

THE FORMULA OF CONCORD:  
BACKGROUND AND ARTICLE ONE

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## THE FORMULA OF CONCORD: BACKGROUND AND ARTICLE ONE

In the introductory remarks of his Studies In The Augsburg Confession; Professor John Meyer writes, "It is the nature of a Christian to confess... Faith, being as it is a vital force that regenerates a person and makes a new creature out of him, cannot be hidden away in the heart... [Confessions] serve the double purpose of uniting us in the true faith, founded on God's Word alone and confessed by the Christians of all ages, and yet also of saving us from an unhealthy unionism with such as do not truly hold the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (p. 1). By the grace of God we are a confessional church. But in an age when so many view being confessional a flaw rather than a blessing, we do well from time to time to reflect on and to praise God for our confessional stance as well as for our confessions themselves.

On the day of our ordination amidst a bundle of nerves, every one of us answered "I do" to the question, "Dost thou believe that the Unaltered Augsburg Confession is a true exposition of the Word of God and a correct exhibition of the doctrine of the Evangelical Lutheran Church; and that the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the two Catechisms of Martin Luther, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord - as contained in the Book of Concord - are also in agreement with this one Scriptural faith?" Since we are a confessional body, and since we have all publicly subscribed to these confessions, and since these confessions are a true exposition of God's Word, it is good for us to review them from time to time. Such will be our work over the next few conferences

as we take a look at the Formula of Concord, reviewing its content and applying it to our ministry. May this study help us to grow in our faith and love for God, and in our zeal to do his work!

### BACKGROUND

To one degree or another, we have all studied church history somewhere along the line. Part of my assignment was to give a brief background of the Formula of Concord. My purpose is not to go into all the details, but simply to hit some of the highlights and refresh our memories a little bit.

With the death of Luther in 1546, many proponents of the Reformation undoubtedly realized that they would need to step to the forefront and pick up where Luther was forced to leave off. Unfortunately, opponents of the Reformation realized that this would also be a good time to bury the cause once and for all. They wasted little time.

In 1547 Emperor Charles V defeated the armies of the Protestant princes in the Smalcaldic War. The Smalcaldic League was greatly weakened by the defection of Maurice of Saxony to the side of the emperor and by problems surrounding Philip of Hesse. Any remaining forces were easily routed by the Emperor at Muehlberg later in 1547.

With the defeat came the *Augsburg Interim* at the Diet of Augsburg in 1548. The *Interim* exacted many compromises of the

Lutherans. It demanded the immediate restoration of the Romish customs and ceremonies. It demanded that the pope be acknowledged as the head of all Christians. "Transubstantiation, the seven sacraments, and other papal errors were reaffirmed, while Lutheran tenets, such as the doctrine of justification by faith alone, were either denied or omitted" (CI, "Historical Introductions, p. 95).

As expected, the Lutherans resisted the terms of the *Augsburg Interim*. Although those who resisted it were punished, it was so strongly met with non-compliance that finally the *Augsburg Interim* became a dead issue. But Maurice had a solution. He suggested that a new document be drawn up - one with a few more compromises - and enforced throughout the land. As a result, the *Leipzig Interim* was drawn up and adopted on December 22, 1548. In reality, the *Leipzig Interim* was not much different from the *Augsburg Interim*.

The chief architect of the new compromise was none other than Philip Melanchthon. "Melanchthon's motives, as he himself later tried to justify them, were to insure the peace of the church and to prevent needless persecution. Besides, he contended, whatever compromises were made, were made in adiaphora, that is, in matters neither commanded nor forbidden in the Scripture. Hence, all Lutherans should be able to accept them without injury to their consciences" (Fricke, Formula of Concord: A Study Guide for Bible Classes, p. 8).

Some years later, Maurice hopped back to the side of the Lutherans, routed the forces of the Emperor at Innsbruck, and

marched triumphantly into Augsburg. That victory led to the *Religious Peace of Augsburg* (1555). This was a huge victory for the Lutherans because it officially granted religious freedom to the Protestants. It placed Lutherans and Catholics on "equal footing" and endorsed the rule of "*cuius regio, eius religio*." Every prince now had religious control in his own territory.

