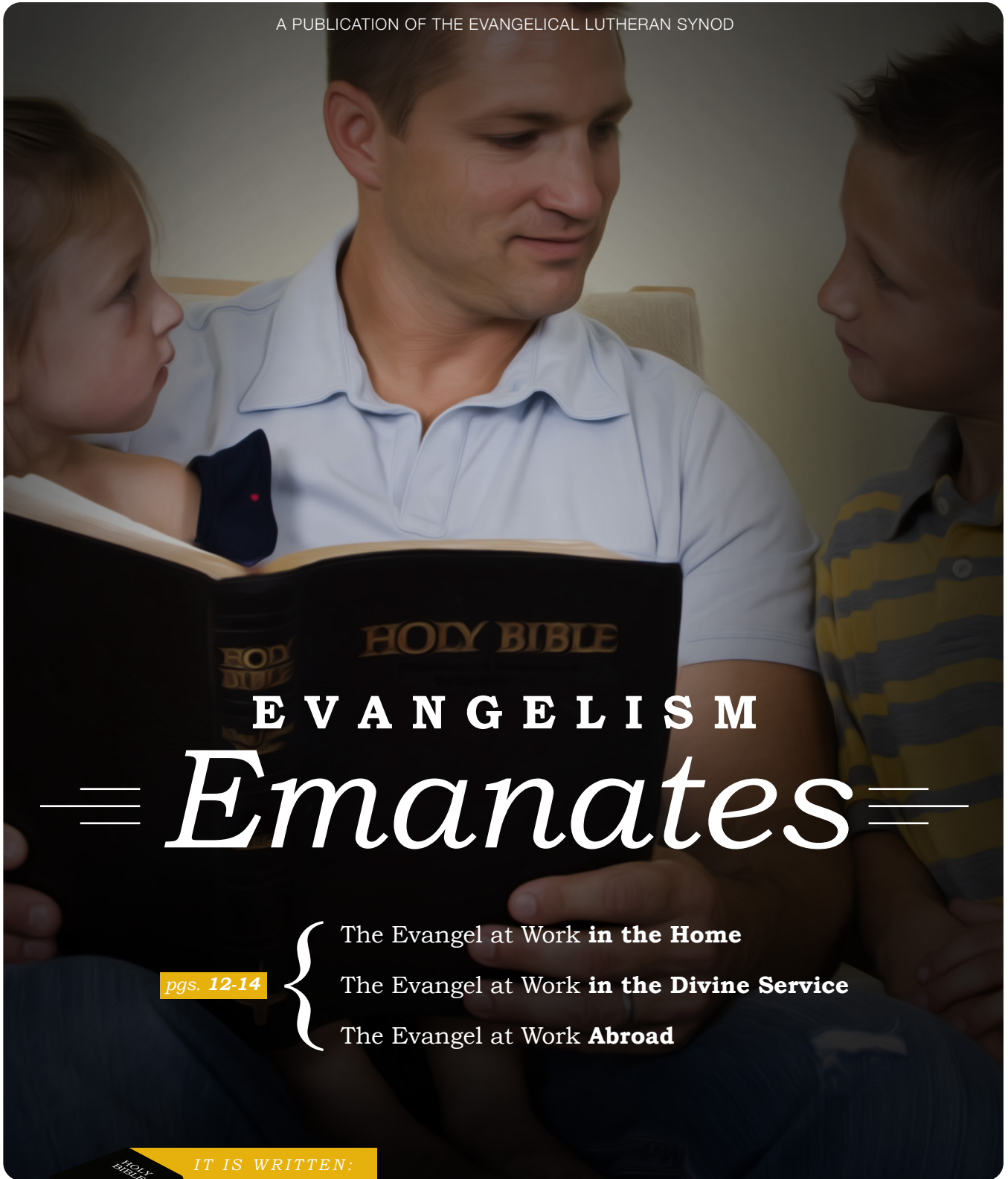


LUTHERAN SENTINEL

A PUBLICATION OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD



EVANGELISM

— *Emanates* —

pgs. 12-14

- The Evangel at Work **in the Home**
- The Evangel at Work **in the Divine Service**
- The Evangel at Work **Abroad**

IT IS WRITTEN:



"I am not ashamed of the Gospel ..." (Romans 1:16)

Living in the Shadows

Dear Members and Friends of our ELS:

Out of the corner of your eye, you notice something move behind you. You suspect someone is following you. You keep walking until you think it is the right moment to turn around. You turn around. Nobody is there! You were right, though. Something was following you—your shadow. Shadows are hard to lose.

Harder yet for each of us to lose is a spiritual shadow that casts itself over us. Like King David, we can identify with the unwelcomed companionship of our guilt and shame: *For I know my transgression, and my sin is always before me* (Psalm 51:3).

Is there a sin that weighs especially heavy on our conscience? The same David who wrote of his bottled-up guilt also penned these words intended to bring great comfort to each of us today dealing with the dark and shadowy figure of our sins: *Then I acknowledged my sin to you...and you forgave the guilt of my sin* (Psalm 32:5).

