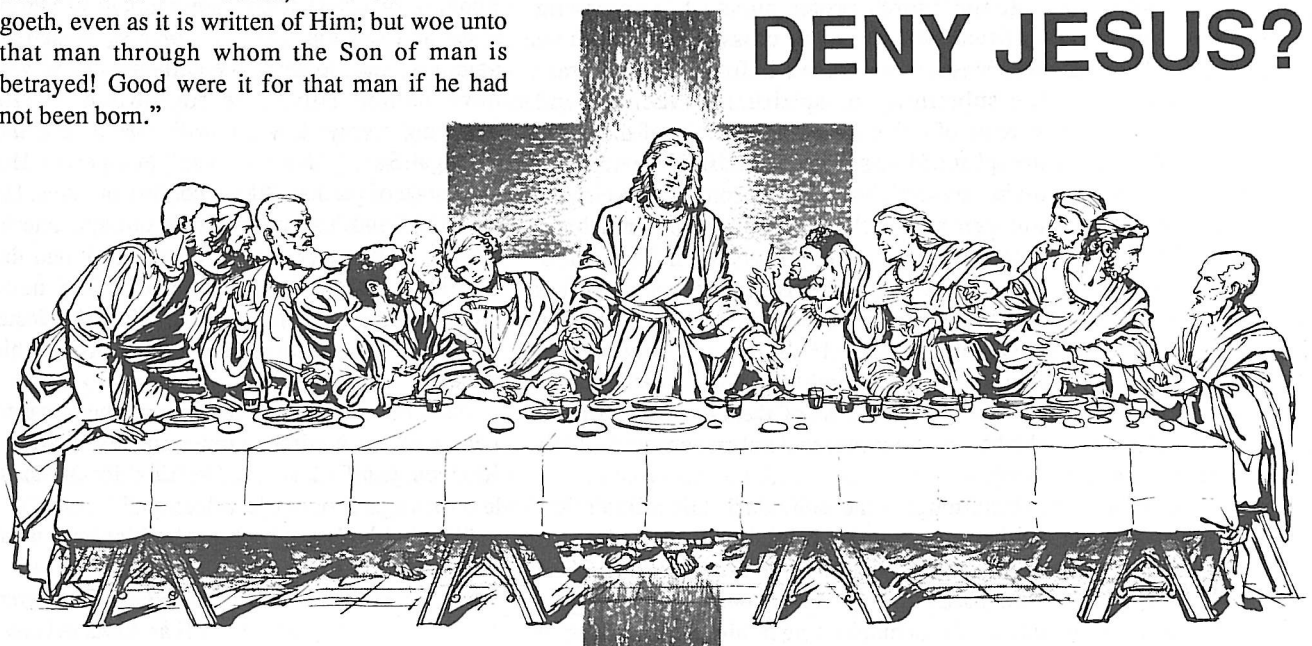
We have dwelt on this incident because the Gospel records would show that this experience was an ingredient in the cup of Jesus far more bitter than the trials of the following morning. To the loving heart of Jesus it brought a pang more terrible than all the physical suffering He was about to endure.

But again Jesus says, here and now, "One of you shall betray Me." Are we startled? Are we "exceedingly sorrowful?" Why should it grieve us? Why should we care? "Woe unto that man through whom the Son of man is betrayed! Good were it for that man if he had not been born."

How shall we find out who it is? By staring in consternation at each other? By suspecting some one else? No; not even by examining ourselves in the light of our own reflections. Only by turning to Jesus can the inner state of our hearts be revealed, and if we really wish to know His verdict, the anxious question will leap to our lips, "Lord Jesus, is it I? Do you mean me?"

"Is it
I, Lord?"

DENY JESUS?



WHAT ABOUT SPORTS?

— by Rev. Gerald F. Mundfrom
Osceola, Wis.

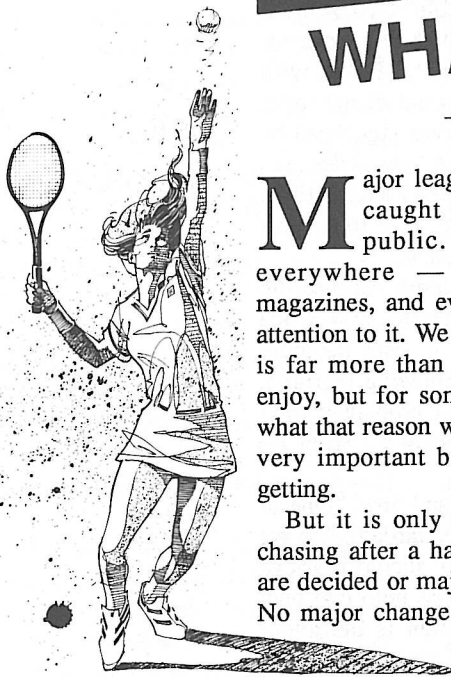
Major league and Olympic sports have caught the prime attention of the public. Nothing equals it! It is everywhere — TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, and even our clothing often draws attention to it. We get the impression that sports is far more than just an innocent pastime to enjoy, but for some reason (and I don't know what that reason would be) it is something very, very important because of the attention it is getting.

But it is only a game. Much of it is only chasing after a harmless ball. No major issues are decided or major problems solved by sports. No major change for something better is ever

brought about by sports.

Many Christians have also become enthused with sports. In their hearts God may be first, but by lending their praise along with the world for sports, they, too, give the impression that sports is on top of all that is important.

Sports and games can have some positive aspects if not overshadowed by those aspects which are negative. One positive aspect is that it can demonstrate and teach good sportsmanship, such as being a humble winner and a good loser. But a great evil in *making winning all-important* has come into sports, robbing it of many of its positive aspects. The high prizes in winning, such as large salaries, great recognition and fame, have often caused those involved in sports to forget good sportsmanship in their zeal to win.



