

The DNA of the LCMS

Do not Lutherans, by definition, have the same DNA? Are LCMS and LCMC members together on Scripture except for ordaining women?

(You may know fine Missouri pastors, but one has to proceed by LCMS formal documents. Moreover, we need to be alert to the fact that the LCMS is currently torn by an internal struggle between the 52% conservatives and the 48% ultraconservatives).

The LCMS is not a member of the LWF because the LWF only requires the Augsburg Confession of 1530 (CA), although the Batak Lutherans were allowed to write their own confession.¹

The LCMS requires Scripture and the complete *Book of Concord* and not in the way Chapter 2 of the ELCA Constitution requires Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

The LCMS so-called *Brief Statement* of 1932 and *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* of 1973 (both available online) are quasi-confessional documents requiring that one conform to LCMS doctrine about Scriptural inerrancy—including historical, geological, astronomical, and geographical matters.²

Inerrancy has been, of course, defined variously. The LCMS has carefully spelled out what it means by inerrancy. Included, for the LCMS, is the simultaneity of the formal (inspired inerrancy) and material (justification by faith alone) principles of Scripture. The LCMS view of Scripture undercuts the whole Lutheran enterprise.³

For the LCMS ordaining women is clearly against Scripture. No exceptions.

The LCMS mandates the third use of the law. (Forde militates against the third use of the law. There you have the controversy in a nutshell.)

Those holding the third use (sometimes calling such laws “evangelical counsels”) claim that the Bible has specific directives (laws) for the Christian life, including structures for the church and ministry.

Those holding to only two uses of the law claim that the Bible is an important witness to how Christians have used reason in their time to work out life in the Kingdom on the left, but that this is not revelation, a matter of salvation, and that the first use of the law is what governs life, including the Christian life, in this age.

¹ The LWF is a federation, not a communion—in spite of what the LWF said about itself at its Curitiba, Brazil, Assembly, and therefore the CA is enough—even some Moravians accept the CA.

² See excerpts from the 1973 *Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles* in the critique of the LCMS Study Bible found at the end of this PDF file.

³ Oswald Bayer has shown how for Luther the formal principle must not be prior to or simultaneous with the material principle—or the centrality of the Word of the cross is lost. See Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, chapter 4: “What makes the Bible become Holy Scripture?” (Simply put, the huge error in making an inerrant text the prior miracle, prior to the scandals of particularity and holiness/sin, is that revelation in the cross and resurrection is merely derivative.)

The first use is to restrain evil, to do no harm (Romans 13:10). The second use is the affirmation that the law always accuses, that all our works, even our best works, are totally caught in sin, even as Christians.

The Missouri mindset is not confined to the LCMS, but is basic to those called conservative evangelicals, and therefore many in LCMC and the NALC. It becomes evident that “Biblicism”⁴ (which is hardly different from the fundamentalism of conservative evangelicals generally) is the underlying issue.⁵ Thus those in LCMC who think we could work with the LCMS because we really are conservatives together, except for the blip about women's ordination, misunderstand the practical consequences of the LCMS' required doctrine of inerrancy.

⁴ Biblicism is the presupposition that what is found in the “canon” is “close enough” to a video tape of words and events, and that as Bayer writes, “a preestablished harmony exists within Scripture, which is to be read in a flat way and which does not have a central message” (Bayer, *Martin Luther's Theology*, p.77).

⁵ There is no “clear,” “simple,” “self-evident” approach to or understanding of historical (or other) materials, including Scripture. To claim or even infer such is a trick of the Evil One.