

The Lutheran Church

Collected and Edited by Scott Shifferd Jr.

History:

- According to the book, *Christianity through the Centuries*, Martin Luther was once a Roman Catholic monk whose diligent study of the Bible and witnessing the corruption of the Roman Catholic Church changed him. **“On October 31, 1517, Luther posted his Ninety-five Theses on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenburg. In them he condemned the abuses of the indulgence system and challenged all comers to a debate on the matter. A reading of the Ninety-five Theses will reveal that Luther was merely criticizing abuses of the indulgence system. However, during the years between 1518 and 1521 he was forced to accept the idea of separation from the Roman system as the only way to get a reform that would involve a return to the ideal of the church revealed in the Scriptures. The translation into German and printing of the Theses spread Luther’s ideas rapidly”** (Cairns, Earle E. **“Luther and the German Reformation”** *Christianity through the Centuries*. 3rd ed. Zonderman: 1996. P.281-283).
- The Handbook of Denominations states, **“In the sixteenth century, a German theologian named Martin Luther (1483-1546) set out to reform the Roman Catholic Church of his day.** Although he did not intend to create a new church, his followers were nicknamed ‘Lutheran.’ **These Protestants, as they would later be called, meant to affirm the message of the Bible as the sole authority for church life and Christian belief and practice without rejecting the historical church. To this day, Lutheranism retains much of the tradition of the ancient and medieval church, including a sense of participation in the historic people of God and in the traditional liturgy, revised to accord with Protestant Biblicism.** Lutherans are devoted to sound doctrine, systematically developed and expressed in thoughtful preaching. Luther’s teaching on justification by faith and on the universal priesthood of believers might be called the cornerstone of Protestantism” (Mead, Frank S and Hill, Samuel S. *Handbook of Denominations in the United States*. 11th ed. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2001. P.203).
- “The German Reformation resulted not in a united Protestantism, but in one with two major branches: Evangelical Lutheranism, with Luther and Melanchthon as leaders, and the Reformed Church, lead by John Calvin (1509-64), Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531), and John Knox (ca. 1513-72). Evangelical Lutheranism spread to Poland, Russia, Lithuania, Bohemia, Austria, Hungary, France, and Holland. It became the state church of Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, Estonia, and Latvia” (Mead, P.204).
- “It was mainly from Germany and Scandinavia that Lutheranism came to the United States. A Lutheran Christmas service was held at Hudson Bay in 1619; the first European Lutherans to remain permanently in this country arrived at Manhattan Island from Holland in 1623” (Mead, P.204).
- The Handbook of Denominations states, “At one time there were 150 Lutheran bodies in the U.S.; consolidation, unification, and federation have now reduced that number to less than a dozen” (Mead, P.205). **The Handbook of Denominations presents 8 Lutheran bodies. The 3 largest are the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) with more than 2,500,000 members in over 6,000 churches, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America with over 5,100,000 members in more than 10,000 churches, and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod of over 411,000 members in more than 1,200 churches** (Mead. P.210-213).

God, Christ, and the Spirit:

- According to the Handbook of Denominations, all Lutherans confess the Apostles’ creed (8th c.), which states, “I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died and was buried; he descended to the dead.* On the third day he rose again; he ascended into heaven, he is seated at the right hand of the Father, and he will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen" ("The Apostles' Creed." *Evangelical Lutheran Church in American*. 29 Feb. 2012. <elca.org/What-We-Believe/Statements-of-Belief/The-Apostles-Creed.aspx>).

- Regarding the age of Creation, the President of the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) stated, "**The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod believes, teaches and confesses that Adam and Eve were real historic individuals and that the Genesis account of Creation is true and factual, not merely a 'myth' or a 'story' made up to explain the origin of all things.**

We would also be making a very serious error simply to accept the theories of science without question. Many aspects of evolutionary theory are directly contradictory to God's Word. Evolution cannot be 'baptized' to make it compatible with the Christian faith. Those who attempt inevitably wind up watering down the teachings of the Bible. Christians have no need to fear the findings of science, nor do they have any reason to give" (Barry, Dr. A.L. "What about Creation and Evolution?" *Belief and Practice*. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).

