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WHY HEART DISEASE AND TRAUMATIC HEAD INJURIES SHOULD BE AVOIDED

When advocating for correct Biblical doctrine there will always be that one person who responds, “We are not saved by pure doctrine. You are a doctrinal Pharisee advocating for a salvation by works.” This refutation brings up a very valid point. Does doctrine matter and if it does, how much doctrine must be pure if one is to remain a Christian?

Dr. Robert Kolb in his book *The Christian Faith* presents an excellent metaphor that helps us understand the serious threat that incorrect doctrine has upon Christian thought. His metaphor of the human body also allows us to understand that even though incorrect theology is destructive, it does not necessarily result in one becoming apostate. Finally, his metaphor assists us in understanding that the question, “How much doctrine must be pure if one is to remain a Christian,” is simply the wrong kind of question to ask. He states,

“Some people define biblical teaching as a series of topics. Like pearls on a string, these topics are all roughly of equal importance for them. If we conceive of doctrine in this way, we could say that losing any one pearl has about the same effect on the whole of biblical teaching as losing any other pearl. Some people could say that you dare not lose any pearl if you are to be dressed for the host of the heavenly banquet. Others could say that as long as you have a pearl or two left on the string, you are ready to be received at his table.

Others conceive of biblical teaching as a wheel, with a hub and spokes and rim. They suggest that wheels cannot exist without hub and rim and some spokes, but other spokes may be broken without immobilizing the wheel.

Neither of these metaphors adequately describes the nature of biblical teaching. It is better to compare the doctrine of the Scripture to a human body. The body of doctrine cannot exist if Christ the head is decapitated. It dies without the heart of our understanding of how we become right with God pumping away - although the heart, the doctrine of justification, may be partially diseased and still pump, it is true. This was evident in the medieval church, where preachers put a high but false premium on good works and still pointed people to Christ's saving blood. We see this in contemporary Christians who empathize the contribution of our own personal decision in coming to Christ and still try to cultivate trust in his grace.

If an arm, the doctrine of Baptism, for example, is severed, the body may be able to survive. But it may haemorrhage and die. If the leg of the doctrine of the church become paralyzed, the body may survive, but it will be crippled at best, and it may fall down in a heap and crack the head, too.

So the question, “How much doctrine must be pure if one is to remain a Christian?” is simply a wrong kind of question. The whole of our conveying of biblical teaching needs to be accurate and on target - both because believers need to know what God wants us to know and because God’s Word is true. Nonetheless, sinful doctrinal error does not always break our relationship with the Lord even though it makes it more tenuous.”¹



Applying this metaphor to a contemporary example we can derive that one who embraces the tenets of the Church Growth Movement should not automatically be considered an unconverted pagan outside the Christian faith, but rather a person who walks with a serious limp due to their doctrine of the church (i.e., leg) being influenced by inflated anthropological assumptions. Consider another example, a person who embraces decision theology is not necessarily one who is completely lost, but one who tragically has heart disease (i.e., heart of justification is infected with free will theology). Thus, these examples are not necessarily people who specifically reject Christ as the head or promote decapitation. These examples are not necessarily people who reject Justification or celebrate heart disease. Rather, they are individuals whose body of doctrine is unknowingly ill in some areas and possibly healthy in other areas. They are individuals who are at risk of a heart attack and traumatic head injury. They are at risk of losing justification due to their free will theology infecting the heart. They are at risk of the doctrine of Christ being traumatically struck due to their faulty anthropological assumptions weakening the leg; a leg that may give out causing the whole body of doctrine to fall.

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Furthermore, this metaphor also helps in showing the motives of those advocating for pure doctrine. Otherwise stated, those advocating for pure doctrine are not advocating for works righteousness by doctrine, but are fighting against false theologies that damn, distort, and poison a person’s body of doctrine. They are not advocating pure theology to meet a certain doctrinal purity quota for a salvific pay-out, but rather are promoting purity of doctrinal truths for the health of God’s saints.

Finally, this metaphor helps us understand why correct theology matters. It matters because it is indeed important to guard Christ and the doctrine of Justification. It matters because it is indeed important to take note of false theology within secondary doctrines that can advertently and inadvertently impact the head (i.e., Christ) and heart (i.e., Justification).

As a closing point, this metaphor allows us to consider this subject within a compassionate pastoral framework, a framework that causes one to assess a person’s error in light of its seriousness and location in the body of doctrine, which then allows one to assess the proportional corrective response that is needed.

[1] Robert Kolb, *The Christian Faith: A Lutheran Exposition* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1993), 13-14.

WHY USE THE SAME LITURGY EVERY SUNDAY?