DENY

A traitor to Jesus! Is such a thing possible? Yes, church membership is no guarantee. Not a prominent position and leadership in the church. Judas was an apostle. Not even communing at the Table of the Lord. According to Luke, Judas was a communicant that night. It is even thinkable that the church itself may betray Jesus. Judas was a type of the church of *his* day. It is no difficult thing for the Bride to become the harlot — for “Jerusalem” to become “Babylon.”

If the church prefer money to conserving spiritual values; if the cross become a mere ecclesiastical ornament; if formalism becomes the substitute for spiritual awakening and seasons of refreshing from the face of the Lord, the spirit of Judas is in our midst. If we deny the divine authenticity of the Scriptures; if we reject the central truth that “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,” treason is entering the door. Heresy, on the one hand, but also traditional orthodoxy itself for its own sake, may betray Jesus. If the church becomes an incubus and a stumbling-block instead of a servant and a witness of the Lord Jesus Christ, she becomes a traitor and not an “apostle” of His cause.

Returning to the individual, this attitude and spirit may not be known to others, as in the case of Judas. It may be a secret known only to Jesus. Yes, possibly not even to ourselves. Peter did not see the denial lurking in his own heart. But if

we turn to Jesus and listen to His voice in the written Word and in the word preached in truth and purity from our pulpits, He will make it clear to every honest soul. He will warn us, as Judas was repeatedly warned. He will call us to repentance and to restoration.

God save us from hardening our hearts against that Word! Satan is on the alert to take possession. Do not bring grief to the heart of your Savior! Be a faithful disciple, like John, or Thomas, or Peter! If you are tempted to betray Jesus and sell him for gold, or lust, or selfish ambition, turn to Him for deliverance! If you have denied Him, flee for refuge to His forgiving mercy! Cry out with David, and the Prodigal Son, “I have sinned,” and accept His assurance of pardon. “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” When the Publican in the Temple prayed, “God have mercy on me a sinner” (or “*the sinner*”), Jesus observed, “That man went home right with his God.”

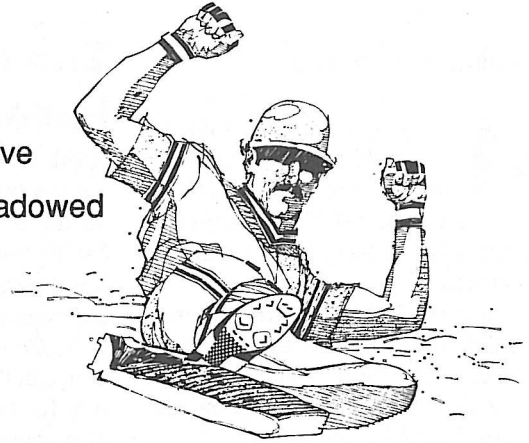
Jesus has spread out His arms on the Cross to gather every penitent sinner to His heart — forgiven, justified, saved. He “died for our sins, and rose again for our justification.”

“He that hath ears to hear, let him hear what the Spirit saith to the churches!”

— C. J. Sodergren
The Bible Banner



"Sports and games
can have some positive
aspects if not overshadowed
by those aspects
which are negative."



Poor sportsmanship reached a new low in the Olympics with the use of steroid drugs in building up the body. However, that is also becoming a major problem in other sports, even reaching down to the high school level in some cases. Rules are being adopted to bar the use of drugs in sports; however, it will be next to impossible to check its usage, especially on the international level within the Olympics. Before we can hope to control its usage we must lower the stakes and importance of winning, thus decreasing the temptation.

We have a "Hall of Fame" for famous baseball players and another "Hall of Fame" for famous football players. And if the trend continues, who knows how many other sports halls of fame will come into being. Is there any scientific or artistic achievement (or other walk in life) which receives as much recognition as sports? What kind of history are we writing?

Sports has been known to create a oneness, increase business and bring financial gain to a community, especially when there is a winning team. But this, too, is not always good because again it increases the importance of winning and often causes good sportsmanship and all that relates to it to be secondary.

How much better it would be if a oneness is created in a community through the united effort of a worthwhile community project, such as helping the poor, the needy, the elderly, or in building up the community in some way.

Along the same line of thought, how much better it would be if a high school, for instance, gained its reputation by the caliber of students it graduated, and who were making worthwhile academic contributions to society, rather than just having a winning ball team. How sad it is that the student who achieves in sports often receives greater recognition than the student who does well in his studies. It is no wonder

that we have so many students who are disinterested in academic study and are doing poorly in school, when such achieving receives little recognition.

Sports, if it is to have a positive aspect, must be willing to take second place to other more important issues and goals in life. It is not good when our recreation demands our best, receives more recognition, and is thought to be more worthwhile than our work or preparing for a vocation.

The over-importance of winning in sports, with its high stakes, has had a very tempting and damaging effect upon some of our youth, especially young men, who are seeking a vocation. It is lulling them into choosing major sports for their life's ambition or vocation. It is over-challenging them, causing them to believe they can achieve in sports if only they train and work hard enough. But the truth is that a very small percentage ever achieve in this way. And I assume that many work hard, train hard and still don't make it. We never hear of these. What a waste of time and effort!

And even those who do make it, their time of being employed as a major league athlete is very short. The sports world is interested in its players only to the extent that they can outdo and outplay their opponents and are at their peak physically. They must be willing to exert themselves to the maximum and sometimes beyond what is good health-wise. Retirement is early and sometimes leaves the athlete with ill effects as the result of overexertion or injury.

