Trinitarian Monotheism: A Mouthful of Orthodoxy

As Lutheran Christians, we are Trinitarian Monotheists. Yes, it's a mouthful to say, but it's important to understand that it's a mouthful of orthodoxy. Orthodoxy has to do with sound or right doctrine/teaching, and the Bible repeatedly exhorts us to guard our doctrine closely. It's precisely the sort of words that should fill our mouths.

Take but a few examples from the Pastoral Epistles (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus). Paul warns Timothy in 1 Timothy 6:3, "If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing." In 2 Timothy 4:3-4 he warns, "the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."

In Titus 1:9 he tells Titus that the congregation's overseer (pastor), "must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it." And in 1 Timothy 4:16 Paul reminds Timothy what's at stake: "Keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching. Persist in this, for by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers." Orthodoxy matters, for as Paul makes clear, if we lose it, we lose salvation!

TRINITARIAN MONOTHEISM IS THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH'S ORTHODOXY ON GOD – AND IF WE LOSE IT, WE LOSE THE TRUE GOD!

Trinitarian Monotheism is the Christian Church's orthodoxy (correct teaching) on God – and if we lose it, we lose the true God! We confess our Trinitarian Monotheism in the Church's historic creeds: the Nicene, Apostles', and Athanasian. Formulated over the first few centuries of the Church's existence, these creeds represent centuries of thought and study as they establish a pattern of sound words that rightly express the Bible's teaching on God and give us a mouthful of orthodoxy to confess every week.

Some churches today are opposed to creeds, claiming, "No creed but the Bible!" (which, ironically, is itself a creed). But the preservation of sound doctrine (which the creeds were designed to do) is one of the reasons Jesus gave His Church the keys to the kingdom of heaven. The Church was given the authority to discern which teachings accorded with God's revealed will and which didn't. So the Church penned the creeds to keep us from veering into false doctrine and away from the Triune God. In short, we need to know and understand these words!

On May 31, the Church celebrated Trinity Sunday. That celebration included confessing the Athanasian Creed. This creed explicitly details what it means to be a Trinitarian Monotheist. If you confessed it you chewed on its mouthful of orthodoxy. You can find it printed on page 319-320 in our hymnal (*Lutheran Service Book*). The hymnal's introductory remarks explain,

> The Athanasian Creed declares that its teachings concerning the Holy Trinity and our Lord's incarnation are 'the catholic faith.' In other words, this is what the true Church of all times and all places has confessed. More than fifteen centuries later, the Church continues to confess this truth, confident that the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, has given Himself for our salvation.

The creed introduces its mouthful of orthodoxy by explaining that "we worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity, neither confusing the persons nor dividing the substance." This is Trinitarian Monotheism – One God; three Persons. The creed

makes this clear: "the Father is one person, the Son is another, and the Holy Spirit is another. But the Godhead of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit is one: the glory equal, the majesty coeternal."

It's critical at this juncture that we understand the terms. Each Person of the Triune God shares the essence of God while remaining distinct Persons. The creed goes on to explain. Each Person is "uncreated… infinite… eternal." "And yet there are not three Eternals… there are not three Uncreated or three Infinites…" Notice the capitalization. Each person is eternal, uncreated, and infinite, but there is only One Uncreated, Infinite, and Eternal, so three Persons, one God.

All this remains relevant today because many of the ancient heresies that the creed condemns have been subtly repackaged in modern religions which deceptively use orthodox words with heretical definitions. In other words, they use the same words, but a different dictionary. For example, an ancient heresy called "modalism" has been repackaged in some modern Mormon-related religions. This heresy rightly speaks of God as one. It also speaks of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, but instead of using an orthodox dictionary to define them as Persons, it defines them as "modes" or "expressions" of God.

So, it speaks of God existing in the mode of the Father, the mode of the Son, and the mode of the Holy Spirit. Think of a wrist watch. You can change its mode from "time" to "stopwatch" to "alarm," but you can only display one of these modes at a time. So, modalism describes God as the Father mode in the Old Testament, the Son mode in the New, and the Spirit mode after Jesus' ascension. But repeatedly throughout Scripture we see all three Persons simultaneously present (e.g. Jesus' baptism). God does not exist in one mode at a time; He is eternally three Persons.

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We must understand that for orthodox Christianity the word "person" means "a rational entity which subsists in itself." The founding document of our Lutheran Confessions, the Augsburg Confession, acknowledges this orthodox definition:

> Our Churches, with common consent, do teach that the decree of the Council of Nicaea concerning the Unity of the Divine Essence and concerning the Three Persons, is true and to be believed without any doubting; that is to say, there is one Divine Essence which is called and which is God: eternal, without body, without parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness, the Maker and Preserver of all things, visible and invisible; and yet there are three Persons, of the same essence and power, who also are coeternal, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. And the term "person" they use as the Fathers[1] have used it, to signify, not a part or quality in another, but that which subsists of itself.

Notice how it defines what it means by "God" and "Persons." This is the orthodox dictionary. When it comes to the three Persons it's important to notice that they are not defined as parts or qualities (or modes) of God; they are Persons, that is, rational entities which subsist in themselves. So this means that we don't speak of God as having three parts or even three personalities. Parts and personalities don't subsist in themselves. Persons might have parts and personalities; personalities and parts don't have persons.

So, this means that we shouldn't use many of the familiar analogies to depict the Trinity. The three parts of the apple and the egg, the three leaves of the clover, and the three modes of water aren't good analogies for God. They all divide God into parts or

[1] This is a reference to early church pastors and theologians.

modes, failing to appreciate the three self-subsisting Persons and leaving us vulnerable to false teaching. A couple years ago I penned a simple song for our VBS program to make this point. Here are a couple verses of it:

Man has tried to picture this mystery of God.
He's concocted many models, but they've all been flawed.