Martin Luther stressed how confession of sin is to be met with the wonderful news of full forgiveness from God, freely offered through the merits of God's own Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. This is what we have offered in the reading and hearing of the Gospel, in absolution, in Baptism, and in the Lord's Supper.

Every sinner—no matter how scary one's self-shadow—is to know and believe without any doubt that the holy life of Jesus and his holy blood have completely covered each and every one of our transgressions. Echoing David, Luther drew attention to the dual aspect of repentance for daily strength:

Repentance embraces both the terrors of conscience and faith; that is, it teaches that Christ helps a sinner at no cost when he is close to despair and nevertheless buoys himself up through faith and cries, 'Have mercy on me, O God, for the sake of Christ, in whom I trust and who suffered for me' And if you persevere in this faith, you will certainly be saved (LW 8:332).

We live in a very visual world. As a result, it is difficult—if not impossible—to erase from our minds unwelcomed scenes of hatred, violence, lust—the list of sins is endless. The shadows of our own sins easily can impress themselves vividly into the recesses of our minds.

Yet another welcoming shadow is with us constantly as believers in Christ. It is a wonderful shadow that gives us instant repose. The psalmist David pictures for us the resting pose of repentant sinners under the protection of our Savior. He writes: *How priceless is your unfailing love! Both high and low among men find refuge in the shadow of your wings* (Psalm 36:7).

***Lord Jesus, who dost love me,
O spread Thy wings above me!***

REVEREND
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JAN-FEB 2017

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ANNIVERSARY YEARS

Proclaim the Wonders God Has Done

During the coming two years, as a Lutheran, you are a part of something exciting! We in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod will observe a double anniversary.

During this year, world-wide observances will be made of the 500th anniversary of the start of the Lutheran Reformation. On October 31, 1517 Martin Luther's approached the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, Germany and pounded the nails through the theses which began the Lutheran Reformation. Luther wished to continue the teaching of historic Christianity, that forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation are found only By-Grace-Alone, Through-Faith-Alone, and In-Scripture-Alone.

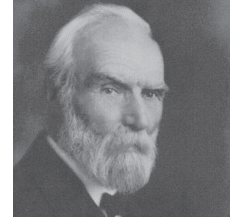
This year also commemorates the start of another significant anniversary. One hundred years ago, in 1917 at the time of the 400th anniversary of the Reformation, the Norwegian Synod merged with other Lutheran church bodies on a basis which compromised the teaching of "by-grace-alone." A faithful few wanted "to continue in the old doctrine and practice" of our Lutheran forebears and, in 1918, meet at the Lime Creek Lutheran Church in northern Iowa to reorganize the synod. In 1957, the name of the synod was changed to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS).

During these next two years, you can experience both the 500th anniversary of the Lutheran Reformation and the 100th anniversary of the reorganization of the Evangelical Lutheran

MARTIN LUTHER



BJUG HARSTAD



Synod. A number of special events are being planned, including two commemorative issues of the Lutheran Sentinel, a special essay and hymn festival at this year's synod convention, another special essay and a choral union concert at the 2018 synod convention. The Committee on Worship is planning regional hymn festivals. The Doctrine Committee has prepared a special Bible study for congregation use this fall centering on issues which affected both the Reformation and the reorganization of the ELS. In addition, a hard-bound centennial history will be published. This anniversary book, *Proclaim His Wonders: A Pictorial History of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod* will contain many historical photographs. The ELS Historical Society also will make available a commemorative medallion featuring the anniversary logo. Additional resources can be accessed through the synod's web-site: els.org/anniversaries.

As we celebrate these anniversaries and look to the future, along with Martin Luther, we will Proclaim the Wonders God Has Done as we "give thanks to the Lord, call on his name, and make known among the nations what He has done" (Psalm 105:1).

REVEREND

CRAIG A. FERKENSTADCHAIRMAN, CENTENNIAL COMMITTEE
EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN SYNOD

A NOTE FROM THE ANNIVERSARY OFFERING COMMITTEE:

Our home missions work is an integral part of our ELS. Be sure to support the Anniversary Offering by giving generously.

Visit els.org/offering to learn more and support our students and missions online.

SEND YOUR GIFT TO:

ELS Anniversary Offering
6 Browns Ct.
Mankato, MN 56001

QUESTION:

Q

It seems like I am naturally a pessimist like my father, whereas my sister seems to be an optimist like our mother. I assume that in itself, such a personality trait is not sinful (perhaps a cross to bear). But still, it predisposes a person to certain temptations to sin. What kind of advice would you give a Christian who wishes to avoid falling into sins associated with a pessimistic trait?

.....

ANSWER:

A

This question is most difficult and this writer empathizes. His father and mother tended toward pessimism. His dad had a springtime tradition. He would kick Murphy (of Murphy's Law) out of the house because so many things had gone wrong over the winter and Dad expected the situation to continue. This pessimist tends to expect things to go wrong.

