



THE AUSTRALIAN EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH

NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2009

DOES OUR SUBSCRIPTION TO THE CONFESSIONS CONFLICT WITH "SCRIPTURE ALONE?"

Are the Confessions the source of what we believe? No. The Scriptures are both the sole source of divine truth and our norm; but like the Creeds, the *Augsburg Confession* and the other confessional writings are our norms in the sense that they determine whether a person or a church has correctly understood the doctrine of Scripture (Compare *Epitome, Rule and Norm*, 3-6).

Do we subscribe to the Confessions insofar as they agree with Scripture? No, because they agree with Scripture. We make a full and unrestricted subscription, without any mental reservations. That would be dishonest. If a person says, "I agree with the Lutheran Confessions insofar as they agree with the Bible," that may sound right, but, when we examine it, we realise that such a subscription is quite meaningless. One could even subscribe to the Koran like that.

Does subscribing to them because they agree with the Bible place the Confessions above the Bible? We would surrender any assertion of the Confessions if it could be shown that it contradicted the Bible. We expect a clear yes or no to the essential question, whether the Confessions are correct or not.

They were written in the sixteenth century. Do they need to be updated? No, as little as the Scriptures need to be updated, because they are a faithful exposition of the Scriptures. When the Confessions summarise the Scriptures and reflect them, they participate in the authority of the Scriptures. Lutherans refer to the Confessions to address contemporary issues. The biblical truth in them always applies.

What would you say if someone objects to the statement about Jesus' virgin-birth in the Creed? His real problem is with Scripture.

We must accept every sentence and every word of the Bible. Are we bound to the exegesis of every individual Scripture passage in the Confessions, even to the unusual opinion about the effect of garlic on magnets? No. The confessing church is concerned about doctrine. We are not bound to all historical statements, attributions of authorship, statements about science, and so on. In John 6 there is a relationship to the Lord's Supper that Luther and the Lutheran Confessions did not see. However, the Confessions are important because they contain important

ways of understanding Scripture, such as the real presence in the Lord's Supper. They confess doctrinal issues on the basis of the Scriptures. They are models of Scripture proof, mostly citing bare Scripture without much explanation.

The *Augsburg Confession* says that preaching and administering the Sacraments are the tasks of men who have been called to the ministry (XIV). What do you say if someone says that Scripture is silent about consecration of the Lord's Supper by a layman, and that it is therefore an *adiaphoron*? Looking for a prohibition is often the wrong approach. We would not drive our cars with flat tyres because the manuals do not tell us we should not do so. We simply look at the recommendations about tyre-pressure. The Scriptures tell us about Christ's institution of the office of apostles, and of the public ministry as stewards of the mysteries of God (Mt 28:16-20; John 20:21-23; Acts 14:23; 1 Cor 4:1; Eph 4:10-12; Tit 1:5-7).

But does not 1 Pet 2:9 say that all Christians are priests? Cannot a non-ordained layman, therefore, be appointed to consecrate the Lord's Supper if there is a need? 1 Pet 2:9 says nothing about the administration of the means of grace. It is liturgical. Christians are spiritual priests to God, and extol His wonderful deeds.

Did Luther not teach the universal priesthood of all believers? That term actually comes from Pietism, a hundred years after Luther. The Lutheran Confessions refer to 1 Pet 2:9 only once, to show that congregations have the right to call pastors (*Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, 69).

Do the Confessions establish doctrinal positions that are distinctively Lutheran? No. The confessors insist that they introduced nothing new, and often refer to the universal church of the past to show that (See the conclusion to the *Augsburg Confession*). The articles would become distinctively Lutheran only if all other churches rejected them.

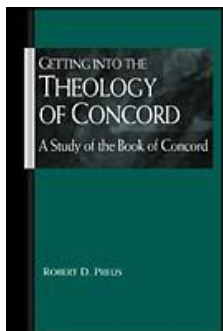
Are you saying that a person who does not accept a particular article, like the one on the Antichrist, will be damned? Of course we are not! When we say that some articles are fundamental and others are not, we speak in the context of salvation. However, we deny fellowship in the Lutheran Church to a person who rejects an article of the Confessions. Those articles say, "Our churches teach," "We believe, teach, and confess," and "We reject and condemn." At his ordination, every Lutheran pastor makes a solemn promise

to uphold the Confessions, and, at their confirmation, all Lutherans promise to abide by the doctrine as they have learnt it from Luther's *Small Catechism*. A person who cannot subscribe to the Lutheran Confessions because they agree with the Bible is, in spite of his protestations, not Lutheran.

