

The
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“The Scripture cannot be broken.” John 10:35.

“Thy Word is a Lamp unto my feet, and a Light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105.

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“There is
none other God
but One.”

— 1 Corinthians 8:4



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To show, **on the basis of Scripture**, what true Christians are to believe and how, out of love for their Savior Jesus Christ, they are to lead Godly lives.

To furnish aids for Bible study and articles for Scriptural devotion and meditation.

To demonstrate, by our Scriptural stand, that our **Concordia Lutheran Conference** is not a sect or false church body, but that the congregations which form it confess, teach, and practice the Word of God in its full truth and purity and use the Sacraments according to Christ's institution. All who do this are the true visible Church on earth.

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To show that we do not have among us a mixture of divergent teachings but that we are "*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.*"

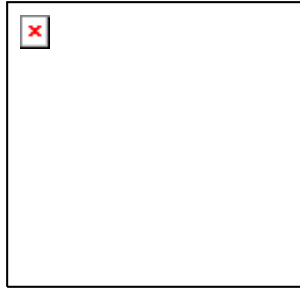
To set forth pertinent historical information which has a bearing upon the Church and to expose modern philosophical thought and the so-called scientific theories which contradict the Word of God.

To expose particularly the false teaching and practice of the various so-called "Lutheran" church bodies by comparing their teachings and practices with what is plainly recorded in the Word of God, in the Lutheran Confessions, and in the old orthodox Lutheran writings.

To expose false teaching and practice wherever it makes its appearance and to keep abreast of the current happenings in the church and among the nations as signs of the times.

To be truthful and factual in our reporting and freely to correct any misinformation of which we are not aware and which has been called to our attention. Also to clarify any information or statement of doctrine or practice which may be unclear to our readers or which may create a wrong impression.

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The Truth about the Baptism of the Spirit

*Are all apostles? Are all prophets?
Are all teachers? Are all workers
of miracles? —I Corinthians 12:29*

To the Holy Ghost the Bible especially (though not exclusively) ascribes the work of *sanctification*. In the *wider sense*, the word “sanctification” refers to everything that the Holy Ghost does for our Christian faith and life (bringing us to saving faith in Christ and thus making us “*a new creature*,” moving and enabling us in that “*new man*” to do good works, and strengthening and preserving us in the faith). The Spirit’s work of *sanctification* is accomplished through the *Means of Grace*—the Gospel and the Sacraments. As a Means of Grace, the *Sacrament of Holy Baptism* bestows the following gifts of the Spirit: It works the new birth of faith (John 3:5; Titus 3:5) and thus makes one a member of the spiritual Body of Christ (I Corinthians 12:13); it produces a new life of good works (Romans 6:4); it gives the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16) and, therefore, also bestows eternal salvation (Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21). Indeed, the Sacrament of Baptism—the application of water in the name of the Triune God according to Christ’s institution—confers great and priceless blessings of God’s Holy Spirit. And yet, this Baptism is despised and minimized by *charismatics*, who look for something completely *different* (and far *inferior*), which they call the “baptism of the Spirit.”

The term “charismatic” is used with reference to those who claim to receive the same kind of special *gifts* (Greek: “*charismata*” – *char • iz • mah • tah*) of the Holy Ghost that were given to the disciples on the day of Pentecost (described in Acts 2), as well as to certain other Christians—notably among the members of the Corinthian congregation (I Corinthians 12, 14). “Pentecostal” churches, “Full Gospel” churches, “Foursquare Gospel” churches, and others can be grouped under the heading “charismatics.” While the history of these groups can only be traced back to the early 1900s, there were some charismatic tendencies in the Anabaptists of Luther’s day, as well as in Thomas Müntzer and the “Zwickau Prophets.”

Luther referred to these people as “*Enthusiasts*” (German: *Schwärmer* – SHVAIR • mer). In our present day, it is estimated that there are over 600 million charismatics worldwide (approximately one quarter of professing Christians). The most common manifestation of the Spirit that the charismatics look for is the “speaking in tongues” (and the related gift of “interpreting” those tongues); but they also promote “healing,” “prophecy,” and general “miracle-working” as well. All these things are to be expected, according to the charismatics, when a person has received the “baptism of the Spirit.” But does the Bible say *anything* about such gifts (as the charismatics describe them); and does the Bible guarantee the appearance of any extraordinary spiritual gifts in every believer?

John the Baptist foretold that Jesus would baptize His disciples “*with the Holy Ghost and with fire*” (Matthew 3:11). Likewise, Jesus told the disciples that, after ascending into heaven, He would pour out the Holy Ghost upon them. “*It is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you*” (John 16:7). “*Ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. ...Ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth*” (Acts 1:5, 8). According to the words of the Savior, this outpouring of the Spirit would be an event that would bring to their remembrance all the things He had said to them (John 14:26) and fill them with “*power*” (Luke 24:49). Christ also told them that the “*Comforter*” (Greek: “*Parakletos*” – pah • RAH • clay • toss, John 14:16, 26; 15:26) would *guide the disciples into all truth, and show them things to come* (John 16:13). These gifts were miraculously bestowed upon the disciples through the “immediate” (without means) working of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost. This was a direct fulfillment of the foretold baptism “*with the Holy Ghost and with fire*” (Matthew 3:11)—including both the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, as well as the “*cloven tongues like as of fire*” that sat upon the heads of those who received this special “baptism” (Acts 2:3–4).

