



Oak Leaves

Newsletter of the ELS Historical Society

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Issue 3

Homily for the ELS Historical Society Meeting at Bethany Lutheran College — June 16, 2007 By the Rev. Prof. Juul B. Madson

In nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus Sancti. Amen.

Romans 6:1-4: What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin: how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.

Fellow redeemed in Christ, grace is yours, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ!

In a Christian church, especially a Lutheran Christian church, most of us might expect to find a baptismal font clearly displayed. Why? Because in our catechismal instruction we had been instructed that this heavenly washing is a means of grace. We learned the Scriptural truth concerning the nature of Baptism, that it “*works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.*”

In our instruction we had also been reminded of the POWER of Baptism because of the accompaniment of the “*Word of God*

which is in and with the water” and therefore makes it “a gracious water of life and a washing of regeneration in the Holy Spirit.”

Today, when we gather as an historical body interested especially in the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod we need to be reminded of the meaning of Baptism. Again Luther can well lead us in the words of his Little Catechism to confess what such baptizing with water signifies—or means. It means “*that the old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die with all sins and evil lusts, and that a new man daily come forth and arise who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*”

This claim he bases on the closing words of our Biblical lesson, in which St. Paul writes: “*We are buried with Christ by Baptism into death, that just as He was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life*” Verse 4.

Up to this point in his Epistle to the Romans the Apostle Paul has concentrated on the new status which the Gospel has created for us. The status of our justification before God for Christ's sake through faith is totally the work of God alone; it is a result of man's activity neither in whole nor even in part. One faithful theologian has summarized it this way: “*Man received the acquitting ver-*

dict of God in the passive desperation of faith; he is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.”

While that gift of faith is alone what saves us, that kind of faith can never be alone — it is a working faith that is ready with the arguments which Paul marshals against the crude objections which are raised against the doctrine of salvation by faith alone in order to ridicule it.

One such question the Apostle himself raises at this point in order that he may refute it. The question often raised is: *“If salvation from sin is by grace alone, and if where sin abounds grace abounds even much more, why not continue in sin in order that we may experience more grace”!*

Now there is a certain kind of logic to that pesky question, which even we find ourselves contemplating often enough when we are faced with certain choices in a sin-laden world. But it is a SATANIC LOGIC, the logic of a rebel against God who would exploit God’s grace in the quest for fulfilling the desires of his sinful flesh.

It is the kind of logic employed by the arch-rebel himself when he tempted our hungering Lord in the wilderness by saying: *“If you are the Son of God, why not get some good out of that fact? Don’t starve yourself, but make these stones bread. Again, why not put the Father’s vaunted providence to the test by casting yourself down from the pinnacle of the temple? And, finally, why deny yourself the pleasure of great possessions at the cost of only a small compromise—that of bowing down to me”?*

If you have forgotten how forcefully Christ handled that display of Satan’s logic, read again the opening portion of the fourth chapter of the Gospel according to St. Matthew. And the Apostle Paul is no less forceful in his response to the blasphemous question that even he has himself raised here for the purpose of instruction, namely, *“shall we increase our sin in order to obtain more*

grace”?

His reply of μή γένοιτο [*mê génoito*] the language of the Greek New Testament is a strong negative response that in the earlier Authorized [King James] Version is translated: *“God forbid!”* A Norwegian Apostle might have said: *“Nei, langt ifra”* (*No, far from it!*) And in colloquial speech an American might say: *“Not on your life!”*

And what is the reason for such a convincing denial? Essentially one might say the reason is found in the great meaning and significance of Baptism, for the Apostle reminds us that our Baptism into Christ means that we have an antidote for sin, namely, death by proxy, and we have the power of a new life in Christ by His resurrection from the dead.

No wonder that Luther was accustomed to exult in his favorite language, Latin, by saying *BAPTIZATUS SUM*: (I am baptized!) When baptism has the significance for you and me that it had for the Apostle Paul or Martin Luther, we are well on our way to heaven, for it is our Savior who has said: *“whoever believes and is baptized shall be saved.”* GLORY BE TO THE FATHER AND TO THE SON AND TO THE HOLY SPIRIT! Amen

He that believes and is baptized shall see the Lord’s salvation;

Baptized into the death of Christ, he is a new creation.

