

Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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Quo vadis?

Is Latin for “where are you going.” One of you enterprising Interneters do a search and find out how many papers have been written for LCMS confessional conferences with that in the title. I myself have heard that title so many times I smile. It’s considered the sophisticated, erudite, learned way to ask what you already know.

Theologically where are we going? We’re still a member congregation of the Association of Confessional Evangelical Lutheran Congregations. I can’t tell you how important that last word is. Bureaucrats don’t count pastors; they count congregations. Each time we add one congregation that has the force of adding a dozen pastors. If all the lay people bothered by the gross open Communion practiced literally all around them wrote the president of the Missouri Synod, he would be blanketed by at least 100,000 letters – even emails would get noticed. But in my experience 1 in a 100 lay people are willing to write the ecclesiastical supervisor in charge of such things synod-wide. However, 100 % of these people bothered by such things will complain to their faithful pastor.

This pastor is continuing the march with the ACELC. It is not the pace and sometimes even the direction I would choose. But as no one has elected me an ecclesi-

astical supervisor, so no one has elected me a leader in the ACELC. My choices are to follow or leave. By the way, Trinity has the same choices.

Practically where are we going? Here I speak of Trinity’s physical future. Now that the floor is finished and the organ rebuilt all the major parts of the big church have been redone. This includes the roof and the HVAC unit. Lord willing, we expect that these will not need major attention for 50 or more years. What you might not have noticed, ideally you haven’t, is that the Trustees are replacing the light bulbs in the chancel and choir loft with long life, 10 – 22 years, super energy efficient LED lights. One example, the lights at the base of the fixtures were 300 watt incandescent bulbs. They will be 31 watt LED. They produce the same amount of light but at 1/10th the power.

The next big project is the roof on the rest of the building. This will be a big project, but the only options here are to either fix the existing roof or start out with a whole new structure. As with the floor, this won’t be done in a corner. If you come to voters meetings, read the bulletin and newsletter, or come to any special congregational briefings, you will know what is going on.

I said the floor is finished, and it is, but you notice only one of the 12 circles has any coloring. The one where the Baptismal Font sits is blue. The rest of the circles were meant to have some type of artwork in them. A com-

mittee will be appointed by the President of the congregation with the input of myself and the Elders to come up with a unified theme and style, as well as prices should anyone wish to donate the artwork. If we don’t have a plan, we will get artwork inconsistent with what we have or plan on having.

Quo vadis? Regardless of where the Synod, our nation, or the world for that matter, goes over the next two months we’ll go to Divine Service with special celebrations of Reformation, All Souls’ Day (That’s right not All Saints’ this year, but All Souls’), Thanksgiving, and the beginning of a whole new Church Year. Of course, some of us might also be going into sickness, sadness, or sorrows. Some of us may go into the valley of the shadow of death, into many dangers, toils, and snares. We really don’t know which of us is going where, do we? But we do know Who is going with us.

Christ, The Order of Creation, and the Church

“So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over

every living thing that moves on the earth” (Genesis 1:27-28).

“Let a woman learn in silence with all submission. And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression” (I Timothy 2:11-14).

Christ is the creator of all things: “All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made” (John 1:3). The order of creation was anything but random or arbitrary. Like God, who brought it all into existence out of nothing and fashioned it from that which “was without form, and void” (Gen. 1:2), creation was so ordered that the finest Swiss watch or most complex computer system pales in comparison. When Adam heeded the voice of his wife, Eve, who had followed the lead of the serpent (who is the seedbed of disorder and lawlessness) – a creature over which man had been given dominion – God “cursed” the ground/earth, and He warned Eve of her “desire” toward rulership over her husband (Gen. 3:16f). These two disruptions to the created order stand behind and serve as the foundation of the errors that have crept into our Synod; indeed, which have all but overwhelmed our current culture in general! While this cultural concern needs and deserves a thorough hearing in the public square, it is not the main point of this essay, except where it may intersect with matters in the Church.

