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MEMBERS OF OUR SYNOD  
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### The Sweet Gospel of the Reformation.

From a sermon by Dr. Luther.

*Text:* For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. *John 3, 16.*

If it were told me that God had so distinguished me as to grant me that I was to live several thousand years on earth, and was to have peace and prosperity, and all that my heart desires, I would say, "Oh, that cannot be God's Word; it is too much and too great! Who am I that God should give me all that?" How much more difficult is it for us to believe that God has given us this treasure, His Son, and with Him eternal life and blessedness! Who is able to express the greatness of this gift? How precious and excellent is even this physical life! Who would exchange it for all kingdoms, money, and wealth of this earth? But, now, this is much less than a moment compared with eternal life and blessings. In short, it is beyond comprehension, unless you form some conception of it by setting off against it the loss and misery which is expressed in the words "eternally lost."

And yet a Christian must get to this that he give glory to God and to Christ, and acknowledge that this His Word is the truth and his own unbelief is false. And where this takes place, there the Holy Ghost has even then begun to work faith in the heart by His almighty power, and the heart is opened so wide that it is now capable of receiving this treasure which is greater than heaven and earth. Certainly it will all be done in much weakness as yet, nor shall we on this earth accomplish it, or feel the faith as we should; but it will still be a wishing and sighing of the spirit, which for man is inexpressible when the heart saith: Oh, that it were true! And again: Oh, if I could but believe it! etc.

And if the heart could but remember these words in time of trial, no devil nor hell could frighten it, but it would say

fearlessly: Why shall I be afraid? I have the Son of God, given me by the Father; to that His Word testifies, which I surely know to be His Word. That can no more belie me than He can lie and deceive, even though I, so to say, cannot believe it firmly enough.

Yes, say you, I would gladly believe if I were like St. Peter, Paul, and others, who are pious and holy; but I am much too great a sinner; and who knows whether I have been elected thereto? *Answer:* Do look at the words, how and of whom He is speaking: "God so loved the world"; again, "That whosoever believeth in Him." Now "the world" does not mean St. Peter and Paul, but the whole human race, all together, none excluded. For all God's Son has been given, all are to believe, and all who believe shall not be lost. Take hold of your nose, search your bosom, whether you are not as much as any other also a man (that is, a piece of the world), and in the number which are included in that word "whosoever." If neither I nor you are to appropriate these words, then they must be false and spoken in vain.

However I be, I know that God's Word is true, and if I do not accept it, I commit even this sin, in addition to all others, that I blaspheme and consider God's Word and truth a lie.

These and the like excellent, comforting words should certainly be to a Christian dear and precious above the treasures of all the world. For they are words which no one may exhaust or fully explore. If they were rightly believed, they should certainly make a good theologian or, rather, a strong, happy Christian, who could speak well and teach about Christ, judge of all other doctrine, advise and comfort every one, and suffer all that might befall him.

Tr., S.

### Doxology, Greetings, Benediction.

PHIL. 4, 20—23.

Studies in St. Paul's Epistle to the Philippians.

Twentieth Article.

St. Paul had just spoken of the riches of the glory of God in Christ Jesus which are in store for us. Such words were never a formal phrase with St. Paul. The thought stirred his soul to the profoundest depths, and bore him up to the sublimest heights of devotion. He thought upon his God, the great God, our Father through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Frequently in his writings such thoughts moved him

words of eternal truth. They are words freighted and charged with power and blessing just as well to-day as they were about two thousand years ago.

And we will not forego the privilege of reading his every word in this epistle. We will treasure the very last, the closing words of St. Paul: "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!" They are a benediction, the like of which he uttered at the opening of the letter, chap. 1, 2. We will not hurriedly close the book because we have finally arrived at the last verse, like churchgoers who prepare to leave because the approaching benediction to them means merely a dismissal. No, like thirsty pilgrims we will drink and quaff to the full what is here offered and given; for the word of the Apostle is the Word of God, whereby he always gives and bestows the blessing wherewith he speaks. Here is a precious, invaluable gift for all of us, for our souls, our poor death-ridden, sin-laden, our immortal souls, so susceptible of anxiety and sorrow and grief. Here is healing. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all!"

Let us say: Amen, so be it, so we believe.

Amen.

South Euclid, O.

II. M. ZORN.

### The Epidemic.

Our country is suffering under another scourge of the Almighty. To war is added an epidemic that has prostrated thousands on the bed of sickness, and given the summons of death to other thousands. More soldiers of our army have fallen prey to it, according to common report, than the toll exacted by the German implements of death. The production of natural resources is crippled. Our output of coal in the anthracite regions alone is reduced by an average of 1,200,000 tons a month. Business is suffering; places of amusement, schools, even the churches are closed in many and large sections, and the fear of death is tormenting many.

What are the lessons the Lord would impress upon us? He has not left us ignorant. He has spoken through the mouth of Moses and the prophets. Whatever may be the causes of the disease that lie on the surface, the sending of 200,000 coolies from the plague-infested portions of Northern China to France, the capture of many of these by the German army and the subsequent outbreak among the Teutonic soldiers and in Spain, the return of American soldiers to camps and cantonments in this country to serve as instructors, who brought the germs with them; the Pfeiffer bacillus; the streptococcus and other germs; these and other possible causes may have been employed by Providence to spread the plague and strike many hearts with consternation. The one original and real cause of all sickness, however, is naught but man's sin. Sickness and death came into the world when God pronounced sentence upon the first trembling sinner, and ever since sin-sick humanity has been subject to diseases that wore the strongest down to make unconditional surrender to death. To Israel, God announced as a threat that He would make their plagues wonderful and their sicknesses of long duration in the day of their departure from His Law, and David was made to feel its execution. In boastful pride he insisted upon the numbering of his army, a mighty host of 1,300,000 valiant men. God gave him an epidemic of three days' duration,

which reduced the man-power whereof he was proud by 70,000 men. And on the last page of the Bible, God for once and forever threatens to add unto all who add to His words the plagues that are written in the Book. Sin is the cause of sickness.

Can we lift our heads in self-righteousness, denying or minimizing our guilt, insinuating against the justice of God in letting us come under the plague? On every hand we hear voices that deny the very presence among us of sin, or that make boast of our superior goodness. The Chinese may be heathen, the German enemy atrociously guilty, the Turk simply nuspeakable; compared with them we feel rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing. But comparing ourselves with those who are worse in our opinion, and when judged by the standard of man, we close our eyes against the sins of which we are guilty when judged by the standard of God.

Boasters call us a Christian nation. Where are the evidences of our national Christianity? Not in the fact that two thirds of our citizens, more than 66,000,000 of them, are professedly churchless, confessedly ignorers of Him who sitteth in the heavens; atheists, if not theoretically, yet practically so. Do we find evidences of Christianity among the sects of this "land of many sects"? Not where Agnosticism, Rationalism, Unitarianism, Pharisaism, empty Moralism has ejected the very Christ as the vicarious and only Savior of humanity. We blaspheme the name of God on the streets in the besetting sin of profanity of so universal proportions that the English-speaking people have been nicknamed the "God-dams" from their favorite curse-word. Little wonder that where God's name, His Word, and His authority are despised, the authority of man is held in utter contempt. Witness the docket in our courts; note the docket of the Juvenile Courts. What an alarming percentage of the offenders are mere youths, striplings! While justly condemning the murderous U-boat warfare, which sinks ships even to the drowning of women and children in utter helplessness, dare we close our eyes against the fact that by the abolition of capital punishment in a number of States we are standing like guardian angels over the murderers in our own midst to shield the lives of the very criminals who murder our policemen and endanger the very foundations of the Government, the desirable form of which we are recommending to other nations, and all constituted authority? Nay, does not the warning of Theodore Roosevelt still ring in our ears which warns the nation against that cold-blooded murder, the nipping in the bud of life more tender and helpless than that of women and babes in mid-ocean? While shocked at the stories of rapine and ravished chastity that come from across the seas, shall we smile with easy toleration on the close second we are running for the world's divorce record; at those who favor the introduction of what Sophie Arnould, a famous actress, called the sacrament of adultery, test-marriages, reducing the marriage union to a mere civil contract of transitory character for licensed concubinage? We are resolved to banish from the earth, if we can, the national greed of those who, not satisfied with their place in the sun, seek to enrich themselves through bloody wars of conquest at the expense of other nations. God bless the effort and the issue! But while trying to subdue national greed, is there no individual avarice that would join house to house and field to field, till the mighty and opulent

are placed alone in the midst of the earth? No greedy chase after the Almighty Dollar that defrauds the neighbor? David was brought down for numbering his army in a boastful pride. We cannot say that there has been national gratitude to God for the large man-power He has given us as a valuable asset against the day of battle, and a humble admission that He who has given the power must also give the protection and victory.