Through Christ’s redemption he shall stand Among the glorious, heavenly band of every tribe and nation.

With one accord, O God, we pray: “Grant us Thy Holy Spirit;

Look Thou on our infirmities through Jesus’ blood and merit.

Grant us to grow in grace each day by Holy Baptism

That we may eternal life inherit.” Amen!

Juul Madson was long-time professor of New Testament at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. He passed away in the spring of 2008. Blessed be his memory.

Christian Day Schools

Excerpts reprinted from the 1921 *Synod Report*

By A. J. Torgerson

Editors' note: The previous issue of Oak Leaves included biographical articles about the Rev. A. J. Torgerson and Nehemias Tjernagel. In this issue we are including writings from these two men.

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter. Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee, He saith unto, him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, lovest thou me? And, he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep.” John 21, 15-17. ...

This question, “Lovest thou me?” as recorded in the verses read is directed to every Christian congregation. And all congregations that truthfully can answer, “Yes, Lord, thou knowest I love thee,” are charged with the duty to feed Christ’s lambs.

Who are the lambs of Christ? Self-evidently the Christian children such as have by baptism been brought into the fold and have received the right of sonship. For these, His lambs, Christ is very solicitous. He is very much concerned about their care. For this reason He repeatedly commends and praises the act of caring for His lambs. Thus He says: “Whosoever shall receive this child in my name receiveth me.” Luke 9, 48. And: “Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.” Math. 18, 10. And who is not familiar with His solemn admonition, not to offend one of these little

ones? That it were better for such wicked people if a millstone were hanged about their neck and that they were drowned in the depth of the sea. Math. 18, 6. The Son of God was Himself born as a little child, and has by this act honored and sanctified the state of childhood. And us, His saintly congregation, He has taught, yea, expressly commanded to cherish these children and feed them.

To *feed* Christ’s lambs is to care for them, watch, nourish and cherish them. Note here, it is not the bodily care that is urged, but the care, the “feed” that these children must needs have in order to be retained in the fold, Christ’s fold. When the little children through baptism are admitted to Christ’s fold He places them within the pale of His congregation as its property, its charge, and says to the congregation: Feed them! Care for them! Nourish them with the unadulterated milk of God’s Word! Teach them to keep all the things that I have commanded you! This it the duty of the *whole* congregation, the joint duty of all individual members. Here all have the same responsibility regardless of parenthood.

The practical question then for us to answer is, How can a congregation comply with this command and meet its obligation? What must a congregation do? In searching the Scriptures I find that there are chiefly two things that must be done: pray and teach. We must carry these lambs before the throne of grace in prayer and teach them all things that God has commanded us. ...

Prayer alone, however, be it ever so important, will not suffice. In addition, we must also provide for instruction in the Catechism, in the tenets of Christianity. Solomon says: “Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not

depart from it." Prov. 22, 6.

That it is the duty of the congregation to do something along this line, is well recognized in our Lutheran congregations. But few seem to have grasped the full import of the duty imposed. When we examine the work done by the great majority of the Norwegian Lutheran congregations for the instruction and education of the children, what do we find? We find that the major part of the work is left to the state to do through its public schools, and that the congregations only attempt to supplement or fill in with a little instruction in religion. For this purpose many congregations establish and maintain Sunday schools. And I would not dare deny that a *good* Sunday school *can* be of some help in feeding Christ's lambs. In the Sunday schools we lead the little children to Bethlehem, show them child in the manger and teach them why Jesus lies there as a little child. We teach them the blessed truth that Jesus Christ this world in order to save sinners. We lead them to Golgatha, that they may see and behold the Lamb of God that carries the sins of the world. Here they are exhorted to praise and glorify the *love* of God, which caused Him to redeem the world by the precious blood of His only begotten Son. And who would dare deny that this seed, sown in the hearts of little children, *can* bear good fruit? Still the best that can be said the Sunday school is that it is better than nothing. It is indeed very little that a child can learn in a Sunday school. What can you reasonably expect of such an institution? There the children are assembled *one* hour each Sunday. Of this hour one at best is employed in class work. ...

