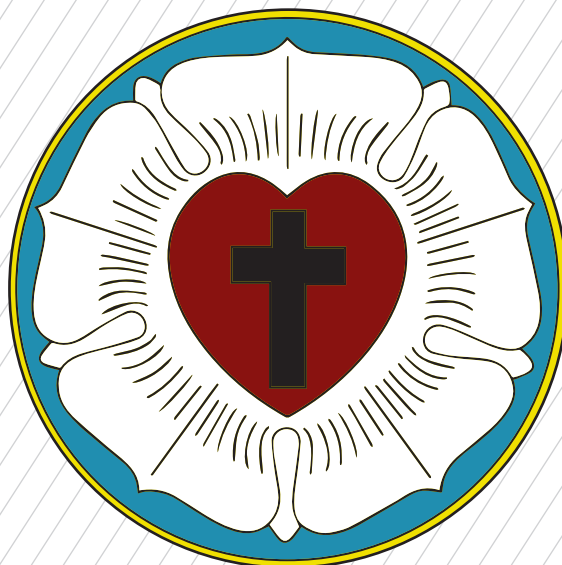


THE LUTHERAN AMBASSADOR

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Sola





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TWO IMPORTANT QUESTIONS

BY PASTOR TOM PARRISH

I did the math. If you and I are asked 50 questions each day (which is low), that means we are asked 18,263 a year. In a lifetime of 80 years that becomes 1,461,000 questions. No wonder people are tired when they become senior citizens.

Some questions are important and some have little meaning at all. If you had to boil down your entire life to only two questions, what would they be? As I search the Bible I have discovered that there are two questions which will determine our purpose and give meaning to our eternity. These two questions summarize everything.

Questions no. 1: Jesus will ask, "Do you love me?" (John 21:15-19).

Jesus claims to be the one and only Savior in the universe. He says that He is the resurrection and the life. He further proclaims that He is God when He says that He and the Father are one. The Bible teaches that Jesus will be our final judge, and our response to Him in this life determines our eternity.

Some of us may have had a children's portrait of Jesus holding a lamb in our homes when we were growing up. While this image of the Savior is true to His character, the Bible also teaches that this same Jesus is not to be treated with indifference. Revelation 19:15 describes Him this way: "From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the

Almighty." In other words, Jesus is no one to be ignored or treated lightly.

So, how do you answer that question today? Do you love Jesus? To love Jesus means that He is your purpose for living, He is your master, He has the final word in all things, and that He is your priority in life—more than mother or father, sister or brother. Jesus is the reason for living.

Question no. 2: Who did you bring with you?

We were created for a purpose. That purpose is found in II Corinthians 5:20: "We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ: be reconciled to God." That's pretty straightforward. Our purpose on earth is to bring the good news of Jesus to as many as possible. This means we are to be intentional in sharing with others the hope of Jesus that is within us.

So often I hear people say, "Well, I don't talk to people about Jesus but I try to witness by my works." The problem is that Jesus never gave us that option. He said that witnessing verbally and doing good works in His name are paramount to His mission. Both must go together.

It is time to get ready to answer these two questions. May our answers bring joy and glory to Jesus.

Parrish, Mendota Heights, Minn., operates Stepping Into Eternity Ministries, which develops discipleship materials and seminars (toeternity.org).

Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Scriptures or by clear reason ... I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and I will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen.

—Martin Luther

Alas! Can we think that the reformation is accomplished, when we cast out a few ceremonies, and changed some vestures, and gestures, and forms! Oh no, sirs! It is the converting and saving of souls that is our business. That is the chiefest part of reformation, that does most good, and tends most to the salvation of the people.

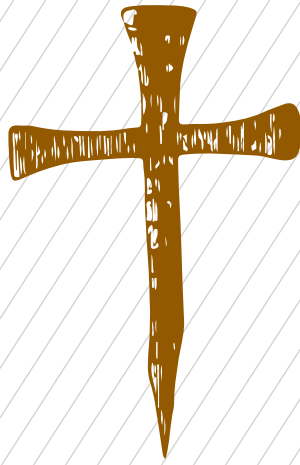
—Richard Baxter

Luther's doctrine of justification depends upon two things: the constant preaching of the wrath of God in the face of sin; and the realization that every Christian is at once righteous and a sinner, thus needing the hammer of the law to terrify and break the sinful conscience.

—Carl Trueman

For Christians to influence the world with the truth of God's Word requires the recovery of the great Reformation doctrine of vocation. Christians are called to God's service not only in church professions but also in every secular calling. The task of restoring truth to the culture depends largely on our lay people.

—J. Gresham Machen



SOLA

Gratia

By Kevin Borg

What is so special about the words, “grace alone?” Are they just a slogan from a bygone era? Or buzz words from a turbulent debate that raged five centuries or more ago? Do these words mean the same thing to us today as they did to the those who first spoke them? Is it enough for us to simply define the words and understand them in the same manner as those who spoke them before us, and then call it good? Or is there something much deeper in these two words, something much more profound than the plain, simple definition to a couple of words.

Grace alone. Grace, the first of our two words, has been defined as the free, unmerited, love and favor of God. When we look at the word *grace*, we may wonder who could have a problem with its definition. Who would oppose the love and favor of God? Honestly, most people probably don't have a problem with the thought that God is loving or that God would regard them with favor. It's the "unmerited" part that upsets some people.

Here's a likely thought process: "What do you mean unmerited? I'm a pretty deserving person. After all, I'm not like other people. I'm honest. I'm not unjust or an adulterer. I fast twice a week and I tithe everything I get. Why in the world wouldn't God bless me?" It's similar to what the Pharisee thought in Luke 18:11-12. And it leads me to ask myself, "Do I sometimes think similar thoughts? Really, just look around at all those other people. I'm not nearly as bad as ..." You know the drill.

Don't we all tend to do that? Don't we all tend to have our lists? Lists of people who don't quite make the cut. God has His list, too.

"As it is written,

THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;
THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,
THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;
ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY
HAVE BECOME USELESS;
THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,
THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.'

'THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,
WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP
DECEIVING;'

'THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS;'
'WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND
BITTERNESS;'

'THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,
DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,
AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT
KNOWN.'

'THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES'
(Romans 3:10-18).

Guess what? Every human being is on that list. Inclusive phrases like "every mouth" and, "all the world," mean nothing less than that we are on that list. The very next verse in Romans says, "... so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may be

accountable to God" (Romans 3:19). We must keep silent and realize that we are accountable to God. We can't say we've been better than someone else. We can't say anything at all.

In the night watches, when we are alone and silent with our thoughts and looking back on our less-than-perfect lives, the accuser comes to remind us of all our faults and sins. What hope do we have? What can we do? What can we say? The brutal truth is that we, of ourselves, can do nothing. We cannot change the fact that we are sinners. There is nothing we can say or do to change our status before God.

Into this hopelessness God enters and intervenes. He takes matters into His own hands and acts on our behalf. Why? No one person deserves to have God work on his or her behalf. The answer can only be the undeserved, *unmerited*, love and favor of God. It is grace. Grace alone.

Why did God give His only begotten Son for a damned human race? Grace! Why did God give us His Word, the Holy Scriptures, to show us how lost we are and to proclaim the good news of salvation in His Son? Grace! Why did God give us the gift of faith to believe in the promises of His Holy Word? Grace!

Why would He do all this? Because that is who He is. When Moses asked to see God's glory, the Lord passed in front of him and proclaimed this about Himself: "The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in lovingkindness and truth" (Exodus 34:6).

He is compassionate and gracious. May we praise the Lord with the psalmist:

"Gracious is the LORD, and righteous;
Yes, our God is compassionate.

The LORD preserves the simple;

I was brought low, and He saved me.

Return to rest, O my soul,

For the LORD has dealt bountifully with you.

For You have rescued my soul from death,

My eyes from tears,

My feet from stumbling. ...