Perhaps the most negative aspect of all relating to sports, especially major league sports, is the way it has robbed God of His day, Sunday. Instead of being a holy day in which God is honored, worshiped and listened to, the first day of the week has become a play day in which sporting events take up the best part and often

Brazilian testimony

My name is Yara Iza. I am 16 years old and for four years now I have been participating in the Central Free Lutheran Church, where I have been a member for two years.

As a child I attended Bible camps for children and started to have more direct contact with a church and when I grew older I went to youth camp and I felt God touching my heart.

My family is not Christian and when I first decided to visit the church there was some opposition from my parents. During these visits to church, God spoke to my heart, but I closed my heart to Him.

I participate in sports and my Sundays were always filled with champi-

The best goal I ever made

onships and trips. I won many medals, but the biggest medal that I won was on the day I accepted Christ as my Savior and received from Him eternal life. It was the best goal I ever made and continues to be until today.

As God's daughter, I have had many duties in the church. First, I was secretary for the youth group in 1987 and also secretary of the Sunday School and Sunday School teacher. In 1988 I again participated in the leadership of the youth group, working as the sports coordinator.

In August of 1987, I felt God calling me to study at the EBLI-Bible School. I began to pray and ask God to speak to my parents so they would authorize



my going to Bible School. I spoke seriously with my parents two weeks before classes started in March and it was hard, but God fulfilled His promises and today I am a student at the Bible School.

I have felt the desire to be a mission-

SPORTS

the most part of the day for many people, including many Christians. How can the Word of God have any lasting effect upon a person's life when one's thoughts are taken up with sports so much of the time? We are reminded of what Jesus said in the parable of the sower, where the fowls of the air devoured the good seed before it had a chance to sprout (Matt. 13:4). We might ask how much of God's Word is crowded out of our minds and hearts because of sports, never allowing that Word of God to have any lasting influence upon our lives.

But there are other negative aspects which we need to consider. There is great profiteering in major league sports. It does not help the poor but helps a few to become richer. Tickets, concessions and souvenirs are expensive. The players negotiate and sometimes strike for higher wages when already they are among the highest paid employees in the world. The major ball clubs are "taking" the fans for all they can get out of them. However, high salaries also give greater prestige to the players and to the major league games.

Sports is a great consumer of time as many fans watch from the stands or over TV, time that could be put to better use.

Gambling, as well as profiteering, is very much a part of sports, especially in such sports as horse and dog racing.

Some sports have become dangerous games, especially football, hockey and boxing. This,

too, excites the spectators. It is reminiscent of the gladiator games during the days of the Roman Empire, where the spectators often cried out for blood.

The selling and consuming of alcoholic beverages have a big place in major league sports. Champagne is drunk and doused upon the players when they win a major victory.

These negative aspects have grown with sports. As sports have become more and more important in the minds and hearts of the players and fans, the negative aspects have become more noticeable. One wonders how it all will end!

But we need to ask what we, if Christians, can do about sport as it grows and mushrooms like a pet tiger in our midst. Perhaps we can do little. The evil forces of the world seem to be gaining control of the world more and more and they have their effect on sporting events.

However, we can curb our support and enthusiasm for sports, especially major league sports. We can refuse to get on the bandwagon of sports and get carried along with the trend of the times. We can seek to make good sportsmanship, and not winning, the all-important aspect of sports.

It is time that we recognize the negative aspects of sports, especially in major league sports, and realize that it is no longer a harmless pastime. It has all the marks of worldliness.

BOOK REVIEW

The Twilight of a Great Civilization

by Carl F. H. Henry

Crossway Books, 192 pages, \$12.95

In my opinion, Carl F. H. Henry is among the great contemporary Christian thinkers. He is well acquainted with the history of philosophical thought and how it has influenced our modern Western society. I also find Dr. Henry to be a man of Christian compassion, continually applying God's Word to the human predicament of misery and suffering. When I learned of his book, *The Twilight of a Great Civilization* (The Drift Toward New-Paganism), I determined I must order a copy.

I have to say I was disappointed to find that, rather than its contents being a unit built around the theme expressed by the book's title, it was a compilation of seventeen separate recent public addresses on various subjects. However, I must also say that each address is on an important issue of contemporary concern in the realm of human thought, ethics and morals. Each presentation is clear and helpful to anyone concerned with our modern Western civilization, where it has come from, what its present state is and where it will end up if there is no change in what we believe life is all about. Henry claims the Church of Jesus Christ, in Western society, is living its life within the same kind of pagan culture as was the case in the first centuries of the Church's history. He claims our generation is adrift from its spiritual and moral heritage and is paying a great penalty for what he calls its "existential vagabondage."

continued on p. 8

grow more and more in His Word. At the end of this year I want to leave here strong in faith, prepared to confront the sinful world we live in, always holding the hand of God. I feel His presence, as Matthew 11:28 says, "Come to Me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," growing each day in my life.

—Tito Lucas Ott

ary and take God's Word to others. This month I made another important decision. I became involved, along with Pr. Oseais, Seminarian Clerio, and two other students, in a new church being started in a suburb of Campo Mourao. I had to leave my church, where I was baptized and had responsibilities, and all my friends there, but I know that God will use me where He needs me and has called me.

The time here at Bible School is very edifying. I have more intimate contact with God through study of His Word. He is perfecting me more in His knowledge and wonders.

I don't like to think about my past without Christ, for having walked so long away from Him, with my eyes blind to His Word and a heart closed to His love. The only thing I like to

remember about my past is that one day I left all this and decided to live for Christ and with Christ. I know that it was the most important decision that I ever made, and will continue to be eternally.

Having more intimate contact with God, I have come to the conclusion that without Him I am nothing.

I know that the abundant life Christ offers, the world cannot give, for it is life perfect in love, life at the feet of the Lord, the life of God in me, life that is born from the death, life that brings pardon. It is more than a religion. It is Christ living in me, and I hope in *you* also!

