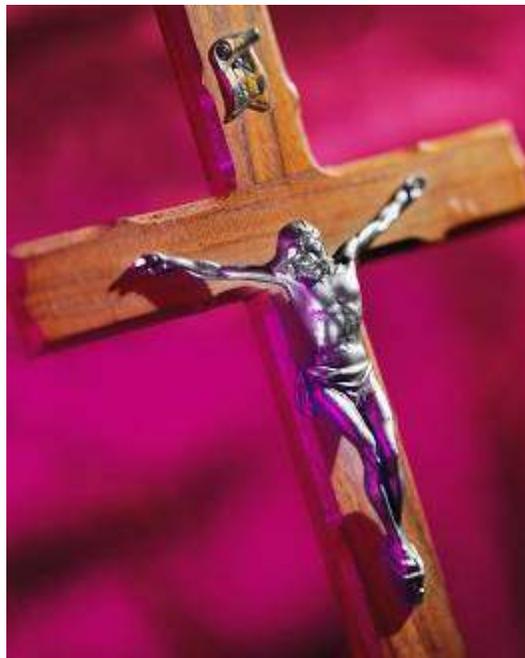


The Spirituality of the Cross

The Way of the First Evangelicals

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Introduction: The First Evangelicals

- *“Church would seem to be custodians of spiritual reality, but they often do not seem particularly spiritual. They often seem mundane, too. The whole round of preachers, sitting in the pew, going to fellowship dinners can seem so ordinary. One would think that spirituality would be rather more spectacular” (p9-10).*

How ordinary and unspiritual does church seem to be? Why might this be so? Does one’s faith affect what one sees/doesn’t see in church? If so, how? 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 2:1-16; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18

- *“Many Christians are often disappointed in actual churches because they hold to impossible ideals and have an inadequate theology of ordinary life...” (p10-11).*

If there is disappointment, what might be some of the ‘impossible ideals’ or ‘inadequate theologies of ordinary life’? What are the ‘standards’ in churches (realistically)? What is the church? What is the church not? Matthew 11:25-30; 18:20; Acts 2:42; 1 Corinthians 14:26, 40; Colossians 2:6-10; 3:15-17; Hebrews 10:19-25

- *“Each of the varieties of Christianity represents some spiritual tradition, an emphasis or distinctive teaching” (p11).*

“Another rather ironic problem today is that many of these traditions, however valuable, are now hard to find. The diverse Christian traditions - such as those of Aquinas, Calvin, Wesley - all very different but bracing in their own ways, have been merging into a single generic pop Christianity...This new popularized Christianity seems bland and one-dimensional, full of good feelings, but rather empty of content. In the meantime, the riches and insights of the historical Christian traditions are all but forgotten” (p11).

Why have divisions in the church always existed? What is the reason for separation within the church? What truly unites? Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:1-11; Ephesians 4:1-6

- *“This is a faith particularly centered in the cross of Jesus Christ, one that offers a framework for embracing, in an honest and comprehensive way, the whole range of the spiritual life, and whose insights have a profound resonance in ordinary, everyday life” (p11).*

What/who is the center of the Christian faith? What/who is not the center of the Christian faith? John 14:6-10; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24; 3:11; Colossians 1:27-28

Augsburg Confession & Apology IV (Justification); Apology VII & VIII (The Church); Smalcald Articles Part II, I (Christ and Faith); Luther’s Large & Small Catechisms, The Second and Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed

The Original Evangelicals

- *“Originally, the word ‘evangelical’ meant ‘Lutheran.’ In the years following the Reformation. ‘Evangelicals’ were those who followed Luther, as opposed to ‘reformed,’ who followed Calvin” (p12).*

What are differences between the Lutheran and the Reformed? How important are these differences?

- *“...Lutherans were the first to be called evangelical. There were also the first to emphasize the Gospel to such an extent that it became central to every level of their doctrine and practice. This evangelical focus, made over against medieval Catholicism, opened the door to ever other Protestant expression that came later. But evangelical Lutheranism remains distinct” (p13).*

What is distinctive about Lutheran doctrine as compared to Catholicism and Protestantism? What is central to the doctrine and practice of each? John 14:6-10; Acts 4:12; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24; 3:11; Colossians 1:27-28

Augsburg Confession & Apology IV (Justification); Augsburg Confession & Apology VII & VIII (The Church); Smalcald Articles Part II, I (Christ and Faith); Luther’s Large & Small Catechisms, The Second and Third Article of the Apostles’ Creed

Spirituality and Theology

- *“Many people today say that they are not interested in religion, with its doctrines, creeds, and institutions, but they are very interested in ‘spirituality.’ They are in the market for something that will give them a pleasant mystical experience and a sense of meaning and well-being, without making any uncomfortable demands on their minds, behavior, or social position. They want religious experience, without religious belief” (p13-14).*

What does this say about our society? What opportunity does this offer to the church? What answer does the church have for these interests/concerns?

- *“The fact is, there can be no spirituality without theology, no religious experience apart from religious belief.” “Spirituality has to do precisely with the content, what fills abstract theology, mundane institutions, and the everyday life of the Christian with their real substance.” (p14)*

Is this true? Why or why not? John 1:14; Colossians 2:6-10; Hebrews 2:14-18

- *“One of the great strengths of the Lutheran tradition is that theology is taken seriously and has been thoroughly worked out. Sophisticated theology, biblical scholarship, and vigorous polemics are to be found in abundance among Lutherans” (p16).*

AUGSBURG CONFESSION

IV. [JUSTIFICATION]

It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith,² when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us.³ For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.

VII. [THE CHURCH]

¹ It is also taught among us that one holy Christian church will be and remain forever. This is the assembly of all believers among who the Gospel is preached in its purity and the holy sacraments are administered according to the Gospel.² For it is sufficient for the true unity of the Christian church that the Gospel be preached in conformity with a pure understanding of it and that the sacraments be administered in accordance with the divine Word.³ It is not necessary for the true unity of the Christian church that ceremonies, instituted by men, should be observed uniformly in all places.⁴ It is as Paul says in Eph. 4:4, 5, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call, one Lord, one faith, one baptism."

VIII. [WHAT THE CHURCH IS]

¹ Again, although the Christian church, properly speaking, is nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints, yet because in this life many false Christians, hypocrites, and even open sinners remain among the godly, the sacraments are efficacious even if the priests who administer them are wicked men, for as Christ himself indicated, "The Pharisees sit on Moses' seat" (Matt. 23:2).

³ Accordingly the Donatists⁸ and all others who hold contrary views are condemned.

SMALCALD ARTICLES, PART II

[ARTICLE I. CHRIST AND FAITH]

¹ The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:25).² He alone is "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). "God has laid upon him the iniquities of us all" (Isa. 53:6).³ Moreover, "all have sinned," and "they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, by his blood" (Rom. 3:23-25).

⁴ Inasmuch as this must be believed and cannot be obtained or apprehended by any work, law, or merit, it is clear and certain that such faith alone justifies us, as St. Paul says in Romans 3, "For we hold that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28), and again, "that he [God] himself is righteous and that he justifies him who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:26).

⁵ Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised,⁶ even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed. For as St. Peter says, "There is no ^(tr-463) other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). "And with his stripes we are healed" (Isa. 53:5).

On this article rests all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubts about it. Otherwise all is lost, and the pope, the devil, and all our adversaries will gain the victory.

⁸ Rigorists of the fourth century who denied the validity of the ministry of those who apostatized under persecution.

⁶ Latin adds: nor can any believer concede or permit anything contrary to it.

Justification: The Dynamics of Sin and Grace

- *“Adolf Koeberle notes three kinds of spiritual aspiration: moralism, in which the will seeks to achieve perfection of conduct; speculation, in which the mind seeks to achieve perfection of understanding; and mysticism, in which the soul seeks to achieve perfection by becoming one with God” (p17). [Mattes, John C. (trans.) (1936). The Quest for Holiness. Harper & Brothers: New York, p2.]*

How are these ‘three kinds of spiritual aspirations’ recognized in our day?

How do they relate to Deuteronomy 6:5 (also Matthew 22:37-38)?

Where is ‘perfection’ to be/not to be sought? John 8:7; Romans 3:10-12 (Psalm 14:1-3; 53:1-3); 7:18, 24; Hebrews 4:15-16; 12:1-2; 1 John 4:18

Paths to God

Moralism

- *“Many people assume that moralism is, in fact, what Christianity is all about. Good people go to heaven, it is thought, while bad people go to hell. Christians are those who live morally upright lives, avoiding ‘sins’ while doing good works. Sometimes this takes the form of rather small lifestyle choices - avoiding alcohol, tobacco, and other pretty pleasures - while sometimes it takes the form of working for vast ideals, righting the wrongs of society through political activism and social reform” (p18-19).*

What makes someone ‘morally upright’ (‘morally good’)? In the sight of men? In the sight of God? Is there a difference? Matthew 12:33-35; 15:10-11, 13, 16-20; John 3:6; 1 Peter 1:13-25
What is Christianity ‘all about’? What is it not about? Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:44; 22:37-40; John 3:18; 6:29

- *“Moralism is often accompanied by hypocrisy, a show of external righteousness that masks the true story of what is happening inside” (p19).*

What is a hypocrite?

How can one distinguish between the Christian and the hypocrite? Matthew 6; 7:21-27; 23; 24:31-46

Speculation

- *“Speculation...the assumption that knowledge is the key to spiritual fulfillment. If we only knew the truth, if we could only find the key to understanding the complexities of life, if only we attained the right knowledge, then we would be content” (p20).*

Is knowledge alone the ‘key to spiritual fulfillment’? Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 19:2; 22:17-19
Ecclesiastes 1:18; 1 Corinthians 8:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; 2 Timothy 3:1-7

What does the Bible say about salvation and truth? Acts 4:12; 2 Corinthians 6:1-2; Psalm 119:142, 151, 160; John 1:14, 8:31-32; 14:6; 17:17, 19

Where is true contentment to be found? Philippians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5-6 (Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Proverbs 30:5-6)

- *“As with moralism, the way of speculation often becomes simply another occasion for human pride, manifesting itself in an elitism that scorns ordinary people or a private arrogance that shuts out the rest of the world” (p21).*

Synonyms of pride: conceit, egoism, egotism, self-glory, self-importance, self-opinion, vainglory, overconfidence, self-assurance (Webster’s Collegiate Thesaurus, 1988, p576)

How does pride show itself? Matthew 7:1-5; 2 Corinthians 10:17-18; Galatians 6:3-5

How are Christians ‘to be’ towards one another? Matthew 7:7-12; Philippians 2:3-8

Mysticism

- *“Though the ways of moralism and speculation are followed by religious and non-religious people alike, perhaps the most appealing mode of spirituality today is mysticism: attaining the ecstatic experience of becoming one with God” (p21).*

How does one ‘encounter’ God? Matthew 18:20; John 12:26; 17:11, 21-22

How is one ‘united’ with God? Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27

- *“Its (mystic’s) temptation is to use God for one’s own purpose - to achieve an intensely pleasurable experience, to score a ‘spiritual high,’ to gain power to make one’s life more pleasant” (p22).*

How are God and man to relate to one another? Isaiah 29:16; Jeremiah 18:1-12; Romans 9:14-26; Psalm 95:6-11 (Hebrews 3:18); Matthew 20:25-28; Acts 16:27-34

Moralism - Speculation - Mysticism

- *“All three of these conventional approaches to spirituality involve human beings’ expending strenuous effort to reach God, who is, by implication, an impassive observer, far above the fray, a goal that must be attained, a treasure that must be sought, discovered, and earned. Koeberle says that the three approaches to spirituality are tied to the various faculties of the human mind: moralism exerts the efforts of the will; speculation exerts the efforts of the intellect; mysticism exerts the efforts of the emotions” (p23). [Mattes, John C. (trans.) (1936). The Quest for Holiness. Harper & Brothers: New York.]*
- *“Lutheran spirituality begins with the insight that all human effort to reach God is futile... God is no passive force. God is the one who is active, not human beings. The issue is not our ascent to God, but God’s descent to us. Lutheran spirituality is all about what God does. To rescue us from our miserable and depraved human condition, He became a human being Himself” (p23).*

How are moralism, speculation, and mysticism to be understood according to Deuteronomy 6:5 (also Matthew 22:37-38)?

