Catholic, Lutheran, Protestant: A Comparative Study

Rev. Thomas N. Reeder Jr.
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Bibliography

*Note: The information from websites and Rose Publishing is for reference only and may not be completely accurate.*
I. An Introduction

WHAT IS TRUTH?

John 14:6-7
Matthew 16:13-17
John 17:17

WHAT DOES TRUTH DO?

Ephesians 4:4-5
Ephesians 4:11-16
John 7:37-43
Matthew 10:32-40
Matthew 10:14-22

WHY DO DIVISIONS IN CHRISTIANITY EXIST?

Romans 16:17-18
1 Timothy 4:1-6,16
2 Timothy 3:1-5 2
John 8:31-32
1 Timothy 6:11
Timothy 4:3-4
John 18:37-38
2 Timothy 2:15
Titus 2:2ff

WAS IT ALWAYS THAT WAY?

1 Corinthians 1:10 12
1 Corinthians 11:19

WHY STUDY DIFFERENT FAITHS?

1 Peter 3:15-16
Deuteronomy 6:5
John 8:31-32
Matthew 22:37-40
1 John 4:1ff
So Many Denominations

Q. I am confused regarding so many denominations that exist. Appreciate if you could provide advice regarding the Biblical and theological teaching for the following: “Some say that the existence of denominations within Christ’s church is a tragedy caused by sin and immaturity; others claim that denominations are a blessing, since they produce diversity within the body of Christ.” What do you think?

A. Since apostolic times visible Christendom has been divided. Although there are historical, cultural, and sociological factors that have contributed to such division, departure from God’s truth revealed to us in the Holy Scriptures must be regarded as the principal cause for such division. The apostles themselves foresaw and had to deal with such division within early Christian communities (see, for example, Acts 20:25-31). While the Scriptures are the inerrant source and norm of all doctrine and while God’s Truth is one, sinful human beings can and do err. Hence, division occurs in visible Christendom.

The same can be said for modern denominationalism. While there are historical, cultural and sociological factors involved in the formation of denominations, disagreement regarding the understanding and application of biblical doctrine remains the fundamental reason for division between and among them. We hold that there can be only one Truth, and that denominations exist because some Christians have departed from what is faithful to biblical doctrine. In spite of the divided state of Christendom, we in The Lutheran Church — Missouri Synod remain committed to the quest for external unity in the church based on agreement in doctrine. We believe that this is not an option, but is God’s will.

Ecumenical Movement

Q. I read so much about the ecumenical movement, and I would like an answer to a question: "Is the final result of the attempt for Christian unity really mean a reunification with the bishop of Rome?" A minister in the Disciples of Christ church says the pope has a lot or merit, - and often quotes him. Are we Lutherans being hard headed? How could there be so much difference within the Protestant churches?

A. True ecumenism does not mean simply returning to a position where the pope is considered the leader of the entire church. While it is undoubtedly true that there is much which is good and much to be admired in the Roman Catholic Church, especially the fact that in spite of some of its positions, which are inimical to the Gospel, that Gospel is still heard and read and people come to faith in Jesus as their Savior, it is also true that this does not mean that all should submit to papal leadership. Rather, what is important is the recognition that there is one head of the church, Jesus Christ, and it is He who makes of the church one family, one Christian church in spite of the many denominations.

Our Lord has made it clear that the divisions in the visible church are not pleasing. That is especially clear in his high priestly prayer in the Gospel of John, chapter 17:20ff for all believers as He asks that all those who believe through the message spoken by the apostles "may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you . . . May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you loved me." While there are, of course, many different reasons for the different denominations that we have today, including such things as culture, methods of biblical interpretation, emphasis on specific leaders, etc., perhaps one of the main reasons is that groups and individuals differ with respect to the basis for their teachings—some of them basing them on scripture alone, some on scripture and tradition, some on scripture and human reason, etc., etc.

The fact is that there will probably always be denominations as long as this world exists and that true and full unity in the church will only be found in eternity. In the meantime, it is our responsibility to do all we can to eliminate the divisions and seek to give outward expression to the unity that is already there. There is "one holy, catholic (universal) and apostolic church." Ecumenical efforts are efforts that seek to give outward expression to that unity.

1 Printed from: http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID= 2138
2 Printed from: http://www.lcms.org/pages/internal.asp?NavID=2139
Ecumenism: Facts and Illusions
by Kurt E. Marquart

The words "ecumenical" and "ecumenism" come from a Greek word meaning "the whole inhabitable world." The "Ecumenical Movement" means to unite into one worldwide church all the scattered bits and pieces of Christendom. In itself, that is a noble aim. Everything depends on understanding the problem of Christian unity and division realistically. Otherwise, we are likely to apply Band-Aids to cancers, and actually make matters worse.

The Lord makes His church ONE not in just any way, but only in the TRUTH (St. John 8:31-32; 17:14-17). Without real unity in the One Lord, the One Faith, and the One Baptism (Eph. 4:5), mere outward togetherness is a sham. This is why our Augsburg Confession demands for the "true unity of the church" nothing more and nothing less than "that the Gospel be preached unanimously in its pure understanding, and the Sacraments be administered in accord with God's Word." It is not necessary that human customs and traditions be everywhere alike. And, of course, there are believers, dear children of God, in all churches, who retain enough of the Gospel to make possible the creation of faith.

The three basic confessions or versions of Christianity are the Roman Catholic/Eastern Orthodox, the Lutheran, and the Calvinist (Presbyterian, Baptist, etc.). The differences among these are not minor matters but go to the heart of the Gospel. Did Christ earn for us the free gift of eternal life, as the Bible teaches, or only the opportunity to earn this life by doing good works with His help, as Rome says? An honest reading of Romans and Galatians will leave us in no doubt about the answer. Again, does Holy Baptism give life and salvation, as Christ and His Apostles teach (St. John 3:5, Tit. 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21), or is it only a symbol of our obedience, as the Baptists say? And does the Lord really give us His holy body and blood to eat in His Sacrament for the forgiveness of sins, or is all this only picture and symbol? There is no generic "Gospel," which might overlook or bypass such questions. Any honest confession of faith must "come clean" on matters so clearly taught in God's Word (Gal. 1:6-8).

The modern "Ecumenical Movement" —despite some promising beginnings a hundred years ago—has largely given up on the issue of truth. It concentrates on getting everyone together outwardly, under compromise formulas like the recent "Lutheran'-Vatican joint statement on justification. During a major seminar on Christian-Muslim relations conducted recently at a "Lutheran" seminary, one person raised the issue of Christian evangelism among Muslims. He was told that this was "fascism"! And the Southern Baptists were accused of promoting "ancient hatreds" by proposing to do mission work among non-Christians. This intolerant secular "tolerance," with its fear and contempt for the whole idea of truth, has had its impact also in the churches. And since the bureaucracies and seminaries of the "main-line" churches have given up the authority of the Bible as the Word of God, they, of course, have no grounds for any firm convictions about anything.

Genuine ecumenism must go another way. It must walk by faith, not by sight. That means being guided by the truth of God and not by outward numbers or prestige. Whatever is not built on the one foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph. 2:20) is to that extent not the church of Christ, but a counterfeit. There cannot be real peace between the Cross of Christ and the wisdom of this world (1 Cor. 1 and 2). As Christians we are called to be friendly and peaceable among people of all kinds—and to love even our enemies. But we cannot go along with a deceitful outward show of church union and communion when there is no agreement in the life-giving doctrine of Christ and His Apostles, on which everything depends (St. John 6:63; Acts 2:42; 1 Tim. 4:16). The true ecumenical task is to raise everywhere—humbly but with conviction—the banner of Christ's truth and doctrine, and not to budge from it. Such faithfulness God will bless—and is blessing throughout the world today. From Siberia and Kazakhstan to Haiti, from Sudan to Kenya and South Africa, from Europe and Canada to South America and Australia, everywhere the sheep of Christ hunger for the pure Bread of Life and rejoice in it. Thanks be to God!

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II. Definitions & Classifications

Church

1 The entire body of believers (The Holy Christian Church, the Communion of Saints - 3rd Article of the Apostles' Creed)
2 The visible Church of God
3 A denomination
4 A local congregation
5 A House of Worship

Denomination
A church body or organization with a distinct name and a distinct body of doctrine (teaching).

Families of Christian denominations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Family</td>
<td>Southern Baptists, American Baptists, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communal Family</td>
<td>The Jesus People, Twin Oaks, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiness Family</td>
<td>Christian and Missionary Alliance, Church of the Nazarene, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>Plymouth Brethren, Fundamentalists, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fundamentalist Family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lutheran Family</td>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Lutheran church - Missouri Synod, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal Family</td>
<td>Assemblies of God, Church of God (Cleveland, TN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Priest-Methodist Family</td>
<td>Scandinavian Pietism, United Methodism, other Methodists.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reformed-Presbyterian Family</td>
<td>Reformed, Presbyterian, Congregational, United Church of Christ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Liturgical Family</td>
<td>Old Catholicism, Anglicanism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Luther's Small Catechism, III Third Article
4 www.religioustolerance.org
Family Tree of Denominations

The Undivided Church
Great Schism occurs between East (Orthodox) and West (Catholic)

Orthodox Church
1054

Catholic Church
1517

Anglican Church (Episcopal)
1534

Methodists
1738

Orthodox

Catholics

Anglicans

Methodists
1901

Pentecostals
1895/97 Church of God (7th)
1907 Pentecostal Assemblies
1914 Assemblies of God
1927 Foursquare Gospel
Charismatic
1950 Calvary Chapel
1985 Vineyard Ministries

Churches of Christ

Adventists

Baptists
1845 Southern Baptist
1915 National Baptist
1923 American Baptist and others

Congregationalists

Presbyterians

Lutherans

Anabaptists

Calvinists (Reformed)
1537 Mennonite (USA 1725)
1530 Hutterite
1693 Amish

Lutheran Church
1524

Anabaptists

Due to space limitations, this chart shows only a few major groups and offshoots.
II. Definitions & Classifications (Continued)

Conservative - Believes the Bible is not only true but entirely free from error (inerrant).  

"The Bible IS the Word of God."

"Religious conservatives are sometimes viewed negatively as overly strict on moral issues, close-minded, intolerant of other religious views, fanatical about their beliefs, too harsh, and placing too much emphasis on guilt or sin, too concerned about their own salvation, and too rigid and simplistic. Many people would not like to have them as neighbors." (www.religioustolerance.org)

Discuss: What is true and what is not concerning this statement?

Historical-Grammatical Method - Method of interpreting the Scriptures giving attention to grammar and history. (This method of interpretation presupposes that the Bible IS God's Holy Word, inerrant and infallible.)

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Moderate/Liberal - Does not believe the Bible entirely true and not free from error.

"The Bible CONTAINS the Word of God."

"Liberals are sometimes viewed as substituting social concerns for the true Gospel, too compromising with the world, morally loose, having a shallow knowledge of the Bible and too much influenced by secular humanism." (www.religioustolerance.org)

Discuss: What is true and what is not concerning this statement?

Historical-Critical Method - method of interpreting the Scriptures giving attention to historical research (This method of interpretation presuppose that the Bible is NOT inerrant or infallible. Thus, the Bible is, in effect, like any other written document of man.)

Evangelical

1"Those who emphasize the Gospel of salvation by faith in Jesus Christ."
2 Word used to designate those who emphasize the doctrine of justification by faith (salvation is by God's grace through faith) during the time of the Reformation. When used this way, it referred first to the Lutherans.
3 Today, often associated with Protestant Denominations to distinguish them from Roman Catholics.

5 Definitions adapted from What's Going On Among Lutherans? (1973), p 15
6 Lutheran Cyclopedia (1954), p347, p384
7 What’s Going on Among Lutherans? (1973), p15
8 Lutheran Cyclopedia (1954), p282-283
## Conservative & Liberal Evangelicalism (A Brief Overview)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Conservative Wing</th>
<th>Liberal Wing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Theological Matters:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of God</td>
<td>Lawgiver, Father, Judge, Creator, Redeemer</td>
<td>Parent, Lover, Healer, Liberator,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concept of Jesus</td>
<td>Profoundly powerful and</td>
<td>Symbol of evil. Does not exist as a living entity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devil</td>
<td>important living entity, dedicated to evil</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of the Bible</td>
<td>Inerrant free of errors, except for a few isolated</td>
<td>Many internal conflicts. Books are created by</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>copying mistakes</td>
<td>fallible human authors promoting their own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpreting the Bible</td>
<td>Mainly literally</td>
<td>Some literal, some symbolic, some as simple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How one can understand</td>
<td>One must first ‘be saved’ before the Holy Spirit will</td>
<td>By studying infusion of religious ideas from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the Bible</td>
<td>understand the Bible</td>
<td>cultures surrounding Palestine and the biases</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consistency of the Bible</td>
<td>Totally consistent, presents an undeviating</td>
<td>Major evolution in theological beliefs from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>theological belief</td>
<td>Genesis to Revelation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness of Bible</td>
<td>All verses are useful</td>
<td>Some passages should be rejected as advocating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passages</td>
<td></td>
<td>unethical behavior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision of Christian faith</td>
<td>Essentially fixed</td>
<td>In constant change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hell</td>
<td>Place of eternal punishment</td>
<td>Temporary punishment, symbolic condition, or non-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>existent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basis of Salvation</td>
<td>Repentance, trust in Jesus as savior</td>
<td>Universalism: all will be saved</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Man</td>
<td>Created by God</td>
<td>Created by God or evolved due to purely natural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>forces</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second Coming of Jesus</td>
<td>Imminent</td>
<td>Not expected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>By immersion. Given to believers only, after the age</td>
<td>By sprinkling; given to the very young, before</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>of accountability</td>
<td>the age of accountability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main sources for social policies, and beliefs</td>
<td>The Bible, tradition, findings of science</td>
<td>Findings of science, the Bible, tradition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biblical basis for policies &amp; beliefs</td>
<td>Selected Biblical verses</td>
<td>Christ's message, coupled with modern knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Book of Daniel</td>
<td>Written by Daniel in the 6th century BCE; predicts events in our immediate future</td>
<td>Author unknown. Written circa 165 BCE. Recorded prior events from the 6th to the 2nd century</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How the books in the New Testament were selected from the many writings in circulation</td>
<td>Under the inspiration of God; fraudulent books rejected; only inerrant books accepted</td>
<td>They selected mainly those writings which supported their 1st century theology and which they thought were written by the apostles</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of Jews and Judaism</td>
<td>Abandoned by God, or of uncertain status</td>
<td>A parallel, great world religion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church Organization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church membership</td>
<td>Exclusive; must conform to standards of belief and practice</td>
<td>Inclusive, minimal requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Growth in membership</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Little or negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of beliefs among members</td>
<td>Small</td>
<td>Wide</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Policies</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under what conditions is an act sinful?</td>
<td>Depends upon the act itself; e.g., all homosexual sex is sinful</td>
<td>Depends upon the situation; e.g., all manipulative sex is sinful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial segregation, circa 1997 CE</td>
<td>Opposed</td>
<td>Opposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial segregation, circa 1960 CE</td>
<td>Supportive, Neutral</td>
<td>Opposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special rights &amp; roles for mates</td>
<td>Supportive</td>
<td>Opposed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special rights for heterosexuals, e.g., marriage</td>
<td>Favor</td>
<td>Various</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage, circa 1997</td>
<td>Restricted to heterosexuals</td>
<td>Some favor marriage for all committed couples</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage, circa 1960</td>
<td>Only heterosexuals of same race</td>
<td>Only heterosexuals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to Abortion</td>
<td>Pro-life; politically active</td>
<td>Pro-choice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sinful forms of sex</td>
<td>Gay, lesbian, any sexual acts outside of marriage, rape</td>
<td>Any heterosexual or homosexual coercive, manipulated or unsafe acts, or any sex acts outside a committed relationship</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.religious_tolerance.org
II. Definitions & Classifications (Continued)

