

*In Nomine Jesu*  
**Rev. Stephen H. Funck**  
3201 Hiss Avenue  
Baltimore MD 21234-1724

## Historic Faith for the Twenty first Century

### Some issues for Today

I choose "Historic Faith for the Twenty first Century" as a slogan for my Living Water Letterhead. Lutherans pride themselves on being a "Confessional Church", faithfully proclaiming and following the historic faith. That is not and never was a principle of the radical reformers. They follow the Spirit of the day. Lutherans follow the Spirit that always has been. This nation, our members and clergy swim in a reformed sea. People by nature want to fit in. So Lutherans are under pressure to conform. It looks so right, with all the Bible passages in the evils of this present day. It is what the other churches are saying. The Roman Church is a bit in-between: on the one hand with a historic touch and on the other hand sensitive to the winds of the day. It has less fixed root than the Lutheran.

What is the spirit of this age that is affecting you, your people, our denomination? The media, the spirit of the day, keeps bringing "New" issues to fore. Some good, some not so good. Slavery, women's suffrage, temperance, child labor, communism, add your favorite good or bad issue.

It is tricky. We are influenced by these and more, fundamental, evangelical, orthodox, inerrancy, liturgical practices, Confessional. What is the proper position? What are foundations on which to stand? Everyone stands on the Bible - heretics love to quote Bible verses. The Confessions are a good place for a Lutheran to begin. What do they say? not say? If it is really important, basic, to our stance it will be there in plain words not in obscure readings between the lines. The second foundation is Books of Doctrine. The helpful ones explain the historic positions and the opposition and the reasons behind them. Be very suspicious, reject doctrines that have a short time of history. Most doctrinal warfare is about what grandfather taught, not Luther, or Augustine. Since "Scripture interprets Scripture" truth is "catholic", the Church is Universal. I did not include Scripture as foundation because all heretics make that claim. Scriptures are "normed" by the Confessions, by the standard historical teachings, i.e., the catholic faith.

Truth and Church are, and always will be under satanic attack. The worst attacks are from inside, from "Christians", and are popular. What are the major attacks on the Church today? Which ones are satanic misdirection, twisting the will of God and truth? What are "minor", the normal follies of every age? The world majors in minors.

*The Sign of Concord*

He died for all, so that those who live might live no longer for themselves,  
but for him who died and was raised for them. 2 Cor. 5:15

Homosexuals I have talked with are both very aware that the Bible considers premarital sex as sinful as homosexual. And they are very aware that the Church says nothing about the one while it screams about the evil of the other. Abortion is the great hot button sin to be legally outlawed to save the nation from God's judgment. It never used to be. What spirit is behind that? Orthodox Jews who are very serious about scripture do not find the same meaning as the recent Bible faithful Calvinists.

The Rabbis dealing with the Torah for male and female took account of what people were actually like. More than one in a thousand are born gender ambiguous. In recent times they are altered surgically, given hormones and called female. It works better for XX females than for XY males. The average congregation would have members who are personally aware. In addition some have psychological wounds that damaged their sexual orientation. Many cultures and Nations have three gender classifications. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third\\_gender](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Third_gender) The Rabbis have five, the ambiguous had to keep all the rules for both male and female.

I consider the warfare on homosexuality and abortion nuisances. Fads that will blow out like other fads in the past. The harsh pronouncements of damnation are repulsive to people and not just to outsiders. People do not want to have anything to do with a church without love, mercy and grace. The Gospel is about love. It is perception. Does the Church cause me to feel the love of God, acceptance, forgiveness in the struggles of life? Or is the voice of the Church causing me to look elsewhere? Is a loving homosexual better than a cruel heterosexual? However there is an issue that is much more deadly, in my opinion, and is corrupting the heart of the Gospel and Church.

I expect you are barely aware of it since it is so normal and widespread. It is the modern spiritual water we swim in. Luther, the great Church Fathers, would be appalled. I have seen it leading people to leave the church in anger and disgust. Normal people have normal problems, disagreements, misunderstandings. They speak to the minister, to the other church member and are ignored, worse told to forgive the one who harmed them. They are willing to forgive. However there is no need of apology, no need to amend the harm, no repentance. The victim must not mind that the perpetrator is held harmless, to continue injuring more people. It did not used to be that way! Old standard principle of confession, absolution, was the question, charge, did you talk to, apologize to the one you hurt? If they refused to apologize then absolution could not be given! Today, if you tell God you are sorry for being a sinner, ALL your sins are forgiven without need of amendment! Luther, the great Church Fathers, would be appalled.

"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift." Mt. 5:23f. Notice very well. It does not matter if the person thinks they did not mean or do any harm. It is ONLY the opinion of the "victim" that counts in God's judgement.

That perversion of the Gospel is coupled with a perversion of "ex opere operato". Lutherans decried the Calvinists for "once saved always saved" but many now do the same, counting all who

have been baptized in a Lutheran Church forever saved, no matter what. The Lutheran Church Fathers would be appalled. Saying words out loud makes them forever efficacious? The subscription at ordination appears to render clergy immune from ever being able to be condemned no matter how explicitly they later reject in word and action Confession and Scripture. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ex\\_opere\\_operato](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ex_opere_operato) The RC doctrine is actually similar to the Lutheran. The Sacraments work, depend, on the faith of the recipient and God, not on the faith of the clergyman. No personal faith means no effect.

For a very long time the Lutheran and Reformed Churches in Europe have been in decline. I have noticed bits of that. It does seem to me that the perversions above have become common and normal. No wonder the people have left. Among Lutheran they combine in an attack on the "Third Use of the Law". It is improper for the believer, "freed by faith in the Gospel", to use the Bible as a guide, rule, for life as a Christian. "Live in the freedom of the Spirit." It is subject of gentile theological papers and is put in practice. They are foundational for the acceptance of promiscuous bisexual clergy, and the rejection of Scripture as normative. Today anything goes in most of Western Christianity as long as you say some nice things about Jesus.

I invite you to notice that what I am talking about is exactly what Bonhoeffer was opposing in his "The Cost of Discipleship". He saw the Church dying in his day. Protestant Christianity has nearly died out in Europe and I know the RC was also deeply affected. "Cheap Grace" is no grace at all. It benefits no one. It drives people away instead of attracting them. Cheap grace rejects the Cross of Christ, denies the Gospel and kills the Church.

S.D.G.

August 11, 2019