We have good reason to be pessimistic. Our nature is sinful apart from Christ Jesus. It is prone to sin. It is eager to succumb to temptation. A world of sinners surrounds us. We can expect fellow sinners will do their worst to make life harsh.

Jesus warned about the last days: *"For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect"* (Matthew 24:24). Jesus told His children to take up the cross and follow Him. Paul encouraged suffering disciples, saying that through many tribulations they must enter the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

At the same time, we have good reason to live with hope. Though we live under a cross, God controls the future. God filled His Word with promises answering every temptation toward worry and pessimism. Jesus resisted temptation in the wilderness by the power of God's Word. We turn to God's Word in all our temptations.

It is not easy. This writer confesses to suffering many nights wrestling with worry. Again and again, he would remember promises from God, but again and again the worries would stir in his heart. Worry accomplished nothing good. God took care of him in all things in spite of

his worry. Every Christian has many memories of times God took care of them.

God is true; we trust Him. No matter how bad this world becomes, no matter how troubled our lives may be, God is with us. He promised: *He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?* (Romans 8:32). God took care of our sin. He suffered death for us. He promised life eternal by faith in Jesus and His cross. He will take care of all the other things that go wrong in our lives.

This does not mean we will be free from suffering. Suffering did not defeat Jesus. By it He accomplished our salvation. God promises that our suffering will not defeat us. Suffering will end. It may end with our death, which will bring us to our Savior because of what He suffered for us.

God also gives us prayer. God said: *"Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify Me"* (Psalm 50:15). Peter advised: Cast all your anxieties upon Him, for He cares for you (1 Peter 5:7). You may still be tempted with anxieties that feed your pessimism, but God will keep His promises. He will hear and answer your prayers. He is your heavenly Father and you are His child, redeemed in the blood of the Lamb.

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APOLOGETICS

"TO DEFEND A PERSON OR THING"

THIS ISSUE

PART 1: APOLOGETICS

What is Christian Apologetics?

In 1521, Martin Luther was called before Holy Roman Emperor Charles V at the Diet of Worms (*diet* meaning “a formal meeting, not a weight-loss plan,” and *Worms* being a “city south of Frankfurt”). At that meeting, Charles demanded that Luther recant all he had said. Charles instead heard Luther’s defiant statement that:

*Unless I am convinced by the testimony of the Holy Scriptures or by evident reason—for I can believe neither pope nor councils alone, since they have often made mistakes and have even said the exact opposite about the same point—I am tied by the Scriptures I have quoted and my conscience. I cannot and will not recant anything for to go against conscience is neither safe nor right. Here I stand. God help me. Amen.*¹

With these few words, Luther clarified one of the most important principles of orthodox Lutheranism—that all doctrine must be based solely on God’s Word. This standard applies to Christian apologetics as well.

Apologetics does not concentrate on doctrine, but rather focuses on whether or not the source of our doctrine, the Bible, is trustworthy. **Christian apologetics** deals with the question of whether Scripture and Christianity are true.

The word *apologetics* comes from the Greek word ἀπολογία (*apologia*), which means “to defend a person or thing.”² The *Anchor Bible Dictionary* defines apologetics as “the art of persuasion em-

ployed by the Early Christians.”³ Dr. Rod Rosenblatt explained that apologetics is the presentation of the arguments for the truthfulness of the Christian faith.⁴

The Apostle Peter admonished us to be ready to make use of apologetics. Said Peter: *Always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect* (1 Peter 3:15).⁵ That is, we should be ready to present our reasons, our evidence, for being Christians. Our English term *Christian apologetics* derives from this text in 1 Peter.

1. Frederick Nohl, *Luther: Biography of a Reformer* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 107.

2. J. H. Thayer, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Fourth Edition* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons Publishing, 1901), 65.

3. *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 1 (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell Publishing Group, Inc., 1992), 302.

4. Dr. Rod Rosenblatt, “Beyond Culture Wars,” *Modern Reformation*, Vol. 2, No. 3. (May/June 1993), 1.

5. This passage is usually considered to be the *sedes doctrinae* (basis) for Christian apologetics. All Bible passages quoted here are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

The Greek word *apologia* has two parts, *apo*, meaning “from,” and *logia*, as used in 1 Peter 3:15, meaning “logic.”⁶ Peter asks us to be ready to defend the truth of the Christian gospel message and do so from logic; that is, by providing arguments and evidence to substantiate the truth of the message. Using logic is indispensable in matters of doctrine as well. The highly respected theologian Francis Pieper said: “Without the use of reason or intellect no one can occupy himself with theology, for theology is not to be presented to the brutes and animals, which lack reason.”⁷

In his second epistle, Peter gave us a striking example of how he presented reason and evidence. He said: *For we did not follow cleverly devised myths when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of His majesty* (2 Peter 1:16). Here Peter argued that we can be assured of the truthfulness of everything he told us because he and other disciples were there; they were eyewitnesses of Jesus in His divine glory. Peter meant that he and the other apostles were eyewitnesses in the same sense that someone is an eyewitness in a court of law—someone who can give trustworthy testimony because he saw and heard it all for himself. Whenever the New Testament speaks of persons who are “witnesses,” it always means “eyewitnesses”—people who could give reliable testimony because they were there and saw and heard it for themselves.