Our God isn't liquid; He isn't ice or steam.
Apple, egg, and clover, He doesn't fit those schemes

The Trinity isn't made up of three different parts;
He's an undivided Union Who can't be torn apart.

The Athanasian Creed says the same thing with these words:

> Just as we are compelled by the Christian truth to acknowledge each distinct person as God and Lord, so also are we prohibited by the catholic religion to say that there are three Gods or Lords.

From there the creed transitions into the unique way the Bible speaks of the Persons relating to one another. The distinctions it highlights might seem inconsequential to the uninformed hearer, but these distinctions establish the pattern of sound words that we need to preserve orthodoxy and to protect us from veering into a false confession of God.

The creed describes the Father as "not made nor created nor begotten by anyone." It describes the Son as "neither made nor created, but begotten of the Father alone." We might define "begotten" as "eternally comes from…" And the creed describes the Holy Spirit as "of the Father and of the Son, neither made nor created nor begotten, but proceeding." We might define "preceding" as "sent from…"

Not only are these descriptions Biblically faithful, but as we said, they also establish a pattern of sound words to defend us from heresy. The ancient heresy "Arianism," which taught that Jesus is not eternal, has been repackaged today in the Jehovah Witness religion. They teach that there was a time when Jesus did not exist. In rejecting the Church's creeds (our orthodox dictionary, if you will), they have strayed into false teaching and, by so doing, are worshiping a false god. They may still use the words "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit," but they are using a different dictionary to define them, a dictionary outside the Christian faith.

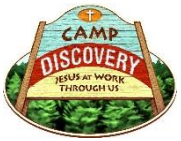
THE MOST LOVING THING WE CAN DO FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS BEEN DECEIVED BY A FALSE TEACHING IS TO SHARE THE TRUTH WITH THEM!

This is hard for many in the church to understand because they have believed the lie that it is unloving to call an idea or teaching false. On the contrary, the most loving thing we can do for someone who has been deceived by a false teaching is to share the truth with them! We need to remember that Jesus Himself warned of false teachings and false christs (Matthew 16:5-12; 24:23-28). St. Paul warned of "fierce wolves" who would teach "twisted things" to draw people away from the true God (Acts 20:28-32). And remember Paul's warning to Timothy that we mentioned earlier about people not enduring "sound teaching."

The Trinitarian Monotheism recorded in Scripture and summarized in the creeds is the sound teaching we need to preserve orthodoxy, and thereby preserve the message of the true God and His salvation for the world. Praise God for the orthodox mouthful preserved in the creeds. – Pastor Conner

MINISTRY APPS—Zion Lutheran – February 2015

Applying the Gospel in Hearts and Homes



Camp Discovery

Zion VBS will have a camp theme this year. Children of Zion and the community will discover that the God who rescued Judge Deborah in an enemy camp, protected three men from a fiery camp fire, and guarded tent-maker Paul, is also the God who has saved them from sin. Stop in to see the special camp setting. Help out at the camp site as a volunteer. Sit around a special Thursday evening campfire. Share in the special offering to Camp Okoboji. Thanks to those who donated food, volunteered in serving, and attended the Memorial Day Brunch. Proceeds from the brunch help purchase the many supplies needed for an anticipated VBS enrollment of over 100 children.

Camp of Laborers for Christ

Welcome to Zion, Laborers for Christ! These special servants travel in campers across the continent to assist in building and remodeling churches. The team serving at Zion this summer will be commissioned and introduced in the Divine Service on June 7 and will begin their work at Zion on June 9. The Laborers for Christ team will be active in the congregation and community this summer as they complete the remodeling of the fellowship hall, offices, and education areas. They will typically work Tuesday through Saturday of each week. Each work day they break at 10 a.m. for a team devotion. They welcome Zion members to join them for this devotional time.

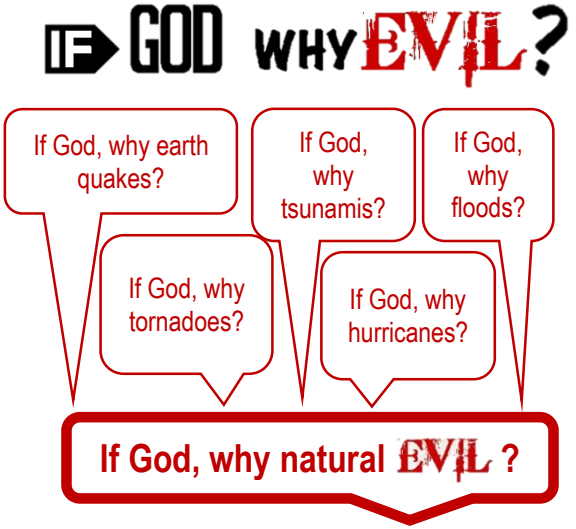
MANY volunteers from the congregation will be needed to accomplish the remodeling this summer. As your schedule allows, come to church and they will provide directions for a volunteer job to fit your gifts. Donations of cookies for breaks and meals for lunch will also be welcomed. We're thankful that Laborers for Christ will be serving Zion as they camp at Willow Creek in Manning.

Camp "Songs"

The 4th annual C-3 concert will be held on Sunday evening, June 7, at Heritage Park. (In case of rain or inclement weather the concert will be held at Zion). Christian artists Rachel Burnette (originally from Irwin) and Steve Reischl (originally from Dunlap) will provide the music on the outdoor stage. Food will be served from 4 to 5:30 with the music beginning at 5:30 p.m. Thanks to Zion members who energetically lead C-3 (Christ + Community + Celebration) events and so generously provide financial support.

