

Trinity Te Deum

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What the United States, Louisiana, a Zombie, and the LCMS Have in Common

Posted on October 7, 2013 by Rev. Paul R. Harris

There may be many more than one thing these all have in common, but I can only think of one. They refuse to call things what they are.

The United States, or more properly the Obama administration, refused to call the military overthrow of a democratically elected ruler a coupe because that meant the U.S. would be forced to hold back over a billion dollars in aid to Egypt. The State of Louisiana refused to call floating casinos gambling institutions because the constitution expressly prohibited gambling in the state. The law legalizing gambling called it gaming.

You seldom see a LCMS church admitting they practice open Communion. You will find that among the ELCA, the Methodists, and others. I sincerely applaud their honesty. Among the LCMS you will find people practicing close Communion and calling it closed. They report to visitors what the

LCMS believes about Communion and leave it up to them decide whether to commune. More practice open Communion but won't call it that. They call it responsibly administering Communion or even administering Communion according to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

This is laughable. This is reminiscent of the decadent time of the Judges when the son who stole 1,100 pieces of silver from his mother was called blessed by the Lord rather than a thief. It's never a good thing when the insanity that the world swallows is found in the church.

What about the zombie? That comes from a Sprint commercial. A zombie walks into a cell phone store to ask about their lifetime unlimited talk, text and data guarantee. He's making zombie sounds and has the desiccated, deformed flesh and face of a zombie. He asks the salesclerk if their unlimited plans apply to someone "who say technically was not alive like maybe you were undead." She replies, "You mean like a zombie?" He says, "Whoa let's not go putting labels on people." The punch line is that his ear drops off and then he quickly, shamefacedly says, "I'm a zombie."

A zombie has more integrity than pastors and congregations practicing close or open Communion and refusing to be called what they are. It will take more than an ear dropping off of them for them to admit what they are. Hopefully, it won't take as much as the weakness, sickness, and death St. Paul warns of.

The History and Meaning of Ash Wednesday

By Dr. Richard P. Bucher, Pastor

Ash Wednesday is the name given to the first day of the season of Lent, in which the Pastor applies ashes to the foreheads of Chris-

tians to signify an inner repentance. But what is the history and the meaning of this Christian holy day?

Ash Wednesday, originally called *dies cinerum* (day of ashes) is mentioned in the earliest copies of the Gregorian Sacramentary, and probably dates from at least the 8th Century. One of the earliest descriptions of Ash Wednesday is found in the writings of the Anglo-Saxon abbot Aelfric (955-1020). In his Lives of the Saints, he writes, "We read in the books both in the Old Law and in the New that the men who repented of their sins bestrewed themselves with ashes and clothed their bodies with sackcloth. Now let us do this little at the beginning of our Lent that we strew ashes upon our heads to signify that we ought to repent of our sins during the Lenten fast." Aelfric then proceeds to tell the tale of a man who refused to go to church for the ashes and was accidentally killed several days later in a boar hunt! This quotation confirms what we know from other sources, that throughout the Middle Ages ashes were sprinkled on the head, rather than anointed on the forehead as in our day.

As Aelfric suggests, the pouring of ashes on one's body (and dressing in sackcloth, a very rough material) as an outer manifestation of inner repentance or mourning is an ancient practice. It is mentioned several times in the Old Testament. What is probably the earliest occurrence is found at the very end of the book of Job. Job, having been rebuked by God, confesses, "Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes" (Job 42:6). Other examples are found in

2 Samuel 13:19, Esther 4:1,3, Isaiah 61:3, Jeremiah 6:26, Ezekiel 27:30, and Daniel 9:3. In the New Testament, Jesus alludes to the practice in Matthew 11:21: "Woe to you, Korazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! If the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes."

In the typical Ash Wednesday observance, Christians are invited to the altar to receive the imposition of ashes, prior to receiving the holy Supper. The Pastor applies ashes in the shape of the cross on the forehead of each, while speaking the words, "For dust you are and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:19). This is of course what God spoke to Adam and Eve after they eaten of the forbidden fruit and fallen into sin. These words indicated to our first parents the bitterest fruit of their sin, namely death. In the context of the Ash Wednesday imposition of ashes, they remind each penitent of their sinfulness and mortality, and, thus, their need to repent and get right with God before it is too late. The cross reminds each penitent of the good news that through Jesus Christ crucified there is forgiveness for all sins, all guilt, and all punishment.