- Regarding evolution, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America presents the words of retired "pastor" and physicist, George L. Murphy, who says, "**But the theology of the cross gives a new way of thinking about the issue. We shouldn't picture God as ruthlessly forcing millions of generations through the evolutionary process without himself being affected by it, for in the Incarnation God becomes a participant in the evolutionary process. Jesus has the same evolutionary history and carries the same relationships with other species that we do. Moreover, he becomes a participant in evolutionary history on the side of the losers in the struggle for survival — because in the short term it's Pilate and Caiaphas who win.**

And Easter means that there is hope for the losers: Those who humble themselves will be exalted. And that is hope not only for *Homo sapiens* but for the whole world, because again, in the Incarnation God has taken on organic relationships with all terrestrial life. Thus the idea of common descent gives us a way to think about how "all things" may be reconciled to God through the cross of Christ, as Colossians 1:20 says.

There continue to be criticisms of evolution, most of them motivated by religious concerns. Those in the Intelligent Design (ID) movement focus attention on claims for the 'irreducible complexity' of biochemical structures and processes (Michael Behe) and the difficulty of explaining 'complex specified information' in biological systems (William Dembski). We should put the best construction on such claims and take seriously the possibility that there are important features of living things that current evolutionary theories haven't yet explained. **But it is not legitimate to make the jumps from 'Science hasn't explained this' to 'Science can't explain this' to 'An Intelligent Designer (a.k.a. God) did this directly'** ("Evolution – Cosmic and Biological." *Social Issues: Covalence Magazine*. 29 Feb. 2012. <elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Faith-Science-and-Technology/Covalence/Features/Evolution-Cosmic-and-Biological.aspx>).

- "When asked whether he believes in creation or evolution, Dr. William Stoeger, S.J., cosmologist and Jesuit priest at the Vatican Observatory, answers yes, elucidating the difficulty in answering poorly phrased questions. *Pitting creation against evolution presents people with a false choice*. Nearly 12,000 clergy members across a spectrum of Christian denominations (and, recently, Jewish communities) have publicly affirmed this sentiment in 'The Clergy Letter Project'" (Wolf-Chase,

Grace. "Science and Faith in an Evolving Creation." *Lutheran Partners Magazine* <elca.org/Growing-In-Faith/Vocation/Lutheran-Partners/Complete-Issue/091112/091112_05.aspx>).

Scriptures: *God:* Gen. 1:1-2, Psa. 110:1, Isa. 9:6, 48:16, 61:1, Mic. 5:2, Matt. 12:46-47, 13:55-56, 28:19, Luke 3:22, John 1:1, 14, Acts 7:55, 10:38, Rom. 8:9, 15:30, 2 Cor. 13:14, Heb. 9:14, 1 Pet. 1:2, 3:18, 1 John 4:2; *Creation:* Gen. 1:26-27, **Exo. 20:11**, Matt. 19:4-5, **Mark 10:6-8**, Luke 11:50-51, Rom. 1:20.

Christ's Words and the Scriptures:

- The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) states their belief in "Sola Scriptura" meaning, "**The Bible is God's inerrant and infallible Word, in which He reveals His Law and His Gospel of salvation in Jesus Christ. It is the sole rule and norm for Christian doctrine**" ("Sola Scriptura." *Belief and Practice*. 29 Feb. 2012. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).
- The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) says, "'What is the Bible?' is this: **The Bible is the Word of God. The Bible is the collection of the thoughts—even the very words—that God gave to the authors of the Biblical books. The Bible is a gift God has given to His church. It is not a collection of ancient fables and myths. The Bible is the sure and certain means that God the Holy Spirit uses to communicate God's Word to us today**" ("The Bible." *Belief and Practice*. 29 Feb. 2012. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>)
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), states, "But its meaning — and its significance to the Christian faith — is far more complex and profound. As Lutherans, ELCA members believe that the Bible is the written Word of God. It creates and nurtures faith through the work of the Holy Spirit and points us to Jesus Christ, the living Word and center of our faith. And in reading the Bible, we are invited into a relationship with God that both challenges us and promises us new life" ("The Bible." *What We Believe*. 29 Feb. 2012. <elca.org/What-We-Believe/The-Bible.aspx>).

Scriptures: Luke 1:1-3, 1 Cor. 1:1-2, 2 Cor. 1:1, Eph. 3:3-5, Col. 4:16, 2 Thess. 2:15, **2 Tim. 3:16-17** (cf. 1 Tim. 5:18), 2 Pet. 1:16-21, 3:15-16, 1 John 1:1-4.