Catholic
Designates the Roman Catholic Church. (The word *catholic* literally means, ‘universal’)

Lutheran
Refers to those churches who subscribe (bind themselves) to all the symbols (confessions) in the Book of Concord (1580). In the present day, however, not all who call themselves 'Lutheran' 'unconditionally' subscribe (bind themselves) to the Confessions of the Historic Lutheran Faith, [i.e. The Evangelical Lutheran Church of America (ELCA) and others]

Protestant / Evangelical
In 1529, a meeting (diet) met at Speyer, Germany. The evangelicals (Lutherans) presented a protest against restrictions imposed by the Roman Catholic Church. Thus the name Protestant. Today, Protestant refers to non-Catholic & Non-Lutheran fellowships.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theological Belief</th>
<th>Roman Catholic Church</th>
<th>Fundamentalists, Evangelicals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Apocrypha: meaning</td>
<td>Books by Christian authors, used by early Christians, but later rejected as non-canonical</td>
<td>Books by Jewish authors written between the Old and New testament times; rejected as non-canonical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apostolic succession</td>
<td>Believe in the Apostolic succession; ordinations traceable back to St. Peter</td>
<td>Concept rejected as historically invalid; It simply didn't happen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority within the church</td>
<td>Vested in the hierarchy of the church.</td>
<td>Within the believer (soul freedom)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism, significance of</td>
<td>Sacrament which regenerates and justifies</td>
<td>Testimony of a prior regeneration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptism, timing</td>
<td>Usually done in infancy.</td>
<td>Usually done later in life after person is &quot;born again.&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bible, status of</td>
<td>Historically teaches that the original writings by Bible authors are inerrant</td>
<td>The original writings of the authors of the Bible are inerrant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change of beliefs, practices</td>
<td>Debate sometimes forbidden.</td>
<td>Free discussion allowed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church, structure</td>
<td>Hierarchical.</td>
<td>Democratic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clergy, selection of</td>
<td>Appointed; all male, almost all unmarried.</td>
<td>Elected; mostly male; single or married.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God, access to</td>
<td>Via clergy, saints, Virgin Mary, Jesus</td>
<td>Via Jesus alone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hell</td>
<td>More than a physical place; hell is a state of being involving &quot;the pain, frustration and emptiness of life without God.&quot;</td>
<td>A real physical place of eternal torture. Some theologians say that hell does not exist.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Immaculate Conception of Mary</td>
<td>Required belief.</td>
<td>Denied.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Note 1: Many people confuse the <strong>immaculate conception</strong> with the <strong>virgin birth</strong>. The former is a Roman Catholic belief that when Mary herself was conceived, she was without original sin. The latter is a generally held belief among all conservative and most mainline Christian denominations that Mary was a virgin when Jesus was conceived about 6 BCE. Religious liberals generally consider both to be mythical concepts.</td>
<td><a href="http://www.religioustolerance.org">www.religioustolerance.org</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
<td>Orthodox Churches</td>
<td>Lutheran Churches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Founder and Date</strong></td>
<td>330: Emperor Constantine renamed the city of Byzantium “Constantinople,” which became the city of the living patriarch in the “Great Schism” of 1054.</td>
<td>1517: Martin Luther’s “95 Theses” (challenges to Catholic teaching) usually mark the beginning of the Protestant Reformation. 1530: The Augsburg Confession is the first formal Lutheran statement of faith.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adherents in 2000</strong></td>
<td>About 225 million worldwide; 3-5 million, USA</td>
<td>About 80 million worldwide; 2-4 million, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Scripture</strong></td>
<td>The Scriptures are without error in matters of faith only. Scripture is to be interpreted by Sacred Tradition, especially the Seven Ecumenical Councils which met from 335–787. The canon includes 48 Old Testament books (the Catholic Bible plus three more) and the 27 New Testament books.</td>
<td>Scripture alone is the authoritative witness to the gospel. Reformers pointed more directly or fully to Christ. Reformation scholars view Scripture as normative. The standard Protestant canon of 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books is accepted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>God</strong></td>
<td>The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).</td>
<td>Theone Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jesus</strong></td>
<td>The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, conceived and born of the Virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.</td>
<td>The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, conceived and born of the Virgin Mary, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Salvation</strong></td>
<td>Christ died as a substitutionary sacrifice for our sins. God, by grace, effects a supernatural gift of faith in Christ in those who are baptized, which is maintained by doing works of virtue and receiving communion in the Eucharist.</td>
<td>In Christ, God became human so that human beings might be saved (theosis), that is, have the divinity of God in them. Through baptism and participation in the Christian community, people receive the benefits of Christ’s redemption and work as they praxis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Afterlife</strong></td>
<td>The souls of the faithful go to heaven either immediately or, if imperfections persist in this life, after purification. The souls of the wicked at death are immediately consigned to eternal punishment in Hell.</td>
<td>At death, the souls of the faithful are purified as needed by process of growth, not punishment, then get a foretaste of eternal bliss in Heaven. The souls of the wicked are consigned to eternal torment in Hell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Church</strong></td>
<td>The Church is the Mystical Body of Christ, established by Christ with the bishop of Rome as the pope, who may at times pronounce dogmas and doctrines required of all members, infallibly, as its earthly head. It is united (one) in a sacrament (catholic) community through the succession of bishops whose ordination goes back to the apostles (apostolic). Christians not in communion with the Catholic Church are called “separated brethren.”</td>
<td>The church is the Body of Christ in unbroken historical connection to the apostles, ceasingly maintaining the faith of the apostolic church as expressed in the creeds. It is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic, with churches organized nationally (Armenian, Greek, Russian, and so forth) by its bishops and the leadership of popes (the pope, recognized as one of several), of which that of Constantinople has primacy of honor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sacraments</strong></td>
<td>Baptism removes original sin (usually in infants). In the Eucharist, the substances (but not the properties) of bread and wine are changed into Jesus’ body and blood (transubstantiation).</td>
<td>Baptism initiates God’s life in the one baptism (usually infants). In the Eucharist, bread and wine are changed into Jesus’ body and blood (a Mystery to be left unexplained).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Other Beliefs and Practices</strong></td>
<td>Mary was conceived by her mother immaculately (free of original sin). Mary remained a virgin, and was assumed bodily into heaven. She is the Mother of the Church and is considered an object of devotion and veneration (a show of honor that stops short of worship).</td>
<td>Mary was cleansed of sin when Gabriel appeared to her. She remained a virgin perpetually, not in tradition, not by prayer, but by assumption into heaven. Icons pictures of Christ or saints are objects of veneration through which Christ is loved.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Division and Trends</strong></td>
<td>About one-fourth of Catholics are doctrinally conservative. Many priests and members tend to accept liberal, pluralist beliefs contrary to church teaching.</td>
<td>Roughly one-third are doctrinally conservative. Most Orthodox bodies are members of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, whose liberal direction is causing some concern.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Liturgical Churches

#### Anglican Churches
- **Founder and Date:** 1534; King Henry VIII was declared head of the Church of England. 1546; Thomas Cranmer produced the first Book of Common Prayer.
- **Adherents in 2000:** Some 45-75 million worldwide; 2.5 million, USA.
- **Scripture:** Scripture contains the truth that is necessary for salvation and is the primary norm for faith, but must be interpreted in light of tradition and reason. The canon includes 39 Old Testament books and 27 New Testament books (the Apocrypha is rejected but not viewed as Scripture).
- **God:** The one Creator and LORD of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- **Jesus:** The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, conceived and born of the virgin Mary. Died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.
- **Salvation:** Christ suffered and died as an offering for sin, freeing us from sin and reconciling us to God. We share in Christ’s victory when in baptism we become living members of the church, believing in him and keeping his commandments.
- **Atonement:** The souls of the faithful are purified as needed to enjoy full communion with God, and at Christ’s return they are raised to the fullness of eternal life in heaven. These who reject God face eternal death.
- **The Church:** The church is the body of Christ, whose unity is based on the “apostolic succession” of bishops going back to the apostles of whom the bishop of Rome is one of many. It is one, holy, catholic, and apostolic. The Anglican communion is a part of the church, whose unity is witnessed by the archbishop of Canterbury. The church in the USA is known as the Episcopal Church.
- **Sacraments:** The sacraments are “outward and visible signs of inward and spiritual grace.” Infants and converts are made part of the church in baptism. Christ’s body and blood are really present in communion.
- **Other Beliefs and Practices:** Members are free to accept or reject the Catholic doctrines of Mary. The Book of Common Prayer is the norm for liturgy. Priests may marry. In 1979 the Episcopal Church approved the ordination of women. Same-sex marriage and ordaining homosexuals are matters of debate.
- **Division and Trends:** In the USA, most belong to the Episcopal Church. About one-fifth are doctrinally conservative. The 94 Articles (1571) are the doctrinal basis for the Reformed Episcopal Church and other conservative spin-off groups.

### Presbyterian Churches
- **Founder and Date:** 1560; John Calvin writes Institutes of the Christian Religion. 1643-48; Westminster Standards outline Presbyterian doctrine. 1706; Presbyterian Church (USA) first organized (see below).
- **Adherents in 2000:** Some 40-45 million worldwide; 3.4 million, USA.
- **Scripture:** Historic view; Scripture is inspired and inerrant. The sole, final rule of faith.
- **God:** The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- **Jesus:** The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, conceived and born of the virgin Mary. Died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.
- **Salvation:** We are saved by grace alone when God imparts to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone. We are saved by grace alone when God imparts to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone.
- **Atonement:** We are saved by grace alone when God imparts to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone. We are saved by grace alone when God imparts to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone.
- **The Church:** The church is the body of Christ, including all who believe in Christ. Congregations are the governing bodies of the church and are governed by their elected boards. They are autonomous bodies of believers in the Lord’s Supper.
- **Sacraments:** Baptism is not necessary for salvation but is a sign of the new covenant of grace. All are invited to receive the Lord’s Supper.
- **Other Beliefs and Practices:** Conservatives affirm the “five points of Calvinism.” Humans are so sinful that they cannot initiate return to God. God chooses whom he will elect. God also elects specifically to give those whom God chose God’s gift of life. In this way God initially drew to Christ those whom he chose; they will never fall away.
- **Division and Trends:** The Presbyterian Church (USA), or PCUSA, is the mainline church. The Presbyterian Church in America (PCA) is the largest denominational conservative church body.

### Methodist Churches
- **Founder and Date:** 1704; Conversion of John and Charles Wesley, already devout Anglican ministers, sparked Great Awakening. 1784; USA Methodists form separate church body.
- **Adherents in 2000:** Some 20-40 million worldwide; 12 million or more, USA.
- **Scripture:** Historic view; Scripture is inspired and inerrant. The sole, final rule of faith.
- **God:** The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- **Jesus:** The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully man, died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, will come again in glory to judge us all. Some Methodists accept the historic Protestant canon.
- **Salvation:** We are saved by grace alone when God imparts to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone. We are saved by grace alone when God imparts to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone.
- **Atonement:** We are saved by grace alone when God imparts to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone. We are saved by grace alone when God imparts to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone.
- **The Church:** The church is the body of Christ, including all who believe in Christ. Congregations are the governing bodies of the church. They are autonomous bodies of believers in the Lord’s Supper.
- **Sacraments:** Baptism is a sign of regeneration and of the new covenant of grace. It is for adults and infants. In this way, the sign of the Lord’s Supper is for adults and infants.
- **Other Beliefs and Practices:** “ Entire sanctification” is a work of the Spirit subsequent to regeneration by which fully consecrated believers are purified of all sin and for its service—i.e., they live a life that is Christ-like and are aligned with the five points of Calvinism.
- **Division and Trends:** United Methodist Church (3.5 million) and the African Methodist Episcopal church bodies (about 4 million) are mainline churches. The Free Methodists are a small conservative body.