Now to a certain extent the foretold blessings of the Spirit mentioned above are still bestowed upon us Christians today by the working of the Holy Ghost *through the means of His Word*. In His Word, the Spirit works to bring to our remembrance the teachings of Christ through His messengers (Matthew 28:20; II Peter 3:1–2); He builds us up and strengthens us (Acts 20:32; I Peter 2:2); He gives us “*comfort*” (Greek: “*paraklesis*” – pah • RAH • clay • siss, Romans 15:4); He guides us into all truth (John 8:31–32; 17:17); and He tells us of things to come

(Matthew 24:4–13; Luke 21:25–28; etc.). But the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, as these were bestowed upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost—and on certain other Christians as well (Acts 10:44–45; 19:6)—were discontinued by God after the time of the Apostles. The “tongues” of the charismatics bear no resemblance—neither in source, nor in substance, nor in effect—to the gift of tongues as this was bestowed upon the disciples when they were baptized with Holy Ghost.

The tongues, or languages, in which the disciples spoke on the day of Pentecost were *real languages*—not incoherent, meaningless babblings. “*They were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. ...Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together and were confounded because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, ‘Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God’*” (Acts 2:4–11). If the charismatics want to experience this same “baptism of the Spirit,” then they really should expect spontaneously to start speaking in *real languages* (German, French, Latin, Greek, Norwegian, etc.) that they have never before learned.

Now the enthusiasts claim that their babblings *are real languages*—just not *human* languages. They point to I Corinthians 13:1 and say that they, like the Apostle Paul, speak in the *tongues of angels*. However, the Bible nowhere says that any human has ever been given the ability to speak in the tongues of angels. In I Corinthians 13:1 Paul does *not* say that he has the ability to speak in the tongues of angels any more than he says that he has given all of his goods to feed the poor or has given his body to be burned (v. 3). Rather, he says that even *if he had* that ability, without also having true Christian love (“*charity*”), it would be unprofitable, useless, and meaningless.

But for what purpose did God grant the gift of tongues to various Christians in the early New Testament Church? In general, like the other miraculous gifts, they served as a **sign** to unbelievers that the disciples were messengers of the Lord. “*Tongues are for a sign, not to them that believe, but to them that believe not*” (I Corinthians 14:22). “[*The disciples*]

went forth and preached every where, the Lord working with them and confirming the Word with signs following” (Mark 16:20). Jesus described what these signs would include when He said: *“In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover”* (Mark 16:17–18). In addition to attracting the attention of the people and causing them to listen to the preaching of the Apostles, the gift of tongues also served the special purpose of allowing the Word of the Lord to be spread rapidly among the nations whose inhabitants spoke different languages. As the various foreign visitors to Jerusalem confessed on Pentecost: *“We do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God”* (Acts 2:11).

On another occasion, the gift of tongues helped to break down some prejudices held by many of the Jews against the Gentile Christians. At the direction of the Lord, Peter and some of his Jewish friends came into the house of Cornelius, a Gentile, to preach to him and his family; and *“while Peter yet spake these words, the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word. And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God”* (Acts 10:44–46). When a question later came up about whether God would accept the uncircumcised Gentiles, this *gift of tongues* was used by Peter as proof that God had extended His Kingdom of Grace even to the uncircumcised. He told the Jews at the church council in Jerusalem: *“Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the Word of the Gospel and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as He did unto us, and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith”* (Acts 15:7–9).

The gift of tongues (as well as the other miraculous gifts) was certainly a good and important blessing in the early New Testament church. However, not every Christian received the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. Writing to the congregation in Corinth, where these gifts were bestowed in abundant measure, St. Paul rhetorically asks: *“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”* (I Corinthians 12:29–30). As the church grew, as the inspired writings of the Apostles became widely dispersed, and especially when the canon of the New Testament Scriptures was closed, leaving

the church God's entire written revelation of Himself to men, the importance of extraordinary, charismatic gifts decreased; and we have neither the need nor God's direction to look for them as something that is important for our faith or Christian life or as validation of the Spirit's indwelling in our hearts (I Corinthians 3:16).

"But," say the enthusiasts, "does not St. Paul exhort the Christians in Corinth to '*covet earnestly the best gifts*' (I Corinthians 12:31)?" Indeed he does. But is meaningless babbling in a nonsensical "tongue" one of these "*best gifts*"? Certainly not! Now it is true that if God would grant us the ability to speak in real languages that we have never learned—as He did with the Apostles—we would classify *that* as being a beneficial gift that could help us do mission work in foreign lands as well as communicate more easily with our brethren in Nigeria and Russia. But we still do not *need* such a gift in order to carry out our God-given mission of serving Him and our neighbor in love. Immediately after Paul writes, "*Covet earnestly the best gifts; and yet show I unto you a more excellent way,*" he sets forth "*charity*" (Greek: "*agape*" – *ah • GAH • pay*), that is, Christian love, as being the most excellent virtue. "*Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing*" (13:1–2; see also verses 3–13). Furthermore, if we would start speaking in a "foreign" language in our own congregations, it would not at all benefit the brethren who do not understand us. "*Now, brethren, if I come unto you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you, except I shall speak to you either by revelation, or by knowledge, or by prophesying, or by doctrine?*" (I Corinthians 14:6). "*In the church I had rather speak five words with my understanding, that by my voice I might teach others also, than ten thousand words in an unknown tongue*" (v. 19).

