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The Value of Children according to the Gospels

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On September 18, 2012, it was widely broadcast through various forms of media that a small scrap of papyrus had been released for public view by a Harvard professor that contained a Coptic text which mentioned Jesus speaking of someone as "my wife."[1] This fragment, provocatively named the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife,* prompted immediate buzz concerning whether Jesus had been married and even if he possibly had children. Not surprisingly, about a month after its unveiling, it was shown to be a modern forgery.

The canonical Gospels provide no evidence that Jesus ever married or had children. It was not the will of the Father for the life of the incarnate Son. All four Gospels, however, do provide significant evidence of Jesus' attitude towards women, marriage, and children. This paper will demonstrate that the Gospels testify that children are of central significance to Jesus and the mission he has put before the church. Jesus is not merely affirming cultural norms in his strong support of marriage as a divine institution that consists of a lifelong union between a man and a woman that typically results in the procreation of children. He is, in fact, going against some contemporary Jewish attitudes in his affirmation of that which he as the eternal Son created and instituted: marriage as the lifelong union between one man and one woman that typically is blessed with children. He is also going against the wider norms of both Jewish and Greco-Roman societies as he lifts up children as his exemplar of faith when he uses their example to speak of entry into his kingdom.

This study will consider four aspects of the value of children according to the Gospels. First, it will begin with some brief comments about Old Testament teaching on marriage and children, since such teaching is assumed and affirmed by Jesus. Second, it will focus briefly on the incarnation narrative in the prologue of John and the birth narratives of Matthew

[1] For a brief analysis of this fragment and evidence that it is a forgery, see Charles A. Gieschen, "The *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*: A Modern Forgery?" *CTQ* 76 (2012): 335–337.

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and Luke as very clear testimony to the value of children with the Gospel writers' focus on the conception and birth of the child Jesus. Third, because any teaching about children assumes teaching about marriage, Jesus' teaching on marriage will be reviewed. Fourth, this study will examine how Jesus uses children in his teaching and what can be concluded from this evidence. Finally, three broad implications on the basis of this Gospel evidence regarding the value of children for our own preaching and teaching in the church today will be sketched out.

I. Old Testament Teaching of Marriage and Children

Inherent in the Genesis 2 narrative of woman being created to be with man is implicit testimony to procreation as necessary and children as having value.[2] Even though the birth of Cain and Abel (Genesis 4) follows the fall into sin (Genesis 3), procreation and children are not the result of the Fall. It is vital to note that the creation of woman to be in a one-flesh union leading to procreation, as well as the command "Be fruitful and multiply [פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ] and fill the earth" (Gen 1:28), precedes the Fall and does not result from it. It is the pain of childbirth that results from the Fall, not procreation itself, as God pronounced in his curse: "I will surely multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children" (Gen 3:16a).[3]

Nor does the situation of sin in the world that led to the flood dampen God's desire that those who trust in him should be fruitful and multiply. After what happened in the years between Adam and Noah that led to the worldwide deluge, one would think that there should have been a slight modification to God's plan, like "Do not be too fruitful or multiply too fast because I do not want to put up with this situation again." What is the command, however, that is given to Noah? It echoes the command given to Adam and Eve: "Be fruitful and multiply [פְּרוּ וּרְבוּ], teem on the earth and multiply in it" (Gen 9:7; cf. 1:28).

With Abraham, God moves from a command to a promise: "I will make you exceedingly fruitful [וְהִפְרֵתִי אֹתְךָ בִּמְאֹד מְאֹד], and I will make you into nations" (Gen 17:6). With this promise came the sign of circumcision, Israel's covenant marker (Gen 17:9–14). Circumcision is a visible sign of the important role that procreation played in ancient Israel's identity. It testified not only to the Messiah who would be born from among Israel, but also to the value of procreation and children within

[2] For a broad introduction to this topic, see Daniel I. Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 33–102.

[3] Unless noted otherwise, all translations are this author's.

marriage. The fear of Abraham and so many others in the history of Israel was not the birth of children, but, rather, *not* to be blessed with children in marriage (e.g., Gen 16:1–2; 18:9–15). The evident disappointment in Hannah's prayer over being childless, before she was blessed by the birth of Samuel, shows that the desire for children was not merely a paternal concern among Israelites: "O Lord of hosts, if you will indeed look on the affliction of your servant and remember me and not forget your servant, but will give to your servant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life" (1 Sam 1:11).

Daniel Block summarizes several pillars of understanding about children that reflect the high value placed upon them in ancient Israel. His first three are especially noteworthy.

> First, every human being is created as an image of God and endowed with dignity in keeping with the divine charge to govern the world on God's behalf. Therefore, to beget and bear children means more than mere procreation; it signifies co-creation—God involving father and mother in the creation of images of himself. Second, in a world languishing under the curse of death because of human sin, children—both male and female—represent the keys to the perpetuation of humanity and the fulfillment of the divine mandate to populate the entire earth. Third, although this prescientific world perceived conception as the implantation of the male seed in the fertile soil of a female's womb, children were viewed primarily as the product of divine action . . . . As divine creations children were viewed as special treasures, blessings, gifts granted graciously to parents, and the more children one had, the greater the sense of divine favor.[4]

If one were to select a representative text that expresses the attitude of the wider Old Testament witness about children as "special treasures, blessings, and gifts," the logical text would be Psalm 127.

> [3] See, children are a special grant of the Lord;
> the fruit of the womb is a reward.
> [4] Like arrows in the hand of a mighty man,
> So are the children of one's youth.
> [5] How blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them;
> They shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate.