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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Founder and Date</th>
<th>Anabaptist Churches</th>
<th>Congregational Churches</th>
<th>Baptist Churches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1525</td>
<td>Protestants in Zurich begin believer's baptism.</td>
<td>1607: Members of a moss church in England, illegal at that time, who were forced into exile.</td>
<td>1612: John Smyth and other English Puritans form the first Baptist church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1537</td>
<td>Menno Simons begins leading Mennonite movement.</td>
<td>1629: Congregationalists called Pilgrim's Sow on Mayflower to Plymouth (now in Massachusetts).</td>
<td>1638: The first Baptist church in America is established in Providence, Rhode Island.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adherents in 2000</td>
<td>Perhaps 2 million worldwide; Roughly 600,000, USA.</td>
<td>Over 2 million worldwide; About 2 million, USA.</td>
<td>Over 100 million worldwide (including families); 25-30 million, USA.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scripture</td>
<td>Most view Scripture as the inspired means for knowing and following Jesus, but not as infallible. Jesus is the living Word. Scripture is the written Word that points to him. The standard Protestant canon is accepted. New believers live a sanctified life espered to having correct doctrine.</td>
<td>Most view Scripture as the authoritative witness to the Word of God, that was living in Jesus, rather than viewing Scripture as the unerring Word of God. (UCC, see below.) The Bible and creeds are seen as “documents of faith, not tests of faith.” The standard Protestant canon is accepted.</td>
<td>Scripture is inspired and without error, the rule, test, totally trustworthy rule of faith. The standard Protestant canon is accepted. (Mainline churches vary in the extent to which they continue to view Scripture as without error.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>God</td>
<td>The one Creator and Lord of all, revealed in Jesus through the Holy Spirit. Most affirm the Trinity in some way.</td>
<td>The Eternal Spirit who calls the worlds into being and is made known in the main Jesus.</td>
<td>The one Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as eternally three (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jesus</td>
<td>The Savior of the world, a man in whom God's love and will are revealed by his life and suffering and death. His death, empty tomb, and resurrection are traditionally affirmed.</td>
<td>The crucified and risen Savior and Lord, in whom we are reconciled to God. His death and empty tomb are widely ignored or rejected except in the conservative church bodies.</td>
<td>The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully human, conceived and born of the virgin Mary, died on the cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salvation</td>
<td>Salvation is a personal experience in which, through faith in Jesus, we become at peace with God, moving us to follow Jesus' example as his disciples by living as peacekeepers in the world.</td>
<td>Salvation is a personal experience in which, through faith in Christ, we become at peace with God, moving us to follow Christ's example as his disciples by living as peacemakers in the world.</td>
<td>We are saved by grace alone when God imparts to us his gift of righteousness through faith alone ( sola fide) in Christ, who died for our sins. Good works are the necessary result of true faith, but is no way the basis of our right standing before God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Afterlife</td>
<td>No official view of what happens immediately after death. Some believe in a second coming of Christ whose return God's people will be raised to eternal life and the unrighteous will be forever separated from God (the traditional view).</td>
<td>The church is the body of the living God, of all persons who believe and have been born again through the work of the Holy Spirit.</td>
<td>The souls of believers during their dying and immediate to be with Christ and, as Christ's return, their bodies are raised to immortal, eternal life. The wicked will suffer eternal punishment in hell.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Church</td>
<td>The church is the body of Christ, the assembly and society of Christ's disciples who follow him in the power of the Spirit. It is to be marked by holiness, love, service, a simple lifestyle, and peacemaking. No one system of church government is recognized as being characteristically by biblical service and is primarily not exclusively local.</td>
<td>The church is the people of God living as Jesus' disciples, by serving humanity as agents of God's reconciling love. Each local church is self-governing and chooses its own ministers. The United Church of Christ is not one of the &quot;Churches of Christ&quot; but was formed in 1957 as the union of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, a liberal Protestant body.</td>
<td>The church universal is the body of Christ, which consists of the redeemed throughout history. The term “church” usually refers to local congregations, each of which is autonomous, whose members are to be baptized believers and whose officers are pastors and deacons. Churches may form associations or conventions for cooperative purposes, especially mission and education.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sacraments</td>
<td>Baptism is for believers only, a sign of commitment to follow Jesus. The Lord’s Supper is in memorial of his death. Most Quakers view sacraments as spiritual only and not external rites.</td>
<td>The church is the people of God living as Jesus' disciples, by serving humanity as agents of God's reconciling love. Each local church is self-governing and chooses its own ministers. The United Church of Christ is not one of the &quot;Churches of Christ&quot; but was formed in 1957 as the union of the Congregational Christian Churches and the Evangelical and Reformed Church, a liberal Protestant body.</td>
<td>Baptism is immersion of believers only as a symbol of their faith in Christ. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial of Christ's death and anticipation of his return.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Beliefs and Practices</td>
<td>Anabaptists and similar bodies are “peace churches,” teaching nonresistance and pacifism (the view that all participation in war is wrong). Dogma is decentralized, and liberal views with social emphasis prevail in some church bodies, including most Quaker churches.</td>
<td>Congregations may practice infant baptism or believer's baptism or both. Sacraments are symbolic of spiritual realities.</td>
<td>Most Baptist bodies emphasize evangelism and missions. Church and state are to be separate. Baptists include both Calvinists (dominant in the Southern Baptist Convention) and Armenians (dominant in mainline bodies and the Free Will Baptists).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Divisions and Trends</td>
<td>The Mennonite Church and Church of the Brethren are the largest bodies; the Amish (1835) are a variety of Mennonites. Quakers (Society) originated separately but share much in common with Anabaptists.</td>
<td>The United Church of Christ (UCC) is one of the most theologically liberal denominations in the USA, individual ministers and churches vary widely in the ticket. The United Church of Christ ordains openly homosexual men and women to ministry.</td>
<td>Southern Baptist (15 million), a conservative body that is the largest Protestant denomination in the USA, American Baptists (7.5 million), and the National Baptists (5 million), are mainline churches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Non-Liturgical Churches

#### Churches of Christ
- **Founder and Date:** 1901; Barton Stone holds his Cane Ridge Revival in Kentucky. 1832; Stone's Christians unite with Thomas and Alexander Campbell's Disciples of Christ. They have different beliefs in some areas.
- **Adherents in 2000:** Perhaps 5-6 million worldwide; 3-4 million, USA.
- **Scripture:** "Where the Scriptures speak, we speak; where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." Churches of Christ view Scripture as the inerrant word of God. Disciples of Christ generally view Scripture as witness to Christ but not necessary. The standard Protestant canon is accepted.
- **God:** One Creator and Lord of all. The creeds are rejected, but most conservatives accept the idea of the Trinity.
- **Jesus:** The Son of God, fully God and fully human, conceived and born of the virgin Mary. He died on the Cross for our sins, rose from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.
- **Salvation:** Churches of Christ: A person must hear the gospel, believe in Christ, repent, confess Christ, be baptized, and perseveres in holiness to be saved. Disciples of Christ: God saves human beings (orally) by his grace, to which we respond in faith.
- **Baptism:** Immersion of believers only. The initial act of obedience to the gospel. Only Churches of Christ recognize baptism in their own churches only as valid. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial.
- **Other Beliefs and Practices:** Many but not all Churches of Christ forbid the use of instrumental music in worship. International Churches of Christ believe that their members are saved and widely reported to strongly influence its members.

#### Adventist Churches
- **Founder and Date:** 1844; William Miller's prediction that Christ's "second" advent would occur in 1844 failed. It was later interpreted as a heavenly event, not as an actual return. 1879; Seventh Adventist Church is organized.
- **Adherents in 2000:** Over 11 million worldwide (plus members of many smaller bodies, about 500,000, USA.
- **Scripture:** Scripture is inspired and without error, the final, totally trustworthy rule of faith. The standard Protestant canon is accepted.
- **God:** One Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- **Jesus:** The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully human, conceived and born of the virgin Mary died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.
- **Salvation:** To be saved, we must believe in Christ as Example of his life and Substitute for our sins. To be saved, we must receive God's grace by faith.
- **Death:** Death for all people is an inconceivable state. At Christ's return the righteous will be raised to live in heaven. After a Millennium, the wicked will be raised only to be annihilated. The righteous will live forever on a new earth.
- **Baptism:** Immersion of believers only, as a symbol of their faith in Christ. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial of Christ's death and is practiced in conjunction with foot washing.
- **Other Beliefs and Practices:** In 1844 Christ began the Investigative Judgment, a year in heaven of determining who among the dead and living are saved or damned. Baptists believe in whole immersion baptism only. The Seventh-day Adventist Church is by far the largest Adventist body. Most of the smaller Adventist groups reject the Trinity and other traditional Christian doctrines.

#### Pentecostal Churches
- **Founder and Date:** 1901; Charles Fox Parham's Kansas City Church of the Bible. 1914; Assembly of God organization.
- **Adherents in 2000:** Over 10 million worldwide (estimates vary); 500 million, USA.
- **Scripture:** Scripture is inspired and without error, the final, totally trustworthy rule of faith. The standard Protestant canon is accepted.
- **God:** One Creator and Lord of all, existing eternally as the Trinity (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit).
- **Jesus:** The eternal Son incarnate, fully God and fully human, conceived and born of the virgin Mary. He died on the Cross for our sins, rose bodily from the grave, ascended into heaven, and will come again in glory to judge us all.
- **Salvation:** We are saved by God's grace. By Christ's death for our sins, through repentance and faith in Christ alone, receiving a new being from God to live in obedience to God's commandments. Those in Christ at the end will be saved.
- **Death:** The souls of believers upon dying go immediately to be with Christ, and at Christ's return their bodies are raised to live in immortal, eternal life. The wicked will suffer eternal punishment in hell.
- **Baptism:** Immersion of believers only, as a symbol of their faith in Christ. The Lord's Supper is a symbolic memorial of Christ's death and is practiced in conjunction with foot washing.
- **Other Beliefs and Practices:** Baptists believe in whole immersion baptism only. The church is the body of Christ, in which the Holy Spirit dwells, which meets to worship, and which is the agency for bringing the gospel of salvation to the world. Most church bodies practice a form of church government similar to Baptists.
III. Historical Introduction

Different Categories of the Study: ¹ Catholic, ² Lutheran, ³ Protestant

In this study, the term Protestant/Evangelical refers also to 'Reformed' Churches, not only those churches with the same name, but the churches who followed the lead of Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin during the time of the Reformation.

* Protestant = Evangelical = Reformed
  
  Calvinistic (Reformed)       Arminian (Reformed)
  Reformed                    Methodist
  Presbyterian                United Brethren
  Calvinistic Baptist         Free Will Baptist
  Protestant Episcopal        Salvation Army
                             Holiness Bodies
                             Pentecostal groups

Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531) [Switzerland]
  'enthusiasm' characterizes his theology
  ""The Holy Spirit requires no vehicle." (enthusiasm)
  "...the separation between the Creator and the creature is such that God does not employ means of grace."

John Calvin (1509-1564) [Geneva, Switzerland]
  Father of Reformed Theology
  Founder of Presbyterian Church polity
  Felt that a complete reformation of the church required the abolition of all ceremonies (traditions) with no Scriptural command ('Luther didn't go far enough')

James Arminius (1560-1609)
  Taught that man cooperates with God in his conversion by his own free will [Arminianism/Synergism (from the Greek word "work with")]

¹ The Religious Bodies of America (1954), p200
² ibid, p202
³ ibid, p203
Denominations, Names, Dates, & Location
(Not a complete listing)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Faith Group</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lutheranism</td>
<td>Martin Luther</td>
<td>1517</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mennonites</td>
<td>No single founder</td>
<td>1525</td>
<td>Switzerland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglican</td>
<td>King Henry 8</td>
<td>1534</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterianism</td>
<td>John Knox</td>
<td>1560</td>
<td>Scotland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptist Church</td>
<td>John Smyth</td>
<td>1605</td>
<td>Holland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch Reformed</td>
<td>Michaelis Jones</td>
<td>1628</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodism</td>
<td>John Wesley</td>
<td>1739</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Society of Friends</td>
<td>George Fox</td>
<td>1647</td>
<td>England</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moravians</td>
<td>Count Zinzendorf</td>
<td>1727</td>
<td>Germany</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Top Ten Largest Religious Bodies in the United States
(Figures reflect U.S. membership only. A few of these religious bodies have significant numbers of members in other countries as well.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rank</th>
<th>Religious Body</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Membership</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Catholic Church</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>66,407,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Southern Baptist Convention</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>16,400,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>United Methodist Church</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>8,251,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>5,599,177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Evangelical Lutheran Church in America</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>4,984,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Church of God in Christ</td>
<td>1991</td>
<td>*4,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>3,595,259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>National Baptist Convention of America</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>3,500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Assemblies of God</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>2,687,366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod</td>
<td>2003</td>
<td>2,512,714</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.adherents.com/rel_USA.html#bodies
IV. Is the Bible
THE Final Authority??

The Source of Doctrine (Theology) & the Standard by which it is Judged
(Formal Principle)

Scriptural References
Psalm 1  Psalm 19:7 (the word for law is Torah); 119:105
Proverbs 30:5-6  John 10:35  John 17:17
1 Thessalonians 2:13  2 Timothy 3:15-17  2 Peter 1:20-21

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Implication</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“...it is not from Sacred Scripture alone that the Church draws its certainty about everything which has been revealed. Sacred tradition and Sacred Scripture are sacred deposit of the Word of God, which is committed to the Church, and both are to be accepted and venerated with the same sense of devotion and reverence.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authority does not rest fully on what God has said, but also on what the church has said in the past, which may/may not be correct. God’s Word is NOT THE source of truth.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Although faith is above reason, there can never be any real disagreement between faith and reason...”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reason is on the same level as faith. (i.e. understanding = faith)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i.a. ““One would be mistaken, if he were to interpret the first chapters of Genesis in a slavishly literal way, viewing them as if they were intended to provide a factual description of the manner in which creation took place.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Bible is not to be taken literally, even where a literal account is given. Scripture becomes a matter of subjective interpretation.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“... (Bible): the books which contain the truth of God’s revelation...”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holy Scripture is not entirely the Word of God.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* * A Catholic Catechism, p210 (Quote from Vatican II)
 * ibid, p48
 * ibid, p49
 * Catechism of the Catholic Church, p868 (Glossary)
### Lutheran

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teaching</strong></th>
<th><strong>Implication</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;... the Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel&quot; SOLA SCRIPTURA</td>
<td>Scripture guides what the church is to speak and do. God's Word is the final authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;We believe, teach, and confess that the prophetic 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...&quot;</td>
<td>The Word of God is the final authority, not any other writing of the church.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Reason is captive to the Word of God.&quot; (Luther)</td>
<td>Man's reason (understanding) is servant to the Word of God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks: What has God done for my salvation?</td>
<td>Finds salvation to be the purpose of Scripture, NOT how to live one's life.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* The Book of Concord, Smalcald Articles, p 295
* The Book of Concord, Formula of Concord, p 464-5

### Protestant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Teaching</strong></th>
<th><strong>Implication</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Bible is God's Word. SOLA SCRIPTURA</td>
<td>Scripture guides what the church is to speak and do. God's Word is the final authority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>* Calvin: &quot;Reason and faith are not opposed to each other. Hence we maintain that we must not admit anything, even in religious matters, which is contrary to right reason.&quot; (see RC above)</td>
<td>Reason (we are) is the master of the Word of God, not the servant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks the question: &quot;What must I do to the greater glory of God?&quot;</td>
<td>The Bible becomes a 'law' book on how to greater glorify God. What we do becomes the emphasis of the Bible.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* What's Going On Among Lutherans?, p227 (Quoted from Calvin's Institutes of the Christian Religion)

### Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Catholic</strong></th>
<th>Scripture, Tradition (Church Fathers), Reason</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lutheran</strong></td>
<td>Scripture (Sola Scriptura)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Protestant</strong></td>
<td>Scripture, Reason</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What About . . .