Way of Salvation:

- The Lutheran Church states, "**Our congregations accept and preach the Bible-based teachings of Martin Luther that inspired the reformation of the Christian Church in the 16th century. The teaching of Luther and the reformers can be summarized in three phrases: Grace alone, Faith alone, Scripture alone**" ("Being 'Lutheran'." <lcms.org>).
- The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) agrees with Martin Luther, when he wrote in his Small Catechism about baptism stating, "**What does Baptism give or profit?--Answer. It works forgiveness of sins, delivers from death and the devil, and gives eternal salvation to all who believe this, as the words and promises of God declare. Which are such words and promises of God? Answer. Christ, our Lord, says in the last chapter of Mark: He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.**" (Luther, Martin. "The Sacrament of Holy Baptism." *The Small Catechism*. <bookofconcord.org/smallcatechism.php>).
- Concerning infant baptism, the Lutheran Church states, "**Sadly, there are individuals and church bodies that deny Baptism to young children and infants. They do not believe that these little ones need what Holy Baptism gives.** They do not believe what the Bible teaches so clearly, namely, that God saves us through Baptism. As a result of these false teachings, they deny both to themselves and to others the power, blessing and comfort of Holy Baptism. **That is tragic, for it is a most serious offense against God to deny what He plainly declares in His Word: 'The promise is for you and your children' (Acts 2:39) and 'Baptism now saves you' (1 Peter 3:21)**" ("What about Holy Baptism." *Belief and Practice*. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).

- The Handbook of Denominations shows that Lutherans recognize two sacraments stating, **“The two sacraments, baptism and the Lord’s Supper, are not merely signs or memorials, but channels through which God bestows forgiving and empowering grace upon humankind.** The body and the blood of Christ are believed to be present ‘in, with, and under’ the bread and wine of the Lord’s Supper and are received sacramentally and supernaturally. **Consubstantiation, transubstantiation, and impanation are rejected.** Infants are baptized, and baptized persons are believed to receive the gift of regeneration from the Holy Ghost” (Mead, 10th ed., P.177).
 - Lutherans are expected to confess their sins to their pastors (Barry, Dr. A.L. “Confessions and Absolutions.” *Belief and Practice*. 29 Feb. 2012. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).
- Scriptures:** Matt. 28:19-20, Mark 16:16, John 6:53-56, **Acts 2:28, 3:19, 8:38, 22:16**, Rom. 6:3-7, **Col. 2:11-12**, 1 Pet. 3:21, 1 John 1:5-2:6.

Church Government:

- The Handbook of Denominations states, **“The congregation is usually administered between its annual meetings by a church council consisting of the pastor and a number of elected lay officers. Pastors are called by the voting of the members of the congregation. As a rule, ministers, after college and seminary training, are ordained at the annual meetings of the synods.**
Congregations are united in synods composed of pastors and lay representatives elected by the congregations and have authority as granted by the synod constitution. In some instances, there are territorial districts or conferences instead of synods, operating in the same manner and under the same restrictions; some may legislate, while others are for advisory or consultative purposes only.
Synods (conferences or districts) are united in a general body that may be national, or even international, and are called variously ‘church,’ ‘synod,’ or ‘conference.’ Some of these general bodies are legislative in nature, some consultative; they supervise the work in worship, education, publication, charity, and mission. Congregations have business meetings at least annually; synods, districts, and conferences hold yearly conventions; the general bodies meet annually or biennially” (Mead. 10th ed. P.177).
- Regarding **pastors**, the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) states, **“Through a congregation’s call, God places a man to be the shepherd of that congregation. ‘Our churches teach that nobody shall publicly preach or teach or administer the sacraments without a regular call’ (Augsburg Confession, Article XIV).** Only those who are called and ordained to the pastoral office may exercise it publicly. **Although the Holy Scriptures make it clear that all the baptized are priests, called to offer God sacrifices of thanks and praise (1 Peter 2:9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10), it also teaches that in the church there is an office to teach, feed, guide and rule, which Christians, by virtue of their general calling as Christians, do not possess (1 Cor. 12:29; Rom. 10:15; 1 Tim. 5:17; James 3:1).** While all Christians through Baptism are made part of God’s royal priesthood, not all Christians are ministers.
When a man receives and accepts his first call to serve as a pastor, he is then ordained. Ordination is a confirmation of a man’s call into the ministry of the church and is the historic and apostolic rite by which, through Word and prayer, a man is set apart for service to Christ and His church as a pastor. [...]
 Pastors do not ‘represent their own persons but the person of Christ, because of the Church’s call, as Christ testifies (Luke 10:16) “He who hears you, hears me.” When they offer the Word of Christ or the sacraments, they do so in Christ’s place and stead’ (Apology VII/VIII.28).
 The Apostle Paul writes in 1 Tim. 3:2-4 that a pastor is to be ‘above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well

and see that his children obey him with proper respect.' In 1 Tim. 3:6 we read that a pastor is not to be "a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil.' In Titus 1:9 it is said that pastors 'must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine, and refute it.' Although some Protestant churches ordain women to the pastoral office, this is a 20th-century innovation. For more than 1,900 years, there has been nearly unanimous faithfulness to the Word of God, given through the Apostle Paul, that women are not to serve as pastors (see 1 Cor. 14:33-35, 37; 1 Tim.2:11-12; 1 Tim.3:1-2 and Titus 1:5-6)" ("Pastors." *Belief and Practice*. 29 Feb. 2012. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).

- Concerning ecumenical alliances, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America reports, "Lutherans are part of a reforming movement within the whole Christian church; as a part of practicing their faith, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and its predecessors have engaged in ecumenical dialogue with other church bodies for decades. **In fact, the ELCA has entered into cooperative 'full communion' agreements (sharing common convictions about theology, mission and worship) with several other Protestant denominations, including the Moravian Church, the Episcopal Church, the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), the Reformed Church in America, the United Church of Christ, and the United Methodist Church**" ("What Do Lutherans Believe?" *The Basics*. 29 Feb. 2012. <elca.org/What-We-Believe/The-Basics/What-Lutherans-Believe.aspx >).

Scriptures: *Government:* Acts 14:26, Acts 20:28, Eph. 1:22, **Phil. 1:1**, Col. 1:18, 2:19, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, **1 Pet. 5:1-4**.

Worship and Assembly:

- The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) states, "**Through His precious Word and Sacraments, our Lord continues to fulfill His promise. Our Lord Jesus Christ instituted the Sacrament of the Altar with these words: 'This is My body, given for you. This cup is My blood of the new testament, shed for you for the forgiveness of sins'** (Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20; 1 Cor. 11:23-25). The Lord's Supper 'is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ Himself for us Christians to eat and to drink' (*Small Catechism*). [...] **Thus, receiving His body and blood, we receive forgiveness, life and salvation.** [...]
- **Our Lutheran Confessions make it clear that the Lord's Supper is offered every Lord's Day and on other days when there are communicants present (AC XXIV.34 and Ap.XXIV.1). In saying this, our Confessions are merely reflecting the truth of the Sacred Scriptures, which place the Lord's Supper at the center of worship (Acts 2:42; 20:7; 1 Cor.11:20, 33), not as an appendage or an occasional extra.** It is for this reason that our Synod has repeatedly encouraged our congregations to provide the opportunity for communicants who so desire to receive the Lord's Supper every Lord's Day" ("The Sacrament of the Alter." *Belief and Practice*. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).
- "Lutheran worship puts the focus squarely on Jesus Christ, who is present for us and with us through His Word and Sacraments. Lutheran worship is, therefore, Christ-centered, not man-centered. When we are gathered for worship, we are not contemplating some far-off Christ or meditating on abstract concepts, or pondering various principles for living. Neither are we in church to be amused or entertained. Christ is living and active among us, right where He has promised to be in His Word and Sacraments. [...]

The two main parts of the Divine Service are (1) the proclamation of the Word of God, and (2) the celebration of the Lord's Supper. Other orders of service used in the Lutheran church feature a more extended service of the Word as well as times of prayer, such as the services of Matins and Vespers, Morning and Evening Prayer, Compline, and **the Litany** [prayers with a set congregational response].

In Lutheran services, pastors and congregations sing or speak the liturgy back and forth or together. Congregational singing of hymns has always been a hallmark of Lutheran worship. The

best of musical traditions, both ancient and modern, are embraced by the Lutheran church in its worship, with an emphasis on congregational singing, reinforced by the choir.

