



# Steadfast

## In the Word and Faith



Published by the Evangelical Lutheran Congregations of the Reformation, Inc.  
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Vol LIII

May June 2018

No. 3

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## What Luther Says About —

### The Lutheran Church

**History Repeats Itself.** With outrageous blasphemy men now call God's Word "Lutheran doctrine" that they may seem to do God a service and persecute man's teaching. So the Jews did to the apostles, as Christ predicted they would (John 16:12) .... Although I do not like to have men call the doctrine and the people Lutheran and must suffer it if they disgrace God's Word with my name in this way, nevertheless they shall let Luther, the Lutheran doctrine, and Lutheran people remain and come to honor .... For we know whose Word we are preaching. They shall not take it away from all of us. May this serve as my prophecy, which shall not fail me. SL 5, 1274, 1283



**"Lutheran" Means Loyal to Scripture.** Luther himself has no desire to be Lutheran except insofar as he teaches the Holy Scripture in purity. SL 21 a, 1093

THE CENTER and cornerstone of Scripture is Christ. Therefore the very heart of the Lutheran faith is the conviction that simple trust in Christ as the all-sufficient Savior — this, nothing more, but nothing less — is the only way to salvation. Luther made this statement in 1530 in connection with his exposition of Ps. 118:23.

**Lutherans Recognize the Limitations of Revelation and Reason.** Our principal doctrinal position is this: Whatever is not established by the Word of God is abominable and diabolical if we presume to appease God thereby. Therefore nothing is to be done, taught, or believed except what is commanded by a very definite Word of God. But in all matters which do not pertain to conscience or to the establishment of righteousness before God we may safely follow human teachings, as in economic and political affairs. For wisdom to administer these matters is created in us, and these things pertain to temporal life only; but consciences we can and must control only by the Word of God. SL 6, 539 f

**Antiquity of the Lutheran Faith.** We can prove that our faith is not new and of unknown origin but that it is the oldest faith of all, which began and continued from the beginning of the world. For when Adam and Eve, our first parents, came to grace again after their miserable fall in Paradise, they began to have this faith

in the Savior, the Son of God. For the promise which was given them ran thus: The woman's Seed will crush the serpent's head (Gen, 3:15). From this first Gospel our faith has come and flowed. SL 12, 1205 f

**Pure in Doctrine but Impure in Life.** We have at least the advantage of allowing the doctrine to remain. Although, because of our flesh and blood, we are unable to glorify God so purely in our life, yet God has granted us the grace to preach aright, to love the doctrine, and to say: It is indeed the truth. . . . To sum it all up, let the pupil hear God's Word, and let the master teach God's Word. Both are captives and are bound to hear and preach God's Word; they dare not depart to the right or to the left. If either departs from this path, he is wrong. But whoever continues on it is he who seeks the honor of Him who has sent Christ; and even though sin remains in us, no harm is done; for we are sincere, and no unrighteousness is in us, because we teach purely, preach of His grace, and accept His Word by faith. For this reason the unrighteousness is gone and harms us in no way. In our doctrine nothing is false; there we are pure and right through and through. Our doctrine is pure because it is a gift of God. But in our life there still is something sinful and punishable. However, this is forgiven and not imputed. It is not put on the books against us; but *remissio peccatorum* (remission of sins) is placed over it, and the sin is wiped out. SL 8, 38

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## Devotion — Matthew 10:28-31 Part 3

**S**o we are to fear God, to love God. But there is also something else; we are to trust in God above all things.

**‘Trust in the Lord with all thine heart,** (committing oneself entirely to the grace and faithfulness of Jehovah), **and lean not unto thine own understanding,** (in false and blameworthy self-confidence).’ Proverbs 3:5.

And our text finally teaches us a lot about trusting in God above all things. Indeed, fear is really the absence of trust; fear is really doubting God, that He is not capable of keeping His promises.

**V. 29. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.**

**V. 30. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.**

**V. 31. Fear ye not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.**

Wuest translates these two verses in an interesting way. Wuest: **‘Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet one of them shall not fall to the ground without the will or intervention of your Father. Moreover, also your hairs, the ones of your head, have been counted and the result tabulated.**

**Therefore, stop fearing. As for you, you are of more importance than many sparrows.’**

In an argument from the least to the greatest, Jesus now wants to show how much God values His children. Sparrows were the cheapest of animals one could offer as a sacrifice- two sparrows could be bought for a copper coin, a penny, we might say five cents. Yet not one falls from the sky without the Father’s will.

