

NEW LCMS Book “Faith Misused” a Misuse of the Bible

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“Faith Misused,” another book in a series by Concordia Publishing House, designed to wean laypeople off the plenary inspiration, infallibility, and inerrancy of the Bible.

“*Faith Misused: Why Christianity Is Not Just Another Religion*,” by Rev. Dr. Alvin J. Schmidt, (published by CPH, St. Louis, 2022, 150 pages), has a forward by LCMS President, Matthew Harrison, and is endorsed, among others, by Concordia Seminary Exegetical Professor, Kevin S. Golden and Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary St. Catharines’ President, Paul Winger. Harrison’s endorsement is another reason he should not be re-elected as LCMS President.

Before reviewing Schmidt’s book, we ask, “In view of current pressing issues, how relevant is the defense of Christian faith’s exclusivity to the New Testament?”

While CPH is educating people on the distinction between faith as a collective referent for all religions versus the exclusivity of Christian faith, another new book was just published in paperback, “*30 Arguments against the Existence of God, Heaven, Hell, Satan, and Divine Design*,” by [Jonathan M S Pearce](#) with a foreword by [Dan Barker](#).

Pearce was interviewed for 2 hours and 26 minutes on the *MythVision* podcast on 3/24/2022 talking about the first ten of 30 reasons God is a myth. *MythVision* has 43.7 thousand subscribers and is growing by 2,000 to 5,000 new subscribers a month.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCx76W9IJEw>

While the number of LCMS worshippers declines on Sundays, their children and/or grandchildren are dropping out of religion at a rate that will lead to the Synod’s demise in 20 years. Millennials and Generation Z are asking questions like “*Is there a God?*” and “*What is the proof that God wrote the Bible?*” Neither CPH nor any other mainline denomination dares to publish books addressing these questions.

A primary reason the LCMS does not have a seminary or college professor of Pearce’s caliber is that LCMS faculty members must sign a contract that prevents them from criticizing another professor or synodical institution. The recent removal of Gregory Schultz from the faculty of Concordia University, Mequon without comment is a prime example. He signed the contract—end of story. The 1974 Concordia Seminary-Faculty-Walkout taught Missouri how to circle the wagons. On his part, Schultz unfortunately demonstrated his inability to articulate his concerns.

Pearce’s book is just one example of hundreds of titles, videos, and podcasts on smart phones, laptops, iPads, desktops, radio, TV, and movies, which are dismantling the Bible, and yet going unanswered by the LCMS, WELS, ELS, and the CLC. At the time Luther posted the 95 Theses, all opponents agreed that God told the prophets and apostles what to write. Why doesn’t CPH or the WELS publish titles such as, “*30 Reasons Why Pearce is Wrong and There Is a God*,” or “*Proofs for the Plenary Inspiration, Infallibility, and Inerrancy of the Consonantal Masoretic Text*,” or “*Proofs that God Wrote the Bible*”?

Schmidt excels at cataloging facts and staying on point. The main point of Schmidt's book is repeated nearly 40 times, often two, three, or four times on the same page; namely, the New Testament's exclusively Christian concept of faith; stated on pages x, xi, xii, xiii, xv, 2, 5, 6, 9, 16, 17, 21, 23, 25, 47, 50, 52, 53, 54, 60, 69, 90, 102, 105, 116, 121, 123, and 128, 130, and 131.

The following two quotations state Schmidt's case:

Subtitle—"Faith (*Pistis*) Became a Religious Principle and Exclusively Christian" (page 2)

"In short, it is *pistis* [faith] in the singular, not *pisteis* in the plural, that is unique and exclusive in the New Testament" (page 52).

Alvin Schmidt bifurcates the Bible. His latest book has not one quote from the Old Testament, which is three and a half times longer than the New Testament. Do Jews exist? Isn't the Jewish Messiah/Redeemer the same Person as Jesus Christ? Didn't Jews have faith in the Messiah or did the New Testament appear like Topsy under a cabbage leaf? Schmidt's theme of "Christian faith exclusive to the New Testament," turns Christianity into a First Century AD pop phenomenon.

Schmidt ignores Habakkuk 2:4 in the Old Testament which teaches, "*the just shall live by faith*," which is quoted in Romans 1:17, Gal 2:16, 3:11-12, and Heb. 10:38. The Septuagint undermines Schmidt's claim that faith (*pistis*) is exclusive to the New Testament. The Septuagint translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek began with the Torah in the Third Century BC. Habakkuk 2:4 is the foundation for Paul's doctrine of Justification by *faith* alone which the Septuagint translates as "*pistis*" 33 times. Septuagint books were found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Paul, Hebrews, and James identify Abram as the archetype for all Christian faith in Rom. 4:3, 9, 20, Gal. 3:16, Heb. 11:8 and James 2:23, "*Then he (Abram before circumcision) believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness*" (Gen. 15:6 NASB). The Septuagint uses the word *believe* "*pisteuw*" (the verb for "*pistis*" *faith*), which occurs 48 times in the Septuagint.

