

With the Same Heart

An overview of the Book of Concord

Session 10 - The Formula of Concord



Warm up question

What do you think are some of the controversies within the Lutheran church today?



Original Sin

The “status controversiae” (state of the controversy)/principal question:

Is there a distinction between human nature and original sin?

The basic response:

Yes, there is a distinction to be made between human nature and original sin. However, “original sin is not a slight corruption of the human nature, but rather a corruption so deep that there is nothing sound or uncorrupted left in the human body or soul...The damage is such that God alone can separate human nature and the corruption of this nature from each other.”

- *Question:*
- *What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



Free Will

Question: “What kind of powers do human being have after the fall of our first parents, before rebirth, on their own, in spiritual matters?...Are they able, with their own powers, ...dispose themselves favorably toward God’s grace and prepare themselves to accept the grace offered...?”

Answer: “Human beings have no powers to even prepare themselves for conversion. However, “the Holy Spirit does not effect conversion without means but He uses the preaching and hearing of God’s word to accomplish it...it is God’s will that people hear His Word and not plug their ears.”

- *Question:*
- *What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



The Righteousness of Faith

The Question: The Lutheran answer is clear that we are only saved through Christ, but Christ has two natures: divine and human. Through which of these are we saved?

The Answer: “Christ is our righteousness neither according to His divine nature alone nor according to His human nature alone. Nor are we to separate God’s redeeming work into categories of divine and human. e.g. we are not to believe that we are forgiven because of Christ’s divine nature alone and then granted righteousness because of Christ’s human nature alone.”

Question:

What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?



Good Works

Question: There are two parties, one argues that “good works are necessary for salvation...no one has ever been saved without good works,” and the other argues “good works are harmful to salvation...[and because of this] one party argued that the law should not be preached at all among Christians.”

Answer: Neither are correct. “Good works follow true faith as certainly and without doubt as fruit from a good tree.” However, “good works must be completely excluded from any questions of salvation.” Yet, “we reject and condemn the teaching that faith and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit are not lost through intentional sin,” therefore the Law continues to be preached even to Christians.

- *Question: What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



Law and Gospel

Question: “Whether the preaching of the holy Gospel is really not only a preaching of grace, which proclaims the forgiveness of sins, but also a preaching of repentance and rebuke, which condemns unbelief.”

Answer: “It is correct to say or write that the gospel is a proclamation of both repentance and the forgiveness of sins...when however, law and gospel are placed in contrast to each other - as Moses himself is spoken of as a teacher of the law and Christ as a preacher of the gospel - ... the gospel is nothing else than a proclamation of comfort and a joyous message which does not rebuke nor terrify but comforts consciences against the terror of the law.”

- *Question:*
- *What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



Third Use of the Law

Question: “Whether the law is to be urged upon the reborn Christians or not.”

Answer: “Even if they are reborn and “renewed in the spirit of their minds” (Eph 4), this rebirth and renewal is not perfect in this world. Instead, it has only begun. Believers are engaged with the spirit of their minds in continual battle against the flesh, that is, against the perverted nature and character which clings to us until death...”

- *Question:*
- *How does the format of this document help the reader understand?*



The Holy Supper of Christ

Question: “Are the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ truly and essentially present, distributed with the bread and wine, and received by mouth by all those who avail themselves of the sacrament” whether they are believers or unbelievers?

Answer: “The sacramentarians say no; we say yes.”

More background: The “sacramentarians” here are divided into two groups: The first is the the “crude sacramentarians” that say that there is nothing more than bread and wine present. The second is the “cunning sacramentarians” who say “that this takes place spiritually through faith...yet they retain that nothing more than bread and wine is present in the Holy Supper and received by mouth.”

More: The Lutherans also criticize the sacramentarians habit of not saying “this is my body” and “this is my blood” in their celebration of the Lord’s Supper and the philosophical maneuvering around true presence.

- *Question:*
- *What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



The Person of Christ

Question: Are the two natures of Christ united in one person “in such a way that neither nature in reality shares with the other what is unique to that nature”?

Answer: The two natures of Christ (divine and human) are “personally united”. Jesus “always possessed this majesty [that of God], yet dispensed with it for the state of His humiliation...Until He completely laid aside the form of a servant after His Resurrection. Then He was again invested with the full use, revelation, and demonstration of His divine majesty.”

More background: This argument largely comes in relation to the arguments being made about communion. Some “sacramentarians” were saying that Jesus couldn’t be “bodily present” (a human attribute) at altars around the world at the same time (a divine attribute).

- *Question:*
- *What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



Descent into Hell

Question: In what manner did Christ descend into hell and what did He do there. Does His descent into hell belong to His suffering or His victory and triumph?

Answer: “...It is enough that we know that Christ descended into hell and destroyed hell for all believers and that He redeemed them from the power of death, the devil, and the eternal damnation of hellish retribution. How that happened we should save for the next world...”

More background: This article in the epitome does not engage in the normal listing of affirmative and negative theses.

- *Question:*
- *What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



Ecclesial Practices

Question: In situations of persecution, can “certain ceremonies that have been abolished (as in themselves indifferent matters neither commanded nor forbidden by God) could be revived under the pressure and demand of opponents?”

Answer: “Ceremonies or ecclesial practices that are neither commanded or forbidden in God’s word” are in and of themselves neither worship ordained by God nor are a part of such worship...” but “all frivolity and offense must be avoided and special consideration given particularly to those who are weak in faith.” Also, not all such issues are equal in their effect and should be taken into consideration on a case by case basis. Lastly, if something is truly detrimental, the church should hold firm and not engage in it.

More background: This argument seems to trace back to issues of: hymns, chanting, readings, [lay] ministers, places/times of required worship, vestments, ringing of bells, fasting, and times of prayer.

- *Question:*
- *What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



Predestination

Question: Does God predestine some people to heaven and some to hell without giving them a chance for redemption?

Answer: Notably, the Lutherans say that this is not an issue among Lutheran churches, “however because it is an article of comfort when properly treated, it is also explained in this document so that no offensive dispute may arise in the future.” There is a difference between God’s foreknowledge and God’s predestination. God may know who is going to hell, but it is not for us to know. Our job is to proclaim the Gospel to all people. God wants all people to repent and believe the Gospel.

- *Question:*
- *What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



Heresies and Sects

Question: Which heretical groups should not be considered Lutheran?

Answer:

- The Anabaptists (i.e. Mennonites)
- Certain “intolerable teachings in the Church” like those that refuse baptism to children and that Christ is not truly and fully God
- Certain “intolerable teachings in Public Affairs” like that Christians cannot participate in government, taxation, capital punishment, etc.
- Certain “intolerable articles in Domestic Life” like that Christians cannot own private property or take certain jobs. It also condemns what appears to be “no fault divorce”
- The Schwekenfelders (basically early Pentecostals)
- New Arians and other “Anti-Trinitarians”

• *Question:*

- *What difference does this question or controversy make in understanding God and theology?*



Next Time - Stump the Pastor

We have finished our overview of the Book of Concord.

Next week we will play “Stump the Pastor” so please bring your questions about faith and life.

We will also choose a new study, so please bring some ideas of what you would like to study.