In the courts of the LORD's house,

In the midst of you, O Jerusalem.

Praise the LORD!" (Psalm 116:5-8, 19).

Borg serves as associate pastor of Grace Free Lutheran, Valley City, N.D.



SOLA
Fide

By Pastor John Brennan

Is there anything in all of creation more exhilarating and more liberating than living out a simple gospel faith? Gospel faith trusts wholly in Christ and takes God at His word. Gospel faith doesn't pollute the finished work of justification done by Jesus on the cross with human trifles of self-serving do-goodery or by attempting to adhere to man-made rituals and traditions. Simple faith is just that—simple faith. Faith in the gospel's promise needs no embellishment, and it needs no explanation. In fact, faith needs absolutely nothing—it needs to be left alone.

Having been raised in a Roman Catholic home, I witnessed the misery imposed on believers by adding unbearably high taxes of penance, prayer, and uncertainty to Christ's free gift of saving faith. For my father, and all devoutly imprisoned Catholics, simple faith all by itself was not enough. Catholics were taught that Jesus' sacrifice didn't quite cover all the sin-debt you owed; you needed to add your own pound of flesh to even begin to settle accounts with God. And probably one pound wouldn't be enough; you could never know for sure. My dad was near perfect in attendance at mass and a constant in the confessional booth, yet he almost never counted himself worthy of participation in the Lord's Supper. He had great faith, but that was not enough. Faith alone was too easy; he was taught that a higher price must be paid to buy God's forgiveness. Having no assurance of salvation, he dared not come to the family gathering around God's table.

As I sat in a Lutheran church and watched the faithful return to their seats after communion, over and over again, I saw on their faces the radiance of God's peace, the look of liberation from sin, and the exhilaration of being right with God—things I'd never seen in a Catholic church. Forgiveness on the faces of the faithful is so incredibly beautiful, and it's such a simple beauty. The saint's face is not haggard by the strenuous effort of soul-saving good works. Rather, it is brightened by the joy of loving service in Christ's name. Salvation's brow is not furrowed in the contemplation of high sounding pontifical blathering or theatrical church ritual. Instead, it is tranquil and serene in the knowledge of being saved by the grace of God—nothing more than simple faith.

How frustrating it can be to share your faith when the “smartest” Bible scholars say that salvation by faith alone is too good to be true. How humbling when the “enlightened” theologians explain that Jesus must have meant something other than what Scripture has recorded. The sad truth of their theology is this: on our own, without their help, we're just not clever enough to figure out Christ's real intentions and desires for us. So, standing between Scripture and us—for our own good—we need the firm guiding hands of priests and councils, sacraments and scholars, traditions and rituals. Otherwise we'll fall into the simpleton's snare. Faith alone becomes foolishness.

Mine is a simple mind, and a simple mind needs a simple faith. In fact, anything more than that is beyond me. I wouldn't even have faith if it weren't given to me. I'm not smart enough to find saving loopholes in God's Word, and honestly I'm too lazy to attempt working my way into heaven. However, I have discovered that I'm really good at sinning. Sin is like a second nature; I can't stop even if I want to (which I sometimes do). I am encouraged that the apostle Paul and I are not alone in this exceptional sinmanship. Romans 3:23-2 says, “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God put forward as a propitiation by His blood, to be received by faith.”

If God required anything more of me than faith alone, I'd be doomed. If I lived every last minute of the remainder of my life trying to be holy and attempting to earn my own salvation, all I'd have to show to God would amount to nothing more than a mountain of fertilizer. God knows I am not capable of anything good apart from Him, so He gave me a saving faith. That faith is enough. Enough for God, and enough for me. Nothing more than faith alone.

So is there anything in all of creation more exhilarating and more liberating than living out a simple gospel faith? Thanks to God, no!

Brennan serves St. Peter's Lutheran, Melvin, Ill.

SOLA

Scriptura

By Ruth Gunderson

It would have been easy to get into a verbal sparring match, or to acquiesce, or even shut down completely. “Should I change the subject?” I wondered.

I felt like those were my only options. None of them good.

But out of nowhere, I wondered aloud, “What does God’s Word say about it?”

Instantly I felt relieved, the burden gone.

It was an uncomfortable conversation, to be sure. And we were stuck in the car for another four hours, just the two of us. Not to mention the long drive home at the back end of the three-day weekend.



I had felt this moment coming in the preceding weeks and months. Our lighthearted friendship over common interests had quickly deepened as we shared our struggles in life with each other, both personal and spiritual. I wanted to offer my friend the same openness that she had offered me. Mostly, I wanted to encourage her faith in Christ. I could see she needed that.

But little things nagged at me. Little statements from her that didn't quite fit. Statements meant to shock, and, likely, to feel out where I stood on a particular issue.

So I guess I knew, somehow, that this conversation would come. I just didn't know how it would end. I prayed that I would be ready.

And God answered. With that one question, I knew I needn't fear any lack on my part. I wasn't up on the latest research she was quoting. I hadn't read the dissenting blog posts. I knew only vaguely of the most current trends in progressive churches. But one thing I did know: "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (II Timothy 3:16-17).

Lutherans call this teaching *Sola Scriptura*, the belief that God's Word is the supreme authority in all matters of faith and practice that involve doctrine. This teaching was born out of a much more uncomfortable conversation. Standing before a formal deliberative assembly of the Holy Roman Empire at the Diet of Worms in 1521, Martin Luther was told to recant a collection of his own written materials. Instead he famously answered, "Unless I am convicted by Scripture and plain reason ... I am bound by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience is captive to the Word of God. I cannot and will not recant anything, since it is neither safe nor right to go against conscience. May God help me. Amen."

The problem Luther and the Reformists faced is not unlike the challenges facing the Christian faith today. They may come in a different form—in Luther's time, it was the Catholic church placing itself and tradition above God's Word. Today, Scripture has been relegated to a "time- and place-bound cultural prejudice," described Al Mohler, historical theologian, in a lecture titled "Sufficiency of Scripture."

Luther's statement, then, should be ours. But what exactly is bound up in those two words, *Sola Scriptura*? The Apostle Paul's letter to Timothy, his young student, holds a beautiful picture of its meaning.

We find in Paul's writing that God is the author of Scripture. I love the imagery the first part of these verses evoke, "All Scripture is God-breathed." It reminds me of the beginning of Scripture, when God spoke and it was. Paul uses the Greek word *theopneustos* in his letter, which gives us the dramatic active image of God breathing out the Scriptures. No other written word—historically traditional or otherwise—is given this designation.

If God is the author, then His Word which He breathes out and gives to us must be the final authority on faith and doctrine. Paul writes that it is "useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness." That's a whole lot of life packed into those words. It encompasses doctrine: who God is, what Christ has done for us, and how we can be saved; censure: convicting us when we stray from His Word; correction: checking our actions and beliefs against God's Word; and training in righteousness: not only does His Word tell us what to believe, but also how to act rightly.

There is one last aspect that we should not miss: the sufficiency of Scripture. Paul writes that with God's Word as our touchstone in faith, we will be "thoroughly equipped for every good work." Other written words may contain truth, but when authored by anyone other than God, it falls short. Only God's Word can perfectly prepare us to live rightly in light of a Holy Father.

In the midst of the conversation with my friend, I could see that she was struggling to call sin sin. The world which she had turned to for answers—those bloggers, social scientists, and progressive theologians—would disagree with my diagnosis, painting a sunnier picture of human authority over social norms. I'm thankful that this conversation drove me back into the Scriptures, where I found a completely trustworthy source for even this matter of faith and life. I pray that someday, my friend will also turn once again to Scripture, for there is life for her, too.

Gunderson, a member of Vision of Glory Lutheran, Plymouth, Minn., is the managing editor.



SOLUS

Christus

By Brooke Duncan

“We basically believe the same things. We both teach our kids to be good people, we’re trying to do the right thing. We just have our own ways of going about it.” She smiled, urging me to concede. Our conversation had already turned philosophical that afternoon, but here it was: the crux of the matter.