Many Christians choose to leave the ashes on their forehead for the remainder of the day, not to be showy and boastful (see Matthew 6:16-18). Rather, they do it as a witness that all people are sinners in need of repentance AND that through Jesus all sins are forgiven through faith.

Ash Wednesday, like the season of Lent, is never mentioned in Scripture and is not commanded by God. Christians are free to either observe or not observe it. It also should be obvious that the imposition of ashes, like similar external practices, are meaning-

less, even hypocritical, unless there is a corresponding inner repentance and change of behavior. This is made clear in Isaiah 58:5-7 when God says,

Is this the kind of fast I have chosen, only a day for a man to humble himself? Is it only for bowing one's head like a reed and for lying on sackcloth and ashes? Is that what you call a fast, a day acceptable to the LORD? 6 "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? 7 Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter-- when you see the naked, to clothe him, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood?

With this in mind, however, the rite of ashes on Ash Wednesday is heartily recommended to the Christian as a grand opportunity for repentance and spiritual renewal within the framework of confession and absolution. A blessed Ash Wednesday observance to all.

Lenten factoids

Lenten Factoids: *The original period of Lent was 3 days: Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Holy Saturday. By the 3rd century, it was extended to 6 days and called Holy Week which is the week before Easter. Around 800 AD during the reign of the great Christian emperor, Charlemagne it was increased to 40 days. The Sundays in Lent are **not** included. The 40 days correspond to the 40 days in which Jesus fasted in the wilderness in preparation for His battle with Satan...a battle He won by the way.*

The earliest Lent can begin is February 5. That last happened in

1818. The latest that it can begin is March 10. That will not happen again until 2038.

The day before Ash Wednesday is called Shrove Tuesday. The word Ashrive≡ means to cut off, and it means to forgive sins. It was the custom on Shrove Tuesday to go to confession and have one's sins forgiven in preparation for Lent. The day was also one of Asaying farewell to meat,≡ which is the meaning of the Latin word Acarnival.≡ So the custom was to use up all the fat in the house by making jelly rolls or pancakes, and to feast on a roast of fat meat. AMardi Gras≡ is the French name for the day, and it means AFat Tuesday.≡

Originally, no meat was eaten during Lent, but this was gradually reduced to only Fridays and Wednesdays when fish was eaten instead.

AGiving up something for Lent≡ is not done to do something for Jesus, the One who did it all for us, but to purposely focus on spiritual things more than on physical things.

The most important thing about Lent is that it is the time we consider more closely the last week of Christ's life, actually the last two days, where He suffered the most intensely for our sins. This time in Christ's life is called the Passion. Every year for Lent we read the account of Jesus's Passion. Over the six Wednesdays of Lent we read it from the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. On Good Friday, we hear it from St. John. By following Christ on His way to the cross, we identify closely with His suffering. When Easter comes we celebrate with great joy His Resurrection.

The Greatest Martyr on Earth

*An Advent-Lent Sermon Series on
the Third Chief Part
Of Luther's Small Catechism*

Luther called the Lord's Prayer the greatest martyr on earth because of all the ways Christians have abused this wonderful gift. You have those who dismiss it in favor of what they consider more noble prayers made up in their own hearts. There are others who use the Lord's Prayer repetitiously as if God *does* hear because of their much speaking. Then there is us who don't think about what we are praying, might not know what we are asking for, or might not really care (?). In all these ways the Lord's Prayer is martyred.

In Lent this year we will complete our sermon series on the Lord's Prayer. It is my hope, that these will bear the fruit of a renewed prayer life.

Service times are 7:30 PM. Usually, Ash Wednesday being a notable exception, we are "done" by 8:15. You can be out of here before 8:30 PM if you so choose.

Mar. 5 - 3rd Petition
"To us and Through Us"

Mar. 12 - 4th Petition
"Bramafam"

Mar. 19 - 5th Petition
"As not Because"

Mar. 26 - 6th Petition
"Despair Rightly"

Apr. 2 - 7th Petition
"East does Meet West"

Apr. 9 - The Conclusion
"The Right Stuff"

"To put the matter as clearly as I can, I am opposing the Synod's opposition to the well-established physical facts of evolution. The Synod should adopt a more cautious approach about condemning scientific theories and should allow for modern natural knowledge of God's creation to shed light on how one is to understand the language and genres in the first chapters of Genesis. We should learn from our forebears who were forced to adjust their interpretations of cosmological passages in Scripture to accord with modern cosmology, as has happened with respect to the acceptance of the Copernican Theory (Dr. Pieper's rejection of that theory, notwithstanding)." (Excerpt by Dr. Matthew Becker from <http://matthewbecker.blogspot.com/2013/04/2013-lcms-conventionworkbook-and-my.html>)

One should recognize from the outset that evolutionary theory, as manifested in the interpretation of the fossil record, dating of geological formations, etc., is based on two primary philosophical assumptions:

1. naturalism (or materialism), i.e., nature is the sum total of all that exists, and (usually, if less consistently)
2. uniformitarianism, i.e., natural processes have operated more or less uniformly over the ages.