While the *Peace of Augsburg* was a great blessing to those who adhered to the Augsburg Confession, it did not mean the end of their troubles. They were still plagued by the painful sting of disunity. Really there were three parties that could be distinguished in the ranks of the Lutherans after Luther's death. The first was the Philippists, also called Crypto-Calvinists or Synergists. They, of course, were adherents of Melanchthon. The second camp was made up of the so-called Gnesio-Lutherans. Their primary leader was Flacius. They proved themselves to be the valiant champions of Luther and the most adamant opponents of the Philippists. The third party "was composed of the loyal Lutherans who took no conspicuous part in the controversies, but came to the front when the work of pacification began" (CI, "Historical Introductions", p. 102). Their most noteworthy men were Brenz, Andrae, Chemnitz and Chytraeus.

The final stage in the history that led to the Formula of Concord is dominated by two men, Jacob Andrae and Martin Chemnitz. These two men put their heads together to try to establish some unity in the restless camp of the Lutherans. The two first met together in 1568. It soon became evident to Andrae that the

Philippists were probably too far gone and that trying to unite them with the Gnesio-Lutherans while still holding to sound doctrine would be impossible. As a result, Andrae turned his time and attention toward uniting true Lutherans.

In 1572 Andrae preached six sermons concerning the troubles that had plagued Lutherans from 1548 on. After preaching the sermons, Andrae sent them to Chemnitz, Chytraeus and others. The theologians received them excitedly, but suggested that they be transferred from their form as sermons to a form more suitable for a confession. The articles were written in the form of thesis and antithesis. This work resulted in the *Swabian Concord*, which contained all but one of the articles which were later included in the Formula of Concord. Chemnitz and Chytraeus revised some of the articles and the work was renamed the *Swabian-Saxon Concordia*.

At last Lutheran unity was beginning to take shape. Duke August called a meeting of a general body of theologians who were commissioned to produce a confession that would serve as a rallying point for all true Lutherans. The result was the *Torgau Book*, which was completed in 1576. The *Torgau Book* was a combination of the *Maulbronn Formula* and the *Swabian-Saxon Concordia*. The *Torgau Book* had the same twelve articles in the same order as the Formula of Concord would later have. It's also interesting to note that those two documents were largely prepared by the same group of men, including Andrae, Chemnitz, Selnecker, Chytraeus, Koerner and Musculus.

The next step was for the Elector August to get the *Torgau*

Book out into the hands of the Lutherans for criticism and suggestions. It was met with great enthusiasm. Some did, however, suggest that the work should name those theologians whose errors were being dealt with. Others suggested that the work was thorough, but just too voluminous. And so with the approval of the Elector August, Andrae produced an abridged version of the *Torgau Book* which he called the *Epitome*. Still more comments were gathered concerning the *Epitome*, and in March of 1577 the Elector appointed Chemnitz, Andrae and Selnecker to carry out the work of another revision. Two months later those three men were joined by three more, namely, Chytraeus, Koerner and Musculus. The result of their work was the *Bergen (or Bergic) Book*, which is today referred to as the *Solid or Thorough Declaration*. Together with Andrae's *Epitome*, this now makes up the *Formula of Concord*. The *Formula of Concord* was published in German at Dresden in 1580 as part of the *Book of Concord*. The Latin version was completed in 1584.

The rest, as they say, is history. The *Formula of Concord* received wide acceptance. It achieved the goal of establishing peace and concord within the young Lutheran church. That peace didn't come easily and should never be taken for granted. Pastor Harmon Krause says it well in his essay, *The Formula of Concord: How It Developed*: "The more than 20-year struggle for Christian unity following the death of Dr. Luther and the defeat of the Smalcaldic League shows us first of all how great was the cost which other Christians were willing to pay for their Savior so that you and I may today enjoy a Christ-given and Holy Spirit created

union and peace within our WELS which is a rare gift in this world of thorns and tears."

Still today, some 411 years later, the Formula of Concord stands as a clear witness to the truth of the inspired Scriptures.

#### ARTICLE ONE, ORIGINAL SIN

Essential to a proper understanding of the Scripture's doctrine of justification by grace is a proper understanding of Scripture's teaching of original sin. In an age of rampant humanism, the doctrine of original sin and of the natural fallen state of mankind is not popular; but then it never really has been. Nor was it popular during the era of the Reformation. A controversy arose concerning the doctrine of original sin and man's corrupt nature. Article I of the Formula of Concord was written to clarify the true scriptural teaching on original sin and to combat the faulty notions that were held by many.