We find a number of congregations that admit that the Public-school-Sunday-school combination does not accomplish what is required, that it is inadequate, and fails to nourish the spiritual life of Christ's lambs and sustain them on their journey toward the heavenly home. As a remedy for this want

they have introduced the summer school, and instruction by the pastor preparatory to confirmation. ... But do we thereby reach the standard and attain our object, to feed Christ's lambs and nourish them? By this method they are not *daily* nourished by the Word of God. Do we not on the contrary make religion and Christianity nauseating to our children by administering it in such extreme doses as we do in these summer schools? It is equivalent to giving the congregation all the sermons they should rave during the entire year bunched together in one month. When the children are given nothing but Catechism, Bible History and Explanation, with some hymn verses and reading by way of diversion, the result is that they get too much for the time being and they are not able to assimilate it all. ...

We that are parents have indeed been signally blessed by our heavenly Father. "Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord and his reward," says the Psalmist. "Happy is the man that has his quiver full of them." But along with these precious gifts He has imposed a great and difficult task. The difficulty does not consist in grasping what our duties are, in finding out what we as parents are to do. This our Lord tells us in His Word, and in such plain, simple and obvious language that there is room for no misunderstanding. Thus He says: "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Eph. 6, 4: "Bring them up," i. e. nurse them, rear and foster them, bring them up to the age of discretion "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." Through the days of childhood and youth, from the cradle to manhood and womanhood they are to be reared in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. But the Lord nurtures and admonishes alone through His Word; or can you point to any other means that He employs? ...

Now we all know how our children can be admitted to Christ's kingdom. We are all

familiar with His command: “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.” Math. 28, 19. Through baptism our children are brought into union with Christ. ... Mindful of this, Christian parents will hasten the baptism of their children. What a relief it is to know that they are safe in the arms of Jesus.

But is that all that is required? Can we rest easy now and let the children take care of themselves? No, no! After we have carried them to Christ we must strive to keep them there.

Christ’s command is to baptize and teach. Both must be done. These go hand in hand, belong together. And who will dare deny that this is necessary with children above all others? ... When they on life’s journey reach the valley of the shadow of death, through which we all *must* pass, when the black specter of fear confronts them, then there is only *one knowledge* that avails, the living knowledge, childlike faith in Jesus Christ. ...

Now let us note that, we are to lead our children to Jesus *while they are little children*, and not wait until they grow older. We find a number of parents that do little or nothing for the Christian education of their children until they send them to the pastor’s confirmation class. Then they shall learn it all in a short time. We even find parents — so-called Christian parents — that purposely allow their children to grow up without any specific religious instruction in order that they may be free to choose for themselves what to believe and to do after having reached the age of maturity. But what about their childhood? Who knows how long the children will live? All children do not live to maturity. ... Now consider, — to prepare the child for this temporal life of 50, 60, or 70 years a steady training in school from the

age of 6 to 16 is considered insufficient, but to prepare the same children for eternity, for the life that can not be numbered by years very little training is required. Does not sound reason tell us that this is absurd? Christ’s command is to teach them to observe *all* that He has commanded us. And that can not be accomplished without diligent application of time and opportunity. Furthermore — children do not only need instruction in the Word of God *while young*, but this instruction and training must be given *during childhood days* if they on the whole shall obtain the true blessing therefrom. There is no other place that the Word of God finds such fruitful ground and bears such good fruit as in the heart of little children. Their hearts are soft and pliable. What they learn is not easily forgotten. Many indeed have on their sickbed and deathbed experienced the great blessing flowing from the biblical knowledge acquired during childhood days. And these treasures must be gathered while yet young. ...