For one thing, the liturgy is a framework which summarises the whole history of salvation - a story which we all need to hear!

By now we know the story of the Baby of Bethlehem who grew up to teach, heal, suffer, die, rise from the dead, ascend into heaven, and send His Holy Spirit to create faith and sustain the church. We have learned this story in worship and Bible classes and Sunday school and confirmation classes. We have also experienced the church year - a means of reviewing our complete spiritual history as it outlines what God, in Christ Jesus, has done for us.

Our liturgy saturates our worship with Scripture. It also provides a framework through which God dispenses His gifts and we respond to His great love. Yet there is another reason to celebrate the liturgy regularly. *The order of Divine Service is itself a mini-church year-a* "microcosm," if you will. Open your hymnal and follow along as we examine the various seasons of the church year and find them reflected in the Divine Service.



ADVENT

This first season of the year is a time of preparation as we anxiously await the arrival of the Saviour. As more of the advent wreath candles are lit week by week, the anticipation grows. *Likewise, in the confession and absolution we prepare ourselves to meet the Saviour who is about to enter into our midst by means of Word and Sacrament.*

CHRISTMAS

We gather with the shepherds at the manger to welcome the Bread of Life. The overwhelming nature of this greatest Gift is underscored by the announcement which was given to the shepherds by "a multitude of the heavenly host" (Luke 2:13) singing praises to God. *We are privileged to join with the angels in welcoming the Saviour by singing. "Glory to God in the highest. And on earth peace, among men with whom He is pleased."*



EPIPHANY

During Advent, we anticipated the gift of the Saviour. At Christmas, we received this gift. Now, in Epiphany, we open this gift and examine what the Saviour came to do and teach. In Epiphany, we see that the gift of the Saviour is for the whole world (as the Magi learned), that He came to take our place under the law (as He claimed at His baptism), and that the Father is well pleased with Him (see the baptism and Transfiguration accounts). *We learn about the Saviour through the Scripture readings and sermon, highlighted by the Gospel reading which recounts His exact words to His disciples. We also summarise all of His teachings as we recite the creed.*

LENT

Lent is a penitential season in which we prepare ourselves to recall the suffering and death of our Saviour. We are reminded that it was our sin that led Him to the cross, and we pray that He would forgive our sins and help us to lead more God-fearing lives. *Psalm 51, one of the great penitential Psalms, is the text of the Offertory. As truly penitent believers we ask that God would grant His Spirit to uphold us and renew us.*

HOLY WEEK

Lent concludes with Holy Week, a special time when we focus on a number of separate events in the last week of our Lord's earthly life. Specifically, we remember the following:



PALM SUNDAY

The crowd in Jerusalem greeted the coming King by shouting "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Matthew 21:9). *We join in their song of welcome in the Sanctus (Holy, Holy, Holy).*

MAUNDY THURSDAY

It was on this night, in the upper room, that Jesus gave to His church the Sacrament of the Altar. *This story is recounted as the pastor speaks the Words of Institution which give us this gift of Jesus' body and blood, too.*

GOOD FRIDAY

It was on the cross that Christ earned the forgiveness of sins for the entire world. *We are reminded of this as we sing to "Christ, the Lamb of God, You take away the sin of the world."*

EASTER

The risen Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene, then to the two disciples walking to Emmaus, and then to the gathered disciples in the upper room. What were His first words to the fully assembled group? "Peace be with you." In the liturgy the pastor says, *"The peace of the Lord be with you always."*

PENTECOST

In this season, the focus is upon the church and the gifts that God gives to and through the church to help us fulfil the Great Commission. *In the Benediction we hear again the Lord's promise to go with us as we leave His house and go into the world to proclaim the gospel. He blesses us, keeps us, and gives us His peace to share with everyone we meet.*

So there we have it. In one brief hour or so we have the entire story of our salvation presented to us and we receive all the gifts of Jesus His words bring. Thanks be to God for the gift of salvation and for the liturgy which delivers this gift while teaching us how it came to us!

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GOOD HYMNODY DOES NOT EQUAL ENTERTAINMENT

Many think the reason we use the hymnal is either because that's just how we've always done it, or because we're stodgy stubborn Lutherans. The assumption is usually made that the music is neutral and eventually we too will trade in our Hymns for the music we might hear on Christian Radio. But Music is never neutral.

In our culture today music is used either as a form of entertainment or a tool to affect the mood. Retail stores will choose specific music to incite you to spend money. The radio plays a specific genre and style to tickle your ear. The elevator plays music which is supposed to keep you calm. But the music we hear in church is neither mood-setting nor entertainment driven.

