

I. Pure Doctrine



Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions teach the absolute maintenance of pure doctrine. Today (using outreach as a justification) there are those in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) who claim that we can no longer waste time on “incessant internal doctrinal purification.” We reject the toleration of this error.

1. **Passages from Scripture** that testify that the Gospel must be taught in all of its truth and purity. [* Page 4]

Galatians 1:6-9
 Matthew 5:18
 John 10:35
 John 17:17
 Galatians 5:7-9

I Timothy 6:3-4
 II Timothy 3:14-17
 II Peter 1:19-21
 Revelation 22:18-19

2. **Quotes from the Lutheran Confessions** that testify to the necessity of pure doctrine. [* Page 5]

- a. Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Rule & Norm, 3; 10-11
- b. Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Summary, Rule & Norm, 14

3. **Quotes from our Lutheran forefathers** regarding the necessity of pure doctrine. [* Pages 5-7]

Martin Luther: "... It must not be treated lightly, as the world maintains and many people who do not understand, saying we should not fight so hard about an article and thus trample on Christian love; rather, although we err on one small point, we agree on everything else, we should give in and overlook the difference in order to preserve brotherly and Christian unity and fellowship.



"No, my dear man, do not recommend to me peace and unity when thereby God's Word is lost, for then eternal life and everything else would be lost. There can be no yielding nor giving way, no, not for love of you or any other person, but everything must yield to the Word, whether it be friend or foe. The Word was given unto us for eternal life and not to further outward peace and unity."

Herman Sasse: "In order to understand the doctrinal controversies that accompany the history of the Reformation, we must keep in mind that according to the New Testament such controversies belong to the history of the church from the days of the apostles to the end of the world: "There must also be heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1 Cor. 11:19)."

4. **The witness of the history of the LCMS** shows no toleration for false doctrine. [* Page 7]

- a. **The Brief Statement of 1932:** "...the Holy Scriptures are the sole source from which all doctrines proclaimed...and therefore, too, the sole rule and norm by which all teachers and doctrines must be examined and judged. ..."
- b. **LCMS First Constitution:** "Matters of doctrine and of conscience will be decided by the Word of God alone." ... "To stand guard over the purity and unity of doctrine within the synodical circle, and to oppose false doctrine." ... "It is the duty of Synod to discuss and investigate in its annual convention which articles of church doctrine to emphasize or further especially, also against which heresies and weaknesses in life testimony is to be given and the manner in which this is to be done."
- c. **C.F.W. Walther,** first President of the LCMS. "Whether our Synod gains friends or makes enemies, wins honor or invites disgrace, grows or declines in numbers, brings peace or incites enmity, all this must be unimportant to us--just so our Synod may keep the jewel of purity of doctrine and knowledge. However, should our Synod ever grow indifferent toward purity of doctrine, through ingratitude forget this prize, or betray or barter it away to the false church, then let our church body perish and the name 'Missourian' decay in disgrace."



5. Today, however, **the urgency of the evangelistic task** supersedes the need for agreement in every article of Christian doctrine in our proclamation. Following are some quotes from a former president of the LCMS. [* Page 8]

"My concern is that we can spend so much time in incessant internal purification that we do so at the expense of the eternal destiny of people who are dying every minute." ... "People, this is NOT a game. Our incessant internal purification at the expense of the eternal destiny of the souls of men and women for whom Christ has died must stop!"

6. **ACELC Response.** [* Page 8]

- a. This view of “pure doctrine” pits doctrine against evangelism. This is a false dichotomy. To truly hold to the Gospel in all its purity is to proclaim that same Gospel. This view also separates doctrine from practice and places the emphasis on practice. Again this is false. Doctrine cannot be separated from practice. When you adopt false practices it will affect your doctrine. If your doctrine is faulty (Gal. 1:6-9) your practice will follow suit. Once you separate these two and decry as “heartless” (i.e., not having a real heart for the lost) the insistence on “pure doctrine,” faulty practice will follow (as seen from the examples below) all in the name of “reaching the lost.”
- b. Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions teach that unity (that is, full agreement) in doctrine and practice is *the* basis for establishing pulpit and altar fellowship. Today some have indicated that the unifying factor among Christians is not absolute agreement on every word and interpretation of doctrine and practice. We reject the toleration of this error.



7. **Evidence for the Existence of this Error.** [* Pages 9-10]

- a. “As this Easter approaches, I am deeply humbled to have the privilege to celebrate the Resurrection of Jesus with our LCMS missionaries in the Philippines and in Thailand. . . . In those places I will also meet again people of other Christian faith families, and in that setting, all will rejoice over the unity that makes them and us one forever. That unifying Factor is Jesus the Risen One, **not absolute agreement on every word and interpretation of doctrine and practice.**” [*Lutheran Life*, FL/GA District Newsletter, April 1996, Rev. Dr. Thomas R. Zehnder.]
- b. Rev. Herb Hoefler, Missions Chair, Concordia University, Portland, Oregon, on September 12, 2007, posted an article on Concordia’s website entitled, “Muslim-Friendly Worship” which reads in part: “I suggest below several areas in which Christians might adjust their worship practices to ensure a clear witness in Muslim contexts...Even if prayers and worship might justifiably be addressed to the name of Jesus, I would urge that such a practice is unhelpful as Christian witness in a Muslim context.” Likewise Hoefler suggests that especially the Pauline (if not all) Epistle lessons be omitted, that we do not refer to Jesus as the “Son of God,” that we forego the use of wine in the Lord’s Supper and discontinue the presence of crucifixes and other statuary in our houses of worship so as not to offend Muslim sensibilities.” (As of 2012, Prof. Hoefler still serves on the faculty of our Synodical university at Portland, and remains on the LCMS roster. To our knowledge he has not been placed under discipline for his false teaching.)
- c. 2004 Overture 3-35, “To Promote New Approach to Unity,” from Resurrection Lutheran Church, Coronado, California, says in part:

“*Resolved*, That The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod, gathered in this 2004 convention, direct the Synod’s Commission on Theology and Church Relations to identify and report what The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod has in common with the Roman Catholic Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, drawing upon the nine Lutheran-Roman Catholic reports, from 1965 through 1995; and be if finally *Resolved*, That we continue to affirm that unifying faith in Jesus Christ is deeper than our divisions and to ‘rejoice in what we have in common.’”

[According to the *Historical Highlights* at Resurrection Lutheran’s web site, since the above resolution was submitted, they joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.]

The ACELC concern is that resolutions like those above were permitted to be listed in the Convention Workbook when they were clearly in theological error, with no disciplinary action taken by Synod. At the same time, overtures from Confessional congregations were being eliminated for alleged “errors in fact.”

* Asterisks refer to page numbers in the ACELC *Evidence of Errors in the LCMS: I. Pure Doctrine* document. You are encouraged to download the entire document from <http://www.acelc.net/> → Key Documents → ACELC Admonition and Error Documents. The online version contains the full text of all Bible passages, Lutheran Confession citations, examples, quotations and sources for all the citations and quotes.