“Actually, I disagree,” I told her. It was the same old lie. The deception of the garden repackaged in modern relativism. “The difference is Jesus Himself.”

Relativism is rampant in our culture. In their short book, *Relativism: Feet Firmly Planted in Mid-Air*, Francis J. Beckwith and Gregory Koukl define relativism as the belief that “All people have a right to their own opinion—except those who hold that some opinions are better than others (though we believe that our opinion about them is better than their opinion about us).”

Our neighbors’ speech, conduct, and world view is laced with this message of relativism: What’s right for you is right for you, and what’s right for me is right for me. So proclaiming that Christ alone is “The way, the truth, and the life” is like a slap in the face to someone who believes there are no absolutes.

In like fashion, the Reformation slogan *Solus Christus*, or “Christ alone,” must have infuriated the papal authorities of the day. The Catholic Church of 1517 had become accustomed to playing God, granting people freedom from purgatory and even forgiveness of sins. Forgiveness, that is, if a person had done enough good works. A person’s reward was especially certain if those works included making contributions to the Pope’s treasury. Not surprisingly, when Martin Luther declared the papal authorities impotent of such mediation, that it was Christ alone who had the power to forgive sins, Germany and all of Europe erupted. In no uncertain terms, Luther had demanded that the Catholic Church loosen its grip on the people. It is Christ alone, not the Church, who has the ability and authority to impart salvation.

“And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He Himself is the propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for those of the whole world,” writes John in I John 2:1b-2.

There is no forgiveness of sin apart from Christ, but over time the Church had gotten it all wrong. It had become about the institution rather than the Savior. People didn’t need to give more, do more, or go to confession more. They didn’t need a priest.

They needed Christ alone. *Solus Christus* was a blazing banner over the people heralding the way for true redemption. And so it remains today, Christ alone is the only answer for lost souls and our ever-changing culture.

We, too, are not immune to veering from the finished work of Christ. Catholicism still seems to teach justification by faith plus good works and the primacy of the Pope. Some practice extra-spiritual biblical disciplines to go deeper, to be a more spiritual Christian. We are told to have the right programs, the right music, and the right ministry strategy. If we just cater to the felt needs of the masses, we too can grow a “healthy” church. The American creed is that if it feels good, do it. The pragmatist says if it works, it must be right. We are expected to accept cultural relativism despite the fact that the Bible teaches us absolutes. We are told to welcome everyone’s beliefs, to celebrate our differences.

The Catholic Church turned away from its first love by worshiping the idols of greed and power. Christians in the 21st century can also be seduced into altering the message, to mistakenly cooperate with the serpent of old. We get it wrong when we trade the truth for a softer message that doesn’t clearly proclaim Christ alone.

But pressures from within the Church and from the culture around us do not change the steadfast truth of the gospel. Luther said that Jesus is the, “Center and circumference of the Bible.” It should be true of all things in our lives, as well, because He gives us life and breath and everything else. The message of reconciliation to the world is sure: Christ alone is our hope. With humility, let’s stand firm. May “Christ Alone” be our motto. Let us “Fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith” (Romans 12:2).

What my friend needs is what we all need. She needs to know absolutely that her deeds can’t save her. Her good intentions absolutely are not enough. She needs to understand that despite her striving, she absolutely falls short of God’s glory. Jesus is her Advocate and offers Himself for the forgiveness of her own sins.

“The difference is Jesus Himself,” I told her.

Duncan, formerly Schrage, is a 1998 graduate of AFLBS and former member of Christian Free Lutheran, Wheatland, Iowa. She now lives with her husband and three children in Idaho.



Martin Luther on Brand

BY PASTOR WADE MOBLEY

Next fall is the 500th anniversary of something called the Reformation—on that much all agree. The *nature* of that event, though, is more debated.

Some historians characterize the Reformation as a social rebellion of the people over the papacy, or simplistically, the religious arm of the Renaissance. Philosophers with a similar world view to those historians teach the Reformation as a change in the manner of human thought, perhaps even as a precursor of the European Enlightenment two centuries hence. True, the Protestant Reformation in Germany produced subsidiary benefits such as an increase in literacy and the normalization of German as a language, but the Reformation was much more than a cultural upheaval. More accurately, the Reformation was a multi-nation, multi-person movement that changed theology's source (placing the Bible in people's hands) and content (replacing an overly optimistic view of human nature with the substitutionary atonement of Christ).

Calling the Reformation an *event* is even more central to the problem. Such a cataclysmic shift in both thinking and

power—in both state and church—cannot be the effect of a single event. Yet there is an event associated with the beginning of the Reformation, and that event is etched in our minds iconically: Martin Luther, hammer in hand, on the steps of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Saxony, on All Saints Eve in 1517. That this event is etched in our minds affirms the legacy of what author Andrew Pettegree calls “Brand Luther: How an unheralded

monk turned his small town into a center of publishing, made himself the most famous man in Europe—and started the Protestant Reformation.”

Pettegree tells the story of Luther and his influence against the backdrop of another one of the author's loves: The history of printing. The advent of the movable type printing press has long been credited with hastening the influence of Reformation thinking. What has not been explored as much is the influence of the Reformation on the printing industry.

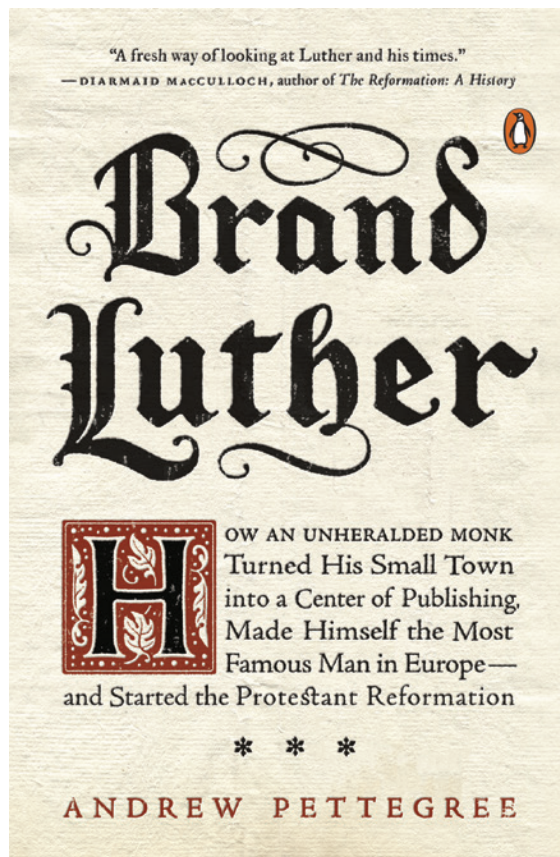
Printing was a sapling in the forest of business. Paper was expensive and in short supply. Ink was hard to come by, and as easy to tax and restrict as the paper itself. Printing presses, due to their scarcity alone, were easy to regulate. Not many people knew how to read. But the Reformation was about to change both the printing of literature and the literacy of its consumers.

The Reformation brought a steady stream of business to presses longing for saleable material. This stream flowed from both sides of the debate, with enough populism and vitriol to turn printed paper into hard currency. Printers, who did not pay for the rights to print material, competed with one another for the opportunity to print the most lucrative content. This competition, in turn, produced printing products of increasing quality.

While Wittenberg was a small town with an even smaller printing industry, years of investments by the elector of the region, Frederick the Wise, led to the establishment of a university, and thus, a university press. Pettegree demonstrates the advance in printing from the rudimentary sheets produced by Wittenberg printer Rhau-Grunenberg to more sophisticated works of his competitors. Local artist and businessman Lucas Cranach contributed to the success of the Reformation with his funding of the Wittenberg print works and through the production of his shop that produced woodcuts for use in the printing process.

