



## A Word from Pastor Schielke

Gnosticism – What is it, and who cares? Part 2.

Last month I introduced the teachings of Gnosticism (pronounced – NOSS-ti-cism). A very simple summary of Gnostic thought is: spirit good, matter evil. This basic tenet underlies most of the other Christian heresies that Gnosticism promotes.

You should think about Gnosticism not so much as a religion but as a general way of seeing the world. It is a non-Christian way of explaining the relationship between the spiritual and the physical world. Very few people would claim to be Gnostics or even know what that means. You won't find a local Gnostic congregation by searching on Google. However, ideas from Gnostic thought are pervasive in our culture today.

For example, you've probably heard the sentiment when someone dies that they are now "an angel." The person has escaped the prison of the body and is now purely a spirit. This is a thoroughly gnostic idea. We believe, teach, and confess that upon our deaths we are not

"done" with our bodies. No. They will be resurrected and made perfect and glorious at the resurrection of the dead when our bodies and souls will be reunited to live for all eternity with our Lord. We understand both the material and spiritual to be part of God's **good** creation but also that sin ruined both the spiritual and physical world. Our bodies and souls need to be redeemed by Jesus' death and resurrection.

We see gnostic ideas most clearly today in our culture's desire to find one's "authentic" or "true" self. All kinds of "lifestyle choices" are present on the internet and in social media. Political ideologies, sexual perversions, physical transformations, and the like that many would never have considered are now only a mouse click or screen tap away. If we see or hear something that we feel might be right for us, we are taught that it is our right even our duty to indulge whatever decision our heart embraces even if that means going against tradition, our family values, or reality itself!

Gnostic spirituality is also

manifest when we are encouraged to look inwardly to discover "truth" about God. Gnosticism understands that within each of us is a divine inner "spark" that we can tap into to connect to God. Our feelings and emotions can lead us to identify where God is at work in our lives and how to best serve Him. Contrast that with Biblical Christianity. The Bible teaches that God comes to us from the outside. We are spiritually dead inside without the power of the Holy Spirit to enliven us. He comes to us from the outside, through His Word, and in His ordained sacraments. God is at work spiritually through the sensate things of this world: hearing the word, touching the water, eating the bread and the wine. God cares about us so much spiritually and physically, that He took on flesh in the person of the Son.

Next time will explore some Bible passages in which the Lord inspired the Biblical writers to specifically teach against the ideas of Gnosticism.

"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."  
**1 Corinthians 15:57**

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**The Formula of Concord** - The Formula of Concord (FC) was the last of the confessional documents written by the Lutherans in the 16th century. Finished in 1577, the FC consists of twelve articles presented in two parts. The first part, the Epitome, is a brief presentation of each point of doctrine and the controversy surrounding it while the Solid Declaration presents a more detailed discussion. Over a dozen authors contributed portions of draft versions of the FC, but the most influential authors of the final document were Jakob Andrea and Martin Chemnitz. The need for the FC arose after the death of Martin Luther in 1546. Over time, the Lutherans became divided over several points of doctrine. Several political peace treaties also forced the Lutherans to entertain and accept certain points of Reformed theology which had been developing in Switzerland. Thus, the FC was pivotal in clarifying the Lutheran position over and against both the Roman Catholic position and more significantly, over the Reformed position. It is the FC that most clearly distinguishes Lutheran teaching on several important points and against the various Protestant bodies we see around us even today. Over the next months, you will find the articles of the Epitome of the Formula of Concord in our newsletter. It's good for all of us to have at least some familiarity with this important doctrinal statement.

### Summary Content, Rule and Norm

According to which all dogmas should be judged, and the erroneous teachings [controversies] that have occurred should be decided and explained in a Christian way.

<sup>1</sup>1. We believe, teach, and confess that the sole rule and standard according to which all dogmas together with [all] teachers should be estimated and judged are the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament alone, as it is written Ps. 119:105: Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. And St. Paul: Though an angel from heaven preach any other gospel unto you, let him be accursed, Gal. 1:8.

<sup>2</sup>Other writings, however, of ancient or modern teachers, whatever name they bear, must not be regarded as equal to the Holy Scriptures, but all of them together be subjected to them, and should not be received otherwise or further than as witnesses, [which are to show] in what manner after the time of the apostles, and at what places, this [pure] doctrine of the prophets and apostles was preserved.