Could the Lutheran Church manage without the Confessions? Walther wrote that that argument comes from Pietism (*Essays for the Church*, I, 19-29). Our *Statement of Faith* makes very few references to the Scriptures, because it was meant for non-Lutherans as well, but it was also guided throughout by the Confessions. We share the Scriptures with the worst sects. The Scriptures have often been misunderstood and misused. Creeds and Confessions are therefore necessary for the well-being of the church. It is impossible for a faithful church not to confess.

Does a mere declaration make a church confessional? No. That is no substitute for what is actually preached in its pulpits, done at its altars, taught in its catechesis, applied in its pastoral care, printed in all its materials, and lived by its people. If a group of dishonest car salesmen adopted an excellent constitution, that process would not mean that the dishonest salesmen had become honest.

[CRP. For more reading on this, see Dr Robert Preus, *Getting into the Theology of Concord*.]



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NO LONGER LUTHERAN

Courtesy and fraternal collegiality compel us to inform you of recent events in our church, the AELC (Australian Evangelical Lutheran Church), which have transpired because of our desire to uphold the common confession of all Lutherans -The Book of Concord.

You may or may not be aware that some within our synod have, in the past, supported the teaching and practice of "lay consecration," also known as "lay presidency." Lay consecration/lay presidency is the practice of allowing laymen to consecrate and distribute the Lord's Supper on a regular, routine basis, when an ordained pastor is not present.

We as a synod have studied this matter very carefully over the past three or four years and as a result, have **rejected lay**

consecration/lay presidency as an erroneous doctrine and practice not in accord with the teaching of Scripture and our Lutheran Confessions.

To further confirm the correctness of our conclusions which were presented in numerous papers, (all available at request) we submitted the arguments and papers of both those in favour of lay presidency and those against, to other respected Confessional Lutheran Theologians, both in Australia and abroad who upheld the judgment of our church. [These papers too, are available on request through the AELC Newsletter].

Unfortunately some AELC pastors and their congregations chose not to submit to the public doctrine of the church and are consequently no longer members of our synod. In fact because they have departed from the Confessions of the Lutheran Church, we believe that they are actually no longer Lutheran. "The only churches, therefore, of any land, which are properly in the Unity of that Communion, and by consequence entitled to its name, Evangelical Lutheran, are those which sincerely hold and truthfully confess the doctrines of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession" (*The Conservative Reformation*, Charles Porterfield Krauth, Augsburg, Minneapolis, Second Printing 1978 page 163-4). These pastors and congregations who are no longer members of the AELC are: Pastor Vern Grieger and the Gympie congregation, Pastor Michael Rosensweig and his congregations at Tanunda, Horsham, and Adelaide (Enfield), Pastor Phil Mueller and his congregation at Hivesville. Also Pastor Dieter Winkler and the congregations aligned with him at Murray Bridge and elsewhere. A dissident group has also left their congregations at Marburg and Minden and is being served by Pastor Phil Mueller.

We believe these pastors and congregations knowingly and deliberately continue to support lay consecration in spite of diligent attempts to instruct them in the truth. We concur therefore with the words of Dr John Kleinig, who writes "*A congregation or denomination that authorises lay presidency must therefore surely forfeit its claim to belong to the church of the Augsburg Confession*" (J Kleinig; "Lay Presidency: Does a layman have the authority to administer Holy Communion?" Unpublished paper, January 2009, page 5).

These folk are not permitted to receive communion in the congregations of our synod, nor are they to be accepted as sponsors for Baptism, whilst they knowingly and willingly condone this erroneous doctrine error and practice in spite of frequent Scriptural admonition.