To be sure, some scientists have recognized the undeniable role of catastrophe in natural history; others, e.g., Gould, have posited theories such as punctuated equilibrium to account for otherwise inexplicable exceptions that interfere with the consistency of their evolutionary interpretations of natural phenomena. Still other more (literally) outlandish theories have been offered to "explain" the

origins of life on earth, e.g., "seeding" by visitors from other planets.

Such anomalies aside, the basic underlying philosophical positions of naturalism, or materialism, and uniformitarianism are the foundation upon which the "facts" of evolution depend. One who thinks that evolutionists who hold these positions—and interpret nature by them—will be swayed to a compromise that permits any level of divine creative or providential activity, e.g., theistic evolution or progressive creation, is destined for disappointment. Consider the overwrought reactions displayed by many macro-evolutionists when confronted even by intelligent design theory. Take note of the fear and alarm they express regarding teaching anything in public schools but their materialistic philosophy and interpretations of nature based on it. As their ultimate value, materialism serves as their religion. Scientific findings are not the reason for such fear. Surely, no scientist worthy of his credentials would express so openly a fear of challenges or opposition to his interpretation of natural phenomena. That is how science works, but it is not how evolutionists work or think.

Modern science in the West began in a climate of belief that nature was created, that it reflects the Creator's orderly design, a design that can be examined and understood to a significant degree by the Creator's rational creatures. In no other culture than Christendom have science and technology made such great strides. Post-Darwinian evolutionists, however, insist on excluding any role of a divine power or intelligence in their investigation and interpretation of natural phenomena. Materialism is their creed; upon it rest their interpretations of natural phenomena and their "scientific" reputations. It is impossible to ignore the irony: In their investigations of and fash-

**An Open Letter to Dr.
Matthew Becker**

ioning theories on the origin of the material universe, including life, evolutionists have, willfully or unwittingly, left the realm of science and entered that of history and metaphysics. Speculations about origins, whether of matter or life, unlike scientific theories, can be neither proven nor falsified. They can be accepted or rejected only on faith.

In sum, orthodox evolutionary theory, based as it is on faith in materialistic uniformitarianism—or at least in naturalism / materialism—is not science. It is a philosophical position posing as natural history and science, while, as noted, simultaneously serving as the framework for interpreting natural phenomena, e.g., the fossil record, rock strata. In his belief that “nature is all that there is,” the evolutionist limits his ability to study and interpret natural phenomena. More important, materialism serves to bolster a godless world view and leads to an irrational dead end: If material nature is all there is, it cannot investigate, much less “understand,” itself, whatever understanding might mean in the context of a mind that is nothing but matter. The gaping holes and circular reasoning evident in evolutionary interpretations of nature are an embarrassment to true science, which assumes an orderly, purposeful creation that can be appreciated, interpreted, and manipulated by God’s creatures. Although sin has corrupted God’s plan for His creation and clouds the lenses of those who investigate it, creation manifests the glory and providence of God.

It is sadly ironic that, even as true science persistently reveals His glory and providence in, for example, the wonders of information-rich DNA, attempts by evolutionists to deny any source of that highly complex and sophisticated information become ever

more determined, unrelenting, and desperate. Consider a parallel example with lethal implications: As science reveals ever more clearly the intricate details of individuation at the very beginnings of life at conception and in its earliest stages in the womb, supporters of abortion adamantly ignore these facts of life in order to defend and continue their savage “medical” practice of destroying the “tissue” in the womb. Their willful denials of the implications of scientific discoveries betray their true intentions and reveal their closed minds. Finally, let us not forget the many Christian scientists who reject materialistic evolutionary interpretations of nature on scientific grounds, often at great risk to their livelihoods or professional reputations. Should we not be concerned about defending their scientific integrity and encouraging them in their pursuits?