Schmidt vociferously and falsely claims *faith* is exclusive to the New Testament. Yet, Paul clearly relies on the Septuagint's use of "*pistis*," written 300 years before he wrote Romans! Schmidt's book reads more like LCMS propaganda than theology and exposes the LCMS' problem with antisemitism. (See "*Mysteries of the Heart in the Torah*," and how the Hebrew uses the two spellings of the word for *heart* as the basis for faith and works under *articles* at RedeemerPress.Org) Schmidt should have claimed that faith is exclusive to the Bible.

Schmidt advocates that faith is based on facts, empirical evidence, and the foundation of history, a theme he repeats on pages 24, 28, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42, 43, 44, 46, 47, 49, 51, 68, 70, 71, 72, 73, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 89, 90, 91, 97, 98, 99, 100, 105, and 121. He confuses faith with apologetics on every page, especially pages 97-100.

Schmidt begins his arguments that faith is based on evidence, facts, and history on page 24, and finally addresses Hebrews 11:1 on page 82, which states that faith does not rely on evidence

which can be seen. “*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen*” (Heb. 11:1 NKJ), a translation which he quotes for other verses.”

In order to get rid of the word *evidence* Schmidt quotes NASB, “*Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen*” (Heb. 11:1). He cannot have it both ways. *Evidence* is the objective definition of ἔλεγχος and *conviction* is the subjective definition.

ἔλεγχος, ου, ὁ strictly *trying* or *testing* for the purpose of proving; (1) objectively *proof, means of proof, evidence* (possibly HE 11.1); in a negative sense *reproof, correction* (2T 3.16); (2) subjectively *inner conviction, confident assurance* (possibly HE 11.1)

On the one hand, if *evidence* is correct, then Heb. 11:1 is saying faith does not require visible or tangible facts to back it up. On the other hand, if *conviction* is correct, then faith is based on personal opinion, which also lacks visible or tangible facts to back it up. In either case Hebrews 11:1 undoes the premise of Schmidt’s book, because Hebrews says faith is based on “*things not seen*.” Hebrews 11:1 proceeds to introduce a series of people who acted on faith with no visible evidence, which is why it is called “faith.”

Instead of Schmidt’s unseeable and untouchable facts for faith, why doesn’t the LCMS or any other denomination say, “We have the original Divine inspired Hebrew and Greek word of God.” This they will not do because they and Schmidt teach, we don’t have the original words, only flawed copies.

How President Matt Harrison, CPH, the CPH doctrinal reviewers, and LCMS professors can endorse Schmidt’s book unmasks the Synod’s steady decline into slipshod, pop theology.

With approximately 40 pages interspersed throughout 150 pages arguing that faith requires facts, evidence, and historicity, Schmidt never gets past apologetics. Yes, in one place he uses the phrase “word of God,” but he does not define it. None of his arguments are tactile or visible proof for faith. The book reads as if Schmidt is attempting to convince himself.

All apostles and prophets worked miracles as visible proof that God told them what to write. Christ Himself worked countless miracles to verify His Messiahship. The one and only miracle available to the church today is the one that Schmidt never mentions; namely the miraculous presence of the plenary inspired, inerrant, infallible Hebrew and Greek texts which are the only basis, evidence, and proof for saving faith.

Rather than talking about the exclusivity of saving faith, Schmidt’s book should be telling people about the source of saving faith. The phrase “the Means of Grace,” is not in Schmidt’s book, at least I couldn’t find it. God only creates faith through the Bible (the Means of Grace)—not facts, evidence, or history which are all based on apologetics. If he was in a showroom, the sales manager would tell him, “Sell the car and stop telling them this is a car!”

Schmidt presents a litany of liberal German heretics (pages 28-48) all of whom questioned the necessity of faith based on facts. Herman Samuel Reimarus (1638-1712), Gotthold Ephraim Lessing (1729-81), David Friedrich Strauss (1808-1874), Martin Kahler (835-1912), Paul Tillich (1886-1955), Rudolph Bultmann (1884-1976), Karl Barth (1886-1968 Swiss Reformed), and

Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945). On page 76 Schmidt criticizes Lutheran Sociologist Peter L. Berger for stating, “But to say that Christ is risen requires faith. It is not something I know.”

I agree with Berger. Without faith, which does not require seeing or touching, it is not possible to know that Jesus rose bodily from the dead. Job writes, “*I know that my Redeemer lives,*” but Job is a prophet and he spoke directly to God. The Creeds all begin with “I” or “We believe,” not “*I know.*” Garden variety Christians have no facts, proof, or evidence for anything about God without the miraculous text of the Bible, not even if someone comes back from the dead and tells us the Bible is true. (“*If they do not hear Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rise from the dead*” Luke 16:31.)

For example, archaeologists have identified the ancient city of Bethlehem, which the Bible says is the birthplace of Christ. Yet, there is absolutely no proof of when or how Christ was born there, or even if He was actually born there. What we do have is the text.