The message of the charismatics does, indeed, have some *carnal* appeal to it. It plays on a person's emotions and his desire to have something tangible to point to as validation for his beliefs. In a fleshly way, it makes people "feel" more connected to God—"feeling" that the Lord is working powerfully in their lives. But therein lies the problem. A person's feelings and emotions dare never be made the touchstone of faith. Not only does this make a person's faith subject to the rising and falling tides of his emotions; but it draws his focus away from the Scriptures, "*the foundation of the apostles and prophets,*" and from Jesus, *the Cornerstone* of His Church (Ephesians 2:20), the only *Way, Truth, and Life*

(John 14:6). A dreadful judgment awaits those who base their faith on the sinking sand of signs and wonders instead of on the solid rock of Christ and His Word. The Savior says: “*Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name have cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.’ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them not shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon the sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell; and great was the fall of it*” (Matthew 7:22–27).

Rather than speaking *to* us or *through* us in an incomprehensible language, the Lord has distinctly spoken to us through His prophets and apostles in clear words that even children can understand (Psalm 119:130; II Timothy 3:15); and He has caused His written Word to be made available to us all (Romans 16:25-26). With the fully-sufficient divine revelation of Holy Scripture, we have no need of any “immediate” revelation of the Holy Ghost and should condemn the seeking of such as being a Satanic distraction from Holy Scripture (Cf. Genesis 3:1; Matthew 4:3ff.). So instead of looking for a so-called “baptism of the Spirit” that has no divine command or promise connected with it, let us cling firmly to the *Scriptures* and thank the Lord for the *Sacrament of Baptism* that He has graciously given to His church, the sacrament which conveys far greater gifts than speaking in foreign languages, interpreting those tongues, or even physical healing. For through the waters of Holy Baptism, administered according to Christ’s institution, the Holy Ghost works faith (John 3:5; Titus 3:5) and grants the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38; 22:16) even to little ones who as yet cannot comprehend spoken language (Acts 2:39; Matthew 18:6; Luke 18:15-16; etc.). These priceless blessings are the true “*gift of the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 2:38) bestowed in Baptism for the salvation of our souls (Mark 16:16; I Peter 3:21). May God graciously preserve us from being deceived by the “*signs and wonders*” of the false prophets (Matthew 24:24), and continue to build us up in our most holy faith through His precious Means of Grace, the written and spoken Gospel of our Savior and the sacraments that He instituted to offer, give, and seal to us the forgiveness of our sins!

— P. E. B.



Without Apology: The Mystery of the Holy Trinity

“O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counsellor? Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.” — Romans 11:33-36

An explanation is in order regarding our title “Without Apology: The Mystery of the Holy Trinity.” Holy Scripture commands Christians to be ever ready to give a defense of the Gospel hope God has wrought in us, with meekness and Godly fear, to every one who asks us (I Peter 3:15). If we are referring to such an answer or defense (“apology” in *this* sense), then we stand ready always, by the grace supplied by God alone through His Word, to do so. That is *not* the type of apology to which our title refers. As we are using “apology” in this article, we are referring to “an acknowledgment expressing regret, a request for pardon because we have caused offense.” When we confess the true doctrine of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, earnestly contending for the faith once delivered unto the saints (Jude 1:3), we offer no such apology nor should we!

That is not to say that such a bold, clear confession of this sublime, transcendent self-revelation of the only true God will not result in people *taking* offense at the truth of God! Satan, the world and the sinful flesh of all human beings stand at enmity against God’s truth and oppose it as utter foolishness, unable to receive any of it, due either to Satan’s agenda (on his own part) or to the carnal mind (on the part of natural man), as Paul writes of the unconverted: *“But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them because they are spiritually discerned”* (I Corinthians 2:14).

In our present evil age, the false doctrine of *universalism*, the philosophy of *existentialism*, the position of *relativism*, and the politically correct *ecumenism* so popular today combine with other elements to make every exclusive doctrine of orthodox, Biblical Christianity an object of ridicule, contempt and persecution. For example, people take offense at the truth of the only true God, the Holy Trinity. In the face of such a reaction we, of course, offer no apology but rather continue to proclaim what God has clearly revealed about Himself in His Book, the Holy Bible, unmoved by the fear or favor of men, solely by the grace and power of our God (Acts 4:20; Matthew 10:28; I Corinthians 15:10).

The doctrine of the Holy Trinity is a mystery. How so? Despite the fact that man can know of God's existence and even some of His divine attributes from His creation (Romans 1:19-20), man cannot know anything whatsoever about the *Holy Trinity* specifically without God's written revelation of Himself. Why is this? God dwells in the light no man can even approach, as it is written of "*the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords*" (I Timothy 6:15b): "*Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen nor can see, to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen*" (I Timothy 6:16).