The Bible

Greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Bible continues to be the best selling book of all time. Throughout the ages, the Bible has provided inspiration, comfort and guidance to those who have read it. But is the Bible merely an inspirational book? It is this, but so much more!

Let's spend a few moments reviewing some important truths about the Bible.

What is the Bible?
The word "Bible" is from a Greek word that means "book." What is this "good book"? That question has a two-part answer.

First, the Bible is actually a collection of books—66 of them—to be exact—from the first book, Genesis, to the last, Revelation. These books cover thousands of years and were written in either Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek. There are many different kinds of writing in the Bible: historical narrative, prophecy, poetry, speeches, letters and so on. From a merely human perspective, there is no question that the Bible is a masterpiece of literature.

Second, the much more important answer to the question, "What is the Bible?" is this: The Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is the collection of the thoughts—even the very words—that God gave to the authors of the Biblical books. The Bible is a gift God has given to His church. It is not a collection of ancient tales and myths. The Bible is the sure and certain means that God the Holy Spirit uses to communicate God's Word to us today.

How did we receive the Bible?
The Bible itself explains how we received it. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Tim. 3:16). We read elsewhere that, "Prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit" (2 Pet. 1:21).

Because people knew that the Bible was the actual Word of God, it was copied and re-copied with painstaking care and attention to detail, letter by letter, word by word. Though today we no longer possess the actual, original text of the Bible, we can be certain that the Holy Spirit has preserved the Word of God for us. Careful study of the many thousands of copies of the New Testament reveals that though there are minor differences between the various copies, there is no place where any key teaching of the Bible is contradicted.

Our English Bibles are translations from the original languages. When we use reliable translations, we can be sure that we have the true Word of God. Whatever the Word of God is in Hebrew, Aramaic or Greek, it is also the Word of God in English, or in any other language, as long as the translation is faithful to the original languages. Reliable translations include the King James Version, the New King James Version, the old Revised Standard Version, the New International Version and the New American Standard Bible.

Why is the Bible so important?
Someone may say, "The Bible is important to me because it tells me what to do" and another person might say, "The old stories remind me of my childhood" or "The Bible is a guidebook for daily living." These answers all have a grain of truth, but they miss the real reason why the Bible is so important: It is the sure and certain source for knowing who Jesus Christ is and what He has done for us.

Jesus said, "The Scriptures testify about me" (John 5:39). The main message of the Bible is the good news of God's work to reconcile the world to Himself through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Throughout Old and New Testaments, the central message of the Scriptures is the account of how God was in the world preparing to receive His Son and then what His Son did when He was here. It also tells how the church received this glorious message of salvation, and how it grew and spread throughout the known world. Luther once compared the Bible to the swaddling clothes the baby Jesus was wrapped in. Thus the Bible is Christ-centered.

Our Lord Jesus said, "If you remain in my Word, truly you are my disciples" (John 8:31). The divine authority and reliability of the Bible does not rest on the persons God used to write the Bible, nor on the endorsement of the Bible by the church, but rests entirely on the fact that it is the Word of the Lord. How do we know this? This confession of the Bible's complete authority is part of the certainty of the faith God gives to us as a gift.

Real human beings were given real words from God to write down. As our Lord Jesus Christ was both true God and
What About the Bible?

true man, so the Bible is truly the Word of God and also the writing of human beings. Even as our Lord Jesus took on human flesh free from sin and error, so God used human beings to provide a written revelation of Himself that is free from error. Thus, we believe that the Bible is both incapable of error (infallible) and free from error (inerrant).

The Bible has a very important distinction one needs to keep in mind in order to understand the Bible correctly: the difference between Law and Gospel. The Bible reveals God's perfect holiness and righteousness, and His expectation of perfection. His Law, summarized best in the Ten Commandments, reveals our sinful rebellion and our inability to save ourselves. The Gospel is the joyful news that our Lord Jesus Christ has given us complete forgiveness from our sins through His life, death, and resurrection for us. The proper distinction between Law and Gospel is the key to understanding the Bible correctly.

The most important message of the Bible is not the Law of God. The Bible is not merely a collection of principles for daily living. The Bible is not a book that answers every possible question we may have. Nor for that matter is the Bible a book that predicts every last detail about the future. The central and most important teaching in the Bible is the Gospel, the good news of God's gift of salvation through Jesus Christ. The Gospel is the message that predominates throughout the Bible, from Old Testament to New Testament. Thus the Bible is Gospel-centered.

We know that the Bible was not given merely for the sake of itself. We are not saved because we own a Bible. We are saved by our Lord Jesus Christ, who is revealed in the Bible. We believe the Bible because it is the Lord's Word. We believe in Him, thus we believe His Word to be true. We receive what He has given, He has given us the Scriptures. Thus, the Bible is the foundation and touchstone for everything that the church believes, teaches, confesses, and practices. Why? Because the Bible is the inspired, Christ-centered and Gospel-centered Word of the Lord.

How Do We Use the Bible?

The Bible is foundational for the church's ministry. The Bible was never intended to stand alone or apart from the community of faith we call the Christian church. It is sad when some people think that, if they just read the Bible, they can stay away from church. We receive our Lord's gifts with joy and do not say, "We want this, but not that." It would be misleading if our high respect for the Scriptures were used to drive a wedge between the Bible and the church. The church is the gathering of God's people around the Lord's Word and Sacraments. The Scriptures are the sure and certain revelation of God's Word and thus are to be read, studied, and meditated on by Christians at church and at home.

We Lutherans realize that Scripture must be interpreted according to the central truth of the Bible, the Gospel, not picked apart and made to teach things that actually conflict with the Gospel. Therefore, we pay close attention to the grammar and words of the Bible, seeking out the intended meaning, which is the plain sense of the text. We recognize that God the Holy Spirit works through the Scriptures to create and sustain the church as it comes together around the preaching of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments.

Whenever the Word of God is preached, taught, studied, read, learned, or meditated on, the Holy Spirit is actively turning people from their sin and drawing them to Christ for their salvation. Thus, we will want to be in the Word daily. At home we read and meditate on the Word through our private and family devotions. At church, our hymns and liturgy are anchored in the Word of God. Our pastors preach to us on the basis of the Scripture lessons appointed for each Sunday in the church year. Our school teachers lead our children into a deeper knowledge of the Word of God. In Sunday school, children learn the biblical accounts and thus have a foundation for their lives. In youth and adult Bible studies, the Scriptures are studied in a variety of ways so they can inform and enlighten us and help us understand how we live out our lives as God's people.

What a blessed gift the Holy Scriptures are to us and to all people! Everything God wants us to know about Himself is contained in His Word. Through the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit reveals the truth about our sinful condition and the joyful news of God's saving work for us through His Son, Jesus Christ. Truly, God's Word is a lamp to our feet and a light for our path (Ps. 119:105). For that reason we pray, "Lord, keep us steadfast in your Word."

— Dr. A.L. Barry
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
V. The Main Emphases

The Central Thought of the respective theological system
(Material Principle)

John 6:29
John 20:31
Romans 6:23

What is the Gospel?
Does it matter how one defines the Gospel?
How does one's definition of the Gospel affect one's practice?

- Lutheran

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Law</th>
<th>Gospel</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written in the heart</td>
<td>Manner of revelation</td>
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<tr>
<td>What we are to do</td>
<td>Contents</td>
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<tr>
<td>Conditional</td>
<td>Promises</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nothing but threats</td>
<td>Threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To secure sinners</td>
<td>Persons to whom preached</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By revelation</td>
<td>What God is doing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unconditional</td>
<td>No threats</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To alarmed sinners</td>
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* God’s No and God’s Yes (Walther), p15-17

"Where this single article (of justification by faith) remains pure, Christendom will remain pure, in beautiful harmony, and without any schisms. But where it does not remain pure, it is impossible to repel any error or heretical spirit." (Luther)
[Book of Concord, Formula of Concord, p540]

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Lutheran</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Works righteousness, legalism, man must progressively be justified (God’s Sovereignty)</td>
<td>Justification by grace through faith (God declares the sinner righteous) (God’s grace &amp; mercy)</td>
<td>‘God’s Grace’, but adherence to God’s rules, legalism (God’s Sovereignty, The Glory of God)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What About...

The Gospel

Greetings to you in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. This pamphlet has been prepared to show you how much we need the Gospel, why it is such good news, how we receive it and how we respond to it.

Why do we need the Gospel?

We cannot really understand how good the message of the Gospel is until we understand how bad our situation is without it. We are poor miserable sinners. We sin daily and deserve nothing but God's wrath and punishment.

Without Jesus Christ, our situation would be totally hopeless. The Scriptures describe human beings as dead in trespasses and sin. Without the mercy and cleansing of God through the blood of Jesus Christ, there awaits us only everlasting punishment in hell. Thus, we need the Gospel—desperately!

What is the Gospel?

The word “gospel” is a translation of a Greek word that means, “an announcement of good news.” The Gospel is the good news that God the Holy Trinity decided not to abandon humanity when Adam and Eve first fell into sin. God decided then and there that sin and death would not have the last word. He promised to send a Savior.

When the time was right, God sent His Son into our world to be born of the Virgin Mary. Our Lord Jesus Christ lived a perfect life for us. On the cross, He received the penalty and punishment for the sins of the whole world, offering Himself as the perfect sacrifice for sin. Jesus rose from the dead, victorious over our ancient enemies: sin, death and the devil.

Therefore, each Christian is able with great joy and confidence to declare before the whole world: “My Lord Jesus Christ has redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil; not with gold or silver, but with His holy, precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death.”

What glorious good news! The one, true eternal and all-powerful God came into our world to live, suffer, die and rise again for us. We, who are unholy and unrighteous, receive the forgiveness of all our sins and thus receive the perfect holiness and righteousness of Christ our Savior—as a free gift—purely because of His love for us. That is good news! That is the Gospel!

How do we receive this great salvation in our lives today?

How do we personally receive the forgiveness Christ won for the entire world? How does what happened on the cross nearly 2,000 years ago flow into our lives today?

Here too there is very good news. God, through His Gospel, offers us forgiveness and help against sin in more than one way. God is surprisingly rich in His grace. He gives His Gospel to us through His Word, through Baptism, through the Sacrament of the Altar, and through confession and absolution. These are the ways God enters our lives today to apply to us personally the great salvation Christ won for the world.

The Holy Spirit works through the Word of the Gospel to create and sustain faith in our heart that Christ is the Savior of the world, and thus our Savior too. The Bible is the Word of God, written down for our learning and edification. The Scriptures are filled with the good news of Jesus Christ and all that He has done for us. Through the almighty Spirit-filled Word, God gathers us into His church, which is truly the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit is present, effective and active through the Word when it is proclaimed, heard and meditated upon.

The Sacrament of Holy Baptism is water included in God’s command and combined with God’s Word, or as St. Paul says in Holy Scripture, “The washing of water with the word.” Through Baptism, we are made partakers of Christ’s death and resurrection. Therefore, we know that Baptism works forgiveness of sins, rescues from death and the devil, and gives eternal life to all who believe. Since Baptism is connected to the Word and promise of God, it is truly a life-giving water, rich in grace—a washing of the new birth in the Holy Spirit.

Christ has provided a special application of the Gospel through confession and absolution. Confession is admitting our sins to God and receiving His forgiveness from our pastor, as from God Himself, not doubting, but firmly believing that by it our sins are forgiven before God in heaven. Thus, by divine ordinance, Christ Himself has entrusted absolution to His Christian church and commanded us to absolve one another from sins.

The Lord’s Supper is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself, for us Christians to eat and to drink. In the Lord’s Supper, Christ’s body and blood are given to us as our treasure
What About the Gospel?

and gift which sustains our faith and life in Him. If you are heavy-laden and feel your weakness, go joyfully to the Sacrament and receive refreshment, comfort and strength.

Those who want to be forgiven by God and who want to enjoy His presence in their lives, hunger and thirst for the Word and Sacraments. With the Psalmist we say, “My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?” God has provided the means to receive Him. So, Christians hunger and thirst for God’s Word, absolution, the Sacrament, etc. We have the certainty that God meets us and gives us what we need in His means of grace. The forgiveness Christ won for the world on the cross is applied to us personally by God through His Word and Sacraments. What a joy for us to know that where there is forgiveness of sins, there is also life and salvation.

Thus, we believe that we cannot, by our own reason or strength, believe in Jesus Christ our Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit calls us by the Gospel, enlightens us with His gifts, sanctifies and keeps us in the true faith. In the same way, He calls, gathers, enlightens and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all of our sins and the sins of all believers.

How does God cause us to respond to His Gospel?

We love God because He first loved us. Our Lord is at work in us both to will and to do what is pleasing to Him. Christians look to the Ten Commandments to know what is pleasing to God and wish to serve Him in gratitude for the great salvation that is theirs in Christ.

From the Word of God we learn that God wants us to put Him first, above any other person or thing, to respect His name and not misuse it, to hear and obey His Word. Children are to honor and obey their parents and others in authority. We are to look out for the welfare of others, doing nothing to hurt or harm our neighbor. We are to live sexually pure and decent lives with husbands and wives loving and honoring each other. In looking out for our neighbor’s welfare and helping him to improve and protect his property and business, we are also to take care not to lie about our neighbor, but to help, support and defend him in every need and, finally, we are to be content with what we have been given, and not want what is not ours.

What a joyful privilege we have to serve God and others! He gives us the opportunity to bear witness to our faith through both our words and our deeds.

How is the Gospel obscured?

The Gospel is obscured by well-intentioned people who want to encourage a life of good works, and end up making Christians think that it is by their works that they are saved. This is a great danger. Through His Word and Sacraments, Jesus is constantly working in our lives to forgive our sins and strengthen our relationship with God. God always receives the credit for our salvation. He is the one working in us. This is not something we can do. Our good works are the result of God’s love in our hearts and lives. Our good works in this life do not save us, only Christ saves us. Works serve our neighbor and show to the world that we are grateful for God’s mercy in our lives.

Another way the Gospel can be obscured is when too much emphasis is put on an emotional response to the Gospel. Some Christians believe that unless they have some sort of ecstatic, charismatic experience, or feel some sort of “spiritual high,” they are not really Christians. It is truly sad that some people look into their own hearts for the security that they are children of God, instead of putting their hope and trust in the objective work of Christ for them, and in the means God uses to come to them—His Word and Sacraments.

If we find ourselves beginning to ask, “Am I doing enough?” or thinking, “It doesn’t matter what I do, for God will forgive me anyway,” then we are at risk of losing Christ and His forgiveness. We look always to Jesus and put our hope and trust in Him. He is our Savior. And, that’s good news! All blessing, honor, thanks and praise to Father, Son, and Spirit, the God who saved us by His grace. All glory to His merit! O triune God in heaven above, you have revealed your saving love. Your blessed name we hallow.

—Dr. A. L. Barry
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
VI. Salvation & Faith

John 3:36    Ephesians 2:8-10    Romans 4:4-5
Romans 6:23  Romans 8:1-4    Galatians 3:2-3; 10-14

Who are saved?
From who/where does salvation come?
What is meant by ‘grace’?
is grace universal or selective?
How about ‘once saved always saved’?

Salvation

Catholic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Implication</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Outside the (Roman Catholic) Church there is no salvation,&quot; St. Cyprian taught in the third century.</td>
<td>If one is outside (not a member of) the Roman Catholic Church, one is not saved.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>[Extra Ecclesiam Salus Non Est]</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>The Church has always taught this doctrine. But this is no fierce proclamation that those who through no fault of their own, have not come to recognize Christ’s presence in the Church and His command to come to this life will be excluded from the hope of eternal life, as they are not excluded from a certain membership by desire of the Church.</td>
<td>Ignorance IS an excuse. Because the Church desires them to come, the not-knowing ones are not excluded from salvation. But what does the Bible say?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;Man stands in need of salvation from God. Divine Help comes to him (man) in Christ through THE LAW THAT GUIDES HIM and the grace that sustains him.&quot;</td>
<td>God helps man with the law for salvation.</td>
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Lutheran

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<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Implication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;...our righteousness before God consists in this, that God forgives us our sins purely by his grace, without any preceding, present, or subsequent work, merit, or worthiness, and reckons to us the righteousness of Christ’s obedience&quot;</td>
<td>Our righteousness before God DOES NOT depend on us, but only on Christ’s perfect obedience.</td>
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**Protestant**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Implication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal decision for Christ: ‘Asking Jesus into the heart’</td>
<td>It's up to us to 'let Jesus in'; prayer becomes a 'means of grace'; we are the deciding factor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Born-again Christian’</td>
<td>Implies that one was a Christian but was not born again. The two are the same, just different terms. Redundant and misleading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subjectivity of emotions (Wesley, Philip Spencer (Lutheran Pietist)) - “I feel Christ in my heart”</td>
<td>One is a Christian if one 'feels' like one - a dangerous game it is to trust in one's feelings for the assurance of faith.</td>
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**FAITH**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>Protestant</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A gift or a work?, God initiates, &quot;Faith is the beginning of human salvation.&quot; &quot;Faith is man's response to God.&quot;</td>
<td>Basis of faith: &quot;The Holy Spirit's activity evident in producing self-denial and observance of the rules for Christian living&quot; (Calvin)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A work &amp; gift of God, simply believing God's promises.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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*Book of Concord*, Formula of Concord, p473
*ibid.*, p473

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**Scriptural References**

- Genesis 15:6
- Romans 4:2-5
- Hebrews 11:1-3
- John 3:18
- Galatians 3:5-7
- John 6:28-29
- Ephesians 2:4-5, 8-9
VII. Sanctification & Good Works

Sanctification:
- wide sense - 'all that the Holy Spirit does in separating man from sin and making him God's own, so that he may live for God and serve Him.' (Pieper, p3)
- narrow sense - 'the internal spiritual transformation of the believer or the holiness of life which follows upon justification.' (Pieper, p4)

Guiding questions:
- Sanctification: Who does it?
- What is the definition of a 'good work' (before men/God)?
  [Consider: God's law & a proper motive]
- Comment: 'deeds NOT creeds'

Catholic

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Implication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&quot;It is a prime duty of the Catholic to retain and develop this relationship (sanctifying grace) with God.&quot;</td>
<td>Good works improve and keep us in the 'state of grace' with God. It is OUR job to keep the relationship going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;If anyone saith, that men are justified, either by the sole imputation of the justice of Christ, or by the sole remission of sins, to the exclusion of the grace and the charity which is poured forth in their hearts by the Holy Ghost, is inherent in them, or even that the grace, whereby we are justified, is only the favour of God; let him be anathema.&quot;</td>
<td>Cursed are they who believe that men are justified only by Christ and NOT also by what God does in them (and their following works).</td>
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*Catholic Catechism, p364  
*Our Church and Others, p52

Lutheran

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<tr>
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<th>Implication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... good works, like fruits on a tree, certainly and indubitably follow genuine faith - if it is a living and not a dead faith.&quot;</td>
<td>Good works follow faith. Faith produces good works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&quot;...not our works but only the Holy Spirit, working through faith, preserves faith and salvation in us. The good works are testimonials of the Holy Spirit's presence and indwelling.&quot;</td>
<td>God sustains &amp; preserves us in the faith, not our works.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preace to St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans (Dr. Luther): “Thus faith is a divine work in us, that changes us and regenerates us of God, and puts to death the old Adam, makes us entirely different men in heart, spirit, mind, and all powers, and brings with it [confers] the Holy Ghost. Oh, it is a living, busy, active, powerful thing that we have in faith, so that it is impossible for it not to do good without ceasing. Nor does it ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has wrought them, and is always engaged in doing them. But he who does not do such works is void of faith, and groans and looks about after faith and good works, and knows neither what faith nor what good works are, yet babbles and prates with many words concerning faith and good works. [Justifying] faith is a living, bold [firm] trust in God’s grace, so certain that a man would die a thousand times for it [rather than suffer this trust to be wrested from him]. And this trust and knowledge of divine grace renders joyful, fearless, and cheerful towards God and all creatures, which [joy and cheerfulness] the Holy Ghost works through faith; and on account of this, man becomes ready and cheerful, without coercion, to do good to every one, to serve every one, and to suffer everything for love and praise to God, who has conferred this grace on him, so that it is impossible to separate works from faith, yea, just as impossible as it is for heat and light to be separated from fire.”

(The Book of Concord, Formula of Concord, p552-3, paragraphs 10-12)

Protestant

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching</th>
<th>Implication</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sanctification is a means to increase the glory of God. (Calvin)</td>
<td>What we do increases/decreases God's glory, leaving God's glory dependent? on us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>*'entire sanctification' through methodical observances or rules and regulations under the supervision of other Christians (John Wesley of the Methodists)</td>
<td>Sanctification is dependent on us. We get 'closer' to God by what we do. (see quote *under Catholicism)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generally, emphasis on 'life over doctrine'. [Deeds, not Creeds]</td>
<td>The way we live is more important than THE life (Jesus) that saves us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An emphasis on the 'cultivation of holiness' via small groups (Pietism, Protestants generally).</td>
<td>Small groups are needed in order to 'produce' (and grow) the Christian life. Without them, we cannot be 'true' Christians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* What's Going on Among Lutherans?, p 238

Scriptural References

John 15:4-6 2 Corinthians 3:5 Ephesians 2:10 Galatians 2:20-21
Galatians 5:19-26 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Hebrews 13:20-21
VIII. The Sacraments - Definition

What is a sacrament? (Validity? Benefit/Blessing?)
How many are there?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catholic</th>
<th>7 sacraments - Baptism, confirmation, Eucharist, Penance, Extreme Unction (anointing oil), Holy Orders (Ordination), Matrimony</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>Only the sacraments are means of grace. The Word is not.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lutheran</td>
<td>2 (3) sacraments - Baptism, Lord’s Supper (Absolution)</td>
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<td>“Means of Grace”; assurance is based on the objective promises of the Gospel</td>
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<td>Protestant</td>
<td>“Zwingli - signs and badges whereby men outwardly indicate that they are through faith already the recipients of God’s grace.</td>
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<td>Directs the Christian to seek assurance of being in the state of grace in a program of Christian activity.</td>
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<td>Elmbrook (‘Nondenominational’ church Milwaukee, WI area) - “We believe water baptism and the Lord’s Supper are ordinances to be observed by the Church during this age. They are, however, not to be regarded as means of salvation or prerequisites for church membership.”</td>
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*The Religious Bodies of America, p. 203*

Different Views of the Means of Grace

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<th>Reformed</th>
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<th>Lutheran</th>
<th>Roman Catholic</th>
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<td>Saving Faith by</td>
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<td>Efficacious Grace</td>
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[faith without means]     [faith through faith]                      [means w/out faith] (ex operae operato) operation by physical contact
[faith through means]     [faith through means]                      [faith through means]

*Charts of Christian Theology, p. 101*

Scriptural References

Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33
Matthew 28:27-28
Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26

John 5:24; 8:31-32; 14:23-26; 12:47-50
Romans 1:16-17; 10:8-15 (8b)
Titus 3:5-7 (1 Corinthians 6:11)
What About…

Holy Baptism

Suppose for a moment that there was a doctor who had such incredible talent that he could prevent people from dying, and bring those who had died back to life, never to die again. Just imagine how people would do whatever they could to be treated by this doctor! Now consider that in Holy Baptism, God actually does give us the gift of eternal life! Let’s learn more about this marvelous blessing.

What is Baptism?

Baptism is not just plain water, but it is the water included in God’s command and combined with God’s Word.

What’s so special about a handful of simple water? Nothing, until God connects His Word to it! In Baptism, that is exactly what God is doing. He combines His life-giving Word with the waters of Holy Baptism, and thereby we are born again of water and the Spirit (John 3:5).

What is that Word of God?

Christ our Lord says in the last chapter of Matthew: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 28:19).

Our Lord commands Baptism. It is not optional, nor is it simply a nice “extra.” God’s Word takes on many forms, according to His good and gracious will. The Word is preached, taught, and proclaimed. It is read, studied, and mediated on. It is shared by Christians, with non-Christian and fellow believer alike. And it is that Word of God, His promise, that makes Baptism what it is.

God Himself is present as His name is joined to the water, with all His power and all His blessings of forgiveness, life and salvation. Christ consecrates the water of Baptism with His Word, so as we in Baptism stand with Christ in the water, the Father calls us His beloved children, the Holy Spirit is given to us, and heaven is opened to us.

Those who receive Baptism after they have been brought to faith by the preaching or teaching of the Word also receive all the blessings God has attached to Baptism.

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).

In and through Baptism, God cleanses us from all of our sins, snatch us from the power of Satan, and gives us everlasting life. It is all God’s doing as He gives us His blessing. It is His promise. In Baptism, our Triune God imparts to each of us personally the gifts the Lord Jesus Christ won for the world through His life, suffering, death, and resurrection. Please see especially Gal. 3:27; Col. 1:13–14; 1 Peter 3:21; Titus 3:5–7 and 1 Cor. 6:11.

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 in 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 3:5–8).

Of course, simple water can’t do such great things, but the water of Baptism is not simple water! Baptism is one very special way God delivers to us the blessings Christ won for us. Baptism is not something we do, but something God does. Therefore, it is far more than a symbol. It is a sacred act in which God Himself is at work forgiving sins, giving new life in Christ and bestowing on us the Holy Spirit with all of His gifts. Baptism gives us the faith through which we receive these gifts. God the Holy Spirit works faith in the promise attached to Baptism.

What does such baptizing with water indicate?

It indicates that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned over and die with all sins and evil desires, and that a new man should daily arise and come out to live before God in righteousness and purity forever. Where is this written? St. Paul writes in Romans chapter six: “We were there-
What About Holy Baptism?

fore buried with Him through Baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life" (Rom. 6:4).

In Baptism we are buried with Christ, and in Baptism we are raised with Christ. His death and resurrection are made our own, and because of that fact through our entire life, we are able to say, "I am baptized!" Having been buried with Christ into His death we do not have to be afraid of the tomb in which we will rest one day. Christ has already been there. In Holy Baptism we have passed through His grave into His resurrection.

As Luther says in his Large Catechism, "If I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and have eternal life, both in soul and body. ...No greater jewel can adorn our body and soul than Baptism. ...Baptism is a treasure which God gives us and faith grasps, just as the Lord Christ upon the cross is not a human work, but a treasure comprehended and offered to us in the Word and received by faith."  

What does Baptism have to do with our daily life?

Everything! Our entire life is a life lived trusting in the promises of God, given to us in and through Holy Baptism. We are constantly returning to Baptism. In moments of temptation and suffering in our lives, when all seems to be crashing down on us, and in particular in those moments when our sin and the guilt of these sins haunt us, we are able, as Luther says, to "Pull out our Baptism and wave it under the devil's nose and say, 'I am baptized.' ...I have God's bath. It is Christ's own. It is a bath blessed and mixed with the blood of Christ.'" We can't return to the cross of Christ, nor should we attempt to imagine ourselves back there. No, we turn instead to the "here and now" reality of God's work in our lives. We return to our Baptism. For it was there and then that God buried us with Christ and raised us with Him to a new life.

In his Large Catechism, Luther says, "Every Christian has enough to study and to practice all his life. He always has enough to do to believe firmly what Baptism promises and brings—victory over death and the devil, forgiveness of sins, God's grace, the entire Christ, and the Holy Spirit with His gifts." And: "If you live in repentance, therefore, you are walking in Baptism, which not only announce this new life, but also produces, begins and promotes it. In Baptism we are given the grace, Spirit and power to suppress the old man, so that the new man may come forth and grow strong. Therefore, Baptism remains forever ...Repentance, therefore, is nothing else than a return and approach to Baptism."

