

The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



Lutheran Concerns Association
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Are UFOs Demonic?

"The truth is out there" or so the UFO refrain goes. But what truth? The answer depends on whom you ask.

In recent years, ufology has grown into a carnival: Hucksters promote sensational UFO stories in television documentaries and tabloids. For them, the truth of a UFO story is its potential to boost ratings. "Abductees," certain of their capture, appear at conferences to put forward their version of the truth. The mainstream media carries regular accounts of military encounters with UFOs performing inertia-defying acrobatics in the sky. Photographic images from these encounters have the potential to verify the existence of alien craft, but the images are fuzzy, stymieing positive identification.

Meanwhile, outside of the hoopla, a largely invisible college of serious investigators researches the topic. Some are only interested in the psychology of UFO contactees, whose collective response constitutes a type of religion. For them, whether UFOs objectively exist is less important than the response of those who believe they do. Others, convinced that UFOs are piloted by extraterrestrials, are fascinated by the physics of superluminal velocity and the seismic shift in world-wide understanding that the discovery of alien life would stir. For them, physical evidence is an important stepping stone to the truth. A third group painstakingly compiles reports of UFOs in an attempt to reveal patterns which they hope will indicate the true nature of the phenomenon.

One of the interesting, though not surprising, aspects of paranormal sightings is that the observer will interpret his experience in terms of his cultural framework. In ancient times, strange lights in the sky and visitation by alien beings were interpreted mythologically. In medieval times, spirits, ghosts, leprechauns, and fairies were reported, sometimes with astral signs. In 1897, a few decades after the invention of dirigibles, cigar-shaped "airships" with revolving wheels and brilliant search lights were described cruising through the sky in numerous places in the United States. During World War II, the British began investigating unexplained aerial objects for security reasons. By that time, aviation technology had greatly advanced and unexplained aerial objects were assumed to be spacecraft arising from enemy countries, or possibly alien worlds. In 1947 the term "flying saucer" was used by the press to describe the strange objects seen by a pilot over Mt. Rainier. The United States Air Force used the term Unidentified Flying Object (UFO) in its internal investigations, and a book was published on its findings by the head of the fa-

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Why We Need the Synod (Part II)

Part I of Dr. Noland's essay was in the March 2021 *Clarion* (at <http://lutheranclarion.org/newsletter.html>). He gave reasons some people think we no longer need a Synod. Then he gave reasons from Holy Scripture for why we do need a Synod. Dr. Noland's essay concludes below. Parts I and II are posted as one document at the web site.

Reasons We Need the Synod from the Book of Concord

The Lutheran reasons for having a synod are found in the Book of Concord. In many places, the texts simply assume that the churches are in association and fellowship with each other. How could the reformers have thought any differently? The Brownists did not appear in England until after the Book of Concord was published. The doctrine of the church found in the Book of Concord makes no sense when applied to non-associating congregations.

We will look at these reasons in chronological order, starting with Luther's Small Catechism (1529). The Third Article explanation states that the Holy Spirit "calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one, common, true faith" (SC II, 6).¹⁰ Notice again the use of the singular when referring to the church. Then Luther writes: "Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins" (SC II, 6).¹¹ Notice that the Holy Spirit forgives sins "in this Christian church." Forgiveness is not an isolated, individualistic experience. The church calls pastors to forgive sins, as the Small Catechism's article on the Office of the Keys explains.

Next, we turn to the Large Catechism (1529). The Third Article explanation states:

The Holy Spirit effects our being made holy through the communion of saints or Christian church. . . . That is, he first leads us into his holy community, placing us in the church's lap, where he preaches to us and brings us to Christ. . . . In the first place, he has a unique community in the world, which is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God, which the Holy

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mous Project Blue Book in 1956. By then, the idea of alien visitations was firmly planted in the American mind and became the subject of countless B movies. Today, the extraterrestrial theme remains the primary explanation in the popular media. The notion that UFOs are the product of another country's secret research is mostly out of vogue. Regardless of the origin of UFOs, the Defense Department recently announced a new program to detect and catalog UFOs which may pose a security threat. The term UAP, unidentified aerial phenomena, is sometimes used instead of UFO.