Thankfully, in I Corinthians 14, St. Paul brings clarity to the Church's life in this disordered world when he writes: “For God

is not the author of confusion (disorder) but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (vs. 33). The disorder and lawlessness brought on by the serpent – as initiated in his subverting God's order of creation by speaking with the wife rather than Adam – do indeed have a multitude of followers in the world, but in the Church the way of the Lord is clear: “Let all things be done decently and in order” (I Corinthians 14:40). Earlier he also wrote this important admonition: “Let all things be done for edification (building up)” (I Cor. 14:26). Included among the all things that St. Paul sets forth in this chapter as “the commandments of the Lord” (I Cor. 14:37) is this prohibition: “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says” (I Corinthians 14:34).

The disruption to God's created order resulting from man's fall into sin permeates our entire being and reveals our inbred inclination to sin against God. The Confessions of our Church put it succinctly in terms reminiscent of the First Commandment when they confess in the article on Original Sin that all who are naturally born are “without the fear of God, without trust in God, and with the inclination to sin, called concupiscence” (*Concordia*, AC II, p. 57). This is who we are by virtue of our conception, and there is no denying, ignoring, changing, or escaping it. This inbred absence of “the fear of God” and “trust in God,” coupled with the “inclination to sin,” in both man and woman is the root out of which every sin of omission or commission comes forth out of the heart (Mark 7:19-23).

When we consider this root-bound-heart-problem of man relative to the Lord's warnings to Adam and Eve in the garden, we see the deep-seated potential for tension, friction, and even outright war for the sake of control. Adam's passivity in family affairs, a gene still dominant in our own day, coupled with Eve's desire for what was not given her, also a dominant trait in our day, has taken humanity down two roads which have become increasingly divided in the past two centuries, and there is little to suggest that these diverging roads are changing anytime soon.

Culture's way, or the world's way, is to live and let live, or in Biblical terms allow everyone to do what is right in his own heart. This is nothing less than the Serpent's and Eve's way. The Church's way, or more pointedly, Christ's way, is clearly the road less traveled, and yet it is the way of the Order of Creation, and thus, it is the right way.

So, where does that leave us in the LCMS? The evidence set forth in the ACELC's Fraternal Admonition and further expounded in the document, Service of Women in the Church (Order of Creation), testify that the LCMS has a lot of egg on her face! For as it stands today in the LCMS – as this document points out: “women may serve as elders, congregational presidents and vice-presidents, may assist with communion distribution, and publicly proclaim the Word of God.” How is this not in direct violation of God's own commandment in I Corinthians 14:34, and I Timothy 2:11-14, quoted above?

Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions are clear: life within the Christian congregation is to be governed in accord with

the doctrine of the Order of Creation. The Missouri Synod, composed of congregations and pastors, has a long overdue need to repent and return in doctrine and practice on these and other important matters to the One who alone forgives transgressions and calls us to order our lives to His way because He alone is: "the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6).

As we continue in the way of celebrating the resurrection and ascension of the Lord of truth and life throughout this year of our Lord, 2014, I pray many will consider joining the ACELC and stand with us as a beacon on a hill during these darkening days of an increasingly pagan culture and this splintering Church visible which seems bent on jettisoning doctrine after doctrine in the name of political correctness, or sheer folly.

In these latter days, St. Paul's words to the Corinthians serve us well: "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ" (II Corinthians 10:3-5).

Pastor Bruce G. Ley
Documents Chairman, ACELC

Dynamic Equivalence or Formal Equivalence

The terms "dynamic equivalence" and "formal equivalence"

were originated by Eugene Nida to describe ways of translating Scripture, but the two approaches are applicable to any translation of any text -- especially liturgical texts.

Formal equivalence tends to emphasize fidelity to the lexical details and grammatical structure of the original language while dynamic equivalence tends to favor the language into which the text is being translated toward a more natural rendering for the hearer or reader. In this case, dynamic equivalence favors the readability of the translation is more important than the preservation of the original grammatical structure (favored by the formal equivalence).