Camp Okoboji

Camp Okoboji is celebrating 75 years of outdoor ministry this summer. We thank God for the children, youth, families, and congregations that have been blessed through the Camp ministry. Information on anniversary activities and summer camps for children and youth can be found at the Camp website: www.campokoboji.org. Camp Okoboji is also launching a Discover Campaign to build a new center for campers to discover God's creation and discover the truth of God's Word. Opportunities for Zion members to support the campaign will be shared in upcoming weeks. Camp Okoboji will host the Iowa District West Convention June 21-23. Pastors Conner and Riggert and Warren Puck will represent Zion.



In the early hours of December 26, 2004 a deadly tsunami was unleashed by an undersea megathrust earthquake in the Indian Ocean. 230,000 people perished in 14 countries as coastlands were swallowed by giant waves, some reaching 100 feet! The world stood stunned.

This earthquake-triggered tsunami, along with other natural events such as tornadoes, hurricanes, landslides, and floods have been termed "natural evil," but calling them evil may be misleading. In his book *If God is Good: Faith in the Midst of Suffering and Evil*, Randy Alcorn points out, "Earthquakes and tsunamis are not moral agents and therefore cannot be morally evil. A tidal wave is not malicious – water cannot have malice any more than it can have kindness" (85). These natural disasters can, however, "produce secondary evils by thwarting the good of human, animal, and environmental welfare" (85).

Whatever we call them, it still raises the question: Why would God create a world with earthquakes, tsunamis, and other such natural disasters that inflict so much suffering on mankind? Some theologians have responded, "He didn't." They argue that God's self-proclaimed "very good" creation was free from natural disasters and that these events are a result of Adam's sin. They exist because creation is now cursed. And there is clear Biblical support for creation's curse. When God issued His judgment on Adam for his sin He included these haunting words: "cursed is the ground because of you." In his letter to the Roman Christians, St. Paul writes that the creation is in "bondage to corruption" because of Adam's sin. So there is clear Biblical evidence that the brokenness in creation has man's sin at its root.

Further, the suffering inflicted by many natural disasters is magnified because of man's moral evil. Natural disasters disproportionately affect poor nations, nations in which governmental greed and corruption have kept safety advancements, warning systems, and architectural improvements from their people, thereby leaving them vulnerable to floods, quakes, and wind.

Natural disasters may be good for life

And yet, blaming natural disasters totally on man's sin may be too simplistic. It certainly doesn't get God off the hook. And as we'll see in a moment, it's not even a hook from which God wants to get off. When it comes to the things we call natural disasters, it turns out that they may prove beneficial, even necessary, for life on earth.

We'll consider but one example: earthquakes. Earth's continental crusts float on a molten mantle. Because these crusts float, they sometimes bump into neighboring crusts. When this happens, earthquakes result. God could have eliminated earthquakes by replacing the molten mantel with a solid rock center, like scientists tells us He did with the rocky planets of our solar system. That would solve the earthquake problem, but then it would make life on earth impossible, just like it is on the solid rock planets in our solar system.

As it turns out, the rotating molten interior of the earth produces a magnetosphere around the earth, which produces a radiation shield that protects earth from harmful radiation from space. If we removed the shield, we'd all be toast. And getting rid of the radiation wouldn't help because it's also needed for life on earth. Through nuclear fusion, stars (like our

sun) produce light, heat, and radiation. And life on earth wouldn't fare too well if the sun's nuclear fusion process stopped! We wouldn't be toast, we'd be icicles.

Even more, if those tectonic plates didn't butt heads, erosion would wash great land masses back into ocean and Iowa might be ocean front property (and possibly ocean bottom property)! The only way to stop erosion is to cut off the water, but no water means no life. You get the idea. While earthquakes have undeniably caused a lot of trouble, they have surprisingly done a whole lot of good, too. Space prevents explanation, but it turns out that almost every natural disaster we can imagine has similar surprising benefits to life on earth. So, while we acknowledge that Adam's sin has brought God's curse on creation, we may speak prematurely if we conclude that earthquakes and other naturally occurring events didn't exist pre-fall. They may prove to be a part of God's design.

God doesn't want off the hook.

This may all prove insightful and thought-provoking, but it doesn't answer why specific people suffer in the wake of natural disasters, and it doesn't get God off the hook for the destruction left in their wake. Earthquakes may be good, even necessary, for life as a whole, but they certainly have proven bad for numerous people throughout history. Simply saying, "Well, Adam sinned and that's why so-and-so died in a tsunami" doesn't necessarily help. We may think we're getting God off the hook, but the fact of the matter is that God doesn't want off the hook. God takes full responsibility for natural disasters. He declares,

> I form light and create darkness,
> I make well- being and create calamity,
> I am the Lord, who does all these things (Isaiah 45:7).

GOD TAKES FULL RESPONSIBILITY FOR NATURAL DISASTERS.

And the prophet Amos asks, "Does disaster come to a city, unless the Lord has done it?" (3:6).

Understanding why God chooses to bring natural disasters where He does or why He allows natural events to transpire that result in untold human suffering may simply be beyond our limited capacities to comprehend or explain. In Scripture we see God using natural events like wind, hail, and lightning to bring judgment, to call people to repentance, and to display His glory.

At the very least natural disasters, as philosopher Eleonore Stump points out, take "away a person's satisfaction with himself. [They tend] to humble him, show him his frailty, make him reflect on the transience of temporal goods, and turn his affections toward other-worldly things, away from the things of this world…" And that is a turning we all need to make.

Our modern problem

Part of our struggle with natural disasters is culturally specific. Our modern culture has steadily elevated man and diminished God. We tend to build our thinking around man instead of God. As such, we believe we should be able to understand everything, that everything should have a reasonable explanation to us, even the ways of God. In fact, we tend to believe that God *owes* us an explanation. And when we don't see any good reason for God's ways, we conclude God doesn't have one or we condemn God for not conforming to our expectations for what a god should be and do.