Why are infants and young children baptized?

They are baptized for the same reason adults are baptized—because of the command and promise of God. What is promised in Baptism is given to all who receive it; therefore, infants and young children also have the promise of God. They, too, are made children of God. They, too, are included in the words "all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Jesus specifically invites little children to come to Him (Luke 18:16-17). But most important, as sinners, infants need what Baptism gives.

By His word, God created all that is seen and unseen. By His word, our Lord Christ called a dead man from the tomb (John 11:43-44). The unbaptized child, John the Baptist, leaped in his mother's womb when he heard the word of God (Luke 1:41-44). Why is there any doubt that it is through the Word and the promise of Baptism God works a similar gift of faith in the infant? If we misunderstand Baptism to be our work, then we will always cast doubt on it. When we recognize that it is not our work, but God's gracious promise and work, we realize that infants are to be baptized and receive the treasures offered in and through Baptism.

Sadly, there are individuals and church bodies that deny Baptism to young children and infants. They do not believe that these little ones need what Holy Baptism gives. They do not believe what the Bible teaches so clearly, namely, that God saves us through Baptism. As a result of these false teachings, they deny both to themselves and to others the power, blessing and comfort of Holy Baptism. That is tragic, for it is a most serious offense against God to deny what He plainly declares in His Word: "The promise is for you and your children" (Acts 2:39) and "Baptism now saves you" (1 Peter 3:21).

Conclusion

"We see what a great and excellent thing Baptism is, which snatches us from the jaws of the devil and makes God our own. It overcomes and takes away sin and daily strengthens the new man. It always remains until we pass from this present misery to eternal glory" (Large Catechism).

The meaning, power and promise of Holy Baptism rest entirely on the One who lived perfectly in our place and who suffered and died as the sacrificial ransom for the sins of the world. He rose victorious over death and the grave. In Holy Baptism, we receive all the blessings of Christ's atoning sacrifice. Thank God for His gift of Holy Baptism!

1. The words in italics are from Luther's Small Catechism.
2. WA 67/68, 10:19, 32:16.

—D.L. Barry
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
What About...

The Sacrament of the Altar

On the journey through our earthly life to heaven, our good and gracious God provides a holy and precious meal to sustain and strengthen us on our pilgrimage—the Lord's Supper. What a privilege it is for us to receive this powerfully comforting gift! Thanks and praise forever be to God for the Sacrament of the Altar.

Guide me ever, great Redeemer, pilgrim through his barren land. I am weak, but you are mighty; Hold me with your powerful hand. Bread of heaven, bread of heavens, Feed me now and evermore.

Why do we need the Lord's Supper?

As we examine our lives in the bright light of God's holiness, we realize how much we have sinned and how much we need His forgiveness. Our sinfulness and the troubles, sorrows, difficulties and stresses of our life in this fallen world are all reasons we need the Lord's Supper.

As great as is our need, even greater is the life-giving meal He has provided: It is a very personal way God works in our life to save us, to strengthen us and to keep us close to Him. Jesus promised to be with us always, to the very close of the age (Matt. 28:20). Through His precious Word and Sacraments, our Lord continues to fulfill His promise.

Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of the Altar with these words: "This is My body, given for you. This is My blood of the new testament, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins" (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:21-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). The Lord's Supper is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for His Christians to eat and to drink (Small Catechism).

Solemnly, we gather around the table. As adorning the Lord's Supper, we are reminded of the Bread of Life. This is a meal before which all must bow, for it is a meal with a living God. We are reminded of our weakness and sinfulness. But we are also reminded of our God's strength and power. We are reminded that we are forgiven and that we are loved. We are reminded of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. And we are reminded of the joy and peace that come from knowing that we are forgiven and that we are loved.

What is Jesus giving as in the Lord's Supper?

In the Sacrament of the Altar our Lord and Savior is continually distributing to us the body and blood of the sacrifice He made for us, the sacrifice by which He paid for the sins of the entire world. Thus, receiving His body and blood, we receive forgiveness, life and salvation. Flowing from these tremendous treasures of God's mercy are the love, peace and hope that He gives us in His Supper, and the ability and desire to do God's will, living in love and harmony with others.

It is often observed how there is a foreshadowing of the Lord's Supper in the Old Testament discussion of how the sacrifices were eaten by those for whom they were offered (1 Cor. 10:18). The Scriptures indicate that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins (Heb. 9:22). The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son, cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7; Matt. 26:28; Acts 20:28; Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:14; Heb. 12:24; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Rev. 1:5; Rev. 7:14). And it is this very blood He gives in His Supper.

Draw near and take the body of the Lord, and drink the holy blood for you outpoured. Offered was He for greatest and for least, Himself the victim and Himself the priest.

How is Jesus present in His Supper?

We do not try to explain how Jesus is present under the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper, rather we believe, teach, confess and rejoice that He is present. We Lutherans let the words of Jesus stand without arguing about their possibility or trying to explain how they are true. As Luther put it so clearly, "We maintain that the bread and wine in the Supper are the true body and blood of Christ" (SA III.6). Everyone who communions receives into their mouths the body and blood of Jesus Christ, whether they believe it or not, be they worthy or unworthy.

Jesus' Word is sure and certain. The Holy Spirit gives us faith to trust in and believe Jesus' words, "Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins." Faith in Christ's promise is what makes us worthy to receive His Supper. Christ's words of institution retain their validity and efficacious power and thus, by virtue of these words, the body and blood of Christ are truly present, distributed and received.

Your body and your blood, once slain and shed for me, are taken at your table, Lord, in best reality. Search not how this takes place, this wondrous mystery. God can accomplish vastly more than what we think could be.

Why do we receive the Lord's Supper often?

We receive the Lord's Supper often because of how much we need what the Lord gives in His Supper. We dare never make a law about how often an individual "should" or "must"
receive the Lord's Supper. But this is a separate question from how frequently Holy Communion is offered in our congregations. Our Lutheran Confessions make it clear that the Lord's Supper is offered every Lord's Day and on other days when there are communicants present (AC XXIV.34 and Ap. XXIV.1).

In saying this, our Confessions are merely reflecting the truth of the Sacred Scriptures, which place the Lord's Supper at the center of worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor. 10:16, 31), not as an appendage or an occasional extra. It is for this reason that our Synod has repeatedly encouraged our congregations to provide the opportunity for communicants who so desire to receive the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day.

My Lord, You have here in me within Your holiest place, and here Yourself have fed me with treasures of Your grace; for You have freely given what earth could never buy, the bread of life from heaven, that now I shall not die.

What should we do if we do not feel a need to receive the Lord's Supper?

Because of our sinful human nature, we are tempted at times to think, "I don't need to take Communion. I just don't feel like it." But when we feel this way, we need to realize that in the Lord's Supper, the holy God of God, and Light of Light, very God of very God, is coming among us, under the bread and wine, to be with us, to join Himself to us, to forgive, renew and strengthen us.

In preparing to receive the Lord's Supper, it is good for us to review, "Christian Questions with Their Answers," on page 306 of our hymnal, Lutheran Worship. Here Luther talks about those times when we just may not "feel" like receiving the Lord's Supper. Luther writes, "To such a person no better advice can be given than that, in the first place, he put his hand into his shirt and feel whether he still has flesh and blood, and that he by all means believe what the Scriptures say about it in Gal. 5 and Rom. 7.

"Secondly, that he look around to see whether he is still in the world, and keep in mind that there will be no lack of sin and trouble, as the Scriptures say in John 15:16 and in 1 John 2 and 5.

"Thirdly, he will certainly have the devil also about him, who with his lying and murdering, day and night, will let him have no peace within or without, as the Scriptures picture him in John 8:19 and 16; 1 Peter 5:8; 6:2 Tim. 2."

O Jesus, beloved Lord, my praise, my heart's delight to You I raise. You have so lovingly bestowed on me Your body and Your blood. Break forth, my soul, in joy and say: what wealth has come me today, what health of body, mind, and soul? Christ dwells within me, makes me whole.

Conclusion

Here is how one Lutheran theologian beautifully describes the precious treasure of the Lord's Supper:

"The Israelites were fed with manna in the wilderness as with bread from heaven (Ex. 16:15). In this Holy Supper we have the true manna which came down from heaven to give life to the world. Here is that bread of heaven, that angel's food, of which if any man eat he shall never be hungry (John 6:35, 31).

"The children of Israel had the ark of the covenant and the mercy seat, where they could hear the Lord speaking with them face to face (Ex. 25:21, 22). Here we have the true ark of the covenant, the most holy body of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). Here we have the true mercy seat in the precious blood of Christ (Rom. 3:25), through which God has made us accepted in the Beloved (Eph. 1:6).

"Nor does Christ simply speak the word of comfort to our souls. He also takes us up into heaven. He feeds our souls not with heavenly manna, but, what is far better, with His own blessed Self. Here is the true gate of heaven for our souls, and the ladder reaching from earth to heaven on which the angels of God ascend and descend (Gen. 28:12).

"Christ holds us dear because He has bought us at so dear a price. He holds us dear because He feeds our souls with the precious bread. He holds us dear because we are members of His body, of His flesh (Phil. 3:30).

"The holy flesh of God, which the angelic hosts adore in the unity of the divine nature, before which angels bow in lowly reverence, and before which the principalities and powers of heaven tremble and stand in awe, has become the nourishment for our souls. Let the heavens rejoice and the earth be glad (Ps. 96:11), but still more let the believing soul exult and sing for joy to whom God gives such an unspeakable gift!"

O Lord, we praise you, bless you, and adore you, in thanksgiving how before you. Here with your body and your blood you nourish our weak souls that they may flourish. O Lord, have mercy!

1 Hymn 220, LW
2 Hymn 239, LW
3 Hymn 240, LW
4 Hymn 241, LW
5 Hymn 244, LW
6 Hymn 245, LW
7 John Gerhard, Sacred Meditations, pg. 105.
8 Hymn 238, LW.

— Dr. A. L. Barry
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
What About...  

Fellowship in the Lord’s Supper

Fellowship in the Lord’s Supper is the basis for the practice of “close” or “closed communion.” (The phrases “close communion” and “closed communion” refer to one and the same practice.) This pamphlet will help you appreciate, understand and explain to others the practice of close communion.

What does God teach in His Word?

“Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, ‘Take and eat; this is my body.’ Then he took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.’” (cf. Matt. 26:26–28; Mark 14:22–25; Luke 22:14–20; 1 Cor. 11:17–29).

“They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself” (1 Cor. 11:26–29).

What does the Lutheran church believe about the Lord’s Supper?

The Lutheran church believes, teaches and confesses that the Lord’s Supper is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, under the bread and wine, given to us Christians to eat and to drink. 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 into the mouths of all who commune. Those who believe the promise: “Given and shed for you for the forgiveness of sins,” receive forgiveness of sins, life and salvation. This promise, along with the bodily eating and drinking, is the main thing in the Sacrament.

The Lutheran church rejects and condemns incorrect understandings of the Lord’s Supper, such as the view that the sacrifice of the Mass delivers man from his sins, or that the substance of the consecrated bread and wine is actually changed into the body and blood of Christ. We also reject and condemn the view that in the Lord’s Supper the true body and blood of Christ is not received by the mouth of the communicants, under the bread and wine, but is received only spiritually in the heart by faith, or that the bread and wine are only symbols of the far distant body and blood of our Lord.

How is the Lord’s Supper an expression of church fellowship?

While the Lord’s Supper is always a personal matter, it is never a private matter. That is an important truth that is often overlooked. Those who commune at the same altar are thereby declaring publicly that they are united in the doctrine of the Apostles (Acts 2:42). Therefore, fellowship in the Supper is church fellowship. This is taught by Holy Scripture in 1 Cor. 10:16. Here is how one of our church’s teachers explained this truth.

“As there is but one bread, one loaf, from which we eat, so we are the body of Christ. The eating of one and the same loaf of bread unites us to one body. Our participation in the Lord’s Supper is a public profession on our part that we are not only in fellowship with Christ, but that we also are in fellowship with those with whom we commune at the Lord’s Table. We all eat the same bread, the body of Christ. Through that act we indicate that we belong together. All of us Christians who in the Lord’s Supper eat the body of Christ and drink his blood present ourselves as one spiritual family. What we eat and drink together, Christ’s body and blood, ties us together more closely than the bonds of blood. We declare ourselves to be brothers and sisters in Christ. Upon this Bible passage do we base the saying, ‘Altar Fellowship is Church Fellowship.’

“This passage in Corinthians strikes a crushing blow at unbelief. To admit those who believe differently to our Communion, and so to our church fellowship, is a contradiction within itself. For those who approach the same altar together profess to be one—one in all points of Christian doctrine and practice—while irreligiously they disagree. It would be shameful hypocrisy on our part if we would have those who actually profess a different faith than we do join us at the Lord’s Altar” (Steckhardt, 1 Corinthians, p.60–61).
What About Fellowship in the Lord's Supper?

Another teacher of our church had this to say about why the Lord's Supper is an expression of church fellowship:

"The Holy Supper is one of the marks, one of the banners of the church, one of the seals of the church's doctrine and faith (Rom. 6:11; see I Cor. 10:21; Ex. 12:48). In whichever church one receives the Holy Supper, one is confessing that church and its doctrine. There cannot be a more inward, brotherly fellowship than that into which one enters with those in whose fellowship he receives the holy Supper. . . . Even one who confesses the Real Presence cannot ordinarily except in the case of death, be admitted if he is and wants to remain, not a member of our orthodox church, but rather a Roman Catholic, Reformed, so-called Evangelical or Unionist, Methodist, Baptist, in short, a member of an erring fellowship. For the Sacrament, as it is a seal of faith, is also the banner of the fellowship in which it is administered" (Walther, Pastoral Theology p. 110–111, 149).

What is the Lutheran church's motive for practicing closed communion?

Our Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations offers the following helpful explanation of why we practice closed communion:

"Closed communion seeks to prevent a profession of confessional unity in faith where there is, in fact, disunity and disagreement. It would be neither faithful to the Scriptural requirements for admission to Holy Communion (1 Cor. 11:27ff; cf. 10:16–17) nor helpful to fallen humanity if the Christian Church welcomes to its altar those who deny or question clear Scriptural teachings.