Though we tend to love dynamic equivalence as a means of rendering a text of one language into our own vernacular, this kind of translation is inherently short lived and becomes quickly dated. What might be the modern equivalent for this moment is, over time, no longer able to communicate as well -- especially over a decade or more. Language is not static and words and their usage -- even grammar -- evolves. Frequent updating, however, robs the people of the familiar and ends up distancing them from that which it seeks to communicate.

It is in vogue today only because our technology makes such constant updating possible and affordable. In previous eras when printed books and memorization were required for consistency, such change was too great a cost to be paid for relevance. For this reason a formal or literary style was preferred for Scripture and liturgical texts over slang (so much more subject to change in meaning than the formal). The more stunted language

of a more literal translation is actually more enduring both in accessibility for the reader or hearer and in terms of meaning.

Take for example the use of Christian in the Creed. This was not a Lutheran invention but predated the Reformation. It was an example of dynamic equivalence. Catholic was a word difficult to translate and the word Christian was intended as a synonym for catholicum. Now, long removed from the original usage, the word Christian in the creed has become antagonistic toward the original it was intended to translate (so much so that a comment on a post on this blog once insisted that the commenter would rather be Christian than catholic. This is a statement that would undoubtedly cause shock and consternation to the one who originally thought he was doing the reader or hearer a favor by proposing the change from a word more difficult to render in any vernacular than Christian. Now that person, whoever he was, never intended to rewrite the creed -- no user of dynamic equivalence admits to rewriting the text being translated. It is a fluid process of many choices and judgments. Yet the more we choose dynamic equivalence, the more distant we actually are from the original text. Roman Catholics knew this instinctively when the Novus Ordo was first used some 40+ years ago and yet we tend to be as in love with the lingo of the moment as we do the moment itself. Hence the resistance among some Roman Catholics to return to a more formal equivalence used in the 2010 Mass translations. As many have noted, nowhere is the weakness of the sense translation over the word for word rendering of the text than in the collects.

Once so eloquent and majestic, the prayer of the day became a poster child for the 1960s and 1970s that eventually became a joke to the Roman Mass several generations later.

In other words, readability is not necessarily a priority for translations of Scripture or the liturgy which are meant to be heard and sung over many generations and put to memory by young and old. Lutherans should not lose sight of this truth.

(pastoralmeanderings.blogspot.com/2014/08/27dynamic-equivalence-or-formal.html#sthash.V0dQOUCL.dpuf)

Separatistic or Unionistic

Posted on July 15, 2013
by Rev. Paul R. Harris

Neither one is Biblical. To be separatistic is to separate from other Christians without Biblical cause. To be unionistic is to have altar or pulpit fellowship (not friendship) without Biblical cause. Of course, those of us practicing closed Communion are called separatistic; we've rejected that since the ones we are not communing deny Scriptural doctrines we affirm. On a fresh translation of Proverbs 18:1, I wonder if the unionistic crowd, those practicing open Communion, aren't the real separatists?

Keil and Delitzsch translate Proverbs 18:1, "The separatist seeketh after his own pleasure; Against all that is beneficial he showeth his teeth" (Vol. VI, ii, 1). They take this as a reference to one who separates himself from the congregation and follows his own counsel. They go on to say: "the effort of the separatist goes out after a pleasure,

i.e. the enjoyment and realization of such; instead of seeking to conform himself to the law and ordinances of the community, he seeks to carry out a separate view, and to accomplish some darling plan."

I can tell you that there is absolutely no pleasure in practicing closed Communion. I imagine there is nothing but pleasure in practicing open Communion. What a hero you are when you say the Baptist aunt visiting on Confirmation Sunday can commune! How caring you are for communing any Christian who wants to! How accepting, non-judgmental you are in welcoming all Lutherans to your altar! I don't know if the Methodist still say this but at one time their invitation to the Sacrament was, "Let all who love the Lord come here" (Barclay, Luke, 130). Can't you just hear the congregation going, "Aww"?

