



# The Lutheran Herald

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## Our Unity is in the Catholic and Apostolic Faith

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**H**ow much error can be tolerated in the Church? How much false doctrine?" This was one of the questions posed to me by a pastor of the ACLC during our recent meeting at Reformation Lutheran Church in Hillsboro, Oregon.

I have to admit, the question took my breath away for a moment. I've gotten used to listening to wavering 'Lutheran' pastors ask that sort of question (although usually such people will speak in terms of "wrestling" with some new false teaching, or defend their doctrinal ambivalence with code words such as "toleration" and talking about "gray areas" of Scripture). So, this question, especially coming up *where* and *when* it did, set me back for a second.

"None," I replied, thankful that every pastor in the room understood that this was the right—indeed the only—answer God's Word allows.

Our forefathers in the faith concluded the Book of Concord (1580) with the pledge: "Therefore in the sight of God and of all Christendom, to those now living and those who shall come after us, we wish to testify that the above declaration, concerning all the controverted articles presented and explained, and no other, is our faith, doctrine, and confession, in which we also will appear, by God's grace, with unterrified hearts before the judgment-seat of Jesus Christ, and for it will give an account. We also will neither speak nor write, privately or publicly, anything contrary to this declaration, but, by the help of God's grace, intend to abide thereby. After mature deliberation we have, in God's fear and with the invocation of His name, attached our signatures with our own hands." (Jacobs, p. 671)

When a Lutheran pastor is ordained, he joins his oath to that of the fathers who came before him; a Lutheran layman makes a similar oath at his confirmation when he swears "to continue steadfast in the confession of this Church, and suffer all, even death, rather than fall away from it".

It does not rest with men to add to, or subtract from, the whole counsel of God revealed in Sacred Scripture; our Lutheran Confessions are simply a faithful exposition of what Holy Scripture teaches, and thus our confessional subscription is an oath before the Triune God and His Church to be faithful teachers of His people, and to never stray from that catholic (or universal) confession of the apostolic faith. The only godly unity in the Church is found in that common confession of the unchanging truth of God's Word. The oaths of confirmation and ordination, it must be noted, are to a *confession* of the faith, and not an institution—whether a particular congregation, or synod. As we behold the weakness of all the institutions of men, how great is our joy in the saving faith which the Lord has made known to us through His saving Word!

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# The Doctrine We Confess...

## Why is Doctrine Important?

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**“He who denies Christ in one article (of doctrine) or word has in this one article denied the same Christ who would be denied in all articles; for there is but one Christ in all His words, collectively, and individually.”** Luther

As Lutherans, we ought remember three important words: We believe, teach, and confess. These three words are inseparable. St. Paul wrote: *For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved* (Romans 10:10). We are to believe what God has taught us through His Word and we are to confess what God has taught us through the same Word. We can only believe and confess these things if we are taught “*everything*” that Jesus has “*commanded*” should be taught in accordance with His Word (see Mt. 28:19,20).

Yet, I have been told, maybe you have too, that we shouldn’t let doctrine divide Christians. Then the same person who told you that, one who most likely would be quick to tell you how much he or she really loves Jesus, would say something like, “What’s important is that we all love Jesus and believe in Him.”

Many years ago, my wife had the opportunity to attend a weekday morning Bible class at the church where we were members. The class had church members as well as nonmembers in attendance. The nonmembers were parents whose children attended the Lutheran day school. Many of the member and nonmember parents were also friends outside of the church/school setting. They were happy that theirs was a friendship between Christians. It was at this weekday morning Bible Class comprised of Lutherans and non-Lutheran

my wife heard people talking about . . . “What’s important is that we all love Jesus and believe in Him.”

The pastor teaching the class also overheard the discussion. What those in attendance didn’t know was that the pastor teaching the class was about to play a little trick on them. The pastor had planned the trick in cooperation with his wife who had been attending the Bible class. He told them a story. It was a very untrue story (as the class later found out). but the story was told very convincingly. He told them that they all knew his wife. However, there was something he needed to share with them. There was something they needed to know about her. He told them that many years earlier, long before he had met his wife, she had spent time in prison.

Mouths dropped.

He then went on to tell them that the information he had just shared with them really wasn’t that important because, just like him, they had grown to love her.

Eyes were wide open.

He continued to comfort them by telling them not to worry. With a big smile on his face he said, “You love my wife and so do I.”

He then paused for a few moments to give this untrue but convincing disclosure some time to sink in. Then he let the cat out of the bag. He told the class that the story was a complete fabrication. He said, “Let me make this abundantly clear. My wife has never spent time in prison. I just made that up. But hey, I love her and that’s all that really counts. Right, honey?”

By that time there were few people were noticeably agitated. “How could you do that to your wife?”

He replied, “Exactly! How can you lie about someone that you claim to love.” Only then did he let the class know that his wife was in on his little trick.

He then asked the class this question, “If you became so upset with me over the lie I told you about my wife, how much more shouldn’t you be upset, YES! even become incensed over those who lie about God? Every teaching that is not in accord with Holy Scripture is a lie about Jesus. You can’t have it both ways. You can’t say that you love Jesus and yet believe and/or teach and/or confess false doctrine or worse overlook false doctrine when you know better.”

He went on to explain that the Christian faith is not about how we claim to love Jesus, then find others who “share” the same love of Christ so we can join hands and sing “I Decided to Follow Jesus.” He told the class that love of Christ will bear good fruit. One of those fruits is the confession of the true Christian faith, to boldly speak of how God calls, gathers, enlightens, sanctifies, and keeps people in the true faith. Needless to say, the non-Lutherans were struggling at this point as were some of their Lutheran friends. At the same time, other Lutherans present that day were pleased to hear orthodoxy proclaimed even though the discussion came about in a rather unorthodox manner.