In his Pentecost sermon recorded in Acts chapter 2, Peter presented three additional reasons for recognizing that the message of Christ is true. The first reason is that Jesus fulfilled all the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. These prophecies include his being born from the line of David, being born of a virgin in Bethlehem, being killed by crucifixion, his rising from the dead, and many others.

Jewish convert to Christianity Louis Lapidès was asked if there was any possibility that the Messianic prophecies could refer to anyone other than Jesus. In answer, he said that the odds of someone fulfilling all the Old Testa-

ment Messianic prophecies are astronomical. The truth of the matter is, he stated, that only Jesus managed to do so. The only reasonable conclusion, said Lapidès, is that the long-awaited Messiah has come into the world, and his name is Jesus of Nazareth.⁸

Peter also argued that Jesus’ many miracles demonstrate that he truly is the Messiah of God. These miracles of Jesus were well known among Peter’s listeners. Accordingly, Peter said to them, *“Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs that God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know...”* (Acts 2:22). When the Apostle Paul spoke to Agrippa, he similarly appealed to the common knowledge of Jesus’ miracles as proof that the Gospel message was true. Said Paul, *“For the king knows about these things, and to him I speak boldly. For I am persuaded that none of these things has escaped his notice, for this has not been done in a corner”* (Acts 26:26). Even Jesus’ enemies admitted to his miracles.

Peter’s last and most important proof for the Christian message was that Jesus demonstrated its truth by rising from the dead. In describing David’s prophesy that the Messiah would be raised, Peter said, *“He foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption. This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses”* (Acts 2:31-32). The resurrection is the most important evidence for the truthfulness of Christianity.

As we have seen, there is a clear apologetics emphasis in Peter’s Pentecost sermon. Peter not only explained the Gospel message of Christ, he presented powerful evidence to demonstrate that the Gospel is true. In *Sentinel* articles to follow, much of this evidence will be explained in greater detail. Several objections to Christianity will be considered as well.

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6. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Fourth Edition, 381.

7. Francis Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, Vol 1. (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1953), 198. We are speaking of the ministerial use of reason.

8. Louis Lapidès, actuarial in Del Tackett DVD series, “Who is Jesus? Building a Comprehensive Case,” Focus on the Family’s The Truth Project (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishing, 2013).

THE TEN COMMANDMENTS CATECHISM *in*

Every Lutheran, from confirmation age on up, if they don't remember the exact words to every part of the Catechism, at least remembers these words: "What does this mean?" It's a phrase that carries more weight than we often give it credit for. Our Catechism doesn't ask "What does this mean to you?" as if to say the chief articles of the faith only have meaning when contextualized in your own personal experience.

Instead, "What does this mean?" puts the chief parts of our faith into their proper context. It wraps them around words and phrases from Scripture that explain them and create a safeguard so that the basic teachings of our faith aren't ripped out of context and distorted. Christ is at the center of all our teachings. Distorting the basic teachings of the faith shifts Christ away from the center.

IN CONTEXT

The first chief part of the Catechism is the Ten Commandments. Given by God in Exodus 20, they inform us about our relationship with God and people around us. They form the basis of God's moral law, the law which God inscribed on the hearts of all people even before He inscribed the Ten Commandments in stone. The Commandments reveal to us the laws we already know by nature, such as that killing is evil, stealing is wrong, and that we owe something to God.

But they also reveal what we wouldn't otherwise know: That we are unable to keep the Commands

and that we are unable to do what God's moral law demands. God's Ten Commandments drive us to despair of ourselves and to look elsewhere for help and salvation. That's where God's work of creation, justification, and sanctification revealed in the Creed come in (more on that next issue).

The order of the Commandments is also important. The First Commandment is the chief commandment, the fountain and source from which all the others flow. It explains what it means to have a god and what our relationship with the true God should be. Luther summed up the meaning to this commandment in his Large Catechism: "[It as if God were saying:] whatever you lack of good things, expect it from Me. Look to Me for it. And whenever you suffer misfortune and distress, crawl and cling to Me... Only do not let your heart cleave to or rest on any other." If we would follow this commandment completely, then we would follow every other commandment perfectly as well. In trusting God completely, we wouldn't have reason to steal, to lust, to covet, or any other sin. But of course the Commandments, like a mirror, also show us that we can never have such great trust.

The Fourth Commandment is the first and greatest of the second table of the commands. It explains what our relationship with our neighbor is supposed to be: that we love them. And more than that, the Fourth Commandment explains what our relationship with those in a position of authority over us is supposed to be: that we honor them. Honoring authorities means trusting them for the blessings that God has promised to provide through them. Keeping this commandment also means keeping the last six commandments.