"The reasons for the practice of closed communion are often misunderstood by Christians who have been accustomed to an 'open communion' policy. In a tract titled, Why Close Communion? the rationale for the practice of closed communion is explained in this way:

"So it is not that a Lutheran congregation wants to bar fellow-saints from the blessings of the Eucharist when they practice closed communion. It is not that they want to be separatistic, or set themselves up as judges of other men. The practice of closed communion is prompted by love and is born of the heartfelt conviction, on the basis of Scripture alone, that we must follow Christ's command. This means refusing the Lord's Supper to those whose belief is not known to us. It is not showing love to allow a person to do something harmful, even though he may think it is for his own good. It also means that they are members of a Christian body which departs from the full truth of the Scripture in some of its doctrines, that we must not minimize the evil of this false teaching by opening our fellowship to any and all Christians who err in the faith" (Lohse, Why Close Communion?, p. 14).

"In keeping with the principle that the celebration and reception of the Lord's Supper is a confession of the unity of faith, while at the same time recognizing that there will be instances when sensitive pastoral care needs to be exercised, the Synod has established an official practice requiring that pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, except in situations of emergency and in special cases of pastoral care, commune individuals of only those synods that are now in fellowship with us. By following this practice whereby only those individuals who are members of the Synod or of a church body with which the Synod is in altar and pulpit fellowship are ordinarily communed, pastors and congregations preserve the integrity of their witness to the Gospel of Christ as it is revealed in the Scriptures and confessed in the Lutheran confessional writings."

"The Office of the Keys is less than faithfully exercised when admission to the Sacrament is granted to all who come to the altar regardless of their faith and congregational and denominational affiliation. The practice of open communion renders it difficult, if not impossible, for church discipline to be exercised in a way that honors the ministrations being carried out by those to whom the responsibility of spiritual care for a member of God's flock has been entrusted" (Heb. 13:17; cf. John 20:22–23; Acts 20:27–28; 1 Cor. 4:1–2. Theology and Practice of the Lord's Supper, p. 21–23).

Conclusion

On the basis of God's Holy Word, our Lutheran church continues to practice the ancient, Biblical and confessional practice of closed communion as an opportunity to give joyful witness to our unity in the true faith. We practice closed communion with the belief that this is what the Lord would have us do as we faithfully administer His body and blood in His holy Sacrament.

Closed communion is not a practice unique to the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It is also practiced by the majority of Christians in the world who are members of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox communions.

Hopefully, this brief explanation will help you, or someone else, understand that our love for our Lord and His Sacrament, and our love for the individual, is the reason why we practice closed communion.

—Dr. A. L. Barry
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
### Inter-communion Chart

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Denomination</th>
<th>Which denominations' members can receive Communion in your church?</th>
<th>In which denominations are members of your church allowed to receive Communion?</th>
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<tr>
<td>Lutheran - ELCA (ELCA members believe that, through Communion, they receive Christ's body and blood as assurance that God has forgiven their sins.)</td>
<td>Communion is given to all baptized believers in Christ.</td>
<td>Receiving Communion is another church is a matter of conscience for ELCA members. The church's only policy about the matter is that ELCA members can receive Communion in any church whose tenets are congruent with their own.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lutheran - Missouri Synod (Synod members believe that, through Communion, they receive Christ's body and blood as assurance that God has forgiven their sins.)</td>
<td>Communion is open to members of a church that has entered into an &quot;altar and pulpit fellowship&quot; with the Missouri Synod. This is also known as a &quot;full communion fellowship.&quot; In North America, this includes the Lutheran Church-Canada and the Lutheran Synod of Mexico. Elsewhere, about two dozen churches have &quot;altar and pulpit fellowships&quot; with the Missouri Synod.</td>
<td>Members of the Missouri Synod can receive Communion only in denominations that have &quot;altar and pulpit fellowships&quot; with the Synod.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methodist (The bread and grape juice of Methodist Communion signify Christ's body and blood.)</td>
<td>Has an &quot;open table&quot;: anyone of any age who believes in Christ may receive Communion.</td>
<td>Methodists can receive Communion in any church that welcomes them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Episcopalian (Many Episcopalians believe in the Real Presence of Christ in the consecrated bread and wine.)</td>
<td>Communion is open to all baptized Christians.</td>
<td>Episcopalians can receive Communion in any church that welcomes them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pentecostal Church of God (Calls Communion the Lord's Supper. It is a memorial to Christ's death and resurrection.)</td>
<td>Communion is open to all baptized Christians.</td>
<td>Members of the Church of God can receive Communion in any church that welcomes them, but only if grape juice—not wine—is served, since Church of God members abstain from alcohol.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presbyterian (Communion—grape juice and wafers—is an &quot;outward sign of an inward reality.&quot; It is a remembrance of Christ.)</td>
<td>Communion is open to all baptized Christians.</td>
<td>Presbyterians can receive Communion in any church where they are welcome. They are now precluded from Communion in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| **Roman Catholic**  
(Through the **transubstantiation** of the Communion bread and wine, Christ's body and blood are literally present for participants.) | Communion is available to members of the Assyrian Church of the East, the Orthodox Churches, and the Polish National Church. Baptized Christians who do not belong to these churches may receive Catholic Communion only if they are gravely ill, do not have access to a minister of their own church, ask for Catholic Communion on their own initiative, and are "properly disposed" toward Catholic Eucharist. | Catholics in danger of death can receive the Eucharist from a minister of the Assyrian Church of the East, the Orthodox Churches, or the Polish National Church only if a Catholic minister is unavailable and if they request such Communion of their own volition. |
|---|---|---|
| **Baptists**  
(The bread and grape juice of Communion memorialize Christ's body and blood, and are a reminder of the Second Coming.) | The Baptist churches have **no official policy** regarding who can receive Communion. **Each individual church is autonomous and sets its own policy.** Some churches restrict Communion to members of that specific church, some open Communion to any baptized Christian, some open it to anyone present. Some Southern Baptist churches limit Communion to baptized Southern Baptists. **Most ministers place the decision about whether to receive Communion in the hearts and minds of those present.** | The Baptist churches have **no official policy** regarding which non-Baptist churches its members can receive Communion in. Some ministers say that limiting Communion through such a policy would be contrary to Baptist belief in the "priesthood of the believer," which maintains that each Baptist is accountable directly to Christ. |

Sources: Worship Staff, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; News and Information Office, The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; General Conference, The United Methodist Church; News and Information Office, The Episcopal Church; Office of the General-Secretary, The Pentecostal Church of God; The Office of the Mission Interpreter and International News, The Presbyterian Church (USA); "Directory of the Application of Principles and Norms on Ecumenism," published by the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity; Media Office, Southern Baptist Convention.

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What About . . .

The Difference Between the ELCA and the LCMS

August 1997 will be long remembered as an important time in the history of the Lutheran church in America. The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) made a number of very significant decisions during that month. It declared full communion with three Reformed churches: the United Church of Christ, the Reformed Church of America, and the Presbyterian Church—USA. It based this decision on its opinion that there is no longer essential disagreement between the ELCA and these Reformed churches. Furthermore, the ELCA decided that the long-standing differences between Lutheranism and the Roman Catholic Church over the question of how we are saved have been resolved.

These decisions have caused considerable confusion within the ELCA as well as within our own church, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS). It has caused many people to wonder what the differences are between the ELCA and the LCMS, even though our two churches both use the name "Lutheran."

The LCMS has a tremendous opportunity to make it very clear, both to our own members, as well as to the world at large, what it means to remain committed to the full truth of the Holy Scriptures and the historic confessions of the Lutheran Church. This pamphlet is intended to offer a brief overview of the key differences between the ELCA and the LCMS. Hopefully, it will help you understand these differences so that you will be able to discuss them with others.

Our Differences Over the Bible

The LCMS and the ELCA have different views on the nature and authority of the Bible. While both of our churches profess allegiance to the Reformation principle that Scripture alone is the supreme authority for the church's doctrine and life, our two church bodies have significant differences when it comes to putting this principle into practice.

The LCMS holds that the Bible is actually the Word of God, and, therefore, is totally truthful, reliable, and free from any error. We believe that the Scriptures are the final standard by which we must judge everything that we believe, teach, and confess.

The ELCA, on the other hand, avoids making statements that confess the full truthfulness of the Bible. It holds that Scripture is not necessarily always accurate or trustworthy in all its details and parts. The ELCA tolerates and encourages methods of interpreting the Scripture that presuppose that the Bible contains error and is unclear about various doctrinal matters.

Our differences over the Bible explain other more visible differences. For example, our churches disagree about the ordination of women to the pastoral office, the issue of homosexuality, and the question of abortion. The LCMS does not ordain women to the pastoral office, while the ELCA does, in spite of the fact that Holy Scripture clearly teaches otherwise.

The LCMS unequivocally teaches that homosexual behavior is intrinsically sinful because it is contrary to God's Word. In love, we want to help the person caught up in the homosexual life to repent of his sin and receive God's forgiveness. The ELCA has been unable to take a clear Biblical stand against homosexual behavior. It also tolerates groups within its midst that openly advocate the homosexual lifestyle both for clergy and laity.

The LCMS has repeatedly condemned willful abortion as contrary to God's clear commandment not to murder. The ELCA has not been able to speak out clearly against abortion, and, sadly, even pays for willful abortion procedures for members in its health insurance plan.

While there are other examples, these three serve to make the point that our differences over the authority and reliability of God's Word lie at the heart of the other differences between the ELCA and the LCMS.

Our Differences over the Authority of the Lutheran Confessions

Our two churches also disagree about the authority of the historic Lutheran confessional statements contained in the Book of Concord. The LCMS binds itself to the entire doctrinal content of the 16th-century Lutheran confessional writings. We agree with the confessions of our church not merely insofar as they agree with the Bible (a position which would allow individual members to reject certain doctrines), but because these confessional statements are in complete harmony with God's inspired and inerrant Word. We therefore accept without reservation all the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unaltered statement and exposition of the Word of God, normative also for the church today.
What about The Difference Between the ELCA and the LCMS?

The ELCA, on the other hand, does not require that its church workers and congregations pledge unqualified acceptance of the full doctrinal content of the Book of Concord. The ELCA views the Lutheran Confessions as historical expressions of the faith held to be true at the time that they were written, but not necessarily as normative standards for teaching and practice today.

Our differences over what is necessary for church fellowship

Given its approach to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, it comes as no surprise that the ELCA would consider it possible to enter into fellowship with churches that teach things that are clearly contrary to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions. These sorts of fellowship arrangements are a reflection of the attitude that absolute truth is unable to be known, confessed and assented to, which is contrary to the confessional principle of the Lutheran church that is characterized in the Book of Concord with two very important phrases: “We believe, teach, and confess” and “We reject and condemn.” These phrases reflect the Lutheran church’s firm belief that God’s Word is clear, that it does assert truth that is binding for all times and all peoples, and that we are able with joy to confess and proclaim this truth.

The LCMS believes that the Bible requires full agreement in doctrine before it is possible to join in altar and pulpit fellowship with other churches (Rom. 16:17). On the other hand, the ELCA believes that disagreement in important doctrinal truths does not prohibit altar and pulpit fellowship with other churches.

A good example of this attitude is found in the documents the ELCA used to establish church fellowship with the three Reformed churches. In these documents, it is admitted that “important theological differences...remain between our two churches in such questions as the understanding of the Lord’s Supper and Christology.” These differences are viewed “not as disagreements that need to be overcome, but as diverse witnesses to the one Gospel that we confess in common.”

What this means is that the ELCA is willing to tolerate the Reformed church’s denial that Jesus Christ was really present in the consecrated bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper. The Reformed believe Jesus is present only “spiritually” but not really present in a miraculous manner in the bread and wine. Lutheranism has never accepted the Reformed church’s denial of our Lord’s real presence in Holy Communion. The ELCA now claims that the errors of the Reformed church regarding the Lord’s Supper and the doctrine of the person and work of Christ are acceptable options. This has never before been the position of the Lutheran church, and reveals a decided movement away from historic Lutheranism on the part of the ELCA.

The ELCA’s attitude toward doctrine obscures the vital relationship that exists between the saving Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and all other teachings of Scripture that are centered and rooted in that Gospel — teachings our Lord Himself has given to us to believe and to share with others (Matt. 28:20). The ELCA position regarding church fellowship compromises Scripture’s clear mandate to confess and proclaim “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27) — in all its Gospel-centered truth and purity.

Synod’s opportunity for faithful clarity

All Lutherans have a wonderful opportunity to wrestle with the question of what it means to be a confessional Lutheran church in this day and age. What does it mean to say that we embrace the Holy Scripture as the inerrant and inspired Word of God? What teachings will therefore be rejected? What truths will be raised high as positions that can never be compromised or bargained away for the sake of external church unity? What does it mean to say we agree unconditionally with the Lutheran Confessions as pure expositions of the Word of God? Given this unqualified subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, what issues are non-negotiable and can never be surrendered or given up by Lutherans who wish to remain genuinely confessional Lutherans? What makes for true church union? Is “agreeing-to-disagree” an appropriate attitude for Lutherans when it comes to establishing church fellowship?

The differences between our two churches are a source of great sadness for the LCMS. We take no pleasure in talking about these differences. We wish that our two churches could share a common confession of what it means to be Lutheran. It is important that the members of LCMS congregations have a clear picture of why our two churches are not in fellowship. Knowing the basic differences between our two churches will help us talk with our ELCA friends and family members in a loving and kindly manner.

— Dr. A. L. Barry
President
The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod
The Lutheran Confessions

The Augsburg Confession, 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.”

The Augsburg Confession, 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 Donatists and all others who hold contrary views are condemned.

The Apology, VII & VIII. [THE CHURCH]

5 The church is not merely an association of outward ties and rites like other civic governments, however, but it is mainly an association of faith and of the Holy Spirit in men’s hearts. To make it recognizable, this association has outward marks, the pure teaching of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the Gospel of Christ. This church alone is called the body of Christ, which Christ renews, consecrates, and governs by his Spirit, as Paul testifies when he says (Eph. 1:22, 23), “And he has made him the head over all things for the church, which is his body, the fullness,” that is, the whole congregation “of him who fills all in all.” Thus those in whom Christ is not active are not members of Christ. This much our opponents also admit, that the wicked are dead members of the church. 6 We wonder why they criticize our description, which speaks of living members.