And who is the one not conforming to "the law and ordinances of the community"? Prior to the 2004 convention, closed Communion was our official doctrine and practice. (Reading the 2013 Convention Workbook, I would say some in our Synod still think it is. But long after the ALC had abandoned an inerrant view of Holy Scripture, they made believe they still held it.) Even if open Communion is the new doctrine of our community, isn't it true that among those practicing open Communion, they each commune who they will? Some commune all Christians, others all baptized Christians; some commune not all Christians but all Lutherans. Others have no stated or written policy about who is invited to the Lord's Table. They really are a law unto themselves.

Who is the one who shows "his teeth against anything beneficial"? We who practice closed Communion are said to hate everything, but while admitting that we tend to be less winsome than the open Communion crowd, before we let this proverb stick we have to define beneficial. The truly beneficial must be in accord with God's Word for only God is good. When a person, against better knowledge, goes against God's Word he is bearing his teeth at it.

The open Communion pastor may believe that babies are to be baptized, Mother Mary is not to be prayed to, the Body and Blood of Jesus is truly present, and the Lodge is an unchristian religion. But when he communes people in these errors, what God's Word has to say about these things doesn't matter to him. His own word, opinion, or "darling plan" count for more.

The unionistic pastor is separatistic, and all the pleasure he is getting now from being so is all that he will ever get from it.

How Martin Luther Dealt With the Devil

Issues, Etc. Journal - December 1996 - Vol. 2 No. 2

Edited by Don Matzat*

Thoughts from the reformer on how to handle the assaults of the devil.

Because he was on the front line of the battle to restore the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the Church, Martin Luther had numerous encounters with the devil and demons. How he dealt with the devil provides a classic

illustration of walking the line between ignorance and obsession. Read his words carefully.

Luther compares the devil to a chained dog.

Why should you fear? Why should you be afraid? Do you not know that the prince of this world has been judged? He is no lord, no prince any more. You have a different, a stronger Lord, Christ, who has overcome and bound him. Therefore let the prince and god of this world look sour, bare his teeth, make a great noise, threaten, and act in an unmannerly way; he can do no more than a bad dog on a chain, which may bark, run here and there, and tear at the chain. But because it is tied and you avoid it, it cannot bite you. So the devil acts toward every Christian. Therefore everything depends on this that we do not feel secure but continue in the fear of God and in prayer; then the chained dog cannot harm us. But this chained dog may at least frighten him who would be secure and go ahead without caution, although he may not come close enough to be bitten.

Christians should face the devil with the Word of God.

Experience is required, gathered in many kinds of bouts and temptations, to be able to meet the devil when he comes and enters into judgment with us, wants us pious, and, on the basis of the Law, argues with us about what it means to have done right or not. Before an untried and inexperienced Christian has learned his lesson, the devil has so disturbed him that he must fear and tremble and does not know which way to turn. Therefore we must learn to cling to Christ's Word and comfort alone and to permit the devil

no argument about our own works or piety.

Luther saw the "white devil" as the greater threat.

Let us learn clearly to recognize the tricks and subtleties of the devil. No heretic comes in the name of error or Satan, nor does the devil himself come as devil, especially not the white one. . . . In spiritual matters, not the black but the white devil operates and presents himself in angelic and divine guise. . . . Therefore Paul ironically calls the doctrine of the false apostles, the minister of Satan, a gospel.

The white good-looking devil is the one who does the most harm, the devil who eggs people on to commit spiritual sins, which are not regarded as sins at all but as pure righteousness and are defended as such. . . . Therefore he must embellish them with a fine appearance and gloss them over with these holy names: God's Word, the worship of God, a divine life, etc.

Luther would have little good to say about those who enter into lengthy dialogue with demons in their alleged "deliverance sessions."