How does one ‘reach’ God (or rather, how does God ‘reach’ us?) Romans 10

APOLOGY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION
IV. JUSTIFICATION

Christ says in Luke 7:47, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, because she loved much.” But he interprets his own words when he adds: “Your faith has saved you” (v. 50). Now Christ did not want to say that by her works of love the woman had merited the forgiveness of sins.¹⁵³ Therefore he clearly says, “Your faith has saved you.” But faith is that which grasps God’s free mercy because of God’s Word. If anybody denies that this is faith, he utterly misunderstands the nature of faith.¹⁵⁴ And the account here shows what he calls “love.” The woman came, believing that she should seek the forgiveness of sins from Christ. **This is the highest way of worshiping Christ.** Nothing greater could she ascribe to him. By looking for the forgiveness of sins from him, she truly acknowledged him as the Messiah. Truly to believe means to think of Christ in this way, and in this way to worship and take hold of him. Moreover, Christ used the word “love” not toward the woman but against the Pharisee, because Christ contrasted the whole act of reverence of the Pharisee with ^(tr-165) that of the woman. He chides the Pharisee for not acknowledging him as the Messiah, though he did show him the outward courtesies due a guest and a great and holy man. He points to the woman and praises her reverence, her anointing and crying, all of which were a sign and confession of faith that she was looking for the forgiveness of sins from Christ. It was not without reason that this truly powerful example moved Christ to chide the Pharisee, this wise and honest but unbelieving man. He charges him with irreverence and reproves him with the example of the woman. What a disgrace that an uneducated woman should believe God, while a doctor of the law does not believe or accept the Messiah or seek from him the forgiveness of sins and salvation!

¹⁵⁵ In this way, therefore, he praises her entire act of worship, as the Scriptures often do when they include many things in one phrase. Later we shall take up similar passages, like Luke 11:41, “Give alms; and behold, everything is clean.” He demands not only alms, but also the righteousness of faith. In the same way he says here, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, because she loved much,” that is, because she truly worshiped me with faith and with the acts and signs of faith. He includes the whole act of worship; but meanwhile he teaches that it is faith that properly accepts the forgiveness of sins, though love, confession, and other good fruits ought to follow. He does not mean that these fruits are the price of propitiation which earns the forgiveness of sins that reconciles us to God.

Law and Gospel

- *“In the New Testament, a single verse demolishes each brand of human spirituality: ‘There is no one righteous, not even one [so much for moralism!]; there is no one who understands [so much for speculation!]; no one who seeks God [so much for mysticism]’ (Romans 3:12) (p24).*

What does a verse such as Romans 3:12 say of the Christian? See Romans 7:14, 18, 24-25

- *“Admitting one’s failure - and agreeing with one’s condemnation - is the first step of Lutheran spirituality.” “...But the law is the prelude to the Gospel. Those broken by the Law are convinced of their need and of their inability to save themselves. Then the message that God does it all comes as an astounding relief, as good news. Those who despair of achieving perfection by themselves can hear the message of the cross - that they can find totally free forgiveness through the work of Jesus Christ - and cling to it, desperately, with every fiber of their being” (p25).*

What does ‘The Law’ say? Romans 3:19-20; Galatians 2:21; 3:10-12, 21-24

What does ‘The Gospel’ say? Romans 1:16-17; 3:21-26; Galatians 2:16; 3:13-14, 18

- *“Christians continually must fight temptation and will, despite all their efforts, fall into sin. But Christ is also at work in the Christian’s life. The discipline of prayer, confession, and the ministry of the Word and Sacrament enable the Christian to grow in holiness and good works - a process known as sanctification” (p27).*

What is the struggle of the Christian? Matthew 7:13-14; Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Timothy 4:16; 2 Timothy 1:13; Hebrews 10:23; James 5:8, 10-11; Revelation 2:10-11

What is sanctification? 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 2:1-4; Jude 1:20-21

How does a Christian 'grow'? John 8:31-32; 17:17; Acts 13:43-44; Galatians 3:2-9; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 3:18 By whom? 1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:6; 2:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11-18; Jude 1:1; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

FORMULA OF CONCORD, EPITOME

V. LAW AND GOSPEL

AFFIRMATIVE THESES

THE PURE DOCTRINE OF GOD'S WORD

² 1. We believe, teach, and confess that the distinction between law and Gospel is an especially glorious light that is to be maintained with great diligence in the church so that, according to St. Paul's admonition, the Word of God may be divided rightly.

³ 2. We believe, teach, and confess that, strictly speaking, the law is a divine doctrine which teaches what is right and God-pleasing and which condemns everything that is sinful and contrary to God's will.

⁴ 3. Therefore everything which condemns sin is and belongs to the proclamation of the law.

⁵ 4. But the Gospel, strictly speaking, is the kind of doctrine that teaches what a man who has not kept the law and is condemned by it should believe, namely, that Christ has satisfied and paid for all guilt and without man's merit has obtained and won for him forgiveness of sins, the "righteousness that avails before God," and eternal life.

⁶ 5. The word "Gospel" is not used in a single sense in Holy Scripture, and this was the original occasion of the controversy. Therefore we believe, teach, and confess that when the word "Gospel" means the entire doctrine of Christ which he proclaimed personally in his teaching ministry and which his apostles also set forth (examples of this meaning occur in Mark 1:15 and Acts 20:24), then it is correct to say or write that the Gospel is a proclamation both of repentance and of forgiveness of sins.

⁷ 6. But when the law and Gospel are opposed to each other, as when Moses is spoken of as a teacher of the law in contrast to Christ as a preacher of the Gospel, then we believe, teach, and confess that the Gospel is not a proclamation of contrition and reproof but is, strictly speaking, precisely a comforting and joyful message which does not reprove or terrify but comforts consciences that are frightened by the law, directs them solely to the merit of Christ, and raises them up again by the delightful proclamation of God's grace and favor acquired through the merits of Christ.

⁸ 7. Now as to the disclosure of sin, as long as men hear only the law and hear nothing about Christ, the veil of Moses covers their eyes, as a result they fail to learn the true nature of sin from the law, and thus they become either conceited hypocrites, like the Pharisees, or they despair, as Judas did, etc. Therefore Christ takes the law into his own hands and explains it spiritually (Matt. 5:21-48); Rom. 7:14). Then "God's wrath is revealed from heaven" over all sinners and men learn how fierce it is. Thus they are directed back to the law, and now they learn from it for the first time the real nature of their sin, and acknowledgment which Moses could never have wrung from them.

⁹ Therefore the proclamation of the suffering and death of Christ, the Son of God, is an earnest and terrifying preaching and advertisement of God's wrath which really directs people into the law, after the veil of Moses has been removed for them, so they now know for the first time what great things God demands of us in the law, none of which we could fulfill, and that we should now seek all our righteousness in Christ.

¹⁰ 8. Nevertheless, as long as all this — namely, the passion and death of Christ — proclaims God's wrath and terrifies people, it is not, strictly speaking, the preaching of the Gospel but the preaching of Moses and the law, and therefore it is an "alien work" of Christ by which he comes to his proper office — namely, to preach grace, to comfort, to make alive. And this is the preaching of the Gospel, strictly speaking.

ANTITHESES

REJECTED CONTRARY DOCTRINE

¹¹ 1. Hence we reject and deem it as false and detrimental when men teach that the Gospel, strictly speaking, is a proclamation of conviction and reproof and not exclusively a proclamation of grace. Thereby the Gospel is again changed into a teaching of the law, the merit of Christ and the Holy Scriptures are obscured, Christians are robbed of their true comfort, and the doors are again opened to the papacy.

The Paradoxes of Lutheranism

- *“In its theology and in its spirituality, Lutheranism is a system of paradoxes, of apparent contradictions that are actually two poles of truth and experience. The Christian, according to Luther, is simul justus et peccator, at the same time righteous and a sinner. The Christian is totally free, yet a slave - in Christian service - to everyone. Such paradoxes are not just formulas of doctrine, but, as will be seen, polarities that comprehend the complexities of the spiritual life” (p28-29).*

What is a paradox? "A statement that is seemingly contradictory or opposed to common sense" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary)

What are some examples of Christian paradox?

Living in Christ, but dying to the flesh [at the same time]: Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21
Foolish, but wise; Weak, but strong; Poor, but rich: 1 Corinthians 1:18-21, 27-29; See also
2 Corinthians 6:9-10

From Luther's, The Freedom of a Christian

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none.

A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.

One thing, and only one thing, is necessary for Christian life, righteousness, and freedom. That one thing is the most holy Word of God, the gospel of Christ, as Christ says, [John 11\[:25\]](#), “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live”; and [John 8\[:36\]](#), “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed”; and [Matt. 4\[:4\]](#), “Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God.” Let us then consider it certain and firmly established that the soul can do without anything except the Word of God and that where the Word of God is missing there is no help at all for the soul. If it has the Word of God it is rich and lacks nothing since it is the Word of life, truth, light, peace, righteousness, salvation, joy, liberty, wisdom, power, grace, glory, and of every incalculable blessing... On the other hand, there is no more terrible disaster with which the wrath of God can afflict men than a famine of the hearing of his Word, as he says in [Amos \[8:11\]](#). Likewise there is no greater mercy than when he sends forth his Word, as we read in [Psalm 107\[:20\]](#): “He sent forth his word, and healed them, and delivered them from destruction.” Nor was Christ sent into the world for any other ministry except that of the Word.

Now when a man has learned through the commandments to recognize his helplessness and is distressed about how he might satisfy the law—since the law must be fulfilled so that not a jot or tittle shall be lost, otherwise man will be condemned without hope—then, being truly humbled and reduced to nothing in his own eyes, he finds in himself nothing whereby he may be justified and saved. Here the second part of Scripture comes to our aid, namely, the promises of God which declare the glory of God, saying, “If you wish to fulfill the law and not covet, as the law demands, come, believe in Christ in whom grace, righteousness, peace, liberty, and all things are promised you. If you believe, you shall have all things; if you do not believe, you shall lack all things.” That which is impossible for you to accomplish by trying to fulfill all the works of the law—many and useless as they all are—you will accomplish quickly and easily through faith. God our Father has made all things depend on faith so that whoever has faith will have

everything, and whoever does not have faith will have nothing. “For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all,” as it is stated in [Rom. 11\[:32\]](#). Thus the promises of God give what the commandments of God demand and fulfill what the law prescribes so that all things may be Coifs alone, both the commandments and the fulfilling of the commandments. He alone commands, he alone fulfils.

The following statements are therefore true: “Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works.” Consequently it is always necessary that the substance or person himself be good before there can be any good works, and that good works follow and proceed from the good person, as Christ also says, “A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit” [[Matt. 7:18](#)]. It is clear that the fruits do not bear the tree and that the tree does not grow on the fruits, also that, on the contrary, the trees bear the fruits and the fruits grow on the trees. As it is necessary, therefore, that the trees exist before their fruits and the fruits do not make trees either good or bad, but rather as the trees are, so are the fruits they bear; so a man must first be good or wicked before he does a good or wicked work, and his works do not make him good or wicked, but he himself makes his works either good or wicked.

Illustrations of the same truth can be seen in all trades. A good or a bad house does not make a good or a bad builder; but a good or a bad builder makes a good or a bad house. And in general, the work never makes the workman like itself, but the workman makes the work like himself. So it is with the works of man. As the man is, whether believer or unbeliever, so also is his work—good if it was done in faith, wicked if it was done in unbelief. But the converse is not true, that the work makes the man either a believer or an unbeliever. As works do not make a man a believer, so also they do not make him righteous. But as faith makes a man a believer and righteous, so faith does good works. Since, then, works justify no one, and a man must be righteous before he does a good work, it is very evident that it is faith alone which, because of the pure mercy of God through Christ and in his Word, worthily and sufficiently justifies and saves the person. A Christian has no need of any work or law in order to be saved since through faith he is free from every law and does everything out of pure liberty and freely. He seeks neither benefit nor salvation since he already abounds in all things and is saved through the grace of God because in his faith he now seeks only to please God.

...No good work helps justify or save an unbeliever. On the other hand, no evil work makes him wicked or damns him; but the unbelief which makes the person and the tree evil does the evil and damnable works. Hence when a man is good or evil, this is effected not by the works, but by faith or unbelief...

The Means of Grace: The Presence of God

- *“According to the terms of this mysterious exchange, all of the sin that the Christian has ever done - all of the selfishness, the hate, the secret vices, the greedy egotism that breaks out in hurting others - all of this is credited to Jesus. And killed on the cross. Conversely, Christ’s righteousness - all of the goodness He showed in healing the sick, feeling compassion for the multitudes, resisting temptation, driving the moneychangers out of the Temple - is credited to the Christian. And since Jesus rose from the dead to a new life, the Christian does too” (p32).*

What is meant by ‘great exchange? How does this ‘great exchange’ take place? What does it mean before God? How does the ‘great exchange’ affect how we see ourselves and others, or does it?

Bible references: Isaiah 53:4-9; Romans 5:12-21; 6:3-11; 8:3-4; 2 Corinthians 5:2; Ephesians 2:11-13; 5:25-27; Hebrews 2:14-18; 9:11-14, 24-28; 10:5-14, 18, 19-23; 1 John 1:7; 2:1-2

- *“Looking at salvation in terms of decisions and experiences shifts the focus away from what Christ has done to what I have done. We are back to the unevangelical dilemma of having to save ourselves - by what we decide or what we experience or what we do” (p33).*

How does looking at salvation ‘in terms of decisions and experiences’ shift ‘the focus away from what Christ has done to what I have done’? How is this inconsistent with the Bible’s teaching about salvation? John 6:27-29; Romans 3:19-28; 4:2-8, 13-23; 5:1; 8:1; Galatians 2:16, 20-21; 3:2, 5, 10-14, 22; Ephesians 2:8-9

How is what ‘we decide’ or what ‘we experience’ or what ‘we do’ not the means of salvation and why? Leviticus 19:2 (1 Peter 1:16); Psalm 14:1-3//Psalm 53:1-3 (Romans 3:10-18); Matthew 5:48; John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Romans 7:18

Does salvation rest in any way on decision or experience (Do we even contribute a little?) [see above references and Matthew 5:20]

How are we to understand passages that speak, then, of ‘choosing’ or ‘opening the door’? Deuteronomy 30:19-20; Joshua 24:14-18; Revelation 3:20. [Questions to ask: What is the context? To whom are the questions or statements made (to believers or nonbelievers)?]

Does the Bible have anything to say about the claim ‘making a decision for Christ’? How are we to understand the pleas and prayers of many Christians who advocate this position? [i.e. Is anyone able to ‘make a decision for Christ’ as an unbeliever? (See Romans 3 & 7 referenced above) Has God chosen us or have we chosen Him? (John 15:16; Romans 5:8; Ephesians 1:3-6, 11; 1 John 4:9-10)] How might we respond to those who make the claim of ‘making a decision’ or ‘deciding for Christ’?

Can or do the phrases, 'trusting in faith,' and 'I have my faith,' mislead from the sure promises of God? How or how not? Are those phrases the same as saying, 'trusting in the Lord Jesus'? Why or why not? How might the statement, 'the power of prayer' mislead from the power of God? Is there a difference? Why or why not?

- *"How do we attain a saving, life-changing faith? The answer, in Lutheran spirituality, has to do with the so-called means of grace. We are connected to Christ, and the Holy Spirit works both faith and good works in our lives by means of the Word and the Sacraments" (p34).*

What do the means of grace have to do with salvation? See Luther's Large & Small Catechisms concerning Holy Baptism & The Lord's Supper. (see below)

Where does Christ promise to be? How do we know 'where' He is? Matthew 10:40; Luke 10:16; John 1:14; 15:3; 20:23; Romans 10:17; Galatians 3:5 (See also Exodus 20:24; Matthew 18:20) How is this true comfort? Isaiah 40:8 (1 Peter 1:24-25); Hebrews 13:8 (See also Malachi 3:6)

LUTHER'S SMALL CATECHISM

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism

Second

What benefits does Baptism give? It works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare.

Which are these words and promises of God? Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Mark: "Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:16).

Third

How can water do such great things? Certainly not just water, but the word of God in and with the water does these things, along with the faith which trusts this word of God in the water. For without God's word the water is plain water and no Baptism. But with the word of God it is a Baptism, that is, a life-giving water, rich in grace, and a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Titus, chapter three: "He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by His grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying" (Titus 3:5-6).

The Sacrament of the Altar

What is the benefit of this eating and drinking? These words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins," shows us that in the Sacrament forgiveness of sins, life, and salvation are given us through these words. For where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

How can bodily eating and drinking do such great things? Certainly not just eating and drinking do these things, but the words written here: "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." These words, along with the bodily eating and drinking, are the main thing in the Sacrament. Whoever believes these words has exactly what they say: "forgiveness of sins."

The Word of God

- *“Some Christians assume the Holy Spirit communicates to them directly, as an inner impulse or a personal revelation. For Lutherans, God comes from the outside; the Holy Spirit is to be found objectively. God speaks directly and effectually to us in His Word” (p34).*

What Scriptural passages support God’s ‘objective voice’ of the Bible? Deuteronomy 4:2; 6:6-9; Psalm 119:9; 49-50; Proverbs 30:5; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 7:15-27; Luke 11:28; John 5:39; 8:31-32; Romans 10:17; 15:4; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2

What Scriptural passages speak against the ‘subjectivity’ of God’s voice coming ‘from within’? Genesis 6:5, 21-22; Isaiah 8:16, 20; Amos 8:11-12; Matthew 15:1-20; Romans 7:12, 18, 24; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Philippians 2:5; 3:7-9

How is this teaching of Scripture concerning the objective Word of God important for today? On what is confidence to be placed? How certain and sure is God’s Word compared to man’s thoughts, opinions, decisions? Can man err? Can God?

- *“It is a Lutheran truism that God generally works through means. Just as God is not ashamed to inspire the utterances of fallen human beings, to have His truths written in human language with paper and ink, He is not ashamed to have His Word communicated by the halting speech of His followers. The main difference between God’s Word and merely human words, is that God - the Holy Spirit - promises to be at work whenever His Word is spoken” (p36).*

What Scriptural passages support the truth that God works through means?

God creates ‘the heavens and the earth’ by means of the Word	Genesis 1
God promises deliverance through ‘the seed of the woman’	Genesis 3:15 (Galatians 4:4-5)
God calls and sends Moses as His spokesman	Exodus 3
God ‘meets’ with His people in a given location	Exodus 25:22; 30:6; 30:36
God speaks through the prophets, disciples, apostles	(Luke 10:16)
God’s work through Holy Baptism	
Matthew 28:19; Mark 1:4 (Luke 3:3); 11:3 (Luke 20:4); Acts 2:38; Romans 6:3-4;	
Colossians 2:11-14 (Genesis 17:11-14); 1 Peter 3:21	
God’s work through the Lord’s Supper	
Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 22-24; Luke 22:17-20; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 11:23-29	

THE FORMULA OF CONCORD, PART I: EPITOME

*A SUMMARY EPITOME OF THE ARTICLES IN CONTROVERSY
AMONG THE THEOLOGIANS OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION EXPOUNDED AND SETTLED IN
CHRISTIAN FASHION IN CONFORMITY WITH GOD'S WORD IN THE RECAPITULATION HERE
FOLLOWING*

THE COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY, RULE, AND NORM ACCORDING TO WHICH ALL DOCTRINES SHOULD BE JUDGED AND THE ERRORS WHICH INTRUDED SHOULD BE EXPLAINED AND DECIDED IN A CHRISTIAN WAY

¹ **1.** We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written in Ps. 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” And St. Paul says in Gal. 1:8, “Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.”

² Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times.

LUTHER'S LARGE CATECHISM, The Third Article of the Creed

⁵⁵ Therefore everything in the Christian church is so ordered that we may daily obtain full forgiveness of sins through the Word and through signs appointed to comfort and revive our consciences as long as we live. Although we have sin, the Holy Spirit sees to it that it does not harm us because we are in the Christian church, where there is full forgiveness of sin. God forgives us, and we forgive, bear with, and aid one another.

⁵⁶ But outside the Christian church (that is, where the Gospel is not) there is no forgiveness, and hence no holiness. Therefore, all who seek to merit holiness through their works rather than through the Gospel and the forgiveness of sin have expelled and separated themselves from the church.

⁵⁷ Meanwhile, since holiness has begun and is growing daily, we await the time when our flesh will be put to death, will be buried with all its uncleanness, and will come forth gloriously and arise to complete and perfect holiness in a new, eternal life. ⁵⁸ Now we are only halfway pure and holy. The Holy Spirit must continue to work in us through the Word, daily granting forgiveness until we attain to that life where there will be no more forgiveness. In that life are only perfectly pure and holy people, full of goodness and righteousness, completely freed from sin, death, and all evil, living in new, immortal and glorified bodies.

⁵⁹ All this, then, is the office and work of the Holy Spirit, to begin and daily to increase holiness on earth through these two means, the Christian church and the forgiveness of sins. Then, when we pass from this life, he will instantly perfect our holiness and will eternally preserve us in it by means of the last two parts of this article.

⁶⁰ The term “resurrection of the flesh,” however, is not well chosen. When we Germans hear the word *Fleisch* (flesh), we think no farther than the butcher shop. Idiomatically we would say “resurrection of the body.” However, this is not of great importance, as long as the words are rightly understood.

⁶¹ This, then, is the article which must always remain in force. Creation is past and redemption is accomplished, but the Holy Spirit carries on his work unceasingly until the last day. For this purpose he has appointed a community on earth, through which he speaks and does all his work. ⁶² For he has not yet gathered together all his Christian people, nor has he completed the granting of forgiveness. Therefore we believe in him who daily brings us into this community through the Word, and imparts, increases, and strengthens faith through the same Word and the forgiveness of sins. Then when his work has been finished and we abide in it, having died to the world and all evil, he will finally make us perfectly and eternally holy. We now wait in faith for this to be accomplished through the Word.

The Bible

- *“That God’s Word is written in a Book, which anyone can read whenever they want, sounds unspiritual to many people...But Christians believe that God’s Word is something tangible, written down in ink and paper, accessible and objective” (p37).*

How do we know that the Bible is God’s Word? Mark 7:6-13; Luke 16:29-31; John 5:39; 10:35; 17:6-8, 14, 17, 25-26; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21

How is the Bible different from other religious Scriptures? (i.e. the Koran of the Muslims, the Talmud of the Jews, the Book of Mormon of the Mormons, the New World Translation of the Jehovah’s Witnesses) [What is their emphasis concerning the Jesus of the Bible?] Luke 1:1-4; 5:24; Luke 24:15-27, 44-48; John 5:39; 20:30-31; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 John 5:9-13

- *“My neighbor and I - in short, all men - may err and deceive,” writes Luther in his Large Catechism, ‘but God’s Word cannot err.’” [Tappert, T.G. (trans). The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Fortress Press: Philadelphia, PA.] (p37)*

Is it a true statement that ‘God’s Word cannot err’? Psalm 119:160; John 10:35; John 17:17; Ephesians 1:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; Titus 1:2; James 1:18

Does it make a difference if the Bible is all true or mostly true? How?

What is the difference between saying, “The Bible is the Word of God” and “The Bible contains the Word of God”? What significance does each phrase have? What do each lead to concerning one’s view of Scripture?

- *The point of Bible reading is not merely to learn about God, to see how we should behave, or to gain principles for successful living, though the Bible does communicate such things. To read the Bible as a spiritual venture is to be confronted, in the most personal terms, with God Himself” (p39).*

What is the purpose of the Holy Bible? Luke 1:1-4; 5:24; Luke 24:15-27, 44-48; John 5:39; 20:30-31; Ephesians 1:13-14; 1 John 5:9-13

How does one’s understanding of Scripture’s purpose affect one’s understanding of Christ, the Church, and the Christian life? How does one’s understanding of Christ affect one’s understanding of the Bible?

SMALCALD ARTICLES, PART III, VIII. CONFESSION

We must hold firmly to the conviction that God gives no one his Spirit or grace except through or with the external Word which comes before. Thus we shall be protected from the enthusiasts — that is, from the spiritualists who boast that they possess the Spirit without and before the Word and who therefore judge, interpret, and twist the Scriptures or spoken Word according to their pleasure.

FORMULA OF CONCORD, SOLID DECLARATION, II. FREE WILL

Affirmative Thesis

3. God the Holy Spirit, however, does not effect conversion without means; he employs to this end the preaching and the hearing of God's Word, as it is written that the Gospel is a "power of God" for salvation;⁶ likewise, that faith comes from the hearing of God's Word (Rom. 10:17). It is God's will that men should hear his Word and not stop their ears.⁷ The Holy Spirit is present with this Word and opens hearts so that, like Lydia in Acts 16:14, they heed it and thus are converted solely through the grace and power of the Holy Spirit, for man's conversion is the Spirit's work alone. ⁶ Without his grace our "will and effort,"⁸ our planting, sowing, and watering are in vain unless he "gives the growth."⁹ Christ also states, "Apart from me you can do nothing."¹ In these few words he denies all power to free will and ascribes everything to the grace of God, so that no one might boast in the presence of God (1 Cor. 9:16).

Antitheses, Contrary False Doctrine

⁷ Accordingly we reject and condemn all the following errors as being contrary to the norm of the Word of God:

⁹ **2.** We also reject the error of the crass Pelagians who taught that by his own powers, without the grace of the Holy Spirit, man can convert himself to God, believe the Gospel, whole-heartedly obey God's law, and thus merit forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

¹⁰ **3.** We also reject the error of the Semi-Pelagians who teach that man by virtue of his own powers could make a beginning of his conversion but could not complete it without the grace of the Holy Spirit.²

¹¹ **4.** Likewise the teaching that while before his conversion man is indeed too weak by his free will to make a beginning, convert himself to God, and whole-heartedly obey God's law by his own powers, yet after the Holy Spirit has made the beginning through the preaching of the Word and in it has offered his grace, man's will is forthwith able by its own natural powers to add something (though it be little and feeble) to help, to cooperate, to prepare itself for grace, to dispose itself, to apprehend and accept it, and to believe the Gospel.

¹³ **6.** Likewise we reject and condemn the error of the Enthusiasts³ who imagine that God draws men to himself, enlightens them, justifies them, and saves them without means, without the hearing of God's Word and without the use of the holy sacraments.

¹⁸ **9.** Likewise Luther's statement that man's will in conversion behaves "altogether passively"⁵ (that is, that it does nothing at all) must be understood as referring to the action of divine grace in kindling new movements within the will, that is, when the Spirit of God through the Word that has been heard or through the use of the holy sacraments takes hold of man's will and works the new birth and conversion. But after the Holy Spirit has performed and accomplished this and the will of man has been changed and renewed *solely by God's power and activity*, man's new will becomes an instrument and means of God the Holy Spirit, so that man not only lays hold on grace but also cooperates with the Holy Spirit in the works that follow.

¹⁹ Prior to man's conversion there are only two efficient causes, namely, the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as the Holy Spirit's instrument whereby he effects conversion. Man should hear this Word, though he cannot give it credence and accept it by his own powers but solely by the grace and operation of God the Holy Spirit.

The Sacraments: Baptism

- *“The Word of God itself speaks of ...means of grace, which, by the power of that same Word, also convey Christ and create faith. These are the sacraments: Baptism and Holy Communion. Lutheran spirituality is a sacramental spirituality, centered in the conviction that the Holy Spirit actually descends in the waters of Baptism, and that Christ is really present in the bread and wine of Holy Communion.” ... “These are astounding claims; but they are more examples of the objectivity of God’s grace and the fact that God accomplishes everything for our salvation, and that all we need to do is to receive His gifts” (p41-42).*

How do we know that God’s Word does what it says? How do we not know this? How do we distinguish between these? See Genesis 1 (God created the world with a Word); Ezekiel 24:14; 36:33-38; John 6:60-65; 18:37

How is faith created? How is it not? Romans 10:14-17; Galatians 3:2-9 What difference does it make? Colossians 2:6-9; Genesis 15:6 // Romans 4:3; Galatians 3:5-6; James 2:23

- *“Lutherans, who are taught to cling to God’s Word rather than to try to interpret it away, simply take them literally” (p43). (See Romans 6:3-5)*

Why is it necessary to take God’s Word literally? Are there places of Scripture not to be taken literally? If so, how do we know?

What is the danger of ‘interpreting away’ the Word of God? What is the ultimate conclusion of doing so? Colossians 1:21-23; 1 Timothy 1:18-20; 4:1-6; 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 2:15-19; 3:1-9; 1 Peter 5:8-9; Jude; Revelation 14:12

- *“To be baptized in God’s name is to be baptized not by men but by God himself. Although it is performed by men’s hands, it is nevertheless truly God’s own act” (p43). [Luther’s Large Catechism]*

What examples from Scripture might be helpful in understanding how God works through men? Exodus 3:13-15; 4:10-16; Numbers 16:8-11; Deuteronomy 18:15-22 (Acts 3:17-26); Luke 10:16; John 5:36-47

- *“In justification, the human being is purely passive, purely receptive. Salvation, again, is not by works, not by moral effort or by acquiring knowledge or by cultivating a mystical experience. Salvation is simply receiving a free gift of God. A baby receiving Baptism models that passive reception, which adults constantly struggle against in their zeal to save themselves by their own efforts” (p44).*

See Ephesians 2:1-10 [Notice the distinction between what we were (and what we couldn’t/can’t do) and what God did]

Notice who did what in Matthew 19:13-15; Mark 10:13-16; & Luke 18:15-17 [v15--babies (NIV), infants (NKJ, ESV)].

- *“Grace, Lutherans insist, is objective. Christians in need of assurance should understand that their salvation is an objective fact, sealed in an event in space and time, as tangible as water” (p46).*

How is God’s grace objective? Does it make difference whether God’s grace is objective or not? Why or why not? What comfort does God’s objective grace offer?

AUGSBURG CONFESSION, IX. BAPTISM

¹ It is taught among us that Baptism is necessary and that grace is offered through it. ² Children, too, should be baptized, for in Baptism they are committed to God and become acceptable to him.

³ On this account the Anabaptists who teach that infant Baptism is not right are rejected.

SMALCALD ARTICLES, PART III, V. BAPTISM

¹ Baptism is nothing else than the Word of God in water, commanded by the institution of Christ; or as Paul says, “the washing of water with the word”; or, again, as Augustine puts it, “The Word is added to the element and it becomes a sacrament.” ² Therefore we do not agree with Thomas and the Dominicans who forget the Word (God’s institution) and say that God has joined to the water a spiritual power which, through the water, washes away sin. ³ Nor do we agree with Scotus and the Franciscans who teach ^(tr-493) that Baptism washes away sin through the assistance of the divine will, as if the washing takes place only through God’s will and not at all through the Word and the water.

⁴ As for infant Baptism, we hold that children should be baptized, for they, too, are included in the promise of redemption which Christ made, and the church should administer Baptism to them.

LUTHER’S LARGE CATECHISM, IV. BAPTISM

¹⁷ Note the distinction, then: Baptism is a very different thing from all other water, not by virtue of the natural substance but because here something nobler is added. God himself stakes his honor, his power, and his might on it. Therefore it is not simply a natural water, but a divine, heavenly, holy, and blessed water — praise it in any other terms you can — all by virtue of the Word, which is a heavenly, holy Word which no one can sufficiently extol, for it contains and conveys all the fullness of God. ¹⁸ From the Word it derives its nature as a sacrament, as St. Augustine taught, “*Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum.*” This means that when the Word is added to the element or the natural substance, it becomes a sacrament, that is, a holy, divine thing and sign.

¹⁹ Therefore, we constantly teach that the sacraments and all the external things ordained and instituted by God should be regarded not according to the gross, external mask (as we see the shell of a nut) but as that in which God’s Word is enclosed. ²⁰ In the same way we speak about the parental estate and civil authority. If we regard these persons with reference to their noses, eyes, skin and hair, flesh and bones, they look no different from Turks and heathen. Someone might come and say, “Why should I think more of this person than of others?” But because the commandment is added, “You shall honor father and mother,” I see another man, adorned and clothed with the majesty and glory of God. The commandment, I say, is the golden chain about his neck, yes, the crown on his head, which shows me how and why I should honor this particular flesh and blood.

²¹ In the same manner, and even much more, you should honor and exalt Baptism on account of the Word, since God himself has honored it by words and deeds and has confirmed it by wonders from heaven. Do you think it was a jest that the heavens opened when Christ allowed himself to be baptized, that the Holy Spirit descended visibly, and that the divine glory and majesty were manifested everywhere?

The Sacraments: Holy Communion

- *“In our relationship with God, He is the one who acts. We do not seek Him; He seeks us (Luke 15:4-7). We do not love God; He loves us (1 John 4:10)...This action is objective. God comes to us from the outside” (p48).*

How is this a comfort? What confidence does this truth of God bring? Exodus 20:24; Romans 5:1-5; 1 Peter 2:10

What does this say about our human endeavors of ‘reaching’ God? Romans 10:4-10

- *“The means of grace - the Word and Sacraments - are ...material things. Mundane acts such as going to church and living in a family and going to work are charged with spiritual significance” (p50).*

Are these things that we see? How do we know whether or not these ‘are charged with spiritual significance’? Faith—Romans 14:23; Galatians 3:22; Hebrews 11:6

Does it seem this way? Why or why not?

- *“In the sacrament of Holy Communion, all of Lutheran spirituality is crystalized: God acts, objectively, through matter, embodying the Gospel and promising the forgiveness of sins. And, more than that - or rather, making all of these efficacious - is the real presence of Jesus Christ. This is another astonishing claim, one which many Christians draw back from, but one that is at the pulsing heart of Lutheran evangelicalism” (p50).*

What is the significance of such a statement in our day and age in the midst of ‘spiritualism’ and ‘feeling’?

Take a close look at St. Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 & 11:23-26. What happens if the words that Paul ‘received from the Lord’ are not taken literally as they are given? See the comforting words of St. Luke 22:19-20. Who is the body and blood of Christ for?

How does one receive the blessings of the Lord such as are given in the Lord’s Supper?

- *“The Gospel of Christ converts us, but is also nourishes us. We need to keep receiving Christ over and over again. In the sacramental spirituality of Lutheranism, the Word and Sacraments are means of grace. They are tangible, material means used by God to convey the Gospel of Christ, who converts us, feeds us, and is actually present in His Church” (p53).*

How is a believer kept/sustained in the faith? By his/her own efforts or by another? Psalm 121:7-8; 1 Corinthians 1:7-9; Ephesians 1:3-14; Philippians 1:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

Will there ever be a time when God’s grace and forgiveness is not necessary? Explain. 1 John 1:8-10

AUGSBURG CONFESSION, X. THE HOLY SUPPER OF OUR LORD

¹ It is taught among us that the true body and blood of Christ are really present in the Supper of our Lord under the form of bread and wine and are there distributed and received. ² The contrary doctrine is therefore rejected.

SMALCALD ARTICLES, PART III, VI. THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

¹ We hold that the bread and the wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ and that these are given and received not only by godly but also by wicked Christians.

² We also hold that it is not to be administered in one form only. We need not resort to the specious learning of the sophists and the Council of Constance that as much is included under one form as under both. ³ Even if it were true that as much is included under one form as under both, yet administration in one form is not the whole order and institution as it was established and commanded by Christ. ⁴ Especially do we condemn and curse in God's name those who not only omit both forms but even go so far as autocratically to prohibit, condemn, and slander the use of both as heresy and thus set themselves against and over Christ, our Lord and God, etc.

⁵ As for transubstantiation, we have no regard for the subtle sophistry of those who teach that bread and wine surrender or lose their natural substance and retain only the appearance and shape of bread without any longer being real bread, for that bread is and remains there agrees better with the Scriptures, as St. Paul himself states, "The bread which we break" (1 Cor. 10:16), and again, "Let a man so eat of the bread" (1 Cor. 11:28).

LARGE CATECHISM, FIFTH PART: THE SACRAMENT OF THE ALTAR

⁸ Now, what is the Sacrament of the Altar? Answer: It is the true body and blood of the Lord Christ in and under the bread and wine which we Christians are commanded by Christ's word to eat and drink. ⁹ As we said of Baptism that it is not mere water, so we say here that the sacrament is bread and wine, but not mere bread or wine such as is served at the table. It is bread and wine comprehended in God's Word and connected with it.

¹⁰ It is the Word, I maintain, which distinguishes it from mere bread and wine and constitutes it a sacrament which is rightly called Christ's body and blood. It is said, "*Accedat verbum ad elementum et fit sacramentum,*" that is, "When the Word is joined to the external element, it becomes a sacrament." This saying of St. Augustine is so accurate and well put that it is doubtful if he has said anything better. The Word must make the element a sacrament; otherwise it remains a mere element. ¹¹ Now, this is not the word and ordinance of a prince or emperor, but of the divine Majesty at whose feet every knee should bow and confess that it is as he says and should accept it with all reverence, fear, and humility.

¹² With this Word you can strengthen your conscience and declare: "Let a hundred thousand devils, with all the fanatics, rush forward and say, 'How can bread and wine be Christ's body and blood?' Still I know that all the spirits and scholars put together have less wisdom than the divine Majesty has in his little finger. ¹³ Here we have Christ's word, 'Take, eat; this is my body.' 'Drink of it, all of you, this is the new covenant in my blood,' etc. Here we shall take our stand and see who dares to instruct Christ and alter what he has spoken. ¹⁴ It is true, indeed, that if you take the Word away from the elements or view them apart from the Word, you have nothing but ordinary bread and wine. But if the words remain, as is right and necessary, then in virtue of ^(tr-757) them they are truly the body and blood of Christ. For as we have it from the lips of Christ, so it is; he cannot lie or deceive."

Theology of the Cross: The Hiddenness of God

- *“God conceals Himself, often in things that we would least expect - a crucified criminal, a book, water, bread, wine, a gouty pastor, trials and suffering, human beings working and raising their families. The hiddenness of God is one of the most profound themes in Lutheran spirituality. It is part of what is termed ‘the theology of the cross,’ which might be better thought of as the spirituality of the cross. It has to do with Christ’s work, His presence, and how we draw closer to Him. The theology of the cross also deals with the difficulties and hardships that Christians must live through in an utterly realistic and honest way” (p56).*

For Scriptural support of the ‘hiddenness of God’, see: 1 Corinthians 1:18-29; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Luke 1:11-18, 26-34; John 3:3-8; 6:25-29, 30-33, 35-42, 47-53, 60-63; 10:31-38; Romans 4:13-25; Hebrews 11 (List is by no means exhaustive)

How is the ‘theology of the cross’ a great comfort? What might it have to say about the church today (i.e. regarding congregational membership, worship practices, God’s work among His people, God’s work in the world, etc.)?

The Theology of the Cross VS. The Theology of Glory

- *“Their (Christian bookstores) shelves are stocked with ways of using God for one’s own health, happiness, and prosperity. There are Christian diet books, titles on the ‘Management Techniques of Jesus Christ,’ and analyses of Christ as the master salesman. Other books deal with more serious concerns, offering solutions for child-raising problems and improving society. Their covers make vast and excited claims, as if by following certain steps family problems will disappear, our bodies will do what we want, our financial problems will evaporate, we will solve our nation’s problems, grow the church, and live happily ever after...The ideal of the ‘victorious Christian life proves impossible to attain, though we have to suppress our failures, keep trying harder, and present a more positive front to the world...Luther call this kind of self-aggrandizing, success-centered, power spirituality ‘the theology of glory’ (p57-58).*

What is ‘the theology of glory’? How is it prevalent today, not only in Christian bookstores, but among Christians and in Christian churches?

What does ‘the theology of glory’ have to say about contentment in the Lord, or does it? Proverbs 30:7-9; Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:11-13, 19; 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5-6

- *“Coming to faith ...involves being broken by the Law, coming to grips with our moral failure. Legalistic religions, in which one saves oneself by one’s own efforts, are very specifically theologies of glory, optimistically assuming success and glorifying the powers of the successful, virtuous person. But when we realize just how lost we are, then we cling to the cross, trusting Christ to do for us what we cannot do for ourselves. This is saving faith, the theology of the cross” (p60).*

What amount of Savior do we need? What amount of Savior do we have?

From Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518
Luther's Works, Vol 31

20

He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross.

The “back” and visible things of God are placed in opposition to the invisible, namely, his human nature, weakness, foolishness. The Apostle in I Cor. 1[:25] calls them the weakness and folly of God. Because men misused the knowledge of God through works, God wished again to be recognized in suffering, and to condemn wisdom concerning invisible things by means of wisdom concerning visible things, so that those who did not honor God as manifested in his works should honor him as he is hidden in his suffering. As the Apostle says in I Cor. 1[:21], “For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe.” Now it is not sufficient for anyone, and it does him no good to recognize God in his glory and majesty, unless he recognizes him in the humility and shame of the cross. Thus God destroys the wisdom of the wise, as Isa. [45:15] says, “Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself.”

So, also, in John 14[:8], where Philip spoke according to the theology of glory: “Show us the Father.” Christ forthwith set aside his flighty thought about seeking God elsewhere and led him to himself, saying, “Philip, he who has seen me has seen the Father” [John 14:9]. For this reason true theology and recognition of God are in the crucified Christ, as it is also stated in John 10 [John 14:6]: “No one comes to the Father, but by me.” “I am the door” [John 10:9], and so forth.

21

A theologian of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls the thing what it actually is.

This is clear: He who does not know Christ does not know God hidden in suffering. Therefore he prefers works to suffering, glow to the cross, strength to weakness, wisdom to folly, and, in general, good to evil. These are the people whom the apostle calls “enemies of the cross of Christ” [Phil. 3:18], for they hate the cross and suffering and love works and the glory of works. Thus they call the good of the cross evil and the evil of a deed good. God can be found only in suffering and the cross, as has already been said. Therefore the friends of the cross say that the cross is good and works are evil, for through the cross works are destroyed and the old Adam, who is especially edified by works, is crucified. It is impossible for a person not to be puffed up by his good works unless he has first been deflated and destroyed by suffering and evil until he knows that he is worthless and that his works are not his but God's.

24

Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner.

Indeed the law is holy [Rom. 7:12], every gift of God good [I Tim. 4:4], and everything that is created exceedingly good, as in Gen. 1[:31]. But, as stated above, he who has not been brought low, reduced to nothing through the cross and suffering, takes credit for works and wisdom and does not give credit to God. He thus misuses and defiles the gifts of God.

He, however, who has been emptied [Cf. Phil. 2:7] through suffering no longer does works but knows that God works and does all things in him. For this reason, whether man does works or not, it is all the same to him. He neither boasts if he does good works, nor is he disturbed if God does not do good works through him. He knows that it is sufficient if he suffers and is brought low by the cross in order to be annihilated all the more. It is this that Christ says in John 3[:7], “You must be born anew.” To be born anew, one must consequently first die and then be raised up with the Son of Man. To die, I say, means to feel death at hand.

Bearing the Cross

- *“Being helpless and utterly dependent is precisely our spiritual condition. We are utterly helpless to save ourselves. We are utterly dependent on God. Saving faith involves giving up on our pretensions of being self-sufficient, strong, and in control. Instead, we are to rest in utter dependence on Jesus Christ. ‘My grace is sufficient for you,’ the Lord told St. Paul, ‘for my power is made perfect in weakness’ (2 Corinthians 12:9)” (p62).*
- *“The attitude of complete self-sufficiency cannot only undermine faith, it can wreck God’s design for human relationships. Just as such complacency is shattered by the Law, in everyday life such complacency is shattered by bearing the cross - that is, by failure, frustration, disappointment, difficulties, struggles, and suffering. Both the Law and the cross drive us to an ever-deeper and more-intimate dependence on Jesus Christ, who meets our sins and our sufferings in His cross” (p63).*

The Hidden Life

- *“...the theology of the cross...by no means advocates suffering as a means of spiritual enlightenment” (p63).*
- *“Our cross is never self-chosen, never self-imposed...Bearing one’s cross has to do precisely with the suffering that we do not choose for ourselves, the trials and difficulties that are imposed on us from the outside, that we have no control over whatsoever” (p64). [See Gustaf Wingren, Luther on Vocation, Evansville, IN: Ballast Press, 1994, 52-53]*
- *“The most severe trial...comes upon a person when he believes he has been forsaken and rejected by God. Such a trial comes only to the ‘greatest of saints’” (p65). [Quoted from, Walther von Loewenich, Luther’s Theology of the Cross, Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1982, 136]*
- *“To believe in God’s Word and promise, despite one’s feelings, is faith. This is why all trials, both major and small, are occasions for the exercise of faith. ‘We live by faith, and not by sight’ (2 Corinthians 5:7)” (p65).*
- *“The relationship between the human being and God is wholly a matter of faith, not human works, and a large part of sanctification is growing in faith. This comes, again, by trial and the cross, in which the struggles of life force us to grow in our dependence on God and thus cause us to grow in our faith. Good works...are a spontaneous result of faith. Those who need to do more good works need more faith, a deeper apprehension of the Gospel, in order to produce them” (p66-67).*
- *“God’s Spirit is at work in the lives of every Christian, mysteriously changing the heart, acting with Word and Sacrament, ministering in trials and tribulations, creating someone who will stand before God in heaven as holy. by this process cannot be evident to the naked eye, nor can it be measured and tracked, nor is the Christian himself necessarily conscious of how far he has come” (p68).*
- *“It is common today to question whether churchgoers are ‘really Christians’ and to dismiss ‘dead churches’ because we expect spiritual dynamos. To be sure, church rolls may include nonbelievers, there are churches that no longer preach the Gospel and so are dead (despite their high membership totals), and there are spiritual giants that put the rest of us to shame. Nevertheless, to paraphrase C. S. Lewis, the average man or woman in the pew may, to God, be a blessed saint before whom, if we only knew, we would have the impulse to bow down. We just cannot judge by appearances” (p68-69).*

From Luther's Heidelberg Disputation, 1518
Luther's Works, Vol 31

25

He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ.

For the righteousness of God is not acquired by means of acts frequently repeated, as Aristotle taught, but it is imparted by faith, for “He who through faith is righteous shall live” (Rom. 1[:17]), and “Man believes with his heart and so is justified” (Rom. 10[:10]). Therefore I wish to have the words “without work” understood in the following manner: Not that the righteous person does nothing, but that his works do not make him righteous, rather that his righteousness creates works. For grace and faith are infused without our works. After they have been imparted the works follow. Thus Rom. 3[:20] states, “No human being will be justified in His sight by works of the law,” and, “For we hold that man is justified by faith apart from works of law” (Rom. 3[:28]). In other words, works contribute nothing to justification. Therefore man knows that works which he does by such faith are not his but God's. For this reason he does not seek to become justified or glorified through them, but seeks God. His justification by faith in Christ is sufficient to him. Christ is his wisdom, righteousness, etc., as I Cor. 1[:30] has it, that he himself may be Christ's action and instrument.

26

The law says, “do this,” and it is never done. Grace says, “believe in this,” and everything is already done.

The first part is clear from what has been stated by the Apostle and his interpreter, St. Augustine, in many places. And it has been stated often enough above that the law works wrath and keeps all men under the curse. The second part is clear from the same sources, for faith justifies. “And the law (says St. Augustine) commands what faith obtains.” For through faith Christ is in us, indeed, one with us. Christ is just and has fulfilled all the commands of God, wherefore we also fulfil everything through him since he was made ours through faith.

Vocation: The Spirituality of Ordinary Life

- *“There is another place where God is hidden: in everyday life. The ordinary routine of making a living, going shopping, being a good citizen, and spending time with one’s family, are spheres in which God is at work, through human means. Luther described the various occupations - parenthood, farming, laborers, soldiers, judges, retailers, and the like - as all being “masks of God” (p71).*

How is God ‘at work’ in the ‘ordinary’ routine of life? How is this insight beneficial and helpful to know and understand? How might it be a comfort?

- *“In the doctrine of vocation, spirituality is brought down to earth to transfigure our practical, everyday life” (p72).*
- *“To be sure, -this- conflating of our very selves with our work can be a perverse confusion. We can use our work as a pretext for neglecting what are perhaps more important offices we also hold, such as “I am a spouse” or “I am a parent” or “I am a citizen.” Those who do not get paid for what they do, but who nevertheless do priceless work - such as housewives and full-time parents - are made to feel out of synch, as are retired people” (p72).*

How might identifying ourselves with our work be harmful & with respect to our other callings in life? Could identifying oneself as a Christian be harmful to our other callings? Why or why not? How or how not? How do we properly distinguish between the spiritual and the earthly with reference to how we live?

Masks of God

- *“God governs and is intimately involved in everything that He has made, that is, everything that exists. This sovereignty includes the laws of physics and the motions of galaxies, the affairs of nations and the fall of a sparrow (Matthew 10:29), and His providence extends over nonbelievers no less than believers” (p73).*
- *“Lutheran theology speaks of two kingdoms, that God rules both the spiritual and the earthly realm, though in different ways”... “In the spiritual realm, He works, as we have seen, through Word and the Sacraments. In the earthly realm, He rules through vocation” “...in His earthly kingdom, just as in His spiritual kingdom, God bestows His gifts through means. God ordained that human beings be bound together in love, in relationships and communities existing in a state of inter-dependence. In this context, God is providentially at work caring for His people, each of whom contributes according to his or her God-given talents, gifts, opportunities, and stations. Each thereby becomes what Luther terms a ‘mask of God’” (p73, 74).*
- *“...God is graciously at work, caring for the human race through the work of other human beings. Behind the care we have received from our parents, the education we received from our teachers, the benefits we receive from our spouse, our employers, and our government lurks God Himself, bestowing His blessings” (p75).*
- *“...our proper human condition, once again, is dependence. Because of the centrality of love, we to depend on other human beings and, ultimately and through them, on God. Conversely (and eliminating the welfare system), other people are to depend on us. We are to work for the good of other people. In God’s earthly kingdom, we are to receive His blessings from other people in their vocations, and they, in turn, are to be blessed through us” (p76).*

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION, XXVII. MONASTIC VOWS

⁴⁹ Besides, the commands of God and true and proper service of God are obscured when people are told that monks alone are in a state of perfection. For this is Christian perfection: that we fear God honestly with our whole hearts, and yet have sincere confidence, faith, and trust that for Christ's sake we have a gracious, merciful God; that we may and should ask and pray God for those things of which we have need, and confidently expect help from him in every affliction connected with our particular calling and station in life; and that meanwhile we do good works for others and diligently attend to our calling. ⁵⁰ True perfection and right service of God consist of these things and not of mendicancy or wearing a black or gray cowl, etc. ⁵¹ However, the common people, hearing the state of celibacy praised above all measure, draw many harmful conclusions from such false exaltation of monastic life, ⁵² for it follows that their consciences are troubled because they are married. ⁵³ When the common man hears that only mendicants are perfect, he is uncertain whether he can keep his possessions and engage in business without sin. ⁵⁴ When the people hear that it is only a counsel⁷ not to take revenge, it is natural that some should conclude that it is not sinful to take revenge outside of the exercise of their office. ⁵⁵ Still others think that it is not right at all for Christians, even in the government, to avenge wrong.

⁵⁶ Many instances are also recorded of men who forsook wife and child, and also their civil office, to take shelter in a monastery. ⁵⁷ This, they said, is fleeing from the world and seeking a life more pleasing to God than the other. They were unable to understand that one is to serve God by observing the commands God has given and not by keeping the commands invented by men. ⁵⁸ That is a good and perfect state of life which has God's command to support it; on the other hand, that is a dangerous state of life which does not have God's command behind it. ⁵⁹ About such matters it was necessary to give the people proper instruction.

Vocation: The Spirituality of Ordinary Life

Having a Calling

- *“The purpose of one’s vocation, whatever it might be, is serving others. It has to do with fulfilling Christ’s injunction to love one’s neighbor. Though justification has nothing to do with good works, vocation does involve good works. The Christian’s relationship to God is based on sheer grace and forgiveness on God’s part; the Christians relationship to other people, however, is to be based on love put into action. As Wingren puts it, ‘God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does.’” (p77)*

Read Ephesians 2:8-10. Which of these verses applies to ‘justification’? To vocation? What is the distinction?

Consider Wingren’s quote, “God does not need our good works, but our neighbor does.” How is this contrary to our human nature? Why doesn’t God need ‘our’ good works? Why do our neighbors? Can we do anything to ‘add to’ or ‘take away from God’? Why or why not?

- *“If you find yourself in a work by which you accomplish something good for God, or the holy, or yourself, but not for your neighbor alone, then you should know that that work is not a good work. For each one ought to live, speak, act, hear, suffer, and die in love and service for another, even for one’s enemies, a husband for his wife and children, a wife for her husband, children for their parents, servants for their masters, masters for their servants, rulers for their subjects and subjects for their rulers, so that one’s hand, mouth, eye, foot, heart and desire is for others; these are Christian works, good in nature.” (p78, quote from Luther)*

How do you think Luther is defining ‘good work’ here? How are these words contrary to the way of the world and even today’s Christendom?

Acting In, and Out of, Vocation

- *“Different vocations have their own kinds of authority and spheres of action, and they operate under different rules. It would be the grossest immorality for someone to make perfect strangers take off their clothes and then cut them open with a knife. But this is permissible for someone who is carrying out the vocation of being a doctor. Having sex is immoral outside of marriage, but it is a great good within the vocation of marriage.” (81)*

What are some other examples of vocations which differ from others? How, or why, is it important to keep distinctions between them?

- *“Those who sin in their vocations, who violate God’s intentions for that vocation and who fail the tests of selfless service and love of neighbor, are answerable to correction and the wrath of God...God really does exercise authority through human beings acting in vocation.” (83)*

How is this a warning, and also a comfort?

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION, VI. [THE NEW OBEDIENCE]

¹ It is also taught among us that such faith should produce good fruits and good works and that we must do all such good works as God has commanded,⁶ but we should do them for God's sake and not place our trust in them as if thereby to merit favor before God. ² For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ, as ^(tr-47) Christ himself says, "So you also, when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants'" (Luke 17:10). ³ The Fathers also teach thus, for Ambrose says, "It is ordained of God that whoever believes in Christ shall be saved, and he shall have forgiveness of sins, not through works but through faith alone, without merit."⁷

LARGE CATECHISM, CONCLUSION OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS

³¹¹ Here, then, we have the Ten Commandments, a summary of divine teaching on what we are to do to make our whole life pleasing to God. They are the true fountain from which all good works must ^(tr-671) spring, the true channel through which all good works must flow. Apart from these Ten Commandments no deed, no conduct can be good or pleasing to God, no matter how great or precious it may be in the eyes of the world.

³¹² Let us see, now, how our great saints can boast of their spiritual orders and the great, difficult works which they have fashioned while they neglect these commandments as if they were too insignificant or had been fulfilled long ago.

³¹³ It seems to me that we shall have our hands full to keep these commandments, practicing gentleness, patience, love toward enemies, chastity, kindness, etc., and all that these virtues involve. But such works are not important or impressive in the eyes of the world. They are not unusual and pompous, restricted to special times, places, rites, and ceremonies, but are common, everyday domestic duties of one neighbor toward another, with no show about them. ³¹⁴ On the other hand, those other works captivate all eyes and ears. Aided by great pomp, splendor, and magnificent buildings, they are so adorned that everything gleams and glitters. There is burning of incense, singing and ringing of bells, lighting of tapers and candles until nothing else can be seen or heard. For when a priest stands in a gold-embroidered chasuble² or a layman remains on his knees a whole day in church, this is considered a precious work that cannot be sufficiently extolled. But when a poor girl tends a little child, or faithfully does what she is told, that is regarded as nothing. Otherwise, why should monks and nuns go into cloisters?

³¹⁵ Just think, is it not a devilish presumption on the part of those desperate saints to dare to find a higher and better way of life than the Ten Commandments teach? They pretend, as we have said, that this is a simple life for the ordinary man, whereas theirs is for the saints and the perfect. ³¹⁶ They fail to see, these miserable, blind people, that no man can achieve so much as to keep one of the Ten Commandments as it ought to be kept. Both the Creed and the Lord's Prayer must help us, as we shall hear. Through them we must seek and pray for help and receive it continually. Therefore all their boasting amounts to as much as if I boasted, "Of course, I haven't a single groschen to pay, but I promise to pay ten gulden."³

^(tr-673) ³¹⁷ All this I say and repeat in order that men may get rid of the pernicious abuse which has become so deeply rooted and still clings to every man, and that all classes of men on earth may accustom themselves to look only to these precepts and heed them. It will be a long time before men produce a doctrine or social order equal to that of the Ten Commandments, for they are beyond human power to fulfill. Anyone who does fulfill them is a heavenly, angelic man, far above all holiness on earth. ³¹⁸ Just concentrate upon them and test yourself thoroughly, do your very best, and you will surely find so much to do that you will neither seek nor pay attention to any other works or other kind of holiness.

Vocation: The Spirituality of Ordinary Life

The Pastoral Vocation

- *“The office of the pastor... is a special vocation, not merely in God’s earthly kingdom but in His spiritual kingdom. Certainly before God, the pastoral vocation is no more meritorious than that of a farmer, the factory worker, or any other secular vocation. Lutheran evangelicals...were the first to promote” the notion of ‘the priesthood of all believers’ [or rather, ‘The Royal Priesthood’], that all Christians can have a personal access to God through Christ. And yet, Lutheranism has always had a high view of the pastoral office.” (84)*

Comment on the above. How is the office of pastor not ‘more meritorious’ than that of others?
Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 3:8-11; 2 Timothy 3:15

- *“Non-Lutherans are often shocked at the notion that the pastor forgives sin, but his ability to do so is simply the proclamation of the Gospel, his ability to ‘announce the grace of God.’ His is forgiving sin not by his own powers but in the name of Christ.” (84)*

From where does the pastor receive the authority to forgive sins, ‘In the stead and by the command of Christ’? Matthew 16:19; John 20:22-23; See also Luke 10:16; John 8:47). How does the pastor receive this authority?

- *“It is God who baptizes, through the hands of the pastor. It is Christ who presides over His supper, as the pastor distributes the bread and the wine. It is God’s Word that rings out in the pastor’s sermon. Lutheran pastors wear robes and vestments and collars to symbolize that this human being—no different in himself from his parishioners—is clothed in an office, in which he must act in the stead and by the command of Christ.” (85)*

In writing what Veith does, he is speaking contrary to what the eyes see and what experience tells us. How does one know whether these things are so? John 7:24; 2 Galatians 2:20; Corinthians 5:7. On what basis is this founded? See 2 Peter 1:16-21

- *“God’s Word extends into the world through vocation. But laypeople—and their pastors—must remember that they do not have to be doing ‘church work’ in order to be working for God. It is easy to spend every night at a church meeting, ‘doing the Lord’s work,’ but the doctrine of vocation teaches that spending time with your spouse and children and fulfilling the demands of your job are also ways of working for God—or rather, of God working through you.” (86)*

How do these words of Veith seem to be contrary to what is commonly understood as ‘Christianity’ today? How does a right understanding of vocation give the proper perspective on the Christian life? Is Christianity only about a spiritual life (at the expense of serving our neighbors in their earthly needs), or is it also a life lived in the world for serving one’s neighbor, not only with the Gospel, but also with the physical needs of the body? See Matthew 22:37-39; James 2.

How can the doctrine of vocation be a comfort with reference to conscience? 1 Corinthians 7:20, 24; Galatians 6:4-5

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

IV. [JUSTIFICATION]

¹ It is also taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, ² when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. ³ For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.

V. [THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY]

¹ To obtain such faith God instituted the office of the ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the sacraments. ² Through these, as through means, he gives the Holy Spirit, who works faith, when and where he pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. ³ And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.

⁴ Condemned are the Anabaptists and others⁵ who teach that the Holy Spirit comes to us through our own preparations, thoughts, and works without the external word of the Gospel.

XXVIII. THE POWER OF BISHOPS

⁵ Our teachers assert that according to the Gospel the power of keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments. ⁶ For Christ sent out the apostles with this command, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:21-23).

⁸ This power of keys or of bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the sacraments (to many persons or to individuals, depending on one's calling). In this way are imparted no bodily but eternal things and gifts, namely, eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. ⁹ These gifts cannot be obtained except through the office of preaching and of administering the holy sacraments, for St. Paul says, "The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith."² ¹⁰ Inasmuch as the power of the church or of bishops bestows eternal gifts and is used and exercised only through the office of preaching, it does not interfere at all with government or temporal authority. ¹¹ Temporal authority is concerned with matters altogether different from the Gospel. Temporal power does not protect the soul, but with the sword and physical penalties it protects body and goods from the power of others.

Vocation: The Spirituality of Ordinary Life

Bearing the Cross in Vocation

- *“For all of the exalted spiritual significance in everyday life posited by the doctrine of vocation—how God is present and active in our work and our relationships—it is evident that we often fail, suffer, and experience frustrations in our vocations...The theology of the cross applies in particular to vocation.” (86)*

Reflect on Romans 13:8-10 and James 2:8-13. Where does the ‘keeping of the Law’ take place? How might our sin be considered ‘a cross’? Matthew 16:24-26. How does the ‘Theology of the Cross’ apply to vocation?

- *“Since God is at work in vocation, observes Wingren, the devil seeks to thwart vocation. One way is to turn it away from sacrificial service of neighbor to a ‘theology of glory,’ to self-aggrandizement, prided in good works, and the achievement of a spiritually vacuous success... Another ploy of the devil is to pry the person out of his or her calling...Thus, there may be the temptation to quit: to get a divorce, to leave one’s children, to quit the job, to give up writing or making music or whatever talents one has.” (87)*

Does Satan tempt everyone in their particular vocation the same? Why or why not? Why do we think that ‘the grass is greener on the other side’? Is it? How are we to resist such temptations? 1 Corinthians 10:11-14; James 4:6-10

- *“Bearing the cross in vocation often involves the sense that one’s vocation is worthless or futile.” (87)*

Does our ‘sense’ or ‘feeling’ truly determine how a thing is? How about the ‘consequence’ or ‘result’? Why or why not? What does determine how a thing really is? John 7:24; Genesis 1; Galatians 1:10

- *“The sense of lowliness in vocation can be resisted out of pride, or it can become humility, Our inability to succeed in our own work can bring us to a deeper faith in the God behind the mask.” (87)*

From where does true ‘success’ come? Psalm 1; Galatians 6:9-10; 2 Thessalonians 3:13. How is this a comfort within vocation?

- *“Without faith, vocations are mere employments, mere things to do, empty of God and empty of meaning. Faith sees them as masks of God. Without faith, suffering is empty and purposeless, an example of the absurdity and meaninglessness of life. With faith, suffering in vocation becomes a cross, comprehended in the saving cross of Jesus Christ.” (88)*

Reflect and discuss 1 Peter 2:18-25; 3:13-17; 4:15-19

LUTHER¹

I can speak differently about my vocation and my activities from the way a heathen, a Turk, or an unbelieving saint can speak; for I am not only a prince or the head of a household, a man or a woman, who administers an office or vocation as the others also do; but I am also baptized and washed with the blood of Christ. This has nothing to do with my station or calling in life. For Baptism does not make me a prince, a subject, a husband, or anyone else; but it does make me a Christian. Furthermore, I also have the Word, which tells me that Christ died and rose again for me. This same Word makes no one a priest, a monk, a master, a servant, etc.; but it does create a heart that receives God's grace and is cleansed by faith. This is what it means to be and remain in Christ. Then they may preach to me what they please; I adhere to the fact that I am baptized, not to my life and my vocation but to the Man called Jesus Christ. Through Him I am in grace and have forgiveness of sins. Similarly, when I hear the Gospel, I hear nothing about myself or about my works that could justify me before God; I hear about Christ, who has been given to me by the Father for my redemption from sins and eternal wrath. Thus through the Word and Baptism you have a reliable testimony and a confirmation. You need no longer doubt and waver, but you can and should have the conviction that you have a gracious God and Father in Christ.

Wherever there is such faith and assurance of grace in Christ, you can also confidently conclude with regard to your vocation and works that these are pleasing to God and are true and good Christian fruits. Furthermore, such temporal and physical works as governing a land and people, managing a house, rearing and teaching children, serving, toiling, etc., also develop into fruit that endures unto life everlasting. Thus the holy patriarch Abraham and our holy ancestress¹⁹ Sarah will be commended and praised on Judgment Day for their marital life. Although the married estate will come to an end and be no more, as will all the life and activity of this world, yet this holy Sarah, and others with her, will receive their little crowns because they were pious spouses and mothers, not by reason of their works per se—for these had to cease—but because they did these works in faith. In like manner, the works of all Christians are performed to God's everlasting pleasure; they will not be despised, as will those of non-Christians, but will have their eternal reward also in yonder life, because they are works done in Christ and grow from the Vine.

From this you can see that it is intolerable to declare in Christendom that we cannot and must not know whether God is gracious to us. He who wants to be a Christian pastor or a believing Christian must teach and profess the opposite and say: "I know that I have a gracious God and that my life is pleasing to Him." After all, I know whether I believe in Christ, that is, whether I adhere to His Word, which is preached to me, whether I remain true to my Baptism or fall away from it, etc. And if I do believe, then it must be certain and true that God is my gracious Father. Over and above this, I have the pledge and seal of Baptism and the Blessed Sacrament, given to me by Christ.

And if I thus remain in Christ, then it is certain that for His sake my vocation, my life, and my works are also acceptable to God and are precious fruits in His sight. And though I myself am still weak in the faith, and though many frailties and sinful lusts still dwell within me and always manifest themselves, this will not be reckoned against me but will be forgiven, provided I do not yield to them, give them free rein, or let myself be torn from faith and from the Vine. For as long as the branch is rooted in the stem or the stock and retains its sap and strength, its fruit must also be and remain good, although here and there it may be punctured by worms or infested with caterpillars and other vermin. Likewise, as long as man remains in Christ and receives and retains sap and strength from Him through faith—Christ works in him with His power and the gifts of the Holy Spirit—the weakness still inherent in him and incited by the devil and his evil nature cannot harm him. But man must constantly resist and combat this with the weapons of faith. He must remove such vermin. But if you surrender or pervert the doctrine of faith, as the papists and other sects do, and transfer your trust from Christ to your own holiness or live in open sin and shame and yet boast of the Gospel and the Christian name, you are to know that you are a false branch and no part of the Vine but are condemned and rejected together with the wood and the fruit and belong in the eternal fire.

¹Martin Luther, vol. 24, *Luther's Works, Vol. 24 : Sermons on the Gospel of St. John: Chapters 14-16*, ed. Jaroslav Jan Pelikan, Hilton C. Oswald and Helmut T. Lehmann, Luther's Works (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999, c1961).

Living in Two Kingdoms: The Sacred and the Secular

- *“As with its other great paradoxes—sin and grace, Law and Gospel, Christ as true God and true man, the Sacrament as mere bread and wine and as the body and blood of Christ—Lutheranism insists that the Christian is a citizen of two different kingdoms at once.” (91)*

How is the ‘two kingdoms’ teaching a paradox?²

- *“The notion that God has both a spiritual rule and earthly rule, each of which He rules in different, though related ways, frees Christians to be engaged in the secular realm, without being swept away by secularism. The doctrine of the two kingdoms gives a blueprint for Christian activism, while safeguarding against the illusions of political—or theological—utopianism. It transfigures the Christian’s life in the world, while safeguarding against worldliness. At one and the same time, the Christian lives in the world through vocation and lives in heaven through faith.” (92)*

How does the ‘two kingdom’ teaching free ‘Christians to be engaged in the secular realm without being swept away by secularism’?

How does the ‘two kingdoms’ teaching serve as blueprint for Christian activism, while safeguarding against worldliness?’ (i.e. consider the various approaches used by pro-life groups)

Christianity and Culture

Reflect on and discuss the following three ‘solutions’ given by some to the conflict between Christianity and Culture: ¹ *Change Christianity*, ² *Change the world*, ³ *Withdraw* (92-96). How are these in agreement with and/or contrary to the Christian faith? See John 17:14-18. How do these words of our Lord help us understand the Christian’s relationship to this world?

Citizens of Two Kingdoms

- *“In Niebuhr’s rehearsal of the various stances Christians have taken to the problem, he describes the Lutheran position as ‘Christ and culture in paradox.’ Lutherans call it the doctrine of the two kingdoms. According to this view, God does rule the culture, and God does rule the church. But He rules them in two different ways.” (97)*

How does God rule the culture *and* the church? Does this appear to be true? How or how not?

- *“Christians are citizens of both kingdoms. They are thus to be active members of their cultures, called in vocation to serve their neighbors through moral action. They are also members of Christ’s church, justified entirely by faith. In the spiritual kingdom, they are passive recipients of God’s grace. In the earthly kingdom, they are active for God in the tasks of their vocation. Christians must function in both realms at once, so that they are ‘in, but not of’ the world.” (98)*

² Paradox: “A statement that appears to contradict itself or be contrary to common sense, but which may be true.” (*The All Nations English Dictionary*, 1992).

THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION

XVI. CIVIL GOVERNMENT

¹ It is taught among us that all government in the world and all established rule and laws were instituted and ordained by God for the sake of good order, ² and that Christians may without sin occupy civil offices or serve as princes and judges, render decisions and pass sentence according to imperial and other existing laws, punish evildoers with the sword, engage in just wars, serve as soldiers, buy and sell, take required oaths, possess property, be married, etc.

³ Condemned here are the Anabaptists who teach that none of the things indicated above is Christian.⁸

⁴ Also condemned are those who teach that Christian perfection requires the forsaking of house and home, wife and child, and the renunciation of such activities as are mentioned above.⁹ Actually, true perfection consists alone of proper fear of God and real faith in God, for the Gospel does not teach an outward and temporal but an inward and eternal mode of existence and righteousness of the heart. ⁵ The Gospel does not overthrow civil authority, the state, and marriage but requires that all these be kept as true orders of God¹ and that everyone, each according to his own calling, manifest Christian love and genuine good works in his station of life. ⁶ Accordingly Christians are obliged to be subject to civil authority and obey its commands and laws in all that can be done without sin. ⁷ But when commands of the civil authority cannot be obeyed without sin, we must obey God rather than men (Acts 5:29).

XXVIII. THE POWER OF BISHOPS

⁵ Our teachers assert that according to the Gospel the power of keys or the power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel, to forgive and retain sins, and to administer and distribute the sacraments. ⁶ For Christ sent out the apostles with this command, "As the Father has sent me, even so I send you. Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (John 20:21-23).

⁸ This power of keys or of bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching the Word of God and by administering the sacraments (to many persons or to individuals, depending on one's calling). In this way are imparted no bodily but eternal things and gifts, namely, eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life. ⁹ These gifts cannot be obtained except through the office of preaching and of administering the holy sacraments, for St. Paul says, "The gospel is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith."² ¹⁰ Inasmuch as the power of the church or of bishops bestows eternal gifts and is used and exercised only through the office of preaching, it does not interfere at all with government or temporal authority. ¹¹ Temporal authority is concerned with matters altogether different from the Gospel. Temporal power does not protect the soul, but with the sword and physical penalties it protects body and goods from the power of others.

¹² Therefore, the two authorities, the spiritual and the temporal, are not to be mingled or confused, for the spiritual power has its commission to preach the Gospel and administer the sacraments. ¹³ Hence it should not invade the function of the other, should not set up and depose kings, should not annul temporal laws or undermine obedience to government, should not make or prescribe to the temporal power laws concerning worldly matters. ¹⁴ Christ himself said, "My kingship is not of this world,"³ and again, ¹⁵ "Who made me a judge or divider over you?"⁴ ¹⁶ Paul also wrote in Phil. 3:20, "Our commonwealth is in heaven," ¹⁷ and in 2 Cor. 10:4, 5, "The weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God."

Living in Two Kingdoms: The Sacred and the Secular

Implications of the Two Kingdoms

- *“A Lutheran perspective on politics will be profoundly realistic. It will be very skeptical towards all utopian schemes. No humanly-devised system or institution will be perfect...At the same time, the doctrine of vocation in God’s earthly kingdom validates social, culture, and political activism. Christian citizens may be under no illusion that they will be able to create heaven on earth through their activism, but they still uphold and apply God’s moral demands.” (99-100)*
- *“According to Lutheranism, morality is the main business not of the church at all, but of the earthly kingdom.” (100)*
- *While the doctrine of the two kingdoms allows for activism and engagement in the culture, at the same time, it keeps the church separate and distinct from the world. The church is not to imitate the culture or follow all of its agendas. The church’s priority is to proclaim the Gospel, not enforce the Law. Christians are free to participate in their cultures, but not uncritically, recognizing sin and maintaining a certain degree of detachment from the transience of the world.” (100)*

Confusing the Two Kingdoms

Discuss the following problems that come when the two kingdoms are confused with each other—“when the church functions like the culture, or the culture functions like the church.” (101-103) How are they a confusion of the two kingdoms?

1. Trying to ‘impose’ one’s religious beliefs on others—when the church uses force (101)
2. When the earthly kingdom tries to ape the workings of the spiritual kingdom (can you give examples?) (102)
3. When earthly authorities presume to grant spiritual benefits (i.e. projects claiming to solve human problems) (102)

Everyday Spirituality

- *“Vocation is the concrete form of the Law, and the church is the concrete form of the Gospel.” (104)*
- *“We often expect a highly spiritual life to include mystical reveries, superhuman virtue, or the possession of a supernatural power that overcomes all obstacles. Actually, the spiritual life turns out to be somewhat ordinary—on the surface. It involves the universal experiences of forming relationships, marrying and rearing children, struggling with problems, working. The doctrine of the two kingdoms teaches that God is hidden in ordinary, everyday life.” (105)*

APOLOGY, XVIII. ECCLESIASTICAL POWER

⁷ In the church we must keep this teaching, that we receive forgiveness of sins freely for Christ's sake by faith. We must also keep the teaching that human traditions are useless acts of worship, and that therefore neither sin nor righteousness depends upon food, drink, clothing, and similar matters. Christ wanted to leave their use free when he said (Matt. 15:11), "What goes into the mouth does not defile a man." And Paul says (Rom. 14:17), "The kingdom of God is not food or drink."⁸ Thus bishops have no right to create traditions apart from the Gospel as though they merited the forgiveness of sins or were acts of worship that pleased God as righteousness. Nor do the bishops have the right to burden consciences with such traditions so that it would be a sin to omit them. All this is taught by that one passage in Acts (15:9), where the apostles say that hearts are cleansed by faith and then go on to forbid the imposing of a yoke, showing how dangerous this is and enlarging on the sin of those who burden the church. "Why do you make a trial of God?" they say (Acts 15:10). But this thunderbolt does not scare our opponents, who vigorously defend their traditions and wicked notions.

¹¹ The Gospel clearly testifies that traditions should not be imposed on the church to merit forgiveness of sins or to be acts of worship that please God as righteousness or to burden consciences so that their omission is judged to be a sin. Therefore our opponents will never be able to show that bishops have the power to institute such acts of worship.

¹² In the Confession we have said what power the Gospel grants to bishops. Those who are now bishops do not perform the duties of bishops according to the Gospel, though they may well be bishops according to canonical polity, to which we do not object. But we are talking about a bishop according to the Gospel.¹³ We like the old division of power into the power of the order and the power of jurisdiction.⁵ Therefore a bishop has the power of the order, namely, the ministry of Word and sacraments. He also has the power of jurisdiction, namely, the authority to excommunicate those who are guilty of public offenses or to absolve them if they are converted and ask for absolution.¹⁴ A bishop does not have the power of a tyrant to act without a definite law, nor that of a king to act above the law. But he has a definite command, a definite Word of God, which he ought to teach and according to which he ought to exercise his jurisdiction. Therefore it does not follow that since they have a certain jurisdiction bishops may institute new acts of worship, for worship does not belong to their jurisdiction. They have the Word, they have the command about when they should exercise their jurisdiction, namely, when anyone does something contrary to that Word which they have received from Christ.

¹⁵ In the Confession we nevertheless added the extent to which it is legitimate for them to create traditions, namely, that they must not be necessary acts of worship but a means of preserving order in the church, for the sake of peace. These must not ensnare consciences as though they were commanding necessary acts of worship. This is what Paul teaches when he says (Gal. 5:1), "Stand fast in the freedom with which Christ has set you free, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery."¹⁶ Therefore the use of such ordinances ought to be left free, only that offenses should be avoided and that they be not regarded as necessary acts of worship. Thus even the apostles ^(tr-449) ordained many things that were changed by time, and they did not set them down as though they could not be changed. For they did not contradict their own writings, in which they worked hard to free the church from the idea that human rites are necessary acts of worship.

Conclusion: Worshiping God

- *“Lutheran spirituality is embodied, expressed tangibly, in Lutheran worship...It is impossible to be Lutheran, really, without the church. Law and Gospel, the saving Word and Sacraments, the vocation of the pastor, and the Real Presence of Christ animate the liturgy at every point. Every week at worship, the Christian takes part in a divine drama, a mystery, in which Christ’s gifts are received.” (108)*

What gifts does Christ give in the Divine Service? How is this significant? How is this different from other Christian church bodies? Why?

The Mystery of Holiness

- *“‘Holiness’ literally means ‘set apart,’ and in America at least, with our egalitarianism, casual ways, and laid-back attitudes, nothing is set apart and, as we say, nothing is sacred. But church, I was learning, was place where something sacred could be found. The way the pastor would bow to the cross and to the Word of God on the altar, the way the congregation would rise and kneel, the majestic language of the liturgy convinced me that something different, something extraordinary is going on here.” (108)*

What implication(s) does the Divine Service have for not only Sunday morning, but throughout the week for the Lutheran Christian? (I.e. How is the Lutheran Christian ‘set apart’ during the week from the world?)

- *“Many people tease Lutherans—and Lutherans tease themselves—about not worshiping in an emotional way. Indeed, Lutheran worship has an objective quality about it, the sense that grace is actually operating outside of one’s own perceptions, that is very different from the more subjective styles favored by other theologies. Lutheran worship is God-centered, not human centered.” (109)*

How does one distinguish between “God-centered” worship and “human centered” worship—by “how” one worships, by what is said (confessed, sung, etc.), by posture? Why is this important?

Heaven on Earth

- *“Lutheran worship bathes the congregation in the Word of God. The readings, the liturgical responses, the great set-pieces such as the Introit and the Kyrie, are not ‘vain repetitions,’ as our critics say. They are the very words of the Bible. Lutheran hymns are not emotional effusions. They are doctrinally and artistically rigorous explorations of a Biblical text. The creed and the prayers are grounded in Scripture. A Lutheran sermon is never a moralistic pep talk, nor a meditation on current events or pop psychology, but the proclamation of both Law and Gospel, drawn from the appointed text of Scripture. And Holy Communion is a reenactment of the Lord’s Supper as recorded in the New Testament. The Word of God permeates Lutheran worship, and the Word of God is a means of grace.” (110)*
- *“A spirituality in which God does everything for us may well seem too easy, too good to be true. There is, to be sure, nothing easy about being broken by the Law, struggling against one’s own nature, and fighting through trials and suffering. But, on another level, it is indeed easy, simply a matter of receiving Christ’s gifts. And the Gospel of forgiveness and grace in the cross, is, as the catechism says, ‘most certainly true.’ This truth is no mere intellectual assertion, but a faith lived out in worship, in the inmost depths of the heart, in love of others, in work, and in the day-to-day routines of ordinary life.” (112)*

THE APOLOGY, IV. JUSTIFICATION

¹⁵² There is a familiar figure of speech, called synecdoche, by which we sometimes combine cause and effect in the same phrase. Christ says in Luke 7:47, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, because she loved much.” But he interprets his own words when he adds: “Your faith has saved you” (v. 50). Now Christ did not want to say that by her works of love the woman had merited the forgiveness of sins. ¹⁵³ Therefore he clearly says, “Your faith has saved you.” But faith is that which grasps God’s free mercy because of God’s Word. If anybody denies that this is faith, he utterly misunderstands the nature of faith. ¹⁵⁴ And the account here shows what he calls “love.” The woman came, believing that she should seek the forgiveness of sins from Christ. This is the highest way of worshiping Christ. Nothing greater could she ascribe to him. By looking for the forgiveness of sins from him, she truly acknowledged him as the Messiah. Truly to believe means to think of Christ in this way, and in this way to worship and take hold of him. Moreover, Christ used the word “love” not toward the woman but against the Pharisee, because Christ contrasted the whole act of reverence of the Pharisee with ^(tr-165) that of the woman. He chides the Pharisee for not acknowledging him as the Messiah, though he did show him the outward courtesies due a guest and a great and holy man. He points to the woman and praises her reverence, her anointing and crying, all of which were a sign and confession of faith that she was looking for the forgiveness of sins from Christ. It was not without reason that this truly powerful example moved Christ to chide the Pharisee, this wise and honest but unbelieving man. He charges him with irreverence and reproves him with the example of the woman. What a disgrace that an uneducated woman should believe God, while a doctor of the law does not believe or accept the Messiah or seek from him the forgiveness of sins and salvation!

¹⁵⁵ In this way, therefore, he praises her entire act of worship, as the Scriptures often do when they include many things in one phrase. Later we shall take up similar passages, like Luke 11:41, “Give alms; and behold, everything is clean.” He demands not only alms, but also the righteousness of faith. In the same way he says here, “Her sins, which are many, are forgiven, because she loved much,” that is, because she truly worshiped me with faith and with the acts and signs of faith. He includes the whole act of worship; but meanwhile he teaches that it is faith that properly accepts the forgiveness of sins, though love, confession, and other good fruits ought to follow. He does not mean that these fruits are the price of propitiation which earns the forgiveness of sins that reconciles us to God.

AUGSBURG CONFSSION, XXVIII. ECCLESIASTICAL POWER

¹⁵ In the Confession we nevertheless added the extent to which it is legitimate for them to create traditions, namely, that they must not be necessary acts of worship but a means of preserving order in the church, for the sake of peace. These must not ensnare consciences as though they were commanding necessary acts of worship. This is what Paul teaches when he says (Gal. 5:1), “Stand fast in the freedom with which Christ has set you free, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.” ¹⁶ Therefore the use of such ordinances ought to be left free, only that offenses should be avoided and that they be not regarded as necessary acts of worship. Thus even the apostles ^(tr-449) ordained many things that were changed by time, and they did not set them down as though they could not be changed. For they did not contradict their own writings, in which they worked hard to free the church from the idea that human rites are necessary acts of worship.

¹⁷ This is the simple way to interpret traditions. We should know that they are not necessary acts of worship, and yet we should observe them in their place and without superstition, in order to avoid offenses.

Appendix: The First Evangelicals and Other Churches

- *“Lutheranism has much to offer Christendom as a whole. As a church body with a thoroughly worked-out theology, which it actually follows, some Lutheran denominations have retained their orthodoxy more successfully than most. But more than that, Lutheran theology—and spirituality—is animated by a dynamic polarity in which divisive theological controversies are put into balance and thus resolved.” (115)*

What does Lutheranism have to offer Christendom? How might what Lutherans have to offer be made known? What does this mean for the Lutheran Christian?

Paradox

Veith writes, “The distinctive characteristic of Lutheran theology is its affirmation of paradox.” (115) Discuss some of these paradoxes and how Lutherans affirm (and deny) both ‘evangelical and ‘Catholic’ ideas [i.e. Calvinism, Arminianism, charismatics, Catholicism, Anglicanism, etc.](115-118)

- *“Lutheran theology, though embracing in one sense the whole range of Christian spirituality, is nevertheless an entity unto itself, with its own spiritual disciplines that are quite alien to those of other traditions.” (118)*

Where does Lutheran ‘fit-in’ with respect to Roman Catholics and Protestants? Does it matter?

Lutheranism in American Culture

Who was Samuel Schmucker and Charles Krauth, and what did they do?
What happened in the LCMS during the 1970’s?

- *“Many Lutheran churches have been jettisoning their liturgy and their distinctive beliefs, in favor of emulating evangelicals, adapting techniques from the church growth movement, singing ‘praise songs,’ preaching sermons on pop-psychology, and otherwise abandoning their spiritual heritage in favor of generic American Protestantism.” (120-121)*

How is “jettisoning” one’s distinctives (i.e. Lutheran) a temptation? What must be done to avoid succumbing to them?

Lutheran Confessionalism

How is the pendulum of the Lutheran church ‘swinging in the other direction’ of Confessionalism?

How is Lutheran Confessionalism different from ‘conservatism’?

Are confessional Lutherans ecumenical or not, and why or why not?

What might be meant by the terms, ‘evangelical catholic’ and ‘confessing evangelical’? How are these terms helpful/unhelpful?

FORMULA OF CONCORD, EPITOME

THE COMPREHENSIVE SUMMARY, RULE, AND NORM ACCORDING TO WHICH ALL DOCTRINES SHOULD BE JUDGED AND THE ERRORS WHICH INTRUDED SHOULD BE EXPLAINED AND DECIDED IN A CHRISTIAN WAY

¹ **1.** We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged, as it is written in Ps. 119:105, “Thy word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.” And St. Paul says in Gal. 1:8, “Even if an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we preached to you, let him be accursed.”

² Other writings of ancient and modern teachers, whatever their names, should not be put on a par with Holy Scripture. Every single one of them should be subordinated to the Scriptures and should be received in no other way and no further than as witnesses to the fashion in which the doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved in post-apostolic times.

³ **2.** Immediately after the time of the apostles — in fact, already during their lifetime— false teachers and heretics invaded the church. Against these the ancient church formulated symbols (that is, brief and explicit confessions) which were accepted as the unanimous, catholic, Christian faith and confessions of the orthodox and true church, namely, the Apostles’ Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. We pledge ourselves to these, and we hereby reject all heresies and teachings which have been introduced into the church of God contrary to them.

⁴ **3.** With reference to the schism in matters of faith which has occurred in our times, we regard, as the unanimous consensus and exposition of our Christian faith, particularly against the false worship, idolatry, and superstition of the papacy and against other sects, and as the symbol of our time, the first and unaltered Augsburg Confession, which was delivered to Emperor Charles V at Augsburg during the great Diet in the year 1530, together with the Apology thereof and the Articles drafted at Smalcald in the year 1537, which the leading theologians approved by their subscription at that time.¹

⁵ Since these matters also concern the laity and the salvation of their souls, we subscribe Dr. Luther’s Small and Large Catechisms as both of them are contained in his printed works. They are “the layman’s Bible” and contain everything which Holy Scripture discusses at greater length and which a Christian must know for his salvation.

⁶ (tr-779) All doctrines should conform to the standards set forth above. Whatever is contrary to them should be rejected and condemned as opposed to the unanimous declaration of our faith.

⁷ In this way the distinction between the Holy Scripture of the Old and New Testaments and all other writings is maintained, and Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule, and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should and must be understood and judged as good or evil, right or wrong.

⁸ Other symbols and other writings are not judges like Holy Scripture, but merely witnesses and expositions of the faith, setting forth how at various times the Holy Scriptures were understood by contemporaries in the church of God with reference to controverted articles, and how contrary teachings were rejected and condemned.