At least as important for Christians are the theological implications of materialism: How does belief in materialistic evolution affect the Christological understanding of the Scriptures—of the first Adam and the Second Adam, of the Fall and the Promise? How does the Christian(?) evolutionist deal with death before the Fall, if, indeed, he acknowledges the Fall? But these are matters for my brother theologians to deal with.

On creation and the flood, the Scriptures are quite clear. II Peter 3:3-7 is a warning to our age, as it was to Peter’s. *“First of all, you should know that in the last days mockers, following their own desires, will come mocking: ‘He promised to come. What has happened? From the time the fathers fell asleep everything has stayed as it was since the world was first created.’ They deliberately forget that long ago God’s Word made the sky and formed the earth out of water and with water. Then this water also flooded the world and*

destroyed it. And the same Word has preserved the present heavens and the earth for the fire and keeps them for the day when the ungodly will be judged and destroyed.”

[Beck, AAT 2nd ed. (1976, 2000)]

Do we see nature with the eyes of the mockers or, as Peter did, with the eyes of faith?

Paul, too, made it clear that they are without excuse who reject the clear evidence of God in His work of creation. *“Ever since He made the world, they have seen the unseen things of God—from the things He made they can tell He has everlasting power and is God. Then they have no excuse”*(Romans 1:20). [Beck, AAT 2nd ed. (1976, 2000)]

We echo the words of the Psalmist: *“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge. There is no speech, nor are there words whose voice is not heard . . . The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple”* (Psalm 19:1-3,7b) [ESV (2001)].

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Editor’s Note: Dr. Becker is Associate Professor of Theology at Valparaiso University in Valparaiso, Indiana. From 1994-2004, he taught at Concordia University in Portland, Oregon (<http://www.valpo.edu/theology/faculty/matthewbecker.php>). The web site of Immanuel Lutheran Church, Michigan City, Indiana, shows Dr. Becker has been preaching at Immanuel (<http://immanuelmc.com/pastorbecker.html>). The 2014 *Lutheran Annual* shows Dr. Becker as a rostered pastor holding membership in the Northwest District of the Synod. That District’s offices are in Portland, Oregon. *Clarion* readers are strongly urged to look at their print edition of the September 2013 *Clarion* (or pull it up on the in-

ternet at <http://lutheranclarion.org/>) and read the distinguished Dr. Paul A. Zimmerman's book review of *God and Evolution, Protestants, Catholics, and Jews Explore Darwin's Challenge to Faith*.
The Lutheran Clarion - Volume 6,
Issue 3 – January 2014 Page 4-5

Abortion: The Evolution Connection

By Jake Hebert, Ph.D., and Michael Stamp *

Within a consistent evolutionary worldview, there is no logical basis for moral absolutes. If mankind is truly a cosmic accident, then there is no Creator-God to whom we must give an account, and there is no logical and objective basis for claiming that a given action is morally right or wrong.

In such an amoral worldview, it's perfectly "natural" for the strong to prey upon the weak, as often occurs among animals in the wild. And if it's natural for the animal, it's also natural for strong humans to discard the weak. An individual might claim that he prefers that a frail human not be harmed, but is one's mere preference an objective basis from which to make a moral claim that applies to all people?

The recent trial of American abortionist Dr. Kermit Gosnell dramatically illustrates this deep ethical problem with the evolutionary worldview. Gosnell is charged with killing four newborn infants who had apparently been born alive after surviving his attempted abortions. He is also charged with murdering a 41-year-old woman, but the grisly killings may have gone far beyond even this (see references below).^{1,2}

Many of those familiar with this case (including evolutionists) have been horrified by it. But if evolution is true, why is Gosnell's behavior wrong? Some might ar-

gue that his behavior is wrong simply because he broke the law—but then *why* is breaking the law wrong? On what basis can one claim that *any* behavior is wrong?

The essential question is straightforward: Is human life precious and sacred or not? When we witness atrocities like the Gosnell crimes, we recoil in horror because human life has been ravaged. Our collective consciences concur that his acts were wrong and even malicious. At these moments we all agree human life is sacred—it's uniquely precious—and that sacredness is the objective basis for our determining right and wrong.

Human life is sacred because humans are made in the "image of God" (Genesis 1:27). God alone has authority over life because He alone is its Author—this is the *objective, logical* basis for declaring that Gosnell's actions are wrong. Human life is sacred in every case simply because God made it so. "For You formed my inward parts; You covered me in my mother's womb. I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Marvelous are Your works, And that my soul knows very well" (Psalm 139:13-14).

Evolution denies God's existence and, in so doing, negates the objective and intrinsic value of human beings. Dr. Gosnell and his like are, in a sense, acting this belief out as they discard the weakest and most helpless human beings.

The Lord Jesus said, "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor [can] a bad tree bear good fruit."³ Bad ideas often have bad consequences, and evolution is one such *very* bad idea.⁴ The theory of evolution sowed its amoral seed generations ago, and the desacralizing of human life is part of its bad fruit today.

References

1. Associated Press, "Babies treated worse than sick dogs, prosecutor alleges at abortion

doc murder trial," *Fox News*, April 29, 2013.

2. However, witnesses have claimed that Gosnell may have killed more than one hundred newborn infants. Weigel, D. Kermit Gosnell: The Alleged Mass-Murderer and the Bored Media. Posted on www.slate.com on April 12, 2013, accessed April 15, 2013.
3. Matthew 7:18 (NKJV).
4. Women have long been told that their pre-born children pass through different evolutionary animal "stages" in the womb, and such a claim may make the prospect of abortion psychologically easier to accept. It has long been known that Ernst Haeckel, the zoologist who first proposed this evolutionary animal stages idea, falsified data in order to strengthen his argument. Unfortunately, many biology textbooks still present versions of this argument as "evidence" for evolution. Thomas, B. Do People Have 'Gill Slits' in the Womb? *Creation Science Update*. Posted on icr.org July 20, 2012, accessed April 15, 2013.

* Dr. Hebert is Research Associate at the Institute for Creation Research and received his Ph.D. in Physics from the University of Texas at Dallas. Michael Stamp is an editor at the Institute for Creation Research.
Article posted on May 3, 2013.

Reflections on New Ulm Free Conference

A decade or so ago, it was common to hear about the "divergent courses" of the two largest Lutheran church bodies in the United States. It was said that the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod were heading in different directions. They were. Now these bodies live

in two different worlds. While it would be premature to suggest that the seismic shifts in American Lutheranism will result in institutional realignment or new declarations of church fellowship, the third Lutheran Free Conference at Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, on November 6-7, 2013, was indicative of the vitality of pastors and church leaders who are committed to encouraging one another in fidelity to the Holy Scriptures as the Word of the Triune God and the Lutheran Confessions as normative for doctrine and practice. This conference was the third held at New Ulm since 2011 under the leadership of Dr. Michael Albrecht

and Pastor Philip Hirsch with assistance from the Luther Academy.

It was significant that there were major presentations by the presidents of three church bodies formerly in fellowship with each other and members of the now defunct Synodical Conference. In addition, Dr. Steven Paulson of Luther Seminary in Saint Paul delivered a potent paper using Luther's theology of the bound will. Each paper was followed by a short presentation by a reactor which led into discussion involving the approximately 150 people in the audience.

The conversations generated at New Ulm were fresh, transparent, and realistic. President Matthew Harrison admitted that the Wisconsin Synod was justified in ending fellowship with the Missouri Synod over 50 years ago. The events in the decade after the dissolution of the Synodical Conference could well have spelled an end to the Missouri Synod as a confessional Lutheran body. Hermann Sasse, among others, could see little hope for the Missouri Synod.¹ Nevertheless, there was change of another sort afoot.

There would be the exodus from Concordia Seminary in February

of 1974. In fits and starts the Missouri Synod was on a path of recovery. The election of Matthew Harrison as president of the LCMS in 2010 signaled fresh hope and this was gratefully recognized by leaders in the WELS and ELS. Recovery from the trauma of those years has not been easy.

Confessionalism has sometimes been confused with Fundamentalism or social conservatism. Holding to a doctrine of inerrancy does not by itself make one a Confessional Lutheran. Flirtations with the so-called Church Growth Movement have been corrosive in our Synod even as President Schroeder acknowledges in the Wisconsin Synod as well.

The goal of these free conferences is not the restoration of church fellowship but encouragement toward fidelity. As President Schroeder put it our "primary goal is joint faithfulness to the Word and the Lutheran Confessions." To this end, free conferences such as this one should be cultivated. In this way, points of commonality can be affirmed even as we do not shy away from controversies, inherited or new, which emerge between the Synods.

