

Rooted in the Truth

How Lutherans Understand Our Faith. An Introduction. Student Notes.
Ruth Vallevik, for Leadership Training Conferences II

Introduction:

Definitions:

- Theology: *The study of God and all His works* (Grudem, p. 16)
- Doctrine: *What the whole Bible teaches about some particular topic* (Grudem p. 25)

Presupposition of study: Inerrancy of Scripture

Scope of this study and limitations:

- **I am not a theologian!** Your local pastor is your source for more complete information.
- Rev. Egge is supportive of concept of this project
- Subject is **ENORMOUS!**
 - Will basically list areas of disagreement
 - Exhaustive supporting texts available, no space for here. Bibliography at end.

Purpose of this introductory study:

- To better understand our church's teaching
- *Specific targeted reason for this study:* Selection of materials for women's Bible Studies (from many publishers, writers, streams of theological distinctives)

The Problem (most material #1-4 from Dr. Brad Harper, professor of theology, Multnomah)

I have watched with growing disbelief as the evangelical Church has cheerfully plunged into astounding theological illiteracy...the effects of this great change in the evangelical soul are evident in every incoming class in the seminaries, in most publications, in the great majority of churches, and in most of their pastors." -David Wells, prof. At Gordon-Conwell Seminary in book, No Place For Truth.

***"Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers."* (Tim. 4:16)**

1. **Theology of "How To"**

2. Theology of felt needs

“The newer language of Zion fudges: ‘Let us confess our problem with human relational adjustment dynamics, and especially our feebleness in networking.’ Or, ‘I’d just like to share that we just need to target holiness as a growth area.’ Where sin is concerned, people mumble now.” - Cornelius Plantinga, Not the Way It’s Supposed to Be: (Eerdmans, 1995)

3. Theology of “What this passage means to me is…”

4. Harper’s FOUR RULES FOR BIBLE STUDY:

a. Observation

b. Interpretation

Writing style: **Narrative/ Wisdom literature/ Epistle**

c. Principalization –

d. Application:

(see Principles for Evaluating Bible Study materials, appendix)

Attitude in approaching study of doctrines:

○ *Essentials/Non-essentials*

Motto of Richard Baxter:

“In necessary things, unity; in doubtful things, liberty; in all things, charity”

○ C.S. Lewis in Mere Christianity, Preface:

There are questions at issue between Christians to which I do not think we have been told the answer. There are some to which I may never know the answer: if I asked them, even in a better world, I might (for all I know) be answered as a far greater questioner was answered: ‘What is that to thee? Follow thou Me.’

- **Diligence**

- **Humility**

- **Respect**

- Cooperation in the *Great Commission (not the Great Discussion)*

- **Mutual Hope:**

Post-Reformation Streams of Theology (4)

1. **Lutheran** 1517

2. **Calvinism** (Reformed) 1536

a. **Five Points of Calvin:**

- i. **T: Total depravity:** Humans are so sinful that they cannot initiate return to God
- ii. **U: Unconditional election** (predestination) God chooses who will be saved
- iii. **L: Limited Atonement:** Christ died specifically to save those whom God chose
- iv. **I: Irresistible Grace** God infallibly draws to Christ those whom he chooses
- v. **P: Preservation of the Saints:** they will never fall away (become apostate)...eternal security. Can backslide, but not fall away. (illus: house)

b.. Presbyterians, some Baptists

3. **Arminian**

a. Basically oppose all five points of Calvin:

- i. T: **man has free will**, so can accept/reject
- ii. U: God chooses, but **based on foreknowledge** of man's decision
- iii. L: Jesus death/**atonement available to all** who believe
- iv. I: Grace of God **can be rejected**
- v. P: Believers **can fall away** (become apostate)

b. Methodists, some Baptists, Salvation Army, most Pentecostals, Nazarene

c. Holiness doctrine: total sanctification

4. **Pentecostal/Renewal/Charismatic**

- a. Much later than others (early 1900's)
- b. Mostly Arminian
- c. Emphasis on use of spiritual gifts
- d. Very fast growing worldwide.

The Big Eight:

Sin and Salvation

Monergism: *The work of salvation is entirely God's product.* (see Gjerness)

Synergism: *Man cooperates with God in the work of salvation*

Means of grace: *a vehicle or element to bring grace to man* (mediate grace)

Lutherans believe in three: The Word, baptism, Lord's Supper

Calvinists/Lutherans: believe in total depravity –

Arminians:

- Sin is defined as only that which is *intentional voluntary transgression, deliberate rebellion, avoidable, with knowledge.*

Election (predestination)

- Calvinists:
 - God chose who would be saved (election);
 - his atonement was only for them;
 - if they are elect they cannot fall away.
- Lutherans/Arminians – God chooses based on **His foreknowledge**. (Rom. 8:29: “*those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified.*”)

Sanctification – living a Christ-like life

- Lutherans/Calvinists see as **a process**
- “Holiness” churches (usually Arminian) see as a **separate post-salvation experience**

Eternal Security

- “Preservation of the saints” – true believers never are lost or become apostate
- Calvinists, most Baptists believe it; can **backslide, but never leave the faith**
- Lutherans believe is possible, so people **need to be called to repentance, and can be restored.**

Sacraments: Baptism

Lutherans:

- Baptism as a **means of grace; regenerative** – but must be followed with teaching,
- A person can fall away from baptismal faith
 - “*This does not mean that we have another savior in baptism so that we do not need Christ; baptism is merely a means of bringing Christ to us as the pump brought water to the dying man. We are saved by FAITH*”. –Iver Olson, Baptism and Spiritual Life)
- Infants are capable of faith
- **Baptism not** something WE do; something GOD does

- “*It is probably in the area of cooperation with God that the greatest difficulty lies in our understanding of the effects of baptism. Most people unconsciously or otherwise, consider baptism to be something we do in response to God’s requirements, and in obedience to God. Obviously, an infant is not capable of such a response. Hence we must deny baptism to him. Discussions on baptism are often prefaced with “but a child is incapable of..” It is precisely at this point that many disagreements lie. Lutheran emphasize that baptism is something God does for us, rather than something we do for Him. It belongs to the category of grace, rather than to the category of works.* Gjerness, p. 36

Calvinists:

- practice infant baptism, because of election (children of the elect are elect)
- and baptism is seen as NT parallel to OT circumcision

Baptists observe only “believers’ baptism” –

- a sign of faith; a testimony
- Most Baptists require “re-baptism” in order to be members and lead in churches

Sacraments: Lord’s Supper

- Lutherans see as a **means of grace** – sacrament, and Jesus’ body is “in, under, and between” the elements
- Calvinists: Christ’s body and blood are “**spiritually present**” in the elements
- Arminians – the Lord’s Supper is only a “**memorial**”

Use of Spiritual Gifts, especially speaking in tongues

Most Pentecostals view speaking in tongues as an outward sign of “baptism of the Holy Spirit” which occurs after conversion.

Most Lutherans believe the baptism of the Holy Spirit occurs at conversion

Five general positions regarding use of spiritual gifts (Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? See biblio.)

1. **Cessationist** position –
2. **Pentecostals** –
3. **Charismatic** –
4. **The Third Wave** (called this by C. Peter Wagner at Fuller Seminary)
5. **Open but cautious**

Eschatology (“last things”)

What about non-denominational churches?

. The CLB Among the Lutherans – Where we are unique

- Church government: autonomous congregations
- Style of worship – non-liturgical
- Evangelical: Word is inerrant, infallible
- Affiliation: not member of National Council of Churches
- Conversion: need for evangelism, because baptized can fall away
- Pietism – stress godly living, relationship with Christ
- Confirmation – confirmation seen as instruction
- Church membership – on basis of statement of personal faith. Church is seen as body of true believers, while acknowledging some hypocrites may be among the believers.
- Social Issues – CLB is conservative on social issues, i.e. abortion, homosexuality
- Ordination of women as pastors – complementarian view; women are not ordained

Lists and Charts: Appendix 1

Publishers

A partial listing of some of the most familiar publishers of Bible Study material with their denominational affiliation, if known; otherwise listed as “evangelical” (*non-denominational, but a Statement of Faith or Beliefs are usually found on their website.*) Many are listed on the ECDA website (Evangelical Christian Publishers Association.) Click on Members, then Voting Members, then on individual publisher to link to their website.

