

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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Sunday School and Bible Study 9:15 AM - Divine Service 10:30 AM

Happy New Year!

Long before there were gifs or memes or YouTube videos, this was a joke:



This needs no explanation as long as you know how to pronounce gnu. We all start a new year. In the Army, the fiscal new year was always a big deal. In day-to-day life, the school year controls most people's lives who have children or are some way connected to the school. You have people who mark time by hunting seasons, by sport seasons, by election years. There really is no command to do it one way or the other. But it means something: you are saying something by whatever you choose to begin your New Year with.

It was Luther's custom to begin his new year on Christmas Day (LW, 58, 192, fn. 1). He also railed on the point that we date things *anno domini*, in the year of our Lord. "Do we not all write the year not from the [founding of] the papacy at Rome, but from the birth of our Lord Christ more than 1,500 years ago? Look at your own letters" (LW, 58, 275). But we rarely date things anymore, emails, texts, pictures, etc. are all dated for us.

It would be good if we could recapture the habit of thinking in terms of A.D. Why pastors have historically railed at confirmation students (at least this pastor did) who said A.D. meant After Death, even as B.C. *does* mean Before Christ? *Anno Domini* means the direct opposite. We are confessing that 2023 is a Year of Our Lord, i.e. He is alive; He is reigning and ruling no less this year than He has every other year since God created Sun and Moon "to separate the day from the night, and let them serve as signs to mark seasons and days and years" (Genesis 1:14).

I predict that in the not-too-distant future the designations B.C. and A.D. which confess Christ to be the dividing point – which He is – of all history, of reality, will be campaigned against. This website: <https://www.dictionary.com/e/should-we-use-bce-instead->

of-bc, says the designations BCE and CE, Before Common Era and Common Era have been around since the 1700s. That's about the right time frame for when the overthrowing of Divine things started. I only noted seeing them in my own readings in books from the 1950s.

I think the challenge will be much more direct. Jesus is a divisive subject. He's also the only salvation for sinners divided from God. May we keep confessing our years to be A.D. To show you how things have changed, I have my Army Reserve Officer Commission hanging in my office. It is from September 12, 1978. This is the last paragraph: "Done at the City of Washington this twelfth day of September in the year of our Lord, one thousand nine hundred seventy-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the two hundred and third By the President." Then it's signed by the Adjutant General and by the Secretary of the Army.

In 1978, a government document could actually spell out "in the year of our Lord". This is the Christian Capital you hear of being accrued in the largely Christian Country that was pre-21st century America. I am NOT saying America was ever a Christian country, but she gave the Gospel full freedom and defaulted to Christian ethics. Not anymore. The default ethic is broadmindedness, tolerance, and secular humanism. Go on start putting A.D. after each date. Sooner or later someone will ask you about it. If not, you'll be reminding yourself that this is your Savior's and Lord's year.

Uxoriousness

Posted on August 8, 2022 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

I had to look this word up when I first read it. Uxoriousness means to be "excessively fond of or submissive to a wife". It's from the Latin for wife *uxor* (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/uxorious>). In his 1999 book, *The Church Impotent*, Roman Catholic scholar, Leon Podles, observes: "Not tyranny, but uxoriousness, is the chief danger of patriarchy" (73).

That thought's worth rolling around in your head. If you haven't been through a struggle, a tussle, a *brouhaha* (Who can't smile when he uses this French word?) over women suffrage, girl acolytes, or even perhaps ordaining women, you might not have seen uxoriousness in action.

Uxoriousness is not the same as henpecked or the woman wearing the pants in the family. With these, you typically see the effects in the woman. With uxoriousness, you see the effects in the man. This is C. S. Lewis' men

without chest; this is effeminacy; this is standing up for the downtrodden in a meek, mewling sort of way.

In any of the aforesaid dust-ups, forays, or tempests in teapots, it is uxorious men arguing the most stridently, stringently, and cloyingly for their wife, daughter, mother to vote. Some women are present of course, but they appear unwomanly which everyone knows without consulting a dictionary is better than appearing as unmanly or unmanned. The uxorious man is this.

What urges the husband, father, son to advocate for women to vote, pastor, lead, read, usher, or to distribute will be excessive fondness – in this case misdirected – or submissiveness which is downright embarrassing.

Patriarchy never speaks in favor of putting women into roles contrary to their calling, their order, their gifts; the uxorious man, either of the fond or the servile type, does. But to argue contrary to the Creator's order for the sake of a creature is saying that something contrary to the Creator could be of benefit to the created.

You know how cowardice can catch? How hysteria can be mass? How panic can be epidemic? Uxoriousness speaking in favor of "liberating" women from the blessings of God's created order can be too. But, and here's the real problem, it appears unamerican, ignoble, and insensitive to speak against a man arguing for his woman's rights.

But the truth must out. Imagine a husband arguing for his wife's right to be a prostitute? A father arguing for His daughter's right to be a whore? But that's exactly what happens when a divorcee argues that his adulterous ex-wife or a when father argues that his daughter with a live-in lover not be disciplined.

Every man sees the problem, but it's very hard to speak up. It seems impossible to follow Paul here and speak the truth in love. Better to speak truth any which way you can than to countenance the lie.