Those woodcuts are a big reason for the

see **Brand**, page 16



By Andrew Pettegree
Published by Penguin
2015, 381 pages



The Genius Theology

Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand wrote *The Genius of Luther's Theology* in order to initiate Christians into Luther's way of thinking theologically. It is not organized systematically, but is composed of two essays that highlight Luther's two major presuppositions that guided every aspect of his theology. The first essay is about the two kinds of human righteousness. The second essay examines how God deals with humans by His powerful Word. Kolb and Arand seek to show how Luther's approach to theology is relevant and useful for Christians today. I think they have succeeded in this task. By focusing on just two main points and driving them home, there is a good chance that those two points will stick with readers and influence how they approach the theological task.

The first essay considers Luther's presentation of the two kinds of human righteousness: passive righteousness and active righteousness. Passive righteousness is that by which humans are justified before God. This righteousness has been won for all people by Christ's life, death, and resurrection. Humans, who receive this righteousness by faith in the Word of the gospel, are purely passive in their reception of this righteousness; they don't do a single thing or make any contribution to this righteousness. It is from outside of them, it is alien—it is the righteousness of Jesus Christ. It is perfect, holy, and unassailable. God is forever pleased with this righteousness just as He is forever pleased with His beloved Son. This is the righteousness given to humans apart from the law and it is the basis for our acceptance before the Father on judgment day.

Active righteousness is that which humans actively pursue in the world for the benefit of others. This is the realm where baptized believers are called to live out what they already are. They have been given Christ's perfect righteousness as a gift. Now, empowered by the Holy Spirit, they are called to live righteously and do justice on earth as they wait for Christ's return. When Christians do not know what righteous deeds

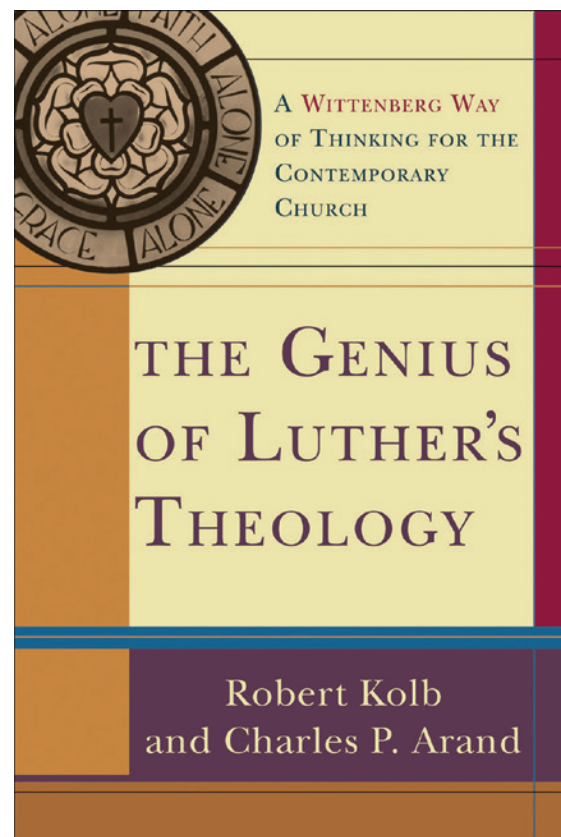
God requires they may look for guidance in His law. Love for neighbor is always the guiding factor as Christians seek to live righteously. A Christian's vocation will also determine just how he or she goes about loving and serving his or her neighbors. The manifest needs of others is another determiner. Even non-Christians carry out active righteousness in their vocations. Although when non-Christians do outwardly righteous works it is not considered as righteousness before God because it is tainted with sin and unbelief, nevertheless, the righteous deeds of non-believers are still beneficial for others and contribute to the well-being of the community and God's creation.

The distinction between the two kinds of righteousness is excellent as it allows us to speak highly and unreservedly about grace and works in their proper contexts. It is embarrassing to hear pastors hem and haw about the gospel in such a way that they always feel compelled to say something about the necessity of good works. It is just as embarrassing to hear them preach about good works in such a way that they always downplay their significance because they don't save us.

A proper understanding of the two kinds of righteousness allows pastors to extol grace and Christ's righteousness with no strings attached as it becomes our righteousness before God. Similarly, pastors are enabled to speak of works and the law unreservedly with no shame as they impress upon believers the value of works for others and God's will in this matter. Kolb and

see **Genius**, page 16

BY PASTOR JARROD HYLDEN



By Robert Kolb and
Charles P. Arand
Published by Baker
Academic
2008, 240 pages



So Obviously Human

BY PASTOR CRAIG JOHNSON

While being interviewed for a university teaching position Carl Trueman was asked, “If you were trapped on a desert island, who would you want with you—Luther or Calvin?” Trueman is a Presbyterian and he was being interviewed for a position at a Reformed university that looks more to John Calvin for its theological direction than Martin Luther. But Trueman had to be honest in his answer. “Well, I think Calvin would provide the best theological and exegetical discussion, but he always strikes me as somewhat sour and colorless. Luther, however, may not have been as careful a theologian, but he was so obviously human and so clearly loved life. Thus, I’d have to choose Luther” (p. 195).

Trueman got hired for the position, and his appreciation for Luther has remained strong. His book, *Luther on the Christian Life*, is an introduction to Luther, the man who was “so obviously human.” Sometimes historic figures like Luther are portrayed as almost flawless superheroes. Trueman helps us appreciate the great work God did through this very human individual.

In his book, Trueman brings out Luther’s great sense of humor. Some books on Luther can be dry dissertations that attempt to dissect every fine point of Luther’s teaching. This fails to reflect the man who was anything but dry and boring.

Trueman writes: “One of the most striking things about the man is his sense of humor, and one cannot possibly write a book on his understanding of the Christian life without reference to this. ... Luther laughed all the time ... Humor was a large part of what helped to make him so human and accessible” (p. 198).

Trueman helps his readers understand Luther’s teaching by considering the context of the times in which Luther lived, which had some

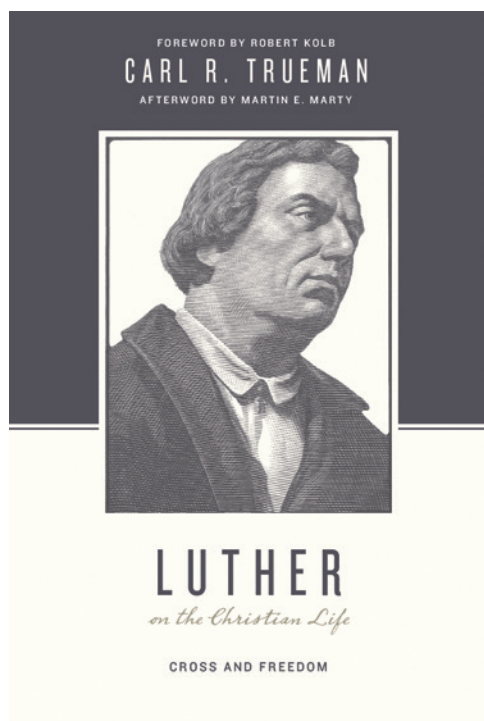
major differences from our day. Understanding those differences is helpful in attempting to understand the reformer. “... we cannot understand Luther’s view of the Christian life in general without understanding his own Christian life in particular” (p. 24). Trueman does an excellent job of providing a biography of Luther’s life and showing how his life influenced and was influenced by his theology.

In a very readable style, Trueman describes some of the main points of Luther’s theology, including “Luther’s great stress upon the priority and objectivity of God’s revelation. ... The Word is powerful, creative, destructive, and re-creative” (p. 196). Understanding the priority and objectivity of the Scriptures totally influences the Christian’s view of life, the church and the Sacraments. “Thus, as I reread Luther, I was struck both as pastor and as Christian believer by the immense confidence he had in the objective action of God in Christ and the objective reality this gives to both Word and sacrament” (p. 198).

