

A History of Lutheranism in America

- 1838 – Martin Stephan and the Saxon immigrants leave for the New World.
- 1839 – Founding of Concordia College (the log cabin) in Perry County.
- 1847 – Formation of the Missouri Synod in Chicago. Pledges fidelity to the entire Book of Concord.
- Initial members, which included 12 pastors representing 14 congregations from Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Michigan, New York and Ohio, signed the church body's constitution on April 26, 1847, at First Saint Paul Lutheran Church in Chicago, Ill.”
Source: <https://www.lcms.org/about/lcms-history>
 - Article II of the Synodical Constitution: II. Conditions under which a congregation may join Synod and remain a member. 1. Acceptance of Holy Scripture, both the Old and the New Testament, as the written word of God and as the only rule and norm of faith and life. 2. Acceptance of all the symbolical books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (these are the, three Ecumenical Symbols, the Unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Apology, the Smalcald Articles, the Large and the Small Catechism of Luther, and the Formula of Concord) as the pure and unadulterated explanation and presentation of the Word of God.
- 1872 – Formation of the Synodical Conference (Missouri, Wisconsin, Norwegian, Ohio Synods join)
- 1880s – Predestinarian Controversy. Norwegian and Ohio synods leave the Synodical Conference. The controversy is, in some ways, a test of confessional subscription – how strongly does one hold to Article XI of the Formula of Concord?
- 1917 – Launch of American Lutheran Publicity Bureau. LCMS moving towards English language
- 1924 – KFYO radio is dedicated and begins broadcasting.
- 1930 – American Lutheran Church is formed. They begin discussions with the LCMS.
- 1930 – The Lutheran Hour begins broadcasting.
- 1932 – Publication of *A Brief Statement*. This document sets forth the doctrinal position of Missouri. This document was initially meant as guide for potential fellowship with the ALC.
- 1935 – Adolph Brux, Synodical missionary to India who is disciplined for praying with Presbyterians while on the mission field, publishes paper: “Christian Prayer-Fellowship And Unionism. An investigation of our Synodical position with respect to prayer-fellowship with Christians of other denominations.”
- 1935 – Election of John Behnken, first American born president of the LCMS
- 1945 – “Statement of the 44,” signatories include many Concordia Seminary professors.
- 1948 – Bad Boll conference held in Germany. Many in the Missouri Synod attend.
- 1952 – Martin Scharlemann installed as professor at Concordia Seminary.
- 1958 – Martin Scharlemann publishes essays addressing ‘errors’ within Scripture.
- 1962 – Cleveland convention of the LCMS. Martin Scharlemann apologizes and retracts essays.
- 1965 – Mission Affirmations approved by the LCMS convention in Detroit.

A Brief Statement, 1932. Written by Francis Pieper.

Of the Holy Scriptures

We teach that the Holy Scriptures differ from all other books in the world in that they are the Word of God. They are the Word of God because the holy men of God who wrote the Scriptures wrote only that which the Holy Ghost communicated to them by inspiration, 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Peter 1:21. We teach also that the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures is not a so-called “theological deduction,” but that it is taught by direct statements of the Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:16, John 10:35, Rom. 3:2; 1 Cor. 2:13. Since the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, it goes without saying that they contain no errors or contradictions, but that they are in all their parts and words the infallible truth, also in those parts which treat of historical, geographical, and other secular matters, John 10:35.

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Statement of the Forty-Four

September 20, 1945

TWO: We affirm our faith in the great Lutheran principle of the inerrancy, certainty, and all-sufficiency of Holy Writ. We therefore deplore a tendency in our Synod to substitute human judgments, Synodical resolutions, or other sources of authority for the supreme authority of Scripture.

THREE: We affirm our conviction that the Gospel must be given free course so that it may be preached in all its truth and power to all the nations of the earth. We therefore deplore all man-made walls and barriers and all ecclesiastical traditions which would hinder the free course of the Gospel in the world.