Much more could be said about the many ways that the desire to be fruitful or simply to have sexual desires led to polygamy, the taking of concubines and pagan wives, adultery, and other vices that are not hidden

[4] Block, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Israel," 80–81.

from the reader of the Old Testament. This testimony, however, does not supplant the order in the Creator's design of a lifelong, one-flesh union between one man and one woman resulting in children. The purpose of relating briefly some Old Testament evidence here is to note that the perspective of Jesus in the Gospels assumes much of this evidence and reaffirms it. Much about marriage and children as established in the creation narrative is not restated in the Gospels because it is understood and assumed from the Old Testament as the narrative that was foundational for understanding marriage, children, and family within the ministry of Jesus and early Christianity.

II. The Incarnation and Birth of Jesus in the Gospels

Given the fact that Jesus was no ordinary child, one would think that there would be the temptation among the earliest Christians to depict Jesus at birth as much more than a helpless infant, even like the exalted depiction of the birth of Melchizedek in the Jewish document, 2 Enoch. There one finds this elaborate physical description of him at birth as a supra-human priestly messiah.

> 71:18 And Noe and Nir were very terrified with great fear, because the child was fully developed physically, like a three year old. And he spoke with his lips, and he blessed the Lord. 19 And Noe and Nir looked at him, and behold, the badge of priesthood was on his chest, and it was glorious in appearance. 20 And Noe and Nir said, "Behold, God is renewing the priesthood from blood related to us, just as he pleases."21 And Noe and Nir hurried, and they washed the child, and they dressed him in the garments of priesthood, and they gave him holy bread and he ate it. And they called his name Melkisedek.[5]

Unlike this exalted depiction of a newborn messianic figure or even the "no crying he makes" of the Christmas carol "Away in a Manger," the canonical Gospels give very limited attention to the birth of Jesus. The details that are provided in Matthew, Luke, and John indicate that Jesus would have blended in quite well among other first-century Jewish babies. One of the starkest and most profound scriptural testimonies to the value of children in these narratives of Jesus' origin, even to life beginning with conception in the womb, is the climatic statement in John's prologue: καὶ ὁ

[5] This is the translation of recension J of 2 Enoch (c. first century AD) in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 206. For a discussion of Melchizedek in 2 Enoch, see Charles A. Gieschen, "Enoch and Melchizedek: The Concern for Supra-Human Priestly Mediators in 2 Enoch,"in *New Perspectives on 2 Enoch: No Longer Slavonic Only*, ed. Andrei A. Orlov and Gabriele Boccaccini (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 369–385.

λόγος σὰρξ ἐγένετο ("And the Word became flesh"; John 1:14). The Gospel of John contains no narration of how the physical birth of Jesus to the Virgin Mary came to be. The prologue, instead, focuses solely on the miracle of the incarnation: the eternal Word, the Son, becoming also flesh. That the eternal Son would take on flesh to become man speaks volumes as to how much God values human life.

In the Gospel of John, the Son taking on flesh becomes the center of God's salvific action that climaxes in Jesus' death. His nine-month residence in the womb, therefore, is as important for our salvation as his three-day rest in the tomb. The miracle of the incarnation becomes the basis for John's proclamation of universal atonement for sin, using the words of Jesus: καὶ ὁ ἄρτος δὲ ὃν ἐγὼ δώσω ἡ σάρξ μού ἐστιν ὑπὲρ τῆς τοῦ κόσμου ζωῆς ("And the bread that I will give on behalf of the life of the world is my flesh"; John 6:51).[6] This interest in the fleshly humanity of Jesus in the canonical Gospels stands in stark contrast, for example, to the Gnostic Gospels, such as the *Gospel of Thomas*,[7] where the interest is solely in what Jesus supposedly taught (i.e., secret *gnosis* or knowledge), but not in what he did by taking on flesh and dying an atoning death for sin. That the Son "became flesh" and entered this world as a tiny child in the womb of his mother trumpets out the value of each child from the moment that the miracle of life begins.

The genealogies and birth narratives concerning Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke provide additional testimony to the value of the created order of marriage blessed with children.[8] These genealogies testify to the pattern of children as the means by which God fulfills his promise to multiply Abraham's offspring and to bless all nations (e.g., Gen 12:2–3; 17:6), even when the children are the result of illicit unions such as Judah with Tamar and David with Bathsheba (Matt 1: 3, 6) or non-Israelite unions such as Salmon with Rahab and Boaz with Ruth (Matt 1:5).

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[6] Charles A. Gieschen, "The Death of Jesus in the Gospel of John: Atonement for Sin?" *CTQ* 72 (2008): 243–261.

[7] In contrast to the canonical Gospels, Gnostic Gospels like the *Gospel of Thomas* consist of *logion* ("sayings") with little or no interest in narrating Jesus' life, especially his passion. For a translation of these so-called Gospels, see *The Nag Hammadi Library in English,* third completely revised edition, ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988). For analysis, see Jeffrey Kloha, "Jesus and the Gnostic Gospels," *CTQ* 71 (2007): 121–144.

[8] See the exegetical discussion of the genealogy in Matt 1:1–17 in Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006). See the exegetical discussion of Luke 3:23–38 in Arthur A. Just Jr., *Luke 1:1–9:50*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1996).

Both Matthew's and Luke's narration of the events related to the birth of Jesus testify to the miracle of life in the birth of children. The conception of the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, the prophet John who will prepare the way for Jesus, happens in spite of their age and Elizabeth's bareness. The angel delivers this promise to Zechariah as recorded in Luke 1.