The answer expected is, ‘of course’ means: ‘They are nearly worthless. In fact, we didn’t know they were worth that much.’ Note that Jesus says ‘your’ Father, not ‘their’ Father. He is not the Saviour of sparrows and yet cares infinitely for them. The single point is: ‘How great Thou art!’ We so easily doubt the greatness of God and His loving providence which reaches even the cheapest life in nature.

If God providentially cares for the seemingly worthless in the animal kingdom and cares for your body infinitely more than you can, why should you fear?

It has been estimated that the average human will have about 150,000 hairs in their lifetime. How much attention do you pay at the loss of a single hair? And yet, your heavenly Father knows the very number of hairs on your head. God has calculated carefully, even

recorded, the number of hairs on your head. He has accounted for each one. God cares infinitely and providentially for the crown of creation, man. If He cares that much, what dare or can I ever fear?

I. FORE-ORDINATION. The text may be read, 'have all been numbered.' It is of the past as well as of the present.

- All the man; his being as a whole is foreknown. 'In thy book all my members were written' (Ps. 139:16).
- All that concerns him is foreknown; even to his hair, which may be shorn from him without damage to life or health.
- All that he does; even the least and most casual thought, or act.
- All that he undergoes. This may affect his hair so as to change its colour; but every hair blanched with sorrow is numbered.

Its source. The counting is done by the Lord.

3. Its lessons. Jesus mentions this fore-ordination for a purpose:

- To make us brave under trial.
- To teach us to be submissive.
- To help us to be hopeful.
- To induce us to be joyful.

4. Its influence. It ennobles us to be thus minutely predestinated.

If God arranges even our hairs, we are honoured indeed.

To be the subject of a divine purpose of grace is glorious.

II. KNOWLEDGE. We are known so well as to have our hairs counted. Concerning this divine knowledge let us note—

1. Its character.

- Minute. 'The very hairs of your head.'
- Complete. The whole man, spirit, soul, and body, is thus most assuredly well known to the Omniscient Lord.
- Pre-eminent. God knows us better than we know ourselves, or than others know

us; for neither we nor they have numbered the hairs of our head.

- Tender. Thus a mother values each hair of her darling's head.
- Sympathetic. God enters into those trials, those years, and those sicknesses which are registered in a man's hair.
- Constant. Not a hair falls from our head without God.

2. Its lessons.

- Concerning consecration, we are taught that our least precious parts are the Lord's and are included in the royal inventory. Let us not use even our hair for vanity.
- Concerning prayer. Our heavenly Father knoweth what things we have need of. We do not pray to inform him of our case.
- Concerning our circumstances. These are before the divine mind, be they little or great. Since trifling matters like our hairs are catalogued by Providence, we are assured that greater concerns are before the Father's eye.

III. VALUATION. The hairs of our head are counted because valued.

These were poor saints who were thus highly esteemed.

The numbering mentioned in the text suggests several questions.

- If each hair is valued, what must their heads be worth?
- What must their bodies be worth?
- What must their souls be worth?
- What must they have cost the Lord, their Redeemer?
- How can it be thought that he will lose one of them?
- Ought we not greatly to esteem them?
- Is it not our duty, our honour, our joy to seek after such of them as are not yet called by grace?

IV. PRESERVATION. The hairs of their head are all numbered, because they are to be preserved from all evil.

1. From the smallest real loss we are secured by promise. ‘There shall not a hair of your head perish’ (Luke 21:18).
2. From persecution we shall be rescued. ‘Fear not them’ (Matt. 10:28).
3. From accident. Nothing can harm us unless the Lord permits.
4. From necessity. You shall not die of hunger, or thirst, or nakedness. God will keep each hair of your head.
5. From sickness. It shall sanctify rather than

injure you.

6. From death. In death we are not losers, but infinite gainers.

- Resurrection will restore the whole man.

Let us for ourselves trust, and not be afraid.

Let us set a high value upon souls, and feel an earnest love for them.

*Hope of eternal reward*

*T Winter.*

## The Lutheran Church in its Relationship and Position Towards Other Church Bodies

By Pastor Peters<sup>1</sup>. 1890

(Continued from Steadfast March-April 2018.)



