

1  **A READING AND DISCUSSION STUDY OF THE AUGSBURG CONFESSION**

SESSION 4: GOOD ORDER (ARTICLES XIV-XVII)

QUOTES FROM "SO WHAT'S A LUTHERAN DON'T CHA KNOW?" BY DJ LURA

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4  **ARTICLE XIV: CONCERNING CHURCH ORDER**

- 1  • For Lutherans, there is a difference between a "calling" and a "call"
  - We are the priesthood of all believers and as such, we all have callings from God.
  - For Lutherans, you don't get to be a pastor just because you feel like it; because you feel a "calling". You must also be "called" by a particular church.
- 2  • A "calling" means a sense to do the will of God in all of the roles of your life.
  - "Call": "This is a public Call by the Holy Spirit through the people of God (the wider church and also a local congregation) who have "called" you to serve in the role of Pastor in order to rightly preach and teach the Gospel and administer the Sacraments, on behalf of Jesus Christ."

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6  **ARTICLE XV: CONCERNING CHURCH RITES**

- 1  • Example of a party and the role of the cake.
  - Tradition is fine, but when you start hearing, "We have to do it this way because we've always done it this way," we're focusing on the cake rather than the party
- 2  • The reformers rediscovered that the "party" was the good news of Jesus Christ given for us for the forgiveness of sins, but the medieval church became bogged down in "cakes:" church rites, holy days, fasting days, etc.
  - These "cakes" were necessary to please God and for salvation.

7  **ARTICLE XV: CONCERNING CHURCH RITES**

- 1  • The Reformers believed that the "cakes" were taking away from the party and should be discontinued.
  - "Church tradition is fine as long as it does not add or take away from God's amazing grace in Jesus Christ alone for you."
- 2  • "Tradition can be great when it points to the "party," or more specifically, the host of the "party," Jesus Christ himself.
  - "Tradition helps to pass on the faith, it isn't the faith itself. If you want to be at the party, look to Christ alone, not the cake!"

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10  **ARTICLE XVI: CONCERNING PUBLIC ORDER AND SECULAR GOVERNMENT**

- 1  • "Pastor is doing the Lord's work!"
  - "Politicians are doing the Lord's work!"
  - You hear the first, but not the second: however this kind of thinking has led some to think that a

truly Christian life cannot happen without a separation from the work of the world.

- 2 • For Lutherans, this has never been the case. “Instead, we teach and confess that to truly live your Christian calling means ENTERING into the needs of the world such as daily work, family and even politics.”
- “To put it another way, there is NO SEPARATION between Church and State for a Lutheran.”

11  **ARTICLE XVI: CONCERNING PUBLIC ORDER AND SECULAR GOVERNMENT**

- 1 • “We believe that God has instituted government for the sake of a sinful world, to maintain order and administer justice for all people. Therefore, Christians (if called to it) should be teachers, mayors, governors, soldiers, police officers, etc. because God has instituted secular authority as a necessity in this world.”
- 2 • Luther and the Two Kingdoms: 1) God’s spiritual kingdom (right hand) and 2) God’s secular kingdom (left hand) for order in a broken world.
- We can’t be Christians on Sundays only—daily we engage our callings in the world and are living out our faith as we do our work.

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13  **ARTICLE XVII: CONCERNING THE RETURN OF CHRIST TO JUDGMENT**

- 1 • Although it appears that death will have the final word for each one of us, Jesus has conquered death, the devil and evil.
- Still, there will be a reckoning when evil will be punished and brought to an end; in God’s time, not ours.
- 2 • “Eschatology” is the study of end times and Christians have been offering views for 2,000 years.
- 1) Lutherans are not Universalists: we don’t pretend to know who will be saved and who will not; our job is to announce the good news and then let the Holy Spirit work.

14  **ARTICLE XVII: CONCERNING THE RETURN OF CHRIST TO JUDGMENT**

- 1 • 2) Lutherans do not believe in a worldly kingdom of the righteous: until Christ returns in Judgment, evil will remain in the world influencing all nations and peoples.
- “Warning: don’t trust anyone who tells you it’s time to ‘wipe out the ungodly.’ They most like have not been talking to Jesus.”
- 2 • “Outside of the assurance that Christ will come again to judge the living and the dead, Lutherans are leery of any prediction about the end of the world.”
- “Our job is not to worry about the end of all things. Instead our job is to live in God’s grace through faith, taking care of our neighbors, doing our callings, carrying our cross, and living as the good creation God made us to be.

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16  **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

1. The word “ordained” is based on the word “order.” How does the training evaluation, and endorsement of candidates for ordination by the larger church help to produce a ‘rightly ordered’ PUBLIC office of ministry?
2. How does 1 Timothy 3:1-13 reflect a concern for good order? What are some expectations listed for those in leadership positions in the church? Ought Christian leaders held to a higher standard than laity?
3. How does God “call” a person to public ministry in the church? How would a person know? Is this a private or public event? What MEANS does God use to extend this call?

17  **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

4. Why do you think Article XV says that church ceremonies "ought to be observed" IF they "may be observed without sin"? What kind of things would that exclude?
5. What good is there in practicing human ceremonies in the church if they are not instituted by God? What potential danger is there in such things? Can you give an example of each?
6. What is meant in Galatians 4:8-11 by "observing special days, and onths, and seasons and years"? Does this passage of Scripture contradict Article XV or reinforce it? Explain.

18  **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

7. Do you know of any individual or group thareject participation or service in civil government on the basis of their faith? On what basis do Lutherans believe that good citizenship is a way of living out one's faith? What does God have to do with all this?
8. How involved should Christians be in secular politics? Should churches or their leaders take public stands on political issues? If not, why not? If so what issues should these be?

19  **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

9. Romans 13:1 says that "ALL authorities that exist have been instituted by God." Does this mean that we must always obey every authority? When would YOU disobey a authority? What consequences should we expect if we stand against authorities we believe are wrong?
10. What does the word "elect" mean? To whom does "the elect" in Article SVII and the Scriptures refer? What destiny awaits the elect?
11. Is there a connection between Article XVII (on Christ's Return) and the three previous articles? How are the condemnations at the end of this article both based on Christ's authority?

20  **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

12. Is there anything here that speaks to the modern concept of the so-called "Rapture" that some Christians believe in?
- 13.

21  **FOR NEXT WEEK: SESSION 5: DO'S DON'T'S AND CAN'TS (ARTICLES XVIII-XX)**

- Read Articles XVIII-XX (18-20) in the Augsburg Confession
- Reflect on and answer "Initial Observations," "Scripture Lessons," and "Discussion Questions"