If sinful, mortal man would know anything correctly and definitely about God, God Himself must reveal it. God has chosen to reveal Himself in two ways: In the realm of nature, His own creation speaks of Him (Psalm 19:1-3; Romans 1:20); and in His Holy Word, the Bible, He *clearly* reveals Himself, even by name (Isaiah 42:8; etc.). The first venue provides man with a very limited knowledge. From the divine works of creation and from the action of God in nature and in human history, together with the divine Law still written, to some extent, in the heart of all human beings, man knows by nature that God exists as a personal, eternal, holy and just, all-powerful and all-knowing Creator, Preserver, and Ruler of the entire universe (cf. Romans 1:20; Acts 14:15-17; Romans 2:14-15). Obviously the so-called "*natural knowledge of God*" cannot give man what *he needs to know* about God and salvation. Therefore those only having such knowledge are described by God in Holy Writ as "*[being] strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world*" (Ephesians 2:12).

The "*revealed knowledge of God*" comes from the Holy Bible, including God's revelation of Himself as one God in *essence*, but three distinct (but not separately subsisting) *persons*: Father, Son and Holy

Ghost, the Holy Trinity, Three-in-One and One-in-Three! Holy Scripture clearly reveals to all men that God is one in essence (Deuteronomy 6:4; I Corinthians 8:4) and that the one God is Father, Son and Holy Ghost (Matthew 28:19; II Corinthians 13:14, Matthew 3:16-17). This “revealed knowledge” of the Only True God is brought to man and wrought in man’s heart only by God’s self-revelation in His Word, the Holy Scriptures; and it includes “*the covenants of promise*” (Ephesians 2:12), the manifestation of the Gospel, without which the true God cannot be known.

Why is it so vital, so necessary, to have such a truly *Christian* knowledge? Dr. Franz Pieper gives us the Scriptural answer to that question in these words:

The natural knowledge of God cannot deliver us from an evil conscience. The Christian knowledge of God, however, calms the troubled conscience. In fact, it is our salvation. Scripture does not propose the doctrine of the Trinity as an academic question or a metaphysical problem. With the proclamation that in the one eternal God there are three Persons of one and the same divine essence, Scripture combines the further gracious message that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son into death as the Savior from the guilt of sin and death; that in the fullness of time, the eternal Son became incarnate and by His vicarious satisfaction reconciled the world to God and that the Holy Ghost engenders faith and thus applies to man the salvation gained by Christ. When the Christian confesses, ‘I believe in God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,’ he is saying, ‘I believe in that God who is gracious to me a sinner’ (*Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 378).

We, therefore, recognize how important this Christian knowledge truly is and confess it boldly, renouncing any and all fellowship with deniers of the Holy Trinity and recognizing all such as outside the Christian Church. The Apology to the Augsburg Confession declares on the basis of clear Scripture: “This article we have always taught and defended, and we believe that it has, in Holy Scripture, sure and firm testimonies that cannot be overthrown. And we constantly affirm that those thinking otherwise are outside of the Church of Christ, and are idolaters, and insult God” (Apology, Article I, *Triglotta*, p. 103).

Since the true Christian knowledge of God consists in this, “that we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confounding the Persons nor dividing the Substance [Essence]” (*Athanasian Creed*), we must ever and always stand fast without compromise over against all who deny the three Persons or deny the one divine Essence.

The Christian knowledge of God is entirely unique and exclusive to Christianity. The false religions are either monotheistic or polytheistic. In either case man can comprehend the “godhead,” since to have one person with one essence or many persons with many separate essences is commonplace and finds a direct human analog in an individual or group of individuals. And this is no surprise since having and worshipping such a “godhead” or multiple “godheads” is simply the essence of gross, carnal idolatry.

The Apostle explains in his Epistle to the Romans: “*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things... who changed the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen*” (Romans 1:22-23, 25). The false religions of the world all have one thing in common: God has become a god (an idol) and is not transcendent, sublime and beyond human understanding as He is revealed in the Scriptures. No wonder! In false religions, man makes God in his own image!

But in the only true religion, Christianity, we have in God’s self-revelation the Holy Trinity. At once we stand in awe at a doctrine that transcends human understanding: Three in One, One in Three! This is above and beyond all we could imagine! There is no human analog. Even symbols fail fully to represent the sublime Holy Trinity! Consider our theme verse cited under the title above. As believers we are awe-struck in holy devotion and worship by the depth, the fulness, immensity and inexhaustible abundance of the riches or fulness of God’s perfection. In particular, we have both God’s wisdom and His knowledge mentioned.

God is called in Holy Writ “*the only wise God*” (I Timothy 1:17); He alone is wise (Romans 16:27). This means more than simply the fact that no other God exists. The term “wisdom” refers to the infinite practical knowledge of the Holy Trinity in discerning the best means to attain His desired ends. Since man is utterly unable to fathom the depths of God’s unsearchable wisdom, we must simply stand before Him in

adoration and praise. In such holy awe, we acknowledge that His self-revelation to us as the Holy Trinity is also wise and dare never question or criticize it! We have been “*taught of God*” (John 6:45) and must therefore yield humbly to the instruction of our Divine Teacher!