It's easy to speak against a tyrannical patriarchy but not against an uxorious one. But unrebuked uxoriousness leads to unmanning men and empowering Furies, Harpies, and Amazons.

Come, Lord Jesus

January 7, 2021 / Articles / By Gene Edward Veith / 9 Comments

When I became a Lutheran, one of the few things about my new church that I did not love was the Common Table Prayer that everyone in my congregation would say before meals:

*Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest,
And let these gifts to us be blest.*

This struck me as a children's prayer, like "God is great, God is good" and "Now I lay me down to sleep." Nothing wrong with them, but they sound like singsong nursery rhymes. I much preferred the catechism's table prayer with

its strong Biblical core from Psalm 145:15–16: "The eyes of all look to you, O Lord."

But little did I know the depth of the Common Table Prayer and why Lutherans love it. This prayer also has a strong Biblical core: "Come, Lord Jesus" is the last prayer in the Bible (Rev. 22:20). Moreover, it is pretty much the last word of the Bible, appearing next to the last verse of Revelation, just before the closing benediction and the final "Amen."

Scripture ends with a prayer for Jesus to return. The church prays for His return until that happens. But it is also a prayer for Jesus to come in the Gospel. A few verses earlier, the Book of Revelation reveals this to be the word of the Holy Spirit, the word of the church as the Bride of Christ, the word of those who hear this Word of God — namely, us — and also the one "who is thirsty" and in need of grace:

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price. (Rev. 22:17)

The Common Table Prayer asks Jesus to come into a humble context, the family gathered together for a meal. "Be our guest." Join us. We welcome You into our home and to our table.

God gives us this day our daily bread by means of farmers and bakers, but also through the "bread winners" and the hands that prepared our meal. Thus, God is present when we sit around the table with our family to enjoy a good meal.

The 19th-century German artist, Fritz von Uhde, a devout Lutheran, made a painting of this prayer. It shows an ordinary peasant family sitting around a table and then Jesus walks in. They stand to greet Him, with bows and shy looks, as they would with any guest. Jesus, the Lord of the universe, has come to this humble family to be with them.

When we call upon the name of Jesus, as we do in this prayer, He is present with us. "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt. 18:20).

The prayer also acknowledges that our food and sustenance are "gifts." We receive "everything that has to do with the support and needs of the body," in the words of the Small Catechism, from the hands of our gracious God (SC, Lord's Prayer).

The concept of "gift" is important for Lutheranism. Our salvation is not a matter of "wages," of getting compensated for our work (Rom. 4:4). Indeed, our work has merely earned us death: "For the wages of sin is death," says St. Paul, "but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6:23). Salvation is not our doing, but the gift of God's grace. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

What is true in God's spiritual kingdom is also true in God's earthly kingdom. Our life is His gift. Our vocations

in the home, the workplace, the society and the church are His gift. Thus, our spouse, our children and the other members of our family are His gifts. And the food that we are about to eat, after we pray, is His gift.

We pray that God will bless these gifts. And that He will bless them “to us.” They will be for our good.

This prayer helps us reflect on Christ’s presence and God’s gifts even in something as ordinary as eating a meal. We now say it in our home, too.

<https://witness.lcms.org/2021/come-lord-jesus/#comments>

“Faith worked Through these Means”

A 9-Part Advent-Lent Sermon Series on
The 4th, 5th, & 6th Chief Parts of Luther’s Small Catechism

In the edition of *Aesop’s Fables*, illustrated by Arthur Rackham, G. K. Chesterton has written the introduction. He says that “it is universally known among other things ‘that there is such a thing as being too clever by half’” (xi). Since 1991 or perhaps 1992 I have devoted the midweek services during Advent and Lent to preaching on the Catechism. I point out each year that this was the practice during the Reformation. I have done it for my entire time here. Which means this year we are completing our 6th passage through Luther’s Small Catechism. And I fear or maybe just think that perhaps in my desire to be fresh, poignant, trenchant even, I ended up being too clever by half.

So, this year, I’m taking my title out of our Augsburg Confession Article V where we say this: “To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is provided the Gospel and the Sacraments. Through these as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel” (Tappert, 31). In keeping with my desire to renounce my cleverness, I thought it would be good to just follow the Catechism’s questions for my sermon themes if not titles. So this is “what that looks like.”

All services times are at 7:30 PM. With the exception of Ash Wednesday, if you don’t stay to visit you can be walking to your car at 7:20 at the latest.

Nov. 30	What is Baptism?	Baptism 1
Dec. 07	What Benefits Does Baptism Give?	Baptism 2
Dec. 14	How Can Water Do Such Great Things?	Baptism 3
Feb. 22	What is Confession?	Confession 1
Mar. 01	What Sins Should We Confess?	Confession 2

Mar. 08 What is the Sacrament of the Altar?
Sacrament of the Altar 1

Mar. 15 What is the Benefit of this Eating and
Drinking?
Sacrament of the Altar 2

Mar. 22 How can Bodily Eating and Drinking do Such
Things?
Sacrament of the Altar 3

Mar. 29 Who Receives This Sacrament Worthily?
Sacrament of the Altar 4

Theses on Justification

A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations May 1983. Citations from the Lutheran Confessions are taken from *The Book of Concord* edited by T.G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), and, where noted, from *Concordia Triglotta*.