Trueman brings out Luther’s desire for the church to keep declaring the objective action of God in Christ. “The church is there to teach about God. Thus, it is far more important for the church to teach the catechism than to hold classes on parenting or personal financial management. Those things are worthy too and may well fall into the path of a pastor as he deals with individuals in his flock; but they are not the task of the church in the first instance and can indeed be addressed only within a context where the big things, the simple things, have been carefully taught” (p. 114).

The church is given the privilege of teaching the law and the gospel. The law that is declared is not good advice on how to live but the crushing truth of our sin and the judgment it deserves. The gospel is the good news of what God has done in Christ and the cross. Trueman points out how Luther’s teaching on law and gospel is counter cultural but practical. “... we tend to look for techniques, things we can do, in order to solve

see **Human**, page 16



By Carl R. Trueman
Published by Crossway
2015, 224 pages



Two Kinds of Righteousness

The preacher hesitated when he got to the verse in which Paul admonishes the Church to live holy. His mind twisted and turned as he wrestled with how to qualify his next statement so that it didn't seem like he was exhorting the Church to live "properly." He didn't want to give the impression that his people were to be concerned with living holy lives, rather, he wanted to focus on the fact that Jesus lived a holy life in their place. Sadly, statements about ethics, vocation, or sanctification had been long gone from his pulpit.

Does God call us to pious living? Some might scoff or sneer at such a question. However, Martin Luther's writing belts out a resounding, "AMEN!" (Luther never kept his thoughts secret.) In Luther's *Lectures on Galatians*, his interaction with the Holy Word of God brought him to the realization that not only does God call for Christians to be made right with Him by means of justification by faith (passive righteousness), but also to be active in good deeds toward one's neighbor (active righteousness). Both are part of the Christian life and neither one is to be ignored.

Luther writes: "This is our theology, by which we teach a precise distinction between these two kinds of righteousness, the active and the passive, so that morality and faith, works and grace, secular society and religion may not be confused. Both are necessary, but both must be kept within their limits" (p. 7).

In other words, there is a tension. But this tension is nothing new. In the Word, we see both emphasized. In speaking about justification by faith alone, Paul writes: "We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ, so we also have believed in Christ Jesus, in order to be justified by faith in Christ and not by works of the law, because by works of the law no one will be justified" (Galatians 2:16). However, in tension with Paul is James, who writes: "What good is it, my brothers, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can that faith save him? ... Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (2:14, 17).

So how does a believer approach this tension?

Can a call exist for "two kinds of righteousness?"

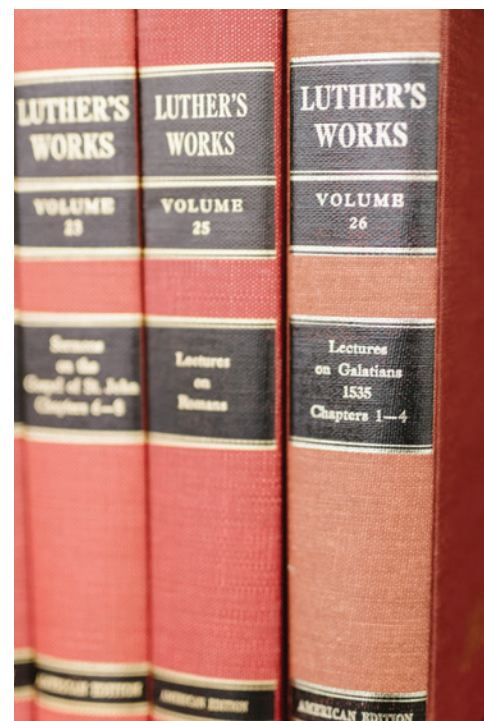
Luther writes: "We set forth two worlds, as it were, one of them heavenly and the other earthly. Into these we place these two kinds of righteousness, which are distinct and separated from each other. The righteousness of the Law is earthly and deals with earthly things; by it we perform good works ... But this righteousness [of the gospel] is heavenly and passive. We do not have it of ourselves; we receive it from heaven. We do not perform it; we accept it by faith, through which we ascend beyond all laws and works" (p. 8).

When we keep both kinds of righteousness in tension, not only are we able to be made right with God, but we are also able to love our neighbors by fulfilling the vocations which God has set before us. While some may try to do away with this tension (as the Catholic Church was doing in Luther's day), Luther attempted to uphold both callings. Does God justify us by His Son without any work of our own? Absolutely (passive righteousness). Does God call us to live out our vocations in love for our neighbor? Absolutely (active righteousness). Both are an essential part of the Christian life and must not be neglected.

So, next time you hear a passage of Scripture preached with an exhortation to holy living, do not shrink back or balk at the pastor's words. Instead, recognize your position as a secure believer in the righteousness of God and look at such callings as a guide of how to live out your faith before your fellow man (the third use of the law). This is pious Lutheranism at its core.

Olson serves Gloria Dei Lutheran, St. Louis, Mo.

BY PASTOR NATHAN OLSON



Jaroslav Pelikan & Helmut T. Lehmann, editors
Published by Concordia Publishing House
1999, 461 pages

BOOK REVIEWS

Genius, from page 13

Arand put it this way: “The two kinds of righteousness enable Lutherans fully and unreservedly to affirm two simultaneous and yet distinct genuine dimensions of human existence without compromising the other” (26).

The second part of the book explains Luther’s concept of the Word. God acts by speaking. When God speaks a thing, it becomes reality. (This is why forensic righteousness is not a mere legal fiction. God declares us righteous, therefore we most certainly are.) God created the universe by means of His Word. God sent the Word made flesh into the world to accomplish the redemption of humankind. God sends His Word out today to recreate fallen creatures and restore them back into a right relationship with Himself. God doesn’t deal with humans apart from the Word.

The connection between this section and the previous section on two kinds of righteousness is that humans can only come to receive Christ’s righteousness as it is delivered to them by God’s Word of promise. This Word bestows the riches of Christ’s righteousness to humans in various forms as it is preached, read, heard in absolution, and given in baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Another form which is similar to absolution is the mutual consolation of the brethren when Christians speak the gospel to one another for their encouragement. God comes to people with His Word in all of these ways to make them righteous, to recreate what was lost in them by sin, to nurture His relationship with them, and to preserve them until the end.

In this second section, Kolb and Arand also write about what happens to humans when they are recreated by God’s Word. The Word bestows faith, which brings with it the fruit of the Spirit. It also gives reborn humans the privilege and responsibility of speaking the Word to their neighbors.

In their book, Kolb and Arand help us enter into the mind of Luther and consider theology through his spectacles. A proper understanding of the two kinds of righteousness and the power of God’s Word in all of its forms will influence every other aspect of theology as well as every opportunity to preach and teach God’s Word. They are fundamental presuppositions for pastors to have as they seek to administer the Word and sacraments for the recreation of God’s people and for their strength as they live out active righteousness in the world.

Hylden serves Skreftsrud Lutheran, Beresford, S.D.

Brand, from page 12

enduring mental pictures of the Reformation. There was a “look” to the Reformation that people saw widely-distributed in print. Luther and his allies produced content that appealed to people. Though foes would follow, the visual appeal of the Reformers’ works was quite unlike the dry, academic disputations of the day. It was effective enough that their Roman Catholic counterparts considered it dirty pool. For the first time in history the mass media would become a significant part of the message.

Questions that most students of the Reformation ask are, “Why him? Why then? Why there?” There are answers to all three. God used circumstances, both political and economic, to cause theological benefit. Yes, Luther was an amazing man. But he was not alone. God also used others, including a small group of publishers across Germany with mixed motives, to spread the message of salvation in Christ alone, by grace alone, and through faith alone. God, in His sovereignty, made Luther and the Reformation, but God used printing as one of His tools to do so. And in some respects, God, Luther, and the Reformation expedited the printing industry.