7 We have not said anything new. Paul defined the church in the same way in Eph. 5:25-27, saying that it should be purified in order to be holy. He also added the outward marks, the Word and the sacraments. He says, “Christ loved the church and gave himself up for it, that he might sanctify it, having cleansed it by the washing of water with the word, that the church might be presented before him in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that it might be holy and without blemish.” We have repeated this statement almost verbatim in our Confession. The Creed also defines the church this way, teaching us to believe that there is a holy, catholic church. Certainly the wicked are not a holy church! 8 The following phrase, “the communion of saints,” seems to have been added to explain what “church” means, namely, the assembly of saints who share the association of the same Gospel or teaching and of the same Holy spirit, who renews, consecrates, and governs their hearts.

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There seem to be three responses to the question, Does being Lutheran matter? One is, Are you kidding me? You'd better believe that it matters! Let me tell you why! Another response is a sort of "mental shrug" to the question, Well, of course we want to be and remain Lutheran, that goes without saying. And then, sadly, there is this response: It doesn't matter. All that matters is being a Christian. We need to focus on what unites us rather than what divides us.

As I watch and analyze events and trends in Christianity and Lutheranism, both in this country and around the world, I am more convinced than ever before of two things: (1) being and remaining genuinely Lutheran matters more than ever; and (2) the reasons why this fact is so important are unclear (at best) to many people.

To be Lutheran is to be a person who says, "This is what God's Word, the Bible, teaches. This and nothing else is true and correct. This understanding and teaching and Confession of the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the most accurate and most faithful to God's Word. This and none other. Nothing more, and nothing less, will do, for this is the truth. It is a truth that needs to be told, widely, clearly, far and wide!"

In our day and age these sorts of bold assertions are often met with angry responses, such as, How dare you insist that Lutheranism is the only true teaching of God's Word. How can you think you alone have the truth? All that matters is if a person is sincere about his or her faith in God."

We live in a time when truth is viewed as something relative and impossible to know for sure. The common attitude is reflected when we hear things like, "I have my truth. You have your truth. As long as we respect our differences, that is all that matters." It seems that the most important "truth" for many people is their profound doubt that there even is objective truth or that it can be known. And they are equally strong in their conviction that those who claim to know the truth are wrong.

Before we go further, we need to clear up a common misunderstanding. While insisting on the truth of Lutheranism, we can never allow ourselves to do so in an arrogant, haughty, or self-righteous manner. People who are passionate about the truth of biblical Lutheranism know that the Bible teaches often and clearly that we are all sinful human beings in need of God's constant mercy, which He so lavishly gives in Christ. To be truly Lutheran is to receive the gifts of God with humility, repentantly recognizing our great need. It is tempting for Lutherans to be proud and arrogant of their great heritage, but this is a terrible evil! To be Lutheran is to be always mindful of our great sin and our great need for a Savior. To be a Lutheran is to be a sinner calling out to fellow sinners, "Come and see!" Furthermore, we would never want anyone to think that we Lutherans are saying, "We, and we alone, are the only ones who will be in heaven. In fact, you can't be a Christian unless you are a Lutheran." Not so! Not at all. We realize that the Word
of God is powerful and active, wherever and whenever it is heard, read, or meditated on.

There are many Christians in other denominations and churches. But they are not Christians because of the errors in their churches, but in spite of those errors. Let's then have none say, "You Lutherans think you alone are Christians." We do not say that. We do not believe that. We never will. The reason we insist on Lutheranism for everyone who will listen is because we believe so passionately that it truly is the most correct and most accurate understanding and Confession of God's Word.

Another point that confuses many people is the fact that there are so many different churches to choose from. It is an awful mess, so it seems. Yes, it can be confusing, but it really is not as complicated as some would think or want to maintain. Up until the year 1044 there was basically one, unified Christian Church, distinct from a number of non-Christian or anti-Christian heretical groups. In 1044, the Church divided into Eastern and Western Christianity. By the time of the late Middle Ages, the Western Church, which had come to be known as the Roman Catholic Church, had reached a point of deep corruption, most importantly in what it believed, but also in the morals and life of the clergy and Church leadership.

In 1517, there began what we know today as the Reformation, when Martin Luther, a professor and monk in Wittenberg, Germany posted a series of "talking points" on the practice of selling indulgences. This was a practice by which people were led to believe they could buy forgiveness of sins for their dead relatives in purgatory. The question became, Is the Lutheran view of Christianity correct, or is the Roman Catholic view correct.

After the Reformation, many groups developed from the teachings of persons other than Martin Luther, most notably, two men: Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin, who did much of his work in Geneva. These two men and their writings gave rise to many churches that can be traced back to and grouped under the general category of "Reformed" churches. In America, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, there arose many splinter groups from Reformed churches; these would include Charismatic and Pentecostal groups, along with groups that rejected all denominations and became, in effect, a denomination of their own, the so-called nondenominational churches. And so the question then becomes, "Is Lutheran theology or Reformed theology correct? Is it Rome or Wittenberg? If Wittenberg, then is it Geneva or Wittenberg? In light of these questions, the myriad of denominations today makes a lot more sense.

But there is an additional challenge, more so in the past half-century. Today, despite all their denominational differences and historic confessions, the vast majority of Christian churches in Protestantism have been nearly overwhelmed by the rise of liberal Christianity. This liberal theology unites them more than any other feature of their confession of faith. Historic differences are no longer regarded as divisive, since these divisions were based on one group's understanding of the biblical text as opposed to another group's understanding. For example, the difference between Lutheran and Reformed views of the Lord's Supper are very important and based on very serious and clear differences in how the words Jesus spoke at the Last Supper are understood.

Modern liberal theology, however, regards the words of Jesus in the Bible as unreliable. It
teaches that we cannot be sure that what is recorded in the Bible is true and accurate; therefore, there is no point in being "dogmatic" about much of anything having to do with the Bible. Modern liberalism has swept through all Christian denominations, Lutheran, Reformed, Protestant, and Roman Catholic.

This impacts our question, Does being Lutheran matter? for we have to realize that there are many churches in the world today that claim to be Lutheran but have been nearly overcome by liberal, anti-Biblical beliefs and have therefore compromised the distinct doctrinal position of Lutheranism. They are, in other words, Lutheran really in name only, more by way of tradition than by any real, living doctrinal distinctiveness. They may still be fond of historic Lutheranism, but they no longer insist that it, and it alone, is true and that other views of the Bible are in error. When we ask the question, Does being Lutheran matter? we must do so first of those who still use the name Lutheran but no longer insist on the exclusive-truth claims of historic, genuine, authentic Lutheranism. Let's think for a moment about the world's largest Lutheran organization, the Lutheran World Federation.

Clear-headed analysis of what is happening in world Lutheranism reveals that the greatest threat to being and remaining genuinely Lutheran comes from the groups that call themselves Lutheran! No organization in the world has done more in the past fifty years to deconstruct genuine Lutheranism than the Lutheran World Federation. It has tolerated, even encouraged, an unfaithful understanding of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, all the while ostensibly claiming a certain identity with them. The predecessor bodies that formed the Lutheran World Federation would not reject and throw out false teachers such as Rudolf Bultmann (1884-1976), who worked to "demythologize" the New Testament, casting doubt on the words and deeds of Jesus. To this day, the Lutheran World Federation pays mere lip service to the ancient Christian creeds, but tolerates in its midst churches whose pastors and theologians doubt, and even very brazenly and openly deny the most fundamental tenets of the Christian faith, casting doubt on the miracles of Jesus, His virgin birth, His bodily resurrection, and so forth! LWF member organizations have embraced the anti-apostolic and anti-scriptural practices of the ordination of women, homosexuality, same-sex unions, and abortion. The LWF, despite its claim that it is Lutheran, does not even insist on absolute faithfulness to the most basic of all the Lutheran confessions, Martin Luther's Small Catechism. The LWF, and many of its member churches, compromised and walked away from the Lutheran insistence on the biblical Lord's Supper when it entered into all manners of "full Communion" with Reformed churches that continue to this day to deny that the bread and wine in Holy Communion are in fact the body and blood of Christ. The LWF leadership structure embraced a compromise of the very heart of the Gospel itself with Rome when it accepted the "Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification," in which it allowed Rome to continue its formal anathema of the biblical doctrine that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, apart from any works.

Does being Lutheran matter? Many would suggest that to insist on being and remaining Lutheran is to insist on what divides us from other Christians rather than on what unites us with them. "I'm more interested in people being Christian, rather than Lutheran" is a comment one actually hears these days-sadly and tragically, even from Lutheran pastors. Clearly this is what we must be on our guard to avoid.
Being Lutheran is not a matter of culture, tradition, or habit, at least it should not be. No, being Lutheran is about being passionate about the truth, the full truth, and nothing but the truth as revealed by God in Holy Scripture. As much as we care about the truth of God's holy Word and the proclamation of a pure and unadulterated exposition of the Scriptures, being Lutheran matters. Martin Luther was concerned that people wanted to use his name as part of their faith identity, but then he realized that using the name Lutheran was a way to identify with what he stood for, to identify with his Confession of the Gospel. In other words, to clearly identify oneself as a person who holds to a specific Confession of Christ and none other. There are so many competing points of view of what Christianity is. Being Lutheran is a way to distinguish and teach and confess and bear witness to the Christian faith in a very specific and faithful way.

Being and remaining truly Lutheran takes courage and determination. It is not easy. Faithfulness to the Word of God is never easy or convenient or popular. Determined to be and remain truly Lutheran places unique demands on our pastors, congregations, and church body, but it is worth the effort!

Dr. C. F. W. Walther, the first president of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, offers important insight on this topic. He writes that contrary to our detractors, the Lutheran Church has never claimed to be the only church outside of which there is no salvation. No, not at all. We do believe that the teachings of the confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Book of Concord of 1580, are in fact the pure, divine truth, because they agree with the written Word of God on all points. It is for this reason that the Lutheran church, and consequently our Synod, demands of all members, especially of our ministers, that they acknowledge the Lutheran Confessions without reservation and show their willingness to be obligated to them. And it is precisely because we so value and honor the purity of the Gospel given as a gift to us that we stand with Scripture (1 Corinthians 1:10; Romans 16:17) and our Confessions (AC VII; FC SD X) in rejecting every fraternal and ecclesiastical fellowship that rejects the truth of the Lutheran Confessions, either in whole or in part.

This is why we say that being and remaining Lutheran does matter. We Lutherans, therefore, have no choice but to sound the call for true, orthodox, confessional Lutheranism. We want no poor imitations, but the real thing. We will continue to call for complete faithfulness to God's Word and the Lutheran Confessions, recognizing the blessing that such faithfulness has been since the time of the Lutheran Reformation. Our desire is always to be maximally faithful, not merely minimally so.

With this call for faithfulness comes the Lord's call for outreach. In no way must we ever permit ourselves to pit faithfulness against outreach. Faithfulness to the Word results in outreach with the Gospel. Faithful outreach is based entirely on a faithful proclamation of the Word. The constant hallmark of a genuinely Lutheran Synod, and a genuinely Lutheran congregation, is this two-fold emphasis: (1) faithfulness to Scripture and the Confessions and (2) outreach with the Gospel.

God forbid that we would ever apologize for wanting to be, and remain, a truly Lutheran Church, or that we would ever hesitate clearly to speak up when we notice others walking away from the truths of the Word and the Lutheran Confessions for the sake of unity, which is no unity at all,
since it is not based on agreement in the teachings of the Word, but only on an agreement to disagree! Thus, we pray that the Lord would continue to strengthen and embolden us to be a true, faithful and courageous Lutheran church body, to the glory of His holy name and the extension of His kingdom.

It is particularly interesting to me how many young people are keenly interested in Lutheranism. They want substance in worship and in Bible study and in every aspect of their church life. They want "authenticity," not the showy and manipulative "hype and hoopla" that their parents, and maybe now even grandparents, found so alluring in past several decades. They have been raised in a culture that at every turn is trying to manipulate them into buying something. Young people have had enough of that. They see how shallow it is, and they want instead substance and content and rich depth of meaning. This is where Lutheranism excels, for we rejoice in the depths of God's truths, not resting content with simply "once over lightly."

We wonder why, when people have a choice, they leave the Lutheran Church. Why bother to remain Lutheran if there is nothing worth remaining for? If the differences that distinguish Lutheranism from any other option in Christendom are never mentioned or are made to appear no more important than picking amongst various ice-cream flavors, is it any wonder why people leave our congregations to find "greener pastures" in other churches? That is why the constant challenge we face is gently, pastorally, warmly, and winsomely to be working hard at reinforcing good understandings and encouraging careful thinking and reflection, helping our people to see the issues of our day, and thereby recognizing and appreciating the fact that Lutheranism is the best option for anyone who wants to remain genuinely faithful to God's Word. Simply put, unless we provide our people with clear, compelling, passionate, and determined reasons to be and remain Lutheran, they won't.

So, how does one remain Lutheran? Fond hopes, fervent wishes, pious prayer. Yes, all that, but more. The old Benedictine motto "Ora et labora" applies! Pray and work. And then pray and work some more. Teaching is key. We must disciple people into the truth. This involves long, hard work. Passion, energy, excitement, dedication, enthusiastic desire to pass along the truth—these are key to being and remaining Lutheran. Nothing is more exciting than the truth, and if that is so, shouldn't our attitude toward it be equally one of excitement and energy and conviction? If Lutheranism appears to be dreary, dull, and plodding, whose fault is that but ours? High-quality intensive teaching is the key to the future of Lutheranism. We sing, "Lord, keep us steadfast in Your Word," and then we work to make it so among us, for our sake and for the sake of those who will come after us.

Does being Lutheran matter? Yes, it matters. It matters as much as being and remaining true to Christ and His Word and Sacraments matters, as outreach with the Gospel matters, and as loving our neighbor matters. Our great privilege is helping all those whom we can to be and remain genuinely Lutheran, for to be so is nothing more, and nothing less, than true to Christ and His Gospel. To that end, may God bless our efforts, and may He guide our work together in this high calling and noble task of being and remaining Lutheran.

Here we stand. We can do no other. God help us. Amen.
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