One does not gain much ground against the devil with a lengthy disputation but with brief words and replies, such as, "I am a Christian, of the same flesh and blood as is my Lord Christ, the Son of God. Settle your account with him." Then the devil does not stay long.

In the great hymn of the Reformation, "A Mighty Fortress is Our God," Luther wrote:

Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us, we tremble not, we fear no ill,

they shall not overpower us. This world's prince may still scowl fierce as he will, he can harm us none, he's judged; the deed is done; one little word can fell him.

Luther dealt with the devil with cold contempt.

Satan may be overcome by contempt, but in faith, not in presumption. However, he is certainly not to be invited; for he is a powerful enemy, seeing and hearing everything that lies before us and that we are now talking about. And God permitting, he spoils everything that is good.

When the devil comes during the night to plague me, I give him this answer: "Devil, I must sleep now; for this is God's command: Work during the day, sleep at night." If he does not stop to vex me but faces me with my sins, I reply: "Dear devil, I have heard the record. But I have committed far more sins which do not even stand in your record. Put them down too. . . ." If he still does not stop accusing me as a sinner, I say to him in contempt: "Holy Satan, pray for me! You never have done anything evil and alone are holy. Go to God and acquire grace for yourself. If you want to make me righteous, I tell you: Physician heal yourself."

We recently received a request from a pastor who was seeking information on casting a demon out of a house. The best suggestion comes from Luther.

The devil has often raised a racket in the house and has tried to scare me, but I appealed to my calling and said, "I know that God has placed me into this house to be lord here. Now if you have a call that is stronger than mine and are lord here, then stay where you are. But I well know

that you are not lord here and that you belong in a different place - down in hell." And so I fell asleep again and let him be angry, for I well knew that he could do nothing to me.

Some Christians have the impression that God and the devil are locked in mortal combat and that we, as God's people, are also engaged in this "spiritual warfare." For Luther, the devil is an agent of God.

God uses the devil and the evil angels. They, of course, desire to ruin everything; but God blocks them, unless a well-earned scourging is in order. God allows pestilence, war, or some other plague to come, that we may humble ourselves before him, fear him, hold to him, and call upon him. When God has accomplished these purposes through the scourge, then the good angels come again to perform their office. They bid the devil stop the pestilence, war, and famine. So the devil must serve us with the very thing with which he plans to injure us; for God is such a great Master that he is able to turn even the wickedness of the devil into good.

The purpose of the devil is to attack the Word of God and destroy our faith. We should not be surprised by the rise of false teachers and heretics.

When God's holy Word arises, it is always its lot that Satan opposes it with all his might. At first, he rages against it with force and wicked power. If that promises no success, he attacks it with false tongues and erring spirits and teachers. What he is unable to crush by force he seeks to suppress by cunning and lies. This was his strategy at the beginning. When the Gospel first

came into the world, he launched a mighty attack against it through Jews and Gentiles, shed much blood, and filled Christendom with martyrs. When this did not succeed, he raised false prophets and erring spirits and filled the world with heretics... And we must be prepared for this, and by no means allow it to disturb us, for so it must be, as Paul tells the Corinthians: "There must also be heresies among you that they which are approved may be made manifest (1 Corinthians 11:19)."

We must stand firmly upon the Word of God.

All the cunning of the devil is exercised in trying to tear us away from the Word. If in the external preaching he does not succeed in making people unwilling to hear the Word, yet he succeeds in the heart by persuading them not to cling to it.

* All the quotations are taken from the Ewald Plass, *What Luther Says*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), pp. 391-404.

Talking Peace While Bomb Dropping

Posted on [September 23, 2013](#)
by [Rev. Paul R. Harris](#)

On August 8, 1945 the United States became the first nation to sign the United Nations Charter in hopes for continued peace after World War II. The next day the United States dropped the second atomic bomb on Nagasaki (*This Day in U.S. Military History Calendar*, A&E Television). I'm not questioning the morality or necessity of dropping the

bomb; I just find the timing incongruous. About as incongruous as talking of peace in a church body where bombs are still being dropped.