Since certain atmospheric conditions combined with the light from bright stars and everyday aircraft can create peculiar visual patterns in the sky, a large fraction of UFO sightings can be explained without resorting to extraterrestrial causes. Experimental aircraft and drones may also be mistaken for something alien. This does not even take into the account the capacity of psychological disturbance or intoxicating substances to produce false memories, or for people to perpetrate hoaxes. The differing cultural interpretation of astral phenomena over the centuries has also been taken as evidence of some type of mass suggestion.

However, the sheer number of credible witnesses of UFOs, many of whom report similar details of geographically-based phenomenon even though they had no means of communicating with one another, militates against the conclusion that meteorology, human aircraft, hallucination, or hoax can account for all of the sightings. Indeed, if even a tiny fraction of the stories do not arise from spurious causes, one must look to the only alternative, a paranormal explanation, which could include extraterrestrials.

If we accept the premise, for the sake of argument, that at least some UFOs are paranormal in nature, what are they? Most of the hypotheses fall into one of the categories described below.

The most common hypothesis, as noted above, is the one which comports with our current technological vantage-point: UFOs are spacecraft operated by aliens of unknown intent from another planet or a parallel dimension.

Though taken as received wisdom by most UFO enthu-

South Bay United Pentecostal Church Court Case

The *Clarion* intended to provide a follow-up commentary on the case of *South Bay United Pentecostal Church v. Newsom*, concerning religious liberty and the Free Exercise clause of the First Amendment.



However, the case is still pending in the Supreme Court. We hope to have a review and commentary once the case is decided.

The Lutheran Clarion—13 Years!

In September 2020, we started our 13th year of publishing the *Clarion*. We strive to present and uphold the truth of God's Holy Word. **We could use your help.**



If you can help with our costs, there's an enclosed envelope to mail your check to Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921. Do it now. **Thank you!!**

siasts, this hypothesis has significant drawbacks. One has to be careful about saying superluminal velocities or interdimensional space travel are impossible, but given the vastness of space and the extreme technical challenges of such travel, it would seem unlikely on scientific grounds.

Behavioral objections can also be raised. Why would aliens come to earth only to play cat and mouse games with our aircraft? Wouldn't it make sense for them to announce themselves and open a channel of communication? To counter this argument, those who believe the alien explanation invoke the possibility of a "Prime Directive," as in the *Star Trek* series, whereby a more advanced civilization regards it improper to reveal itself to a more primitive one. However, any such directive has already been abrogated since thousands of people claim to have seen UFOs, some of whom even claim to have been abducted. And then there is the evolving form of the UFO craft. How did the steam-driven 1897 airships sighted by thousands manage to get here. Such contrivances hardly seem space-worthy.

There is also an eschatological inconsistency with the Biblical account of the end times. The Biblical account of the creation and the end of the universe are synchronized to events on earth. The universe rolls up at Christ's second coming. That would imply the end to any alien civilizations that exist, which hardly seems tenable, since alien civilizations' survival would be tied to God's specific plan for the earth. That raises the question of whether alien life exists at all. Additionally, it may seem uneconomic or wasteful for the vastness of space not to teem with other civilizations, but God created the universe out of nothing. Hence, the vastness of space is hardly a strain on God's infinite treasury.

A fanciful second hypothesis is that the visitors come from earth but from our future. This avoids the difficulty of interstellar travel, if indeed time travel is possible. It is said that this explains alien reticence since they are concerned about altering history by their presence. However, this makes no sense either. For one thing, whatever such future people might do in our time would already be a part of their history, so they could not change it, they would simply be fulfilling it if they traveled back in time. For another, this creates a paradox in free will. Someone who traveled back to our time, even if he did not interact with us on a personal level, would carry out many unrecorded actions that were still a part of history. An example would be his exact flight path in our century.

When the appointed time in his century came for him to go back in time, he would have no choice but to repeat the flight path exactly as it had occurred in history. He would have no free will to alter it when he visited, which would render him an automaton, yet human beings operate with free will. He can't both have and not have free will. Quantum mechanics allows for indeterminism on a submicroscopic level, but not at the macro level of human activity.

A third hypothesis, which is not often heard, is presented here because it is an important alternative: UFOs are not what they appear. UFOs are directed by an intelligence, not aliens, which manifests in different ways in different periods of history with deliberate adjustments to fit the technology of the time. That is the premise of a remarkable book which appeared in 1970 and now lies buried below the extensive UFO writings published since then. In *Operation Trojan Horse*, John Keel, now deceased, provides an extensive account of many UFO sightings throughout history and examines patterns in the timing, location, and nature of these sightings. By his analysis, the three aspects together indicate an intelligent coordination of UFOs by an unknown agent. The sheer volume of data at first seems random and purposeless, but he teases out of the noise what he considers to be a plausible explanation.

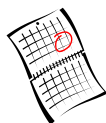
Unexplained astral phenomena have common features, even if there has been a shift in form over time: Multi-colored lights, white, red, green, and blue, are seen flashing or whirling about a geometric shape, usually at too great a distance to get a clear view. Most often the sightings are in remote locations at night, and sometimes they are observed by multiple parties. The apparition may move at extreme speeds darting from one place to another. Associated alien beings, if seen, are sometimes reported to be ghost-like, meaning that they are partly transparent and can slip through objects or vanish. They may appear in a person's home at night. They are purported to communicate fluently in the language of the contactee, often telepathically without sound. The beings appear humanoid, but of a different height than human beings and with different facial features and extremities. The contactee may be examined against his will and may be issued a warning about the future of the earth, typically an environmental warning or a concern about the use of atomic energy. Sometimes the contactee is given to understand that he is being commissioned to perform some task on earth. Occa-

**Mark Your Calendar!!
January 17, 2022**

The Lutheran Concerns conference for 2022 will be held on **Monday, January 18, 2022**, in Fort Wayne, IN.

Please make plans to attend! Again, you will have the opportunity to learn and ask questions of top Lutheran presenters.

Watch for details in future issues of the *Clarion*.



A warm THANK YOU to Clarion readers who contributed to the Rev. Dr. Daniel Jastram's Asian Ministry

In May 2020, an LCA member offered to match up to \$5,000 in contributions to the Jastrams' ministry in Asia, where Rev. Jastram is the Asia Lutheran Resource Coordinator. Since then, nearly \$5,000 in contributions have been received and matched.



Among the current projects are the translation of Walther's *Law and Gospel* into Japanese and the translation of catechism booklets, liturgies, hymnals, and other resources into the native languages of Hong Kong, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Papua New Guinea, and Taiwan.

A copy of the Jastrams' newsletter may be found at: <https://us12.campaign-archive.com/home/?u=49d13e6373d960f6f924e6c91&id=ba47683df4>

If you would like to contribute to the Jastrams' ministry, you may send a check to the LCA, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921 with the note line marked for the Jastram Ministry.

sionally contactees are given prophecies; some come true but others are patently false.

These features frighten those who experience them into believing that they are in the presence of something powerful and transcendent. That makes them very susceptible to manipulation. The more UFO encounters that a supposed contactee has, the more likely it is that others will follow. Those who are involved in this way may become psychologically unstable and their lives drastically altered. Suicides have resulted.

The fantastic nature of the phenomenon, as well as its psychological aspects, argues against its objective existence. Keel, however, contends for the veracity of his data by pointing that he has interviewed hundreds of sober, sensible witnesses who had no desire for publicity, spoke on condition of anonymity, and frankly were not creative enough to concoct false narratives. He dismisses the charge that the form of the astral signs and visitations is culture-bound and therefore suspect, by arguing that the playbook of the cosmic intellect has been adjusted over time to make the apparitions convincing to its victims. A being claiming to be Zeus or arriving in a Buck-Rogers spacecraft wouldn't be credible to modern witnesses.

In his view, the cosmic intellect that deploys these apparitions has a mostly malevolent goal, which can range from irksome pranks to fiendish injury. With few exceptions, the intent seems to be to confuse or derail people's lives.

What should we make of this?

In the numerous UFO events recorded in Keel's book and others, none give glory to God. All perplex the participants and take them in directions which make Chris-

tian faith more difficult. That lends credence to his hypothesis. Some of those enraptured by UFOs become mystics. Their belief in some elusive truth behind UFOs becomes a substitute religion. Some of the scientists involved in UFO research seek to relate quantum mechanics and relativistic concepts involving black holes to the operation of the human brain and a cosmic connection with higher intelligence. This is occultism wrapped in a fancy scientific facade.

Keel's understanding of Christianity is muddled, conflating the actions of demons and angels. However, it would seem that if the appearance of angels and other Godly Biblical figures are subtracted from his data, the malevolent accounts that remain could be pinned on Satan. He fits the part of Keel's hidden cosmic intellect pulling the strings.