The same must be said in reference to God’s knowledge which is complete and far beyond human comprehension. What we can and do *know* about God He Himself has “gifted” to us by His self-revelation. “God, who in His essence is invisible and unknowable to us, has through His Word stepped out of His hidden invisibility and through His Word... has made Himself known to us” (Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. II, p. 40). But apart from the Word of God, in all matters not revealed therein, the mind of the Holy Trinity underlying His “*unsearchable...judgments and His ways past finding out*” is unknown and unknowable to us here on earth. Thus our text exclaims, “*For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been His counselor?*” (Romans 11:34). Given the obvious answer, “No one!”, we should ever remember never to question what God reveals to us in His Word. And that revelation includes the sublime and transcendent teaching regarding the Holy Trinity.

Nor should we be surprised in the least that the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is beyond human logic and understanding. For the LORD declares, “*For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways,’ saith the Lord. ‘For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts’*” (Isaiah 55:8-9).

Why would God’s true nature **not** be above and beyond human logic and so-called rational thought? It is written in the Book of Job: “*Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the earth and broader than the sea*” (Job 11:7-9). Indeed, “*touching the Almighty, we cannot find Him out...*” (Job 37:23). We must be content with what He has revealed regarding Himself and accept it as true, relying on it with firm trust and confidence.

Our theme text continues: “*Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?*” (Romans 11:35). How could any creature, notably a sinful man, place God in a position in which God was obligated to him? What possible way could there be for man to

place God in his debt? How could it be that God owed man anything? How is it then that man thinks he has the right to question God or issue any sort of demand to God? Yet we often behold sinful man acting as if God were bound to do things man's way! When it comes to God's self-revelation in the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, we find such sheer audacity readily displayed by all those that criticize and judge God's Word. The Islamic *Koran* is an example of such blasphemous criticism: "Believe in God and in His messenger* but say nothing of the Triad. Avoid that, and you will be better off. There is only one God. Far be it from Him to have a son! ...How can the Creator of heaven and earth have a son, since He has no wife?" (Quoted by Franz Pieper from its citation in Baier-Walther, I, 131, in *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 81, footnote #11). [Presumably Mohammed. -Ed.]

Anyone who sets himself up as judge over the Holy Trinity commits blasphemy and, in exalting himself over God, is an idolater, making himself God!

Finally, our theme text tells us: "*For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.*" (Romans 11:36). Our concluding verse speaks of the Holy Trinity in His sublime majesty. God is Himself all in all, the absolute independent one, who is the beginning, middle and end of all things good, omnipotently, omnisciently and omnipresently ruling everything according to His perfect wisdom and knowledge. He is the origin of all good things: "*But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by Him*" (I Corinthians 8:6). He is also the medium *through* which all things exist and continue: "*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds; who, being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person and upholding all things by the word of His power when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the majesty on high*" (Hebrews 1:1-3). Moreover, God is the final goal and purpose of everything: "*For by Him were all things created that are in heaven and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him; and He is before all things; and by Him all things consist*" (Colossians 1:16-17). Thus everything finally comes "*to*" Him. Mark well the threefold emphasis.

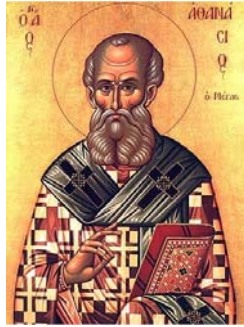
And yet note how the verse concludes with glory to the one true God. Martin Chemnitz states: “The three works of the Trinity according to Romans 11:36 are indivisible; for St. Paul does not add ‘*To them be the glory,*’ but ‘*To whom be glory.*’” (Franz Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, Vol. I, p. 424, footnote #57). We must, therefore, accept and believe the three persons in the one divine essence, neither confounding the persons nor dividing the essence.

Yes, to the Holy Trinity belongs all the glory! (I Corinthians 10:31). True worship of God gives all the glory to the only true God, the Holy Trinity, for all the gracious and good things He has done for us as Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier (Psalm 126:3). In particular, we praise the Father for sending His only-begotten Son to be our Redeemer (I John 4:9); we praise the Son for His redemptive work in life and death (Revelation 1:5-6), in keeping the Law for righteousness and paying the blood-ransom for sin (Matthew 5:17; I Timothy 2:5-6); and we praise the Holy Ghost for working faith and renewal within us in applying all the Gospel benefits to us (I Corinthians 6:11). We thank the Holy Trinity for revealing Himself, Father, Son and Holy Ghost, to us in His Word (I Timothy 1:17).

Without apology, we believe, teach and confess the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, by His grace alone!

— E. J. W.





Just Who Was Athanasius?