My point in offering up this story from years ago is to remind you that teaching and confessing the Truth can strain some relationships while strengthening others. We have come out of the LCMS only to see that as time passes our relationships with those who remain in the LCMS are becoming more and more strained. Yet God has blessed us. Our common confession has led us to ELDoNA where our relationship to one another is strengthened each day by our good and gracious

God. This is one of the ways God blesses His faithful people: He binds them together through a common confession of faith.

Jesus replied, “If anyone loves Me, he will obey My teaching. My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him. He who does not love Me will not obey My teaching. These words you hear are not My own; they belong to the Father who sent Me” (John 14:23,24). Real love of Christ manifests itself in love of doctrine, the love of everything that Christ has taught us through His Word.

Why is doctrine so important? Why should we boldly confess all that we believe and have been taught? Because all doctrine comes from Christ, indeed, is about Christ. As Luther wrote: Hence St. Paul boasts in 1 Corinthians 2:2, “I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him only as crucified”; in Colossians 2:8 he forbids us to follow any doctrine which does not teach Christ. Thus, to downplay the importance of doctrine is to downplay the importance of Christ.

Jesus told the Scribes and the Pharisees: “You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about Me” (John 5:39). If you don’t understand that the whole of Scripture points you to Christ then you will have difficulty understanding many teachings of Scripture. One cannot separate doctrine from Christ as though the two have little or nothing to do with one another. Everything taught in Scripture brings us to Christ. God’s divine design for Scripture is to take the reader to Christ in whom the reader finds salvation.

“For the chief article of the Christian doctrine is this, that Christ is our Righteousness” (Luther).

(By the way, if you would like to know the name of the pastor who played this little trick on the Bible class, he wrote this article.)

# God's Version of the Reformation: From Old Covenant to New Testament

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Growing up as a child, you no doubt heard these words: “Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. But all the king’s horses and all the king’s men, couldn’t put Humpty Dumpty back together again.”

When you gather in your church to celebrate the Festival of the Reformation, you’ll no doubt hear these words from the prophet Jeremiah :

Jer 31: 31-32 > Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

Though these two passages are used in very different settings, they essentially say the same thing. Man has tried it the old way - trying to save himself. But the old way didn’t work. It “broke” and it couldn’t be fixed. So a *new* plan had to be devised—a plan completely *unlike* the old covenant.

Therefore, Jeremiah starts out: “Behold the days are coming, declares the Lord”. Jeremiah refers to another day - another era. It would be the New Testament Age. It would be an age marked not only by “good news”—but by a good man—a *God-Man*.

The New Testament book of Hebrews leaves no doubt about the duty and identity of this “God-Man”. It says He must usher in a new era by abolishing an old one. His work must act as a giant “eraser”. It must change the way man looks at obtaining salvation. The writer to the Hebrews states:

Heb 8:6-7 > But as it is, Christ has

obtained a ministry that is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion to look for a second.

Then the author continues by quoting the passage from Jeremiah 31—that this “more excellent covenant” is necessary because of the helplessness of sinful man. Therefore, salvation can only come to fruition by the work of the *sin-less* Man, the God-Man, Jesus Christ.

So what are the characteristics of this new covenant? Well, first of all, it’s definitely one-sided. There’s no “let’s make a deal”—no “you do this and I’ll do that.” For note the language of the next two verses in Jeremiah 31:

Jer 31:33-34 > But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people. And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD’, for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.”

Note the acting pronoun “I” : “ *I* will make a new covenant,” says the Lord. “*I* will put - *I* will write - *I* will forgive - *I* will remember no more. ” It’s entirely the *Lord’s* doing. He’s the one who’s making all the promises. Nothing more needs to be added. He’s the doer. The “done deal” has all

been accomplished through the person and work of Jesus Christ.

And what else do we see? Well, the new covenant is not “according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke”. Jeremiah is saying this new covenant is going to be quite radical. It’s not going to be anything like the covenant made on Mount Sinai. As that passage from Hebrews stated, that first covenant had a flaw. The old covenant couldn’t produce what it demanded: complete obedience. But it wasn’t the fault of the covenant. Instead, it was the fault of the people—a people who couldn’t produce what they promised. And they promised plenty :

Ex 24: 3-8 > Moses came and told the people all the words of the LORD and all the rules. And all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words that the LORD has spoken we will do”. And Moses wrote down all the words of the LORD. He rose early in the morning and built an altar at the foot of the mountain, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the people of Israel, who offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. Then he took the Book of the Covenant and read it in the hearing of the people. And they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient”. And Moses took the blood and threw it on the people and said, “Behold the blood of the covenant that the LORD has made with you in accordance with all these words”.

But the people did not uphold their end of the bargain. The covenant was fine, but the people were flawed—*deeply* flawed. And there was noth-

ing that was going to change that. They didn’t need *improvement*, they needed *replacement*.

Therefore, the new covenant would have to be a complete rewrite of the old. It would have to be based—not on the people—but upon God. The people needed to be seen as righteous through the *sure* promises of God, and not the *shallow* promises of man.

So no, all the king’s men couldn’t, but God could. And God makes not one - but *three* promises in His new covenant. The first goes like this :

Jer 31:33 > “I will put My law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.”

Simply making the 10 Commandments more “dear” to them—somehow “stuffing” them inside of the people - just wouldn’t do. That’d be like telling them to “try harder.” No, God knew that such an approach was doomed from the start, for the Israelites were incapable of keeping the law. “All this we will surely do!”, the people cried. Yeah, right. Before the “ink was dry” on the old covenant, the metal on the golden calf was already hardening.

So thankfully, this is a *different* kind of law. It’s the Law in the *broad* sense. Yes, it includes the “narrow sense law” - the law that *condemns* the sinner. But it also includes the gospel—the gospel that *redeems* the sinner. And it’s a gospel that comes to them—that even dwells *inside* of them. You see, the old deal was outside; it was external. It shouted down from Sinai: “You’d better shape up or ship out!” And eventually, of course, that’s exactly what happened. The nations of Israel & Judah did not “shape up”. And God allowed the empires of Assyria and Babylon to “ship them out”. Israel was shipped into oblivion by Assyria and Judah was shipped into captivity by Babylon.

So this would be a new deal - a deal unlike the old. The gospel would come and dwell inside of them, even as God’s gospel promises were conveying and converting—thru the “syringe” of His mighty Word. Hence the second promise neatly

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follows the first :

Jer 31:34 > And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD', for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.

To know the Lord is to have saving faith. The gospel writer John puts it this way :

Jn 17:3 > And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent.

Under the new covenant, God makes an intimate connection with His people. They *know* Him because He imparts saving faith *in* them. They won't simply have *heard* about Jesus, they will *have* Jesus. So the Word who dwelt *among* us now dwells *inside* of us. That brings us to the third promise. And the third promise is really the basis for the first two :

Jer 31:34b > "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

This, then, is the foundation of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins. Jeremiah foretells and forth-tells of the perfect & complete sacrifice that'll be made by Jesus Christ. But God can only forgive by remembering to forget. And the only way God can forget—the only way He can "wipe the slate clean"—is to "wipe out" His one and only Son. Perfect forgetfulness is only made possible by perfect sacrifice. And that's just what Jesus did. He took our place under the law, and wiped out our filthy attempts at trying to fulfill it. He took our place on the cross - and wiped out the debt of sin as far as the east is from the west. Yes, such a great cost—all the sins of all the world—would take all that God had to give:

Hebrews 9:16-17 > For where a will is involved, the death of the one who

made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive.

Even in our earthly life, we know that a death must take place for the will of the testator to take affect. And that's what Jesus did for all of us. And nowhere is this more pointedly shown than in the Lord's Supper. And every time you attend that meal, you experience first hand what this new covenant—better called new *testament*—is all about:

"In the same way also He took the cup after supper, and when He had given thanks, He gave it to them, saying: "Drink of it, all of you; this is My + blood of the new testament, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

So the next time you come to the Lord's Table, approach it like you're coming to it for the first time. Use the Festival of the Reformation to reform your own mind. Come with a new appreciation of all that Jesus has done for you. Come and know intimately—first hand—that your sins are forgiven through the last will and testament of Jesus Christ.

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Help us continue to be a voice to, and for, confessional Lutherans in the U.S. If you want to support our efforts, contributions may be made to: Salem Lutheran Church, 718 HCR 3424 E , Malone, TX 76660.

## **Book Review**

*Theodore Abu Qurrah*

John C Lamoreaux, Translator

Library of the Christian East, Vol. I

Brigham Young University Press, 2005

Pp. xxxvii + 278 Cloth at \$38.59

Theodore “who”? When many hear a name like the last one of the author there is almost an automatic assumption among Latin based Christians that the individual must be of the Mohammedan religion. This is one of those cases where the assumption will prove to be quite incorrect. Theodore Abut Qurrah was in fact the Bishop of Haran, a community not far from the present Turkey/Syrian border near the site of the ancient city of Edessa. Scholars are not sure when he assumed the holy office or how long he held it. What is of importance, however, is the fact that he was a staunch supporter and defender of the Christological definition promulgated at the Fourth Ecumenical Council conducted at Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

To truly appreciate the various treatises translated in this volume, it is important to realize that though in the Western theological tradition what is referred to as the “Chalcedonian Definition” definitively settled the major controversy over how to properly understand the two natures in Christ, just the opposite happened in the Eastern portion of Christendom. Thus by the time “Theodore of Haran” (to use the ancient way of speaking of a bishop) was a bishop, in the early 800’s, the theological environment in Eastern Christendom had long been divided among several factions over how to properly understand the two natures in Christ. Additionally, by this time the Mohammedans had, through aggressive and open military force, spread their newly established false religion across all of North Africa and around the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea to include all of present day Turkey, all of which had overwhelmingly been Christian. The bishop was thus confronted with many theological challenges as the various forms of false doctrine, practice and even

religion tried to intrude themselves into the life and beliefs of the saints entrusted into his spiritual care. This is why the topics of the treatises translated in this volume cover such a wide range.

The translator has divided the bishop of Haran’s works into four sections: I-Discerning the True Religion; II-Discerning the True Church; III-Topics in Controversial Theology, and IV-The Byzantine Legacy.

Under section I, “Discerning the True Religion” the treatise’s translated are (1) “Theologus Autodidactus”; (2) “Against the Jews”; (3) “That Christianity Is from God”; (4) “On the Confirmation of the Gospel”; and (5) “On the Characteristics of the True Religion.”

Section II includes the following: (6) “On the Councils;” (7) “Epistle to the Armenians;” (8) “Against the Armenians;” (9) “On the Union and the Incarnation;” (10) “On the Death of Christ;” (11) “On Our Salvation” and (12) “Theodore’s Confession of Faith.”

Section III includes treatises addressing the following topic: (13) “On the Method of the Knowledge of God”; (14) “On Natural Theology;” (15) “On the Trinity;” (16) “On Free Will;” (17) “Questions on Free Will.”

Section IV includes the following: “Refutations of the Saracens by Theodore Abu Qurrah, the Bishop of Haran, As Reported by John the Deacon. (19) “Greek Fragments.”

Reflecting back upon the topics addressed in the respective sections many a layman might well assume, “this book is more for pastors than for me!” Not so! This is one of the surprising blessings of this rather unique volume. To an overwhelming degree the bishop wrote these treatises not as “academic” exercises but with a high degree of catechetical intent. He was greatly concerned about the very serious and most abundant spiritual challenges that confronted the saints entrusted into his spiritual care. Yes, one will occasionally find a few technical words such as “hypostases”; and references to “Monad.” There are references to various theologians many which one may not initially be familiar with such as Cyril and

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**Devotion and Doctrine:**  
**The value of the Lord's Prayer, Ten Commandments, and Apostles'**  
**Creed as devotional summary of all Scripture**  
by Rev. Deacon Anthony R. Oncken

As for myself, let me say that I, too, am a doctor and a preacher — yes, and as learned and experienced as any of those who act so high and mighty. Yet I do as a child who is being taught the Catechism. Every morning, and whenever else I have time, I read and recite word for word the Lord's Prayer, the Ten Commandments, the [Apostles'] Creed, the Psalms, etc. I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and I do it gladly.<sup>1</sup>

-Dr. Martin Luther

It seems to be a common assumption that *doctrine* is something with which only theologians, pastors, and zealous laypersons are concerned. Many people (even faithful church-going people) have an aversion to the very word *doctrine*. Some curse it as the unnecessary reason that Christianity is divided into so many groups, or the bothersome reason that the Church is morally at odds with the rest of humanity. So many times pastors have tried to faithfully inform people about *doctrine*, only to hear grumbles and see rolled-up eyes and scowls on the faces of their hearers. But this should not be, especially among the faithful in Christ!

Doctrine has become a proverbial four-letter word to some people because the real meaning of the word has been forgotten. Doctrine is simply *teaching*. And for any of us to despise good and useful teaching makes us no better than the rebellious, ill-mannered child who constantly resents having to go to school. Unfortunately most adults are less likely to have the blessing of someone to *make* them “go to school” for their own good concerning Christ's doctrines.

In our current times where the idea of doctrine is often despised, even among so-called “churchmen and pastors,” it seems necessary to do

two things: remind people what doctrine truly is, namely *teaching*; and urge them to value and uphold the doctrine that they already know, especially in the form of “the three parts which have been the heritage of Christendom from ancient times,”<sup>2</sup> namely the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Dr. Luther reminds us in the Preface to his Large Catechism that even in these three essential parts of Christian teaching “everything contained in Scripture is comprehended in short, plain, and simple terms.”<sup>3</sup>

Doctrine is not the mere wranglings of theologians and pastors who prefer “ivory towers” over shut-in visits. Doctrine is the Word that is a lamp to our feet. Doctrine is the Truth that sets us free, as Christ has promised. Doctrine is all that God has commanded, which Christ commissioned the Church to teach us all to observe. And doctrine is as simple and familiar as the very devotional habits that are taught to us in the Catechism.

In the sound Lutheran tradition Christian households, as well as all the people of the Church, have been strongly encouraged not only to learn and understand the Commandments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer, but also to make them part of their daily prayer life and devotional habits. These parts of the Scripture's wisdom and teaching are essential memory work for all of Christ's little ones, regardless of how old we are in earthly years! These are words that the Lord Himself says shall be in our hearts, to teach diligently to our children, to talk about while sitting, walking, lying down, and rising (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). These words should be familiar to us, and used by us always. But we should also understand and remember that in these familiar Words is the short, plain, and simple expression of the very doctrines, the teaching and wisdom, of Jesus Christ.

Entire books could be (and have been) written on the teachings contained in the Command-

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“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!” David proclaimed in Psalm 133:1. Pastor Mark Mueller and Deacon Jeffrey Ahonen, together with members of the congregations they serve, had opportunity to manifest outwardly our brotherly unity in the Spirit during a good and pleasant afternoon in Cambridge, Minnesota.



On St. Bartholomew's Day (August 24) members of Redeemer Lutheran (Cambridge, MN) and St. Henry (Winter & Tony, WI) got together for a “first annual” picnic.

On Sunday, August 24, 2008, Deacon Ahonen and several other members of Saint Henry Lutheran Mission in Tony, Wisconsin, made the 120-mile-long trek to Redeemer Lutheran Church in Cambridge for what was billed as their first annual joint mission festival. Following a warm reception of the visitors by the gracious hosts, the two congregations joined together for a Vespers service conducted by Pastor Mueller with assistance from Deacon Ahonen. The group then travelled to a local park, at which all enjoyed a picnic lunch prepared by members of the local congregation, and spent the remainder of the afternoon becoming better acquainted with one another.

Next year's joint mission festival is slated to be hosted by Saint Henry Lutheran Mission at its location in Tony, Wisconsin.

Behold, how good and pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity forever — and to have the opportunity to express that fellowship in worship and in friendship, even if only for an afternoon!



A baptismal font is among the new furnishings of Redeemer-Cambridge's sanctuary.



The 2008 Vacation Bible School at Salem (Malone) — “Fervent Love for One Another” — was enjoyed by everyone who participated. Our thanks to all the volunteers for their help! This was the third year that Salem has used the *Pax Domini* VBS materials, and it seems like they get better every year!

Nestorius, and Gregory the theologian. And yet, as “historic” Lutherans, all three of these theologians (among many others referenced in the volume) have had a direct and very important impact on what you have said you “*believe, teach and confess.*”

One of the most interesting, timely and certainly practical treatises in this volume is included in “The Byzantine Legacy” section. This is chapter 18, “Refutations of the Saracens by Theodore Abu Qurrah, the Bishop of Haran”. Like much of the early Christian apologetic (meaning a “defense” not – “to apologize” as commonly understood) material it is written in dialogue form, an ongoing verbal exchange between “*Theodore*” and “*Saracen*” an ancient name applied to the followers of Mohammadism. There is a series of sub-themes discussed in this exchange, the titles which are most worthy of referencing here. After the initial short exchange the following becomes the topic of discussion: “Mohammad is not from God.” This is followed by an exchange on the topic of “Christian Doctrine is Confirmed by the Most Disadvantageous Features of Its Preaching” in which the bishop teaches that faith does not always equate to human opinion in matters religious. The third topic addressed in the exchange is; “The Eucharistic Bread is the Body of Christ.” The challenge of this section is summarized so well by the opening question of the Saracen:

“Bishop, why do you priests delude Christians? Given two pieces of bread baked from the same flour, one you allow to be eaten as common food; the other you distribute in little pieces to the people, calling it ‘the body of Christ’ and affirming that it can forgive the sins of those who partake of it. Do you mock yourselves or those over whom you have charge?” (p.219).

The bishop responds by leading the Saracen through a series of short but very precise doctrinal declarations until he asserts that the “real presence” of the Body and Blood of the Christ is truly there. This is then followed by a short section in which the bishop asserts that “Christ Was the True God,

even though He Became Human” (Man). Getting deeper into the reality of “God become Man” the topic then becomes: “Christ’s Hypostasis Was Not Destroyed in the Passion.” Wow! There is that word, I not even sure how to pronounce it, let alone what it means. I need not read any further! Wrong again! Challenges are really opportunities, most especially when it comes to the better understand your faith and the confession you have freely made. This is one of the reasons, indeed one of the most important reasons why God the Holy Trinity has placed a pastor in your midst. He is the chief Catechist! Here is one of those spiritually enriching opportunities. Write down that word (or any other unfamiliar to you) and go hastily and ask, “Pastor, *What does this mean?*”

The following treatise is one in which the bishop also speaks with authority and clarity, asserting that: “Muhammad Was God’s Enemy and Possessed by a Demon.” Interestingly, in this treatise the text indicates that this was not an “exchange” between the Saracen and the bishop but simply a declaration by the bishop. The Saracen does not respond. This particular treatise then concludes with a final exchange, the sub-topic of which I believe might well be called a creedal declaration of the ancient, Catholic and apostolic faith, that: “God Has a Son Who Shares His Essence and Like Him Is without Beginning and Eternal.”

The final section of the volume includes “Greek Fragments,” portions of various other treatises written by the bishop that have only been preserved in part. They are also well worth reading, however, for again they address a number of different forms of theological error, in both doctrine and practice, from a Chalcedonian perspective.

In light of the rapidly darkening spiritual age in which we now live, the writings of this bishop of old, Theodore of Heran, can teach us much and that of significant value about the faith we hold, the confession we have made and the various doctrines we have of necessity rejected as well. The treatises vary in length from 6 pages (“On the Confirmation of the Gospel”) to 20 pages (“On the Death of Christ”) but all have something in common regardless of length, they can teach us something yet new about God the Holy Trinity and

His act of saving grace through His Incarnated only-begotten Son, Jesus of Nazareth who is the Christ and thus the only Lord and Savior of the world.

There are, as one might well expect, a few areas where the doctrine confessed by this bishop is not quite that which we wish it would have been, such as on the topic of free will and the role given to St. Peter by the Christ. If one is familiar with Luther's Small Catechism, however, errors of this kind are easily discernable. Knowledge of the Lutheran Symbols, the Book of Concord, will help recognize them to an even greater degree. Nonetheless, there is much for serious theological reflection contained on the pages of this book that can well be considered spiritually edifying.

Perhaps the best way to conclude this all too brief review is to quote the concluding paragraph of "Theodore's Confession of Faith":

This is what I believe. In it I shall live and in it I shall die, and be gathered unto Christ my God when he comes to judge the living and the dead. It is through it that I hope to be saved from eternal punishment and await the everlasting and exalted blessed state, which will most certainly be obtained only through it.

In His service

Pax Domini  
Pastor C. D. Hudson  
2 Thess. 2:15

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ments, Creed, and Lord's Prayer, but I wish to simply touch on a few examples for the sake of reminding us all about the wealth of doctrinal wisdom that is found in the humble stuff of our childhood memory work.

### **The Ten Commandments:**

The proper distinction between the "Law" and the "Gospel" has historically been one of the dominant teachings within Lutheran doctrine. (Thanks be to God for that!) Yet the good Dr. Luther says, "This much is certain: anyone who knows the Ten Commandments perfectly knows the entire Scriptures."<sup>4</sup> So the question comes to mind, how can the Commandments be of any use in meditating on the "Gospel" elements of Scripture? The Commandments are typically considered nothing more than "Law," by which we are accused, and convicted, and reminded of our guilt. Are the Commandments good for nothing more than scourging ourselves and compelling us to mechanical obedience? By no means!