Consider St. Paul's exhortation that Christians must do battle against the powers and principalities of the spiritual world. In effect, Keel is applying that observation to UFOs. Perhaps demons can deceive not only the conscience but also one's perception of reality, extending so far as to create apparitions such as UFOs and misleading physical evidence. This is hardly a stretch since demon possession, which the Bible attests to, exerts powerful control over those afflicted. UFOs may be a more broadly applied (public) mind control made possible by the increasing godlessness and ripeness of the age to receive such a deception.

St. Paul warns of the coming of "the lawless one" in the end times who will bring false signs and wonders with a strong delusion (2 Th. 2:9-11). It is possible that UFOs will play a role in that delusion.

Military aircraft keep amassing photographs and video footage of UFOs. It seems very unlikely that electronic malfunctions or meteorological disturbances can account for all of these sightings. Meanwhile, the public and Congress are demanding more disclosures. Imagine, amidst greater public and government interest, that the photographic evidence slowly becomes more convincing that UFOs exist. Media coverage greatly increases. There is anticipation among everyday citizens and the government that events are coming to a head. Then one day a UFO actually lands and the occupant claims to be from another world. That scenario is the stuff of science fiction, but what if it happened? Are you, Christian reader, ready for that? How would you react? I would be very surprised if the "alien" confirmed our Judeo-Christian beliefs. To be sure, the world would lap-up anything that validated its sinful behavior and humanistic beliefs. And that validation could be very convincing with signs and wonders done for our supposed benefit.

Needless to say, Keel's hypothesis is highly speculative. He goes on to warn his readers not to become too involved with following and studying UFOs, implying that they may be drawn into something ruinous. That sounds like good advice.

John F. Lang, Ph.D.

Why We Need the Synod, Part II

Continued from page 1

Spirit reveals and proclaims . . . For where Christ is not preached, there is no Holy Spirit to create, call, and gather the Christian church, apart from which no one can come to the Lord Jesus Christ. . . . All this, then, is the office and work of the Holy Spirit, to begin and daily increase holiness on earth through these two means: the Christian church and the forgiveness of sins (LC II, 37-59).¹²

Notice that Luther considered the church, *i.e.*, where Christ and the Word of God is preached, to be a means of grace by which the Holy Spirit works. He also places the church immediately next to the forgiveness of sins as a means of grace.

Now we turn to the great *Magna Carta* of the Lutheran church, its Augsburg Confession (1530). In the German text of Article Seven, it states: "At all times there must be and remain one, holy Christian church" (AC VII, 1, German).¹³ Notice again the use of the singular for "church" and the echo of the Nicene Creed. Then in Article Eight, it states: "The Christian church is, properly speaking, nothing else than the assembly of all believers and saints" (AC VIII, 1, German).¹⁴ Nothing could be more comprehensive than that, since it includes all the living believers and all the dead saints in one church. Then in Article Fourteen, it states: "No one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper [public] call" (AC, XIV, 1, German).¹⁵ In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession (1531), Philip Melancthon defined what the term "proper [public] call" means when he says "we would willingly retain ecclesiastical and canonical order as long as the bishops desisted from their cruelty against our churches" (Ap XIV, 5).¹⁶ Thus the Lutheran church recognizes the authority of bishops, or their equivalent, to ordain pastors and install them in parishes, as long as they do not use that authority to squelch the truth or to persecute faithful pastors.

The last article of the Augsburg Confession, Article XXVIII, is titled "Concerning the Power of Bishops." By using the term "bishop," the Lutheran church thereby acknowledges the role of church associations and their leaders. What is the office of bishop? The Augsburg Confession defines the Lutheran position on this subject when it states:

According to divine right, it is the office of the bishop to preach the gospel, to forgive sin, to judge doctrine and reject doctrine that is contrary to the gospel, and to exclude from the Christian community the ungodly whose ungodly life is manifest—not with human power but with God's Word alone. That is why parishioners and churches owe obedience to bishops, according to this saying of Christ (Luke 10:16): "Whoever listens to you listens to me." But whenever they teach, institute, or introduce something contrary to the gospel, we have God's command in such a case not to be obedient

Is Our Concordia University System Lutheran?

The 2019 Convention Resolution 7-03 Committee was tasked to develop a proposal to “strengthen all Concordia University System (CUS) institutions’ connection to the Synod” and “to strengthen [their] confessional Lutheran identity.”