The bombs I'm thinking of are found in the "Pastor Profile Texas District LC-MS." A layman from another congregation in the Call process sent me the document. I quote below the opening paragraph and then questions 4, 8, and 9.

Pastor Profile Texas District, LC-MS

This survey seeks to clarify what our congregational members believe to be the key roles, functions, attributes and qualities of the pastor we are seeking to call. Your responses to this survey will provide information that will help in the process of identifying one or more pastors who are suited for our ministry and would, therefore be good candidates for our call. Please answer all questions, carefully following instructions. Please return your completed copy to the call committee.

4. *Communion Practice – Think about your congregation's practice of distributing Holy Communion. Rank the following three practices in order from 1 to 3 with 1 being most like your desired communion practice and 3 being least like your desired communion practice.*

____ *Our congregation serves the Lord's Supper only to communicant members of this congregation, of other LCMS congregations and to members of congregations in altar and pulpit fel-*

lowship with the LCMS. No exceptions to this practice.

____Our congregation serves the Lord's Supper to baptized believers who confess their sins and come to the communion table after being educated in what the LCMS believes, teaches and confesses about this sacrament.

____Our congregation serves the Lord's Supper only to communicant members of this congregation, of other LCMS congregations and to members of congregations in altar and pulpit fellowship with the LCMS. Discretion is given to pastor and elders to commune others in exceptional circumstances.

8. Roles for Lay Women: Think about how your congregation involves laity in worship and leadership roles. Check all of the roles currently available to women in your congregation.

____Congregational Chairman of Board of Directors and Vice Chairman

____Elder/Lay Minister

____Usher

____Lay Reader (Lector)

____Children's Sunday School Teacher

____Adult Bible Class Teacher

____Board/Action Team member

____Board/Action Team chair

____Confirmation Instructor

____Treasurer/Financial Secretary

____Communion Assistant

____Other, please specify:

9. Roles for Lay Women: Think about the roles you checked in the previous question and how important it is to that our new pastor support women serving in these roles.

1=Very Strong Emphasis

2=Strong Emphasis

3=Moderately Strong Emphasis

4=Some Emphasis

5=Small Emphasis

6=No Emphasis

____Emphasis our new Pastor should have in supporting these roles for women.

Additional Comment:

Here we see the officially adopted policies of the 2004 Convention at work. At that convention closed and open Communion were recognized as differences only in practice. Here we see you can have open Communion (option 2); closed Communion with the open-ended option of "exceptional circumstances" (option 3); or you can have closed Communion as I have never known it practiced, with no emergency exceptions.

At the 2004 convention the roles of women were expanded to include any man-made office. Here we see that in practice women are congregational chairman, elders, lectors, and Communion assistants. The only thing the layman is asked to consider is how important it is to him that a new pastor emphasize the ongoing roles. There is no hint that some of these roles might be contrary to Scripture.

We can't call on ecclesiastical supervisors to correct, discipline, or work to change anything reflected in these questions. Why? Because these practices are supported by reports made to Synod and by resolutions passed by Synod. That's why when I expressed dissent I was told I was free to leave Synod but I was not free to teach contrary to these

things. And neither are you. Neither is the president of Synod.

That's why Resolution 4-10, passed at this last convention, is meaningless. District Presidents are *encouraged*, never required, never instructed to "address the congregation's administration of the Lord's Supper...and...that those practices which are not in harmony with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions be addressed fraternally and evangelically." The Communion practices listed above are all acceptable.

So who is fooling who? What will talking about peace in our Synod do when bombs like these are going off everyday? And remember we have agreed that these aren't bombs at all. These departures from the historic position of our Synod are not subject to discipline.