CHRIST IS AT
OF ALL OUR
DISTORTING
TEACHINGS
SHIFTS CHRIST
FROM THE

OUT OF CONTEXT

Luther, in his preface to the Large Catechism, warned against the danger of imagining that once we have read the Catechism, we think we know it all and have no reason to keep learning or reading. Once we think like this, we use our experience to judge the Catechism rather than letting the Catechism judge our experience.

Experience tells us that feelings are our moral Supreme Court, that the standard by which we know something is right or wrong is the reaction either we or someone else has to a certain action. The last thing we want to do is make someone feel bad, so we judge our actions based on how we make someone else feel. Ironically, “Thou shall not judge” has become the fountain and source from which all other actions are judged according to the world and our own sinful flesh. Whether or not unborn babies deserve to live is judged according to the standard of how a mother feels about it. Whether or not we should speak poorly of someone is based on whether or not that person first did something that caused another person or group to be offended. Not only is this letting experience judge the Catechism, this is mixing up the order of the Commandments.

Rather than letting the First Commandment inform all the others, we’d rather let a distorted version of the Fifth or Eighth Commandment inform all of our actions: “How someone feels is more important than what God desires.”

IN OUR CONTEXT

Luther may have written the Small Catechism 488 years ago (published in May 1529), but sin and grace haven’t changed. People seem to be finding new ways to sin, but no sin is not covered by the Ten Commandments. There is also no sin that Jesus’ blood does not cover. The Commandments

should drive us to repentance and to trust in Jesus’ keeping of them on our behalf. The Ten Commandments and all the rest of the chief parts of the Catechism point us to what God has done for all people.

Luther wrote, “It must be true that whoever knows the Ten Commandments perfectly must know all the Scriptures [Matthew 7:12]... And what, indeed, is the entire Book of Psalms but thoughts and exercises upon the First Commandment?” To understand Scripture is to understand the Catechism, and to understand the Catechism is to understand what Scripture means.

What the chief articles of the faith mean to you is important. In fact, that’s the point of confirmation. As you are reviewed, you are asked to confess what you believe. “Therefore whoever confesses Me before men, him I will also confess before My Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 10:32). We do this because Christ is coming again soon, and we hold fast to the faith we have so that no one may rip heaven away from us (Revelation 3:11).

Luther intended the Catechism to be a book used not only at church, but one that would be regularly used at home. We’re blessed in the ELS to have the entire Small Catechism contained in our hymnal, the Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary, another necessary item for every household. So why not use the Catechism in your context at home? Ask, “What does God mean in it?” And then, “What does this mean for me?”

IT MUST BE TRUE THAT
WHOEVER KNOWS THE
TEN COMMANDMENTS
PERFECTLY MUST KNOW
ALL THE SCRIPTURES

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THE CENTER
TEACHINGS.
G THE BASIC
OF THE FAITH
RIST AWAY
E CENTER

In Your blest body let me be / E'en as the branch is to the tree / Thy life my life supplying
P. NICOLAI

SETTING THE SCENE FOR THE REFORMATION

A Gospel-Parched Church

PHOTO CREDIT: JORG HACKEMANN / SHUTTERSTOCK, INC.



St. Petri-Pauli Church, Eisleben, Germany;
Baptismal site of Martin Luther.

When a little baby named Martin Luther was baptized in Eisleben, Saxony, on November 11, 1483, he became a member of an outward church structure that was deeply troubled and deeply in need of reformation. The medieval institution of the papacy had served as a focal point of ecclesiastical unity for the western church. But from 1378 to 1417, there were two and sometimes three competing claimants to the papal throne. This chaos was not settled until the Council of Constance when a new single pope was elected. But these years of schism had diminished the prestige of the papacy in the eyes of many. And while the various kings and bishops of Europe had been squabbling with each other over these papal pretensions and divisions, the deeper needs of the church went largely unmet. Bishops had become feudal lords, and many if not most of them were more concerned with material riches than souls. Few of them could preach. Many parish priests could barely read. Sexual immorality among the clergy of all ranks was rampant.

Copies of the original Hebrew and Greek Scriptures were extremely rare. For almost everyone, if the Bible was accessible at all, it was accessible only by means of the Latin Vulgate translation, which in some key places did not accurately convey the genuine meaning of the original. For example, where the Greek says that “the righteousness of God” is revealed in the Gospel (Romans 1:17), the Latin Vulgate says that “the justice of God” is revealed in the Gospel. That rendering

would tend to elicit a fear of divine judgment rather than instilling the peace of divine forgiveness as the message of the Gospel is supposed to do. Many of the monasteries had become corrupt and lax, filled with gluttony and lechery. Some monasteries did seek to be more dutifully “observant” of their monastic discipline, but what this meant is that they had a renewed commitment to works righteousness and asceticism. Neither variety of monasticism was known for promoting a proper understanding of Christian vocation or the proper distinction between Law and Gospel.