Have you made an earnest attempt personally to do what the Lord commands every father and mother, to teach your children all the parts of the Christian doctrine? If you have you will agree with me, when I state that this is an exceedingly arduous task well nigh impossible of accomplishment in connection with the daily toil of your vocation. ... It is a fact that we can not get away from that the parents need help to educate their children properly. And for what other purpose do we build and maintain schools? Is it not for the very purpose of assisting parents who have not the necessary time, opportunity or ability to take charge personally of the education of their children? Self-evidently. But then it is just as self evident, that the school, if it shall be a help for Christian parents, must give the same education that the Word of God requires of the parents. It must be a school with Christian teachers and the Word of God as the guide and per-

fect rule, where the entire instruction is based upon and permeated by the Word of God. Otherwise the school will be of no help to Christian parents. Thus Dr. Martin Luther says: "*Where the Holy Scriptures do not rule there I certainly do not advise anyone to send his child. All must be ruined where the Word of God is not constantly exercised. I have a great fear, that the schools are wide portals to hell, when they do not persistently and diligently use the Word of God and impress it upon the young.*" ...

The problem then, that we must solve, is how to get religion in education, so as to really educate, form and develop firmness of character. We are doubtless all agreed, that this can not be done in the public schools of our land. We thank God that the stars and stripes wave over a land, where church and state are separate, where all are granted the liberty and right to serve God according to the dictates of the individual conscience, where the civil law protects our liberties and rights in spiritual as well as in temporal affairs. The state prescribes no religion or belief and forbids none. Once for all the American people has declared, that its legislative bodies: "*shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof*" — and thus it has built a wall between the church and the state.

As citizens of the state each individual has the same duties and enjoys the same privileges regardless of religious conviction, be he Christian, Jew, Mohammedan, Mormon, or what not. But from this follows with necessity, that the state institutions, all of them, hence also the public schools must abstain from exercising "any specific religious influence" ...

Hence — no Christian education in our public schools. No Word of God there. The only means that can change the heart, the only means in the wide, wide world, that has power to form, develop and strengthen the

moral Christian character in man, can not be applied there. The one and the only practical, serviceable textbook in morality, in heart-training, character formation, the Bible, is excluded from the public schools. There it does not belong. Its use there is a violation of existing laws. W. T. Harris, former Commissioner of Education in Washington, says correctly: "The necessity of considering the rights of conscience of all citizens alike in the state schools, renders it impossible to bring in religious ceremonial or teach doctrines that are distinctively religious. An undenominational religion is not to be found. Mere deism is opposed to all the creeds of Christendom." ... The Supreme Court of this State (Wisconsin) has pronounced judgment in a case concerning the use of the Bible in the public schools. The question at issue was whether or not the reading of the Bible in the public schools was sectarian instruction. The Court finds that the reading of the Bible in the schools is instruction, even though no explanation is made by the teacher, that, as the Bible contains many instructive passages and the different sects base their particular doctrine on some of these passages, and as such passages in the Bible can rationally be understood as teaching the doctrines founded thereon, then reading of the Bible is also sectarian instruction; — that, therefore, the use of the Bible as a textbook in the public schools, and reading thereof in such schools without limitation, has a tendency to inculcate sectarian ideas and falls under that which is forbidden in the constitution and the statutes of the state of Wisconsin.

In this decision there are some very interesting remarks concerning the general question of religious education and the place of the Bible in education. Thus the Court says: "The priceless truths of the Bible are best taught to our youth in the church, the Sabbath and parochial schools, the social religious meetings, and, above all, in the

home circle. There those truths may be explained and enforced, the spiritual welfare of the child guarded and protected, and his spiritual nature directed and cultivated in accordance with the dictates of the parental conscience.” ...

To avoid possible misunderstanding, allow me to call your attention to the fact that I have no quarrel with the public schools, that I do not oppose them as a secular institution. ... All our citizens are not Christians. The majority of the inhabitants of the United States are outside of the pale of the church. Where the conditions are such the state must provide for the instruction of the growing generation, in order to enable them to exercise their political rights somewhat intelligently. As good citizens, Christian parents will therefore support the public schools and do all in their power to make them as good as possible. Our public school system is a good civic institution. ...

But where shall we Christian parents seek the necessary help, when we can not along with our fellow citizens turn to the state for aid? Our Lord and Master tells us. He has commanded the Christian congregation to FEED HIS LAMBS. Hence we must turn to the larger family, the congregation, the Christian church for help to educate our children.

Granting this, the only question that remains to be answered is: How can the congregation help Christian parents? What can a Christian congregation do in order to feed Christ's lambs? To this question there is to my knowledge but one answer: Establish and maintain Christian day schools. ...