SIX: We affirm the historic Lutheran position concerning the central importance of the *una sancta* and the local congregation. We believe that there should be a re-emphasis of the privileges and responsibilities of the local congregation also in the matter of determining questions of fellowship. We therefore deplore the new and improper emphasis on the Synodical organization as basic in our consideration of the problems of the Church. We believe that no organizational loyalty can take the place of loyalty to Christ and His Church.

EIGHT: We affirm our conviction that any two or more Christians may pray together to the Triune God in the name of Jesus Christ if the purpose for which they meet and pray is right according to the Word of God. This obviously includes meetings of groups called for the purpose of discussing doctrinal differences. We therefore deplore the tendency to decide the question of prayer fellowship on any other basis beyond the clear words of Scripture.

ELEVEN: We affirm our conviction that in keeping with the historic Lutheran tradition and in harmony with the Synodical resolution adopted in 1938 regarding Church fellowship, such fellowship is possible without complete agreement in details of doctrine and practice which have never been considered divisive in the Lutheran Church.

Notable Signers: CSL Faculty: William Arndt, Paul M. Bretscher Richard Caemmerer, Theodore Graebner. Oswald Hoffmann (Lutheran Hour speaker) O.P. Kretzmann (President of Valparaiso)

Martin Scharlemann, 1958 paper: The Inerrancy of Scripture

“In this paper I propose to defend the paradox that the Book of God's truth contains errors. What is more, I hope to show that by the proper resolution of this paradox we in fact magnify the truth that comes to us by divine revelation. What is set forth here is necessarily devoted to what is called "the human side" of that revelation.”

Martin Scharlemann, statement at the 1962 LCMS Convention in Cleveland:

It has become obvious that several essays I have written have become the source of much difficulty, disturbance and confusion because of their inadequate formulation and their failure to guard carefully against misunderstanding. I realize that basically they addressed themselves to the wrong question, namely: “In what sense are the Scriptures the Word of God?” The proper inquiry would have been, and is, “How are The Scriptures, as the Word of God, to be used?”

I deeply regret and am heartily sorry over the part I played in contributing to the present unrest within the Synod. Since last Tuesday I have been haunted by the statement of the lay delegate from Bethel Lutheran Church in Chicago, namely: “If only he would say that he is sorry!” I do so

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herewith and ask of my fellow-members in the Synod that they forgive these actions of mine. Herewith then I withdraw the following papers in their entirety:

- (1) The Bible as Record, Witness and Medium of Revelation; (2) Revelation and Inspiration;
- (3) The Inerrancy of Scripture; and (4) God is One.

Such withdrawal is here understood to mean that the questions to which these essays proposed to address themselves will not again be dealt with by me on the basis of anything written in them.

Roland Wiederanders, Synodical Vice-President. December 2nd 1963:

“Despite repeated efforts we have not dealt honestly with our pastors and people. We have refused to state our changing theological position in open, honest, forthright, simple, and clear words. Over and over again we have said that nothing was changing when all the while we were aware of changes taking place...With increasing measure the Synodical trumpet has been giving an uncertain sound.”

Report of the Synodical President from the Fact Finding Committee – 1971

C. Inerrancy – Synodical Position

There is no error of fact of any kind in the Scriptures. This does not deny the existence of copyists' errors in the extant manuscripts. Scripture is truthful in every respect, also in the sense that it contains no contradictions in meaning or intent. Problems and apparent contradictions in Scripture may be caused by copyists' errors or by a lack of information or understanding on our part but are not to be attributed to error on the part of the inspired writers. The Scriptures do accomplish their divine purpose of bringing men to faith in Jesus Christ, but this attribute of the Scriptures is more accurately described as "efficacy" than as "inerrancy."

Other Positions: The Holy Scriptures are inerrant only insofar as they accomplish their purpose of bringing the Gospel to men and creating faith and life. Although the Scriptures are reliable, they exhibit the frailties common to human authors. Thus they err in matters of history, geography, and science and contain various contradictions, including theological contradictions. For example, related historical accounts such as Gen.1:1-2:4a and Gen.2:4b-25 may be regarded as contradictory and therefore need not be treated as accounts of something that actually happened.