> 13 "Do not fear, Zechariah, because your prayer has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear a son for you and you will call his name John. 14 And he will be your joy and exultation, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great before the Lord, and wine or strong drink he will not drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, while still in his mother's womb, 16 and he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 And he will go before him in the Spirit and power of Elijah, to return the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the disobedient to the understanding of the righteous, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared."[9]

John would be Zechariah's "joy and exultation" and many would "rejoice" in this birth: καὶ ἔσται χαρά σοι καὶ ἀγαλλίασις καὶ πολλοὶ ἐπὶ τῇ γενέσει αὐτοῦ χαρήσονται (Luke 1:14). Zechariah's song following John's birth reflects this joy (Luke 1:68–79). The angel states that John will be filled with the Holy Spirit even from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). This presence of the Holy Spirit is demonstrated vividly later in the narrative by John leaping in his mother's womb when in the presence of Jesus who was yet in the womb of Mary (Luke 1:41; 43). In order that this leaping not be misinterpreted simply as an active child in the womb, Luke mentions this event twice, including Elizabeth's conviction that John recognized the presence of Jesus in the womb of Mary: "For behold, when the voice of your greeting came to my ears, the baby leaped for joy in my womb" (Luke 1:43). Arthur Just comments, "Here John, the forerunner, responds to the presence of Jesus, the Messiah, and thus John foreshadows his own role as precursor."[10] What does this account say of the value of this child and other children? They are priceless.

With the birth account of Jesus in Matthew and Luke, the conception is even more miraculous than that of John the Baptist, since no earthly father is involved and the child not only has the Holy Spirit, but is conceived by the Holy Spirit: τὸ γὰρ ἐν αὐτῇ γεννηθὲν ἐκ πνεύματός ἐστιν ἁγίου (Matt 1:20). Mary's *Magnificat* in Luke 1:46–56 rejoices in many things, but it certainly does rejoice in the child she is carrying in her womb and his forthcoming birth:

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[9] English translation from Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 48.

[10] Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 75.

46 My soul magnifies [Μεγαλύνει] the Lord and
47 my spirit rejoices [ἠγαλλίασεν] in God my Savior,
48 because he has regarded with favor the low estate of his servant.
For behold, from now on all generations will call me blessed;
49 because the Mighty One has done great things to me, and holy is his name.[11]

Although the angel's announcement to the shepherds and the heavenly host's *Gloria in Excelsis* testify to the birth of Jesus as savior (Luke 2:8–14), these events and words also testify to the miracle of human conception and birth as well as the value of children that the Christ-child was born to save.

The value of each child is also seen in Joseph's protection of Jesus during the flight to Egypt in order to escape King Herod's effort to eradicate a possible political contender (Matt 1:13–15). Very few people can read of the slaughter of the innocent boys "in Bethlehem and all the region" by Herod (Matt 2:16–18) and not be moved. In this senseless taking of life, there is a clear message: the life of the baby Jesus is valuable and must be protected for the future salvation of the world, and the lives of these little boys are valuable to God, even if not to men like Herod, Pharaoh of old (Exodus 1), or a Sandy Hook school shooter of our day.[12] Here is Matthew's quotation of Jeremiah: "A sound in Ramah was heard, weeping and much mourning, Rachel lamenting her children; and she was not willing to be comforted, because they are not" (Matt 2:18).[13] What does this communicate about the value of children? They are priceless.

III. Jesus' Teaching on Marriage

What has been expressed to this point about marriage and children is neither new nor shocking. Yet, what may be obvious to many of us is not obvious to others who are impacted much more by societal attitudes than scriptural revelation. For example, theologian Gerald Loughlin makes this startling claim: "Procreation, though natural, is an inessential part of marriage."[14] He also stated that "Christian couples need a good reason for having children, since faith in the resurrected Christ frees them from the

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[11] English translation from Just, *Luke 1:1–9:50*, 78.

[12] This is a reference to the tragedy that occurred at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Connecticut, when Adam Lanza fatally shot twenty children and six adult staff members on December 14, 2012.

[13] English translation from Gibbs, *Matthew 1:1–11:1*, 129.

[14] Gerald Loughlin, "The Want of Family in Postmodernity," in *The Family in Theological Perspective,* ed. Stephen C. Barton (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1996), 323.

necessity to reproduce."[15] And such nonsense is coming from a theologian? This is the sort of thing that Paul confronted in 1 Timothy when he warned against some Christians teaching that marriage and bearing children was part of the old order that should now be set aside with Christ's first coming.[16] With this kind of theology, it is no wonder that mainline churches are in rapid numerical decline. This is a case where theology has a direct impact on membership numbers. Against such false teaching, it must emphasized that Christians have been redeemed by Jesus to live out their lives within the created order, if possible, of a lifelong marriage between one man and one woman with procreation resulting in children. This position has been crucial to the fulfillment of Christ's mission and the future of Christianity in past ages.

The scriptural accounts about marriage in the Gospels, such as Jesus' presence at the wedding in Cana in John 2:1–12 and his teaching about divorce in the synoptic Gospels, are important in this discussion because they confirm that Jesus reaffirmed this created pattern of marriage, procreation, and children. Although the Cana account is much more than merely a statement of Jesus' affirmation of marriage between a man and a woman, yet it is certainly that. The first miracle in John's Gospel is done at a wedding for the benefit of those who had just been married. The eternal Son, who had formed Adam and then Eve to be "one flesh" (Gen 2:18–25), is present at Cana, saving the bridal couple from serious shame due to a shortage of wine. There the bridegroom of Israel (John 3:29) affirms that two becoming one in marriage and having children continues to be the God-pleasing pattern for the end-times that have commenced with his arrival.