In his insightful book *Walking with God through Pain and Suffering*, Tim Keller summarizes this modern problem:

> It is as we get larger in our own eyes, less dependent on God's grace and revelation, and surer that we understand how the universe works and how history should go that the problem of evil becomes so intolerable. And it is only as God becomes more remote – a God who is all-loving only in the abstract, not in the sense of having

> suffered and died for us to rescue us from evil – that he seems unbearably callous in the face of pain.

Further, modern man assumes that the world exists for his benefit and his pleasure. And while it's true that God has given us all good things for our enjoyment, we are not the center of reality; God is. The world remains His. His works, no matter how mystifying to us, are to move us to magnify Him and not to give us cause to complain for diminishing our pleasure.

The church's historical response

The church's historical response to suffering in the wake of natural disasters was not to try to justify or explain the ways of God or to excuse God by blaming Adam for natural disasters. Instead, the church chose to emphasize the savings acts of God. Keller details four distinctive Christian beliefs that uniquely equip Christianity to respond to sufferers.

First, Christianity boldly confesses a personal, wise, and eternal God who controls world affairs. Despite leaving us with questions as to why He causes or allows the specific events that He does, it comforts us with the knowledge that we do not live and die at the hands of chance and purposelessness. God is loving and He is in control.

Second, God became man in Jesus Christ. So, as Dorothy Sayers wittily pointed out, "Whatever game [God] is playing, with his creation, he has kept his own rules and played fair." In Christ, God has been touched by suffering. Even more, He has suffered for us, in our stead, as our substitute. We might not always understand His ways, but in the incarnation and sacrificial death of Jesus we see that our God has come near to us and that He is for us.

Third, Christ's accomplished work on the cross assures us not only that we have been reconciled to God, but comforts with the knowledge that the sufferings we encounter in this life aren't a karmic payment for sins in a previous life or the arbitrary whim of a distant, lightning-throwing, Zeus-like deity.

And fourth, God's great promise of bodily resurrection and renewal of the earth serve both as consolation for what we have lost in this life and as anticipation for what we will have restored to us in the life to come. Keller explains,

> The resurrection is not just consolation – it is restoration. We get it all back – the love, the loved ones, the goods, the beauties of this life – but in new, unimaginable degrees of glory and joy and strength. (59)

These four uniquely Christian beliefs are strong comfort and great sources of joy for sufferers. They might not answer every question we have about natural disasters. If Adam had never sinned, would there have been tornadoes, hail, or floods? If so, would they have been less severe? We don't know. Will the New Earth need natural events like earthquakes and lightning to sustain life? We don't know. Why do natural disasters strike the people they strike? We don't know.

THERE IS A LOT WE DON'T KNOW AND WE NEED TO LEARN TO BE COMFORTABLE WITH WHAT WE DON'T KNOW BECAUSE WHAT WE DO KNOW IS FAR MORE IMPORTANT.

The fact of the matter is there is a lot we don't know and we need to learn to be comfortable with what we don't know because what we do know is far more important. We do know God is personal, wise, eternal, and good. God became man in Jesus. He knows what it means to suffer. God has shown that He is for us in Christ's cross. And God will resurrect our bodies and renew the earth as He liberates it from sin's curse. This we know. And this is the important part to know. – Pastor Conner

ASK THE PASTOR

Q: How can we know the anonymous books and chapters (Psalms) of the Bible are the inspired word of God?

Great question. To answer it we'll need first to address the assumption in your question and then help you understand how the church has historically situated inspiration in God's saving acts. You asked about the anonymous books and chapters of the Bible. It's a reasonable question, but it assumes that the author of a particular text is a key criterion in discerning a text's inspiration. It's not. For example, although we believe Moses penned the Pentateuch, he never claimed he did. The same goes for the four gospels. We believe they were authored by the four evangelists, but their authorship is never asserted in the text itself. So authorship is not a key argument put forth by the Bible to establish its inspiration. The Bible goes about inspiration by a different route, one few people appreciate today, which we'll discuss in a minute.

Because of a long, complicated theological tradition (which would take a small book to explain), some traditions moved the doctrine of inspiration out of its appropriate theological home (within the economy of salvation, i.e. how God brings salvation to us) to the starting point for theology. So, instead of keeping inspiration in the story of God's saving acts (which is where the Bible puts it), well-meaning theologians moved inspiration to the prologue of theology, that is, the first words of theology that must be accepted before we can even get to God's saving acts.

Such a move essentially meant that Christianity was now built on the inspiration of the Bible instead of on Christ. As a result, our theological efforts had to be directed to defending the doctrine of inspiration, which led to the felt need to establish a text's author or authorial authority, along with other similar criteria, which is why the anonymous books have become an issue for us. The logic goes like this: if we don't know a text's author, we can't be sure it's inspired, and we can't be sure Christianity is true.

Now, establishing a text's author or authorial authority is a fine exercise, it's just not one that's critical to understanding inspiration because inspiration is not anchored in a text's author; inspiration is anchored in Christ. Let's appreciate what we mean by that. First, we have Jesus' promise that He has all authority in heaven and on earth and the promise that He will always be with us. In other words, He has the authority to bring God's salvation to us and He will do it. Second, we have Jesus' promise that He would send the Holy Spirit to bring to remembrance all that He had said to His disciples (which He does in the writing of the New Testament) and His promise that His Spirit would testify to Him and lead us into all truth (which He continues to do through God's Word).

Inspiration is not anchored in a text's author; inspiration is anchored in Christ.

It's on these promises that the New Testament *assumes* its inspiration. In other words, the New Testament doesn't try to establish its inspiration through its authors or other such criteria; it asserts its inspiration on the foundation of Jesus' promises. Jesus promised His Spirit would lead us to Him, and He does through the Word. Jesus promised His Spirit would work, and He did in the writings of New Testament.

We'll get to the Old Testament in a minute, but notice how these promises of Jesus situate the inspiration of the Bible in the economy of salvation, that is, the great story of salvation recorded in the Bible and succinctly confessed in the creeds. That story is centered in and finds its fulfillment in God's saving action in Jesus. The inspiration of the Bible belongs in this saving action of God.

When we consider the inspiration of the Bible outside of this economy of salvation, this great story of God's saving work, we end up with a misguided understanding of Scripture. Instead of the great story

of God's saving work that finds its fulfillment in Jesus and continuance in the work of the Spirit through the Word (which we'll detail in a minute), the Bible is hacked into individually inspired verses which are then packaged into a huge bowl of fortune cookie texts that we can crack open to find our own personal inspired verse. Because we don't see inspiration as flowing from the promises and confession of Christ and living in the great story of God's saving acts, we feel free to extract individual verses out of their Christ-centered context as if the Bible were nothing but a random assortment of inspiring quotes. But this is not what the Bible means when it discusses its inspiration. When the Bible discusses inspiration it connects it to God's saving work, specifically God's saving work in Christ.

The Bible makes this point in several places. Let's take the account in Luke 24. There Jesus twice explains His place in the great story of salvation. First, to the two Emmaus disciples, Jesus asked, "Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And then Luke tells us, "And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself."

Then to His disciples in Jerusalem Jesus explained, "These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled."

Then Luke tells us,

> [Jesus] opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, and said to them, 'Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.'

Notice what Jesus said: the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms are about Him. That's Jesus' way of referring to what we call The Old Testament,and He says it's all about Him. It's not just a few scattered prophecies about Him; it's *all* about Jesus. So the creation was about Jesus. Adam was about Jesus. Abraham was about Jesus. Moses and the Law were about Jesus. The Passover was about Jesus. The Tabernacle and Temple were about Jesus. The prophets, priests, and kings were about Jesus. The shepherd and the sheep were about Jesus. The sacrificial system was about Jesus. The psalms were about Jesus. Isaiah's Suffering Servant was about Jesus. Jeremiah's new covenant was about Jesus. Zechariah's humble, donkey-mounted, coming king was about Jesus. Daniel's son of man was about Jesus. It's about Jesus. The entire Old Testament exists to set the stage for Jesus and the New Testament announces His entrance.

In short, the Bible was inspired to present Christ. And this Christ called the Old Testament "Scripture." As such, He regarded those books as inspired. It was the work of God's Spirit to prepare us for Christ. Further, Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to inspire the New Testament. This is where inspiration belongs – in the larger story of salvation. In this story God brings His saving Word into our midst. Scripture, as God's written Word, records this story and we celebrate its fulfillment in Christ the enfleshed Word and its continuance in and through the proclaimed Word (sermon), poured Word (Baptism), and administered Word (Holy Communion). God's story continues in our midst. His Spirit is still actively at work through His Word to bring salvation to the world.

So back to your question – how do we know the anonymous books and chapters of the Bible are inspired? They present Christ. Now, if space allowed, we could add some of the supporting arguments that the church has included such as the New Testament's repeated use of the Psalms as "Scripture," Israel's use of the books of the Old Testament as "Scripture," and the early church's use of the Old and New Testament books in worship, but for now it's enough that we see how inspiration fits into the great story of God's saving work through which God brings His saving Word to us.

Dear people of Zion,
Below is a letter from Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison, president of our church body, to the pastors of our Synod regarding the potential outcome of the Supreme Court's ruling on the legality of same-sex marriage in America. I am sharing it with you because he mentions potential effects on pastors and congregations. Please take time to read his words, consider them, and be prepared for what may come.
In Christ, Pastor Conner

THE LUTHERAN CHURCH MISSOURI SYNOD

Dear brothers,
In the face of another radical cultural shift — a denial of God and His creation, a rejection of Christ, the Ten Commandments and God-given natural law (Romans 1) — a great Lutheran responded with truths that are also true for our times:

> *The lie is the death of man, his temporal and his eternal death. The lie kills nations. The most powerful nations of the world have been laid waste because of their lies. History knows of no more unsettling sight than the judgment rendered upon the people of an advanced culture who have rejected the truth and are swallowed upon in a sea of lies. Where this happens, as in the case of declining pagan antiquity, religion and law, poetry and philosophy, life in marriage and family, in the state and society — in short, one sphere of life after another falls sacrifice to the power and curse of the lie. Where man can no longer bear the truth, he cannot live without the lie. Where man denies that he and others are dying, the terrible dissolution [of his culture] is held up as a glorious ascent, and decline is viewed as an advance, the likes of which has never been experienced. (Hermann Sasse, Union and Confession, 1936)*

In just a few weeks, the Supreme Court is expected to rule on the legality of same-sex marriage in America and roll out the implications of that ruling for individual states. I expect the ruling to create an alleged constitutional right to same-sex marriage, contrary to God's created orders, natural law and the inerrant Scriptures. This will be the earnest beginning of a very long struggle for faithful Christians who will, more and more, be driven from participation in the culture. We shall come to know and understand parts of the Word of God like never before. "But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:20).

Brothers, the battle has already been won. Our Lord, Jesus Christ, has already defeated the foe. Satan surrendered at Golgotha. It is finished. But what do we do? If the Supreme Court rules that same-sex marriage is legal in every state or must be recognized in every state, what is our response?

We stand fast (2 Thess. 2:15). We live in and by our Savior, who calls us to stay the course, to repent of our sin, to be in the Word of God and in prayer. We redouble our teaching on God's gift of marriage. And we show love and mercy to those harmed by the dissolution of God's ordering of marriage and family, intended for protection for all. We take legal action where absolutely necessary. "Public remedy, made through the office of the public official, is not condemned, but is commanded and is God's work, according to Paul (Romans 13)" (Apology XVI 59).

The plan fits the nature of the Church: she is enduring and eternal. She speaks Christ's forgiveness and peace to men and women struggling with same-sex attraction and heterosexual attraction alike, in and out of season. She doesn't do flash-in-the-pan or drive-by ministry. She works in the world for the long haul. She doesn't change her tune or stop her singing. She keeps telling real people about a real Jesus, from black-robed Supreme Court justices to the protestors on the steps of that building to the young people in college watching the ruling unfold to those of us who never imagined we would see this seismic shift in our lifetime. And she lives to demonstrate the mercy and love of Christ (1 John 3:15ff).

Most importantly, she speaks of the One who came for sinners — all sinners — and of the One who showed His love for us by dying for us. She simply stays the course.

That's why you, dear brothers in the Office, will need our prayers in the days ahead. And you will have them. Legal marriage may be redefined, and outcomes we never imagined will occur. But these don't surprise or alarm us. The crumbling culture merely proves that what began in the Garden of Eden is still prevalent today, that we are sinners among sinners, that we are all in need of Christ's mercy and grace. This world is wending its way toward the end (Matthew 25). The story ends well (Revelation 7). That is what those in the pew and those disenchanted by the people in the pew need to hear, and will always need to hear, the most.

Beyond the theological consequences of this ruling, however, there are also practical implications, and I urge you to consider the following:

(1) The Synod's legal team is carefully examining the potential ramifications of this case. It will likely be a messy ruling that will require time to unpack. We may discover that there is ultimately no constitutional protection for the Synod, its institutions, you or your congregation. We don't know, but we will be reporting back to you with our findings.

(2) Your congregation should give serious thought to obtaining counsel from your own attorney. Also consider utilizing the Synod's document on marriage policies for member congregations,*** which offers sample provisions limiting the use of church property to marriages that are consistent with LCMS beliefs. The day may come when even this legal protection will not be enough, but it may assist you and your congregational leadership in forestalling issues as long as possible.

(3) Be prepared to discuss what marriage will look like in the future. Will LCMS pastors eventually be forced, as agents of the state, to perform same-sex marriages? If that happens, will we be prepared to let the state perform the legal marriage ceremony, while we as pastors provide a religious ceremony for those marriages that are in keeping with our confession of faith as Lutheran Christians? We must have these discussions as pastors and as a Synod, and we may even need to make decisions at the next Synod convention in the summer of 2016.

(4) Know that I, as Synod president, stand with you. What protections will the Synod or even the Constitution offer you? I don't know. But here is what I am personally sure of: The Gospel is enduring. It never changes. Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever. We as pastors are called to repent and to be faithful to Him — and to His Gospel — alone. Will we be fined for not performing same-sex marriages? Potentially. Will we be thrown in jail? Maybe. A recently deceased Catholic bishop (Cardinal George) described what I believe we shall now begin to face: "I expect to die in bed, my successor will die in prison and his successor will die a martyr in the public square. His successor will pick up the shards of a ruined society and slowly help rebuild civilization, as the church has done so often in human history."

Make no mistake, the battle has been won. The devil has been defeated. The Victor reigns triumphant in mercy, love and truth. The Gospel knows no limits, but proclaims the gracious kingdom of our Lord to all, through Christ's Word and Sacraments.

The temptation will be to run out into the melee, to abandon the home front or to give up all together. But we are called instead to repent, to be ready, to move confidently into the future, come what may. We speak the truth in love to all. We share Christ's forgiveness with each person He sets in our path.

And the Lord will work all things for good, even these trying times. He is faithful, brothers. He will do it.

In Christ,
Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, President, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

*** *This document and more can be found on the synod's webpage: http://www.lcms.org/resources/churchadministration Scroll down to "Marriage Polices for Congregations" and click on the link.*

Ladies Guild

May Highlights

Zion Guild opened the session with the LWML pledge. Pastor Conner led with prayer and gave a devotion on a hymn dealing with the Ascension. Margaret Backhaus followed with a reading entitled "Be Somebody." The mite box offering and prayer were offered.

President Cheral Buhr opened the meeting in the name of the Triune God. The secretary called the roll with 14 members being present. The April minutes were read and approved. Correspondence included thank you notes from Ellie Menz, IOWAY director, for the donation of 30 quilts for homeless veterans and from Camp Okoboji for the donation made for items needed for the dining room at camp.

Treasurer, Barb Anderson, and kitchen treasurer, Darlene Vollstedt each gave a report.

President Buhr announced the birthdays and anniversaries of members and associates. Human Care Chairman, Audrey Roe reported on the delivery of 94 quilts to LWR in Sac City. She said 182 quilts had been tied this year. She reminded members that quilt tops assembled for sewing together for next year's tying are in the quilt closet with information posted for home sewing.

Bev Grundmeier, Sunshine Chair reported sending one sympathy card and 2 get well cards. There were no circle reports, but Circle # 1 has the next funeral and the June coffees.

Information was shared by members attending the Spring Rally. The speaker for the day had made several trips to Haiti. She shared the extreme poverty of the people there. In response to the need, a new outreach called Education to Change Haiti has been established. For $250.00 a year sent to Lutheran Church Charities a child will receive tuition, shoes, books, uniform, backpack, and a meal. All Haitian schools charge tuition. If a child does not have the money for tuition, he cannot go to school.

The graduation breakfast has 13 graduates and families invited for May 17th. Guild will be providing a bookmark with the graduate's confirmation verse on it to each student. Sandra Vahl is chairing the breakfast with help from guild members. Plaza Bingo on May 22nd will have Barb Anderson as chair with Sandra Vahl, Charlene Hickman and Judy Bald as worker.

The June Guild meeting will have hostesses Connie Ahrendsen and Judy Bald.

There will need to be morning snacks for workers on the remodeling of the church beginning on June 9th. Margaret Backhaus and Sue Puck volunteered to help get it set up. All church members are asked to sign up to bring snacks. It is expected that the work will be ongoing on Tuesdays through Saturdays through the month of September.

The meeting adjourned with the Lord's Prayer and the table prayer.

Charles, Cheryl, Caleb, Caitlin, Carissa, and Cassie Ferry
Missionaries to Indonesia

Selamat Paska! (Indonesian for "Happy Easter!")

Alleluia, Christ is risen! April was a month of travels for the Ferry family, jumping right back in to what the Lord has called us to do here in Southeast Asia. In order to care for the emerging congregation in Singapore, we spent most of Holy Week in that small country. We gathered around our Lord's Word and Sacraments for Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and the Great Vigil of Easter on Holy Saturday. Then we joined our Alleluias with yours on Easter Sunday, celebrating Jesus' resurrection from the dead. We were struck by how much of a "non-event" Easter is in the East. How people are missing the greatest news the world has ever heard!

Upon returning to Jakarta from Singapore, the opportunity arose quickly for me to travel to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. I could join some LCMS Life activities going on there, meet the Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Malaysia and start renewing a working relationship with him and his church body. I was warmly welcomed, and hope to continue forming and strengthening that relationship as we discover ways that we can work together for the good of people everywhere.

The family was busy preparing for our next adventure while I was gone: a trip to Sri Lanka to join Pastor Roger, Amy, and Eli James in their field of service. These were the folks who came to stay with the kids last month during Cheryl's medical emergency, so we were anxious to see them again during times that were not so distressing. The Jameses and the Ferrys were both needing some time with familiar community, and this trip allowed us to have that. We toured around the capital city of Colombo, and spent several days in the "up-country" of tea plantations. I got to preach a sermon for the Lankan Lutheran Church, and to be in several Lutheran homes there.

SELAMAT

Now settled back in Indonesia for a while, we're anticipating hosting the Bishop of the GKLI in our home for a few days. We're also getting some things set for the upcoming renewal of our visas, and to celebrate living in Asia for one whole year. Thank you for your continued prayers on our behalf. We are grateful for all the messages we received after the recent miscarriage, and take great comfort in knowing people are remembering us before our Lord's throne of grace. No matter what happens here, Christ is risen indeed... and that changes everything.

Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgiving

- Thanksgiving for all our partners who shower us with generous support so we can continue working in this land!
- Thanksgiving for the joy of knowing Christ has died, risen, and will come again, no matter what may happen.
- For all those who travel, that they might be kept safe by the Lord's angels and return to their homes in peace.
- For Cheryl and the Ferry kids that they might grow, learn, and have great joy in their life here in Asia.
- That our gracious Lord Jesus would grant His wisdom and grace, so many would be blessed by the work we're doing in Indonesia and in Singapore.

To support our work financially, you may send a tax-deductible gift to:
The LCMS, P.O. Box 790089, St. Louis, MO 63179
Or
Mission Central, 40718 Highway E-16, Mapleton, IA 51034
Make checks payable to **The LCMS**, and mark them "Support of Charles Ferry." Gifts can also be given securely online through our online giving page at *www.lcms.org/ferry*.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,
Alleluia, Christ is risen!

Thank You

Here in Indonesia (and in Singapore, for that matter), the joy we know at Easter is largely unknown. People still strive to work their way to happiness, to peace, and to glory.

That's why it's so important that you've partnered with us in our ongoing work. We were touched by your recent donation to Mission Central for the work we're doing here in Southeast Asia. Thank you for your generosity and your trust as you continue your partnership with us.

We take great comfort in knowing that you're with us in this, and that we can work together to bring the Gospel to such wonderful people here, who are still largely in the dark about the incredible things that God has done for them and for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. Thank you!

The Ferry Family --Rev. Charles Ferry, *Indonesia,* LCMS International

The family of Mrs. Fink cannot say enough thanks for the support, sharing of memories, work and food and financial contributions each of you provided for the Appreciation Benefit. It was amazing to see the amount of love and gratitude you have for our mom. She often spoke of her Preschool children and the fun, exciting things they were learning and doing while never complaining or mentioning how much time she spent planning, even though we knew she stayed up late and got up early to get things done.. She truly loved her job and was honored to be able to share Jesus' love with little ones. The gifts continue to come in and even as I'm back in Des Moines, several times over the last few weeks, individuals, who I didn't know even knew my mom, have stopped me to share a story of my mom and her work for Christ. Thank you, we pray for the right person to come into the teaching position to carry on her love of Jesus and sharing that with children.

Jessica & Nick Pilling, Ron Fink, and Jeff & Michelle Fink & Brooklynn

ZioN Lutheran Preschool
Manning, Iowa
Christ Centered... Child Focused... Family Connecting

Above are some of our fun memories from our preschool year: Dad's night, Jesus time with Mrs. Fink, and our closing program. Thank you for supporting your Zion preschool!

!Amigos En Cristo!
News from IDW Hispanic Ministry
Missionary/Pastor Daniel Vogel

Iowa District West, LCMS
Year 11, Issue 6, June 2015

Confirmation Twice and Twice a Blessing: Jazmin and Moises Mendoza are adopted twins and students at Zion School in Denison. They have had quite a life in their 14 years. After a life in which they had little control over the decisions made for them, last month they each made a powerful decision. They shared their Christian faith and witness before friends and members of Zion Lutheran and also our church, Amigos en Cristo. They were confirmed with 15 other youth from Zion. It was a wonderful witness to the community of God's work in all the world. We thank Zion church and school for the relationship that we have with them to teach our children the Good News of Jesus as Lord and Savior.

Mother's Day: Sunday, May 10 was an historic Mother's Day as it fell on the same day in the U.S. and also in Mexico and other Hispanic countries! Following the service, our mothers received flowers and the men made banana splits for the ladies. It was a great day.

Pro-Life Pastors: The Crawford County Right to Life held their annual Pro-Life Conference in April. I counted 8 LCMS pastors and a vicar from the Denison area in attendance in this defense of the unborn and human life. It was a special day with about 50 people from the community participating. Pastor Chris Maronde, formerly of Kiron, now pastoring in Lincoln, Nebraska, was one of the speakers. God bless our leaders. At the same time I am trying to organize a Hispanic pro-life group in Denison. Sadly, this most important issue of protecting human life at all ages and stages is not part of the concern of the Hispanic community even though Hispanics tend to be pro-life. Unfortunately, abortion providers also tend to target minority groups. Please pray for this as next month we hope to have a meeting of area Hispanic pastor and leaders.

My Tyson Chaplaincy at the Plant in Denison: Last month as I visited with workers on lunch break, I noticed a worker who seemed to be upset. I approached her and asked if I could help. She started to cry and told me how worried she was about her husband who also works at Tyson. He has a number of health issues but continues to work and not see a doctor. I asked her if she had a church and a pastor that could help her. "Yes," she said but hadn't been to church for a long time. I asked if I could call her pastor for her so he could visit her and her husband. She gave me permission so I did speak to her pastor who happened to be from one of our Lutheran churches. She was so nervous and anxious that I took her to the HR office to recommend that she be allowed to go home for the day. Thankfully she was allowed to leave and the next time I saw her she was much more hopeful about her work and husband as he is visiting the doctor.

PLEASE PRAY: + For the blessings this past month: presenting at the Denison/Mapleton Circuit meeting; and attending the Denison Ministerial Meeting. + For our spring evangelistic campaign to more effectively reach the Denison Hispanic community. + For my work as a Chaplain at Tyson and for opportunities to share the Gospel. + For our Hispanic Mission Festival at Mission Central this month. + *In thanksgiving for the mission hearts of the many individuals and congregations of Iowa District West who monthly support the Lord's work among Hispanic immigrants in Denison and in our other three Hispanic missions.*

Please Continue to Support our new church: For our mission friends financial support checks should now be sent to: Amigos en Cristo Lutheran Church: 1004 S. 1 Ave., Denison, Iowa, 51442

NEW E-MAIL: E-mail me at: daniel.vogel@ ziondenison.org

TO CONTACT ME:
Rev. Daniel Vogel
32678 Aspen Ave. Manning, Iowa, 51455
1-712-653-2354 or Cell: 712-309-1292 or
E-mail me at: Dan.Vogel@idwlcms.org

June Birthdays and Anniversaries @ Zion

1. McKensie Bess
   Monica Christensen
   Jonathan Conner
2. Janice Ress
   Autumn Winter
4. Kelli Grimm
5. Warren Puck
6. Angela Albertsen
   Brandon Ranniger
7. Jarod Gruhn
8. Jacob Ewoldt
   Jett Sellner
   David Vetter
9. Jon Saunders
10. Amy Bradley
    Luke Doyel
    Deanna Hagedorn
    Judy Jacobsen
    Steve Page
11. Luke Ramsey
    Nolan Ramsey
12. Janet Plumb
13. Nick Backhaus
    Travis Neumann
14. Jessica Winter
15. Ann Ranniger
    JoAnn Wittrock
16. Michael Gore
    Greg Peters
    Ashley Wulf
17. Lily Doyel
    Lucille Ranniger
    Dale Reinke
18. Dan Kerkhoff
19. Wilma Bogatzke
    Daniel Vogel
20. Aubrey Alexander
    Lorrell Borkowski
21. Rodney Kurth
    Mason Vonnahme
22. Duncan Hilsabeck
23. Brooklynn Booth
    Mary Grimm
    Matthew Vogel
24. Holly Borkowski
    Inez Mahnke
25. Jared Rosener
26. Shirley Ahrendsen
    Russell Bruhn
28. Jordynne Bauer
29. Hannah Willison

Official Acts in May

Baptisms: Austin Johnson; 5/3/15; Pastor Conner
Rylan Stoberl, son of Brian and Rachel Stoberl; 5/17/15; Pastor Conner
Funerals: Jeff Joens; 5/22/15; Pastor Riggert

If we missed or misspelled your name, please inform the church office.

1. Gordon & Donna Schmarzo
2. Duane & Janice Monson
6. Ken & Gerry Stripling
7. Floyd & Donna Forman
10. Stan & Nancy Baack
    Ryan & Heidi Crawford
11. Lyle & Arlene Bald
    Lyle & Marlene Borkowski
15. Lynn & Sonia Nulle
    Dan & Lois Peters
24. Jeff & Amy Bradley
    Curt & Debra Janssen
25. John & Barb Anderson
    Sam & Judy Musfeldt
27. Jerry & Carla Backhaus
29. Craig & Luann Langel
30. Albert & Sandra Vahl

In Our Prayers

Athena Bess, Lyle Borkowski, Franklin Mohr, Walt Noelck, Mandi Sandage, Dave Grundmeier, Judy Musfeldt, Heather Kusel, Glen Eickman, Jeanie Petersen, Robert and Ruth Hansen, Sherri Steffes, Susan Lamb, Pearl Kurth (Conrad Kurth's mom), Myra Wittrock, Duane Karstens, Steve Rutz (Karl Rutz's Brother), Natalie Mason