A Christian day school is a school that takes charge of the entire elementary education of a child, a school where Christianity and the secular subjects prescribed by the state laws are taught, where the entire plan, discipline and instruction is based upon the Word of God as the guide and perfect rule, hence, where Christian parents really get

help in bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.

In such a school the children learn to fear, love and trust the God, who has created them. They learn to know their relation to God, that they are sinners, who can not stand before by their own righteousness and escape His wrath and judgment. They are taught what God has done for them in order to save them, how He has not spared His only begotten Son, but has given Him as a ransom for all. They learn how to find God in His blessed Word, how they by faith shall grasp Him and salvation through Christ. They are taught how to walk in the fear of the Lord until He transfers them from this vale of tears to His heavenly mansions. In short, they are led to Christ. And this is done not only now and then, at stated intervals, during the periods of doctrinal instruction, no, the entire instruction is planned so as to lead the lambs to their good shepherd, to Christ. Christian spirit pervades the whole school. The secular branches are explained in the light of the Scriptures and, if necessary, corrected. The children are spared from the direct assault upon the Bible comprised in the evolutionary theory and modern reason, taught in the public schools, a theory that is diametrically opposed to the true knowledge of man's past, present and future. They are led to begin and close every day, every undertaking with prayer, in their daily walk, whatever they undertake, step by step, through their entire lifetime always to consider: What does my Lord and Master say about this? Thus the children are educated for Christian life as well as for good citizenship. A good Christian is always a good citizen. Also worldly-minded men of erudition admit that those, who lead holy lives in accordance with the Word of God, are the best citizens. So when bigotted legislators' attempt to enact laws to hamper the operation of these schools, they actually attempt to cut off their own nose to spite their face. The

best interests of the state are served in these Christian schools. But the point of paramount importance is, that in these schools we do what the Lord has commanded us the best we know how. Here Christian parents get the best help that can be had in bringing up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and in teaching them all that the Lord has commanded us. ...

It has been stated, that the greatest blessing that a person can ask or desire, is that he may on the last day stand at the right hand of Christ. But there is one desire that is even greater than that, and that is standing at

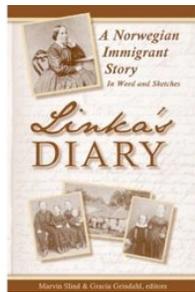
the right hand of Christ to be able to answer not only, Here I am, but also to add, And the children that thou gavest me.

O let us eagerly sacrifice all that we have, energy, money, in order that this object above all objects may be attained! We can not more fittingly celebrate the 400th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther's firm biblical stand at Worms than to establish Christian day schools, Bible schools in all our Lutheran congregations.

Pastor A. J. Torgerson, 1870-1963, served congregations in northern Iowa.

Linka's Diary: A New Translation

Book Review by Rebecca DeGarmeaux



Many of you may be familiar with the 1952 translation of *Linka's Diary*. That book, a compilation of diary entries and letters from the collection of Caroline Dorothea Margrethe Keyser Preus was prepared for publication by her grandson J. C. K. Preus.

Dr. Marvin G. Slind, Associate Professor of History at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, has edited a new translation of *Linka's Diary*. Dr. Gracia Grindal, Professor of Rhetoric at Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota, has added to the narrative by including many of Linka's sketches.

Dr. Slind and his translation assistants have gone back to the original Norwegian to produce a fresh, smooth English rendering. Only occasionally did he go to the Preus translation for clarification and accuracy. Here he found Preus' secret. The original translation was heavily edited for content

according to the pious leanings of the time or anything Preus may have felt embarrassing to the family. For instance, all references to dancing, an activity which Linka mentions often in the early parts of her diary, were removed. Also, Preus removed entire days if they contained little more than "Nothing amusing happened." Prof. Slind has done us a great service by reporting all of the diary, the mundane as well as the "amusing."

The diary itself is divided into three parts: "A Young Norwegian Woman (1845-1849)," "Approaching Marriage and Immigration (1849-1851)," and "A New Life in America (1851-1864)." A fourth part of the book, entitled "Sketches by a Pastor's Wife (1858-1870)," contains 59 of Linka's sketches including the notes she included with (or sometimes on) them along with historical commentary by Dr. Gracia Grindal.

