

# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

"...THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN." — JOHN 10:35

"WELCOME, HAPPY MORNING!"

AGE TO AGE SHALL SAY;

"HELL TODAY IS VANQUISHED,

HEAV'N IS WON TODAY!"

LO, THE DEAD IS LIVING,

GOD FOREVER MORE!

HIM, THEIR TRUE CREATOR,

ALL HIS WORKS ADORE.

"WELCOME, HAPPY MORNING!"

AGE TO AGE SHALL SAY;

"HELL TODAY IS VANQUISHED,

HEAV'N IS WON TODAY!"

(TLH# 202:1)

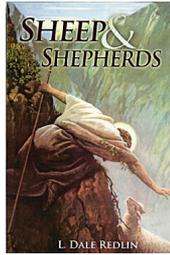
**BOOK REVIEW**

Pastor David Reim, Reviewer

# *Sheep & Shepherds*

**“The Lord is my Shepherd.”**

What an amazing truth that is! The eternal, almighty Lord of heaven and earth is MY Shepherd. He takes care of my every need so that “I shall not want.” I will not lack any good thing.



Few books draw the reader to know and feel the love of the Savior as does this account of life under the care of the Good Shepherd. From our being lost and straying sheep to our lying down in green pastures of contented peace, the author leads us through our life with Jesus. The reader sees how our Shepherd anxiously sought and found us when we were lost and how He leads us along as the WAY, the TRUTH, and the LIFE.

Readers will also be filled with the personal realization that the Good Shepherd has the same overwhelming love for everyone. The author leads us to see the wicked and rebellious people of the world as lost and straying sheep—but sheep who are dearly loved and sought after by the Good Shepherd. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, imparts the desire to share His great work of seeking and saving the lost.

*Sheep & Shepherds* is the type of treasure that will benefit the reader over and over through the years. It also makes a great gift for others. *Sheep & Shepherds* may be purchased either from the CLC Bookhouse [clcbookhouse@ilc.edu](mailto:clcbookhouse@ilc.edu) or directly from the author Pastor L. Dale Redlin at [hope-dale@juno.com](mailto:hope-dale@juno.com). Per copy cost is \$14.95.

# LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

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## 2012 Convention Church of the Lutheran Confession

**Monday, June 18 –  
Thursday, June 21**

Immanuel Lutheran College,  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin

**Theme:**

Thanks Be To God,  
Who Gives Us The Victory  
Through Our Lord Jesus Christ!  
(1 Corinthians 15:57)

**Essays:**

1. Be steadfast and immovable!
2. Be always abounding in the work of the Lord!



*May the Lord of  
the Church bless  
our Convention!*

# “Are We There Yet?”



Teacher David Bernthal • Fond du Lac, Wisconsin

**Being both a father and school teacher with the privilege of taking countless numbers of children on many trips, I have heard my share of “Are-we-there-yets?”!**

Let's not be too hard on our youth, however. We too can get very impatient in our lives. How are you about waiting in line at a store, at a red light, or for a train to pass? And are we always satisfied with the way things turn out in our lives? How do we behave when things don't end up our way—not only in day-to-day issues but in the bigger picture of what we want out of life? Do we question and even complain about the way things turn out? Are we always patient *with each other*—forgiving one another just as Christ has forgiven us?

In this hustle and bustle, rushing about, rarely-satisfied world, don't we often yearn for release? Wouldn't it be wonderful if the Lord would simply take us away already?

In other words, we ourselves might ask, “Are we there yet?”

Our loving heavenly Father gives us comfort from the Scriptures through the pen of the Apostle Paul. In Romans chapter 6 the Holy Spirit gives us our Easter and everyday comfort. He informs us that we have already arrived at a very important destination. *“Don’t you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore 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”* (Romans 6:3-4).

Did you catch not only the destination but the journey as well? As Christians you and I have already passed through death and into eternal life! When we were baptized into Christ—brought to faith by the Holy Spirit—it was as if we had partaken of Christ’s death. After all, it was our sins which nailed Him to the cross. It was our transgressions and guilt that were washed away in His righteous blood. We were laid in His tomb and, when He arose to die no more, it sealed us to Him forever!

This, dear fellow Christians, is why the Lord told Martha and can tell us, *“whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die”* (John 11:26). Death (which is now only a sleep) may come to our bodies, but never to us!

If we have already been delivered from the law and have died to the sin of this world, (see Romans 6:6), what crisis can concern a corpse? What burden—whether financial, physical, spiritual, psychological, or otherwise—can bother a dead body? The Lord is telling us that nothing in this life can defeat us. Nothing—not even death itself!—can separate us from Christ’s eternal love (Romans 8:37-39)!