Psalm 27:14, "Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; yea, wait for the Lord."

—Yara Iza Ferreira de Oliveira

In God's hand

My name is Tito Lucas Ott. I come from Curitiba, Parana.

I was born into a Christian family and my parents taught me Biblical principles. As the years passed I grew in Bible truths that I learned at church and with my parents. Later we had to leave the church we belonged to because of problems arising; a little by

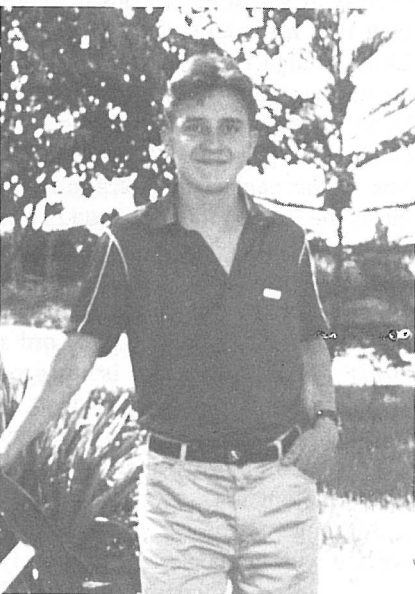
little we felt ourselves becoming distant from God. After a few years we began attending a new church, founded by an American pastor. We renewed our strength through the Sunday services. When this pastor had to leave, the church seemed to be at a standstill and my family left this church also.

Last year, against my own wishes, I had to serve in the Army. During this time, I totally backslid from my Christian faith, as I did not have daily communion with God. I passed through many difficulties and let my carnal principles dominate. Without a firm base and without fellowship, I started smoking and drinking, and even experimented with drugs, feeling that this world had no more meaning for me. The enemy used these weaknesses to gain victory over me.

I was in anguish and finally stopped to reflect on all that was happening. I reached the conclusion that God does have a plan for my life. I spent a week at camp and God spoke to my heart there.

After getting out of the Army, my mother talked me into coming to Bible School, and here I am today.

This year I want my life to be in God's hand so that every day I will



Planning your Luther League meetings

How do we, whether Luther League officer, adult advisor or pastor, keep youth in the church? Many attempts are made to attract youth. Some are mere forms of entertainment such as having bigger and better parties, contests, game nights and other gimmicks. None of these seem to work very well and usually are doomed to failure! Young people like to have "fun" things. However, I feel that most want something special from the church. Something they cannot receive other places! Churches that try to entertain their youth will not have much success. Youth do not want to be entertained; they want to be involved in the things of the Lord!

What is really needed are youth programs which teach *leadership* and *discipleship*! Young people want to be discipled for Christ. Young people want to be shaped into the image of Christ. We should have as our first goal to develop creative youth who will be aggressive leaders in the church and in our communities.

The young people like to learn. They want to solve their problems, if they have any. To assume all kids have big, deep problems and have trouble coping is a mistake! Young people want to know the truths of the Bible. Truly, we need to plan youth programs which will give them such. However, there comes a time when the kids should develop an eagerness for service in the kingdom. They want to be involved in serving. First we worship and then we serve!

Jesus taught large crowds of people. He taught the 12 disciples. Still, even at the same time, He discipled them. Jesus trained them. He trained them in life situations where He could give them additional instruction. Here it is that our congregations can really create an excitement about the things of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Much good youth work is done from the pulpit as we worship on Sunday. Combining this with a caring and lov-

ing adult Sunday School class, a prayer group for the youth, and efforts at getting them involved in the total program of the church will create an excitement which will keep the young people coming again and again.

For instance, I have found that our Christian young people want to be trained in soul-winning. Why not equip them by teaching them to use the Four Spiritual Laws?

They often are consulted by others who are depressed, lonely, discouraged, thinking of suicide or involved in sexual matters. The Luther League can become a tremendous positive peer group which equips the Leaguers to minister where we adults will never go or be!

Yes, there are those kids who are not saved. Yet, it may very well be that the Lord will work in their lives when they see how the Christian kids are getting involved with people.

Young people will really discover who they are and which direction they are going as they learn how to minister to others in their congregation, school and community.

To do all of this you and I as friends of youth, including your very own Luther Leaguers, need to have a plan for ministry in our congregations! Start where your youth are spiritually. Work with individuals. Meet as often as the schedule allows. Organize a prayer fellowship which will pray for matters of importance to the kids.

Make the Luther League a truly youth-oriented group. Utilize the ideas of the young people. Encourage them to do things you think would be important for them to do. *Make the group theirs*, not yours as adults. Give them the opportunity to do the work and give them credit for what they do.

Guide the kids to think of ways to vary their approach. Try skits, role playing, panels, etc. Always keep things moving along without long and dull pauses where the kids begin to think it would have been better to have

stayed home and maybe even finished their algebra!

Your part and mine is to coach, guide, assist and encourage, but not to do the work for them. Being a Luther League advisor or a Luther League officer is often not the easiest opportunity in the world but it can be very gratifying as you commit yourself, your young people and your planning to the Lord, with prayer.

It is not wise to go to your Leaguers with the Lord until you have gone to the Lord with your Leaguers. Prayer, planning and implementation is a lot of reaching and holding youth for Christ. May the Lord Jesus Christ lead.

—Pastor Dennis Gray
Youth Resources Director

REVIEW

The subjects of the addresses in this book cover a wide range. To whet your appetite, I list some here. One chapter deals with the idea that a caravan of barbarians is already on its way to take over our society. Another chapter raises the question as to whether theologians are not an endangered species, and why they may be so. There is an address in which he stresses the concern that institutions of evangelical Christian higher education be of a better caliber than we presently have. Henry feels that the evangelicals have emphasized personal salvation education to the neglect of education that meets the pagan mentality head-on, in the battle for the minds of the people. In many places in this book the exhortation is that the Church needs to give first priority to obeying the Lord's Great Commission, that is, to proclaiming the saving Word of God to every person, to the ends of the earth. That is the ultimate Christian obligation, according to Dr. Henry.