Pettegree provides the reader with a strenuously-researched, brilliantly-written volume that is a delight to read. The author’s point includes the benefit of aesthetics, and he models this in a way that will not disappoint. The heavy pages of the paperback turn in fingers that grasp a hard cover with textured dust jacket. Ample pictures and maps illustrate the pages, helping those with limited geographical knowledge of Europe. The fusion of two interests—Luther and printing—is not forced, and allows the author passionate expression of his material. With a wealth of Luther reading either in print or in the offing, *Brand Luther* deserves a place near the front of the line.

Mobley serves as president of the Free Lutheran Schools and dean of the Free Lutheran Seminary in Plymouth, Minn.

Human, from page 14

our problems. ... Luther would disagree: the person whose life is falling apart and who is thus tempted to despair needs to know Christ, and knowing Christ requires knowing who he is and what he has done” (p. 130).

The church gets to teach the world about “... what Luther calls the “joyful exchange,” whereby the believer’s sins are passed to Christ and Christ’s righteousness is passed to the believer” (p. 69). Once Luther discovered from Scripture the truth of the joyful exchange, his life was changed forever. God then used the change in his life to change the world.

Johnson is the pastor of Bethany Free Lutheran, Astoria, Ore.

W

hat comes to your mind when you hear the term “obey”?

For many of us, the picture that first enters is of a dutiful pet near a responsible master. The master calls the animal and it obeys. We tend to be comfortable with this language because of the established order between the human master and the domesticated creature.

What about when we are the ones called to obey? Our finger raises in objection. Our skin starts to crawl. Our dander gets raised. Our understanding of our humanity and the Lord’s divinity collide. The Lord is holy and good. He is just and powerful. The Living God is faithful and true as our Master.

But us? We are none of those! And yet we seek control of our own lives. Even those of us who through God’s Word and God’s Spirit know Him by grace through faith in Jesus, we recoil at the thought of not being in control.

How, then, are we to make sense of the times when Scripture uses the terms “obey” or “obedience”? We may simply chalk it up as something that God is requiring of us, which

TO OBEY OR NOT OBEY

BY PASTOR JASON HOLT

is fair, but that does not end the assessment. It appears that there is something further going on here. The Lord is calling those redeemed by the Savior King to look on Him as Master and to respond to Him empowered by His grace to walk in His ways.

We find this situation in John 14. This chapter begins with the statement that Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life (verse 6). When asked by the disciples about His purpose in revealing Himself to them, we find the following:

“Jesus replied, ‘Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me’” (John 14:23-24, NIV).

The guidance is clear. Believers are invited into a walk of faith that observes His Word. This process never replaces or overshadows the full sacrifice that Jesus paid at the cross. Instead, keeping His Word is a supernatural outcome for a child of God who is guided by the Spirit of God (John 14:26, just two verses later).

In this way, we could define obedience as a Holy Spirit-led observance of God’s Word. When

we dismiss obedience, we reduce Jesus’ calling to us as His followers. This passage is important for everyone, especially for caring, believing adults seeking to share their faith with the next generation. Teenagers are watching.

#

AFLC Youth Ministries

- 2008 people attended the FLY Convention in 2015
- 127 teens and leaders attended FLY Beyond 2016
- 54 youth leaders attended Youth Workers Weekends in 2016
- 6 AFLC congregations are prayerfully pursuing a paid youth leader role at any given time

(Statistics gathered from congregational contacts 2007-2016)

Holt, the director of AFLC Youth Ministry, is a member of Living Hope, Rogers, Minn.

The 2017 schedule of the Lutheran Ambassador

Below is the 2017 schedule for *The Lutheran Ambassador*. Please be in prayer for each issue. Note the deadlines and special emphasis of each issue. If you have an idea regarding a general article, a certain issue, or have an interest in writing, please contact the editors. E-mail us at ruthg@aflc.org or call (763) 545-5631.

ISSUE DATE	DEADLINE	ISSUE THEME
January	November 28	Worship
February	December 30	Christian Ed.
March	January 30	Lent/Easter
April	February 27	AFLC Schools
May	March 27	Parents
June	April 28	Evangelism
July	May 29	Missions
August	June 26	Conference Review
September	July 28	Youth
October	August 28	Reformation
November	September 29	Thanksgiving
December	October 30	Christmas

Please note, information regarding the Annual Conference, scheduled for June 13-16 on the campus of the AFLC Schools in Plymouth, Minn., will be featured in the May issue, with a deadline of March 27. The May issue will include the conference schedule, board and committee nominees, registration, and WMF convention schedule and registration information. The registration will also be printed in either the March or April issue. Housing information will be printed as soon as it is available.



Reprinting Articles

Our editors have had several requests recently for permission to reprint articles or excerpts of articles from past issues. We appreciate every inquiry, and as a general rule give permission to our congregations to reprint short runs (100 or fewer) of single articles. We ask that any such reprint would include source information (publication name, date, page). We also ask that the author (outside of our editors) would be contacted for their permission, as well.

WATERS IN THE WILDERNESS

NOVEMBER 20

"For in him dwells all the fullness of the God-head bodily, and ye are complete in him" (Colossians 2:9-10).

In Christ we have all the resources for a full and complete life. If we have found peace in Christ and let Him live in us, He is adequate for all our needs. We are too small to hold much of His fullness; but by using what we have we can have more of His fullness. A child whose muscles are perfectly formed still has to exercise them for years before they become the powerful muscles they were intended to be.

But we are never complete in the sense of finished. We reach out to receive from Him every day. His grace is new with every morning. The day we fail to come to Christ in communion we find how woefully incomplete we are.

One reason we may fall short and fail may possibly be that we are overreaching. Perhaps we are trying to be something great, something that God never intended for us to be. We may be running ahead of God. Time and again, He may call us back to remind us of our position and station in life. God's grace is always sufficient for us in the place God intended for us.

Another danger is that we might be holding back and not stepping out on the promises as we should. He wants us to go forward. By faith and relying on God's grace we can accomplish much for God. We are complete in Him.

May Swanson, now deceased, was a member of Triumph Lutheran, Nogales, Ariz.

Waters in the Wilderness is a daily devotional published by the AFLC Board of Parish Education in 1971 with Dr. Iver Olson, editor. All 365 meditations were contributed by AFLC members from many walks of life. "Here, they offer each a glass of cool and refreshing water each day to thirsting souls," wrote Olson in the preface. Reprinted by permission. The volume is out of print.



W

hile working on *Footprints of the Faithful*, my intention had always

been to devote a chapter to Carol Knapp, but as the work progressed and the book lengthened I was faced with cutting chapters rather than adding them. As a result, Carol was not given her proper due.

She was born in Brazil shortly after her parents, missionaries George and Helen Knapp, arrived there. At the time of her birth in January 1959, George proudly announced, "We now have a *brasileira* in our family." This perhaps explains why Carol has had such an enduring love for the country and the people of Brazil.

Take, for instance, her account of accompanying her parents as a young child in the United States when they were home on deputation. As the time grew closer for their return to Brazil, Carol would hear people make comments to her parents: "It must be difficult to think of going back to Brazil." "It must be sad to be leaving and returning to the mission field again." Carol could never understand those comments: "Why were they sympathizing with us? I could hardly wait to get back. Brazil was my home,

CAROL: A BRASILEIRA

BY LOIELL DYRUD

and I was finally going home. It was a joyous thought for me." Of course, she is quick to add that as she grew older, she began to understand the sadness of separation her parents experienced.

And so she grew up on the mission field, working alongside her parents. But as her love for the work grew, it became tempered by an early diagnosis of a rare form of muscular dystrophy in 1976. Only 17 at the time, whatever commitment to the work in Brazil she had been looking forward to would never be fulfilled. Nevertheless, she soldiered on.

When missionary Priscilla Wold left Brazil in 1984, Carol took her place as dean of women, office worker, and youth counselor at the schools in Campo Mourão. She later served on the teaching staff. Because of her progressing illness, she was hired on a year-by-year basis with the knowledge that her work could end at anytime. Yet she continued in this role for the next six years. Missionaries as well as Brazilian nationals who worked with her were always amazed by her warm, positive personality and joy in His service even as her physical health was declining.