<sup>3</sup>2. And because directly after the times of the apostles, and even while they were still living, false teachers and heretics arose, and symbols, i. e., brief, succinct [categorical] confessions, were composed against them in the early Church, which were regarded as the unanimous, universal Christian faith and confession of the orthodox and true Church, namely, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed, we pledge ourselves to them, and hereby reject all heresies and dogmas which, contrary to them, have been introduced into the Church of God.

<sup>4</sup>3. As to the schisms in matters of faith, however, which have occurred in our time, we regard as the unanimous consensus and declaration of our Christian faith and confession, especially against the Papacy and its false worship, idolatry, superstition, and against other sects, as the symbol of our time, the First, Unaltered Augsburg Confession, delivered to the Emperor Charles V at Augsburg in the year 1530, in the great Diet, together with its Apology, and the Articles composed at Smalcald in the year 1537, and subscribed at that time by the chief theologians.

<sup>5</sup>And because such matters concern also the laity and the salvation of their souls, we also confess the Small and Large Catechisms of Dr. Luther, as they are included in Luther's works, as the Bible of the laity, wherein everything is comprised which is treated at greater length in Holy Scripture, and is necessary for a Christian man to know for his salvation.

<sup>6</sup>To this direction, as above announced, all doctrines are to be conformed, and what is, contrary thereto is to be rejected and condemned, as opposed to the unanimous declaration of our faith.

<sup>7</sup>In this way the distinction between the Holy Scriptures of the Old and of the New Testament and all other writings is preserved, and the Holy Scriptures alone remain the only judge, rule, and standard, according to which, as the only test-stone, all dogmas shall and must be discerned and judged, as to whether they are good or evil, right or wrong.

<sup>8</sup>But the other symbols and writings cited are not judges, as are the Holy Scriptures, but only a testimony and declaration of the faith, as to how at any time the Holy Scriptures have been understood and explained in the articles in controversy in the Church of God by those then living, and how the opposite dogma was rejected and condemned [by what arguments the dogmas conflicting with the Holy Scripture were rejected and condemned].

**Victory in Christ Lutheran Church**  
June 2023

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Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Studay / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon	5	6 Women's Bible Study 1:30 p.m.	7	8	9	10 Men's Bible Study 8:30 a.m.
11 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Studay / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon	12 VBS 9 a.m. - noon	13 VBS 9 a.m. - noon	14 VBS 9 a.m. - noon	15 VBS 9 a.m. - noon	16 VBS 9 a.m. - noon	17
18 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Studay / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon	19	20 Women's Bible Study 1:30 p.m.	21	22	23	24 Men's Bible Study 8:30 a.m.
25 Divine Service 10 a.m Bible Studay / Sunday School 11 a.m. Lunch noon	26	27 Women's Bible Study 1:30 p.m.	28	29	30	

**DIVING INTO THE**



**TEN COMMANDMENTS**

Join us for our "Diving into the Ten Commandments" VBS as we discover the meaning behind each of the Ten Commandments and learn that they are good gifts from God!



K-5th grades

Register @ [viclutheranchurch.org/vbs](http://viclutheranchurch.org/vbs)



**June Birthdays:**

3 CJ Teague

3 John Schober

24 Kara Rohloff

29 Tim Rohloff

29 Brenda VanDekerkhove

**For 2023, I would like to challenge every member of this congregation to read or continue reading through the Bible in one year. The Bible readings for June and part of July are listed below.**

June 1: Job 1-4

June 2: Job 5- 7

June 3: Job 8-10

June 4: Job 11-13

June 5: Job 14-16

June 6: Job 17-20

June 7: Job 21-23

June 8: Job 24-28

June 9: Job 29-31

June 10: Job 32-34

June 11: Job 35-37

June 12: Job 38-39

June 13: Job 40-42

June 14: Psalms 1-8

June 15: Psalms 9-16

June 16: Psalms 17-20

June 17: Psalms 21-25

June 18: Psalms 26-31

June 19: Psalms 32-35

June 20: Psalms 36-39

June 21: Psalms 40-45

June 22: Psalms 46-50

June 23: Psalms 51-57

June 24: Psalms 58-65

June 25: Psalms 66-69

June 26: Psalms 70-73

June 27: Psalms 74-77

June 28: Psalms 78-79

June 29: Psalms 80-85

June 30: Psalms 86-89

July 1: Psalms 90-95

July 2: Psalms 96-102

July 3: Psalms 103-105

July 4: Psalms 106-107

July 5: Psalms 108-114

July 6: Psalms 115-118

July 7: Psalm 119

July 8: Psalms 120-125

July 9: Psalms 126-132

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