Although I was somewhat disappointed with the book, as I previously
continued on p. 10

EDITORIALS

DIRECTORY OF OFFICERS

It isn't very often now that we carry a listing of some of the officers of boards, committees and commissions of the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations. Some years ago it was much more common, but other material more worthy of space crowds it out. However, occasionally the Directory is published and we hope that you will take the time to read page 16 and read every name.

We said that "some of the officers" are given on that page today. Vice-presidents and treasurers are for the most part left out. Not that they aren't important, but it is presidents and secretaries who are most apt to receive communications by mail and the treasurers don't handle the money of their organizations or committees, except in the case of the auxiliaries, the Luther League Federation and the Women's Missionary Federation.

Board, committee and commission officers and executives are important people. They keep tab on their particular area of our work year round, whereas the rest of us do so spasmodically, perhaps only at the annual conferences. We entrust to these representatives the operation of the precious benevolence work we have built up over 25 years. These people have been chosen because we have confidence in their concern and their ability under God.

Pray for these people as they carry out their tasks. Some of them must attend many meetings a year. This takes time and considerable travel. They make the effort and for this we should be grateful. Some serve at financial sacrifice. Pray for these brothers and sisters that they grow not weary in well doing. Speak a word of appreciation to them when you have the opportunity.

For now, read their names on page 16 and below.

BIBLE CONFERENCES

By this time some of the Winter Bible Conferences have been held and several others are yet to be. From experience we can say that they are a real blessing to those who attend. It's too bad that more people don't get to attend but it is ever thus. For those who can be present the spiritual food and fellowship are good.

More conferences are being held this winter than ever before. From the original one (at McVile, 1963), there are now five, although one is perhaps not officially AFLC-sponsored. Access to an AFLC Bible conference is easier now than ever before. It's good that there is this interest.

Maybe now is the time to turn the Bible conference sponsorship and planning over to the districts and regions. At first it was necessary for the AFLC leadership to plan and arrange the conferences. Now it would be interesting to see what initiative districts or areas might take in setting up conferences, such as the Illinois District is doing this winter. Local sponsorship might generate even more interest and participation.

There is a note of sadness when one sees what can happen to a Bible conference movement. We refer to the Mid-Winter Conference of the Lutheran Evangelistic Movement. We remember the heyday when Augustana (later, First Augustana) Lutheran Church, 7th Street and 11th Avenue South in Minneapolis, Minn., would be filled for the evening conference services and many would be present, from around the U.S., at daytime sessions. The conferences burst with life. This year a one-day rally was held (and two days for youth). Somehow, a good thing quit filling a need.

Events, movements go in cycles, it seems. But may the Bible conference movement among us not subside, but continue and grow in strength.

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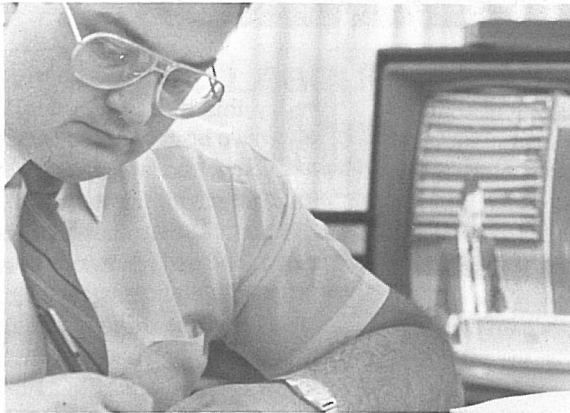
AFLC Benevolences - February 1 - December 31

FUND	TOTAL BUDGET	REC'D IN DECEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	%* TOTAL
General Fund	\$ 178,997.00	\$26,817.63	\$157,008.42	88
Schools - (AFLTS) . .	99,367.00	12,420.23	77,948.50	78
(AFLBS) . .	156,150.00	34,037.61	135,537.15	87
Home Missions.	317,850.00	60,763.60	241,292.00	76
World Missions.	280,140.00	36,622.66	195,472.76	70
Capital Investment . .	25,000.00	2,951.23	20,375.17	82
TOTALS	\$1,057,504.00	\$173,612.96	\$827,634.00	78
1987 - 1988	\$1,014,894.00	\$178,961.29	\$820,536.99	81

*Goal 92%

CAMPUS NEWS

Inter-Term at AFLTS was held Jan. 2-27. Guest instructors Wes Langaas and Dennis Gray taught *Christian Ed and Youth Work* while *Church History* and *Thesis Preparation* were taught by AFLTS faculty. Video tapes are available through the library.



Middler Tonnes Pollestad

Grant received

The Lutheran Brotherhood Foundation has awarded a grant of \$4200.00 to AFLTS for the support of Milton Flores during his internship at Triumph Lutheran Church, Nogales, Ariz. This grant is a part of a special program to encourage Hispanic ministries within the Lutheran Church.

Conservative theologians meet

AFLC Schools faculty members journeyed to Wheaton, Illinois, on November 17-19, where they joined an estimated 400 other participants for the 40th annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society (ETS).

Plenary sessions were held in the spacious Barrows Auditorium at the Billy Graham Center, which is located on the campus of Wheaton College.