The committee’s report is finished and they need **YOUR** comments. If the LCMS is to have higher education that is faithful to Holy Scripture, then our CUS higher education is foundational; we must not be indifferent to LCMS higher education.

The deadline is September 30, 2021. We hope **YOU** will play a role in helping to strengthen the Lutheran identity at our Concordia Universities.

For further information including the resolution and the proposal, see <https://reporter.lcms.org/2021/official-notice-cus-governance-model-proposal-and-request-for-comment/>

(Matt 7:15): “Beware of false prophets” (AC XXVIII, 21-24, German).¹⁷

What about situations where the bishops establish rules and regulations for the churches? Do Lutherans permit that? Yes. The Augsburg Confession expresses the Lutheran position on this subject when it states:

Our people reply that bishops or pastors may make regulations for the sake of good order in the church, but not thereby to obtain God’s grace, to make satisfaction for sins, or to bind consciences, nor to regard such as a service to God or to consider it a sin when these rules are broken without giving offense. . . . Such regulation belongs rightfully in the Christian assembly for the sake of love and peace, to be obedient to bishops and pastors in such cases, and to keep such order to the extent that no one offends another—so that there may not be disorder or unruly conduct in the church (AC XXVIII, 53-56, German).¹⁸

In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Melancthon clarified what Lutherans understood the church to be. In Article VII/VIII, he wrote:

The church is not only an association of external ties and rites like other civic organizations, but it is principally an association of faith and the Holy Spirit in the hearts of persons. It nevertheless has its external marks so that it can be recognized, namely, the pure teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments in harmony with the gospel of Christ. Moreover, this church alone is called the body of Christ (Ap VII/VIII, 5).¹⁹

Nor indeed are we dreaming about some platonic republic, as some have slanderously alleged. Instead, we teach that this church truly exists, consisting of true believing and righteous people scattered throughout the

entire world. And we add its marks: the pure teaching of the gospel and the sacraments (Ap VII/VIII, 20).²⁰

In the Apology, Melancthon also spoke more about the office of bishops in Article XXVIII,²¹ which elucidates the same numbered article in the Augsburg Confession.

In the Smalcald Articles (1537), Third Part, section 10, Luther addresses the matter of bishops. He writes:

If the bishops wanted to be true bishops and to attend to the church and the gospel, then a person might—for the sake of love and unity but not out of necessity—give them leave to ordain and confirm us and our preachers, provided all the pretense and fraud of unchristian ceremony and pomp were set aside. However, they are not now and do not want to be true bishops. Rather they are political lords and princes who do not want to preach, teach, baptize, commune, or perform any proper work or office of the church. . . . Therefore, as the ancient examples of the church and the Fathers teach us, we should and will ordain suitable persons to this office [of bishop] ourselves.²²

The final, settled position of the Book of Concord on the matter of popes, bishops, and other church leaders is described in the “Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope” (1537).²³

Reasons We Need the Synod from a Practical Perspective

Carl F.W. Walther (1811-1887) was without a doubt a most gifted Lutheran theologian and church leader. He combined many talents, including an analytical mind for doctrine and a commonsense mind for practical church matters. He wanted the Missouri Synod to be the very best synod that it could be, for the benefit of congregations, church workers, and the outreach of the Gospel in this land and throughout the world. To that end, he delivered a classic essay titled “Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod” (hereafter DELS) to the First Iowa District Convention held at Saint Paul’s Lutheran Church, Fort Dodge, Iowa, beginning August 20, 1879.²⁴ In this essay, Walther was telling the present and future leaders of the Missouri Synod what their essential duties were and what congregations, pastors, teachers, and other church workers should expect from their synod. These duties explain, in a practical way, the reasons we need the synod. I hereby summarize and paraphrase Walther’s essay, but encourage all our readers to obtain their own copy of Walther’s lecture and read the entire issue.

- We need the synod so that congregations may acquire doctrinally sound, morally upright, and competent pastors, teachers, and church workers (DELS, Thesis II.b).
- We need the synod so that congregations may be protected from pastors who err in doctrine, follow an offensive lifestyle, or are domineering in office (DELS, Thesis II.c).
- We need the synod to give fraternal and friendly counsel to pastors, teachers, and other church workers (DELS, Thesis III.a).

Are You a Member of the Lutheran Concerns Association?

If you are already a member, that is great! If you would like to join we would love to have you and your input in the organization. Information about the LCA is at our web page at www.lutheranclarion.org. Refer to [About Us] for more details. The membership fee is \$35.00 per year, which you can mail using the enclosed remittance envelope.