It is especially when confronting Jewish teaching about divorce that Jesus shows all of his cards regarding marriage.[17] The Pharisee's question about Mosaic law on divorce, "Is it lawful to divorce one's wife for any cause?" reflects an ongoing debate among Jews about divorce. There were at least two rabbinic schools of thought on divorce at the time of Jesus, articulated by the stricter Shammai and the more liberal Hillel. Their positions are expressed in these words from the *Mishnah*:

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[15] Loughlin, "The Want of Family in Postmodernity," 323.

[16] 1 Tim 4:3; cf. 2:15. See futher Charles A. Gieschen, "Ordained Proclaimers or Quiet Learners? Women in Worship in Light of 1 Timothy 2," in *Women Pastors? The Ordination of Women in Biblical Lutheran Perspective*, 3rd ed., ed. Matthew C. Harrison and John T. Pless (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2012), 102.

[17] For a broader discussion of divorce in the Scriptures, see David Instone-Brewer, *Divorce and Remarriage in the Bible: The Social and Literary Context* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 2002).

> The School of Shammai say: A man may not divorce his wife unless he has found unchastity in her, for it is written, *Because he has found in her indecency in anything* [Deut 24:1]. And the School of Hillel say: [He may divorce her] even if she spoiled a dish for him, for it is written, *Because he has found in her indecency in* anything. R. Akiba says: Even if he found another fairer than she, for it is written, *And it shall be if she find no favour in his eyes . . . .*[18]

Jeffrey Gibbs notes that "the Pharisee's question about divorce 'because of *any* charge' (19:3) seems to be asking Jesus to declare whether his own views on lawful divorce conform to those of Hillel."[19] Although Jesus lines up much more closely with Shammai on the issue of divorce, he does not draw on that rabbi or any other as the source of his teaching, but instead goes back to the institution of marriage with Adam and Eve in Genesis, as narrated in Matthew 19:

> 4 But he answered and said, "You have read, haven't you, that the One who created them from the beginning made them male and female?" 5 And he said, "Because of this a man shall leave his father and his mother, and will be joined to his wife; and so the two will become one flesh. 6 So then they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore, let not a person separate what God has yoked together." 7 They did say to him, "Why then did Moses command [us] to give a certificate of divorce and to send her away?" 8 He did say to them, "Moses, with a view to your hardness of heart, permitted you to divorce your wives. But from the beginning it has not been like this. 9 "And I say to you that whatever [man] divorces his wife (not on the basis of immorality), and marries another [woman] commits adultery."[20]

In spite of concessions for divorce already present with Moses in Deuteronomy (e.g., 24:1–4), Jesus stands with Genesis 2:24 and the Creator's original intention for marriage. He makes this clear by providing a forceful conclusion to what is stated in Genesis: "Therefore, let not a person separate what God has yoked together" (Matt 19:6). Furthermore, when he is standing for marriage as the lifelong, one-flesh union between one man and one woman first instituted by God himself through the creation of Eve from Adam, he is also standing for procreation, children, and their inherent value as the result of this union.

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[18] *Gittin* 9:10, *The Mishnah,* trans. Herbert Danby (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), 321; emphasis original.

[19] Jeffrey A. Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2010), 949–950; emphasis original.

[20] English translation from Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 942.

The exchange between Jesus and his disciples after this strict teaching on marriage and divorce is also worthy of attention. Their response to Jesus was, "If such is the case . . . it is better not to marry" (Matt 19:10). Jesus does not agree with this blanket conclusion, so he qualifies it significantly by saying: "Not everyone can receive this saying [i.e., "it is better not to marry"], but only those to whom it is given" (Matt 19:11). He then goes on to acknowledge that in the present and future there will be those who live out their Christian life in celibacy: "there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs [εὐνοῦχοι] for the sake of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 19:12).[21] Jesus uses the term "eunuchs" in this statement as a metaphor to signify those in the kingdom who do not marry and lead celibate lives. These individuals "have made themselves eunuchs" by choosing not to marry and practicing celibacy; they are not eunuchs by castration or physiological defect.[22] Although Jesus acknowledges celibacy "only for those to whom it is given," his teaching here reaffirms the practice of marriage, procreation, and children as the norm for those in his kingdom.

IV. Jesus' Teaching about Children

Far from being marginalized in the ministry of Jesus, children were central and visible. For example, Jesus' healing ministry included the healing and raising of children: Jairus' daughter (Matt 9:18–19, 23–26; Mark 5:21–24, 35–43; Luke 8:40–42, 49–56); the daughter of the Syrophoenician woman (Matt 15:21–28; Mark 7:24–30); and the demon-possessed boy (Matt 17:14–21; Mark 9:14–29), and possibly the son of the widow of Nain who is addressed by Jesus as "young man" (νεανίσκε), although we do not know exactly how old he was (Luke 7:11–17).

It should not be assumed that Jesus' attitude towards children, especially children with special needs, reflects the wider cultural norm of the Greco-Roman world. Although there is widespread testimony to the value

[21] Typically a eunuch in the ancient world was a male who had been castrated in order to stop normal sexual development and render him impotent. The "eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men" (Matt 19:12) mentioned in this context is an obvious reference to castration. Those "who have been so from birth" (Matt 19:12) is a reference to males who were born with some physical problem that rendered them impotent. It should be noted that being a eunuch from birth does not signify someone who is a male homosexual. In the ancient world and in this biblical text, eunuchs and male homosexuals were distinct categories. For further discussion, see Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 953–956.