The following abbreviations have been used:

AC –Augsburg Confession

Ap –Apology of the Augsburg Confession

Ep –Epitome of the Formula of Concord

FC –Formula of Concord

LC –Large Catechism

SA –Smalcald Articles

SC –Small Catechism

SD –Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

Tr –Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope Trig. –
Concordia Triglotta

Introduction

The 1981 convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod adopted a resolution asking “the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, the joint faculties of the seminaries, and the Council of Presidents to make a study of the doctrine of justification within one year, which gives proper expression to all the aspects of what the Scriptures teach on this matter” (1981 Res. 3–12 “To Make a Study on the Doctrine of Justification”). In response to a request from the President of the Synod that the Commission on Theology and Church Relations coordinate the preparation of this study, a set of theses on justification was drafted by the CTCR and shared with the Council of Presidents and the seminary faculties for discussion and review as they carried out their own independent studies of this doctrine. On the basis of the written responses received, the CTCR revised the original draft of the theses and distributed them once again to the Council of Presidents and seminary faculties for final review. The commission now presents these theses for synod-wide study and discussion.

In keeping with the Synod’s recognition that “the need has been expressed to study anew what the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach on this doctrine,” these theses have been formulated for the purpose of presenting the Biblical doctrine of justification by grace through faith

for Christ's sake in as comprehensive a manner as is possible in a format of this kind. In order to elucidate certain key aspects of the doctrine of justification as precisely as possible, the document presents a number of antitheses which point out and reject past and present errors which obscure and even vitiate this central doctrine.

The theses are here presented in accordance with the sequence followed in the articles of the Augsburg Confession. The article of justification is therefore presented in the context of its basis in the work of Christ, the means of grace through which the sinner is brought to faith and to possession of the benefits of Christ, and the renewal or Christian life of the sinner which results from his justification through faith in Christ. The theses are not intended to go beyond the pattern of thought and terminology of Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, and the presentation of our respected Lutheran theologians of the past.

This study on justification is presented to the Synod in the year of the 500th anniversary of the birthday of Dr. Martin Luther. It can therefore serve as a timely reminder of the debt of gratitude we owe to God for this our father in the faith, who so faithfully labored to restore this doctrine to the center of the church's life and proclamation. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations offers the theses which follow with the special prayer that they will assist pastors and congregations as they seek to bring comfort and peace to troubled consciences in their midst and to edify one another for the work of the Christian service.

I. Centrality and Function

1. The doctrine of the sinner's justification before God by grace for Christ's sake through faith is the central and most important teaching of the Christian faith. (Is. 53; John 1:29; 3:16; Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16–17; 3:23–28; 4:25; 1 Cor. 2:1–5; 3:11; Gal. 2:16; 5:4; 1 Tim. 1:15, 2:4–6; AC XX, 9–11; XXVI, 4; XXVII, 48; Ap IV, 2; SA II, i, 1–5; SA II, ii, 21, 24, 25; SA II, iii, 2; FC SD III, 6)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That justification or forgiveness for Christ's sake by grace through faith is not central in Scripture or does not really take place, but is merely one of a number of modes or theological interpretations or metaphors or pictures or motifs – each of these really dispensable – of Christ's saving work found in the Scriptures.

II. Definition¹

2. When used to refer to the sinner's relationship to God, the term "justify" is used throughout the Scriptures to denote a verdict, i.e., a forensic act whereby a person is counted righteous, declared righteous, reckoned to be righteous, absolved, or forgiven. (Rom. 3:20–28; 4:1–13; 5–1; 8:33; Gal. 2:16, [cf. Deut. 25:1; Kings 8:32; Prov. 17:15;

Is. 5:23]; Ap IV, 72, 158, 161, 252, 305; FC Ep III, 7; FC SD III, 17)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That God judges a person to be righteous because that person is inherently righteous on account of what he has done; That Christ's righteousness is reckoned to a person only in piecemeal fashion, as love is infused; That justification is not a completely forensic act of God, but is realized at least in part in the "new creation" among Christians; That God declares a person righteous because He has started to renew that person's life and conduct.

3. The term "justify" in Scripture often overlaps in meaning the term "forgive," which means to blot out [sins], to pardon. In Scripture the term "justify" is often used in the context of God's grace, Christ's work of obedience and redemption, reconciliation, propitiation, atonement, expiation, and faith in Christ. (Ps. 32:1; Rom. 3:24–26; 4:2–8; 5:1–11; 2 Cor. 5:18–21; Ap IV, 76, 103, 117, 132, 158, 163, 290; XII, 36; XX, 10; XXIV, 12; FC SD III, 30, 39, 54; FC SD V, 25; Trig. Ap III, 37, 61, 157, 261)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That forgiveness and justification before God do not involve each other, or that justification and reconciliation are entirely different from each other, as though a person can be reconciled without being justified or justified without being reconciled.