AS CHRISTIANS YOU AND  
I HAVE ALREADY PASSED  
THROUGH DEATH AND  
INTO ETERNAL LIFE!

Please notice that verse 4 of Romans chapter 6 does not say we *will* (sometime in the future) have new life, *but we already have it now—we are already there!* And the 13th verse goes on to declare, “...but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your (bodily) members as tools of righteousness to God.” When we Christians live our lives with Jesus' death and resurrection as our central theme, we realize that we have died to sin and are now able to surrender our lives and resources to the Lord to be used for His glory.

When petty problems (think of it—compared to eternity, they're *all* petty) start to get us down, to distract us from our goal, to bring worry and heartache, we need to remember: with death conquered and new life ours, *now* is the time to rejoice! Right *now* our risen Christ reigns!

We need not wait to enjoy our heavenly reward—by faith we are already there! “Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified” (Romans 8:30). Hallelujah!

*'Tis through the purchase  
of His death  
Who hung upon the tree  
The Spirit is sent down to breathe  
On such dry bones as we.*

—

*Raised from the dead,  
we live anew;  
And justified by grace,  
We shall appear in glory, too,  
And see our Father's face.*

(TLH # 382:5-6)



# Questions to Ponder

Prof. Joseph Lau • Eau Claire, Wisconsin

*“How are the dead raised up?  
And with what body do they come?”*

(1 CORINTHIANS 15:35)

**T**he above text presents us with two special questions to ponder this Easter season.

Let's examine the second first: *“And with what body do they come?”*

If you are like me, every year brings with it evidence of bodily deterioration: reading glasses signify failing eyesight; recuperation time lengthens after vigorous activity or illness; joints ache for no apparent reason.

And if there is anything certain in this life, it is that aches and pains will continue to get worse!

Then there are millions who experience the decay of the mind (perhaps even more debilitating and frustrating for those who experience it).

Of course, this wasn't always the case. In God's perfect creation Adam and Eve suffered no physical or mental handicaps. That was the case until the entrance of sin. With sin came all disease, decay, and pain.

The debilitating daily reminders of sin and its consequences help the Christian maintain a proper focus—a focus on a better life to come, a life with bodies not unlike those which Adam and Eve had before the Fall into sin.

So—*“With what body do they come?”* Answer: “With a perfect body – one without pain, blemish, dementia, or disease!”

But how is this possible? Our second question asks: *“How are the dead raised up?”*

How can God take something that is impure, sinful, dead, decayed, and ugly, and turn it into something that is glorious and holy?

This is possible because God can accomplish for us physically what He has already accomplished for us spiritually. He took our sin-darkened hearts and minds and created in them light and faith. He resurrected our spiritual “dead bones” by breathing new life into them (see Ezekiel chapter 37).

On Easter we celebrate the fact that Jesus demonstrated His authority over death by rising from the dead, just as was prophesied. Because He lives, we shall live also (John 14:19)!

So—“*How are the dead raised up?*” Answer: “By the same power and by the same means as Jesus Himself was raised up, free from sin and with a perfect body.”

Without Jesus' perfect life, atoning death, and glorious resurrection we would have nothing good to look forward to, either spiritually or physically.

May all of us who suffer here below find comfort in the Easter message of life renewed and restored—life eternal!

*I am flesh and must return  
Unto dust, whence I was taken;  
But by faith I now discern  
That from death I shall awaken  
With my Savior to abide  
In His glory, at His side.*

—

*Glorified, I shall anew  
With this flesh then be enshrouded;  
In this body I shall view  
God, my Lord, with eyes unclouded;  
In this flesh I then shall see  
Jesus Christ eternally.*

(TLH #206:4-5)



# Christ's Bodily Resurrection - A Foundational Christian Truth

Pastor Mark Gullerud • Bowdle, South Dakota

**T**he many teachings of God from Genesis to Revelation are precious to believing Christians because they form an unshakeable foundation upon which to firmly establish redeemed lives with God and to possess the certain hope of eternal life in heaven.

Since God's teachings are interconnected, we do not want to give up any of them lest our Christian foundation gradually crumble and finally be completely lost.

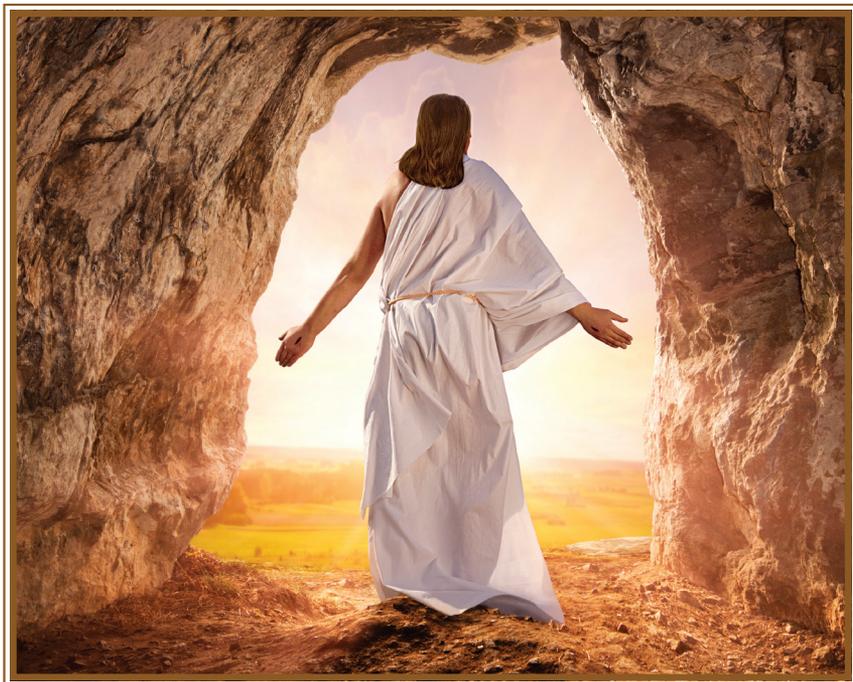
The devil who wants to rob us of our blessed life with God recognizes the importance of each and every teaching of God's Word and tirelessly chips away at God's teachings. His ultimate goal is to cause Christians to lose their life and salvation in Christ Jesus.

Satan—who is not an angel of light but rather the enemy of our souls—has been very successful in his attacks against the teaching of Christ's bodily resurrection.

Sad to say, also in the name of Christianity the idea is espoused that Jesus did not rise bodily from His grave. The claim is made that Bible accounts of Jesus' resurrection are grossly exaggerated. Such critics tell us that the disciples wanted so badly to see Jesus alive again that they imagined it to be so.

What then do such apostate propagandists proclaim from their pulpits on Easter Sunday? If any mention is made of a resurrection, it is of a spiritual resurrection of Christ rather than a bodily one.

What are the implications of all this? In his first letter to the Corinthians, chapter 15, the apostle Paul spells it out very clearly, reasoning that if there is no resurrection, then Christ is not risen (v. 13).



The apostle then tells the domino effect of this false teaching. Without Christ's bodily resurrection the preaching of the Christian faith would be empty and devoid of truth (v. 14); this, in turn, would make authentic Christian preachers false prophets (v. 15), and their preaching and teaching would be completely useless (v. 14,17).

The final outcome is that we sinners would be still in our sins (v. 17). As for all those who have died believing in Jesus as their Savior, Paul writes that they would have perished eternally in hell (v. 18). Were this the case, Christians would be the most pitiable people in the world (v. 19).

### **Complete Certainty!**

But Paul does not leave us in a quandary about this. He declares with absolute certainty that Christ **has** risen bodily from the dead and **has** become the first of countless believers who will rise victorious from the grave on the last day. This is certain because Jesus showed Himself to be our Savior from sin and eternal death when He rose victorious from the dead.

The apostle could testify to this, for on the day of his conversion

on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-5; 26:12-18)—he personally saw and heard the risen Lord Jesus!

What about the Gospel record of Jesus' bodily resurrection from the dead? Was this wishful thinking on the part of the disciples—their wanting so much to see Jesus alive that they imagined it?

Read again the testimony of the Gospels, which reveal anything but wishful thinking (Matthew 28:1-15; Mark 16:1-14; Luke 24:1-49; John 20 and 21) and show the exact opposite of what the nay-sayers claim.

- + **His disciples did not expect to see Him alive again in this world**
- + **His disciples did not believe the women who reported that they had seen Jesus;**
- + **And even when Jesus stood before them in bodily form, the disciples couldn't believe their eyes. Jesus had to prove in a tangible way that He was standing before them and that they were not imagining things.**

In the book of Acts we read of the risen Jesus repeatedly appearing to His disciples so as to fully convince them of His bodily resurrection. We read in the opening chapter, "*He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days*" (1:3).

Fully assured that Jesus rose bodily from the grave as our victorious Savior, on Easter Sunday we can greet one another with complete certainty: "*He is risen.*" To which hearers can confidently respond,

**"He is risen indeed! Hallelujah!"**





# The Innocent for the Guilty!

*“And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward  
of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing amiss”*

(Luke 23:41).

Pastor Em. Daniel Fleischer • Oakdale, Minnesota

**W**hat emotion is created in our hearts  
as we see the Lord Jesus on the cross?

The emotion frequently seen is that which the pastor paints in his sermons during the Lenten season. It is easy to create a sympathetic emotion as the pastor speaks of the flogging Jesus endured before He went to the cross and of the pain Christ endured on the cross with blood coursing down his brow from the crown of thorns.

As true Man Jesus endured the discomfort and pain that accompanies torture. Surely a case can be made that—given the reason for His suffering and death, dying for the sins of all—the emotional abuse suffered from the verbal slings and arrows (from many of those for whom He was dying!) hurt more deeply than the physical afflictions.

All that happened to Christ and all that He endured surely do evoke emotion.

But the whole point of what occurred on Calvary is missed if a person drowns in emotion over Jesus' anguish but fails to recognize that the cause of His suffering is—each one of us! *“All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone, to his own way...”* (Isaiah

53: 6). The emotion felt at our contemplation of His crucifixion should be that created by the fact that our sins caused the Savior's anguish. What is seen there is the "*due reward of our deeds*"—suffered, however, not by ourselves but by Jesus upon whom was laid "*the iniquity of us all.*"

As our text puts it, this "*Man*" had "*done nothing amiss.*" That is an important word for a number of reasons.

First of all, it was the witness of the dying thief who with penitent heart rejected the unbelief of the other thief who felt victimized by the society that had condemned him to such a death.

The penitent one left his witness for posterity: Jesus was innocent. If there was a victim of injustice, it was the Savior who, rather than feeling victimized, declared, "*For this purpose I came to this hour*" (John 12:27).

Further, the penitent thief's testimony witnessed to the Father's faithfulness to His promise to send a Savior. In His faithfulness the Father "*laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all*" and thus made Jesus "*who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him*" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Blessed are the eyes that see and the hearts that believe what the dying thief believed in the last hours of his life.

### **Thank You, Jesus!**

This exchange should never cease to amaze us—He who throughout His life had not earned the wages of sin received them (Romans 6:23a)!

We who had earned the wages of sin (wages are earned, let us not forget) were relieved of them because Jesus was paid what we earned. This makes no economic sense. The way it goes in this world, from the most diligent worker to the laziest, wages are something pursued with the thought that one deserves more and more. And woe unto any who cheats another out of what he has earned!

Yet on the cross *Jesus received what we earned and paid what we owed!* In this exchange the devil was cheated of his victims. Thank you, Jesus!

The Apostle Paul adds his witness to the substitutionary nature of the Savior's death with these words, "*We then, as workers together with*

Him, also plead with you not to receive the grace of God in vain” (2 Corinthians 6:1).  
Bring forth the fruits expressive of repentance.

Confess your sins unto the Lord; do not be ashamed to look upon the Savior crucified for you and believe that in Him—despised and rejected of men (Isaiah 53:3)—you have been given the precious inheritance of life eternal in the heavens, which only He can give.

By our witness in word and deed, may all the world know that our Good Friday emotion is more than sympathetic tears for an Innocent, but an emotion of thanksgiving that the Innocent would give up His life as the Recipient of our wages and the Payer of our debt.

Rejoice, for in the death of Innocence made guilty, guilty you and I have been made righteous.

Blessed are all who believe,  
for they shall see God!



AN EASTER MESSAGE FROM OUR CLC PRESIDENT

*“But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified”*

(I Corinthians 9:27)

## See You At The Finish Line!

Pastor John Schierenbeck

Sports fans celebrate their team's victory with enthusiasm and joy. One of the most moving sporting experiences for me was the 1980 US Hockey Team's gold medal victory at the Olympic Games.

However, this victory and any other sporting win that could be mentioned cannot compare with the victory which Jesus won over death when He rose victorious from the grave on Easter Sunday morning.

In the ninth chapter of I Corinthians the Apostle Paul compares the Christian life to a race. The Olympic Games began in Greece.

Many Greek cities had their own local games. In Corinth the Isthmian Games were held every other year and were second only to the Olympic Games in importance.

These Greek athletes trained to win a perishable laurel-leaf crown. All this effort and excitement resulted in the momentary thrill of victory. In our day, of course, big money has made athletics a business where athletes compete not only for gold medals but for large salaries and big endorsements.

Perhaps the closest thing to the pure amateurism of the Greek games would be local community races. Almost every community has 5k and 10k runs. For most of these runners the object is not so much to win the race but to do the best they can and finish it.

Even for those races the runners put long hours into training, often running 15-25 miles a week. It takes a certain amount of discipline to stick with the program. When the finish line is crossed, the training and the need to give up everyday comforts was all worth it.

The Christian life is worth it when we finish our race and cross the finish line to receive the crown of victory.

### **The Prize of Our High Calling**

The Apostle Paul recognized the possibility that, having preached to others, he might yet be disqualified and lose the prize of his high calling. He hoped to see those he had preached to at the finish line and together with them receive the crown of life.

Paul's prayer is the serious prayer of every pastor who recognizes his own weaknesses and failings, "*so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.*" What a terrible thing to contemplate that, having preached the gospel to others, one fails to obtain the final victory himself!

Instead, Paul in effect told the Corinthian believers, "See you at the finish line!" In the Christian life, everyone who completes the race is a winner. The prize of our high calling is the gift of eternal life. We compete for an eternal crown that lasts forever.

The wonderful thing about this race is that Jesus has already run it for us! Jesus became man so that He could take our place. He resisted all the very real temptations of the devil. He carried the burden of all our sins and guilt. In His substitutionary death, He conquered sin and death.

The glorious Easter message is "Jesus has won the race!" *"Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (I Corinthians 15:57). Jesus has already crossed the finish line as the winner, and His victory is our victory. All that is left for us is by faith to keep our eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.

Then when we finish our race, we will receive the crown of life. Easter teaches us to look beyond the struggle of the training (daily family devotions, regular prayers, church attendance) and the pain of the actual run (sickness, family problems, discouragements). Easter teaches us to look not at our feet and where we are in the race or how many hills are left to run. It teaches us to keep focused on the finish line. For the believer death means the finish line has been crossed. Earthly struggles are over. The crown of eternal life awaits.

Some of those I ran with used to say, "See you at the finish line." Like Paul, I say to you this Easter, "I hope to see all of you at the finish line." By the grace of God, through Jesus' Easter victory this hope will be fulfilled on the great day of the resurrection of the dead to life everlasting.

"See you at the finish line!"

SECOND OF 3 IN A SERIES

## WHAT IS TRULY LUTHERAN?

Pastor Daniel Fleischer, Em. • Oakdale, Minnesota

To begin with, we do well to define the term *Christian*. A Christian is one who believes in the forgiveness of sins through the blood atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. This faith and confidence is not part of the natural human heart but a consequence of the gospel through which the Holy Spirit creates the faith that confesses, "I believe in God the Father... and in Jesus Christ... and in the Holy Ghost."

One is not a Christian because he is perfect in his mortal state but because he is pardoned through the substitutionary atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ. From such faith flows the life of sanctification—Christian living—which glorifies our Heavenly Father who has begotten us again unto a living hope through the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ from the dead (I Peter 1:3-9).

To the continuation of

genuine Christianity and the Christian's hope, the Word of God is essential—for apart from that Word there would be no Christianity! Furthermore, apart from the Word of salvation there is no genuinely Christian life. Martin Luther said, "I am continually saying that our entire life and all our works must conform to God's Word if they are to be considered God-pleasing and holy" (*What Luther Says* [WLS], Vol. I, p. 214).

Luther also maintained that a Christian accepts the Word of God without question: "Christians should simply cling to the Word alone and not argue as to whether God is lying or telling the truth. They are simply to believe it because Christ says it" (*ibid.*)

So then, who is truly Lutheran? That Christian is truly Lutheran who—as Martin Luther implied—remains loyal to Scripture! "The perfectly pure, the only, and the certain Word of God must be the foundation of our faith" (WLS, Vol. II, p. 863). No honest Lutheran would deny Luther's comment.

But here is where a problem arises. Not all within Lutheranism agree on what is Scripture. Consequently, not all agree on what constitutes loyalty to Scripture.

*For us the whole Bible is the inspired, unerring Word of God. What God transmitted to the prophets and apostles was the Word of God, is the Word of God, and shall forever remain the Word of God. Therefore not a single Word of Scripture can be denied without doing violence to the whole of Scripture. For us loyalty to Scripture means that without reservation, evasion, or recasting, we confess and teach the Bible. We are not among those who believe that the divine Word is subject to revision for our time. To suggest so is heresy.*

This is our confession. It is truly Lutheran!

Martin Luther declared, "Nor should we let men toy with Scripture, juggle the Word of God, and make it submit to being explained, twisted, stretched, and revised to suit people or to achieve peace and union; for then there should be no secure or stable foundation on which consciences might rely" (WLS, Vol. III, p. 1475). They who deny that the whole of Scripture is the Word of God make God a liar!

However, even among Lutherans who profess respect for the Word of God and who hold legitimate concerns about the direction of Lutheranism are those who, for reasons of their own, pick and choose what they want to believe and practice from Scripture.

“CHRISTIANS SHOULD SIMPLY CLING TO THE WORD  
ALONE AND NOT ARGUE AS TO WHETHER GOD IS  
LYING OR TELLING THE TRUTH....”

For example, a sizeable group within the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) is upset over that church’s approval of homosexual pastors and homosexual unions. Some of those have left the ELCA. Yet that synod continues to ordain women into the pastoral ministry and engages in unionism (joint worship without unity in doctrine and teaching) as well as in the practice of open communion. Though it is claimed that Scripture is their only and final authority in matters of doctrine, they have adapted themselves to modern interpretations and practices rejected by their fathers.

We make no judgment regarding the salvation of such, for salvation is the gracious gift of God the Father to all who hold fast to Christ and believe in the forgiveness of sins through the merit and atonement of Christ. Nevertheless, they are truly Lutheran who remain steadfast to the Word of God in all doctrines set forth in Scripture and accept the Confessions of the Lutheran Church set forth in the *Book of Concord* of 1580.

True Lutherans give more than lip service to the name “Lutheran” and to the doctrines

confessed in the *Augsburg Confession*, the defining confession of true Lutheranism. With the *Augsburg Confession* true Lutherans without reservation teach from Scripture that...

1. God is Triune—Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.
2. All since the fall of Adam and begotten in the natural way are born with sin.
3. Christ, true God, assumed human nature conceived of the Holy Ghost through the virgin Mary (see Apostolic Creed).
4. All people are justified, and their sins are forgiven for Christ’s sake, who by His death has made satisfaction for our sins.
5. The ministry of the Word and Sacraments was instituted for the proclamation of the Word, through which the Holy Spirit creates faith.
6. This Spirit-engendered faith produces fruits of faith (good works).
7. The Holy Christian Church consists of all believers in Christ, and only believers. It shall endure forever.

8. An orthodox church is a church in which the gospel is rightly taught and the sacraments rightly administered. Its unity is maintained through the Word and Sacraments, not through human rites or traditions.
  9. Baptism administers the grace of God, and children are to be baptized.
  10. The body and blood of Christ are truly present in the Sacrament and are distributed in, with, and under the bread and wine.
  11. Private confession and absolution is retained in the Church.
  12. Repentance consists of contrition (sorrow) for sin and faith in Christ's atonement.
  13. The Sacraments awaken and confirm faith in those who use them.
  14. No one should publicly teach in the Church who is not regularly called.
  15. Customs and traditions are observed that do not burden consciences, and which serve good order in the Church.
  16. It is right for Christians to hold civil office.
  17. Christ will return at the end of time to judge all—believers to heaven, unbelievers to hell.
  18. Humans possess free will in civil matters but not in spiritual matters.
  19. The cause of sin is the will of the devil and the flesh (old man).
  20. Good works cannot reconcile to God, for the sinner is saved by grace through faith in Christ alone.
  21. We may follow the faith and example of the saints, but we do not venerate them.
- These and whatever other doctrines are set forth in Scripture are to be believed and faithfully taught in the Lutheran Church. Luther said in his day, "Let him who does not want Scripture stick to his own. We want Christ and not the pope" (WLS, Vol. III, p. 1178).
- There are those who choose to go their own way. For our part we have no intent to disassociate ourselves from Luther and the doctrine he set forth from Scripture. As we are Christian, God help us to remain truly Lutheran!
- (To be concluded)

“...The Word of God shall establish articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel.” (Luther, SA, Part II, Art. II)

A CLOSER LOOK AT THE *SMALCALD ARTICLES* (SA) (Second of Three)

## Historical Setting

Pastor Paul Fleischer

This year is the 475th anniversary of the *Smalcald Articles* (SA) which were penned by Dr. Martin Luther in 1537. The boxed dateline shows where these articles occurred in the busy reformer's life.

Luther was busy indeed as—with the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God, and with conscience bound to that Word—he spearheaded the protracted 16th century Lutheran Reformation.

It's been a while since we reviewed this part of Reformation history for ourselves. We find it to be quite true that *"the last sixteen years of Luther's life, from the Augsburg Confession in 1530 to his death in 1546, are commonly treated more cursorily by biographers than the earlier period, if they are not omitted altogether..."*<sup>1</sup> In fact, this noted Luther biographer himself provides almost nothing regarding the *Smalcald Articles* and their development.

Still, ample information can be found to (re)introduce us to these *Smalcald Articles* which appeared during those comparatively quiet years of Luther's life. And it is worthwhile to review some of that

### Planned series on the *Smalcald Articles*:

- #1 Of The Divine Majesty/Redemption/Salvation by Grace (in this issue)
- #2 Of The Mass
- #3 Of Cloisters/Papacy
- #4 Of Sin and the Law
- #5 Of Repentance
- #6 Of The Gospel and Sacraments
- #7 Of Keys and Confession
- #8 Of Ordination/Traditions/Conclusion

### Historical Context:

- 1483 - February 10, Luther's birth
- 1517 - October 31, 95 theses posted
- 1520 - Three classic treatises published by Luther
- 1521 - April 18, his "Here I stand!" at the Diet (Council) of Worms
- 1525 - Luther's marriage to Catherine von Bora
- 1528 - May 28, Luther's confession Concerning Christ's Supper
- 1529 - Large & Small Catechisms appeared; Evangelical states "protest" at the Diet of Speyer; Schwabach Articles; Marburg Articles
- 1530 - Diet of Augsburg, Torgau Articles, *Augsburg Confession* read
- 1531 - "Smalcald League" formed; *Augsburg Confession & Apology* published
- 1534 - Luther completed his translation of the Bible
- 1536 - Elector requested Luther write yet another set of articles
- 1537 - *Smalcald Articles* approved (privately)
- 1546 - February 18, Luther's death
- 1577 - Formula of Concord published
- 1580 - *Book of Concord* appeared

history, particularly since the SA remains one of the Confessions our synod accepts as its own.

Luther's theological influence was considerable for the *Augsburg Confession* and its *Apology* (composed primarily by the Reformer's colleague Philip Melancthon). However, of the nine confessions found in the *Book of Concord*, Luther was the sole author of three—his two Catechisms and the *Smalcald Articles*. The latter he prepared at his Elector's request in behalf of the members of the Smalcald League.

The "Smalcald League"? What was that? In the proximity of the city of Schmalkalden (a few miles south of the city of Erfurt in Saxony), Germany, the League was a geographical/theological alliance formed by Lutheran princes following the Diet (Council) of Augsburg in 1530. That year, with Emperor Charles V present, the *Augsburg Confession* was adopted by the Lutheran "protestants" as their church's mark of identity.

Charles, however, was a Roman Catholic and did not accept the AC; instead, he asked his Catholic theologians to prepare a reply to it, giving the Lutherans until April 15, 1531, to reunite with "the Christian Church, the Holy Father, and His Majesty."

## "A Last Will And Testament"

Yes, tension filled the air! It soon became clear that the AC was not enough to settle matters once and for all—at least as far as the Emperor and the pope were concerned. Even the "protesting" Lutherans fondly hoped and prayed that yet another general council of the church might settle some of the still-burning religious issues.

But something more, something new, needed to be written. The following quote shortens a long story:

*"...The [Smalcald] League became a power the emperor had to reckon with. It was not until June 1536 that the pope issued a bull, setting the date (May 8, 1537) and place (Mantua [Italy]) for a council. Later he declared the purpose of the council to be 'the utter extirpation of the poisonous, pestilential Lutheran heresy.' The question now was should the Lutherans attend a council called by the pope? Elector John Frederick was opposed.... Luther favored it, not for the sake of the Lutherans, but for the sake of the rest of Christendom. The papal legate was taken aback when Luther told him: 'We do not need a council for ourselves and our adherents, for we already have the firm Evangelical doctrine and order. Christendom, however, needs it, in order that those whom error still holds captive may be able to distinguish between error and truth.'" 2)*

Electoral John commissioned his friend "Doctor Martin" to

prepare a set of articles setting forth the evangelical position. Luther "was to indicate those doctrines in which no concession could be made—articles which not even peril of death would make him recant. But he was also to note those articles in which some compromise was possible." 3)

The stage was set. Luther had been in such ill health that he felt close to death, yet he could not, would not, miss the opportunity to leave what might be termed a "last will and testament" of all his teaching and preaching. From the PREFACE OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER to the SA: "I have decided to publish these articles so that, if I should die before a council meets...those who live after me may have my testimony and confession... to show where I have stood until now and where, by God's grace, I will continue to stand..."

Luther's PREFACE concluded with this prayer: "Dear Lord Jesus Christ, assemble a council of Thine own, and by Thy glorious advent deliver Thy servants. The pope and his adherents are lost. They will have nothing to do with Thee. But help us, poor and wretched souls who cry unto Thee and earnestly seek Thee according to the grace which Thou hast given us by Thy Holy Spirit, who with Thee and the Father liveth and reigneth, blessed forever. Amen."