The theme of the conference was "Evangelicals and Cross-Cultural Communication" and the keynote speaker was Don Richardson, mission-



Left to right, R. Lee, R. Tjelta, P. Haugen, S. Lombardo, D. Greven and F. Monseth

ary and author of *Peace Child* and *Eternity in Their Hearts*. Other specialists presented papers on the theme

topic, as well as on major areas of theological studies, during numerous smaller group sessions.

One of the bonuses of a conference at Wheaton was the opportunity to visit the impressive Graham Center museum, with its panorama of revival history and a visual Gospel encounter. The center also houses a library and archives containing thousands of volumes on the history of North American evangelicals in missions and evangelism.

Instructors F. Monseth, D. Greven, P. Haugen, R. Lee, R. Tjelta, and S. Lombardo represented the AFLC Schools at the ETS meeting, assisted by a grant from Lutheran Brotherhood Insurance Company. Faculty members recently became members of the society, encouraged by the Board of Trustees to participate in a scholarly society as a preliminary step to possible accreditation of the seminary.

—R. L. Lee

REVIEW

stated, I believe I more than received my money's worth. In past reviews I have recommended some books and suggested better alternatives for others. I believe Henry's book is an important book which all preachers, teachers and serious-minded Christians should read. It is dealing with very important matters and has important things to teach us. If a person's house is on fire, that person ought to be made aware of it so he or she may take action to save life. If our society is in its twilight, and near to coming to its end, Christians should be made keenly aware of that so they, too, may take appropriate action. We once had a saying, "To be forewarned is to be forearmed." That holds good in

the matters dealt with in this book. Christian preachers and teachers have the responsibility of sounding the alarm of danger and of leading God's flock in the right way. They are to lead people to Jesus Christ, and in the path the Savior would have them go. That is the only safe way.

I purchased the hard edition of the book for \$12.95, a few weeks ago. As happens so often, I have been told the book is now available from some book sellers in paper back for about \$4.00 less. I hope many of our readers will avail themselves of this book.

—Pastor Emerson Anderson
Cleveland, O.

The Lord's My Shepherd, I'll Not Want

1. The Lord's my Shepherd, I'll not want;
He makes me down to lie
In pastures green, He leadeth me
The quiet waters by.
2. My soul He doth restore again;
And me to walk doth make —
Within the paths of righteousness,
E'en for His own name's sake.
3. Yea, though I walk in death's dark vale,
Yet will I fear no ill;
For Thou art with me, and Thy rod
And staff me comfort still.
4. A table Thou preparest me
In presence of my foes;
My head Thou dost anoint with oil,
And now my cup o'er - flows.
5. Thy loving kindness all my days
Shall surely follow me;
And in God's house forevermore
My dwelling - place shall be.

PSALMS IN THE NIGHT

WMF BIBLE STUDY MARCH 1989

PSALM 23

Memory Verse: "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for Thou art with me; Thy rod and Thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: Thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." (Psalm 23)

Purpose of the Psalm: Affirmation of faith in God.

Hopefully this Psalm is not so familiar that we miss the wonderful message of the Psalm.

Note the tense of the Psalm. It is written in the present tense; as it was in the day of the psalmist, as it has been down through the ages, so we can claim it today.

Reference to the Lord as our Shepherd is also found in Isaiah 40:11 and John 10:11. What do those verses say? _____

Verse 1 says we "shall not want." Does this apply just to physical needs? _____ How does this apply for the Christians, to all aspects of life, body, mind and soul? _____

What are some physical needs? _____

What are mental needs _____

What are spiritual needs? _____

Is it true that in Him is all sufficiency? _____

Do we claim this? _____

Verse 2 – Here we have a picture of lush green grass, not parched or dry grass. Still waters is not a picture of turbulent, stormy waters. Apply this to our Christian life.

Verse 3 – How is our soul restored? _____

Do we need restoration? _____

Why? _____

For what purpose? _____

Apply Psalm 5:8 to this verse. _____

Explain “For His Name’s sake.” _____

Verse 4 – Friends and family can go with us through life’s experiences but only the Good Shepherd can go with us through death. He goes with us all the way!

How do the rod and staff comfort us? _____

Apply Job 10:21, 22 _____

Psalm 44:19 _____

Psalm 3:6 _____

Isaiah 43:2 _____

Verse 5 – What a beautiful picture!

It shows how God provides abundantly for His children. Describe it. _____

Apply II Samuel 17:27-29 _____

Verse 6 – Note the first word, *surely* – no question about it!

What is the promise for this life? _____

What is the promise for the future? _____

What more can a Christian desire? _____

As Christians, can we say with David that we want the same quality of fellowship as found in God’s house, all our lives?

Is this our concern for others? _____

Principles and Practices of Evangelism

— By Dr. Francis W. Monseth
Dean, Association Free Lutheran
Theological Seminary

(In the third installment of this paper, Dr. Monseth set forth the rest of his theses on biblical evangelism, with supporting Bible references. Then he began a discussion of "Our Ministry of Evangelism" and posed the first of several questions regarding our ministry of evangelism: "How do we balance godly concern for the salvation of every member of our congregation with proper regard for the grace of God bestowed on them in the sacrament of baptism?" That question is still under consideration as this installment begins.)

Part IV

Imagine yourself marooned on a tiny island in the south Pacific. The meager rations you salvaged from the ship's wreckage are gone. Your strength is ebbing fast when suddenly you spot a ship coming in your direction. Summoning your last bit of energy, you manage to feebly wave a tattered rag in order to alert the crew to your plight. With delight, you observe the ship slowing and dropping anchor. A boat is lowered and the captain himself comes to rescue you from the imminent death you were facing. What is your response to this tremendous deliverance? Is your chief attention focused on that life-boat, necessary as it was to perform the rescue operation? I would suggest that your desire would be to express your profound gratitude to that "captain." You would remember "him" the rest of your life. Yes, he used the "life-boat," but it was he himself who rescued you. This illustration, of course, is inadequate in explaining all of the theological aspects of baptismal grace to needy sinners, but if it can serve to remind us to keep our prime focus on Christ and His cross, its purpose may be useful. It is Christ, our "Captain," our Savior, whose promises we grasp by faith and whose promises we minister.