Hymns sung in the context of the Divine Service are countercultural, preaching and teaching the Word of God, delivering the gifts of Christ, and resembling a short sermon set to music. Thus the value of hymnody is not found in its emotional effect

upon the hearer or its appeal to the masses, but according to its objective substance, proclaiming the benefits of Christ under the cross.

It's not simply an argument for orthodox lyrics, like so many suggest. For we cannot set the words of "A Mighty Fortress" to a tune resembling something we might hear at an AC/DC concert or a Jazz club and expect it to be just as beneficial to those preparing to receive the Eucharist.

When orthodox lyrics are accompanied by a primary desire to provide entertaining sounds, the truth within the lyrics can easily be obscured and confused. The sacred claims of the text are easily overpowered by its blending with strong secular overtones, thus taking the timeless truths of scripture and making them subject to the capricious wind of the culture. This is not to argue traditional verse contemporary, organ verse guitar, nor any one genre over another, but simply to maintain the countercultural aspect of the liturgy which is intended to transform the culture through the Gospel, not bow to it.

The foundational purpose of hymnody is not to provide a performance which drives the congregation to clap and sway or have their livers quiver for Christ, but to feed the people with the sustaining Word of God, which gives life and salvation regardless of how well one "feels" they have encountered God in the experience.

Since the purpose of worship is for sinners to receive the gifts of Christ in Word and Sacrament, then success in worship is not dependent upon pew morale, driven by a mood-setting rhythm or a hip tune, but upon the Word of God, proclaimed and delivered in Christ. If we begin to suggest otherwise, that the Word of God is better delivered with a culturally "relevant" upbeat tempo, not only do we degrade God's Word in order to chase the skirt tails of Lady Relevance, but we lose the Gospel all together. For then it is not Jesus' blood-bought grace that we seek, but just another way to scratch the scabs of our itching ears.

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WHAT ARE THE LUTHERAN CONFESSIONS

The following is taken from <http://www.bookofconcord.org>.

A Brief Introduction to the Book of Concord

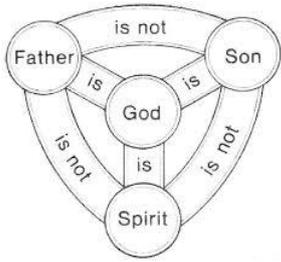
The Book of Concord contains documents which Christians from the fourth to the 16th century A.D. explained what they believed and taught on the basis of the Holy Scriptures. It includes, first, the three creeds which originated in the ancient church, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. It contains, secondly, the Reformation writings known as the Augsburg Confession, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope, Luther's Small and Large Catechisms, and the Formula of Concord. The Catechisms and the Smalcald Articles came from the pen of Martin Luther; the Augsburg Confession, its Apology, and the Treatise were written by Luther's co-worker, the scholarly Phillip Melancthon; the Formula of Concord was given its final form chiefly by Jacob Andreae, Martin Chemnitz, and Nickolaus Selnecker.

I. The Creeds:

The historical background of the documents in The Book of Concord is very interesting. The Apostles' Creed was not composed by the apostles but is a faithful confession of apostolic doctrine; it is a "daughter" of the creed used by early Christians in Rome. The wording of the creed, as we confess it today, can be traced to southern Gaul (France).



The Nicene Creed is spoken today in many Lutheran congregations on Communion Sundays or festive occasions but its history presents some problems. According to popular belief it was formulated by the Council of Nicea A.D. 325 and revised by the Council of Constantinople A.D. 381. But this theory has been challenged. Another theory is that the creed had its roots in the creed of Jerusalem adopted by Epiphanius of Cyprus, then came to the Council of Constantinople via Syedra in Pamphilia, was used in connection with the consecration of a new bishop, found its way into the council minutes, and was mistakenly believed by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 to have been prepared 70 years earlier at the council in whose minutes it appeared. (One addition to the original formula, namely that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father “and the Son” is Western in origin and appears as early as the Synod of Toledo in A.D. 589.)



The Athanasian Creed is the longest of the three. Though included in The Lutheran Hymnal, many congregations use it only on Trinity Sunday (or the First Sunday after Pentecost). It is named after Athanasius, the great fourth-century champion of Orthodoxy against heretics who denied the deity of Christ. The creed originated in southern Gaul, probably about the middle of the sixth century.

The inclusion of the three ancient creeds in The Book of Concord indicates that Lutherans are not a sect but that they embrace and confess the ancient and orthodox faith.

II. The Lutheran Confessions:

Among the particular Lutheran Confessions the two catechisms of Dr. Martin Luther are the earliest. Luther published them in the spring of 1529 to help Pastors and parents give instruction in the chief parts of Christian doctrine.