At the beginning of the diary in January of 1845, Linka has already lost her mother and she is spending an extended visit with her aunt and uncle, Pastor and Mrs. J. Carl Christie, in Askevold. Only a year and a half later, her father, Pastor Christian Nicoli Keyser, has died and she and her sisters

have moved in with their grandmother in Uranienborg.

It is unclear from the diary when Linka became engaged to her cousin Hermann Preus. They were married on May 5, 1851, just a few days before they set out for America and Hermann's first call as pastor of the Spring Prairie church in Wisconsin. Linka describes their trip and their subsequent new life in Wisconsin. Once in America, wifely and motherly duties take up more of her time and she writes less often. Here is where the section of sketches starts to fill the void in describing events, big and small, in her life.

Because the timeframe of the diary covers almost 20 years, the reader soon discovers two things. As the diary and letters pro-

gress, you see Linka grow from a young (Linka might say "silly") girl to a mature wife and mother. You also see her writing style change from carefree and fun to more serious and, at times, quite devotional.

Dr. Slind has added many endnotes which aid the reader in understanding many of the people and places which Linka naturally takes for granted. Dr. Grindal's commentaries on the sketches add extra insight into a time in Linka's life when she seemed to spend more time drawing than writing as a way to express herself and record events.

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A Layman's Faith and Understanding **Two *Lutheran Sentinel* articles written by Nehemias Tjernagel**

Everyday Christianity (1940)

I have often heard lay-people speak of a seeming diffidence regarding the use of the Word amongst themselves, even among ministers, in the everyday affairs of life.

Pious remarks, though occurring in the midst of our daily tasks, may penetrate to the very core of our souls and light up an otherwise drab existence. There is strength in every worshipful utterance.

It is well to be on familiar terms with God during health and vigor, for when sickness comes it is sometimes hard for us to concentrate our thought, even on things of the spirit. How comforting, then, that we may relax in Him and be at peace. The more we engage in Christian contemplation and converse, the more it fortifies our position in life and death.

Most anyone will take part in a discussion about mooted points in religion; not so many will dwell with delight on a Scripture passage, or exchange a pious thought or two

when they wash the dishes, do the milking, drive to town, or walk to work. Why this reticence? At the end of a sermon, or of devotion, let us not draw a breath of relief because it is over, but rather consider it a prelude to Christian living in the periods between.

Not that we are to mumble prayers incessantly, or talk religion to death, so to speak, but an abiding faith must be the very undercurrent in our lives, glimpsing forth like a lovely smile to dispel the shadows on our way.

I remember one minister in particular who, in his daily associations chose, quite generally, to have the regular conversation carry references to God and His attributes in its own vein, nevertheless effectively. This can be done by anybody who is set on spicing the daily fare with a taste of heavenliness.

How, really, can any true Christian remain silent, even in the midst of a busy day,

when an inner urge impels him to utter helpful, devotional word to the plodder by his side? It will not be misunderstood.

Further, when we essay to lend a hand with spiritual admonishment and precept, it is not likely to be resented when we speak as a brother, however firmly.

Even when anyone takes God's name in vain before us, or other wise trespasses against us we are not to swoop angrily upon him but "go tell him his fault between thee and him alone," as Scripture indicates. Thus would the Lord have us act, patiently, lovingly to those who are weak, or astray.

Christ mingled with the lowly, with sinners, because he wanted to make them His own. He spoke gently, kindly, to all, only not to hardened hypocrites. Let us remember His beautiful example in our every move for righteousness, and not the least in every-day Christian living.

N. Tjernagel.

A Layman Views the Church-Union Movements (1940)

A Missouri Synod pastor told me recently that he was somewhat concerned as to the possible attitude taken by the laity regarding union movements in the church.

There can be no doubt that the lay people are, to a greater or lesser degree, pondering these questions in their own minds, though they do not always express themselves.

A reason for their silence is that often the contenders for union are apt to employ vague terms and reasonings that may admit of different interpretations which are scarcely to be understood, perhaps even not entirely and altogether by themselves. He who actually comprehends his own subject can also make it clear to others if he really seeks to do so.