- We need the synod to support pastors, teachers, and other church workers in the proper conduct of their office (DELS, Thesis III.b).
- We need the synod so that someone of authority defends pastors, teachers, and other church workers against unjust treatment (DELS, Thesis III.c).
- We need the synod to promote the growth of its members, i.e., both church workers and congregations, in the knowledge of the truth in every way possible (DELS, Thesis IV.a & b).
- We need the synod to promote the knowledge of the truth by making every effort to disseminate good literature (DELS, Thesis IV.c).
- We need the synod to strive for peace and unity in its midst, by seeing that all members are mutually submissive, that each bear the other's burdens in brotherly love, and that no unnecessary disputes arise and continue, whether in doctrine or practice (DELS, Thesis V).
- We need the synod to assist congregations and church workers in the work of the growth of God's kingdom, both within existing congregations through local evangelism, and by planting new congregations and overseas missions (DELS, Thesis VI).
- We need the synod, as its primary duty, to be faithful to the Lutheran Confessions in word and deed by confessing the Book of Concord without reservation, by accepting only church workers who are faithful to those confessions, by supervising the faithfulness of its members, and by practicing fellowship only with church bodies that are faithful to those confessions (DELS, Thesis I).

Thus, the Bible, the Book of Concord, C.F.W. Walther, and our Lutheran theologians all attest to the necessity of a synod.

The Rev. Dr. Martin R. Noland

Pastor of Grace Lutheran Church, San Mateo, CA

10. Robert Kolb and Timothy Wengert, eds., *The Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 355-356 (hereafter Kolb-Wengert). *The Book of Concord*, with supporting documents and German originals, is available for online viewing for free here: <https://bookofconcord.org/>; accessed 6 February 2021.
11. Kolb-Wengert, 356.
12. Kolb-Wengert, 435-439.

13. Kolb-Wengert, 42. An unsurpassed analysis of AC VII can be found in: Hermann Sasse, "Article VII of the Augsburg Confession in the Present Crisis of Lutheranism," in Hermann Sasse, *Letters to Lutheran Pastors*, vol. 3, trans. Matthew Harrison, et al., edited Matthew Harrison (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 249-279.
14. Kolb-Wengert, 42.
15. Kolb-Wengert, 46.
16. Kolb-Wengert, 223.
17. Kolb-Wengert, 94.
18. Kolb-Wengert, 98-100.
19. Kolb-Wengert, 174.
20. Kolb-Wengert, 177.
21. Kolb-Wengert, 289-294.
22. Kolb-Wengert, 323-324.
23. Kolb-Wengert, 330-344.
24. Carl F. W. Walther, "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod," in Carl F. W. Walther, *Church Fellowship* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2015), 237-336. The essay is available separately for a modest fee in electronic form as a PDF here: <https://www.cph.org/p-22043-duties-of-an-evangelical-lutheran-synod-downloadable.aspx>; accessed 6 February 2021.

Lutheran Clarion Index



We now have an index of all the **Lutheran Clarion** articles that we have published since the **Clarion** began in 2008.

Check it out near the top of our web site at the Newsletter page (<http://lutheranclarion.org/newsletter.html>). There are two indexes: one is sorted by Issue Date and the other is sorted by Category (e.g., Doctrine and Practice, Education, Culture, Seminaries, etc.).

Both documents are in PDF format so you can search them online or you can download and print them.

Student Aid Endowment Fund! Concordia Theological Foundation, Inc.

In early 2018, in honor of Mrs. Ginny Valleau's contributions to the publication of the **Lutheran Clarion**, a Concordia Theological Seminary Student Aid Endowment Fund was established at Concordia Theological Foundation, Inc.



(CTF), which is recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as a tax-exempt 501(c)(3) religious charitable organization. Contributions are tax deductible as permitted by federal and state law. As of March 31, 2021, the fund assets were \$25,284.65.

The Board of Directors of the Lutheran Concerns Association invites *Lutheran Clarion* readers and friends to contribute to the Fund which can be done by sending your check marked Valleau Endowment Fund to:

Concordia Theological Foundation, Inc., 6041 Stellhorn Road, Box 15810, Fort Wayne, IN 46815
or to:

Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921. Donors will receive receipts for their gifts.