**Thesis 1: The Evangelical Lutheran Church is not the one holy Christian Church which we confess in the Third Article and outside of which is to be found no salvation and blessedness.**

Because the Holy Spirit describes the Church to us as a **living and spiritual house of God**, in which the believing Christians are the **spiritual building blocks** that are joined closely to each other so that the entire building is growing into a holy temple, we thereby confess about the Church in the Nicene Confession (Creed) of Faith that there is only ‘*one* Church.’ For the Apostle Paul says in Gal.3:28 of those who by faith in Christ have become Children of

God and who in Baptism have put on Christ<sup>2</sup>: **‘There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.’** The Lord Jesus bears testimony to the same truth when He says in John 10:16: **‘And other sheep (believers among the non-Jews, BLW) I have, which are not of this fold (believers among the Jews, BLW): them also I must bring, and they shall hear My voice (God's Word, BLW); and there shall be one fold (true Christian Church, BLW), and one Shepherd (Christ).’**

<sup>1</sup> **Pastor Peters** (1850-1925) studied at Hermannsburg, Germany and was ordained in 1877. He was at Murtoa from 1878 until 1904 and was also the founder and principal of the college there. He was the editor of the *Kirchenbote* from 1893 until 1894 and president of the Victorian and New South Wales District from 1893 until 1904. He too **became a very faithful “Missourian” in doctrine and practice** as his excellent commentary on Revelation, ‘*The Judge Is At The Door*’ shows. He was a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Australia (ELSA) [which later changed its name to Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (ELCA)]. **This essay was published in 1890.**

<sup>2</sup> Because in Baptism the believers have put on Christ (Gal.3:27) like putting on a clean garment, the believer is clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Within the Invisible Church, before God, all who confess that they are poor sinners and by faith in Christ Jesus have become Children of God, no matter what their position in life, whether they are male or female, they are therefore all one (united) in Him.



This text is known to be terribly misused by the Chiliasts<sup>3</sup> who want to prove their error and support it by distorting this text, to say that before the last day here on earth such a blessed time will occur that all disunity and division among Christians will cease. Yes, not only that, but they falsely assert that all people will be converted and will form *one great flock of people* under the shepherd staff of Jesus Christ, of the One Shepherd, here on earth. We are certainly not going to submit to such dreams, but rather we know and believe that this blessed time of unity of which Jesus here speaks has long since dawned in His beloved Church. For when Jesus here speaks of '*other sheep*' who are '*not of this fold,*' then He indeed clearly means those Children of God scattered throughout the world whom He had also chosen from among the Gentiles (non-Jews), that is, those believers who were not from the sheepfold of His elect from the among the people of the Jews. He would call these people through the preaching of the Gospel. They would come (to Christ), however, not to establish for themselves a special flock, but to obtain the same rights of the Children of God as those enjoyed by His elect from the people of the Jews and would be united with them to become **one flock under Christ, the One Shepherd.**

This then in fact actually happened, for we too belong to the sheep from the '*other fold*' (believers among the non-Jews, BLW). We formerly were heathen (gentiles) at the time of our fore-fathers. But here in the holy Christian Church there is no longer any talk about a distinction between Jews and Gentiles, but here in the Christian Church all are '*all together one in Christ Jesus*<sup>4</sup>.' Therefore John also says in John 11:51,52: '**He prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation** [namely, for the people of Israel, (Pastor Peters)]; **and not for that nation only, but that also He should gather together in one the Children of God that were scattered abroad.**' But they are brought together by faith, in fact, by the *same* faith in Christ; they enter His kingdom through the same Door, namely, through Holy Baptism; they have the same One Lord<sup>5</sup> and call on the same God as their Father, who is above all, and through all, and in you all<sup>6</sup>. That is the glorious unity of the Church about which the Apostle Paul writes to Christians: '**<sup>3</sup> Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. <sup>4</sup> There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; <sup>5</sup> One Lord, one faith, one baptism, <sup>6</sup> One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all**' (Eph.4:3-6).

All believers are also bound **by one Spirit** to be united in One Body. Luther says: 'For there is a much greater unity between a member and the body than between your thoughts and those of someone else. For his thoughts are contained in his body and yours are in your body, and you cannot say that my thoughts and your thoughts are one substance in the way that all the members are one substance with one another, that is, one body. If one member is separated or apart from the body, it is no longer one substance and essence with the body, but its own body or essence. But so long as they are all together, it remains *one loaf*, and there is no differentiation or separation of the essence. For the foot, if it is by itself or severed from the body, is no longer one with the body, but is an [amputated] limb that is cast into the death pit. **But if it remains attached to the body, then I must say that it is one in such a way that the body cannot be without the limb nor the limb without the body.**'

'Thus a Christian is confident in the knowledge that if the devil attacks him, he is not attacking a single finger but the whole body, that is, all Christians in the world, indeed, God and Christ as well.....'