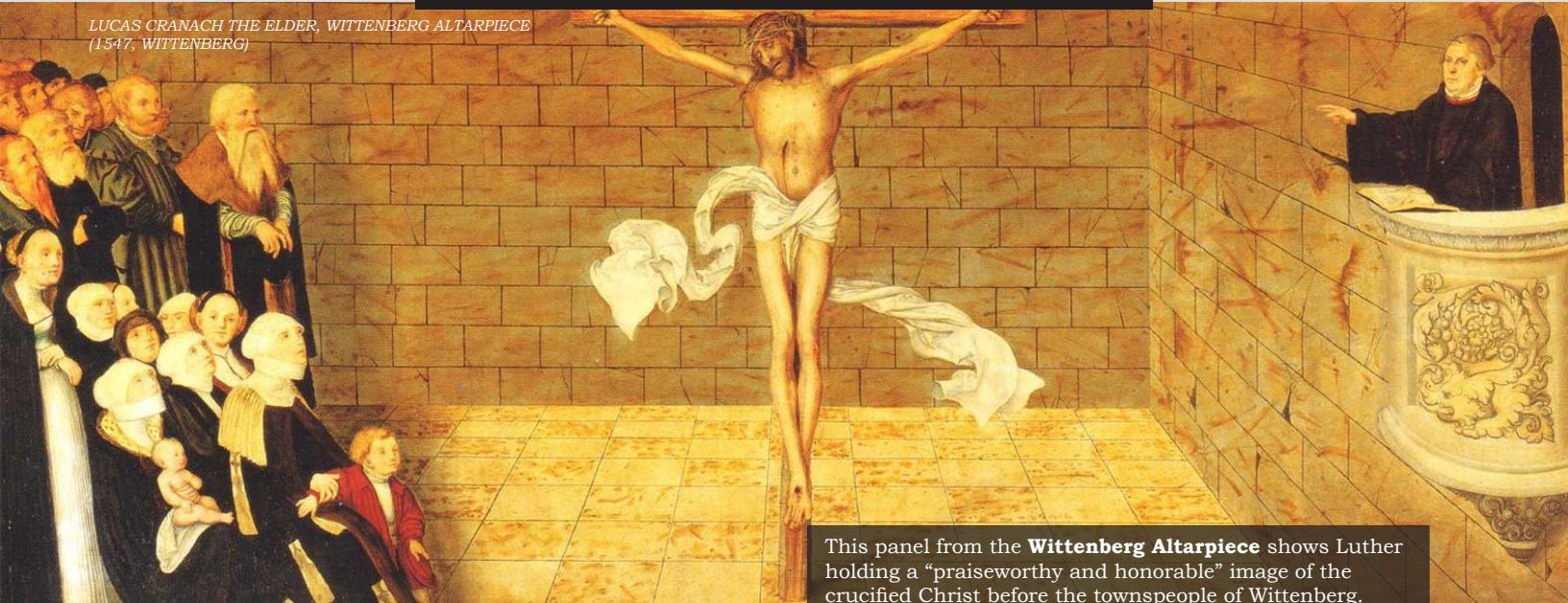
The “Renaissance Humanist” movement, which was trying to bring about advances in education, was largely interested in the writings of the pre-Christian pagan philosophers and paid little attention to the need for more and better theological education in the church. Those relatively few church leaders who had been educated in the universities had been trained in scholasticism, which mingled much philosophy and rationalism into Christian theology. The doctrines of the Trinity and the Incarnation were faithfully preserved. But the doctrine of salvation was seriously distorted by the medieval penitential system, which emphasized works, merits, and satisfactions, and which muted the unconditional voice of God’s absolution in Christ for those who repent of their sins. Some “mystical” groups were trying to promote a deeper piety among Christians, but their impact was very limited. Those who advocated for more far-reaching changes were often executed for heresy. Among these were Girolamo Savonarola in 1498 and Jan Hus in 1415.

To be sure, the Christian church had not disappeared from the earth. Here and there, the promises of the true Gospel could still be heard even in the midst of much human error. Here and there, proper pastoral care was exercised even in the midst of much abuse. But on November 11, 1483—the day when little Martin was baptized—the church of western Europe was in desperate need of a reformation and of a reformer. And God, in his loving providence, gave the church the reformer it needed at that baptismal font in Eisleben.

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LUCAS CRANACH THE ELDER, WITTENBERG ALTARPIECE
(1547, WITTENBERG)



This panel from the **Wittenberg Altarpiece** shows Luther holding a “praiseworthy and honorable” image of the crucified Christ before the townspeople of Wittenberg.

Luther, the Reformation, and the Visual Arts...

“Images for memorial and witness, such as crucifixes and images of saints,... are not only to be tolerated, but for the sake of the memorial and the witness they are praiseworthy and honorable.” **MARTIN LUTHER** (AE40:91)

When you go to church, do you see crosses or banners or other pieces of artwork that serve as a “memorial” or remembrance of a Biblical event? Or do they “witness” and profess a Biblical teaching? Most certainly, yes! For most churches, even the architecture and layout (i.e. the design of the altar area and chancel or a church designed in the shape of a cross) is proclaiming an important message to those in attendance. The use of artistic design and of visual images is one way that the churchgoer is edified and uplifted.