The controversy really began taking shape at the Weimar Disputation, which was held at Weimar August 2-8, 1560. The major parties in the dispute were to be Victorin Strigel and Matthius Flacius. The topics slated to be discussed were: free will, gospel, majorism, adiaphorism and indifferentism. But they never really got that far. As it turned out, the only topics discussed were free will and original sin.

Strigel defended the Melanchthonian doctrine, according to which the causes of conversion



are the Holy spirit, the Word of God, and the will of man feebly assenting to the Gospel and, at the same time, seeking strength from God... Flacius, on the other hand, defended the mere passive of Luther, according to which man, before he is converted and endowed with faith, does not in any way cooperate with the Holy Spirit, but merely suffers and experiences his operations (CI, "Historical Introductions", p. 134).

Flacius was intensely focused on upholding the scriptural doctrine of "by grace alone." Perhaps he was too focused. In an all-out attempt to show his disagreement with Strigel's synergistic teachings, Flacius stepped over the line of orthodoxy and said too much. In the heat of debate Flacius exclaimed, "Original sin is not an accident, for the Scriptures call it flesh, the evil heart."

The Formula of Concord defines the key terms of this controversy, *substantia* and *accidens*. *Substantia* is "self-existent essence"; *accidens* is "an accidental matter which does not exist by itself essentially, but is in another self-existent essence and can be distinguished from it" (877:54). Thus, original sin is *accidens*, it is *in* the human nature. But we cannot say that human nature *is* original sin. Perhaps it is helpful to illustrate this with a pot of water on a stove. The water is the *substantia*. The *accidens* would be heating the water up. The heat is not the water; it is something external that has been added or applied to the water and has completely pervaded it. Flacius' words spoke of human nature and original sin as being one and the same, inseparable from each another. In the book, Getting Into the Formula of Concord: A History & Digest of the Formula, Eugene Klug and Otto Stahlke write:

Even as the image of God in man was lost without essential loss of the human nature - that is, man remained man though not without radical spiritual loss - so sin could (and did) enter in and drastically effect and change man. Though his essential nature as such, body and soul, would not simply be identifiable with sin, the terrible taint of it could twist body, soul, and mind into sinful paths so utterly that man could not of himself work a change, or conversion, not even begin or assist in it. This is how Flacius should have answered his opponent, stating that original sin was actually 'accidental' to, or an intrusion on, man's nature and substance (p. 27).

Strigel seized the opportunity. He jumped all over Flacius. When Strigel said that original sin was an accident, he was trying to show that there was no such thing as total depravity. Flacius was certainly right to oppose this heresy, but he went too far in saying that original sin was man's substance. Instead of rethinking what he said and retracting it, Flacius continued to vehemently defend his words. In so doing, he left himself wide open to charges of Manichaeism. Manichaeism teaches that there are two independent opposing principles which rule the universe, light (good) and darkness (evil). Manichaeism also teaches that man came into being as a creature of Satan and as a result was evil right from the start. Even when the orthodox brothers implored Flacius moderate his Manichaeism-like expressions, Flacius stubbornly refused. As a result, the matter would need to be dealt with in Article I of the Formula of Concord.

Let us move on to taking a look at Article I from the Epitome. The *Status Contr~~o~~versiae* sets forth the key issue to be dealt with in the article. It reads:

Whether original sin is properly and without any distinction man's corrupt nature, substance, and essence, or at any rate the principal and best part of his essence [substance]; namely, the rational soul itself in its highest state and powers; or whether, even after the Fall, there is a distinction between man's substance, nature, essence, body, soul, and original sin, so that the nature [itself] is one thing, and original sin, which inheres in the corrupt nature and corrupts the nature, another (779:1).

In other words, the point of controversy is whether or not original sin is part of essence of man.

The *Affirmativa* sets forth the Formula of Concord's stance in three main points. The first point is that there is indeed a distinction between man's nature and original sin. In fact, the Epitome states, "this distinction is as great as the distinction between a work of God and a work of the devil" (779:2).

The second main point of the Epitome's *Affirmativa* really just states that this distinction between man's essence and original sin must be maintained with the greatest care because a faulty view of this teaching will eventually "conflict with the chief articles of our Christian faith concerning creation, redemption, sanctification, and the resurrection of the body, and cannot coexist therewith" (779:3). The point is also made that Christ, when he assumed the human nature, actually took on our own flesh and became one of us (Hebrews 2:14), and yet did so without sin (Hebrews 4:15). In regard to this the Epitome also states, "But original sin He has not created, assumed, redeemed, sanctified; nor will he raise it, will neither adorn nor save it in the elect, but in the [blessed] resurrection it will be entirely destroyed"

(781:6).