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¹ Writing in April 1961, Sasse observed: "Now the sickness rages in Missouri, and unless there are signs and wonders this great church of confessional Lutheranism will succumb. The churches of the left and the middle are simply waiting for Missouri. They see that the Synodical Conference with its continual internal tensions cannot last much longer, and their hope is that Missouri will then move into the National Lutheran Council, and from there into the Lutheran World Federation and the World Council of Church-

es....Everything is waiting for the fall of Missouri. Then the way would finally be open for a Lutheran world church without a confession?"- "Article VII of the Augsburg Confession in the Present Crisis of Lutheranism" in *We Confess the Church*, 66. Also see Sasse's 1966 essay, "Inclusive Lutheranism" in *The Lonely Way: Volume II (1941-1976)*, 341-345.

The Age of Enlightenment and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod

For over 1500 years the society of western culture knew what was true, what was right, what was moral or immoral, and what was wrong. To be sure, these ideals were frequently ignored or applied only to certain societal strata, but there was a general understanding and consensus in society as a whole as to how life was to be conducted. Ironically, a good portion of this rather significant slice of history was mislabeled "The Dark Ages". This label was, of course, applied by people of later times who felt themselves to be more morally and academically "advanced" than their predecessors.

Nothing happens in a political vacuum. The beginning of the Age of Enlightenment was no exception. The force of authority had, for centuries, rested in the hands of ecclesiastical authorities of the Roman Catholic Church and its puppet government, the Holy Roman Empire. Rome's word was final in nearly all matters of dispute whether political, moral or theological. It was not to last however. As is true of all human institutions, with time and power inevitably comes corruption. The fiasco of the so-called "Babylonian Captivity" of the Roman Church, the

moral failure and corruption of the priesthood down to the grassroots level, coupled with the terrible ignorance of scholarship and the increasing nationalism of distant city-states, combined to force a showdown of major proportions. All of this culminated in the actions of an Augustinian monk named Martin Luther who brazenly challenged not only the authority of Rome, but also her theology. Had Luther foreseen how events were to spin out of control as a result of his brave but stubborn stand, he might well have had second thoughts about posting his convictions so publicly.

The murderous slaughter of the Thirty Years War finally ground to a bankrupt and indecisive halt with the signing of the Treaty of Westphalia (1648). This treaty ended far more than military hostilities. It was the end of central authority for the western world. Now Europe was a place that was divided between Catholic, Lutheran, Anglican, and Calvinistic regions, whose allegiance to Rome was either non-existent or very limited. If the Pope and the Roman Church were no longer the final arbiter of the truth, then who was?

With the rise of French nationalism – partly inspired by the American Revolution – and the Ultramontaine Movement which determined that papal authority was only authoritative in France with the permission of the French crown, and with the increasing influence of philosophers like Descartes, Bacon, and Pascal, the foundations of the Age of Enlightenment were laid and a great deal of political anarchy was underway.

In England the consolidation of ecclesiastical power under the banner of the Act of Uniformity, which promoted and solidified the Anglican influence in that nation, worked together with intellectual foment throughout Europe to bring about a revolution that has affected

us to this very day in ways so profound, that only from the vantage point of the passing of four centuries can we begin to see it. The impact of Enlightenment philosophers like Rousseau, Locke and others combined to move the source of truth from sources external from us (Holy Scripture) to the not-so-new conclusion that people could decide for themselves what was true for them.

When truth shifts its source, the old sources have to give way. Voices of the Enlightenment not only spoke for the removal of the political authority of the Roman Church, it also needed to get rid of the constraints of all external forms of authority other than human reason. The Scriptures themselves had to go or at least be relegated to the status of quaint human antiquarian thought. If human reason was to be the final arbiter of the truth, then it was up to human reason to examine the Scriptures to determine which parts were true and which weren't or to reject them entirely.

What has been the legacy of the Age of Enlightenment? Proponents of Rationalism have virtually taken over every major college and university in this nation and in Europe. The teaching that truth must be found within one's self (simply intellectualized eastern mysticism), is the prevailing conviction of our public media, the public education establishment, the government of the United States of America and many mainstream Christian denominations.

And what has been the harvest of subjugating all wisdom to human reason? I would submit they are as follows:

Secular Humanism

The logic of finding truth within ourselves and excluding the notion that truth is revealed from outside of us found its logical conclu-

sion with the rise of Secular Humanism. The cornerstone of Secular Humanism is atheism. God is simply the invention of man and not the other way around. Truth is determined by science and the scientific method, both of which rendered God obsolete. Matter is the only eternal thing and humanity is but a passing player in the ongoing evolution of nature. Major proponents of Secular Humanism are John Dewey, Bertrand Russell, Erich Fromm, and Julian Huxley.