- 1) Roland H. Bainton, *Here I Stand—A Life of Martin Luther*, Abingdon Press, 1963, p. 292
- 2) A. Schuetze, *Martin Luther: Reformer*, NPH, p. 102f
- 3) W. Allbeck, *Studies in the Lutheran Confessions*, Muhlenberg Press, 1952, p. 188

— To follow —

3) God's Word Alone the Rule of Faith

# This We Believe

A REVIEW OF DR. MARTIN LUTHER'S *SMALCALD ARTICLES*

## I. Of the Divine Majesty/ Redemption / Salvation by Grace

Pastor David Reim • Vernon, B.C. (Canada)

When God's Word is attacked, the salvation of souls is in jeopardy. For that reason, Christians must stand up and proclaim the truth of God's Word boldly and clearly. We do that not only as a testimony to

those who promote error but also for the sake of those who have been deceived and led astray by the error.

That was the purpose of the Lutheran Confessions in the *Book of Concord* of 1580, and

that remains their purpose today. Therefore this review of the *Smalcald Articles* is more than a review of the history of the Lutheran Church. It is a review of the teachings of Holy Scripture so that we may be prepared to confess the truth to the confused and lost in our world today.

Luther organized this confession into three parts. Part I, "Concerning the Divine Majesty," is the shortest part because, as the Reformer said, this truth was not under contention but was confessed by the Church of Rome as well. Yet it is necessary to clearly identify the true God whom we worship. This article separates Christianity from all false religions and is the

foundation for all that follows in a confession like this.

Luther identifies the true God with four key points:

- 1) He declares the trinity and unity of the God who created heaven and earth.
- 2) He shows the distinction of the three Persons in the Trinity.
- 3) He identifies Jesus Christ as the Son of God who became man for our salvation.
- 4) He affirms statements about Jesus in the Apostles' and Athanasian Creeds, showing that he is not presenting some new teaching but a teaching that the Christian Church has always confessed.

Part II is also divided into four articles. Article I states the Bible teaching of justification by faith



## The Book of Concord

*The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church [Tappert Edition]*

Excerpt from THE SMALCALD ARTICLES Part II, Article I. CHRIST AND FAITH

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

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

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

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

alone (see box for full text). That is followed by articles describing how the Roman Catholic Church obscures this teaching with its words and practices on the Mass, the Monastic Orders, and the Papacy (each of these to be discussed in future articles).

### **Why did Luther make this his "first and chief article"?**

Justification by faith alone is the most important article of the Christian faith! If this truth is lost or compromised, there is nothing left, as Luther puts it, "On this article rests all that we teach and practice against the Pope, the devil, and the world." The scriptural teaching of the work of Christ and our redemption is fundamental to all the Bible's teachings and deserves this prominent position in our confession.

### **What error is Luther addressing?**

The Roman Catholic Church taught that man is justified at least in part by his own works, which stands in direct contradiction to the Word of God. Just eight years after the *Smalcald Articles* were written, the Council of Trent [city in northern Italy—ed.] was convened to respond to the confessional writings of the Lutherans and others. In its decrees the Roman church

stated, "If any one saith that justifying faith is nothing else but confidence in the divine mercy which remits sins for Christ's sake; or, that this confidence alone is that whereby we are justified; let him be anathema." Thus the church placed its official condemnation on the only way of salvation!

### **What holy truths does Luther set forth?**

Notice that Luther does not use his own words to set forth his teaching (see sidebar). Rather, he gives the simple, straight-forward Word of God, showing that he himself truly practiced what he preached when he said that "the Word of God shall establish articles of faith, and no one else, not even an angel." He quoted simple passages which teach • That Jesus Christ suffered and died to take away the sin of the world. • That we are justified freely by His grace. • That we receive forgiveness and are justified by faith alone without any works of the law. • This is the only way of salvation.

### **How does this apply to us today?**

As Luther said, "...Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised"! God's Word has not changed. The one and only way of salvation has not changed. This article on Redemption is

just as vital today as ever, and the salvation of souls depends on it.

The devil has not stopped attacking this central teaching of Scripture. Vatican II convened in 1962 and reaffirmed all the decrees of the Council of Trent. The Catechism of the Roman Catholic Church still states, “No one can merit the initial grace which is at the origin of conversion. Moved by the Holy Spirit, we can merit for ourselves and for others all the graces needed to attain eternal life, as well as necessary temporal goods” (emphasis added).

Today the teaching of justification by faith in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins is being challenged and discarded by many churches and church practices, so it is all the more vital that we boldly and clearly confess to the world what God says on this matter.

May the Spirit keep us in this faith and enable us to proclaim it to the world!



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## LUTHERAN SPOKESMAN

“...THE SCRIPTURE CANNOT BE BROKEN.” — JOHN 10:35

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