The final point made in the Epitome's *Affirmativa* deals with the extent of the corruption of original sin on human nature. In regard to this matter, Luther once wrote:

According to the apostle and the simple sense of him who is in Christ Jesus, [original sin] is not merely the lack of a quality in the will or indeed merely the lack of light in the intellect, of strength in the memory. Rather, it is a complete deprivation of all rectitude and of the ability of all the powers of the body as well as the soul and of the entire inner and outer man. In addition to this, it is an inclination to evil, a disgust at the good, a disinclination toward light and wisdom; it is love of error and darkness, a fleeing from good works and a loathing of them, a running to what is evil. Therefore it is as the ancient holy fathers have correctly said: This original sin is the real tinder (fomes), the law of the flesh, the law of our members, the exhaustion of our nature, the tyrant, the disease of origin (Plass, What Luther Says, vol. III, p. 1300,1301).

So also the Epitome states that "original sin is not a slight, but so deep a corruption of human nature that nothing healthy or uncorrupt has remained in man's body or soul" (781:8). Obviously, the authors of the Formula of Concord wanted to be clearly understood as saying that original sin is something which completely corrupts the human nature, leaving unregenerate mankind with no spiritual powers at all. Thus this article refuted Strigel's synergism and at the same time refuted Flacius' faulty view that original sin is not merely something which is in the nature, but something which is actually part of fallen man's *substantia*.

The *Negativa* rejects the errorists in 13 main points. Let us

briefly look at each.

- (1) Rejects the teaching that original sin is only a *reatus* or debt on one's account without any corruption of the nature.
- (2) Rejects the view that holds that evil lusts are not sin, but are only essential properties of the nature.
- (3) Rejects Pelagianism, which teaches that man's nature even after the Fall is incorrupt and has remained entirely good and pure in its natural powers.
- (4) Rejects the teaching that original sin is merely a slight blemish, beneath which the nature has retained its good powers even in spiritual things.
- (5) Rejects the view that original sin is merely an external impediment to the good spiritual powers and not a total destruction of them.
- (6) Rejects the teaching that in man the human nature and essence are not entirely corrupt, but that there is still a spark of good in man.
- (7) Rejects Manichaeism, when it teaches that original sin as something essential has been infused by Satan into the nature.
- (8) Rejects the teaching that not natural man, but something else outside of man, sins and so not the nature, but only original sin in the nature is accused.
- (9) Rejects Flacianism, that original sin is the same as the substance, nature and essence of man.
- (10) Luther called original sin "nature-sin", "person-sin" and "essential sin" not because he was a Flacianist, but in order to distinguish between original sin and actual sins.
- (11) Original sin is not a sin which is committed, but it inheres in the nature of man.
- (12) The word *nature* is not to be misunderstood. Sometimes it means the essence of man, and other times it means the disposition and the viscous quality of a thing which inheres in the nature or essence.
- (13) The Latin terms *accidens* and *substantia* should not be used in sermons because they are not terms used in the Scriptures and because they are not words known to the ordinary man. But in the schools these terms should be taught and used.

So what is original sin? How thoroughly does original sin corrupt the human nature? Article I of the Formula of Concord clearly and succinctly states that original sin is not the same as man's essence, but that it is an "accident" which is in the sinful nature and which totally, radically corrupts that nature so that

natural man is in every sense spiritually blind and dead. As the Thorough Declaration says:

This hereditary evil is so great and horrible that only for the sake of the Lord Christ it can be covered and forgiven before God in the baptized and believing. Moreover, human nature, which is perverted and corrupted thereby, must and can be healed only by the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Ghost, which, however, is only begun in this life, but will not be perfect until in the life to come (863:14).

Yes, Article I, like the rest of the Formula of Concord, served the purpose of clearly stating the true teachings of the Scriptures and thus uniting all who were in agreement with them while at the same time preserving orthodox Lutherans from any unhealthy unionism with those who were misled. The doctrine of original sin as it is taught in God's holy Word was set forth for all to see. The errorists were named and their teachings were refuted. There could no longer be any confusion as to where the orthodox Lutherans stood.

#### APPLICATION: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF ARTICLE I FOR MY MINISTRY

The entire Formula of Concord has a great deal of relevance and application for Christians throughout the ages. We can be sure of that because that was the intent of the authors of the Formula

of Concord right from the beginning.