[22] The Apostle Paul is sometimes seen as an example of someone who lived a celibate life without becoming married. Notice that Jesus clearly does not command celibacy for his apostles, as the Roman Catholic Church does later for its clergy.

of children, there is also extensive evidence in the Greco-Roman world, prior to and contemporary with Jesus, of the practice of infant exposure for children who were not accepted into the family. Here is a chilling description of this practice.

> Before the child was accepted into the family by the father, it was not regarded as a person. If children were not accepted they would be exposed, meaning they were taken to a remote location, or even flung onto a dung heap, to die. There were ostensibly a number of reasons for this cruel practice, including spare resources (starvation in years of bad crops was a real threat to ancient families), unwillingness to leave an inheritance to more than one or two sons, birth of an illegitimate child to a *betaira* or to a concubine, or the birth of a girl. (Girls needed dowries to get husbands and hence threatened the sometimes meager resources of the *oikos*.)[23]

The practice of keeping one child over another is vividly evident in this first-century BC letter from an Egyptian recruit in the Roman army to his sister.

> Hilarion to his sister Alis very many greetings, likewise to my lad Berous and Apolloniarion. Know that we are still in Alexandria. Do not be anxious; if they really go home, I will remain in Alexandria. I beg and entreat you, take care of the little one, and as soon as we receive our pay I will send it up to you. If by chance you bear a child, if it is a boy, let it be; if it is a girl, cast it out. You have said to Aphrodisias, "Do not forget me." How can I forget you? I beg you then not to be anxious.[24]

In contrast to such attitudes found in the wider Mediterranean world, Jesus' most significant statements about children are in soteriological contexts where he is discussing salvation. Every society can point to examples where children, especially infants, are marginalized because they cannot advocate for themselves. It is not ironic that right after Jesus' teaching on divorce and marriage in Matthew 19 and Mark 10, children, the fruit of marriage, are being brought to Jesus. Here is the account in Matt 19:13–15 (cf. Mark 10:13–16; Luke 18:15–17):

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[23] S. M. Baugh, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Greek Society," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 123.

[24] This text is quoted in Baugh, "Marriage and Family in Ancient Greek Society,"125. It is P. Oxy. 744, in *Select Paypyri* vol. 2, *Public Documents,* Loeb Classical Library, no. 282, trans. A. S. Hunt and C. C. Edgar (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), no. 257.

> 13 Then little children [παιδία] were brought to him in order that he might put his hands on them and pray. But his disciples rebuked them. 14 But Jesus said, "Allow the little children [παιδία], and stop hindering their coming to me; for the reign of heaven is of such ones." 15 And when he had put [his] hands on them, he journeyed from there.[25]

What is especially noteworthy is Jesus' action, twice noted, of "when he had put hands on them" (ἐπιθεὶς τὰς χεῖρας αὐτοῖς). Those who have read the Old Testament narrative know that this is a formal action used in bestowing blessing (e.g., Gen 49:14). Those who have been ordained know that this action has spiritual significance (e.g., 1 Tim 4:14). Jesus words, "Allow the little children, and stop hindering their coming to me; for the reign of heaven is of such ones," not only signals the importance of children in his earthly ministry (τὰ βρέφη or "infants" in Luke 18:15), but their centrality in the future baptismal ministry of the church, where the Spirit is bestowed by water and the divine name. Here Matthew understands that Jesus is signaling the centrality of infant baptism for the missiology of his church.[26]

The theological foundation for this missiology is expressed earlier in Matthew 11:

> 25 At that time Jesus answered and said, "I praise you, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you hid these things from the wise and understanding and revealed them to infants [ἀπεκάλυψας αὐτὰ νηπίοις]. 26 Yes, Father, for in this way good pleasure happened before you. 27 All things were entrusted to me by my Father; and no one truly knows the Son, except the Father; nor does anyone truly know the Father, except the Son, and [the one] to whom the Son wishes to reveal [him]. 28 All you who are laboring and are heavily burdened—come to me, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you and learn from me that I am gentle and humble in heart, and so you will find rest for your lives. 30 For my yoke is pleasant, and my burden is light."[27]

Here Jesus sounds forth the foundational truth that underlines his statement about the kingdom "belonging to such as these": the wise and understanding can overlook things about Jesus that have been revealed to

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[25] English translation from Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 960.

[26] Contra Gibbs, who sees this conclusion as "an exegetical stretch"; see *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 961, n. 4. It should be kept in mind that Matthew understands the significance of this saying more fully after Jesus' command to make disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching (Matt 28:19).

[27] English translation from Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 582.

babes (νηπίοι). This is a rebuff to the high status given to wisdom within both Jewish and Greco-Roman contexts. This text testifies to infant faith because faith in Jesus is not a rational activity that goes with acquired reasoning and logic skills; it is a divine gift that can be given to babes but resisted by the so-called wise and understanding. One does not come to know the Son or the Father on one's own; to use the infant birthing vocabulary of Jesus in John 3: one must be "begotten from above" (γεννηθῇ ἄνωθεν). Andreas Köstenberger notes that Jesus' words Matthew 11 turn ". . . out to be prophetic when in Matthew 21:15 the children are shouting in the temple, 'Hosanna to the Son of David!' (NIV) while the chief priest and the teachers of the law are indignant at the sight of the children's praise of Jesus and of 'the wonderful things he did.'"[28] The children believe the foolishness of God, while the so-called wise stumble over him.

