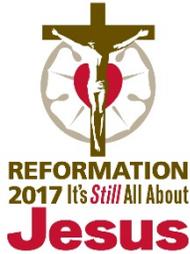


God's Measuring Tape: Sola Scriptura

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It is perhaps curious to reach the end of a series of essays on the Lutheran Confessions and discover that the true rule and norm is not in fact the Confessions themselves, but rather the Holy Scriptures. For what in fact have we been studying this past year, if at the very end we point you away from the Confessions and back to the Scriptures?

And yet, that is hardly the case at all. To read the Confessions is to read the Scriptures, and to read the Scriptures is to read the Confessions.

But which one comes out on top?

The Scriptures alone. That's what the Confessions themselves say: "God's Word alone should be and remain the only standard and rule of doctrine, to which the writings of no man should be regarded as equal. *Everything should be subjected to God's Word.*" (SD Rule and Norm 9) We subscribe to the Confessions because they agree with the Scriptures. Should the Confessions conflict with the Scriptures in any place, it is the Confessions which step aside and allow the Word of God to stand supreme.

This stands in contrast to many other churches which operate quite the opposite. Their own confessions may indeed conflict with the Scriptures, claiming a need to modernize, or a continuing revelation from God regarding teachings. Who wins in these cases? Not the Word of the Lord that has been revealed through the person of Christ, but rather the whims of man, seeking to please itching ears near and far, only to find oneself outside the scope of the one holy Christian Church.

The Scriptures are the plumb line, used not just by Amos in Amos 7, but by the Church today, where we measure all things, both old and new, against the measuring tape of God's authoritative Word. As the Confessions put it, "the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments" are "the pure, clear fountain of Israel. They are the only true standard or norm by which all teachers and doctrines are to be judged." (SD Rule and Norm 3)

And so what of the Confessions? What do we make of them? They are indeed important and authoritative in our lives today, for they have been measured not by popular vote or by executive fiat from on high, but they have been measured against the Word of the Lord and found to be good and proper for the people of God in the 1500s and for the people of God today. (SD Rule and Norm 5-13)

As you read the Confessions, studying their articles for a deeper understanding of our Lutheran faith, take note of the numerous quotes and citations of the full body of Scripture that this confession of faith is built upon.

Further reading AC Preface 8 and Conclusion 4-7; Tr 6, 25; Ep and SD Rule and Norm; Holsten Fagerberg, *A New Look at the Lutheran Confessions (1529-1537)*, 1-62.

Abbreviations

AC = Unaltered Augsburg Confession

Ap = Apology of the Augsburg Confession

SC = Small Catechism

LC = Large Catechism

SA = Smalcald Articles (exclusive of the Tractate)

Tr = Tractate on the Power and Primacy of the

Pope

Ep = The Formula of Concord, Epitome

SD = The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration

Cat = Catalogue of Testimonies

NOTE: Articles and sections/paragraphs in the *Book of Concord* are denoted in Arabic numerals, separated by a period.