Our pastors wear special clothing called vestments. These garments cover the individuality of the man and emphasize the sacred duties of the office he has been given to carry out. Throughout the course of the church year, an appointed order of readings and prayers helps the congregation focus on the major events in the life of Christ and how those events affect us today. Preaching, usually based on the appointed lessons, is a hallmark of Lutheran worship, distinguished by a clear presentation of God's Law and Gospel.

Lutherans may stand, bow or kneel at various points in the service to express reverence and devotion to the almighty Triune God. **Pastors make the sign of the cross over the people, and the people may sign themselves with the cross at various times as well.**

Lutheranism has continued to make use of beautiful ecclesiastical art such as statues of Jesus, the apostles, and other important figures in the Bible or church history. **You will find in many Lutheran churches altars, candles, paintings, statues, crucifixes, symbols, stained-glass windows, processional crosses, banners, and other forms of art and decoration. All of these lend beauty, dignity and reverence to the service.** They help us to focus our attention on Christ and His gifts. Some Lutheran churches are elaborately decorated and richly ornamented. Others are more plainly adorned. We make no fixed rules about such things. We rejoice in our Christian freedom to use all manner of reverent artwork and decoration to glorify and praise God" ("What about Lutheran Worship" *Beliefs and Practice*. 29 Feb. 2012. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).

Scriptures: Matt. 6:1-18, 15:1-9, 23, John 4:21-24; **1 Cor.** 11:17-34; **14;** **Col. 2:18-23;** Heb. 10:24-25.

Morality:

- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America are represented John Wickham's words being that **"Homosexual sex doesn't violate Jesus' principles of unconditional love and forgiveness any more than heterosexual sex does. Both homosexuals and heterosexuals deceive and manipulate each other, both have committed long term relationships, and both engage in prostitution, fornication and adultery. Using Jesus' ethic, heterosexual sex is moral when it involves unconditional love, when it is free from deceit and manipulation and when any resulting children are loved and cared for. Using that ethic, homosexual sex is also moral under the same circumstances.** There is no reason to believe that homosexuals as a class are any more deceitful and manipulative than heterosexuals are. Deceit, manipulation and self interest are part of everyone's nature. Because Jesus always judged cultural and biblical rules and laws using his principles of love and forgiveness, and rejected biblical rules that violated those principles, his followers are obligated to do the same. **Those who say homosexual behavior is morally wrong *in principle* and should not be tolerated in the church must justify that judgment in terms of the principles of love and forgiveness. We cannot rely on St. Paul to do that for us in the 21st century"** (Wickham, John. "The Church and Homosexuality." *What We Believe*. 29 Feb. 2012. <elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Issues/August-2004/The-Church-and-Homosexuality.aspx>).
- Martin Luther commented on Genesis 19 regarding homosexuality stating, **"the heinous conduct of the people of Sodom"** as **"extraordinary, inasmuch as they departed from the natural passion and longing of the male for the female, which is implanted into nature by God, and desired what is altogether contrary to nature. Whence comes this perversity? Undoubtedly from Satan, who after people have once turned away from the fear of God, so powerfully suppresses nature that he blots out the natural desire and stirs up a desire that is contrary to nature."**
- The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod posted an article from a member named Marlys Reid, who had to address her daughter's homosexual behavior. Ms. Reid writes, "No Christian parents think

they will ever have to deal with homosexuality in their own family. However, no one is exempt from Satan's temptations and snares. **We need to prepare our high school and college youth before sending them out into this sin-ravaged world—a world that belittles those who take a stand against premarital sex and homosexuality.** In today's world homosexuality is not only accepted but also flaunted in movies and TV sitcoms. Our young adults will not remember a time when homosexuality was not a socially and legally accepted lifestyle. We earnestly need to pray for and speak frankly to our young people. **Homosexuality can no longer be the unspeakable sin. God speaks clearly about it: "Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Corinthians 6:9,10)**" (Reid, Marlys. "Homosexuality." *My Life Issues*. 28 Feb. 2012 <wels.net/spiritual-help/my-life-issues/homosexuality>).

- **Concerning abortion**, Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod states, "'Let's take care of it.' What does this phrase mean to you? Does it mean nurturing and loving, or does it mean disregarding and trashing. For more than 50 million lives during the last 39 years, 'take care of it' means death. It means never having a chance in this world.

January 22 marks the 39th anniversary of *Roe v. Wade*, the monumental Supreme Court case legalizing abortion.

'We can take care of it' are words all too often uttered in secret, sadness, and desperation. "It" is an unwanted or unplanned pregnancy" (Georgson, Peter. "Unwanted Pregnancy." *My Life Issues*. 28 Feb. 2012 <wels.net/spiritual-help/my-life-issues/unwanted-pregnancy>).

- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America asserts, **"Induced abortion, the act of intentionally terminating a developing life in the womb, is one of the issues about which members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America have serious differences. These differences are also found within society. [...]"**

The language used in discussing abortion should ignore neither the value of unborn life nor the value of the woman and her other relationships. It should neither obscure the moral seriousness of the decision faced by the woman nor hide the moral value of the newly conceived life. Nor is it helpful to use the language of 'rights' in absolute ways that imply that no other significant moral claims intrude. A developing life in the womb does not have an absolute right to be born, nor does a pregnant woman have an absolute right to terminate a pregnancy [...]"

This church recognizes that there can be sound reasons for ending a pregnancy through induced abortion. The following provides guidance for those considering such a decision. We recognize that conscientious decisions need to be made in relation to difficult circumstances that vary greatly. What is determined to be a morally responsible decision in one situation may not be in another. [...]"

A woman should not be morally obligated to carry the resulting pregnancy to term if the pregnancy occurs when both parties do not participate willingly in sexual intercourse. This is especially true in cases of rape and incest. This can also be the case in some situations in which women are so dominated and oppressed that they have no choice regarding sexual intercourse and little access to contraceptives. Some conceptions occur under dehumanizing conditions that are contrary to God's purposes.

There are circumstances of extreme fetal abnormality, which will result in severe suffering and very early death of an infant. In such cases, after competent medical consultations, the parent(s) may responsibly choose to terminate the pregnancy. Whether they choose to continue or to end such pregnancies, this church supports the parent(s) with compassion, recognizing the struggle involved in the decision" ("Abortion." *What We Believe: Social Issues*. 28 Feb. 2012. <elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/Abortion.aspx>).

Scriptures: Rom. 12:9-15:13, 1 Cor. 6:9-11, Gal. 5:16-6:10, Eph. 4:17-6:18, Col. 3-4:6.

Marriage and Divorce:

- The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) states, "In the beginning, God created men and women to live together with one another as husbands and wives, and through their marriages to bring children into the world. We read in Gen. 2:22–24: 'The Lord God made a woman from the rib He had taken out of the man, and He brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.' Our Lord Jesus Christ affirmed the divine institution of marriage during his earthly ministry (Matt.19:5)" ("What about Christian Families." *Belief and Practice*. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).
- The Luther Church (Missouri Synod) affirm Matthew 19:9 saying, "**Once again the exceptive clause occurs, indicating that porneia (in this case on the part of the wife, and by inference on the part of the husband, as the case may be) introduces the possibility that a divorce may be secured and a second marriage entered without the commission of adultery**" ("Divorce and Remarriage: An Exegetical Study." Nov 1987. <lcsm.org>).
- The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America refers to John Wickham, who refers to remarriage for any reason, "**Even more compelling is that most Christians today accept divorce and remarriage in spite of Jesus' explicit judgment that it is adultery (Mt 19: 3-9). Presumably, Christians forgive and accept it because allowing a second or third chance is the loving thing to do. If heterosexual Christians can forgive and accept adultery among their remarried brothers and sisters, it smells like hypocrisy to deny sexual companionship and even marriage to their gay brothers and sisters. If heterosexual Christians can manage to get around Jesus' judgments, they certainly ought to be able to get around St Paul's**" (Wickham, John. "The Church and Homosexuality." *What We Believe*. 29 Feb. 2012. <elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Journal-of-Lutheran-Ethics/Issues/August-2004/The-Church-and-Homosexuality.aspx>).

Scriptures: Matt. 5:31-32, 19:9, Mark 10:5-12, 1 Cor. 6:16-18, 7:10-15, Heb. 13:4.

The End Times & Afterlife:

- The Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) states, "When Christ returns, He will judge all people, both the living and the dead (Matt. 25:31-46; John 5:27; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Rom.2:16; 2 Tim. 4:1,8; Jude 14-15;Rev.20:11-15). Believers will receive eternal salvation and unbelievers eternal damnation (Matt. 25:31-46; 1 Pet. 1:4-5, 7; 5:4; 1 John 3:2; Heb. 9:28; 2 Cor.5:10; 2 Thess. 1:6-10). Satan and Antichrist will be destroyed (2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 12:10-11).
When Christ returns, a 'new heavens and a new earth' will be created (2 Pet. 3:10-13). **Nowhere, however, do the Scriptures teach that at His return Christ will establish a this-worldly, political kingdom or 'millennium.'** [...]
Amillennialism, however, is the teaching that there will be no millennium of perfect peace on earth before or after Christ's second coming. The Lutheran church, on the basis of the Bible, holds to this point of view. The Bible does not teach that there will be a definite 1,000-year period of time during which Christ will reign on earth visibly. Christ Himself said, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36); furthermore, the Bible clearly teaches that we Christians are looking for 'a new heaven and a new earth' (2 Pet. 3:13)—not an era of prosperity on the present earth" (Barry, Dr. A.L. "The New Millennium." *Belief and Practice*. 29 Feb. 2012. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).
- Regarding Hell, the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) states, "In its report on *The End Times: A Study of Eschatology and Millennialism*, the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations says

regarding hell: 'In both "body and soul" unbelievers will suffer eternal separation and condemnation in hell (Matt 18:8; 25:46; Mark 9:43; John 3:36; 2 Thess. 1:9; Jude 13; Rev. 14:11). Indescribable torment will be experienced consciously, the degree determined by the nature of the sins to be punished (Matt. 11:20-24; 23:15; Luke 12:47-48)'. " ("Doctrinal Issues – Heaven and Hell." *Belief and Practice*. 29 Feb. 2012. <lcms.org/page.aspx?pid=388>).

Martin Luther's Understanding of Baptism

Martin Luther also stated about baptism, "...so also I can boast that Baptism is no human trifle, but instituted by God Himself, moreover, that it is most solemnly and strictly commanded that we must be baptized or we cannot be saved, lest any one regard it as a trifling matter, like putting on a new red coat. For it is of the greatest importance that we esteem Baptism excellent, glorious, and exalted, for which we contend and fight chiefly, because the world is now so full of sects clamoring that Baptism is an external thing, and that external things are of no benefit. But let it be ever so much an external thing, here stand God's Word and command which institute, establish, and confirm Baptism. But what God institutes and commands cannot be a vain, but must be a most precious thing, though in appearance it were of less value than a straw. [...]

But as our would-be wise, new spirits assert that faith alone saves, and that works and external things avail nothing, we answer: It is true, indeed, that nothing in us is of any avail but faith, as we shall hear still further. But these blind guides are unwilling to see this, namely, that faith must have something which it believes, that is, of which it takes hold, and upon which it stands and rests. Thus faith clings to the water, and believes that it is Baptism, in which there is pure salvation and life; not through the water (as we have sufficiently stated), but through the fact that it is embodied in the Word and institution of God, and the name of God inheres in it. [...]

But if they say, as they are accustomed: Still Baptism is itself a work, and you say works are of no avail for salvation; what, then, becomes of faith? Answer: Yes, our works, indeed, avail nothing for salvation; **Baptism, however, is not our work, but God's (for, as was stated, you must put Christ-baptism far away from a bath-keeper's baptism).** [...]

That the Baptism of infants is pleasing to Christ is sufficiently proved from His own work, namely, that God sanctifies many of them who have been thus baptized, and has given them the Holy Ghost; and that there are yet many even to-day in whom we perceive that they have the Holy Ghost both because of their doctrine and life; as it is also given to us by the grace of God that we can explain the Scriptures and come to the knowledge of Christ, which is impossible without the Holy Ghost. But if God did not accept the baptism of infants, He would not give the Holy Ghost nor any of His gifts to any of them; in short, during this long time unto this day no man upon earth could have been a Christian.

Lastly, we must also know what Baptism signifies, and why God has ordained just such external sign and ceremony for the Sacrament by which we are first received into the Christian Church. But the act or ceremony is this, that we are sunk under the water, which passes over us, and afterwards are drawn out again. These two parts, to be sunk under the water and drawn out again, signify the power and operation of Baptism, which is nothing else than putting to death the old Adam, and after that the resurrection of the new man, both of which must take place in us all our lives, so that a truly Christian life is nothing else than a daily baptism, once begun and ever to be continued." (Luther, Martin. "Holy Baptism." *The Large Catechism*. <bookofconcord.org/lc-6-baptism.php>).