*“Remember them which have the rule over you,
who have spoken unto you the Word of God;
whose faith follow, considering
the end of their conversation.”*

— Hebrews 13:7

As we latter-day Christians continue to press onward in “*the race that is set before us*” (Hebrews 12:1), drawing ever nearer to the final Day of Judgment, we have as our examples of faithfulness “*a great cloud of witnesses*” or testifiers, chief of which is our Lord Jesus Himself, “*the Author and Finisher of our faith*” (v. 2). And in our title-text we are exhorted to remember especially those faithful testifiers who, by the grace of God, staunchly defended and helped to preserve the doctrines of God’s pure Word to the present day. But whom are we to remember in particular? Whose “*conversation*” or exemplary way of life are we to “*consider*”? The writer to the Hebrews directs us first to “*them which have the rule over [us], who have spoken unto [us] the Word of God,*” to those who, in the nearest point of reference (v. 17), are our own faithful pastors and teachers who by word and deed have held us to the “*old paths*” and the “*good way*” (Jeremiah 6:16) on the foundation of the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 2:20). We should not only remember them in a detached sort of way but gratefully *follow their faith*, that is, adhere to their teachings in doctrine and practice as we press toward the same mark to which they have pressed, “*the end of [our] faith, even the salvation of [our] souls*” (I Peter 1:9). Then, of course, we consider the apostles of the New Testament and the prophets of the Old Testament, God’s penmen, by whom He committed to us, word for precious word, His oracles in the Scriptures; and we remember the trials they suffered for the Lord’s sake. But there are also others who have spoken unto us the Word of God, whose faith we should follow and whose end we are to consider. One such individual is Athanasius of Alexandria. Athanasius is one of the most well-regarded figures of the whole history of the early Christian church; and yet, for all of his efforts, for all of his polemical warfare, many Christians today neither know who he was nor what he, by God’s grace, helped to accomplish. His name may sound in our ears from time to time — on Trinity Sunday perhaps, or in a special Bible Class; but what do we remember of him, and how do we consider the end of his conversation? The question then is put before us in our title: “Just who was Athanasius?”

Athanasius was born in the year 295 A.D. in Alexandria, Egypt. Around this time in history, Christianity had spread to all parts of the known world and had become so popular that under the rule of the Roman emperor, Constantine, Christianity had become the official religion of the Roman Empire. Since the time of the apostles, the early Christian Church had suffered greatly at the hands of the Roman Empire, especially in the persecutions of the early Christians at the hands of heathen emperors such as Diocletian and Nero and others before them. Yet, by God's gracious and good will, through which He "breaks and hinders every evil counsel and will which would not let us hallow God's name nor let His kingdom come" (Luther, Third Petition), the early Christian Church grew in spite of the horrific persecutions inflicted upon it (Romans 8:28-31). It was at this time, being the only externally recognized church, and being officially supported by the government through the endorsement of Constantine, that outward Christendom began to flourish in society. Being born of upper-class parentage, Athanasius was given the rare opportunity in that time to receive an education. Even as a child, Athanasius showed great interest in the Church, and earnestly studied the Holy Scriptures, as St. Paul exhorted Timothy in his second epistle (II Timothy 2:15). As he grew up in the Church, Athanasius also eagerly grew in grace and in the knowledge of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18); and, before reaching the age of twenty, he wrote a treatise entitled, *On the Incarnation*, affirming and showing from Scripture that Jesus Christ is both God and man. He also became the pupil of the then current Bishop of Alexandria named Alexander and was subsequently adopted into his official family. Later on in life, Athanasius would eventually succeed Alexander as Bishop of Alexandria.

While little is known about the personal life of Athanasius, he is much more widely known for holding to the clear and certain doctrines of Holy Scripture (Cf. I Timothy 4:16). Around 325 A.D. controversy arose in the Church concerning the deity of Christ and His relationship to the Father. A man by the name of Arius, a presbyter or pastor in the Alexandrian church, taught that "the Son has a beginning but that God [the Father] is without beginning," and that the Son was not really a part of God. He argued that, in order for the Father to beget the Son, He must be older and superior to the Son in all things including His Godhead. In defense of the true teaching of Scripture, Alexander, the Bishop of Alexandria, argued against the false teaching of Arius and held that "God [the Father] is always, the Son is always." This contention became so great between the two men that Constantine, the emperor, himself stepped in hopefully to quell this conflict. During his rule, Constantine had worked hard to unite his Empire, both politically and religiously; and this argument had the potential of discrediting the most influential establishment in the entire Roman world, namely the Christian

Church itself. Constantine, therefore, took it upon himself to call the first General, or Ecumenical Council of the catholic, i.e. universal, visible Christian Church, which we now refer to as the Council of Nicea. It was at this council that Athanasius, though only an archdeacon of Alexander at the time, engaged in his first of many polemical battles against Arianism.

Nicea was a city located in Asia Minor to which nearly three-hundred bishops were called for this council, or convention. It is said that approximately twenty bishops were outward supporters of Arius and his closest ally, Eusebius of Nicomedia. Even though Scripture clearly had decided the matter already (*scriptura locuta, res decisa est* — *When Scripture speaks, the matter is decided*), at this council the majority of clergy had not yet taken a position on the argument. Although the orthodox position of Alexander and Athanasius was initially held by the minority, they possessed a more influential and persuasive argument, namely that of the Scriptures.