In the life of Christ's redeemed people the Ten Commandments should be regarded as far more than a mere "guidebook" or how-to manual to be observed, or not. The Commandments most certainly serve as a mirror that shows all of us that we are in constant need of forgiveness. And they do serve as a proverbial curb by which governments and authorities hopefully establish good order in society. But unfortunately some Christians are inclined to ignore the wisdom and the promise that the Commandments hold for the people who make up the Body of Christ.

First of all, the Ten Commandments cannot be dismissed as obsolete by Christians, saying, "God will forgive me!" To ignore or diminish the Commandments because they are "Law" is to mock God's grace toward us and earn for oneself the title of "least" among God's people (Matthew 5:19). Instead, we are reminded to do and teach the Commandments because these teach how we are best able to love and serve others! There is immense wisdom in just these ten ideas that the Lord has taught us. Jesus used kind words and

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miracles of mercy to teach others about the Gospel of forgiveness in Himself. Likewise, His Commandments teach us how to do kind works and even simple miracles of mercy for our neighbors. (And you better believe that it's a miracle from God for any of us to truly observe the Ten Commandments!) These are the works that God has prepared for us and makes us able to do by His Son and His Spirit at work in us. So if you don't think the Commandments are useful for anything other than showing our sins, ask yourself, "What *does* God want to accomplish through me?" The Ten Commandments give us a clear picture of the works Christ endeavors to continue through us as members of His Body. And it's through those fruitful works that He teaches and directs others to His mercy and the Gospel of forgiveness in His blood.

We're never to think that any of us could be saved by the Commandments or the works that they teach us to do. The promise of forgiveness, life, and salvation is found only in Jesus Christ and Him crucified. But for His lambs, the Ten Commandments do serve as something of a promise that shows what our life in Christ will ultimately look like. Beyond being commands with which God tells us how we *shall* and *shall not* act, the Commandments should also serve as a reminder, a preview of sorts, of how our life *shall* look in the resurrection and the life everlasting!

Our current existence is constantly plagued by sin, death, and the devil. Even for Christ's faithful people, we still need to be taught and reminded of how we ought to live out our identity in Him, which was placed on us through Baptism and faith. And when He works through us His life and mercy is reflected even now. But when He comes again with glory, to judge the living and the dead, and to ultimately wipe away every tear when the former things of pain will pass away, the Ten Commandments will cease to be lessons and reminders for God's holy people. They will be the constant reality of our eternal life!

In the resurrection there will be no need to be told, "You shall have no other gods," because we *shall* have no other gods. We *won't* take the Lord's name in vain. We won't need to be taught

to remember the Sabbath because we shall be living in the eternal Sabbath. And so on down the list! So for Christians the Ten Commandments are more than just a list of directives; they are also a vision of our life in Christ at its best, here in time, and in eternity. This should be remembered when we ponder the Commandments.

### **The Apostles' Creed:**

The Creed is another example of how the Wisdom of God, spoken to us over centuries and centuries, recorded by the hands of many men, and compiled into a substantial book, can be taught and remembered in a few plain paragraphs. That's not to diminish the tremendous importance of frequently reading and studying all of the Scriptures. By no means! But for those times when we might not have a Bible at hand, and for those of us who don't have the Scriptures memorized in their entirety, the Apostles' Creed is an invaluable tool.

We must never give in to the ignorant complaints of near-sighted "biblicists" who reject the Creed because it's not an actual chapter-and-verse quotation. This is just silliness. Often these critics of creeds say, "I believe in the Bible!" But when one considers all the distortions, and misunderstanding, and dishonesty that Satan murmurs into the ears of men, a generic confession of belief in the Bible can mean just about anything. However, the concise, thought-out, time-tested statements of the Apostles' Creed leave far less room for unclarity. And besides, anyone who actually has read and studied the Scriptures carefully could recognize that the words of the Creed can easily be traced back to their Scriptural source and context!

The Creed gives us a readily available outline of our historic faith. It's placed on our lips at Baptism. The essential facts of true faith in Jesus Christ are given to us so that we can say, "I believe..." and the Holy Spirit makes us able to do so honestly. The Creed is more than abstract notions or impressions of God's Word. And it is certainly more than mere feelings and sentiments. The Creed is a concrete statement of facts and a clear confession of what we know to be truth. It's teaching for those who need to hear it, and it's a reminder for those who have heard it already. God uses the Creed as



a way to show mankind a snapshot of Himself.

When it comes to “Law and Gospel” the Creed is abundant in teaching the glorious Gospel! To say “I believe in God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth.” carries with it the meaning that “I believe that God has created me and all that exists; that he has given me and still sustains my body and soul...”<sup>5</sup> It is most certainly by God’s kind and merciful grace that we exist and enjoy good and beneficial things in our earthly life. Even those who hate God are still blessed by this reality. But His merciful provision for our souls is even greater, as is shown in the second article: “[I believe] in Jesus Christ...”

The second article goes far beyond any sort of generic understanding of “God.” While some distorted notion of God the Father may be seen in the majority of false belief systems, the idea of His Son and our forgiveness in His blood from the cross is what makes Christianity different from every other religion. A whole body of doctrine is packed into a string of clauses in this article! To say He was conceived by the Holy Spirit teaches that Jesus is truly God. To say He suffered under Pontius Pilate teaches that Jesus was a real person in history and not just a fable or a myth. To say He was crucified, dead, and buried teaches that He accomplished what needed to be done for our redemption from the consequences of sin. To say He descended into hell usually makes people stop and scratch their heads.