This was also the case during the Reformation. The visual arts played an important role in the Reformation and also for Luther personally. Though it is true that Luther emphasized the role of music in the church far more than the use of visual arts, he considered the visual arts to be helpful and useful tools in communicating God’s Word to the people. This was in contrast with other reformers during Luther’s time who wanted to destroy and eliminate the liturgical artwork of the church. They sought to destroy religious images that they considered to be heretical, an effort known as iconoclasm.

Luther opposed these radical reformers and defended the use of liturgical art. Certainly he was

cautious, not wanting the false teachings of the Roman Catholic Church to persist in Evangelical churches through paintings and sculpture. Yet Luther believed that much of the liturgical art that already existed in the churches should remain—that it should be reinterpreted and reapplied with proper, Biblical teachings. He also encouraged the production of new art and even assisted in designing works of art that helped instruct the people.

Luther’s close friendship with one of the premier artists of northern Europe, Lucas Cranach, was also tremendously important to the cause and spread of the Reformation. Cranach, along with his prolific workshop, was vital in connecting Luther and the Evangelical movement to the masses through the use of visual arts.

Over the course of this year, we will take a look at some of the most important pieces of visual art within the Lutheran Reformation. We will consider Martin Luther’s impact upon the visual arts within the church and the impact that the visual arts had in the Lutheran Reformation.

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“...IN JERUSALEM...”

The Evangel at Work in the Home

In Acts chapter 1, verse 8, St. Luke reports that while He was in Jerusalem, Jesus said to the disciples, “*You will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*” As they were to begin spreading the Word about Him, notice how Jesus tells the disciples that they will start locally, and then they were to branch out in ever-widening circles. ***Evangelism Emanates.***

When we as believers think about evangelism, the same directive applies. Who better to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with than the members of our own family! Start locally!

What should we proclaim? The Gospel! It is important to teach our children the Ten Commandments. It is important to discipline them and teach them right from wrong. It is also important to teach them how to pray. It is good and beneficial to read Old and New Testament accounts to them. But we especially want to proclaim to our family the good news that Jesus Christ, God’s own Son, lived a perfect life in our place (active obedience) and died on the cross as our Substitute (passive obedience).

A devotion book intended for boys was recently given to our son as a gift. Unfortunately, as I’ve read these devotions to our sons at bedtime, I find that many do not contain the Gospel. I will often add in the Gospel so that our sons do not forget how God showed His love for us. I will add it in to remind them that the sins they have committed during the day have been washed away by the blood of Jesus.

Jesus said, “*I am the Light of the world*” (John 8:12). When Jesus said this, He meant that He is the One who has come into the darkness of this world’s sin and given it light, hope, and peace. He shines everywhere, to the remotest parts of the earth. But again, the light shines brightest to those who are near. I can reach my immediate family with the light of the Gospel much easier than I can reach those on a far-off continent.

Years ago when my grandmother was diagnosed with leukemia, I had a choice to either go home to Arizona and see her while she was alive or to go home for her funeral, which doctors told us would be within six months. I decided to go home to see her and my grandfather while she was still alive. I did this because I didn’t know if she knew the Gospel. I had never talked much with my grandparents about spiritual matters because we kept away from the topic of religion, as many families do.

On that trip, I took along with me Luther’s Small Catechism and I opened to the Second Article of the Creed. Three minutes into the section, my grandfather stepped away from the table and never came back. But my grandma kept on listening to the truths about what Jesus has done for us. On that trip, my grandmother told me that she believed in Jesus as her Savior. I’m confident I’ll see her in heaven.

Proclaiming the Gospel (“doing” evangelism) to the members of our own families can be both difficult and easy. It is “easy” when we know our audience will be receptive, but it is hard when we are not sure if those we love will harden their hearts to the voice of the Holy Spirit. May God grant us all persistence and strength to take the Light of the World to those in Jerusalem—those in our family.

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“...AND IN JUDEA...”

The Evangel at Work in the Divine Service

Evangelism means that our Lord brings His Christians along in His work of saving people. It is His work. He does it. He does it by His Word, just as it says: *For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God* (Ephesians 2:8). *Faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ* (Romans 10:17).

Christ binds this Word of His to certain persons. They are His believers. He also calls them His witnesses. They went out in His name bearing His good news. You see, the *Word Made Flesh* came at a certain time and place, and from there, good news of Him spread out in every direction to every corner of the world: *“in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth”* (Acts 1:8).

The Word comes to you, too, and proceeds from you: in your home, wending its way back to your Church, and finally out to the as yet unwashed, unbelieving world.

The world outside is desperate for good news. Poor devils. Scripture describes them as being without God and without hope. They need the Gospel. They need the forgiveness of sins and the promise of the resurrection and life everlasting.

Perhaps we think our bringing the Word to them will save us. Perhaps it will save our church. Maybe we're desperate, too. Just like the world, we have sickness, distress, money troubles, marriage and family issues, and sinful propensities. Now we also have the burden of our worries for

the Church: budgets, need for leadership, need for growth... There, we seem particularly fixated on the young. How will we win them?

