

Dear Saints,

I cannot believe that October and thus Reformation is already upon us! I seem to be saying that a lot. Time does seem to go more quickly as we age. We plan to have a wonderful celebration for Reformation. At the Divine Service, Pastor Kaelberer will serve as the preacher, Pastor Holm will serve as the celebrant, and I will serve as lector. After service we will have a potluck and afternoon full of fellowship. Then, we will have a Vespers service to send us on our way. Reformation is a wonderful day celebrating being Lutheran. Having travelled much of the Christian landscape, I can most definitely say that the Lutheran confessions are the best and clearest expression of the faith. But it is also important to remember to temper our "Lutheran" pride. Allow me to dive a little deeper.

Theologians make a distinction between the *fides quae* and the *fides qua*. The *fides quae* is the faith which is believed. The *fides qua* is the faith which is received. Rev. Klemet Preus helpfully defines the *fides qua* this way, "here faith is saving faith which receives and holds the riches of Christ's atonement." Why is this important?

The *fides quae* is the sum and substance of what we believe. Our confessions, the Book of Concord, spells out what we believe, teach, and confess. You know, or should know, that our confessions are based solely on Scripture. When we say we are Lutheran, we say nothing else except that we believe the Book of Concord is the right explanation of what the Bible says is true. It is answering Jesus' question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15) Listen to how the writers of the Formula of Concord spoke about the confessions: "In the sight of God and of all Christendom... we want to testify to those now living and those who will come after us. This declaration (confessions)...and no other—is our faith, doctrine, and confession. By God's grace, with intrepid hearts, we are willing to appear before the judgment seat of Christ with this confession and give an account of it...By the strength of God's grace we intend to abide by it." (FC SD Concl.40) We should be no less convinced that our Confessions are the true answer to our Lord's Question about who He is. In this way, when we say we are Lutheran, we are just saying the Lutheran confessions are what we believe, teach, and confess.

The *fides quae* is entirely objective. There is no subjective element in it. Jesus truly "was incarnated by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary." He truly bled and died on the cross. He truly instituted Holy Baptism, Holy Absolution, and the Holy Supper. He truly says, "this is My body." He truly will come again in glory to "judge the living and the dead." It does not matter how you feel about this because it is objectively true. It happened in history. God testifies to it with His Holy Writings. If someone can prove that one of the objective facts about Jesus is false, they can prove that Christianity is

false. We know that this will not happen. And we know that no other religion holds itself up to this kind of standard.

The *fides qua* is the faith which is received. You might call it your experience of the Faith. Here you would identify as a “Christian” and not just as a “Lutheran.” What you are saying is that you are a follower of Christ and not Luther. But this *fides qua* has both objective and subjective elements. I was objectively baptized. I objectively heard the absolution. I objectively received the Lord’s Supper. But I also have subjective feelings about these things. And this is where it gets tricky. When I say my faith feels strong or weak, what am I actually saying? When I am confident that my sins are forgiven and I am doing God-pleasing activities, my faith tends to feel strong. When I am struggling with temptation or struggling with the cross God has put into my life, my faith tends to feel weak. Or consider how excited or lackadaisical you are about reading Scripture. Some days I am excited about digging into God’s Word and other days, I see it as a drudgery or worse, I fail to read it. We have all experienced this. And this is where a problem arises.

American Christianity and your flesh want you to place your trust in the subjective element of the *fides qua*. This is very dangerous as your subjective feelings are not what save you. And as you know, they tend to be all over the place. What the Bible teaches instead, is that you must put your trust in the objective element of the *fides qua* and the *fides quae*. It is not exciting to put your trust in your baptism or absolution or the Lord’s Supper. Many find doctrine boring, but it is what tells us about Jesus. But in these two things are true comfort. If I am really having a bad day and succumbing to temptation left and right, I know I am baptized! If I feel really far away from God, I know I just ate and drank His body and blood! If I wonder if Jesus cares about me, I can look at the Bible and Confessions and see that He is a God that cares for His people. Here is lasting comfort.

When you say you are Lutheran, you are saying that you believe our confessions are a true exposition of God’s Word. When you say you are Christian, you are saying that you have received the grace of God personally through Baptism, Absolution, and the Lord’s Supper and you place your trust in Jesus. These are both good things. Let us enjoy the Reformation where God used Dr. Luther to recover the Gospel and let us enjoy the name Christian because we know we belong to Christ. Happy Reformation!

In Christ,  
Pastor Maggard