It is important that Christians properly understand the point of Christ’s descent into hell. First of all, it is most certainly Scriptural. 1 Peter 3:19 states that Jesus preached to the spirits in prison. Peter says this in the context of teaching about and confessing Christ’s death and resurrection for mankind. Secondly, we must understand that Jesus descended into hell to preach, not to suffer. He finished His suffering for us on the cross. After His death the focus becomes proclamation of His victory! And thirdly, it teaches the importance of faith and trust in God’s Words. For centuries human reason has wrestled and fumbled with the idea of Jesus’ descent into hell, and still there is much confusion over it. But the fact remains that the Scriptures teach it as part of His work to save us

from going to hell ourselves. So even if we don’t understand how or when, or even the full details of why He descended into hell, we simply trust that He did it properly and we give thanks to God for it!

Perhaps one of the most valuable elements of the Creed is what it teaches us about the life and resurrection that come to us through faith in Christ’s death. As surely as we believe and confess that Christ died to forgive our sins and rose again, we also are to be sure of our own resurrection of the body and life everlasting. Too often Christians become fixed on romantic hopes about heaven and vague spiritual abstractions of the hereafter, which are usually based more on art, rather than on the Scriptures. But the Creed teaches us that our abundant life in Christ is a present reality, with real, temporal *and* eternal physical substance!

In Baptism the Holy Spirit makes us part of the holy Christian Church. We are brought into the fellowship and “communion of the saints”. We’re identified with Christ as we are made part of His Body. We get to live according to that forgiveness and bear His fruit *now*. It’s no good to go on acting in the same old sinful ways, thinking that salvation is only a matter for the deathbed. We’re to remember and live according to the forgiveness and identity we have in Christ, and the Creed teaches us that.

Likewise, we need to remember the resurrection of the *body* is part of our life everlasting. It’s shocking how some Christians can know and recite the Creed on a weekly basis, yet when a pastor teaches that our resurrection will be physical and tangible they react as if he’s trying to teach Mormonism. (I speak from personal experience on this one.) The Creed reminds us that Jesus was born of the virgin, true flesh and blood. It also reminds us that His resurrection and ours include the body as well as the spirit. This is most certainly true!

There’s much more that can be said about the Apostles’ Creed, but the important idea is that it’s a clear reflection of God’s Word of Truth in Christ. And if anyone does ask us to give reason for the hope that we have in Jesus Christ, even if

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you don't have all the right chapters and verses of the Scriptures memorized, the Creed is a very good place to start.

### **The Lord's Prayer:**

In the Commandments the Lord teaches us how we are to be. In the Creed the Lord teaches us what we are to believe and confess. And in the "Our Father" the Lord teaches us how to call upon Him in every time of need and trust Him. These three things cover a considerable amount of what makes up our life!

It seems a safe assumption that the Lord's Prayer is more widely used by people devotionally than the Creed or the Commandments. Also, misconceptions about the Lord's Prayer are possibly fewer than those concerning the Creed or Commandments. (Thanks be to God if these impressions are indeed true!) But in terms of appreciating and meditating upon the Wisdom of the Lord's Prayer, we can never be *too* mindful.

Christ Himself teaches us how to pray and ask our Father for good things. Human tendency is to start in right away with, "Lord, I want..." But Jesus gives us the more excellent way, and as we use the Words that He commends to us we learn, even as we are asking.

From its first petitions we are made to properly consider to Whom we are praying, namely God, the Father almighty. But we are also taught to "approach him boldly and confidently in prayer, even as beloved children approach their dear father."<sup>6</sup> And the fact that the Prayer is taught to us in the plural (e.g., "*our* Father...", "*forgive us our* trespasses, as *we* forgive those who trespass against *us*...") should remind us that faithful prayer does concern more than just "me and God". Through faith in Christ we are part of His Church, which transcends time and place, so we are by no means alone when we kneel before our Father, even if we are praying in our closet!

Also, we pray for others, as the Scriptures teach us to do, by virtue of the Prayer's plural language. It's easy to remember that we need to ask God to forgive and provide for ourselves, but we also do well to pray that His kingdom comes for

others to remember their dependence on Him for daily bread, forgiveness, and protection.

Christ teaches us to remember our accountability as we pray. He teaches us to ask for forgiveness often because we sin often, but He also reminds us that that forgiveness should always be reflected through us toward others. If we refuse to properly forgive others, do we properly understand Christ's forgiveness for us? In a word, no.

Much *doctrine* can be learned and remembered if we realize that so much of it is contained in the Ten Commandments, the Apostles' Creed, and the Lord's Prayer. Doctrine is not just big old dusty books that decorate the shelves in a pastor's office. Nor is doctrine the political policies and governing statutes of bureaucracies. True Christian doctrine is the living, breathing, active Word of God, which continues to live, and breathe, and act through the people of Christ's Church. Doctrine is what He teaches us to observe through the witness of the Apostles and the repetition of faithful pastors. Doctrine describes our identity in Him.

So many people know the doctrines of the Church, but they don't always realize it. Worse yet, some know it, but they choose to despise it and ignore it. Many, if not all, of the controversies that plague the Church today come from ignoring our childhood memory work.

We would do well to remember our memory work, like the Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer, but we would do even better to meditate on it. These simple lessons from Scripture are easy to carry, easy to recite, and make for a profoundly strong framework and clear perspective with which we can continue to search and study the rest of God's Scripture. But we all have to start somewhere. + + +

<sup>1</sup> Tappert, T. G. (2000, c1959). *The book of concord : The confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church* (359.7-8). Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

<sup>2</sup> Tappert (362.6).

<sup>3</sup> Tappert (363.18).

<sup>4</sup> Tappert (361.17).

<sup>5</sup> Tappert (345.2).

<sup>6</sup> Tappert (346.2).