It has often happened among men that they skillfully deceive each other in argument in order to be winners in the fray. This

is the worldly way, and Satan has even been successful in sometimes introducing it among churchmen. Besides, addicts of unionism have a knack of signing union documents rather indiscriminately, and crying: "Peace, peace; when there is no peace." Jer. 6, 14.

If, in order to affect a true, God-pleasing union, the differing church-bodies with their leaders, their committees, sub-committees, lay-people and all would, under prayer, be truly concerned for the furtherance of the Kingdom according to the Confessions and the Word of God, the faithful would sense the right directions and gravitate together automatically. They would foregather in the invisible church like steel particles attracted by a great magnet, the beam of truth, and would dovetail in spirit, if not in immediate outer organization.

Whoever had been in error would be the first to denounce it, and thank God for having revealed it to him. Has there been any clear-cut admission of error between the unionistic church-bodies yet amalgamated? There is reason to believe that many of the agreements for union are conceived in such indeterminate, equivocal fashion that each participant feels that he can remain in the common fold without retracting anything. And so the differences continue as before, with an amicable believe-as-you-will spirit hovering benignly over all, so that each may relax undisturbed in the embrace of unionism.

Luther was not concerned as to outer organization except as a blessed result of true inner unity of faith. And so with our true, God-inspired church fathers, who labored to uphold and preserve the truth, knowing full well that when the core remained sound, the tree would reach out and grow. And grow it did! Viewing the abounding fruits of the work of the fathers, some think to do even better in inaugurating the formation of vast churchly amalgamations, without first look-

ing to full Scriptural unity among the participants. It will not do to perch a colossal superstructure' on a base of non-cohesive material, for sooner or later it will crumble and crash.

I believe the great majority of thoughtful laymen realize this, and are not misled by well-meaning but mistaken optimists who think that massed effort in such great loose-linked organizations will be potent, and bring about eventual unity. Experience has shown that instead of attaining true confessional unity, the errors multiply. Even though somewhat dubious about the new church union set-up, some go along because they are determined to be a salt permeating the whole, and serving as purifiers. However, having surrendered the slightest, their power of resistance is weakened, and they tend to turn to salt-pillars instead and Liberalism marches on.

We are asked: What if the members of the differing church-bodies are *NOT* "truly concerned" and will *NOT* strive faithfully to approach one another through strict adherence to the saving faith, must we not then

have union committees to work out a solution? Judging by their record in the past, why, WE ask, should they be continued? Are not the amalgamations reflecting the work of such committees ever growing more and more liberal and unionistic in spirit? What did the holy men of old inculcate, and work with to spread the Kingdom? After all, they had no more to do with than just simply this: The Word and the Sacraments. What more have we? *AND WHAT MORE DO WE NEED?* Certainly not sets of confusing union documents.

This brings us back to the Lutheran Confessions which render clear to all who, by the grace of God, will believe, a genuine Scriptural understanding, *AND A CALL TO REPENTANCE TO THOSE WHO HAVE DEVIATED THEREFROM!* A pious, truly mutual, Scripture-abiding get-together on this platform makes for real Christian union, precludes compromise, and its unholy offspring, Unionism, that hideous canker eating into the very vitals of the church today.

N[ehemias]. Tjernagel.

Oak Leaves Editor(s) Needed

The Board of Directors of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod Historical Society is seeking a new editor (or co-editors) for our newsletter *Oak Leaves*. The position oversees the work of producing four issues of the newsletter each year.

The work involves:

- soliciting articles on topics relating to the history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod from various writers;
- editing the articles;
- planning the layout of each issue;
- getting each issue printed and delivered to the secretary who does addressing and mailing.

This is largely a "labor of love", but there is a small stipend for the position.

The Board would appreciate input from our readership regarding possible candidates for the position.

Please contact the current chairman of the Historical Society:

Mark O. Harstad

Email: mharstad@blc.edu — Office: (507) 344-7334 — Home: (507) 387-2885

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Oak Leaves welcomes articles of both Synodical and local significance
for publication. Articles maybe edited for style, clarity, or length to al-
low for publication. Submitted manuscripts will be deposited in the
archives of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

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