The path many confessional pastors, myself included, have chosen is to build bomb shelters within Synod. This is preferable to thinking there is peace when there is no peace, or that bombs are not bombs, but this leads to a "bunker mentality" where you are always on the defensive and never on the offensive. It is already hard enough to "fight" with people who tell you there at peace with you. But the boxer who hugs the other boxer is not doing so because he is at peace but because he doesn't want to be hit anymore. So rather than talk of peace let's launch some bombs. Its bombs that got Japan to the peace table not talk fraternal, evangelical, or otherwise.

A Movie Review of "God's Not Dead."

By Pastor Stark

September 12, 2014: A few members have asked me my opinion about the movie, "God's Not Dead." Having not seen it, my stock answer was always, "Get your theology from your church and your entertainment from movies. These movies aren't made by Lutherans so they will contradict Scripture since we believe in Scripture alone and they do not. And unlike God's Word, these types of movies (*The Passion, Fireproof, Facing the Giants, Heaven is for Real, etc.*) will be here today and forgotten tomorrow. As He has for thousands of years, God gives faith and salvation through His Word and Sacraments in the Church." Last night I broke down and watched the movie, so I can now go into more detail about why you should avoid and not promote this movie or others like it. This movie, like the others, does not teach Scripture. It quotes the Bible, but twists it much like Satan did with Jesus in the wilderness. Now, I am not saying that those making money from this movie are intentionally twisting God's Word. I believe they are sincere and sincerely want people to go to a 'real heaven.' The problem is that they are sincerely wrong and don't know how God saves. I will prove this by putting the movie on trial and compare it to what Scripture really teaches:

Error #1: Theistic Evolution: As Lutherans, with child-like faith, we believe what God says in Genesis. He says that He created the world in six literal days (24 hour periods) and rested on the 7th. This is what God's Word says and we Lutherans believe Him. The movie, though it quotes Genesis, rejects what God actually says. Instead, **the movie**

teaches big-bang evolution. The only difference between their view and an atheist's view is that the movie teaches that God caused the big-bang evolution. This is called theistic evolution. This teaching means that God did NOT create Adam and Eve on a real particular day—and there was no Garden of Eden in the beginning. No, they teach that millions of years before a fish turned into a monkey and then eventually you have Adam and Eve. For them, Jesus is not only a descendant of David, but monkeys and fish too. This is an attempt to make the Bible make sense to the hostile atheist-big-bang-evolutionist world and rejects what God so clearly says in His inerrant Word. It is dangerous to monkey around with God's Word.

And, please understand that this is the primary argument of the movie that the student makes to his atheist professor in their debate. Additionally, getting someone to believe in a generic god who caused the big-bang and started evolution still leads to hell. It isn't that an evolutionist god isn't dead as the movie teaches. It is that Jesus, the eternal Word made flesh, is not dead but alive. There is only salvation in the one true Triune God Who created everything visible and invisible in the actual beginning. This error in the movie actually is a big-bang against true Christian Evangelism and devolves Christian faith.

Error #2: Name It Claim It: Name it claim it refers to the word of faith movement that is prominent in TV Evangelists. It is the teaching that if you just ask God with enough faith, He will do what you ask and believe. If you just believe enough God will give you more money, heal your

disease or fix your car. One example from the movie is that the pastor's car won't start. But, an African missionary tells the 'doubting' pastor that if he just has more faith, God will miraculously fix his car (no mechanic needed). I am not denying that God can and does work miracles. But, He doesn't promise to fix your car, health, finances, etc. "if you just have enough faith." This is a dangerous error and has conned many out of money and into despair, "I guess God doesn't answer my prayer because I don't have enough faith." Believe God's written word, this error contradicts the Bible and actually hurts true Christian Evangelism and harms Christian faith.