The baptismal missiology seen in Matthew 19 is even clearer in Matthew 18:1–6, which is the closest synoptic teaching in content to the Johannine Nicodemus narrative (cf. Mark 9:33–37; Luke 9:46–48):

> 1 In that hour the disciples approached Jesus, saying, "Who, therefore, is greatest in the reign of heaven?" 2 And when he had summoned a child [παιδίον], he stood it in their midst, 3 and he said, "Truly I say to you, unless you turn and become like children, you will surely not enter into the reign of heaven! 4 Therefore, whoever humbles himself [to become] like this child [τὸ παιδίον], this one is the greatest in the reign of heaven. 5 And whoever receives, in my name, one such child receives me. 6 But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble—that a donkey millstone be hung around his neck and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea is better for him!"[29]

The relationship between the name and baptism is intriguing in Matthew 18: "Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me" (Matt 18:5). This is not a reference to the personal name "Jesus"; it is a reference to the divine name possessed by Jesus that is also possessed by the Father and the Holy Spirit.[30] Therefore, this is not only an encouragement to being nice to children, but primarily a reference to receiving children through the use of the divine name in baptism.[31] When a

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[28] Andreas Köstenberger, "Marriage and Family in the New Testament," in *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World*, ed. Ken M. Campbell (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 270.

[29] English translation from Gibbs, *Matthew 11:2–20:34*, 897, 905.

[30] Charles A. Gieschen, "The Divine Name in Ante-Nicene Christology," *Vigiliae Christianae* 57 (2003): 115–158, esp. 143–146.

[31] This conclusion is also clear from what follows in Matt 18:6a: "but whoever causes one of *these little ones who believe in me* to sin."

child is received in this manner, Jesus is received through the dwelling of the divine name (cf. Matt 10:40). This understanding is stated in the same context of Matthew: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20). This is a reference to the assembled Christian congregation invoking the divine name given them in baptism and shared by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Even as the Name dwelt in the temple of old, now the Name dwells in the baptized; where they gather, there YHWH is present. The closing words of Matthew are the source for such an understanding. After the command to baptize in the divine name, Jesus says: "I will be with you always, even to the end of the ages." Because the divine name is given and dwelling among the baptized, the Son is present, as is also the Father and the Holy Spirit. David Scaer has been an untiring advocate for the implicit teaching of baptism from texts like this.

> Matthew has made it clear at the beginning of his gospel that Baptism is required for inclusion in the kingdom. In both the ministries of John the Baptist (Mt 3:1–6) and Jesus (Mt 4:17), preparation for the kingdom which is coming with Jesus involves confessing and being baptized. Suddenly the baptism of John is not an incidental historical question, because quite evidently those whom Matthew lists as coming to Jesus and being found acceptable by Him are those who confess and are baptized. The argument for infant Baptism is virtually proven.[32]

The warning at the end of this text is also significant: "whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to stumble—that a donkey millstone be hung around his neck and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea is better for him!" (Matt 18:6). A millstone was a very large and heavy stone; everyone hearing this in the first century would understand it as a dire warning. What does it tell us about the value of children to Jesus in his kingdom? They are priceless.

V. Implications for the Church Today

This paper has demonstrated that children are of central significance to Jesus and the mission he has put before the church. What does this now say to the twenty-first-century church? Three significant implications of Jesus' teaching for us today will be presented here.

First, in his strong affirmation of marriage, Jesus also strongly affirms procreation through the one flesh union of marriage as well as the inherent value of children as the typical fruit of marriage. In our generation, where

[32] David P. Scaer, *Baptism*, Confessional Lutheran Dogmatics, vol. 11 (St. Louis: Luther Academy, 1999), 137.

such an understanding is by no means widespread, it is vital that we proclaim and teach this perspective in all possible settings, especially with couples preparing for marriage. As pastors, we should not sit silently by as couples come to our congregations asking to be married and then wring our hands when there are not many births and baptisms from these marriages. It is our responsibility in every generation, especially in the confusion of this generation, to teach procreation and the gift of children to a generation where sexual intimacy is increasingly being distanced and disconnected from marriage and procreation. Given the choice between fulfilling personal needs versus the challenging task of juggling the unending and costly needs of children, individuals are increasingly voting for *their* needs and against those of children. Pastors need to tackle the uncomfortable topic of "contraception," since what was sold as family planning now is also being used to avoid conception and birth except when it is on our terms, our timing, and our number. As pastors, we should not sit silently by as children are killed and ripped out of the protective wombs of their mothers and then wonder why the birth rate has dropped and children are not universally valued in our land and congregations. The influence of Roe v. Wade over the past forty years has made our nation the location of a holocaust that makes the horrors of Hilter's Auschwitz look tame.[33]

Second, rather than viewing children as peripheral to his mission, Jesus places children at the front and center of his earthly ministry, as well as his mission of making disciples of all nations by baptizing and teaching (Matt 28:19). Children are not only valued and loved by Jesus, but they are a primary focus of his salvific activity and models of *sola gratia* and *sola fide*. It is not reason and intellect that lead to the assent of faith, but the work of the Holy Spirit; we are passive receivers of God's gift of salvation. Children, especially infants, illustrate this passive reception, and it is visible no clearer than in infant baptism, where God powerfully works and we passively receive. If we take Jesus' teaching seriously, it leads us to conclude that children should not only be included in our missional focus, but should be at the center of it. In former days, Lutherans were aghast when they discovered that a child was not yet baptized. When we know that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these, and such as these are not yet baptized, we should seek by all means possible to offer this sacrament so that the Holy Spirit can begin his good work in the child. The testimony of the Gospels about children is one that renews our zeal to be about biblical and Lutheran missiology: baptizing and teaching!