Very easily, we lose the goal of being faithful for the goal of being successful. The Gospel of free grace is replaced by the gospel of “doing evangelism.” Evangelism, though, is really His work. It's all a gift, not just to the world, but to us, too, as we are taken up in it. It all starts with good news for us!

Yes, we have already heard the Word. We have the Gospel. Still, we're desperate for it. It's not like we don't need to hear it and receive it since becoming Christians. We still keep sinning! We keep dying. If anything, we feel the need for good news more than ever because now, on top of it all, we have adorned His Word to us with unclean speech and selfish deeds.

God stubbornly, wonderfully gives us the same perfect good news in preaching to us all over again: the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection, and life everlasting. He gives us Jesus. Then, before you even know it, you are at work evangelizing one another, *addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs* (Ephesians 5:19) in the Divine Service. You encourage one another by your coming, receiving, and giving back good news upon good news as you kneel at the Lord's Table, and in receiving, *proclaim the Lord's death until He comes* (1 Corinthians 11:26). These are the kinds of things the Lord seeks to fill you with, first to save you and also because these are the very things He is sending with you and in you to the ends of the earth.

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“...TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH...”

The Evangel at Work Abroad

I began working with a new computer recently, and my wife took the opportunity to install a new screensaver photograph on it. It's a picture of our two children when they were little building a sand castle on a beach. It brings back some great memories of the years we lived in Vero Beach, Florida. But I also like to look in the background of that photograph, over their shoulders, at the endless expanse of the Atlantic Ocean. If you didn't know that the continent of Africa was out there somewhere way past the horizon, you might imagine that you were standing at the end of the earth.

Before He ascended into heaven, Jesus told His disciples that they would be His witnesses “*in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth*” (Acts 1:8). The Lord has given us the joyous task of sharing His saving Word not only at home with our families and in church services with our fellow worshipers, but also throughout the world. The Father foretold it. Centuries before His coming in the flesh, He commissioned His Son: “*I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth*” (Isaiah 49:6).

Currently our synod has the privilege of shining Jesus' light in Asia, where we support and carry out the preaching of the Gospel in India and South Korea with plans to expand elsewhere, if God wills it.

Since 1968, the ELS has had missionaries working in South America, first in Peru and later also in Chile. Both of those mission fields are at the point where the national church members are doing most of the outreach within their countries.

The “ends of the earth” has also been located in the Czech Republic, Latvia, and Ukraine in Europe. In those places as well, most of the evangelism and humanitarian work is carried out by the local believers. But to this day, each one of those

“overseas” churches depends to some extent on the support provided by their American brothers and sisters in the ELS.

The 100th anniversary of our Evangelical Lutheran Synod is a fitting time for us to think about and analyze our efforts at taking the Good News of God's love in Christ to the ends of the earth. We realize that given our relatively small size and the limited resources available, we really can't go everywhere. So we are thankful for the assistance we share with the other church bodies with whom we are in fellowship here in the U.S. and around the world.

But wherever we go, whether at home, at church, or to the end of the earth, the greatest thing is the message we bring to others. Jesus has equipped us with His Word of full forgiveness and eternal life. He earned those gifts for all people by His holiness and by His innocent suffering and death on the cross. He made the perfect sacrifice for our sins, *and not only ours*, St. John wrote, *but also for the sins of the whole world* (1 John 2:2).

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ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION IN BELL GARDENS, CALIFORNIA

Matthew Behmer was ordained and installed as pastor of **Christ the King Lutheran Church** in Bell Gardens, California, on November 27, 2016. Pastor David Jay Webber performed the rite of ordination and installation and Pastor Timothy Hartwig preached the sermon. A dinner was provided by the congregation for the many visiting pastors and the congregation.

REFORMATION VOCABULARY

The Righteousness of God

“No man knows how bad he is till he has tried very hard to be good.”

C.S. LEWIS – MERE CHRISTIANITY

Luther had tried very hard to “be good.” He tried to please his father by going to law school. When the lightning storm was raging about him, he vowed to God he’d be the best version of “good” he knew – a monk! While a monk, he studied very long hours, he scrubbed the monastery floors very vigorously, and when his conscience told him it wasn’t enough he may have resorted to the medieval practice of flagellants (inflicting pain on one’s self). And in all of his efforts to be “very good” – to attain to the righteousness of God – Luther found what Lewis voices; just how bad he is. This notion of the righteousness of God “aroused a secret hate of God” within Luther (LW 5, 594). Think of a son who tries incessantly to please an always-disapproving father.

“Finally” says Luther, “God had mercy on me” (LW 14, 446). In reading Romans 1:17, the warm chord finally struck Luther: *In (the Gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed* (Rom. 1:17). The Righteousness Luther was trying to manufacture by “being good”, God was donating to Him freely through faith in Christ! The righteousness of God – at one time the most hated phrase in all the bible for Luther - became to him “the portal of Paradise” (LW 14, 447).

“But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed...the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ.” (Rom 3:21)

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