Finally, at the end of 1989, she returned to the States with her parents. The next year the World Mission Annual Report paid tribute to her: "We are thankful for the ministry that she had while

there, for she made a very positive impact upon the work and in the churches in the surrounding area."

Though confined to a wheelchair for the past several years, Carol faithfully continues working with missions, posting missionary newsletters for World Missions to the AFLC website as well as on Facebook.

I got to know Carol while working on the book. She was an invaluable resource as I could always count on her to give me insights and check sources since she continues to communicate with her friends in Brazil. In spite of the passing years, she has never left her roots, and though thousands of miles separate her from Brazil, she is still a *brasileira*.



Dyrud, a member of Our Saviour's Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn., is the author of the fourth book in the AFLC Heritage Series.

Three years ago the routine renewal of my work permit, which is required for us to live and work here in Uganda, was rejected. I had applied at the same time as our fellow missionary, Micah Berger; his work permit was approved for three years. Since the rejection, my wife, Rhoda, and I have been on a journey of learning what it means and what it looks like to truly trust God and to wait on Him.

After our initial rejection, we were able to file an appeal, requesting the Immigration Department to reconsider their decision. We discovered that our rejection was due to an “enemy” who wanted us out of Uganda, and who was using his connections at the Immigration Department to get us deported.

How do you pray in such a situation? “Your will be done” is certainly a prayer we learn from Scripture, which reflects being yielded to whatever God’s ultimate plan is. The Apostle Paul often found himself kicked out of a region and needing to move on because of enemies. In Acts 16, however, it says that the Holy Spirit kept him and his fellow missionaries from preaching in the province of Asia and that the “Spirit of Jesus” would not allow them to enter Bithynia (v. 6-7). I have wondered how they came to the conclusion that the obstacle in their way was the Spirit and not

BY PASTOR NATE JORE

the enemy. It was somehow very clear to them that it was the Lord re-directing their steps. In our situation, we have wondered many times if God is closing the door for us to continue our work in Uganda. And yet at every turn, we have seen God’s hand keeping the door open for us to remain here, often miraculously. We have been so blessed and encouraged by many people who, like Epaphras, God has raised up to wrestle in prayer for us (Colossians 4:12).

In the midst of sitting in a state of limbo as we waited on news regarding our work permit, we, together with members of the World Missions Committee, felt strongly that we should go forward with plans for our next phase of ministry here: moving our family from Jinja to Nabukosi, a small farming village which is a 45-minute drive outside of Jinja, with the goal of living in community with the villagers and farming alongside them, seeking opportunities to share Christ, make disciples, and plant simple house churches.

We started building our home in Nabukosi just before Christmas last year, in faith and in hope that our appeal would be granted. To our surprise, we received a phone call in January from the Immigration Department, informing us that our appeal had been rejected and that we needed to pack our bags and leave the country within 30 days. I met with an official a few days after receiving the phone call, explaining our situation and asking for help. He was intrigued

and sympathetic, and said he would look into it for us. He told us to wait to pick up our rejection notice so that he could have time to investigate. In July we were officially served the rejection notice, and this time we had only 14 days to pack up and leave. When I informed them that my wife was entering her third trimester of pregnancy and that it’d be difficult for her to pack up and travel, they told me that I could request for an extension which would allow her to deliver here. We were granted that extension, but were told that once the baby was born and we had the necessary paperwork (i.e. birth certificate, passport) for her to travel, we’d need to leave.

It looked like the door for our family to stay in Uganda was closing for good. Meanwhile, I was continuing to oversee the building of our home in Nabukosi, praying that the Lord would somehow allow our family to stay in Uganda. It was painful to imagine walking away from this dream and this hope of ours, which the Lord planted in our hearts years ago. As difficult as this time was, the Lord brought Rhoda and I to a place of complete surrender to Him, come what may, and we experienced that “perfect peace” that Isaiah talks about (26:3) and the “peace that passes all understanding” (Philippians 4:17)—gifts from Him. But our hearts were definitely grieving the very real possibility of leaving Uganda.

It was at this point, I believe, that the prayer effort began in earnest. People back in the U.S. were called upon to pray, and they did.

A MATTER OF PRAYER



The leadership team of the Ambassador Institute of Uganda began gathering regularly to fast and pray together, as well as to spread the word amongst the Ambassador Institute students, appealing for their prayers. Their prayers often mirrored the prayers of David as his enemies pursued him. “Part your heavens, O Lord, and come down; touch the mountains, so that they smoke. Send forth lightning and scatter the enemies; shoot your arrows and route them” (Psalm 144:5-6). “The Lord is my light and my salvation—whom shall I fear? The Lord is the stronghold of my life—of whom shall I be afraid? When evil men advance against me to devour my flesh ... they will stumble and fall” (Psalm 27:1-2). The Lord reminded me that justice is from Him, as it says in Proverbs 29:26, “Many seek an audience with a ruler, but it is from the Lord that man gets justice.”

Mama Kate, an Ambassador Institute graduate, is an elderly Ugandan woman

who reminds me of Anna in the Bible. If you don’t find her praying, you will find her sharing the gospel with people in the market. She has testified that after her two years of studying and immersing herself in God’s Word, she is now able to understand and to share the true gospel with her people. When she heard about the troubles with my work permit, she began to diligently bring the situation before God in prayer. One day as she was praying, she had a vision that my enemy had fallen off his seat. The interpretation was that my enemy, who had been causing these problems at immigration, was now defeated. The very next day, I was connected to officials who had authority to override our rejection and to issue my work permit.

Perhaps by the time you read this, we will have a definite answer as to whether we need to go or whether we can stay, but we are encouraged and hopeful by these latest developments, that the Lord is indeed providing a way for us to stay. Whether we go or whether we stay, we know that He is good and that we are in His loving hands. We trust Him and we will praise Him, wherever He leads us. May He be glorified in all things, both now and forevermore.

Jore is an AFLC missionary serving in Jinja, Uganda, with his family.

PEOPLE & PLACES

Pastor Leroy Flickinger has accepted a call to serve Abundant Life Lutheran, Thief River Falls, Minn. He was installed Sept. 18 by Pastor Terry Olson, assistant to the president of the AFLC.

Pastor Christian Andrews, Little Falls, Minn., has accepted an interim call to Mount Zion Lutheran, Landisburg, Pa., and Tressler Memorial Free Lutheran, Loysville, Pa.

Members of the AFLC Coordinating Committee accepted **Pastor Richard Taylor** of Eagle Grove, Iowa, to the fellowship roster and **Pastor Chad Forman** of Rockwood, Mich., to the licensed pastor roster.

Disciple Lutheran Fellowship, Reading, Pa., closed at the end of June.

Members of the AFLC Conference Committee have made a change to the schedule of the **2017 Annual Conference**. The Ordination Service, normally held during the concluding service of the conference, will be held on the opening night, June 13. The committee’s decision was based on allowing for as many participants as possible to see how God has answered prayers for providing pastors for AFLC congregations.



Pastor David Ryerson was installed Sept. 25 at Hope Free Evangelical Lutheran, Ishpeming, Mich. Pictured are (from left) Linda and Pastor Lyndon Korhonen and Pastor David and Rachel Ryerson.



Visa issues bring Raans back from work in Asia

After facing several roadblocks in their effort to renew their visas, Pastor Brent and Emily Raan, AFLC missionaries to Asia, will be returning to the U.S. on Nov. 14. The Raans have been abroad for seven months of their first four-year term as missionaries.

Acting on advice from their lawyer, the Raans will apply for an employment visa, which is granted to anyone volunteering with a non-government organization (NGO); the AFLC-India qualifies as such. However, such an application requires them to return home

“We have no idea what this season holds for us. Our plan is to begin gathering everything that we need for the application process before we leave so that once we are in the States we can submit it as quickly as possible,” writes Brent. “However, once everything is submitted it may take up to six months or more before we know if our new visas will be approved or not.”