The Augsburg Confession was written by Melanchthon in 1530. Emperor Charles V had invited the Lutheran princes and theologians to attend a meeting of government leaders at Augsburg. He wanted to discuss how the religious controversy in his empire could be settled, so that German Lutheran princes would join the imperial forces to keep the Turks out of Europe. The Augsburg Confession is composed of several documents which already existed but which were combined by Melanchthon to give a clear but conciliatory summary of the teachings and practices of the Lutheran pastors and congregations. It is to this day the basic Lutheran confession.

The Apology of the Augsburg Confession was published in 1531. After the Augsburg Confession had been read to the emperor, a committee of Roman catholic theologians prepared a reply called the confutation. The Apology defends the Augsburg Confession against the accusations of the Confutation.

The Smalcald Articles were written by Luther in late 1536. On June 4, 1536, Pope Paul III announced that a council would be held in Mantua beginning May 8, 1537, to deal with the concerns of the Protestants. The elector (or prince) of Saxony requested Luther to prepare some articles for discussion at the council. Luther indicated on which points Lutherans would stand fast and on which points a compromise might be possible. These articles were never used for their intended purpose, but Lutherans at once recognized their value as a statement of pure evangelical doctrine, and they were therefore included in The Book of Concord.

The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope was prepared by Melanchthon at the Protestant meeting at Smalcald in 1537 where Luther's articles were to be discussed but, partly because Luther became ill, were never publicly



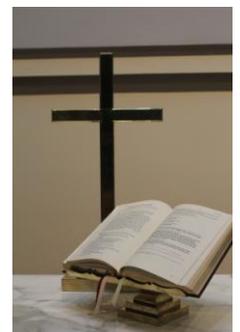
presented to the assembly. Instead Melancthon was requested to prepare a treatise which actually is an appendix to the Augsburg Confession.

The Formula of Concord was written a generation after Luther's death. Serious controversies had arisen among theologians of the Augsburg Confession which threatened the very life of the Reformation. The Formula of Concord deals with these dissensions and presents the sound Biblical doctrine on the disputed issues.

No doubt much will – and should – be made of The Book of Concord as we observe its 400th anniversary. But the most worthy and God-pleasing way for Lutherans of the 20th century to commemorate the publication of The Book of Concord would be to engage in earnest study of the precious Confessions it contains and to commit themselves anew to the glorious truths of God's Word which they teach.

A professor a generation ago described the significance of the confessional writings perhaps best of all. Prof. William Arndt wrote in the Concordia Theological Monthly:

The Confessions are the brightest jewel in the crown of the Lutheran Church. In speaking of our Confessions we dwell on facts that should make the heart of every Lutheran swell with joy and thanksgiving. We look here on one of the brightest pages of our history as a church. It is true, I admit, that the laurels of our fathers must not become the soft bed of the children on which they repose in sweet indolence, and it may be that there is somebody who speaks about the achievements of his ancestors to such an extent that he entirely forgets about the plowing, harvesting, and threshing which he himself ought to do. But my plea is that we do not become so occupied with our daily tasks in the churches that we forget the magnificent treasures which are furnished us in our Confessions. To study them, to read them frequently, to ponder their content, is like traveling, in a mountain country where the air is pure, the brooks sparkle, the birds sing their most beautiful songs, and the clatter of the noisy streets cannot disturb and intrude.



From the Pastor:

We are now in the season of Easter, where over the coming weeks we continue to hear the good news of Jesus resurrection. Then we will come to the Ascension, Pentecost, and Trinity, before entering the season of the Church, focusing on the life of the Church as it is strengthened daily by God's Word.

Now that we have gotten through the busy Easter period, Bible Studies are resuming across the parish. Since the AELC has existed as a church body for near 25 years, I think it is time for us to revisit some of the doctrines of our church. Many of our younger generation perhaps do not understand why we are a Lutheran Church among many. I encourage any families especially with confirmation age children to attend our Bible Studies. Keep an eye on your bulletins for dates.

The family evening recently held was a marvellous night with a large attendance. Our next one is coming up, and I encourage you to attend. Please keep your eyes on the bulletin for dates of future evenings.

I am busy planning to attend the conference of the ACLC (Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches) in July in Minnesota. I plan to leave Australia on July 7, and will meet with Pastor William Mack of the ULMA (United Lutheran Missions of America) in Los Angeles, before travelling onto Minnesota to take part in the conference. Members of the OLCC (Orthodox Lutheran Confessional Conference) are also attending this conference. I will be leaving America to come home on July 21.