**MEETING WITH THE ACLC**—On Sept. 10, Bishop Heiser met with the pastors of the Association of Confessional Lutheran Churches in Hillsboro, OR. The ELDoNA and ACLC have been in doctrinal discussions for several years. Among the topics on the agenda of the latest meeting were the doctrine of creation, the office of the ministry, and fellowship in the Church. All participants were greatly pleased with the fruitful discussions.



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## **Mission Update for St. Luke Lutheran Church in Kenai, Alaska**

by Pastor Tim Tolar

Greetings, to the saints in the lower 48, in the name of Jesus Christ. Throughout the summer our activities within the parish have focused primarily on weekly study and worship.

In Alaska the summer seems to be a much more hectic time than in the rest of the country since it is shorter and at its frenzied peak involves approximately 24 hours of sunshine a day. In spite of these challenges we have completed a study of the book of Genesis which had us study a chapter a week. The group involved in that study has decided to begin Exodus next with a goal of completing a similar detailed study of each of the books of the Pentateuch and ultimately the entire bible.

The other midweek study in the parish finished its study of *Luther's Large Catechism* and has begun a study of the *Formula of Concord*.

We also have continued our Sunday Bible study in which we review the assigned pericopes for that week.

With the coming of fall and winter the discussions among members have turned to future goals and plans for the further spreading of the gospel into the community. This outreach effort will likely kickoff with a visit from Bishop James Heiser for the Installation Rite of Pastor Tolar during the first week of November and we invite all of our brothers and sisters within the diocese to join us in rejoicing over this event. The installation will occur on Wednesday, November 5.

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### **A PUBLIC ANNOUNCEMENT**

It is with profound regret that the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America announces the termination of her affiliation and fellowship with The Reverend Michael Totten, Ph.D., of San Lorenzo, California.

Following a dialogue between Bishop Heiser and Dr. Totten, with assistance from a theological investigation panel composed of three diocesan members, it was determined that the questioned portion of Dr. Totten's doctrine was not in harmony with the confessional standards of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. It also was determined that reconciliation between Dr. Totten and our diocese concerning this doctrinal matter was not possible at this point in time. As a result, Dr. Totten's membership in the diocese was declared to be terminated.

We continue to pray humbly for Christ's abundant grace and mercy upon us, that the ultimate end of this matter will be an enduring unity in Lutheran doctrine and practice among us and an abiding fellowship within the Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of North America between us.

**Congregations served by Pastors  
of the  
Evangelical Lutheran Diocese of  
North America (ELDoNA)**

**ALASKA**

**St. Luke Lutheran Church**

meeting at:

Salvation Army Activity Center

401 N. Forest Drive

Kenai, Alaska

Pastor Tim H. Tolar

Phone: (907) 335-0036

Sunday: Bible Study 3 P.M.; Divine Service 4:30 P.M.

**ILLINOIS**

**Holy Cross Evangelical Lutheran Church**

618 S. Maxwell Road

Peoria, Illinois 61607

Pastor Douglas Handrich

Phone: (309) 697-4832

Sunday: Divine Service 9:30 A.M.; Bible Study 10:30 A.M.

**St. Philip Lutheran Mission**

Grayslake, Illinois.

Location and service times yet to be determined.

Dcn.. Anthony Oncken

Phone: (847) 548-0448

**MICHIGAN**

**Christ our Redeemer Lutheran Church**

2619 Superior ("Superior Place")

Trenton, Michigan 48183

Pastor Mark Raitz

Phone: (313) 278-4091

Sunday: Divine Service 9:30 A.M.; Bible Study 10:30 A.M.

**Saint Boniface Evangelical Lutheran Church**

meeting at:

104 N. 3rd Street

Niles, Michigan

Pastor John Rutowicz

Phone: (269) 683-5169

Sunday: Divine Service 9:30 A.M.; Bible Study 10:45 A.M.

**MINNESOTA**

**Redeemer Lutheran Church**

2560 South Main Street

Cambridge, Minnesota

Pastor Mark Mueller

Phone: (763) 689-2290

Sunday: Divine Service 9:00 A.M.; Bible Class 10:15 A.M.

**MISSOURI**

**Christ Evangelical Lutheran Church**

4H Building

Ray County Fairgrounds

Richmond, Missouri 64085

Pastor C. D. Hudson

Phone: (660) 259-2728

Sunday: Divine Service 9:30 A.M.; Christian Ed. 10:45 A.M.

**NORTH CAROLINA**

**Saint Paul Lutheran Church, UAC**

323 First Avenue SW

P.O. Box 535 (mailing address)

Taylorsville, North Carolina 28681

Pastor Donald R. Hunter

Phone: (828) 632-2695

Sunday: Sunday School 9:45 A.M.; Divine Service 11 A.M.

**TEXAS**

**Salem Lutheran Church**

718 HCR 3424 E

Malone, Texas 76660

Pastor James D. Heiser, Dcn. Jeffrey Ahonen

Phone: (254) 533-2330

Sunday: Sunday School 9:30 a.m.; Divine Service 10:30 a.m.

**WISCONSIN**

**Saint Henry Lutheran Mission**

meeting at:

*Winter, WI*—Town of Winter Hall, N4680 Co. W

**Saturday Evening Service at 5:30 P.M.**

Bible Study at 6:30 P.M.

*Tony, WI*—'Paradise' Building, Intersection of North & Maple Streets, Tony, WI

**Sunday Morning Service at 9:30 A.M.**

Bible Study at 10:30 A.M.

*Ironwood, MI*—**Sunday Evening** Divine Service at 7 P.M.

Dcn. Jeffrey Ahonen

Phone: (715) 403-1433