God has no pleasure in the death of the wicked. He would have all men come to repentance, to be saved. The epidemic is His call to repentance. He would have us to inquire into our past ways, and wherein we have departed from the Lord. He has given us a demonstration to the eye how easily He can cause our power to melt, our resources to be of no avail, our production to be crippled, our soldiery to dwindle down. He has forcibly reminded us of our frailty, and how soon we may have to appear before His judgment-seat. He would have us acknowledge humbly our dependence upon His favor, repent of the things we have done amiss, and flee for fatherly refuge and divine forgiveness to the Savior, whose merits alone can reconcile God and cause His favor to rest upon us again. He that hath an ear, let him hear.

May we hope for a national repentance? Past experience tells us nay. Only last May our Chief Executive called upon the nation to observe a day of fasting, humiliation, and prayer, beseeching the Lord to forgive our sins and shortcomings as a people whereby we have deserved the chastisement of war at His hands. Was the request heeded? In this manner that the day was devoted largely to auto and other outings with well-filled baskets or other provision for an acceptable lunch. That was the fasting and humiliation of many. The praying consisted most largely, we fear, in that wicked way of praying which beseeches God to damn everything in general or anything in particular.

That God, despite such conduct, is seemingly giving us the victory in these very days is divine mercy, divine long-suffering and patience that passes our understanding. Oh, let us pray God that His unspeakable mercy may yet accomplish what the terrible scourges of war and epidemic failed to work. Let us who see and know the intentions of the Lord heed His call to repentance, and beseech God earnestly, as did Abraham of old, to spare the land yet longer for the sake of the righteous, lest they perish with the wicked.

St. Louis, Mo.

R. JESSE.

## The Merger.

### I.

On November 14th the merger of three Lutheran bodies is to be consummated in New York City. The three bodies are the General Synod, the General Council, and the United Synod of the South. The General Synod has a confirmed membership of 364,000, the General Council, 340,000, and the Synod of the South, 53,000. The total membership of the new body will be about 760,000, comparing with 807,000 of our Synodical Conference.

What interests us in this merger is not statistics, however, but the doctrine and practise of the new body. That must determine our relation to it. And since the constitution of the new corporation invites all Lutheran synods and

congregations holding the same faith to unite with it, it is eminently proper that we investigate the merits of this union move.

The doctrinal basis of the merger is hardly to be improved upon. By its terms the contracting parties accept the unaltered Augsburg Confession and approve of the other confessional writings of the Lutheran Church as in harmony with the Scriptures. But the history of these three bodies justifies the question: How far will their practise correspond with their confession? Not, indeed, that we would make perfection of Christian performance a test of true Lutheranism. Yet there must be correspondence of profession and action. We do not wait until a man has attained perfect sanctification before taking him into church-membership, if his confession is right; but we expect him to make that confession the principle of his conduct. We expect him not merely to say, "Lord, Lord," but to do the will of his Father that is in heaven, and to repent when he fails in performance. So with congregations and church-bodies. The Lord says: "*Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.*" We expect Christians everywhere to conform to this rule, and when they begin to make exceptions, when they tolerate unscriptural teaching and practise, we say: Your actions belie your profession. When false doctrine passes unrebuked, when unchristian practise is tolerated, the church-body that permits such things to be cannot point to its constitution and say: We accept the Scriptures as norm of doctrine and life,—what do you want more? We "Missourians" can bear with much weakness and imperfection. For instance, when a General Synod minister in the *Lutheran Survey* states that in his body "ignorance in holy things is very pronounced; many members of this synod have been admitted to church-membership without any catechetical training whatever; they are utterly unable to give a reason for being a member of the church,"—that would not in itself be a reason for us to withhold the hand of fellowship from such a body, if it made honest efforts to "strengthen the things which remain that are ready to die." But it does mean that, as an Ohio Synod paper said last year, with reference to this same merger, "it will never do to say the right words with one's lips, or even set them down on paper and sign them,—and then consider whether one intends to live and act accordingly."

A contributor to the General Council *Lutheran*, thirty years ago, ably discussed the question of loyalty to confessions. Taking for his text the oft-heard remark: "We all stand on the Augsburg Confession; there let us stand," he said: "But it makes all the difference *how* 'we all stand.' The simple matter of standing is not the real criterion. The *how* 'we all' stand is the matter to be looked at. Are 'we all' standing *squarely, erectly, and truly* on the Augsburg Confession? . . . It is absolutely folly to say that the Augsburg Confession is the adopted standard of our whole Church's confession and practise, when many things are said and practised differently by the various portions of the Lutheran Church. Let us have unity of faith, spirit, doctrine, practise."

Because the Missouri Synod stresses this same principle, and will have no fellowship with other Lutherans on any other terms, the same General Council *Lutheran* now upbraids us, and inveighs against "the highly accentuated and legalistic policy of aloofness, of which Missouri is the chief.