Socialism: Marxism-Leninism/Fascism

Karl Marx was an atheist before he was a socialist. God is nothing more than an unnecessary "crutch" for people lacking the courage to face the reality that we are on our own and it is a hinderance keeping people from realizing their own human potential. Together with Frederick Engels and V.I. Lenin, they concluded that all religion had to be overthrown, by violent means if necessary, and that it was necessary. Not only was this violence extended to religion, but economic violence was also part and parcel of the Marxist-Leninist/Fascist philosophy. The proletariat (or poor and middle classes) were totally justified in violent action against people of means so that all could attain economic equality. Despite all the violence, neither the elimination of religion nor economic equality was ever achieved by the 70 year long experiment of the Soviet Socialist Republic.

Materialism

If we are only the highest form of animal, and therefore the product of a random evolutionary process that will only eventually pass from the scene. Then the only real purpose in life will be to make one's self as comfortable as possi-

ble, and provide for our various appetites as completely as possible. This is selfishness in raw form. Materialism is reflected on many bumper stickers and t-shirts with materialistic sayings like, "He who dies with the most toys wins". For the Materialist, what is most critical in life is the accumulation of goods which are supposed to give satisfaction and a sense of success in life. A major problem with Materialism is the judgment on those who are not successful as being "losers" or worse, if you fail to accumulate goods in sufficient quantities for the provision of your comfort. Then you must view yourself as a failure in life. (It may be helpful to note that the vast majority of the world's population – including Jesus – would have to be classified as "losers" in a materialist's view.) Materialism, like Secular Humanism and Marxist-Leninist/Fascism is atheistic. If there is no God to serve, then we may serve ourselves.

Despair

Since all three of the above philosophies conclude that man is without a Creator who has made and cares for us, and since we have come from nothing by means of a random process of evolution – and will return to nothing when our time is completed on this earth – and since there is no external purpose for which we exist, but only those rationale which we invent for ourselves, then there is no reason to go on in life when life become unpleasant. This way of thinking is reflected in the well known saying, that "Life is Hard, Then You Die". What is surprising is that more people do not commit suicide than already do in our society, for despair is the logical outcome of the way of thinking which has been foisted on us by the Age of Enlightenment.

The Age of Enlightenment and the LCMS

But you might be wondering what any of this has to do with our Synod and its current divisions? We in the ACELC believe that it's time to connect some rather obvious dots. Issues of authority outside of ourselves, subjective views of the authority of Holy Scripture, the idea that what I do as a pastor or as a congregation is up to the individual pastor or congregation without regard to the Synod as a whole, or to the Church at large, are woven of the fabric of the Age of Enlightenment. Notions like making sure that a congregation looks "successful" in order to appeal to our materialistic culture go hand-in-glove with the thought patterns of the Age of Enlightenment.

When our Synod was founded in 1847, it was done in the immediate shadow of the Age of Enlightenment. What we said together about truth and authority literally flew in the face of the prevailing philosophical norms. Our Synod was formed at a time when virtually all of the previously existing Lutheran bodies in America were awash in Pietism and its child, Rationalism. For nearly 100 years our Synod was a shining light of orthodoxy on the "hill" of religion in America and became known throughout the world for our clear Biblical stances and unwavering acceptance of and subscription to the Book of Concord of 1580.

It was Luther who said that all institutions of man that do not hold as paramount the Word of God will always become corrupt. Sadly, that has also become true of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod.

A hallmark event occurred in 1945 when a number of highly regarded theologians and personalities in the LCMS issued what became known as "The Statement of the 44." The goal of this statement

was to erode the necessity of achieving agreement in all articles of doctrine so that every previously held barrier to full altar and pulpit fellowship with other Lutheran church bodies (and other Christian denominations) could be done away with. Prior to that watershed event, our Synod (particularly under the leadership of C.F.W. Walther), had faced theological controversies which arose by having the President of the Synod prepare a position paper to address that particular controversy. The paper was next presented to the Synodical Convention, where – after careful study – it could then be accepted as the Synod's historic, Biblical, Confessional position. In this fashion our Synod confronted and resolved the Stephanite controversy (1839-1841), the Grabau controversy (1840-1866), the Chiliasm/Millennialism controversy (1856-1858), and the Predestinarian controversy (1870-1880).

Sadly, with the issuance of The Statement of the 44, we abandoned this method of resolving controversy under the Word of God and our Lutheran Confessions, and instead made every error which was being promoted the object of endless study and discussion while never actually resolving anything. While The Statement of the 44 was ultimately withdrawn, still it was never condemned or rejected. The idea we need to make room for divergent views of Christian doctrine is most certainly a child of the Age of Enlightenment. Dogma is divisive and bad, while tolerance and acceptance is good.