Error #3: Enthusiasm: Enthusiasm is a technical term that defines a specific heresy. It is used in our Lutheran Confessions to demonstrate an error that we reject because it contradicts Scripture. Enthusiasm is the error that the Holy Spirit speaks and creates faith apart from Scripture. We believe what Scripture says, (i.e. Romans 10:17) that God speaks and creates faith only by the Word of Christ. Enthusiasm teaches that the Holy Spirit floats around and speaks to people in their hearts and creates faith apart from Word and Sacraments. This is demonstrated in many scenes in the movie where "God spoke" directly to the person in their heart or feelings to do or say something specific. One example is in a scene when an unbelieving woman interviews a 'Christian' rock band and the drummer tells her that God told him just then that he needed to deliver a message to her. This is dangerous and it leads people away from God's written Word to looking for God to whisper in their ear or

write a message in the clouds. This error is also used by TV Evangelists who say, “God told me to tell you to give me all your money.” If you hear a voice in your heart telling you that I am being too critical of this movie, that voice isn’t from God. God says in Scripture that this error contradicts what He says and actually hurts true Christian Evangelism and harms Christian faith.

Error #4: Synergism: Synergism is the error of “decision theology.” This also was a prominent teaching in the movie, which contradicts Scripture. We believe what Scripture says— God chooses and saves us by grace alone, through faith alone apart from works. This movie rejects this. It teaches that salvation is up to you. Want to go to heaven? Then all **you need to do** to save yourself is to do the work of asking Jesus to come into your heart. This is taught in the conversion of a Muslim girl listening to Franklin Graham on her iphone and the woman with the rock band that I mentioned earlier. Additionally, the climax of the movie is a scene where the

atheist professor is dying and about to take his last breath. The pastor, since God fixed his car, happens to be driving by. The pastor tells this dead-in-trespases sinner that he still has time to be saved, BUT the choice is up to him to **save himself**. They add a big “but” and “if” to the true Gospel revealed in the Bible. Synergy teaches that “God forgives you, IF you ask Him to save you.” No. Scripture doesn’t teach that “you do your part and then God will do His part.” This makes you, not God, responsible for your faith and salvation. “All you have to do is make the right choice.” This error contradicts the Bible and actually hurts true Christian Evangelism and harms Christian faith. It makes God “dead” in saving you, and your sinful flesh very much alive and as god.

Many more errors: There are many more Theological errors that I could address, like how it confuses Law and Gospel, promotes contemporary worship, ignores Jesus’ actual resurrection, denies original sin, and speaks about Jesus as less than true God-

-but I think you get the idea that this movie is a wolf in sheep’s clothing that you should avoid. It looks like a sheep and says it is purely Christian and Biblical, but it most certainly is not. Like all other movies and books in this genre, I speak in the stead and by the command of Christ, “Flee it.” And, not that I need to appeal to other sources besides Scripture, but there are other Christians who are not even Lutheran who are very critical of this movie and give it two thumbs down; *Answers in Genesis*, for example, which confesses a 6-day creation, is very critical of this dangerous and erroneous movie that teaches theistic big-bang evolution.

If you have any questions about this article, I encourage you to speak with me, the one whom God has Called to teach you His Holy Word.

Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word,

Pastor

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October 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
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			1	2	3	4
			Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 PM Colossians: 7:15 PM			
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
	JR. Confirmation 5:15 PM	Trustees 6:30 PM	PASTOR ON VACATION			
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
			Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 Colossians: 7:15 PM			
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
	JR. Confirmation 5:15 PM	Budget Meeting 6:30 PM	Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 Colossians: 7:15 PM			
26	27	28	29	30	31	
Reformation Dinner 5 PM	JR. Confirmation 5:15 PM		Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 Colossians: 7:15 PM			

November 2014

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	JR. Confirmation 5:15 PM	Voters Meeting: 7 PM	Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 PM Colossians: 7:15 PM			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	JR. Confirmation 5:15 PM	Trustees Meeting: 6:30 PM	Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 Colossians: 7:15 PM		Wedding Rehearsal	Wedding
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
	JR. Confirmation 5:15 PM		Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 Colossians: 7:15 PM			
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
	JR. Confirmation 5:15 PM	Elders Meeting 6:30 PM	Bible Stories: 10 AM Choir: 6:15 Colossians: 7:15 PM			
30						