4. In normal Biblical and ecclesiastical usage the terms "justify" and "justification" refer to the ("subjective") justification of the individual sinner through faith (Rom. 4–5, 5:1, etc.; AC IV, 3; FC SD III, 25). But because theologically justification is the same thing as the forgiveness of sins (Rom. 4:1–8; Ap IV, 76; FC Ep. III, 7), it is biblically and confessionally correct to refer to the great sin-cancelling, atoning work of the Redeemer as the "objective" or "universal" justification of the whole sinful human race. (John 1:29; Rom. 5:6–18; 2 Cor. 5:19; Col. 2:14–15; 1 Tim. 3:16; Ap IV, 103–105; LC V, 31, 32, 36, 37; FC SD III, 57)

5. Thus objective justification or reconciliation is the forgiveness of sins both as it has been acquired for the entire human race by Christ's work of obedience in its stead and declared by His resurrection, and as it is seriously and efficaciously offered to all in the means of grace.

6. Subjective justification or reconciliation is this same forgiveness as it is received, appropriated by, and applied to the individual sinner through God-given faith alone (*sola fide*).

III. The Nature of Justification (What Happens When the Sinner is Justified)

7. When the sinner is justified, (a) God does not count his sin against him, but forgives him, and (b) God imputes to him the righteousness of Christ. (Is. 45:25; Rom. 5:18–

¹Definitions in part II. are preliminary to the material in the remainder of the document and should be cross-referenced with more detailed statements in the later theses. For example, theses 5 and 6 are elaborated in theses 19–22.

19; Phil. 3:8–9; Ap IV, 177, 305; XXI, 19; FC Ep III, 4; FC SD III, 15, 30–31)

8. When the sinner is justified, he is forgiven all his sin; no sin remains unforgiven. (Matt. 9:2; Luke 7:47–48; Rom. 8:1; 1 John 1:7; Ap IV, 149, 222; SA III, xiii, 2; SC V, 16)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That, although Christ by His work has earned forgiveness for all, there are still certain conditions which God demands of people before He will pronounce them righteous.

9. The one who justifies is always and only God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (Is. 50:8; Rom. 5:19; 8:30, 33; 1 Cor. 1:30; 6:11; Col. 3:13; AC IV, 3; Ap IV, 224, 389; XV, 7; SA II, i, 1–4; III, xiii, 1; LC II, 63–65; FC Ep V, 5)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That a person is able to bring about his own justification or that of anyone else by his own faculties, abilities, or works.

IV. Man's Need for Justification

10. The one who is justified by God is sinful man, man ungodly (Rom. 3:23; 4:5; Eph. 4:20–24) and guilty (a) because the offense and guilt of Adam, the first man, have been imputed, or reckoned, to all mankind (Gen. 3; Rom. 5:12–19) and (b) because every human being is a sinner by the hereditary corruption of his nature (Rom. 7) and sins daily. (Ps. 51:5; Eccl. 7:20; John 3:6; Rom. 1:32; 3:12, 16–18, 23; 5:6, 8; 6:23; Gal. 5:19–21; 1 John 1:8; AC II, III, 3; XIX; Ap II, 5–13; IV, 34; XII, 142; SA III, i; SC III, 16; LC III, 86–87; FC SD I, 53)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That God judges all people to be guilty sinners only because of their hereditary corruption and resulting actual sinful thoughts, words, and actions, or only because He has reckoned Adam's offense and guilt to all human beings; That Adam was not a historical person, the first man created by God; That everyone is "his own Adam."

11. All people born according to the course of nature stand before God as sinful and guilty, owing an insurmountable debt, and condemned to eternal hell and punishment. (Lev. 19:2; Deut. 32:4; Is. 6:3; Matt. 5:20; Luke 10:15; Rom. 1:18; 2:5, 8–9; 6:23; Gal. 3:10; Rev. 15:4; AC III, 3; LC I, 31–34, 234; FC SD I, 6)

12. Because of man's sin, God, who is absolutely holy and righteous, is angry against all sinners, and there could be no forgiveness or justification except for the fact that propitiation and satisfaction were made by Jesus Christ. (Deut. 27:26; Ps. 5:5; Gal. 3:10; 2 Tim. 2:13; Heb. 2:9, 9:22; AC II, 2; Ap II, 40; IV 40, 128; LC I, 122, 234; II, 68; FC SD I, 6)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That the loving God would not require propitiation and satisfaction before He forgives.

V. The Basis of Justification

13. The source of the sinner's justification before God is solely God's grace in Jesus Christ. (John 1:16–17; Eph. 1:7,

2:5b; Ap IV, 41, 53; LC II, 43; III, 96; IV, 37; FC SD XI, 43)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That there is grace outside of Jesus Christ.

14. God's grace whereby He justifies and saves the sinner is His undeserved mercy and loving kindness, His powerful and active love which sent Christ to be the Savior of the world. (John 3:16; Rom. 3:24, 5:15, 20; 2 Cor. 8:9; Eph. 1:19; Titus 2:11; AC III, 1–3, Ap II, 50; LC II, 65; III, 51)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That the grace by which God justifies the sinner is a supernatural divine power or quality which God gives or infuses into man in order to enable him to do good works and become righteous before God; That there is conflict between the fact that Christ by His saving work made God gracious toward the world and the fact that God in His grace sent Christ to be the Savior, or vice versa.