On page 89 Schmidt adds a living LCMS parish pastor to his pantheon of German Lutheran heretics because the pastor wrote an article on January 5, 1998, titled, “*Wise Men Act on Faith.*” “Faith means believing something is true without the benefit of the five senses. If the senses (feeling, tasting, seeing, smelling, or hearing) are involved, the belief is no longer based on faith, but on fact.”

This writer asks, “Did the Wise Men see a star in the East with Jesus’ name on it?”

Schmidt says this LCMS pastor (page 89) is promoting the “antibiblical” heresy of fideism (faith in faith) instead of Christian faith. He writes, “This is clearly an antibiblical definition of faith. If this definition were biblically correct, Thomas’s confession of ‘My Lord and my God!’ (John 20:28) would have been a faithless remark, because his confession was promoted by two of his five senses, seeing and touching Christ’s resurrected body.”

Schmidt’s conclusion is false because:

- 1) Jesus spoke, which makes that not two, but three of the five senses.
- 2) Jesus speaks before Thomas speaks: “...*Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, ‘Peace be with you.’ 27 Then He said to Thomas, ‘Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing’*” (Jn. 20:26-27 NASB.) Thomas could not have confessed anything if Jesus did not speak first and command, “be not unbelieving, but believing.” In the Bible only the elect are witnesses to the risen Christ.
- 3) As the very word of God, the Bible is the Means of Grace, but the risen Christ is the Grace; no text required.
- 4) Thomas is an apostle. Apostles only come to faith in the Bible as eyewitnesses of the risen Christ. Unlike the other 500 who saw the risen Christ, only the Apostles were called to heal the sick, call down the Holy Spirit, raise the dead, perform miracles, and write Scripture. No one alive today comes to faith as Thomas did.
- 5) Schmidt’s claim that the five senses are involved in creating faith has no explanation for infant Baptism.
- 6) What about all the people who saw Jesus perform miracles, heard Him speak, were touched and healed by Him, and didn’t believe anything? Christ healed the ear of the High

Priest's servant, which Peter had cut off, and then that same servant continued to proceed and arrest Christ. After Christ healed the ten lepers, only one leper said thank you, and Christ told him, "*Your faith has saved you*" (mistranslated as *healed* you): ten healed, one saved.

7) In the very next verse Christ says, "*Because you have seen Me, have you believed?*"

Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed." (Jn. 20:29 NAS). Here Jesus blesses all the antibiblical people who do not know Christ through any of their five senses.

8) John says his entire Gospel was written to create faith through words. "*But these have been written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ...*" (John 20:31 NAS). Christ's words are spirit and life (John 6:63).

9) Why can't the LCMS pastor in question sue Schmidt, Harrison, CPH, and the LCMS for libel and defamation? He is the first living LCMS pastor CPH has condemned as antibiblical. They should have run the book by the Synodical legal department.

This writer challenged every LCMS professor as to whether or not we have original words of the Torah. The debate was to be at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Houston TX on Saturday, January 15, 2022. Three letters were sent to 52 seminary and university inviting any faculty member to debate the authenticity of the text. If we do not have the original words of Moses, the exclusivity of New Testament faith as touted by Schmidt is baseless.

In September 2021 the first invitation to debate offered \$10,000.00 to the professor who could disprove new evidence that we have the original words of Moses. In October 2021 a second invitation went out and the prize was increased to \$15,000.00. In November 2021 the prize was increased to \$20,000.00. Not one faculty member from 52 seminaries and universities, including LCMS, WELS, ELS, and CLC seminaries responded. They would not have responded if the prize had been \$100,000.00.

If Luther hadn't debated five centuries ago, there would never have been a Reformation.

Schmidt and the LCMS rant about all the facts which led Thomas to confess his faith in Jesus Christ, facts which cannot be produced. But when they are challenged to debate the validity of new proof for the authenticity of the text in their hand--nothing but crickets. CPH gives Schmidt's "facts" a higher priority than the inspired, infallible, inerrant text of the Bible.

On pages 84-85 Schmidt writes, "Peter urged the early Christians to always be 'prepared, to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you'" (1 Peter 3:15). Today \$20,000.00 is not enough inducement for LCMS professors to defend in a public forum what they believe about the authenticity of the text we have today.

"...He (God) is known only by faith. This is the explanation of the descent of God. His feet stand in the soul, but in the fog and darkness of faith: then, however, we shall rise up to Him in the future by sight." (Luther's Works, American Edition, Psalm 18:9, Vol. 10, page 118.)

The new editor of Christian News, who continues to provide cover for Harrison and the COP, refused to print anything about the debate, and will never print this article.

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This review addresses ongoing efforts by religious denominations to change their historic confessions that we possess the original text of the Bible and replace them with a confession based on apologetics, rationalism, and/or the human senses. They have determined it is no longer possible or necessary to defend the authenticity of the text we have today. Page 20 of CPH's book, "Why should I Trust the Bible?" reads, "And Jesus would still exist even if the Bible ceased to exist." Such a declaration makes the Bible a false witness. Now CPH has published, "Faith Misused," which states on page 89 that it is antibiblical to say, "Faith means believing something is truth without the benefit of the five senses."

The Bible is the only means God uses to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ.