

Unionism and Syncretism

A Bible Study
with
Discussion Guide
and
Practical Application

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A couple of definitions ...

unionism

general meaning - it is based on the Middle English and Latin word for “one” and refers to the principle, theory or practice that results from the formation of a union, with union being an alliance or group combined into one (for example, the United States of America, the Teamsters’ Union)

Christian meaning - for the purposes of this study it is a term referring to joint worship by various Christian groups who are not united in the truth; that is, there are differences in doctrines, creeds, confessions and/or religious convictions are ignored (for example, the Prussian Union)

syncretism

general meaning - it is based on two Greek words that literally mean “to unite like the Cretans” as they did to face a common foe and came to refer to a bringing into one or a mingling/mixing of different systems of philosophy and/or religions (for example, the United States as a “melting pot”)

Christian meaning - for the purposes of this study it is a term referring to a service in which various religions (Christianity, paganism, etc.) invoke, pray to and/or worship a variety of gods, spirits and/or forces (for example, Manicheanism is the consequence of Christian, Zoroastrian and Gnostic syncretism)

So these nations feared the LORD, and also served their graven images; their children likewise, and their children’s children - as their fathers did, so they do to this day (2 Kings 17:41)

From the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod Handbook:

Constitution of The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

Article VI Conditions of Membership

Conditions for acquiring and holding membership in the Synod are the following:

1. Acceptance of the confessional basis of Article II.
2. Renunciation of unionism and syncretism of every description, such as:
 - a. Serving congregations of mixed confession, as such, by ministers of the church;
 - b. Taking part in the services and sacramental rites of heterodox congregations or of congregations of mixed confession;
 - c. Participating in heterodox tract and missionary activities.

Let's get the Word straight ... concerning *syncretism* and *unionism*

From the Scriptures we learn that:

1. There is only one God ... the LORD. In this very religious, polytheistic (many-gods) world, monotheism (one-god) is the truth. This is not negotiable.

I am the LORD your God, Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself a graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them or serve them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love Me and keep My commandments. You shall not take the Name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless who takes His Name in vain (Exodus 20:2-7).

I, I am the LORD, and besides Me there is no savior (Isaiah 43:11).

Then Jesus said to him, "Begone, Satan! for it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God and Him only shall you serve" (Matthew 4:10).

2. Though there are many gods, there is only one God. Notice in the readings above and those that follow that the LORD is often confessed as "your God" or "our God" or "my God." The next time you read through the Bible make note of all those confessions.

3. Since the Fall into sin, the natural inclination of man is to depart from the LORD and to fashion and worship other gods. Or, said another way, the default reaction is in the direction of polytheism.

- the self-ish god - Genesis 3:5
- the personal or household gods - Genesis 31:22-35
- the community gods - like the golden calf - Exodus 32
 - note how Aaron gives in to the felt needs and desires of the people
 - note the syncretism with the insertion and tolerance of the man-made god
 - note especially verse 5 as Aaron tries to keep the LORD in the game
 - note what Moses said to Aaron (the leader left in charge) in verse 21
 - note the division that is ordered in verse 26 and the judgment that follows
- the geographic or national gods - Judges 10:6-16 (consider the consequences)

4. When church leaders permit other gods to be worshipped, the people follow the example of their leaders. Consider the consequences in the following examples:

- Solomon - 1 Kings 11:1-10
- Manasseh - 2 Chronicles 33:1-17
- Peter (Cephas) - Galatians 2:1-21
- Church in Pergamum - Revelation 2:12-17
- Church in Thyatira - Revelation 2:18-29 (where Jezebel, the self-called prophetess, is tolerated and permitted to teach her false doctrine)

5. The LORD our God sends men to confront the corrupt Church. There is scathing Law preached in order to bring the people to the Gospel. At such times, these men are the objects of attacks and scorn. They are considered unloving and intolerant. Consider a couple examples.

- Elijah - 1 Kings 18:17-40
 - verse 21 - the people could live with and worship two different gods
 - verse 21 - the prophet tells them they can't have two opposing confessions
 - verses 26 - 29 - the "invocation" of the false god Baal
 - v. 27 - mocking of the false god by the prophet in the presence of the people
 - verse 39 - the confession of the people that the LORD is God
- Micaiah - 1 Kings 22:1-28 (This is a particularly interesting example of a faithful prophet avoiding syncretism during a time of national crisis and uncertainty. King Jehoshaphat unionized with King Ahab. Micaiah won't join the other prophets and the truth that he speaks is not supportive of the national resolve.)
- Paul - 2 Corinthians 6:14-18 - Very clear! Answer the questions.

6. The divisions within Christendom occur when there is a denial or rejection of the one true faith. These divisions take place when error seeks a place with, or the replacement of, the truth, particularly the truth concerning the forgiveness of sins, eternal life and salvation - all three being gifts wrought by the Incarnate Son of God in His sin-atonement Death on the cross and death-defeating Resurrection from the tomb - all gifts given by the grace of God alone, through faith alone, in Christ Jesus alone, as revealed in the Word alone.

- Jesus came to give division on earth - Luke 12:49-53
- Paul urges avoidance of those who teach false doctrine - Romans 16:17-18
- Paul warns about there being no other gospel - Galatians 1:6-10
- James writes about that a friend of the world is an enemy of God - James 4:4
- Peter warns about destructive heresies sneaking in - 2 Peter 2:1-2

- John states deniers of the Incarnation have no place in the House 2 John 7-11
- Jude warns about ungodly men creeping in to turn grace into license Jude 3-4
- Jesus warns about false doctrine - Revelation 2:12-17

7. The content of a sermon, especially when unbelievers are present or where those who worship other gods are in attendance, is informative with respect to whether or not the Gospel is actually preached. The basic doctrines of Christianity are always a part of the sermon or teaching when the preacher or teacher desires to proclaim the Gospel.

- The Law Exposing Sin
- The Person of Jesus the Christ
- The Work of Jesus the Christ
- The Resurrection
- The Efficacy of the Word

8. Notice this content in the following sermons (when unbelievers are present, when false teachers are present, and/or when those who worship false gods are present). The Law is preached in all its sternness and severity, and it always accuses the old Adam in each of us. The Gospel of justification by grace through faith in the Person and Work of Christ is announced in all its sweetness, healing and comfort.

- Peter's Sermon on the Day of Pentecost - Acts 2:22-40
 - The Law Exposing Sin - throughout verses 22-36
 - The Person of Jesus the Christ - man and God (v. 22, 23, 27, 36 & others)
 - The Work of Jesus the Christ - throughout the entire sermon
 - The Resurrection - verses 24, 27, 31, 36
 - The Efficacy of the Word - verses 37-40
- Paul's Sermon at Antioch—Acts 13:16-43 (write down the specific verses)
 - The Law Exposing Sin
 - The Person of Jesus the Christ
 - The Work of Jesus the Christ
 - The Resurrection
 - The Efficacy of the Word

9. The Gospel is a stumbling block (Romans 9:32-34) and there should be enough Good News in a sermon to trip up and/or offend, *for the Word of the Cross is folly to those who are*

perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. ... For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:18 & 23-24). If no one is offended, especially in a gathering where unbelievers, followers of other gods, and false teachers are assembled, then ...

- the Law has not accused the sinner; and/or
- the Gospel has not been preached: and/or
- salvation by Christ alone has not been proclaimed

“Let not your hearts be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s House are many rooms; if it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And when I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to Myself, that where I am you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.” Thomas said to Him, “Lord, we do not know where You are going; how can we know the way?” Jesus said to Him, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life; no one comes to the Father but by Me” (John 14:1-6).

10. The Gospel is offensive and there are times when those in attendance would not let the message of sin and grace continue.

- Peter’s address 3:12 - 4:4
- Peter’s witness in Jerusalem - Acts 4:5-22 (verse 12 is especially offensive)
- Paul’s declaration at Antioch - Acts 13:44-52
- Paul’s apology at Athens - Acts 17:16-34

How is this done today?

11. What should a faithful pastor of Christ and His Church do when asked to engage in a syncretistic or unionistic service? Let’s consider a real situation that took place.

Rev. Dean Kavouras is assistant pastor at Christ Lutheran Church in Cleveland, Ohio. In addition to his responsibilities as pastor, Rev. Kavouras is a chaplain with the FBI. After the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, he was called to serve at the Somerset, Pennsylvania Crash Site. When asked to participate in a unionistic service, Pastor Kavouras responded as a faithful pastor. He declined. While others caved in to the sirens of syncretism, he stated that he would have no part in this.