In order that the truth may be preserved the more distinctly and clearly, and be distinguished from all errors, and that nothing be hidden and concealed under ordinary terms [rather general words and phrases], we have clearly and expressly declared ourselves to one another concerning the chief and most important articles, taken one by one, which at the present time have come into controversy, so that there might be a public, definite testimony, not only for those now living, but also for our posterity, what is and should remain the unanimous understanding and judgement [decision] of our churches in reference to the articles in controversy (857:16).

To say that Article I and the doctrine of original sin have some practical application for our ministry to the souls entrusted to us is a gross understatement. You would never know that by listening to much of the popular preachers who occupy our airwaves. Nor would you ever guess that by reading the books of the many modern liberal theologians. But the doctrine of original sin as we know it from the Holy Scriptures and as it is treated in Article I of the Formula of Concord has tremendous meaning and application for every facet of our ministry.

We preach and teach original sin because it is scriptural. "Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men... For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners..." (Ro 5:18a,19a). "Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me" (Ps 51:5). "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature" (Ro 7:18). "Flesh gives birth to flesh" (Jn 3:6). "Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath" (Eph 2:3). To

avoid preaching and teaching original sin is to avoid preaching the whole counsel of God.

And not only will we need to preach and teach original sin, but we will need to do so clearly and fully. That means that we will point out that all are truly by nature the sinful, condemned, spiritually blind and dead enemies of God. But won't that be unpopular? Some may view it that way. Won't that turn some people off? It very well could. Wouldn't it be better to see the good in people and build up their self-esteem instead of hitting them with the wrecking ball of original sin? Never. As long as one does not confess his complete corruption and the total depravity of his inherited sinfulness, he can only do what his warped reason tells him to do - to continue in his attempts to work out his own salvation. Only after every way of work righteousness has been sealed off, only after the sword of the law has cut the heart and has left it screaming for mercy, only then can the sinner even begin to appreciate the redemption won for him by the Savior of mankind.

The doctrine of original sin may not be popular with some. Why is it that the pews are packed for the high-power, feel-good t.v. evangelists? Often, it is because they tell people exactly what their itching ears want to hear. And more often than not, that does not include the scriptural teaching of original sin. The doctrine of original sin is offensive to modern man, especially modern intellectual man. Think of it. We pride ourselves on technology and intellect. We buy into the philosophy of being able



to do anything that we put our mind to. And so in spiritual matters we see no difficulty. Just do the right thing, follow the Golden Rule, respect those around you, give it the old college try and God must be satisfied. God will overlook our shortcomings. After all, everyone has a few weaknesses. To say that everyone is born into this world as the spiritually blind and dead enemy of God is, at best, pessimistic thinking.

But we haven't been called to preach what is popular in the mind of many. We have been called to preach the Word. And the Word clearly states that we are all by nature condemned. "Every minimizing of the hereditary corruption, whether in the crass Papist-Arminian form or in a finer or the finest form, in which it has crept into the Lutheran Church, involves a denial of the sola gratia and accordingly the whole Christian religion" (Pieper, Christian Dogmatics, vol. I, p. 543). If anyone will not preach original sin, then he cannot preach salvation by grace alone; and soon the throbbing heart of Christianity is lost. Knowing that, we will preach original sin even as the Bible preaches it. And once we have trampled down with the law, we will build up with the gospel. There is no other way.

The doctrine of original sin will also apply to our ministry by guarding us against any self-righteous attitudes. It is truly a great temptation for the pastor to feel that he is somehow worth far more in the sight of God than his people are. After all, he spends his time in the Word while they spend their time in the world. He preaches against the very things that his people go out

and do. Satan takes great delight in feeding our egos. He is thrilled when we begin to foster self-righteous attitudes. In his book, One in the Gospel: The Formula of Concord for our Day, Friedman Hebart suggests, "Those of us who attend church regularly and see ourselves as clean-living, upright members of society need to read the Formula of Concord on original sin more than anyone else. Why is it that our churches so often attract only a certain 'type' of person? Is it because the drifters, the bludgers, and the unwashed sense that we feel superior to them? The Formula of Concord reminds us that in God's sight all men are indeed equal - in sin" (p. 19).

We must be on our guard. We must constantly bear in mind that original sin is universal. We need to remember that we all, pastor and parishioner alike, stand before God as ones who are completely corrupt by nature and as ones who cannot stand on their own merits. We need to take it to the Lord in prayer, acknowledging our inherited sinfulness, begging for mercy and asking for strength to guard against the ravaging effects of a holier-than-thou attitude.