[33] It is estimated that over 50 million babies have been aborted in the US since 1973.

Third, there is the tendency to view children as second-class citizens in the church. For example, the confirmation rite in *Lutheran Worship* (1982) gave the impression that the baptized really were not yet members of the congregation until they were confirmed.[34] Such nonsense! In his teaching, Jesus emphasizes that the kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I would further assert that an implication of this teaching is that we should capitalize on the key time of catechesis in the life of a child by moving our catechesis and confirmation program to an earlier age before puberty and hormones hit. In no way am I advocating infant/toddler communion; but I am convinced that it is time that we as The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod study further the issue of earlier catechesis and communion in order to bring our sacramental practice more in line with the sacramental theology of the Scriptures, for the kingdom of God is given not only in baptism, but also in the body and blood of Jesus. At what age should we be offering these children more than a blessing at the communion rail?[35]

What, then, shall we do as pastors in this twenty-first-century context? A few of the prophetic words from YHWH through the prophet Jeremiah to the exiles in Babylon have particular relevance to our situation today. Like ancient Israel, we increasingly find ourselves in a foreign land that does not know the ways of the Lord. Do we despair and retreat? No, as with ancient Israel, God encourages us through Jeremiah to build houses, plant gardens, marry, have children, and multiply. Listen to what YHWH says:

> 29:4 Thus says YHWH of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom
> I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: 5 Build houses and
> live in them; plant gardens and eat their produce. 6 Take wives and
> have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give daugh-
> ters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply
> there, and do not decrease. 7 But seek the welfare of the city where I
> have sent you into exile, and pray to the YHWH on its behalf, for in its
> welfare you will find your welfare.

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[34] See the rite of Confirmation in *Lutheran Worship* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1982), 205–207. Among the questions asked of the confirmand was this one: "Do you desire to be a member of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and of this congregation?" (206). Then, toward the end of the rite, the pastor states: "Upon this your profession and promise I invite and welcome you, as members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church and this congregation . . ." (207). While I used this rite, I found it necessary to add the adjective "communicant" before "member/members" in these lines.

[35] A helpful place to begin might be a study of the rite of First Communion prior to Confirmation in *Lutheran Service Book Agenda* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 25–27.

Why is it that Mormons and Muslims know the importance of children for the future, but Christians seem to have lost sight of this?[36] Having children and bringing them to the font is one of the most missional activities of the church. The ancient command given our first parents in Eden is still very relevant for the church today and until our Lord's return: "Be fruitful and multiply" (Gen 1:28).

[36] The average size of Mormon and Muslim families in the United States is substantially larger than that of Christians. See, for example, the results of the 2008 "U.S. Religious Landscape Survey" prepared by the Pew Forum on Religious and Public Life: "Members of the LDS Church have the most children living at home. Mormon households with four or more children are 9 percent of the membership, compared with 3 percent nationally. Runners-up are Muslims, with 6 percent. Only 4 percent of Catholics have four or more children." David Bauman, "LDS Have Largest Families in US," *Deseret News*, February 26, 2008. http://www.deseretnews.com/article/695256406/LDS-have-largest-families-in-US.html?pg=all (accessed November 19, 2013).

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Abortion, Incarnation, and the Place of Children in the Church: All One Cloth

David P. Scaer

On January 22, 1973, the United States Supreme Court issued its 7-2 decision in the Roe v. Wade case that, based upon a person's right to privacy, a woman would be allowed to abort her unborn child in the early stages of pregnancy. Today, abortion is often seen as an ordinary surgical procedure and not restricted to the first trimester. An unborn child has no more rights than a set of tonsils. This places an obligation on the church to remind its members that early Christians saw abortion as an offense against the Fifth Commandment and found it just as repulsive as pedophilia, for which a Penn State coach will spend the rest of his life in prison.[1] His victims had their day in court. Abortion's victims must wait for the Day of Judgment. When the defenseless are deprived of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, the distinction between the kingdoms of the left and right hands becomes academic. Pastors must encourage their parishioners to engage in all legitimate action to outlaw the practice, with the proviso that in the past some great things began to happen only first when legal boundaries were disregarded. Political action can lead to a moral good.

On that January day in 1973, the court decision came like a thunderbolt out of the blue. Some things we think will never happen do happen. This is a rule of life we forget to our own disappointment. We think that we will

[1] The *Didache* may be as early as AD 60 and so is coterminous with the late apostolic era. Prohibitions against abortion and infanticide appear as subcategories of the commandments "thou shalt do no murder; thou shalt not commit adultery" (Did. 2:2). This ordering may suggest that some Christians were using abortion to resolve an unwanted pregnancy resulting from adultery. The Greek text translated as "Thou shall not commit an abortion" could just as easily be translated "do not murder a child [that had been conceived] in the seduction of a woman." While Matthew had a Jewish audience in view, a later writing like the *Didache* was addressing a similar audience, though one more likely to engage practices common among pagans. Jerry Sandusky, a former Penn State University football coach, was convicted of 45 counts of child sexual abuse on June 22, 2012.