In order properly to understand the relationship of Christ to the Father, we must carefully and diligently examine what the Holy Scriptures teach concerning the Doctrine of God and the Personal Union of Christ. According to Scripture, God is one in essence, or *ousia* (Deuteronomy 6:4, “*Hear, O Israel: the Lord, our God, is one Lord*”; I Corinthians 8:4, “*There is none other God but one*”), though three in person, or *hypostasis* (Matthew 28:19, “*in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost*”; I John 5:7, “*For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost; and these three are one*”). The Scriptures teach that the three persons are fully coordinate; they are all God to the same degree, because the essence of God is numerically one (*una numero essentia*); “so the Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet they are not three gods, but one God” (*Athanasian Creed*; see also regarding the Son: Jeremiah 23:6; John 1:1; 18:5; and the Holy Ghost: II Samuel 23:2; Acts 5:3-4).

Concerning the personal union of Christ, the Scriptures teach that the Son, who is true God from all eternity, not created but begotten, took the human nature into Himself (John 1:14; I Timothy 3:16) in order that He might accomplish His work of redemption (Galatians 4:4-5; Hebrews 2:14-15). The error of Arianism attacks Christ in His *State of Humiliation*, in which He humbled Himself (Philippians 2:5-8) and “did not always and fully use the divine attributes communicated to His human nature” (*Catechism, Q/A 134*). This was interpreted by Arius to be evidence of Christ’s essential inferiority to the Father. However, he failed to understand Christ’s own testimony concerning His relationship with the Father. In John 8:18 Jesus says, “*I am one that bear witness of Myself, and the Father that sent Me beareth witness of Me;*” in John 10:30, “*I and My Father are One;*” and in John 17:5, “*And*

now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (cf. John 1:1; Philippians 2:5-11; John 8:58; *et al.*). On the basis of these and other clear and certain words of Holy Writ, the words that establish or support its teachings, the *sedes doctrinae*, we hold that the Son never was nor became subordinate to the Father in His essence, nor ceased to be God, but was and is the *eternal Logos* (John 1:1), the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8), the only-begotten Son (John 1:18), true God from all eternity (I John 5:20).

Once the council had begun, the Arians presented their position to the clergy. In light of the clear and certain testimony of Scripture summarized above, the Arians were met with violent opposition on the floor of the Council. By the grace of God and the staunch defense of Alexander and Athanasius on the basis of the Word of God, which is able to cut through "*the joints and marrow and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*" (Hebrews 4:12), it was recognized by the Council that the position held by Arius and his followers was clearly false and a heresy contrary to the doctrine of Scripture (Romans 16:17). By order of Constantine, under penalty of death, all books published by Arius were to be burned; and Arius and his close supporters were deposed and banished from the empire.

Upon having come to *unanimous agreement* on the matter in controversy, which is required by Scripture (I Corinthians 1:10), the Council at Nicea decided to compose a creed, or statement of belief, which would contain a summary of the doctrines addressed and agreed upon. This creed, thoroughly addressing the deity of Christ and His relationship to the Father, became known as the *Nicene Creed*, in which we still today truthfully declare:

I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth, and of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made....

While in its end result, the Council of Nicea helped to re-solidify the Church's teaching concerning Christ, false teachers continued to reappear throughout the following centuries. Even within the next few years, a resurgence of Arianism plagued the Church once again; for, not long after the Council had concluded its deliberations, Arius was recalled out of exile. It was during those years that Athanasius continued to defend the resolutions and decisions of the Nicean Council by upholding the Scriptures upon which they were seated.

The faithful fight of Athanasius for the doctrines of Scripture served as an example throughout the continued growth of the early Christian church. Several hundred years after his death in 373 A.D., the Church constructed another summary creed outlining the “catholic,” or universal, faith or *fides quae creditur* concerning in particular the doctrine of the Holy Trinity and the person and work of Christ. It was known as the *Quicumque vult* after its opening words, “Whosoever will [be saved],” or, as we commonly refer to it in the Lutheran Confessions and in our *Lutheran Hymnal*, the *Athanasian Creed*. The name of Athanasius was attached to this creed because of its staunch testimony to the person of Christ and to His deity. The creed states, for example:

Furthermore, it is necessary to everlasting salvation that he [namely, one who wants to be saved] also believe faithfully the incarnation of our Lord Jesus Christ. For the right faith is that we believe and confess that our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is God and Man, God of the Substance of the Father, begotten before the worlds, and Man of the substance of His mother, born in the world.

The resurgence of Arianism became so great and influential that even the “*powers that be*” (Romans 13:1), namely, in this case, the Roman government, was susceptible to its tactics. After the death of Emperor Constantine in 337 A.D., the Empire was divided among his heirs. These new rulers did not have the same respect for the doctrines of God’s Word, nor did they regard Athanasius with the same respect as their father did. We see a similar situation in the Old Testament in ancient Egypt when “*there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph*” (Exodus 1:8). Under the reign of these new rulers, the determination to uphold the decrees and creed of the Council of Nicea was sorely lacking, if indeed it actually existed. The government having been persuaded by the false teachings of the Arians, Athanasius once again found himself in an uphill battle. By holding to the decisions and creed of the Nicean Council, which were based upon the *analogia fidei* (the Analogy of Faith), Athanasius suffered grave temporal consequences. And just what was the result of his defense of Scripture doctrine? What did Athanasius earn by standing up for Jesus and for the full truth of His Word? Over the course of his remaining life, Athanasius, who would later be called “*the Father of Orthodoxy*” and even “*the Defender of the Faith*” for his polemical defense of Scripture, was sent into exile five separate times for a total of twenty-five years.