15. The scope of God's grace in Christ is universal, including all people of all times and places. (John 3:16; Rom. 11:32; 1 Tim. 2:4; 4:10; FC SD XI, 28, 68)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That grace is extended to all simply by virtue of the fact that all are children of our Creator God, and not because of Christ's atonement; That God's grace extends only to a segment of humanity, either those whom God has especially chosen to favor or those who have cooperated with God, sought after God, or believed in God.

16. The basis of the sinner's justification before God is the work of God's only begotten Son in the flesh, His work of obedience. This obedience is the perfect obedience of Christ according to both the divine and human natures. It is His vicarious living under God's law in the place of all sinners, as well as His substitutionary, sacrificial, and atoning death for all the sins of all sinners. (Rom. 5:18–19; Gal. 4:4–5; 1 Peter 2:21–24; 3:18; Ap IV, 214; FC Ep III, 3, 4, 6; FC SD III, 9, 11–12, 14–15, 22, 30, 54–58; V, 22; VIII, 46–47; XII, 10)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That the basis of the sinner's justification is Christ's inherent righteousness as God; That Christ according to His human nature cannot render to God adequate obedience to substitute for all men; That the obedience of Christ which is the basis of the sinner's justification is the obedience of the divine nature only or of the human nature only.

17. The obedient death of Christ was a penal death, the death of an innocent victim under the condemnation of God, a sacrificial and atoning death paid as a ransom to a just and wrathful God and vicariously given to satisfy the penal justice of God. (Is. 53:5–7; Mark 10:45; Rom. 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; Eph. 5:2; 1 Tim. 2:6; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18–19; 1 John 4:10; AC III, 3; IV, 2; XXIV, 25; Ap IV, 40, 53, 57, 98, 178–179, 204, 292; XII, 160; XIII, 7–8; 19; XXIV, 22–24, 55, 59; LC II, 31; FC Ep V, 5; FC SD V, 20)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That Christ's death was not a truly vicarious sacrifice

because His condemnation under the wrath of God is a mere metaphor, or because it otherwise does not correspond to reality.

18. God imputed all the sins of all mankind to Christ, who by the perfect obedience of His life and death paid fully and made complete expiation for them and has thus propitiated the wrath of God. (John 1:29; Rom. 5:18–19; 2 Cor. 5:15, 21; Col. 2:14; 1 John 2:2; Ap IV, 40, 103; XX, 5; SA II, i, 1–3; III, iii, 38; FC SD V, 22)

It is contrary to Scripture and the pure Gospel to teach: That Christ has not propitiated the wrath of God by the perfect obedience of His life and death; That Christ paid the ransom to the devil.

Gateway to What?

Posted on June 6, 2022 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

Gatewaychurch.com says of itself: “Gateway is a COME AS YOU ARE kind of church – a community of imperfect people doing life together, helping each other become all that God created us to be. Whether you’ve had a relationship with God for years or you’re not even sure God exists, come as you are. Bring your questions, doubts, fears, and hurts – but as we say, NO PERFECT PEOPLE ALLOWED — because pretending just keeps us stuck” (<https://www.gatewaychurch.com/new-here/new-to-gateway/getting-started/>). They have 5 Austin area locations and one in Branson, Missouri. They are indeed a gateway, but to what?

We attended their Pflugerville location, and like all non-liturgical, contemporary worship, make-it-up-as-you-go churches, they were in the midst of a message series. (To call it a sermon seems it to add a note of the sacred, the divine, the holy, that they definitely want no part of.) The 4 week series is “Trust Me If You Can”. Week #2 is “Trust Leadership if You Can.” They use your bad experience with church leadership to drive you into their welcoming, accepting, arms, and into the arms of a god they purposely leave undefined, unidentified.

You think this is too extreme? Well, when they begin by defining bad, abusive leadership as being inflexible in doctrine and using dogma, I’d say they are on the broad path of spirituality. While being a heavily organized church with persons identified for every task, ministry, role, and ‘job’, they present themselves as a bulwark against “organized religion.” No, they don’t come out with this that plainly, but they are at war with traditional churches, and this was their call to arms; rather, the call to *their* arms.

I asked my wife what she thought before I said anything. “Self-help, self-improvement with a little bit of God thrown in.” Here’s what I wrote down 20 minutes into the “service”: “This is antichristian worship in that it is worship of people. Our praise, our feeling, our faith, our

love, our surrender, our reframing, redefining, our positive mental attitude is what counts.”

Rev. 13:18 says the number of the beast is really the number of mankind. Here’s a transliteration of it: “*ton arithmon toũ thēriou, arithmos gar anthrōpou estin, kai o arithmos autoũ exakósioi exēkonta ex.*” “Beast” (*toũ thēriou*) has the article; man does not and is often translated ‘a man’ which leads to using numerology to decipher which man has the number. Using a 21st century **None** reading his Bible for the first time, (I’m replacing the South Pacific islander because it’s more likely that he has read his Bible many times and is already a Christian.), how could he possibly come to any definitive understanding of that verse? But *anthrōpou* doesn’t have the article which means it can be translated generically as “mankind”.

Mankind what he thinks, does, says is the center of Gateway worship. The two sacraments are your surrendering of yourself, your situation, your problems, and your prayers on behalf of others and yourself. The ‘service’ begins with the obligatory 3 song set by an easy listening, very emotive, and highly repetitious house band. The 45 or so minute monologue was a young, late 20-something or early 30-something stringing together every buzzword, cliché, and ‘what’s-trending now’ to make his point: It’s not you; it’s not God; it’s the bad church leaders you’ve had in the past, and Gateway is offering you recovery in their open arms. This was the speaker’s point, but his use of current internet, social media language could have been generational and not salesmanship. I say this because he spoke of Joseph prospering in Potiphar’s house saying he, Joseph, “was on the up and up.” That’s a misuse of that idiom. He meant to say Joseph “was on his way up.” However, being guilty of literally laying hundreds of eggcorns in thousands of sermons, I give him a pass on this one.

My wife agreed this had more the character of an AA meeting than a divine service. (The Serenity Prayer came up twice, and we were told that, in fact, was Joseph’s prayer. Who knew?) Recovery is the appeal; they offer a gateway, but Gateway wants to leave the where or more precisely to whom up to you. To a point. It’s their leadership, their church, their view of life, religion, and god that is at the end of their rainbow.

This church is for all who have been raised in a church where all they got was Word and Sacrament, the historic creeds, and maybe even catechetical instruction, and found that abusive, boring, or not enough. Welcome to the antithesis of that. You deserve it.

N.B. - NEWSLETTER ARTICLE IS WRONG

(This note was added after the newsletter was initially published.)

Living With a Clear Conscience particularly the end reflects the non-Lutheran theology of Enthusiasm. Think direct revelation by feelings or God speaking to you outside of Word and Sacraments. I alone decided to publish this, and all I can think is I did not read it to the end. That is inexcusable since the errors in the end are exactly what I point out in this blog:

[Stamping on C-4, January 17, 2011.](#)

Living with A Clear Conscience

John W Kleinig

(https://www.doxology.us/wpcontent/uploads/2015/03/30_living.pdf)

Even though Christian spirituality has to do with a way of life, it is not just a religious philosophy of life that helps us to understand our place in God's world, nor is it just a religious code of behavior that maps out how best to live the spiritual life here on earth. Its main focus is not on how to think or feel or act religiously, but on how to live, like St Paul, with a good clear conscience before God and the people around us (Acts 23:1; 24:16; 2 Tim 1:3). Its basic premise is that, for better or worse, the state of our conscience colors our experience of God. Paul sums up this point well when he writes these words in Titus 1:15-16: "To the pure, all things are pure, but to the defiled and unbelievers, nothing is pure; but both their minds and consciences are defiled. They profess to know God, but they deny him by their works. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for any good work."

Let me explain what Paul is getting at. How we receive God and respond to his word depends on the state of our conscience. Take a mirror! If it is stained, or if its surface is not uneven, it does not receive and accurately reflect what is in front of it. The cleaner the mirror, the clearer its reception and reflection of the light. Or take a pool of water! If it is muddy and dirty, the light of the sun magnifies its darkness. If it is clear, the light of the sun not only lights up the water, so that everything in it is visible; the clear water also reflects the whole of the sky above it and everything around it. The clearer the water, the clearer the illumination and reflection. Our conscience is like that mirror and that pool. If it is stained, it does not receive and reflect the light of God; if it is clear, it is filled with the light that enlightens it and gives it insight.

By itself our conscience seems to have little or nothing to do with God. It operates as a kind of internal court of law in which we play all the roles; we sit in the judge's seat and stand in the dock as the person on trial; we act as the counsel for the prosecution and as the counsel for our own

defense. By the operation of our conscience, we have the capacity to see ourselves as others see us, to sense how we stand with them and what we need to do to have their acceptance. By sensitizing us to how others appraise us, our conscience helps us to assess ourselves in a reasonably honest, balanced way. Unlike sociopaths who seem to be impervious to the community that sustains them, our conscience shows us what we need to do or avoid doing if we are to maintain our social standing.

The problem with our conscience is that while it functions as a kind of internal judge, it does not, by itself, provide any certain criteria by which we can rightly assess ourselves and others. It is like a compass without a magnetic pole. The results of its self-appraisal will differ according to the criteria that it uses. These may be the views of our parents or our friends, the norms of society or the pressure of fashion, our philosophy of life or our personal convictions. All these skew the operation of consciences. We may use these criteria to excuse and affirm ourselves. But that sense of self-justification is short-lived. We end up with an uneasy conscience. No matter how hard we try to do the right thing by ourselves and others, no matter what criteria we use to evaluate ourselves, we feel that we have failed; we sense that we are not the kind of people that we should be and that we should like to be. Worst of all, from bitter experience we discover that our conscience is often deluded and clouded by self-interest; it is tainted by our guilt and our shame, our self-righteousness and our anger. These distort its perception and its judgment. They leave us in the dark about ourselves.

The word of God is the light that enlightens our conscience. It is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path (Ps 119:105). God gave us our conscience so that we would know where we stand with him. He designed it so that we could attend to his word and discern his will as revealed in his word. It operates as it should only when it is fully attentive to his word both as law and as gospel. It operates properly only once it has been cleansed from the stain of sin.

God's law as it is summed up in the Ten Commandments diagnoses the state of our conscience. It identifies God as the Judge; it clears away the fog of neurotic and misplaced guilt. Once we attend to it things become clearer for us; we discover the truth about ourselves with respect to God and with respect to those around us. From it we, to our relief, discern what we need to do to please him and to live in harmony with others and his whole creation. Yet that relief is short-lived, for we soon discover that we cannot get rid of our guilt by doing the right thing and keeping the Ten Commandments. The same conscience that has been enlightened by God's diagnosis of us with his law, turns against us and makes us increasingly aware of our sin (Rom 3:20). In the light of his law we realize how completely we are tainted and contaminated both by our own sins and the sins that have been committed against us. And that makes for a bad conscience before God (Heb 10:22).

A bad conscience darkens our souls like nothing else on earth. Nothing is worse, spiritually, than the confusion that it brings. It affects our experience of God and our experience of life as a whole. When we have a bad conscience, we see him as a strict lawgiver and a harsh judge, a moral watchdog and a moral detective, someone who is out to get us. His disapproval of our sin, his anger against injustice, is experienced as his personal disapproval and rejection of us as people. We resent his demands; we fear his condemnation. He seems to act as if he were our enemy. And so we work hard at getting him off our backs. Failing that, we try to avoid him by minimizing our contact with him and anything to do with him.

The cloud that comes from his accusation and condemnation affects our whole behavior. When we have a bad conscience, we cover up our shortcomings and trumpet our achievements before others. A bad conscience distorts the way that we react to approval and disapproval. Both are personalized and exaggerated, misinterpreted and magnified. Our friends are those who affirm us, while our enemies are those who are critical of us. Life becomes an ongoing exercise in self-promotion and self-justification before others. Most of all, we are afraid, afraid of rejection by people and by God, afraid of death and confrontation with God the Judge in the Last Judgment.

Our conscience, however, is only partly enlightened by the law that diagnoses our spiritual impurity; it is fully enlightened by the gospel that cleanses us from that impurity, the good news that we are justified by the grace of God the Father through faith in his beloved Son Jesus. He offered himself as a sacrifice for us and our sins. His blood now cleanses us from the stain of sin; it alone gives us a clear conscience before God the Father (Heb 9:14; cf. 1 John 1:7-9). Through baptism we receive the great and precious gift of a good conscience before God (Heb 10:22; 1 Pet 3:21).

There is a close connection between faith and a good conscience (1 Tim 1:5, 19). Through faith in Christ we receive a good conscience. We therefore know that God the Father is as pleased with us as he is with Jesus his Son, because we are united with him. It is true that we are guilty of rebellion against him and have been sentenced to death by him for our rebellion; yet by his grace and mercy we have been pardoned and have been given the gift of eternal life. There is therefore now no condemnation for us who are in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:1); we need no longer fear God's disapproval and displeasure. Because we have a good conscience we may approach God the Father in heaven itself in the full assurance of faith, sure of his acceptance and confident in our prayers (Heb 10:19-22). So, just as through faith in Christ we have a good conscience, a good conscience gives us access to the mystery of faith in Christ (1 Tim 3:9).

Our conscience functions properly when it is governed by faith in God's word; it functions properly as it attends both to the voice of the law and the voice of the gospel.

Only as it hears the word of justification do the demands of the law take their proper place. They are not meant to show us how to gain God's approval; they are meant to diagnose our spiritual state before God and to show us who have been justified what kind of behavior is pleasing to God.

The key to life in the presence of God the Father is a good conscience that comes from the Holy Spirit through the conviction of sin and the assurance of salvation. That, in turn, leads to mental enlightenment by the Spirit, so that we learn to see ourselves and others as God does. It also leads to emotional healing by the Spirit, so that we learn to feel about ourselves and others as God does. It also energizes us bodily with the Holy Spirit, so that we are able to work together with God here on earth. The precondition for all that is a clear conscience. A good conscience colors our whole experience of life. By it we become transparent to the light of the Lord and enlightened by his presence.

This means that we will not just have occasional experiences of God's intervention on our journey through life, though we may, of course, have these. Rather, with a good conscience that is attuned to God's word and enlightened by the Holy Spirit, the whole of life becomes the arena for spiritual experience. In the ordinary things that happen to us day by day, we begin to discover the hand of God at work as he provides for us and corrects us, as he judges us and saves us, as he encourages and guides us. By listening to God's word and receiving God's Spirit, we come to discern the presence of Jesus with us at all times and in all places, as we travel with him on our pilgrimage from earth to heaven.

When we have a good conscience, our puzzling journey through life, with all its twists and turns, its troubles and its joys, begins to make sense. We not only make sense of the demands that are made on us and the good things that are given for our enjoyment; we also make sense of what is otherwise senseless, the trials that we suffer and the bad things that happen to us. Here is how Olive Wyon describes the life of faith: "God makes His will known to us through the things that happen every day. God uses everything that takes place to lead us on the path of His will... all we have to do is to accept the will of God as it is made known to us moment by moment, in the guise of a duty to be done, a trial to be borne, a joy to be received; in every experience of life, without exception, God comes to us; if we receive Him humbly we can and will do His will" (*The School of Prayer*, London: SCM, Tenth Edition, 1962, 38).

Pope was Right

Posted on August 29, 2022 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

No, not *the* Pope but Alexander Pope, the turn of the 18th century English poet who some consider better than the Bard. He told us how we would come to embrace LGBTQ. And boy have we.

I heard on the radio that 70% of the country approves of gay marriage. *World* magazine quoted a *USA Today* op-ed where the author opined about the Cinderella of the 2021 NCAA tournament, Oral Roberts University. He claimed that the school had standards that are “wildly out of line with modern society and the basic values of human decency” (5/08/21, 69) because they don’t accept the world’s LGBTQ lies.

I thought the NCAA itself would tap the breaks on some of this nonsense when they saw record after record in female athletics going to biological males who think they are females. But *World* blew my Pollyanna mind out of the water saying that “the NCAA Board of Governors released a statement in April saying it would only hold championship games in states that are ‘free of discrimination’ toward transgender athletes” (Ibid.).

Like I said, Pope foretold how we would get here. (I used this in a April 6, 2015 blogpost. Hey, if all of Hollywood can’t come up with new material and so turn to comics and 70’s TV, don’t look at me askance or askew.) Pope said in the early 18th century: “Vice is a monster of so frightful mien/ As to be hated needs but to be seen;/ Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face/ We first endure, then pity, then embrace” (*An Essay on Man*: Epistle II, V, 1-4).

Austin has, next to San Francisco, the highest % of LGBTQ, 5.6%, of any city in America. First, we endured the gay pride parade becoming ever more prideful. Then Leslie the drag queen drew forth pity for his homeless lifestyle. Now LGBTQ-ism is embraced as less prejudicial, more opened minded, a better way to be.

Pity always leads to embracing unless we pity them enough to maintain the truth: No matter if all the world accepts, promotes, and praises LGBTQ-ism, and it does, we must continue to maintain that it is Satan’s lie that you can embrace such sin and sinfulness and be saved. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 is very clear and warns specifically about being deceived in this area: “Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were

sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God” (NASB77).

This gives no hope, no encouragement, no peace but only certain judgment to those defending, accepting, and promoting any of these sins. But it gives the comfort that you can be so thoroughly washed, so completely sanctified, so totally justified in Jesus’ Name and Spirit, that these are in your past. You were at one time one or more of these but not anymore.

George Orwell said, “In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act.” That time is now. G.K. Chesterton said while a few prigs on platforms are talking about “oneness” and “The All”, in the valleys of ancient earth the truth is renewed that “a woman is loved for being unmanly, and a man is loved for being unwomanly” (*In Defense of Sanity*, 372-3). Even the reprehensible pagan Roman poet Ovid knew the truth. He, speaking for one of them, says that the parents of both parties approved of a gay marriage. “Nature alone says no, and her voice drowns out all the rest, and she alone subverts me.” Then a god ask another, “Why should you attend these rites that aren’t right, where there is no bridegroom; both of us are waiting to be carried across the threshold” (*Homosexuality in Greece and Rome*, 376)?

As for taking the path of starting with mercy (i.e. a kind of pity) or lamenting our sins, that’s a surefire shortcut to embracing. Joe Dallas, a one time gay activist but now a happily married man and father out there on the frontlines speaking the truth in love on college campuses, says that many who confess to being unloving toward LGBTQ’s aren’t helping if they don’t clarify. “We’ve been unloving, without qualifying whether ‘unloving’ means rude or insulting, or whether it means speaking words that someone preferred not to hear, creates more problems than it solves.” And while it’s true that some believers have been truly unloving, it’s not fair to say all have. And so a general apology for all is wrong (*Speaking of Homosexuality*, 56). Pope would agree.

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December 2022

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
				1	2	3
4	5 5:30 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	6	7 7:30 PM ADVENT VESPERS	8	9	10
11 1:00 PM BUS CAROLING	12 5:30 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	13	14 7:30 PM ADVENT VESPERS	15	16	17
18 12:15 X-MAS PAGEANT	19 5:30 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	20	21 NO ADVENT VESPERS	22	23	24 7:30 PM X-MAS EVE CANDLELIGHT SERVICE
25 10:00 AM X-MAS FESTIVAL WORSHIP	26 NO CONFIRMATION	27	28	29	30	31

January 2023

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
1	2		4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 YES HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY 7:15 PM	12	13	14
15	16 5:30 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	17 6:30 PM ELDERS MEETING	18 7:15 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY	19	20	21

22	23	24	25	26	27	28
3M HALF MARATHON	5:30 PM JR. CONFIRMATION	6:30 PM VOTERS MEETING	7:15 HEBREWS BIBLE STUDY			
29	30	31				
	5:30 PM JR. CONFIRMATION					

DEC. 2022 - JAN. 2023