As we remind ourselves of our own original sin, we can only be led to marvel all the more and praise God for our blessed status as heirs of eternal life. We will be reminded of the amazing grace of God who has called us, clay jar miserable sinners, though we are, to proclaim the truths of his holy Word. That sort of godly gratitude will give life and vitality to our ministry. Our people will be able to see the love of Jesus emanating from us in all that we do. We will have a renewed zeal for the Word, and a renewed zeal to be

about the business of our heavenly Father.

Article I also speaks to our preaching. After discussing the terms substantia and accidens, the authors remind us that "because they are not words of Holy Scripture, and besides unknown to the ordinary man, they should not be used in sermons before ordinary, uninstructed people, but simple people should be spared them" (785:23). It goes on to say that these terms can and should be discussed "among the learned." We need to be conscious of this in constructing our sermons. The pulpit is not the place to throw out lofty terms and ambiguous phrases as if to say to our hearers, "See if you can keep up with me now!" We need to speak to the people <sup>about</sup> the marvelous truths of God's Word in terms that they can all understand. This takes hard work, but it is of vital importance.

The Formula of Concord's clear presentation of original sin in Article I is also of great help in the shepherd's work as counselor. None of us would argue the fact that counseling is becoming a very large part of our ministry. Believing that, as St. Paul says, "I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature" (Ro 7:8), we will not be altogether too shocked to help when one of our members confides in us that he or she is stuck in some gross sin and is in need of help. Understanding that the sinful mind is hostile to God, we will be filled with compassion toward such people and will be eager to help.

While we will not be shocked at the sin of those seeking counseling from us, and while we will not write such people off as having lost their faith completely, we also dare never soft-pedal

the law to those who have yet to show repentance. Rather, we too will need to be able to say with the prophet Nathan, "You are the man!" (2 Sm 12:7). We need to understand that the struggle between the sinful nature and the new creation will not be over this side of heaven. These are the truths we will want to point out on the basis of God's holy Word when counseling those who are troubled. And after such a person has been led to see the horrible nature of his sin, we will want to give him the comfort and assurance of forgiveness proclaimed in the gospel. We will also want to assure our people as Nathan assured David, "The Lord has taken away your sin" (2 Sm 12:13).

If it is true that we need to remind the flock entrusted to us of what we were by nature, then it must be obvious that we will want to be sure to express the same truths when making evangelism calls or when witnessing our faith. It is our privilege to share God's Word with the unregenerate.

Thankfully, the success of our evangelism efforts is not dependent upon our charisma or appeal. Rather, our God has chosen to work through his means of grace. Since that is the case, we will want to be sure to present both law and gospel to our prospects. As was stated before, no one will ever be able to appreciate and love the good news of the gospel unless he first hears the full bite of the law. The same holds true for outreach.

I suppose that there is always the temptation to preach and teach in vague generalities to those whom we know to be prospects. I imagine that there will always be some who fall into that

temptation, and certainly none of us is immune. There will always be those who shy away from speaking about our total depravity, our natural hostility against God, our total inability to cooperate in conversion and the harsh sentence of God's law. Such talk may very well boost numbers and swell statistics initially. After all, if you want to sell someone a car you certainly won't point out right off the bat the fact that it is a real gas-guzzler or needs this or that. But this kind of witnessing will only be spiritually harmful to our prospects in the long run. It will not lead them to see their desperate need for a Savior. It will not lead them to beg, "What must I do to be saved?" It will not work in them a genuine sorrow over their sins. Nor will it lift their self-centered eyes off of themselves and point them to a loving Lord.

Certainly Article I of the Formula of Concord has real significance for each of us as we reach out to the unchurched. The scriptural truths expressed in this article will lead us to see the urgent need for outreach to souls who are on their way to eternal damnation and will remind us to preach the law with its full force, because only then can anyone see the desperate need for a Savior from sin.

Without a doubt, the task which lies before each of us is great. Our ministries are filled with obstacles and challenges and frustrations and heartaches, as well as with joys and triumphs. But we have the greatest tool that anyone could ever hope to work with in the inspired Word of God. That Word, along with the scriptural truths expressed in writings such as the Formula of

Concord, contains the message that we have been charged to proclaim. May we always faithfully carry out this work to the glory of God!

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