When asked to compromise his Call and take part in a service where Christ was not proclaimed as the only way to salvation, Pastor Kavouras responded as a faithful undershepherd of Christ. He did what was good, what was right and what he had promised, as a member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, to do. He just said, “no.” Even as other members of the synod unashamedly violated Article VI, Pastor Kavouras took the Godly course and remained

steadfast in his pledge and promise to God, to you, to me and to every other member of the LCMS.

With his refusal to participate in a syncretistic service, he did what he could in sharing the message of sin and grace. He listened to a host of questions from many people who expressed doubts and shared their concerns. He talked with people about God's Law and told them of the Good News of Jesus in this world. He offered to have a service and the people came to it, eager to hear the message of salvation from a man who remained steadfast in the Word and work of the Lord. While others could not think of, or did not desire, any alternative to following the agenda of a polytheistic gathering and as a result, succumbed to the temptations, Pastor Kavouras led the service at the Somerset Crash Site.

It is important to make this point quite clear - the refusal to engage in unionism or syncretism does not preclude evangelism. As it happened, the refusal presented him with the opportunity to the pure proclamation of the Gospel.

People gathered on the day of the week celebrating the Resurrection of our Lord at a service of comfort, strength and healing. What they heard was one man giving a clear and accurate message of the Law that condemns sin and the Gospel that heals the soul. He preached on Romans 6:23 - "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord." On Sunday, September 23rd, while others were giving an incomplete, confused and mixed message of the Christian faith (both in terms of context and content), Pastor Kavouras preached "In the Valley of the Shadow of Death."

12. Read the following sermon and note both the preaching of Law and Gospel as well as the proclamation of the five doctrines discussed above.

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear friends in Christ Jesus our Lord, today is Sunday! The day which every week commemorates for us, the Resurrection of our Lord from the grave. His Resurrection, after what could only be called the most senseless and unjust death of all history, proves that He is in truth "the Resurrection and the Life" - and He became those things for you!

For all who have been baptized into His Name, all who put their hope in Him, all who call on Him to save, especially in times of crisis - will likewise leave their graves, however humble or anonymous or ignominious those final resting places may be. And so this morning, let Him be your hope, your comfort and your only source of strength. Not just here in "the valley of the shadow of death" where we have all lived and worked and cried and anguished - for 13 ghastly days - but always!

Because our status as God's beloved children, the glorious liberty we have in Christ, is always challenged by the devil. But fear not little flock, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give you the Kingdom. And He is able to make good on His every promise of love to you. So again, may the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ lift your drooping spirits this Sunday, and restore the joy of salvation to you!

Dear friends, I would be a fool to stand before you today and offer you anything that I know or possess of myself. Dean Kavouras as such is nothing and has nothing to give. My sympathy, my concern, my emotions, those are all nice things, but they will do little more than soothe your psyche for a short time. My presence will not deliver health and healing for your wounded souls.

Rather I stand before you today as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ; and I assume those of you who have come here today have gathered to hear (or at least to investigate) what message the Word of God might have for such a time as this.

And I dare say that fully one half of the Bible's message speaks of nothing other than what we see hear today - the death brought about by sin; BUT the other 50%, the more important, precious and life-giving 50% tells of the life freely offered for each of us, to win us from sin, from death and from the power of the devil, offered by the Son of God - who loved us, who gave Himself over to a death more gruesome than the one's we've beheld for the last 13 days in our beloved land.

But while these deaths were senseless, our Lord's (death) had a reason; one planned before the foundation of the world, carefully timed and orchestrated by the Heavenly Father, all with only one good goal in mind - to do battle with death and to conquer death, and to give each one of us - our Lord's dear and beloved children - the non-ending life and non-ending glory in Heaven.

Now I can give two answers to the questions that trouble us today. I can give you the "feel good" answer! I can spray pixie dust your eyes and play patty - cake with you and make you warm and fuzzy for a spell. Or I can give you the real answers! The ones that at first, and let me stress that, "at first", are hard to hear, but in the end, will give you true peace, lasting comfort and hope to take home with you from this place.

I think today I'll give the real answers! And that for two reasons. First, only they will satisfy you; and as none of you has been derelict in your duty, I will not be derelict in mine. Second, I would not last five minutes as a chaplain, serving such an august body of investigators of veracity as yourselves, unless I told you the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Though you have become accustomed in your daily work to hearing hard truths, today, you will hear in addition, the most soothing message and powerful medicine ever given for stricken souls.

Dear friends, the answer to the current crises can be encapsulated by one short verse of Scripture, St. Paul's letter to the Romans 6:23 where he writes under the guidance of the Holy Spirit "*the wages of sin (is) death, but the gift of God (is) eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*"

The biggest question people are asking today is: why did this happen? And now I'm going to answer that for you on two levels. The surface answer is this - because sinful people did sinful things! Because a self-appointed, self-righteous son of the devil could not sleep at night unless he shed innocent blood, in direct opposition to God's fifth commandment "Thou shalt not kill."

A commandment which by the way does NOT apply to the work you do when you apprehend these people, bringing them to justice, or . . . justice to them. God says in the Bible about the government's agents: that you are His ministers and that you don't bear the sword (today, the gun) in vain. Bad people doing bad things. Okay so far. But why do people do evil? Because dear friends, all of us have been infected with a congenital heart disease known as sin. We inherited it from our parents and live out its twisted dictates in all we think, say and do. Sin drives us. Each of us makes regular and generous contributions to the boiling cauldron of the world's sin each day. But God's penalty phase is always the same, as we read, "the wages of sin is death."

Each violation of God's un-revised, universal code; the ten best and truest commandments ever given to men by which to live, rules that if followed would make our world heaven on earth (have no other gods; use God's name with reverence; keep the Sabbath day holy; honor parents; don't murder; don't commit adultery; don't steal; don't lie; don't covet) - each transgression of duty to God or neighbor carries a mandatory sentence of death. Death now and death forever. What we saw here 13 days ago, beloved, was only one of the smaller manifestations of God's judgment on us all.

But stay with me here for the cleansing of the wound is now over, and the healing is about to commence.

Please understand and hear my right. God does not do evil! Our Heavenly Father does not take pleasure in evil! But He will use even this to bring about good for us; to exalt us in His own way and His own time; to lift us up high above our enemies; to impart to us the things which will make for true peace - for us and for our children; humility, faith, hope, a greater love for Him; a mind-set of authentic service; lips to praise Him and a greater and more genuine tenderness for one another as we travel the storm-tossed seas of life together - a love I dare say most admirably displayed by you all, and which has not nearly reached its conclusion.

Please note that every person born into this world dies - do we have any doubt? Some young, some old, some justly and some unjustly, but one and all - we perish. Even our Lord was not exempt, but His death was different than all others - and that in three ways.

First, He was innocent of all sin. He was the holy and righteous Son of God who had no sin for which to receive the "wages" He received.

Secondly, He died in the place of another - and you are that "other". It was a substitutionary death! a life-giving death; a death-conquering death; accomplished for us and in our place. And by His sacrifice, our guilt, our curse, our penalty for all sin is removed. The wages of our sins were paid to Him, collected by Him. On the cross, our record of wrongs before Heaven's court, was expunged and in the sight of God, you and I are now holy! Think about that for a moment, for that is the chief truth of the Christian religion, that our sins have been removed from us and we now stand justified, innocent and holy before God; all by virtue of our connection to the crucified and risen Savior. That's why the Bible calls every Christian, a saint! However beleaguered your soul may be, however weak and flickering your faith, you are a saint.

By faith in Christ, you are Righteous in the truest sense of the word. A righteousness you cannot buy with any currency; cannot merit by good behavior; cannot win though you suffer oh so terribly in this life. For it is, in fact, a gift. The gift! The gift of God, bought and paid for by your Lord Jesus Christ. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the children of God.

Third, his death was different in that He did not stay dead! And the great hope of the Christian church, the message which we believe, teach and confess with all vigor, the thing every believer in Christ confidently expects and looks forward to - our own resurrection from the grave! The Bible says that Jesus was the "first-fruits", which is an agricultural metaphor which means "the first of many yet to follow." He was the first; and you, dear friends, are the "many".

For when you were baptized into the strong name of the Trinity, you were made a beloved child of God. At baptism, you were united to our Lord's death; you were buried with Him; and you were - and yet will be - raised with Him, by the glorious power of the Father into new and abundant Life.