This Creed should most certainly ring a bell in our ears at the end of the Festival Half of our church year, as we recently celebrated the Feast of the Holy Trinity on Sunday, May 30th.

“*Considering the end of [Athanasius’] conversation,*” or, as St. Paul called it, “*the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Philippians 3:14), why

would any Christian yield anything of the immutable Word of God for the sake of temporal peace, tranquility and unity (Formula of Concord, Thor. Decl. XI, 95, *Triglotta*, p. 1095), when the price of such empty peace is so high? When we consider what Athanasius and so many others suffered for the sake of God's truth, we haven't suffered much at all, surely not the persecution that many of them suffered. Indeed, when we *remember* the Bishop from Alexandria and the fight he waged, how we should appreciate the peaceful temporal blessings given to us by the Lord, even in these latter days of sore distress. And having examined the valiant fight of this early church father, *who spoke unto us the Word of God* in order to protect and defend the doctrines of God and of Christ, how we ought to appreciate God's divine preservation of His saving doctrines even unto us in this latter time through faithful witnesses like Athanasius. We know that God promises that the world will hate us and despise us for standing up for Christ and His Word (Matthew 10:22; 24:9), yet we should suffer it willingly for the Lord's sake (John 15:20), as Athanasius did even while in exile. This exhortation by the writer to the Hebrews is one to which we, who are closer than ever before to the Last Day, should happily take heed, and for which we ought to praise God for his innumerable blessings to us who "*have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin*" (Hebrews 12:4).

As we pray that the Lord preserve us in the saving faith through "*the Gospel of Christ*" (Romans 1:16-17), giving us the "*strength*" (Psalm 27:1, 14; 46:1) to "*endure unto the end*" (Matthew 10:22), we also sing with the hymnwriter:

Rise again, ye lion-hearted saints of early Christendom!
Whither is your strength departed; whither gone your martyrdom?
Lo, love's light is on them, glory's flame upon them;
and their will to die doth quell e'en the lord and prince of hell.

Would to God that I might, even as the martyred saints of old,
with the helping hand of heaven, steadfast stand in battle bold!

O my God, I pray Thee, in the combat stay me.
Grant that I may ever be loyal, staunch, and true to Thee!

Amen.

(*TLH* 470; 1, 4)

—**Daniel P. Mensing, Seminarian**
(Submitted through his Pastor)

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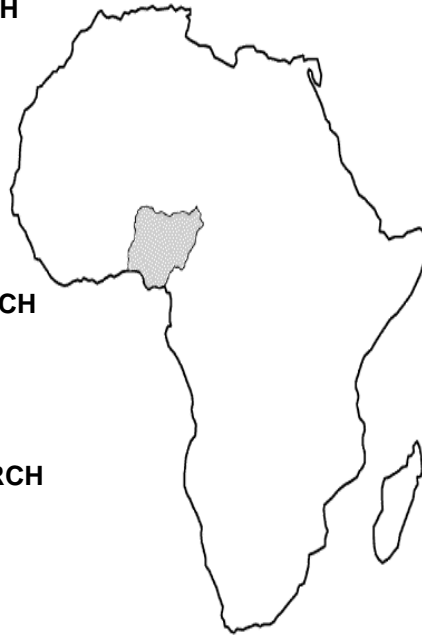
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E-mail: david.redlin@q.com

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E-mail: m.l.natterer@comcast.net

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Worship Service 10:30 a.m.

The Rev. EDWARD J. WORLEY, Pastor

9658 – 54th Avenue South, Seattle, WA 98118 (206) 723-7418

E-mail: revworley@comcast.net

NOTE: Services are also held in **Victoria, British Columbia** on the 1st and 3rd Sundays. Please call the Pastor for current location.

Worship Service 7:00 p.m.

Adult Bible Class 4:30 p.m.

Adult Catechism Class 8:30 p.m.

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Sunday School & Bible Class 8:45 a.m.

Worship Service 10:00 a.m.

The Rev. PAUL E. BLOEDEL, Pastor

22012 Torrence Avenue, Sauk Village, IL 60411 (708) 757-6859

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300 North Ridgeland Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302 Telephone: (708) 386-6773

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Worship Service 10:15 a.m.

The Rev. ROBERT J. LIETZ, Pastor

233 North Cuyler Avenue, Oak Park, IL 60302 (708) 386-4145

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59th Annual Convention
of the
Concordia Lutheran Conference

Friday, Saturday and Sunday
June 25, 26 and 27, 2010

at

St. John's Lutheran Church
Lebanon, Oregon

Motto:

"The Evil of Sinful Separatism"

I John 2:19

The **Convention Essay** will be delivered by
Pastor Robert J. Lietz

*"Sinful Separatism: Satan's Vicious Device
to Destroy the Unity of the Spirit among True Brethren"*

The **Keynote Sermon** on I John 2:19 will be preached by
Pastor David T. Mensing, Conference President

The **Sunday Sermon** on John 6:60-69 will be preached by
Pastor Edward J. Worley

The Pastoral Conference meets on
June 22nd & 23rd

The Board of Directors meeting is on
June 24th