Abingdon – United Methodist
 Alban – Episcopal
 Augsburg – Evangelical Lutheran Church of America
 Baker – Evangelical
 Banner of Truth - Reformed
 Barclay – Quakers (Friends)
 Beacon Hill – Church of the Nazarene
 Bethany House – Evangelical
 Bob Jones – Baptist
 Bridge/Logos – Charismatic
 Broadman/Holman – Baptist
 CBP – Disciples of Christ
 Charisma Books (Strong Communications, formerly Creation House) – charismatic
 Chosen Books – Charismatic
 Christian Publishers – Christian and Missionary Alliance
 Cokesbury – Methodist
 Concordia – Missouri Synod Lutheran Church
 Crossway – Evangelical
 David C. Cook – Evangelical
 Discovery – Radio Bible Class, Evangelical
 Faith and Fellowship Press – Church of the Lutheran Brethren
 Gospel Light (Regal) – Evangelical
 Gospel Publishing House - Assembly of God (also TPE Books – Today’s Pentecostal Evangel)
 Group – Evangelical
 Herald Press – Mennonite
 InterVarsity Press – Evangelical, arm of InterVarsity
 Lifeway – Southern Baptist
 Multnomah – Evangelical
 NavPress – Evangelical, arm of The Navigators
 Pacific Press – Seventh Day Adventist
 Paraclete – Benedictines (Catholic)
 Pilgrim – United church of Christ
 Scripture Press (Victor Books) – Evangelical
 Standard – evangelical
 Warner Press – Church of God
 Westminster/John Knox Press – Presbyterian (PCUSA)
 Zondervan – Evangelical
 Denomination tree (from CLBA centennial publication. (Handout))

Principles for Evaluating Bible Study Materials – Appendix 2

From “Thinking Biblically – Evaluating Women’s Bible Study Materials”, first published in the Treasures of Encouragement e-magazine: www.treasuresofencouragement.org, quoted in Women’s Ministry in the Local Church by J. Ligon Duncan and Susan Hunt. Additional comments from Ruth Vallevik are in parenthesis.

1. Is Scripture the authority?

How much Scripture does each chapter contain? The best books are full of Scriptural quotations and are built around Scriptural principles. Scripture is used to explain and support Scripture in a clear pattern of building precept upon precept. Contrast that with books that give a hypothesis and then pull one or two Scripture quotations out of context to support their premise.

Is Scripture put on the same level as experience? Is the Bible the only authority or is a person’s theory or opinion treated as equally valuable with Scripture? Is experience evaluated by Scripture or is Scripture subjected to varying interpretations and experiences?

2. What is the doctrinal perspective?

Does the book compromise the essentials of the faith: creation, the fall of man, the virgin birth, the sinless life of Christ, the atonement, a physical resurrection? Does it violate any of the *solas*: Scripture alone, grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, for the glory of God alone?

(Comment: In addition, CLBA people should compare our Statement of Faith with the Statement of Faith of either the publisher or the writer of the Bible Study. These can usually be found on the website of the publisher or writer, most often under the heading “about us”. It is also often wise to have your pastor evaluate the material. He can provide additional information to the Bible Study leader that will clarify any doctrinal confusion, or may suggest the material not be used.)

3. Does it teach salvation by grace through faith?

Does the book compromise on or support the need for repentance, reconciliation and reliance? Does it confront the sin nature, focus on our fundamental need for reconciliation and our responsibility to be a witness to a lost world? Does it make clear the reality of the necessity of total reliance on grace as a lifestyle? Does it emphasize the use of the means of grace (worship, prayer, the Word, fellowship, communion, meditating, memorizing)?

(Comment: The CLB teaches three “means of grace” in the true sense of being vehicles through which God transmits His grace to people: the Word, Baptism, and the Lord’s Supper. In the previous paragraph, the writer is likely not using the “means of grace” term in that sense, but rather those elements and activities listed are ways in which believers fellowship with their Lord and grow in their faith)

4. Who is the author?

What do we know about the author? What is their background or reputation? What else have they written? Would use of this book give an endorsement to all of their books? How does the author view women and women’s role in the church?

5. Who does the author quote?

It is important to know who the author reads. Do they quote the Puritans, the classics, familiar trusted theologians?

6. Is the book God-centered or man-centered?

Is the emphasis how we can be conformed to the image of God and glorify God or how we can be satisfied and happy?

7. Is the book teachable and useful?

Can it be easily taught by our leaders? Can our leaders determine and communicate the central truth of each chapter? Does the book delve into issues that our leaders are not prepared to address? Is the subject matter of each chapter appropriate for our use? Is there a workbook or can lesson plans be easily developed from the chapters? What will the book equip our women to know and do? It is hard to find a perfect book, but if there are more than a few questions it is best not to use it. If a book needs a lot of explaining, what will happen to the woman who comes once or twice and doesn't return? We don't want to put something into her hands that will confuse her.

(NOTE: The Director of Women's Ministries of the WMCLB, brave@bresnan.net, can serve as a reference for your group if you send her your positive recommendations or your reservations about particular books or authors.)

A Gentle Welcome – C.S. Lewis on Denominational/Church Affiliations.

From *Mere Christianity*, Preface.

Quoted in *A Year with C.S. Lewis*, Daily Readings from His Classic Works, Harper Collins, 2003.

I hope no reader will suppose that 'mere' Christianity is here put forward as an alternative to the creeds of the existing communions...It is more like a hall out of which doors open into several rooms. If I can bring anyone into that hall I shall have done what I attempted. But it is in the rooms, not in the hall, that there are fires and chairs and meals. The hall is a place to wait in, a place from which to try the various doors, not a place to live in. For that purpose the worst of the rooms (whichever that may be) is, I think, preferable. It is true that some people may find they have to wait in the hall for a considerable time, while others feel certain almost at once which door they must knock at. I do not know why there is this difference, but I am sure God keeps no one waiting unless He sees that it is good for him to wait. When you do get into your room you will find that the long wait has done you some kind of good which you would not have had otherwise. But you must regard it as waiting, not as camping. You must keep on praying for light: and, of course, even in the hall, you must begin trying to obey the rules which are common to the whole house. And above all you must be asking which door is the true one; not which pleases you best by its paint and paneling. In plain language, the question should never be: 'do I like that kind of service?' but 'Are these doctrines true: Is holiness here? Does my conscience move me towards this? Is my reluctance to knock at this door due to my pride, or my mere taste, or my personal dislike of this particular door-keeper?'

When you have reached your own room, be kind to those who have chosen different doors and to those who are still in the hall. If they are wrong they need your prayers all the more; and if they are your enemies, then you are under orders to pray for them. That is one of the rules common to the whole house.

Glossary

(I have chosen to include a list of some useful terms and their meanings. Many, many more could be added, and resources for further study and reference are listed in the Bibliography. The definitions have been derived from many sources, some of which are listed. –Ruth)

Atonement – Christ’s life and death, and how it benefited us in providing salvation

Baptism – One of two sacraments in Lutheran churches (the other, the Lord’s Supper). Various denominations disagree on the meaning of it, the mode of it, and age appropriateness
 “The English word *baptism* comes from a word in the Greek language which means a cleansing by washing, immersion, and/or a death” (Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism)

Baptism of the Holy Spirit – The filling or anointing of the believer by the Holy Spirit, which some Christians believe occurs as a separate event, subsequent to salvation.

Doctrine – What the whole Bible teaches about some particular topic (Grudem)

Egalitarian – The view that all functions and roles in the church are open to men and women alike.
Complementarian refers to the view that men and women are equal in value before God but that some governing and teaching roles in the church are reserved for men.

Election (pre-destination) The belief that the sovereign God has chosen from eternity those who will be saved

Emergent Church – a current movement of churches using non-traditional methods and practices to bring the Gospel to people. They vary in their conformity to orthodox theology and practice.

Example: Solomon’s Porch, Mpls. See current articles in Christianity Today, Leadership

Eschatology – The study of the Bible’s teachings about the events leading up to the return of Jesus.

Evangelical – mostly defined by view of Scripture as inerrant, infallible

Free churches – independent bodies of believers forming congregations outside of the established state-supported churches of certain countries, such as the Scandinavian countries.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit – All abilities that are empowered by the Holy Spirit and used in any ministry of the church. (see references in Rom 12:6-8; Eph. 4:11, I Cor. 12:28-30, I Cor. 14)

Immersion: The mode of baptism in which the person is put completely under the water and then brought back up again. (other modes: sprinkling, pouring)

Inerrancy: The idea that Scripture in the original manuscripts does not affirm *anything that is contrary to fact* (Grudem) “The Bible is free of error in the original manuscripts” (Gjerness)

Justification – right legal standing before God. Declared righteous by God because of Jesus’ sacrifice

Liberal – mostly defined by view of Scripture as containing the Word of God, but not inerrant

Lord’s Supper (communion) – “The Lord’s Supper, instituted by our Lord Jesus Christ, is His true body and blood, in with and under the bread and wine, given to Christians to eat and to drink.” (Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism). Viewed by some evangelicals only as a memorial

Low-church – a practice of worship that is non-liturgical and characteristically less formal

Mainline – A Protestant denomination generally originating before 1900 (though it may have undergone recent mergers), from which theologically conservative congregations have separated (e.g., the United Methodist Church) - (Robert M. Bowman in Denominations Comparison, Rose Publishing)

Means of grace – “vehicles” by which God’s grace is brought to people.. The CLB believes the three: the Word, baptism, and The Lord’s Supper. “*The Word comes in several forms, collectively called “the means of grace.” Some Christians put less stock in the instruments of the Word than do Lutherans. Lutherans believe that the word of the Gospel of Jesus Christ does not merely share information or point toward a heavenly reality. Lutherans believe that the Gospel we convey with our words, in various forms, actually convey God’s power for saving his people. (Rom. 1:16)”* (Kolb)

Millennium – The 1000-year reign of Jesus on earth, described in Rev. 20:4-6.

Premillennial: The belief that the millennium is a *future* event and Jesus will return *before* (pre-) the millennium

Amillennial: The millennium is a symbol of Christ’s present reign among his people.

Postmillennial: Jesus will return after (post-) the millennium. The millennium is a time in which most of the world submits to Jesus, and peace and justice reign.

Monergism- God working alone to produce salvation

Non-denominational. Christian churches or groups which do not have an official membership in a denomination. (However, their doctrinal statements, pastors, and practices will usually be closely aligned with particular denominational bodies.)

Open question - Doctrinal issues that are not clearly understood because the Word is either silent on them or our finite minds are unable to grasp what appears to be a paradox.

Paradox – seemingly contradictory, but still true (ex, the Trinity). Similar to “holding in tension”

Perseverance of the saints (eternal security). The belief that those who are truly saved will never be lost. They may backslide, but they will never commit apostasy.

Pietism – The emphasis on godly living as an outgrowth of true faith.

Prosperity Gospel – The belief held by some charismatic groups that “health and wealth” should be experienced by all true believers. Sometimes called, “name it, claim it”

Rapture – The event described in I Thess. 4:15-17, when Jesus Christ returns for his people.

Dispensational premillennialists believe that the rapture and the second coming of Jesus are *two separate events*. They place the rapture *before* the great tribulation and the second coming *after* the tribulation. Historic premillennialists, amillennialists, and postmillennialists understand the second coming of Jesus and the event described in I Thess. 4:15-17 as the same event. (Dr. Timothy Jones)

Regeneration – The experience of being born again by the Holy Spirit of God

Sacrament – “A holy act, instituted by Christ, in which by visible means, He give and confirms His invisible grace.” (Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism)

Sanctification – growth in likeness to Christ. “...*the gracious work of the Holy Spirit by which He daily renews me more and more in the image of God through the Word and Sacraments.*” (Explanation of Luther’s Small Catechism)

Sinless perfection – the state of being totally free from sin (also called the “holiness” doctrine)

Spiritual formation – The growth in Christ-likeness and Christian maturity that comes by faith in Jesus Christ and through the practices of spiritual disciplines such as Bible study, prayer, and meditation.

Synergism – that salvation comes through the work of God accompanied by man’s cooperation. (As opposed to “monergism”, see above)

Theology – The study of God and all His works (Grudem)

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In addition, the Statements of Faith as well as Core Values Statements from a representative number of denominations have been referenced. Among them:

- Church of the Lutheran Brethren of America "We Believe...Statement of Faith"
- Church of the Nazarene "Articles of Faith"
- General Council of the Assemblies of God "Our 16 Fundamental Truths"
- Presbyterian Church in America "What We Believe"
- South Baptist Convention "The Baptist Faith and Message"