And it is for this reason that the Scriptures constantly and confidently give us words encouragement; words such as those spoken to Joshua as he was about to commence the taking of the promised land; and words which every Christian can take as his own in the battle we all fight each day with sin and death; words which are able to prop you up in the face of grimmest death.

(Joshua 1:9) *The LORD said to Joshua: "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."*

He's with us here. He's with us in the crater. He's with us in the grim woods. He's with us in the morgue. He's with us in the offices. He's with us at the hanger. He's with us on the streets and in the dark places where criminals hide. He's with us in our hearts and in our homes! And now the peace of God which passes all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus our Lord, Amen.

13. Based upon the Scripture readings and discussions to this point, as well as the sermon you just read, address and discuss the following:

- What is the main reason why pastors engage in unionistic/syncretistic services? Is it for the sake of the Gospel and to share this Good News with those in the service?
- In the "normal" unionistic/syncretistic setting, do you think that a pastor would be permitted to preach this kind of a Law/Gospel sermon? Why?
- In the "normal" unionistic or syncretistic setting, do you think that you will be able to hear this kind of Law/Gospel preaching? Why?
- In Acts 13:4-12 Barnabas and Paul are preaching the Word of God. Paul is

proclaiming the Word to Sergius Paulus. A magician named Elymas steps up to lead the proconsul from the faith. Paul does not take turns with the false prophet in a syncretistic service. Note what Paul calls him! In the unionistic/syncretistic service, do you think that you would hear this kind of condemnation of the other participants? Do you think that you would hear the pastor exposing the fellow participants as idol worshipers, a preaching of Judgment Day and an invitation for them to repent and come to faith in the Crucified, Risen and Ascended Christ? Why?

- Of course, the questions in the previous paragraphs are answered “no.” Why?

This is because we all recognize that such preaching would offend both the participants and the hearers. But now, this brings us back to the original question. “*What is the reason why pastors engage in unionistic/syncretistic services?*”

We have concluded that it really is not for the sake of the Gospel or to share this Good News with those in the worship service. So then, what are the reasons? To please others? Afraid? Unable to have the conviction to say “no”? Tradition? To garner the praise of others? Pressure? Unwilling to think about what the right thing to do is? To be honored as courageous? or what?

- Read Galatians 1:1-10. How does it apply to the preceding discussion?

Where are we today?

14. Despite the spans of time, geography and technology, the scene in the world today is much as it was during the days of Gideon and Samson when everyone *did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 17:6)*. Multiculturalism, pluralism and tolerance have invaded many of the sanctuaries of the LORD and infected many of the pulpits of Christ. The result is a slippery-slope defection and departure from the one true God and the one true faith and the one true Church. The Ascended and Enthroned Jesus warns the church in Ephesus of the possibility of His removal of the lampstand from its place in Revelation 2:1-7. This ought to serve as a warning to us today.

- Is the LORD God pleased and Christ honored when He is presented as one of many gods to choose from - when the Christian faith is offered as one of many that lead to salvation, that is, as if it were one within the line of a religious cafeteria, spiritual smorgasbord or polytheistic potluck?
- Consider and discuss the validity of the following.
 - When a leader agrees to engage in a unionistic/syncretistic service the opportunity for the Word to be preached in its truth and purity, that is, to share the Gospel, is forfeited.

- When a pastor declines the invitation to be involved in a unionistic/syncretistic service the opportunity for the Word to be preached in its truth and purity, that is, to share the Gospel, is retained.
- The refusal to be involved in a unionistic/syncretistic service doesn't preclude a pastor from sharing the Gospel. Rather, as has been noted, it will lead to an opportunity for the pure proclamation of it. The bottom line is ...

In order for a pastor to share the whole, he must refuse a part!

- Consider any recent unionistic/syncretistic services that have been in the news. In view of what you have read, studied and discussed is such participation sin? In view of Article VI of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, is such participation grounds for the removal of membership and office?

15. A few quotes to consider, discuss and apply.

- Members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod believe, teach and confess the following concerning the first petition of the Lord's Prayer - *Hallowed be Thy Name* ...