It is our duty to warn you of this sectarian group operating under the guise of being authentic Lutheran churches and pastors. They are in fact neither. As the Holy Spirit says

through the Apostle Paul, "... they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Rom. 10:2).

Submitted by Pastors Hampel, Ohlson, Priebsenow and Ziebell.

SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE ACCOUNTS OF JESUS' PASSION AND RESURRECTION

(A preparation for Lent and Easter, with answers to follow)

1. How late did the arresting party probably arrive at Gethsemane? Factor in the time for the Passover dinner, the walk down to Gethsemane, and the three times the disciples went to sleep.
2. How was the allegation of the two false witnesses (Mt 27:61; Mk 14:58) different from what Jesus had actually said, and how did the mention of three days become significant later on?
3. The chief priests could have moved against Jesus at any time during the last week. What were they afraid of, and what might Judas have told them, at about 10 pm on Thursday night, that led them to move out of their hesitancy?
4. Where had Jesus and His disciples been staying at night during the week leading up to His arrest?
5. Besides Jesus' twelve disciples, what were the names of the women we can name or otherwise identify who belonged to Jesus' party and were present during Jesus' passion and resurrection?
6. What would Judas have heard from Jesus previously that made him sure that Jesus would not leave Gethsemane before he arrived? Mention at least three things.
7. What was the occasion when Jesus told His disciples that He would meet them in Galilee after He had risen?
8. Was any other person present with Jesus and the Eleven on their way to Gethsemane? If so, give the reference.
9. When the temple-guard approached Gethsemane from Jerusalem in the west, in which direction were the nine disciples who fled most likely to run, and where did they probably go? What would have deterred them from going right on back to Galilee?
10. The Jews seem to have been taken aback when Pilate proceeded to conduct a full formal trial (Jn 18:29-30) early on Friday morning. What does this suggest?
11. From secular sources Pilate appears as an obstinate man who lacked ordinary political insight (The affair of the Roman ensigns, his plan to use temple money to build a water supply, the affair of the votive shields at the Herodian palace, and his handling of a Samaritan affair. There is also the incident referred to Lk 13:1. In the passion story Pilate does not fit this characterisation, in his attempt to shift the responsibility to Herod, his threefold declaration of Jesus' innocence, in the washing of his hands, and in his attempt to substitute Barabbas. After Jesus was crucified, mention two instances when Pilate did act obstinately.
12. Why can we say that Pilate expected Jesus to be brought before him early on Friday?
13. During Jesus' passion two Gentiles called Jesus a righteous man. Who were they?
14. Pilate's wife was Claudia Procula. She came from high society. She was the illegitimate daughter of Claudia, the third wife of Emperor Tiberius, and was the grand-daughter of Caesar Augustus. What is significant about her message to Pilate (Mt 27:19)?
15. What three charges did the Jewish leaders put together against Jesus, and which was the most serious?
16. Joanna was one of the women who went to the tomb on Easter morning. Suggest a reason why she is not mentioned among the women watching Jesus' crucifixion (Lk 8:3).
17. The women named as present at the cross were Mary; Mary, the wife of Clopas and the mother of James and Joses; and Salome, the wife of Zebedee and the mother of James and John, besides other unnamed women (Mt 27:55-56; Mk 15:40-41; Lk 23:49; Jn 19:25). It is highly unlikely that St Anne (the traditional name of the mother of Mary) would have called a second of her daughters Mary. On the assumption that John 19:25 refers to four women, not three, who was probably Mary's sister, and which aspects in the Gospels would this fact illuminate?
18. The early Church historian Hegesippus says that Clopas was the brother of Joseph (the husband of the Virgin Mary). Why would the relationship mentioned in Jn 19:25 seem to be even more significant than that one for the passion story?
19. Suggest a reason why Martha and Mary of Bethany were probably not present at Jesus' crucifixion.
20. Suggest a reason why Salome was apparently not present with Mary Magdalene and Mary the wife of Clopas to witness Jesus' burial (Mt 27:61; Mk 15:47; Lk 23:55).
21. Technically, in whose authority was the disposal of Jesus' body before Joseph of Arimathea approached Pilate and in whose authority was it after that?
22. Was the guard posted at the tomb of Jesus a Roman guard or a Jewish one?
23. To whom did the guard report after Jesus' resurrection?
24. Make a rough estimate of the ages of two of the women, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Salome, who are named as having gone to the tomb on Easter morning together with Joanna and Mary Magdalene. What is the probable reason

why Mary Magdalene was the one who ran back to Jerusalem? (Jn 20:2; Mt 28:1; Mk 16:1; Lk 24:10).

25. There were three Marys at the scene of the crucifixion. Hymn 768 speaks of "three Marys" on Easter morning. Does that agree with what the Gospels report?
 26. Why were these women the most likely of Jesus' followers to visit Jesus' tomb for a last tribute?
 27. What did Mary Magdalene say in her message to Peter and John that indicated that she had not been alone at the tomb?
 28. The Gospels place heavy stress on the fact that the women found Jesus' tomb empty except for the linen wrappings. Suggest two reasons why Acts and the Epistles make no reference to the women at the empty tomb.
 29. On which day of the week did the authorities seal Jesus' tomb?
 30. Why is it particularly significant that the public proclamation of Jesus' resurrection seven weeks later happened in Jerusalem and not in Galilee?
 31. The words of Mark 16:6-7 are similar to Mark 14:28. Suggest several reasons why the young man of Mark 14:51 is very unlikely to have been the same person as the young man of Mark 16:5.
 32. To whom did Jesus make His five appearances on Easter Day?
- [If you think you have compiled good answers, you are welcome to submit them]

THE TOMB OF HEROD THE GREAT

Those who received *National Geographic* magazine, December issue 2008, should not pass over the report about Herod the Great, the King of Judea when Jesus was born. It is a pity that, characteristically, the magazine reveals scant faith in the trustworthiness of Gospel of Matthew. However, the report, with its pictures and diagrams, of the probable discovery of his mausoleum about 15 km SE of Jerusalem and the other information about him are well worth reading.

REPORT FROM THE AELC BOOKSHOP

A note of clarification to begin with. The correct name for the shop is "Living Word Oakey."

Business is progressing steadily. We are constantly being asked to get different items in stock and at times we have to go to great lengths to fulfil these requests. However, we are always open to suggestions about what we may be able to stock.

We are very grateful to those people who contributed to our appeal for Christmas decorations to enable us to enter in the "Decorated Window Competition" for Santa Fair. We worked

with a "Nativity Scene" and took out first prize. We also distributed packs consisting of tracts, pencils with a scriptural message and a Pass-Around card at the Santa Fair.

Sales for the month of December totalled just over \$2,000. We closed our doors from Christmas Eve until 5th January. During this time all decorations and Christmas stock had to be removed. While doing this, we took the opportunity to re-organise. Having the children's books near the door was not working as they were continually blowing down. Hopefully people will find the new layout to their liking.

It would appear that our efforts to publicise our opening have fallen short, as all too frequently we have people still coming in and saying that they didn't know we were there. This is something we shall have to rectify.

Fay Wieck

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

It was good to receive the copy of Newsletter and I thank you for the kind remarks regarding my service as Editor.

However, readers may get the impression that I am about to "shuffle off" due to failing health. On the contrary, apart from the eye problems that prevent me doing a satisfactory job as an editor, I am in astonishing good health and, God willing, hope to be around for some time to come.

Being Editor of Newsletter was a most exacting but enjoyable experience. Editorship requires one to keep an open mind, and it is a constant challenge to investigate and report the facts. For me it was an extremely interesting period in which I learnt a lot, probably more than the readers.

I would like to thank those many colleagues who were so kind and helpful over the last 15 years, particularly Pastor Clarrie, Pastor Peter, Pastor Vern, and particularly Brett Ritter. Without Brett's astounding knowledge of computers I would never have sailed the Newsletter ship out of port.

I wish you all well in your work in God's Kingdom.

Whilst vision has been a problem, as stated, I am otherwise blessed with fine health and hope and pray that I will still be able to do something of value in the Kingdom.

Yours Sincerely,

David Mattiske

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