At the same time that we rejoice in God's power and provision to preserve

the spiritual life created at Baptism through water and the Word, we recognize that the relationship can be severed through neglect of and/or resistance to the Means of Grace. In our baptismal service, we acknowledge that the gift of faith may be lost without the nurture of the Word and a "Christian example" to follow. Therefore we dare not assume that every baptized member of our congregation is abiding in Christ. The late dean of our seminary, Dr. Iver Olson, in his book, *Baptism and Spiritual Life*, observes, "Sad to say, there are many baptized persons in all churches...who are not Christians" (p. 72). In his survey of Lutherans from several synods, Jacob Andreasen reported that only 27% claimed to have remained in baptismal grace (*Lutherans and Conversion*, p. 13). Dr. J. N. Kildahl, in his book, *Sin and Grace*, states his opinion about his generation in the early twentieth century, "There are some who can say it, but they seem to be very few. Most people, however, fall away from their baptismal covenant. And there are many, many such in our churches..." (p. 55). We all lament this situation even if it were only partially true. We trace the problem to a failure to nurture the new-born one in the Word of God. At the same time that our Lord commissioned baptism, He also commissioned teaching (Matt. 28:19-20). Without spiritual food (the Word), spiritual life will die. There is need for greater attention to the follow-up of the baptized. This follow-up must include some way of equipping parents and others to truly "feed" the children the Word of God. It may be sometimes a matter of the parents needing to be converted before such nurture can really begin.

To assume that every baptized person in our congregation remains a Christian is to move toward the Roman Catholic conception of the sacraments. Dr. Trygve Skarsten of Trinity Seminary in Columbus, Ohio, says that failure to recognize:

"...the possibility that one can fall

away and renounce one's baptismal covenant is ironically succumbing to the very trap that such an emphasis seeks to avoid, in that it makes baptism into a human work whereby one trusts in the work itself — ex opere operato — apart from faith in the living God (*Our Compelling Need: Evangelization of the Baptized*, p. 35).

We're living in a time when many pastors appear to believe that all members of their congregations are Christians because they have once been baptized. They greet their congregations without hesitation as "Dear Christian Friends." They consider evangelism as grossly inappropriate in the setting of the Lutheran congregation. They comfort the bereaved at the funeral of a loved one that "so-and-so was baptized and therefore is in Heaven." They remind their parishioners again and again of their spiritual security because they were once baptized. Meanwhile, the subjects of repentance and faith receive scarce mention. Oh, how this contributes to the false security held by so many church people. Skarsten observes:

"How many thousands, yes, millions of people in this world, are there not, who think that because they've had some water poured over their heads when they were younger that it makes them a Christian today? This my friends is false security and a damnable heresy!" (Skarsten, p. 35).

It was Luther who said, "Just because everyone in Saxony is baptized does not mean that everyone in Saxony is a Christian. Of course it happens that many leap overboard into the sea and perish" (*Babylonian Captivity*, LW, Vol. 36, p. 61). In his classic discussion of Law and Gospel, C. F. W. Walther writes,

"If the mere act of being baptized and partaking of Holy Communion brings grace to a person, the Gospel manifestly has been turned into a law, because salvation then rests on a person's works...One would indeed think it to be utterly impossible for a Christian minister to teach that the Sacra- ◇

ments produce salutary efforts *ex opere operato*; still, that is what happens again and again. This awful error is taught by the very men who wish to pass for strict Lutherans, every time they discuss the Sacraments. When they have finished unfolding their doctrine of Baptism, every hearer has received the unmistakable impression that, in order to get to heaven, it is merely necessary to submit to the act of being baptized...because God has attached his grace to this external action...This teaching is diametrically opposed to the Gospel (*The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*, p. 351).

It appears that many Lutherans today are embracing also a Calvinistic teaching of eternal security, the so-called "once saved, always saved" doctrine in regard to baptism, only, as Skarsten notes, they say, "once baptized, always saved." When this view is held, it is not surprising that evangelism receives short shrift. Gisle Johnson, the great theologian and revival leader of Norway, warned his own generation in the nineteenth century, "There cannot exist a more effective obstacle to conversion than the ceaseless preaching that every baptized person remains a child of God" (Quoted by C. F. Wisløff in *The Theology of Lutheran Evangelism*, p. 10).

Dear friends, let us continue to uphold and affirm our truly biblical teaching on Christian baptism. Let us continue to teach without apology or compromise that baptism is truly a blessed means of grace instituted by our Lord which is fully effective in bringing people, young and old, into the Kingdom of God. Let us not hesitate to describe the effect of baptism as regeneration, the creation of spiritual life where none existed. Let us with confidence in God's gracious promises administer the sacrament, rejoicing that He is at work in extending and conveying salvation to yet another precious soul.

But, let us do all this in the context of repentance and faith! More on this momentarily.

2. What is meant by the expression, "coming to a conscious experience of sin and grace?" Is this necessary for every person, even though they may have been baptized?