Complicating matters is the recent arrival of their short-term assistant Anja Ferkinghoff, as well as the Raans’ expectant child, due in December. Please be in prayer

for the Raans as they transition, and for Ferkinghoff as she waits to be led by God in her future plans.

“Since we don’t know when we’ll be able to return—if ever—there is so much that we need to do, both practically and logistically for ourselves and within ministry here,” wrote Brent. “Thank you all so much for your prayers and encouragement during this season. It is a difficult time, but we trust that God is in control and we know that He will continue to lead us as He always has before.”

SEPTEMBER MEMORIALS

AFLBS

Ruth Claus
Adeline Kvam
Florence Hiepler
Ingvald Berdal

General Fund

Adeline Kvam
Melvin Fisher

Home Missions

Carol Mackey

Miriam Infant

Home

Erik Mathison

Parish Ed

Mary Sperry

World Missions

Carol Mackey
Marjorie Rysdahl

... in honor of

AFLTS

Joan Udden

AFLC BENEVOLENCES January 1-Sept. 30, 2016

FUND	REC'D IN SEPTEMBER	TOTAL REC'D TO DATE	PRIOR YEAR-TO-DATE
General Fund	\$68,162	\$308,237	\$258,739
Evangelism	7,531	94,004	103,159
Youth Ministries	7,132	77,285	82,278
Parish Education	11,348	112,004	104,954
Seminary	19,486	180,718	201,520
Bible School	35,929	348,372	407,613
Home Missions	38,162	347,881	332,499
World Missions	41,900	386,209	315,759
Personal Support	36,642	432,586	407,626
TOTALS	\$266,291	\$2,323,298	\$2,215,148

Contact the individual departments for further information about specific financial needs.

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/s/ Ruth Gunderson, Managing Editor

OUR REFORMATION ISSUE: HERE WE STAND

The 16th century Reformation is certainly on our minds this year, as preparations continue for the 500th anniversary observances in 2017. You will find book reviews in this issue, as several pastors recommend timely ones that have ministered to them, and the four theme articles are based on the great Reformation *solae*: *Sola Fide* (Faith Alone), *Sola Gratia* (Grace Alone), *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone), and *Solus Christus* (Christ Alone). It is good for our minds and hearts to be reminded of these foundational truths, for evangelical Christianity will not long stand if they are neglected or denied.



Pastor Robert Lee

Our Lutheran tradition usually limits itself to the first three highlighted in this issue, but other theological traditions include one or two more. The first, *Solus Christus* (Christ Alone), is the topic of one of the articles, and the final one is *Soli Deo Gloria* (to the Glory of God Alone). All five are inseparably linked to one another.

Your editor teaches church history, and noted again this semester that the primary issue facing the first generations of Christians was this question: Who is Jesus Christ? For there were already challenges to the faith, with some questioning or outright denying His full humanity and others His full divinity, and it is easy to get weary and confused when navigating through the various controversies and councils. The heritage of these troubled times has been passed on to us in our creeds, particularly the Nicene and Athanasian.

Christ alone! It is certainly correct to connect this central truth to each of the “*solas*” emphasized in this issue.

Grace alone! The Apostle John begins his gospel by proclaiming that both grace and truth came by Jesus Christ (John 1:17),

and the Apostle Paul concludes both his letter to the Romans and to the Corinthians with a benediction: “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen” (Romans 16:24, I Corinthians 16:23). This same benediction is the last verse in the Bible (Revelation 22:21).

Faith alone! Faith has an object, and that object is Jesus Christ (Galatians 2:16, Colossians 1:4, 2:5). Note, too, how grace and faith and love are united in one verse, with both centered in Christ: “And the grace of our Lord was exceedingly abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus” (I Timothy 1:14).

The Word alone! Jesus Christ is the living Word, for “the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us” (John 1:14). Hebrews 4:12 teaches us that Holy Scripture is living, and yet this also becomes Christ-centered, for it is the Scriptures that testify of Him (John 5:39).

To the Glory of God Alone! Christ is the radiance of the glory of God (Hebrews 1:3), and the whole plan of salvation is for the glory of God (Romans 11:36).

Martin Luther wrote: “If I profess with the loudest voice and clearest exposition every portion of the truth of God except precisely that little point which the world and the devil are at that moment attacking, I am not confessing Christ, however boldly I may be professing Christ. Where the battle rages, there the loyalty of the soldier is proved; and to be steady on all the battlefield besides, is mere flight and disgrace if he flinches at that point.”

The great reformer is especially remembered for his rediscovery of the biblical teaching of justification by grace through faith, for it was at this point that the world and the devil were attacking.

The early Church valiantly and carefully defended the truth of Jesus Christ, true God and true man, for it was at this point that the battle was raging. In both circumstances salvation was at stake.

What is the battlefield today? During the 1970s some spoke and wrote of “the Battle for the Bible,” convinced that the inerrancy of Holy Scripture was the great watershed issue of the time. Some of us who lived through those battles would agree. Yet none of these past battles have been totally settled for all time. The fundamental error of the cults is still the old question of what we believe about Jesus Christ, and surely we face the same issue in our attempts to understand Islam. Works righteousness never goes out of style, and the good news still needs to be championed, that by grace we are saved through faith. And all of these truths rest on the authority of Holy Scripture alone.

It is good for our minds and hearts to be reminded of these foundational truths, for evangelical Christianity will not long stand if they are neglected or denied.

So here we stand, praying that we might be found faithful and discerning soldiers. “Now thanks be to God, who always causes us to triumph in Christ ...” (II Corinthians 2:14).

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OUR SPIRITUAL VITALITY

BY PASTOR JEREMY VANCE

As an intensive care unit nurse, my wife knows firsthand how necessary blood transfusions are for saving lives. She knows that the use of blood is vital to the physical life of the patient. In the same way, we believers in Christ need to partake in our Savior's body and blood through regular Holy Communion in order that we, too, may stay spiritually healthy. Participating in the Lord's Supper offers us the benefits of strengthening our faith and assuring us of the forgiveness of our sins. Some people do not realize this, and as a result, stay away when our churches offer it in their services. We need to understand that communion is more than a church ritual; it is important for the vitality of our spiritual lives.

In regards to our faith, the recitation of the words of institution by the pastor is done "that the faith of the hearers concerning the nature and fruit of this Sacrament may be excited, strengthened,

and confirmed" (Formula of Concord). As we hear the words, "This is my Body," and, "This is my Blood," we are drawn to believe that Christ is truly present in the sacrament, that the bread and the wine are elevated above mere symbol to unite with the body and blood of our Savior. If our faith may be weak at this point, then it is strengthened when we are called to take Christ at His Word—as opposed to exercising some verbal gymnastics with the words to make them mean something else. We believe Christ's exact words: "This is My Body," and, "This is My Blood." While we hold in our hands a wafer and a cup of wine, we also hold Christ's body and blood, which was given and shed for us on that cross so long ago. With the sacrament in hand, we can also believe that Christ is truly present, imparting His grace to us.

Not only is our faith strengthened in the partaking of the sacrament, but we are also given the assurance that our sins are forgiven. Jesus Christ paid the price for

our sins in His suffering and death, and God the Father showed His sacrifice to be acceptable by raising Him from the dead. By believing in Jesus, our sins are forgiven. When we partake of Holy Communion, we are assured that our sins are cleansed from us. We can bring our burdens of guilt to the altar, and our Savior will impart His grace to us, ridding us of our guilt through the ministry of the sacrament.

The vitality of our spiritual lives must be important to us. We must make use of all that God has provided for us. Word and sacraments must all come together to build lives accepted by God. May we never despise what God has given us, but instead allow God to daily work within us through the means He has provided.

Vance, Coon Rapids, Minn., serves Sunnyside Free Lutheran, Stacy, Minn.