The Bible and the Gospel – Synodical Position

The Scriptures are the only source and norm of doctrine in the church (formal principle), while the Gospel of Jesus Christ is the chief doctrine of the Bible and the heart of the Christian faith (material principle). The Gospel is a basic presupposition for the interpretation of Holy Scripture (that is, one approaches the Scriptures expecting to hear the Good News of Jesus Christ and to relate all that he reads there to Him), but it does not determine the meaning of the Biblical text. Whatever the text says is the meaning of the text and is to be accepted as such because it is the Word of God. The grammar, context, and literary form of a text determine if it is to be understood literally or otherwise.

Other Positions: The Gospel is not only the center of the Christian faith but the criterion of acceptable Biblical interpretation. Thus no interpretation of a Biblical text need be rejected unless it harms the Gospel. Considerable latitude needs to be given in the interpretation of the Bible in a nonliteral, nonhistorical way, so long as this does not affect the Gospel. For example, the fall of Adam and Eve or the world Flood need not be accepted as factual so long as the doctrinal lesson of sin and grace is preserved in the interpretation.

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V. The Law and Christian Life – **Synodical Position**

Although the primary function of God's Law is to reveal and accuse man's sin against God, the Law also functions to inform Christians of what God's will is for their life and conduct.

Other Positions: God's Law accuses man of his sin but does not function as guide and norm of Christian good works.

Mission Affirmations: Adopted at the 1965 Convention

The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Whole World RESOLUTION 1-01 B

Resolved, That we affirm that the church is Christ's mission to the whole world. Christians will approach men of other faiths in humility and love. They joyfully acknowledge that God is active in the lives of all men through His continued creative and providential concern, through the Law written in their hearts, and through God's revelation of Himself in creation and nature. Christians affirm a common humanity with all men. They confess a common sinfulness. They rejoice over a universal redemption won for all in Jesus Christ; and be it further

Resolved, That we reconsecrate ourselves with everything we are and have to the task of witnessing Christ in deed and word to all the world, thankfully making full use also of the communication tools which God is offering to the church through science and technology for this age of the population explosion; and be it further

Resolved, That in the face of the great unfinished task we rejoice over all faithful Christian efforts to witness Christ to all the world; and be it finally

Resolved, That we recognize that our sister mission churches in other lands have been placed by God into other circumstances and are subservient not to us but to the Lord, who makes His church His mission to the whole world.

Action: This resolution was adopted.

The Church Is Christ's Mission to the Church RESOLUTION 1-01 C

Resolved, That we affirm that the church is Christ's mission to the church. In obedience to the church's Head and in sanctified loyalty to his congregation and his church body, a Christian will be ready with good conscience both to witness and to listen to all Christians. Like the Bereans, the Christian will search the Scriptures to test the truth of what he hears and what he says; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm as Lutheran Christians that the Evangelical Lutheran Church is chiefly a confessional movement within the total body of Christ rather than a denomination emphasizing institutional barriers of separation. The Lutheran Christian uses the Lutheran Confessions for the primary purpose for which they were framed: to confess Christ and His Gospel boldly and lovingly to all Christians. While the Confessions seek to repel all attacks against the Gospel, they are not intended to be a kind of Berlin wall to stop communication with other Christians; and be it further

Resolved, That we affirm that by virtue of our unity with other Christians in the body of Christ, we should work together when it will edify Christ's body and advance His mission, refusing cooperation, however, on such occasions when it would deny God's Word; and be it finally

Resolved, That we affirm that because the church is Christ's mission to the church, Christians should speak the Word of God to one another as they nurture, edify, and educate one another for Christian faith and life. Therefore as a Synod we value our strong tradition of Christian education and seek to extend it throughout life, for laity and clergy. Far from employing agencies of Christian education primarily in our own institutional self-interest, we will endeavor to make them ever more effective tools in equipping God's people for His mission.

Action: This resolution was adopted.