Stay Close to Me

“Stay close to Me, I am your rock and castle.” So we sing in the mighty Luther hymn *Dear Christians, One and All Rejoice* (LSB 556 Stanza 7). This is Jesus bidding us to stay close to Him. He is our protector, our shield, our place of refuge and our Savior.

How blessed we are if we have shepherds who teach us to stay close to our Good Shepherd. Hearing Scripture from the pulpit and in Bible Class with the opportunity to discuss and ask for clarification is truly a blessed gift. We can be the one described in Proverbs 1:5, “A wise man will hear and increase learning and a man of understanding will attain wise counsel.”

To come to Bible Class does not mean that we know and understand Scripture; we can be like the Ethiopian who asked Philip to help him understand what he was reading in the Book of Isaiah. We can ask our pastor to guide us in our understanding. We must never think that our questions are too simple. Hearing and increasing our learning does make us that wise man of Proverbs.

God has given us shepherds to guide us no matter how little we know of Scripture. Our “wisdom” is in listening as we fear our Lord. “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Proverbs 9:10).

The “fear of the Lord” is our sense of respect, awe, reverence and trust in our mighty, powerful, all-knowing, great and awesome God now and forever. Fearing our Lord is why we run to the Word for knowledge and understanding. We can be the “many” who run to and fro searching God’s Word as was told to Daniel. “But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” (Daniel 12:4).

In Proverbs 23:12 we hear “apply your hearts to instruction and your ears to words of knowledge.” This is not a suggestion or question; it is a statement echoed by Jesus in the Gospels when He tells us “He who has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Matthew 13:9, Mark 4:9, Luke 8:8).

It is wonderfully comforting to hear the angel’s proclamation to Saint John; “Then I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on earth - to every nation, tribe, tongue and people” (Revelation 14:6).

We are that “nation, tribe, tongue and people!” The gospel (good news) IS for us. We have ears to hear, let us keep them wide open and gladly hear! This will enable us to fulfill our responsibility as laity to keep watch on the doctrine and teaching of our pastors and teachers. Scripture has many such warnings: “Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1 ff)” and Matthew 24:24 “For false messiahs and false prophets will appear and perform great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect.”

If we don’t know God’s Word how can we “test the spirits”?

Dr. C. F. W. Walther in his little booklet “The Sheep Judge Their Shepherds” warns us that the church “has ever had to use God’s Word, not only as food for the soul, but also as a weapon in unceasing warfare against false teachers” (p. 1). How shall we correctly use a weapon with which we are not familiar? Our weapons are only as good as we know how to use them.

Walther goes on to remind us of Matthew 7:15-23, where Christ warns his disciples of false prophets who come in sheep’s clothing but are inwardly ravening wolves. Christ’s word is “**Beware.**” Walther tells us that “with these words, Christ takes judgement from the teachers and gives it to the pupils. He takes it from the shepherds and gives it to the sheep.” Walther continues, “This admonition by the Son of God shows us plainly how entirely false the principle is that the preachers should teach, and the hearers only listen, that the shepherds should lead, and the sheep only follow, that the clergy should resolve, and congregation only acquiesce” (p. 3). Such a silly bunch of sheep we are to believe that!

To further quote Walther, on page 5 he plainly states that “if the sheep are to judge the shepherds then they should also know the true doctrine and be sure of it.” It is our right and responsibility to judge doctrine and to prove or reject it always on the correct reading of God’s Word. And how shall we do this if we have not the basis and knowledge of Scripture? We must search the Scriptures, be at Divine Services, run to Bible Classes, pray for guidance and encourage family and friends to do the same.

Reading and studying the upcoming lessons ahead of time is good preparation for when we gather with our brothers and sisters in Christ to learn from our Lord who comes to us and serves us with His Word and Sacraments. You can do that preparation! Knowing these lessons will give us a basis for reviewing our pastor’s sermon and commenting on or questioning him about it. This will further strengthen our knowledge and faith. Yes, we and our family can do this. Our pastors will appreciate our attention to what they are preaching. Knowing Scripture will also help us when we have the opportunity to confess our faith to our neighbors, friends and family.

Blessed are the children of God who hear and study His Word at Divine Services, at home and in Bible Classes. They are staying close to Him.

Greta Zeller Martin
Bristol, Wisconsin

Dr. C.F.W. Walther’s booklet “The Sheep Judge Their Shepherds” is available at www.Anchorbooksandtracts.com. The booklet is listed under “The Ministry” products.

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