<sup>3</sup> Millennialists.

<sup>4</sup> Luther's Translation of Gal.3:28.

<sup>5</sup> Eph.4:5.

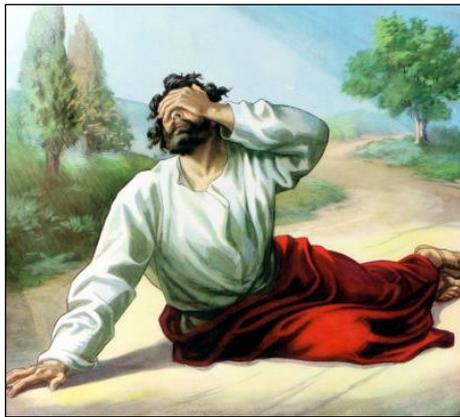
<sup>6</sup> Eph.4:6.



‘For so He speaks by the prophet Zechariah (2:8), **‘He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.’**”

‘We read a fine example of this in the story of St. Paul. When he was persecuting the Christians and had assisted in killing Stephen [Acts 8:1, 3], Christ regarded it as if one of His own toes had been torn off. Yet what does Christ in heaven say to this? He does not say, ‘Why are you crushing My toes or persecuting My poor little flock?’ But instead, He says: **‘Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou Me?... It is hard for**

**thee to kick against the pricks**<sup>8</sup>’ etc (Acts 9:5;26:14). It is just as though Paul had assaulted His own person. Why? Because one cannot touch any member of a body but the head feels it; indeed,



the head feels it first. For it is the head from which the body's power to feel and to sense proceeds and derives.’ [SL pages 805-807; American Edition Vol. 69, pages 76-79; Luther's Sermon on John 17:11,12; His comments on 1 Cor.12:26.<sup>9</sup> Selected quotes by Pastor Peters.]

From this is clear again what our thesis means when it says that the Lutheran Church is not the Church about which we confess in the Third Article and outside of which there is no salvation and eternal blessedness. For this Church (the true Christian Church) is not a visible congregation at this or that place, in this or that country, but it is the **congregation (communion) of saints**, because

in His Word the Holy Spirit describes the Church to us as such a congregation (communion) to which no unregenerate person, no godless person, no hypocrite, no unbeliever belongs. For Paul so writes about the Church that Christ loved it and has given Himself for it **‘<sup>26</sup> that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the Washing of Water by the Word, <sup>27</sup> that He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish’** (Eph.5:26,27). John writes about hypocrites and of those who have fallen away from the faith as follows: **‘They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us’** (1 John 2:19).

Our **Lutheran Confessions** state: ‘So also we confess in our holy creed and faith: ‘I believe in a holy Christian Church.’ There we say that the Church is holy, but the wicked and ungodly cannot be the holy Church.... The true Church is the Kingdom of Christ, that is the gathering (assembly) of all saints, for the ungodly are not ruled by the Spirit of Christ .... If the Church, which is truly the Kingdom of Christ and God, is distinguished from the kingdom of the devil, then the wicked, who are in the devil's kingdom, indeed cannot be the Church; although in this life because the Kingdom of Christ has not yet been revealed the wicked are mingled with the true Christians and with the

<sup>7</sup> The Hebrew scholars **Keil and Delitzsch** state: ‘The apple of the eye (lit., the gate, the opening in which the eye is placed, or ... the pupil of the eye, *pupilla*, as being the object most carefully preserved).’

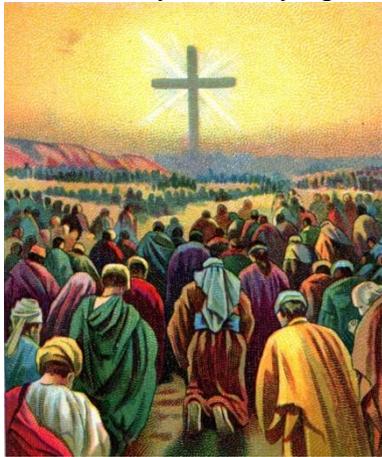
**Kretzmann**: states on this verse: ‘So **dear are the believers, the members of the Church, in the eyes of the Lord**. Every adversary who dares to touch the kingdom of God and its members thereby becomes guilty of a blasphemous act, **which grieves the Lord most deeply**. This insult Jehovah will not accept without the most emphatic resentment; He will punish the people, He will visit their sins upon them.’

<sup>8</sup> **Kretzmann** explains this as follows: ‘It will be hard for thee to strike out against the goads, a figure taken from the driving of oxen by means of pointed sticks, against which they will sometimes attempt to kick.’ This expression means: ‘Saul, the more you oppose Me the more you will only hurt yourself, the more punishment you will receive.’

<sup>9</sup> We thank Pastor Stuart Wood for his help in supplying the Luther quotes. It would be wonderful for everyone to read this excellent sermon of Luther's.

Church hold the ministry of teaching and other offices in the Church..... And with this clearly agree the parables of Christ, who says ([Matt.13:38](#)) that the good seed are the children of the kingdom, but the tares are the children of the devil, and the field is the **world, not the Church**.... When Christ says ([Matt. 13:47](#)): '**The kingdom of heaven is like a net,**' and likewise, to ten virgins, He does not mean that the wicked are a part of Church, but teaches how the Church **appears outwardly in this world**. Therefore, He says that it is 'like,' and so forth; that is to say, as in a catch of fish the good and the bad lie all mixed up, so the Church here is **hidden** in the crowd and multitude of the wicked, and He does not want the pious to be offended [by this fact].' [Pastor Peters has selected portions from the German of the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession*, *Triglotta* pages 228-233; Help in translating this is acknowledged from Dr J T Mueller's translation in *Church and Ministry* (Walther) pages 34,39,40.]

Because of this glorious unity, therefore, we correctly say that, **outside of the Church<sup>10</sup>, there is no salvation and no eternal blessedness (bliss)**, that means, whoever is not a member of the Church, or, what means the same, whoever is not a member of the Body of Christ, whoever has not been converted by the Holy Spirit and has not been placed as a living stone into the holy Temple of the



Church, cannot be saved while they remain in such a condition; for whoever does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him<sup>11</sup>. Whoever has not become a member of this Church **does not have salvation**, even if he exerted himself greatly to perform so much by his own works and had as many of his own virtues and works to show as that Pharisee in the temple; for all the virtues of natural man (all human beings by nature, BLW.) who live outside of fellowship with Christ are, as Augustine says, **only glittering vices**. '**Neither is there salvation in any other; for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved**' (Acts 4:12), except through the highly praised name of Jesus alone, whom the sinner must receive in faith with a penitent heart. Therefore whoever does not belong to the One Holy Christian Church (by faith in Christ,

BLW), he is still dead in sins; for whoever has become truly spiritually alive through Christ belongs to this Church. Whoever has become God's dwelling place in the Spirit, belongs to the One Holy Christian Church. Therefore whoever does not belong to this Church, is still located (found) under the rulership (dominion) of sin. That is why it states in those words: **outside of the Church is no salvation**.

(Pages 8-11; Italicised emphasis is Pastor Peters. Bolded emphasis added. Next time we complete Thesis One. Some larger paragraphs have been divided into shorter ones.) BLW.

## Lord's Prayer, Part 2 – First Petition

**T**he first petition of the Lord's Prayer instructs us to pray, 'Hallowed be Thy name'. This petition deals with the praise, honour, and reputation of God. The verb 'hallowed' means 'holy', 'sanctified', or 'set apart'. The word 'name' is often used in

Scripture to depict 'glory' or 'fame'. Genesis 6:4 says, 'the same became mighty men which were of old, men of *renown*.' The word '*renown*' here is the word '*name*', referring to those who had an established reputation of greatness and excellence. Again, we see the word in Deut. 26:19 where the Lord promises to make Israel, 'high above all nations which He hath made, in praise, and in *name*, and in honour'. The word '*name*' is clearly used for that which

<sup>10</sup> The true Christian Church, the Invisible Church, the sum total of true believers in Christ.

<sup>11</sup> Rom.8:9, "**Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His.**"

is *highly esteemed* and *glorious*. This first petition thus instructs us to pray that God be glorified above all things. Our chief concern should be that we seek the glory of God in all that we say and do. 'Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God.' (1 Cor. 10:31). 'Whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by Him.' (Col. 3:17).

God's glorious name is gleaned from God's attributes concerning His essence, will, and works, as revealed in the Word of God. The Scriptures depict God as loving, wise, just, holy, gracious, merciful, mighty, eternal, and immutable, among other things. There are also many personal names for God in the Scriptures (Elohim, Adonai, Yahweh, El Shadai, etc.). Each reveal something of the person and nature of God. The name of God is already holy (set apart as uniquely glorious) in itself. Our prayers cannot make His name more holy. Rather we pray that God's name might be also holy in and through us. We pray that His name be accounted and esteemed by us and others as sanctified; glorious above all created things.

God has especially revealed His name in the person and work of His dear Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. 'No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath *declared* Him.' (John 1:18). The Greek word for '*declared*' is '*exegesato*', from where we get the theological word '*exegesis*', meaning '*to lead out into the open*', '*to make known*', '*to explain*'. Jesus Christ has '*exegeted*' God, that is, He has

'*made Him known*'. Jesus Christ is 'the image of the invisible God' (Col. 1:15). Jesus told Philip, 'He that hath seen me hath seen the Father' (John 14:9). God desires 'that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father' (John 5:23). 'Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name... to the glory of God the Father.' (Phil. 2:9-11). Jesus Christ is that name of God, of whom Peter said, 'there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.' (Acts 4:12). It is this blessed name alone that has the promise, 'whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Rom. 10:13). 'To Him give all the prophets witness, that through His name whosoever believeth in Him shall receive remission of sins.' (Acts 10:43).

In the Lord's Prayer God instructs us to address Him by the name of 'Father'. Thus He would have His dear children especially hallow this name obtained through the merits of His Son. In our baptism we have also received to ourselves the glorious name of the Triune God - Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Jesus commanded His disciples, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.' (Matt. 28:18, 19). Luther writes, 'For God's name was given us when we became Christians and were baptized, so that we are called children of God... We ought to be most concerned that this name have its proper honour, be esteemed holy and sublime as the greatest treasure and sanctuary that we have... For since in this prayer we call God our Father, it is our duty always to deport and demean ourselves as godly children, that He may not receive shame, but honour and praise from us.' (*Concordia Triglotta*, p.707, 709). When we say, 'Hallowed be Thy name', we pray that God's name be glorified in and through us by pure doctrine and a holy life. When God's Word is taught and believed in its truth and purity, then the name of God shines in its full brightness. He that is 'the Truth' (John 14:6) is glorified through the Word of Truth (John 17:17). When we then also lead a holy life in accordance with the Word of God, the name of God shines through us to others. These, then, are more readily drawn to Christ as their Saviour unto the further glory of God. 'Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' (Matt. 5:16). 'That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.' (Phil. 2:15). 'Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good

works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.’ (1 Pet. 2:12).

God’s name is profaned when anyone teaches contrary to the Word of God or lives a life in opposition to it. God condemns those who treat His Word with disrespect and dishonour, teaching, believing, and spreading false doctrine. He also condemns those who profess Him with their mouths, but disobey Him with their lives. ‘He that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death’ (Lev. 24:16). This sin is committed often. The Lord complains, ‘My

name continually every day is blasphemed’ (Isa. 52:5). Unbelieving men blindly utter their shameful, arrogant, ignorant, contemptuous, and wicked words against the Lord God and His Christ, ridiculing the Word of God and the Christian faith. Let us shun such dangerous folly and give our tongues to praise and thanksgiving to the One who loves us and has redeemed us from our sins.

*Thy name be hallowed! help us, Lord,  
To keep in purity Thy Word,  
And lead, according to Thy name,  
A holy life, untouched by blame;  
Let no false teachings do us hurt,  
All poor deluded souls convert.  
(M. Luther, 1539)*

S Wood

## The Beginning of Protestant Music

The scene is the town of Eisenach, in the Electorate of Saxony, in the latter part of the fifteenth century. In the foreground is a street of the town, and in the street a crowd gathered around a pale-faced boy, of about fifteen years of age, who is skilfully playing a popular melody on the flute, and at its close he holds out his hand for any small coins his listeners might give him. On coming closer, we notice he wears a student’s garb, and we surmise at once that he is one of those poor German lads, so numerous at that time, who earned their way through the schools by playing the flute and singing from house to house. In the background we notice the tall spire of the parish church. Let us attend a service in that church and sit among that sturdy German congregation of a Sabbath morning. A boy choir, among whom we see again the little pale-faced street-singer, sings the Latin hymns and the responses in the mass. The priest reads the Latin prayers, and through it all that German-speaking congregation sits dumb and silent, understanding not one word of the service, having no voice in their worship.

In this picture we get a glimpse of the condition of music in the Church before the Protestant revolt, and also we get a glimpse of the early musical tendency and training of the man who was to bring about its reformation and transformation.

### ‘LET ONLY THE PRIEST SING!’ — ROME

This condition of music in the Roman Catholic Church arose from their idea of the priesthood. The Catholic Church assigned to the priest a mediatorial position between God and man, and considered that the chant and all the musical part of the service belonged to the sacerdotal office, and therefore

could not be participated in by the congregation. At the time of the Reformation the Roman Church had done away with all congregational singing, and all that was left to the people was the singing of a few short responses. How could such a people as the German worship God in silence?

But this was not all: singing was not only taken away from the congregation, but all the hymns and the whole liturgy were in Latin, and the use of the vernacular was prohibited. Even if the people had been given the privilege of singing, they could not have done so intelligently. There was as much need of reformation in the service and hymns of the Church as there was in its doctrine and practice. Indeed, the reformation of the one would have done little good without the reformation of the other. And fortunately for the church and for posterity, God raised up a man capable of doing both.

Never has there been a people better fitted to bring about a reform in church music than the German. The Germans have always been singers. No other can boast such a rich store of song. The hymn from the very earliest times has been the natural expression of German religion. Long before their

conversion to Christianity they had a vast number of religious songs which they sang in praise of their heathen deities. When congregational singing was prohibited in the church, the musical instinct of the German people could not be repressed. Prohibited to sing inside the churches, they sang outside. Thus, long before Luther came upon the scene, the foundation for the reformation in church music had been laid; all that was missing, was needed was a leader.

### **'LET ALL THE PEOPLE SING!' — MARTIN LUTHER**

Let me show you another picture. The scene is the old town of Wittenberg in the year 1524. In the foreground is the house of the great Reformer, Martin Luther. Sitting around a table in one of the rooms of that house are Conrad Ruff, choirmaster to Frederick the Wise, Elector of Saxony, Johann Walther, another famous musician of the time, and the great Reformer himself, at work reforming and readapting the liturgy for popular use. 'Let all the people sing,' was the motto of the Reformer. 'I would fain see,' said he, 'all arts, especially music, in the service of Him who has given and created them.' And right nobly was that wish carried out.

The first step taken toward congregational singing was the breaking down of the barrier of the intermediary priesthood by the recognition of the universal priesthood of all believers, which restored the office of worship to the body of believers. The natural result of this principle was the congregational song, and these songs, sung by the people, emancipated from Catholic restrictions, had a militant ring, and were the agents or the assertion of their new rights and privileges in the Gospel. And these earliest of Protestant hymns, sung with a zeal and fervour only the lusty Germans know, 'mark an epoch no less significant than Luther's Ninety-five Theses and the Augsburg Confession.' The first throes of the struggle with the Pope were hardly over before Luther began the translation of the Bible into German and the transforming of the Latin mass into the 'German Mass and Order of Service', and with this work came the transforming of the hymns.

Luther's greatness and importance in relation to hymnology is not because of his original work, though that was great, but because he used for his purpose what already existed, and put new spirit into old forms. 'He did not break with the past, but he found in the past a new stamping ground... He rejected what he deemed false or barren in the mother Church, adopted and developed what was true and fruitful, and moulded it into forms the style of which was already known to the people... He recast the old models, and gave them to his followers with contents purified, and adapted to those needs which he himself had made them realize. He understood the character of his people; he knew where to find the nourishment suited to their wants; he knew how to turn their enthusiasm for singing into practical and progressive directions. This was Luther's achievement in the sphere of church art.'

## **FOLK SONG THE BASIS OF CHURCH MUSIC**

Most of the great tunes of the Reformation were taken from the folk songs. It was the perception of the true musician in Luther which caused him to use popular melodies as the basis of many of his chorales. But before they were sung in religious service, they were purged of very element of triviality. They were then set to dignified and musical counterpoint under the direction of the great Reformer by the greatest composers available, and they were furnished with new words. Bach's lofty chorale, 'O Sacred Head Now Wounded', shows us that the ancient folk song was not out of place in a religious service, for that noble tune was originally a love song.

### **A STRONG FORTRESS**

From the very beginning these Protestant hymns received the most ardent welcome in Germany. The music was lofty, the words were noble, and, best of all, the people could sing them; and they did sing them — sang them with an enthusiasm that carried all before them. The doctrines of the Reformation were embodied in the hymns, and it was from the hymns that the mass of the people learned the great doctrine of 'justification by faith alone', and from singing it they came to accept it. 'I wish,' said Luther, 'that the Word of God may dwell among the people by means of song also,' and never was a wish more fully fulfilled than this one. The songs were taught in the schools; the traveller sang them on his way; the besieged or persecuted Protestant found comfort even in the midst of his afflictions in these songs; 'Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott' (A Mighty Fortress is our God, GLW) became in very truth a strong fortress to those who sang it. Collections of hymns rapidly sprang up, and after Luther had taught his people in his own parish church at Wittenberg to sing in church, the custom rapidly spread, and congregational singing had

come again to stay. And this, the congregational song, was one of the priceless gifts to the world of German Protestantism.

But the restoring of the song to the people was simply the beginning of a development, the great possibility of which was not to be realized until a century and a half later. At the very beginning German Protestantism, as in all great revivals, threw away art for the sake of religion. Many of the tunes of the Reformation had been crude and the words of the hymns harsh. The pendulum swung to the limit in one direction, and as time went on, it began to swing back. And finally, as it swung back, there arose a party of compromise, who, basing their culture on the old German choir chorus, organ music, and the people's hymn tunes, grafted upon this sturdy stock the Italian melody. 'It was in the hands of this school that the future of German church music lay... They adopted what was soundest and most suitable in the art of both countries, and built up a form of music which strove to preserve the national liturgic song, while at the same time it was competent to gratify the tastes which had been stimulated by the recent rapid advance in musical invention. Out of this movement grew the Passion music and the cantata of the eighteenth century.' And in this movement German Protestant music reached its culmination in the consummate genius of Johann Sebastian Bach.

### BACH'S MUSIC

There are many who do not hesitate to say that the name of Bach is the greatest in all the history of music, religious or secular. He planted himself squarely on German church music, the foundation of which was the people's song.

Bach's vocal music is almost exclusively sacred and interprets Protestant dogma; and his organ music, the most wonderful that has ever been written, is likewise based upon the people's song, and expresses all those aspirations and sentiments which word cannot.

The influence of the people's song upon Bach can best be seen in his Passion music. In the Matthew Passion, the greatest of all of them, he employs every resource of art — 'a double chorus, a full soprano chorus, a double orchestra, and a double organ part, a part for the evangelist, which calls forth the very highest powers of the greatest singers; all the instruments known in Bach's time are, at various points, brought into requisition.' In the work, the words of the Saviour are accompanied by strings alone, in four parts. The chorales, which are of frequent occurrence, are to be sung in unison by the congregation, and harmonized by the choir and instruments. In this wonderful production Luther's motto, 'Let the people sing,' is carried out to the full, and Bach and Luther are in complete accord, (*The Lutheran Witness*, W W Sweet)

## Notes and News

**Hospital:** Over the last couple of months the following people have spent some time in Hospital.

### Moments With God

Verse 1— *Arise. Shine. For thy Light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

DEAR HEAVENLY FATHER, what glory Thou dost shed abroad in this world and into our hearts. Daily Thou dost send marvellous light to us, for Thou dost preserve unto us Thy Word, Thy holy Sacraments, Thy Church. Daily we dare to come to the throne of unchangeable light, for we have the privilege to come to Thee in prayer. Thou hast lighted the darkness of the world's ignorance, the night of the world's sorrows, the shadows of the world's doubts, the blackness of the world's ungodliness. If we do not see the light, it is because we have closed our own eyes to the streams of brightness which come from Thee. Do Thou continue to send the sun-rays of Thy love upon us and all other men. Do not let the light which cometh from the cross of our Saviour be dimmed by the darkness of unbelief and human wilfulness. Let Thy Church remain a tower from which beams of brightness reach to the uttermost parts of the world. Kindle anew each day the fires of faith and devotion in our own breasts. And while we delight in the beauty of Thy light, make us torch-bearers to our fellow men. No matter what the cost, fill us with zeal to bear Thy truth to the ends of the

earth. Make us light bearers to those of our own households and communities. Send us to the distressed and the afflicted with brightness or their relief. And at last take us where endless light doth stream throughout the city above. Accept our prayer, for the sake of Him who is the Light of the world. *Amen*.....