Evangelical Lutherans frequently use the expression, "conscious experience of sin and grace," to emphasize the necessity for every baptized individual to pass from the unconscious faith bestowed through the Word at baptism to conscious realization of personal need for grace and an appropriation of the same through trust in the promises of the Gospel. Sometimes there has been confusion in regard to this matter especially if the impression has been left, real or imagined, that somehow the baptized one has inevitably fallen from grace and now is being restored through a "conversion" experience. This should not be the expectation nor should it be the case, particularly when the child has been nurtured in a Christian environment. The God who saves us is the God who is able to keep. Unless there has been a willful continuance in sin with no repentance evident, we are more likely dealing with one who simply needs to begin to consciously experience the terrifying effects of the Law and the comforting effects of the Gospel. The Christian life is most accurately depicted as a daily experience of sin and grace. Daily repentance and daily appropriation by faith of forgiveness in Christ are the hallmark of authentic Christian experience. What evangelical Lutherans are saying in their insistence on a "conscious experience" or a "conversion" is that there must be this "breakthrough," if you will, in the life of every individual, baptized or not.

How does a faithful pastor best fulfill his ministry of spiritual oversight in his concern that each member of his congregation be living in repentance and faith? Does he constantly assure his people in public and in private that they are Christians solely because they are baptized, without any further explanation? No, he simply continues his main calling — to rightly distinguish between Law and Gospel, and to

CORRECTION

The mistake is obvious, but for the record this change should be noted.

In the second paragraph of Pastor John Strand's letter on page 14 (*Ambassador*, Jan. 10), the last sentence should read: "It recognizes the legitimate concern of a minority, but also recognizes that a strong majority of 75% should not be denied."

IN MEMORIAM

Key: The name of the town was the address of the deceased. Following that is listed the name of the deceased, age, date of death and the church in which he held membership.

MICHIGAN

Ishpeming

Arthur J. Korte, 82, Dec. 15, 1988, Hope.

faithfully preach the Law in all *its* sternness and the Gospel in all *its* sweetness with confidence that the Holy Spirit will apply that Word with power and grace to the hearers. Now, of course, we are not advocating merely a pulpit ministry by using the word "preach." We mean administering the Law and Gospel in all the possible varieties of opportunities including home visitation, office counseling, etc. Certainly the pulpit remains a prime opportunity for that ministry.

Should little children in our homes and Sunday schools have to suffer the effects of the Law? Should not our ministry to these tender consciences be limited to the consolations of the Gospel? In his classic discussion of Law and Gospel, C. F. W. Walther offers this answer:

"Even little children have to pass through these experiences of anguish and terror in the presence of the Law. The reason why so many imagine that they can pass for really good Christians is because their parents reared them to be self-righteous Pharisees; they never made them aware that they are poor, miserable sinners" (*The Proper Distinction Between the Law and Gospel*, p. 83).

Illinois District Winter Bible Conference

The first annual Winter Bible Conference of the Illinois District of the AFLC will be held at Bethlehem Lutheran Church, Morris, Feb. 17-19. Bringing the messages will be Rev. Everald Strom of Mt. Bethel, Pa., and former president of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren. Leading the Bible studies will be Richard Long, pastor of Our Savior's Lutheran Church, AFLC, in Chillicothe, Ill.

Never will I be graduated
from Psalm 51.

Oscar Hanson

The love of Jesus will never be precious to our little ones unless they come to know experientially their tremendous need for the forgiveness of sin. They may sing "Jesus Loves Me, This I Know," but it will remain mere theory until they are convinced of that love through the faithful application of both Law and Gospel. Again, we are not necessarily suggesting a lapse of our baptized children but rather that what was previously an "unconscious" faith become a conscious experience of sin and grace and, of course, remain so.

In 1931, Dr. Karl Ermisch, a theological professor at the former Augsburg Seminary in Minneapolis, delivered a series of lectures at a pastor's summer school of the Lutheran Free Church. His theme was "Confirmation and Conversion." In his approach to this subject, he observed the prevalent confusion: His concern was with those who assumed that all was well with a person spiritually if only he had been once baptized and confirmed. Using the term "conversion" as synonymous with a conscious experience of sin and grace, he said,

...I maintain that in each saved Christian there must be a conscious appropriation of Christ and His merits. Without such a personal attitude — which is termed a living faith — on the part of each, there is not salvation. Many of our Lutheran people in their laudable zeal to emphasize the intrinsic value of regeneration in holy baptism often shrink from speaking of conversion and thereby expose themselves to the suspicion that Lutherans teach a doctrine of salvation without genuine conversion...

"...I say that a faithful pastor who is in the business of saving souls will consider it his highest aim to effect a conversion, to bring about a conscious appropriation of Christ on the part of the child through the preparatory Law and the Gospel (Confirmation and Conversion, pp. 13-16, 23).

Again, it is the faithful ministry of Law and Gospel that accomplishes all that God desires to do in the life of an individual, whoever he may be. Our blessed privilege and responsibility is to proclaim and apply both in the strength that God provides. We may not begin to realize all that God is

HOME MISSION NEWS

Three new congregations begin services

The first Sunday worship services for three new AFLC congregations were held on Jan. 22nd in Rugby, N. Dak., Sioux Falls, S. Dak., and Menomonie, Wis. The Rugby group

has been meeting for the Bible study and fellowship on Sunday evenings during the past couple of months and has already chosen a name, Hope Lutheran Church.



Blaine, Minn.

The first potluck fellowship and carolling party of Maranatha Lutheran Church was held on Dec. 4. After supper the group went carolling at the Linwood Nursing Home and the Fridley Convalescent Home. A warm welcome was given by the residents in both homes. The church had a progressive dinner on December 17, which was very well attended. The congregation meets at the Northtown Mall's Community Center in Blaine, Minn., and is being served by Pastor Donald Greven.

Many a man is willing to rely on God for safety, but he is unwilling to relinquish to God the direction of his course.

Alvin Rogness

doing through His Word in our ministries, but we have the absolute assurance that His Word is effective:

"So shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth; It shall not return to Me void, but it shall accomplish what I please, and it shall prosper in the thing for which I sent it" (Isaiah 55:11).

(To be continued.)

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