See, then, what a great need there is for this kind of prayer! Because we see that the world is full of sects and false teachers, all of whom wear the holy name as a cloak and warrant for their devilish doctrine, we ought constantly to shout and cry out against all who preach and believe falsely and against those who want to attack, persecute, and suppress our gospel and pure doctrine, as the bishops, tyrants, fanatics, and others do.

The Large Catechism, III, 47

- The rejection of the truth is living the lie.

Where man can no longer bear the truth, he cannot live without the lie. Where man, even when dying, lies to himself and others, the terrible dissolution of his culture is held up as a glorious ascent, and decline is viewed as an advance, the like of which has never been experienced.

Union and Confession, by Hermann Sasse, p. 1

- Is yours a Lutheran Church?

While a Church retains its proper identity, it retains of necessity its proper doctrine. Deserting its doctrine it loses its identity. The Church is not a body which bears its name like England, or America, which remain equally England and America, whether savage or civilized, Pagan or Christian, Monarchical or Republican. Its name is one which properly indicates its faith - and the faith changing, the Church loses its identity. Pagans may become Mohammedans, but then they are no longer Pagans - they are Mohammedans. Jews may become Christians, but then they are no longer Jews in religion. A Manichean man, or Manichean Church, might become Catholic, but then

they would be Manichean no more. A Romish Church is Romish; a Pelagian Church is Pelagian; a Socinian Church is Socinian though they call themselves Protestant, Evangelical, or Trinitarian. If the whole nominally Lutheran Church on earth should repudiate the Lutheran doctrine, that doctrine would remain as really Lutheran as it ever was. A man, or body of men, may cease to be Lutherans, but a doctrine which is Lutheran once, is Lutheran forever. Hence, now, as from the first, that is not a Lutheran Church, in the proper and historical sense, which cannot ex animo declare that it shares in the accord and unanimity with which each of the Doctrines of the Augsburg Confession was set forth.

The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology
by Charles Porterfield Krauth, page 365

It is absurd to talk of Jesus Christ and practice Judaism. For Christianity did not base its faith on Judaism, but Judaism on Christianity.

Ignatias (1st Century), *Letter to the Magnesians*, 10:3

16. Where do we go from here?

- Acknowledge that unionism and syncretism have taken place and that these are sins.
- Acknowledge that the reasons for unionism and syncretism vary ...
 - from ... a moment of weakness or fear ...
 - to ... a continuing engagement

- Identify who these men are that do this as well as those men who approve this ...
 - from ... a weak pastor who did so in a time of weakness or fear ...

And Peter remembered the saying of Jesus, "Before the cock crows, you will deny Me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75).

- to ... a hardened, repeat offender who flaunts such sinful behavior

For admission has been secretly gained by some who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly persons who pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ (Jude 4).

- Take appropriate action, ...
 - from .. admonition, repentance, public confession, absolution and retention ...

Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted (Galatians 6:1).

- to ... excommunication and/or removal from pulpit and office

They have healed the wound of My people lightly, saying, "Peace, peace," when there is no peace. Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among the fallen; when I punish them, they shall be overthrown, says the Lord (Jeremiah 8:11-12).

A Final Word or Two

17. The examples of trustworthy shepherds ought to be set before the people of God that the church may rejoice in the Word and the work of faithful pastors. There are many faithful men who are true pastors and who have made the kind, loving and caring decision of politely refusing to engage in unionistic and/or syncretistic services. *We put no obstacle in any one's way, so that no fault may be found with our ministry (2 Corinthians 6:3).* They have also provided services of the Word during these terror-filled times so that others might be able to hear the Word of God preached in its truth and purity. Thus the faithful children in the Lord's Church do consider us "*as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God*" (1 Corinthians 4:1).

18. In the study, consideration and discussion of these matters, the declaration of the faithful written centuries ago is maintained and confessed this day, namely ...

It must not be thought that anything has been said or introduced out of hatred or for the purpose of injuring anybody, but we have related only matters which we have considered it necessary to adduce and mention in order that it may be made very clear that we have introduced nothing, either in doctrine or in ceremonies, that is contrary to Holy Scripture or the universal Christian church. For it is manifest and evident (to speak without boasting) that we have diligently and with God's help prevented any new and godless teaching from creeping into our churches and gaining the upper hand in them.

Conclusion of The Augsburg Confession
