

# Quia or Quatenus: What is our Subscription?

By  
Kristofer Carlson  
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One of the most damaging ideas to come out of modern scholarship is the idea of “open questions.” The idea seems quite pious, quite spiritual, and quite scholarly. One view is that the only open questions are questions which scripture answers neither clearly, nor at all. Unfortunately this concept readily grows to include almost every doctrine that is unpopular, inconvenient, or seemingly contrary to human reason. Thus the teaching that open questions exist rapidly devolves into the abandonment of scripture.

The Lutheran Confessions adopted a much different tack. The Holy Scriptures are the only rule and norm by which doctrines and teachers are evaluated (FC Ep, Comprehensive Summary, 1.) The Lutheran Confessions do not claim the authority of a judge over scripture (FC Ep, Comprehensive Summary, 8,) but rather are normed by the scriptures (FC Ep, Comprehensive Summary, 7.) The Lutheran Confessions are but witnesses to and expositions of the doctrine of Holy Scripture (FC Ep, Comprehensive Summary, 8.)

The Lutheran Confessions, to which all pastors and congregations in The AALC have subscribed, claim to be authoritative in doctrine. The signers of these confessions pledged the following: “We again whole-heartedly subscribe this Christian and thoroughly scriptural Augsburg Confession... We consider this Confession next to the Word of God, just as in ancient times Christian symbols and confessions were formulated in the church of God... We are determined by the grace of the Almighty to abide until our end by this...Christian Confession...and we do not intend...to depart from [it].” (FC SD, Rule & Norm, 4-5.)

Through the concept of open questions, false teachers have crept in unawares and begun to spread abroad the doctrines of devils (Jude 1:4; I Tim 4:1). They look at the Lutheran Confessions and simply ask, “Hath God said?” (Gen 3:1). Doubt spreads---but not, at first, with scripture. No, the scriptures are sacrosanct. The doubt begins with the Lutheran Confessions, the exposition of doctrines derived from scripture. Once the doctrines of scripture become the subject of doubt, the words of scripture are not far behind.

J. Michael Reu has been described as being the most significant scholar of the Lutheran Church in America. He was from the Iowa Synod, which became part of the American Lutheran Church. Thus he is, in some sense, part of the heritage of The AALC. Among Reu’s contributions was the expansion of the idea of open questions to include areas of doctrine (such as “end times”,) that are settled in the Augsburg Confession. Thus J. Michael Reu, by refusing to accept the doctrines confessed by the Evangelical Lutheran

Church, created the very conditions that led to the abandonment of scripture by the majority of American Lutherans.

The theory of “open questions” requires a half-hearted subscription to the Lutheran Confessions. The theory of open questions must inevitably result in the abandonment of scripture and the embrace of the doctrines of men.