When our Synod experienced the "Battle of the Bible" it was precisely the same goal which had been stated by the signatories of The Statement of the 44 that was at stake: that is, ecumenical latitude which found its roots not in the faith we believe, teach, and confess (*fides quae*); but on the faith

that God gives all Christians (fides qua). Thus, troublesome biblical doctrines that got in the way of ecumenical endeavors had to be done away with. This required an entirely new way of looking at Holy Scripture – a way which dulled the sharp points of doctrine some viewed as impediments to formal fellowship with other Lutherans (and other Christian denominations). This new way of thinking was called "Higher Critical Biblical Interpretation," and at the time was embraced by most of the theologians of our St. Louis faculty. Again, truth was what was to be found inside one's own self rather than that which was externally revealed by God's Word., Once again the Age of Enlightenment appears to have been alive and well within the LCMS!

While this threat to the integrity of Holy Scripture and our Confessions was temporarily pushed away under the leadership of President J.A.O. Preus, many of those who held to the positions of the St. Louis Seminary majority were never dealt with and remained a part of the Synod. While about 110,000 supporters of the Seminex faculty left and eventually became part of the ELCA, the sad part was that many others remained while retaining their false teachings. Again, the Age of Enlightenment exonerates tolerance and diversity and disdains dogma as divisive. Unresolved doctrinal issues always fester in the Church and come back to bite the Synod at a later time.

Then came the Yankee Stadium "interfaith worship service" which

was held in New York City following the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the would be airliner attack that was short-circuited and crashed near Shanksville, Pennsylvania. With the Atlantic District President, Rev. Dr. David Benke participating in worship with both Christians and non-Christians, our Synod entered a period of controversy that once again ended in a lack of resolution, and increased the uncertainty respecting what our Synod believed, taught and confessed – not to mention how that faith ought to be practiced among us.

As true children of the Age of Enlightenment, our Synodical leaders once again failed to speak the truth to error and correct it. The uncertainty of our Synod's position respecting joint worship with those with whom we are not in fellowship came to visit us again with the December 14, 2012, Newtown, Connecticut, school shooting. Once again the Synod sounded an uncertain trumpet when the President of the Synod, Matthew Harrison at first corrected the error and then apologized for "mishandling" the situation. Now, virtually no pastor in the Synod knows what our church body's position is respecting such situations and there is little if any need for any pastor of the Synod to fear correction for participating in such events. Dogma is divisive and bad while tolerance and acceptance is good - perfect Age of Enlightenment thinking.

It was philosopher Jorge Agustín Nicolás Ruiz de Santayana

y Borrás, who rightly said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." Unfortunately The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has been forgetting its past for the last 68 years since The Statement of the 44. In the spirit of the Age of Enlightenment we have exalted tolerance, acceptance, and diversity at the expense of pure doctrine. To be sure, voices of objection have been raised again and again but without significant result. Endless study and inconclusive discussion of the issues that divide us are not an end in themselves and resolve nothing.

Thus it was out of love for our Synod and frustration at the ongoing lack of will to settle our differences of doctrine and practice that the Association of Confessing Evangelical Lutheran Congregations formed in 2011 to serve as a voice of conscience for our Synod. The 23 congregations of the ACELC are speaking with one voice to simply ask our Synod to love pure doctrine and right practice more than they love a false "peace" in our church body. As a Synod we desperately need to recapture our original spirit of being unafraid to be counter-cultural, and to reject the principles of the Age of Enlightenment which have so blighted our culture and Synod.

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February 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	5:00 PM Confirmation		Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 PM Revelation II: 7:15 PM			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	5:00 PM Confirmation	Trustees Meeting: 6:30 PM	Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 PM Revelation II: 7:15 PM			
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	5:00 PM Confirmation		Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 PM Revelation II: 7:15 PM			
23	24	25	26	27	28	
	No Confirmation	ACELC	CONFERENCE	IOWA		

March 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
		Voters Meeting: 7 PM	Ash Wednesday Communion: 7:30 PM			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
YOUTH	GROUP	CAMPOUT	Lenten Vespers: 7:30 PM			
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
		Elders Meeting: 6:30 PM	Lenten Vespers: 7:30 PM			
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
			Lenten Vespers: 7:30 PM			
30	31					