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never contract a life-threatening disease, but we do. Those who, in the face of an unanticipated moral collapse, ask "What is the world coming to?" are not aware that from a biblical perspective the world provides a hospitable habitat for the enemies of God with which human beings are comfortable; often, the world is indistinguishable from the church. By the first century, abortion was replacing infanticide, because the mother did not have to view the results of her decision. Looking at the bodies of dismembered babies causes revulsion. Both Moses and Jesus escaped infanticide at the hands of evil rulers, but some did not and still some do not, and so the words of Jesus still prove true that the devil is "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44).[2]

In the 1950s, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) and the predecessor church bodies of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American (ELCA) were more alike than different. We differed on the lodges and pulpit and altar fellowship, but our members held to a shared belief in biblical inspiration and inerrancy, we saw God as our Father through his Son Jesus, and we all learned Luther's Small Catechism. No one in either trajectory of American Lutheranism proposed that homosexuals could serve as ministers or that same sex marriages deserved church blessing. Pentecostals had women preachers, but mainline denominations did not. Governments saw marriage as a union between one man and one woman that would soon produce a family. Kingdoms of the left and right hands washed the other's hands. In those halcyon days, the church influenced the public morality, and in turn the public morality provided external support for church practice. In January 22, 1973, this mutual support began to collapse.

Winters in Springfield, Illinois, were brief and so January 22, 1973, was typically cold, gray, and dismal, but not frigid. I received the news in my second floor office in Wessel Hall opposite the classrooms. James Bauer, a first-year student in the last class to be graduated from the Springfield campus in 1976 and now a pastor in Denver, came across the hall. Faith had to be followed by works and the telephone was the *medium* or *instrumentum gratiae*. We both had faith, but Bauer had the works in making phone calls of protest to various government officials. Following the precedence of Genesis 27:22, Jim introduced himself as me: "The voice is Jacob's voice, but the hands are [those] of Esau." In contacting LCMS president J. A. O. Preus, a hypostatic union took place and I was both person and voice asking Jack to make a statement in the name of our

[2] See John A. Hardon, The Catholic Catechism: A Contemporary Catechism of the Teachings of the Catholic Church (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1975), 334–338.

church. Well, he did, but only after some time had passed. The Cardinal Archbishop of Saint Louis was on the ready with a press release. Roman Catholics are more adept at bringing moral issues to the public attention. If congregational autonomy and synodical fellowship mean our presidents must have permission before speaking for the church, then the episcopal system is superior. Flocks do not guard themselves, shepherds do.

In the intervening years, the LCMS has increasingly taken on a prophetic role in awakening the conscience of its members to the evil that takes away the lives of defenseless human beings. Abortion is no less a moral issue than it is a political one. LCMS president Matthew Harrison has shown no hesitancy in speaking clearly, promptly, and prominently on social issues. The January 2013 issue of *The Lutheran Witness* tackles abortion head-on, with no less than five articles plus two editorials, the first by Harrison. If previously the Lutherans were in the shadows, now they are coming out of the closet. Lutherans tend to be reticent in getting involved in political issues, but abortion is legalized moral violence against the most defenseless human beings. Reticence or Luther's doctrine of the two kingdoms is not a valid excuse in refraining from political involvement.

Soon after the court decision, I took pen to hand—a metaphor for pounding away on a manual typewriter—and wrote what was probably the first article on the subject in the LCMS, entitled "Abortion: A Moment for Conscientious Reflection." Only four and a half pages long, it appeared in the December 1972 issue of *The Springfielder*.[3] The cover date did not correspond with the date of its publication, so the article appeared in an issue that predated the court decision by one month. Call it proleptic eschatology. Drawing a parallel to the holocaust, it may appear harsh, but without an edge, prophetic voices are no longer prophetic.[4] As Jesus said, "If salt has lost what makes it salt, how shall its saltiness be restored? [ἐὰν δὲ τὸ ἅλας μωρανθῇ, ἐν τίνι ἁλισθήσεται;]" (Matt 5:13). Rhetorical etiquette had little place in the preaching of the prophets. In the 2012 vice-presidential debate, Joseph Biden said that he was personally opposed to abortion for religious reasons, but was unwilling to superimpose his beliefs on others. His opponent failed to reverse the argument: if private morality cannot determine public policy, why then should government force individuals to engage in immoral acts, such as paying for pills causing abortions? Separation of public and private morality is a species of

[3] David P. Scaer, "Abortion: A Moment for Conscientious Reflection," *The Springfielder* 36, no. 3 (December 1972): 180–184.

[4] Matthew C. Harrison makes the same comparison in his editorial, "God's Gift of Life," *The Lutheran Witness* 132 (January 2012): 1.

the old argument that science and faith exist in their own autonomous worlds. They do not.

Without the perspective of what was culturally happening in 1973, the legalization of abortion appears as sea change in public thinking. At second glance, cultural, moral, and theological change had been in the air for some time. Like biological evolution, changes in public morality often go undetected until an advanced product evolves. At the end of World War II, extended families living in close knit neighborhoods in cities began to be replaced by the nuclear two-child families of the suburbs. As farms became mechanized, large families became more of financial burden and less of an asset. Children were obstacles to women pursuing careers, and romance rather than procreation was seen as the purpose of marriage.[5] Today, two-parent families are on the decline and one-parent families could become the norm. One self-described liberal social scientist finds that the arrangement of a mother with no permanent partner is harmful to children. This is hardly a religiously bigoted opinion, since the author opposes one government definition of a family over another.[6] He acknowledges, as we all should, that though children come with no guarantees, those with one father and one mother fare better. What the world looks like today is a lot different than fifty years ago. Abortion was not legalized in a moral vacuum.

Beginning with the Emperor Constantine, the church was a factor in shaping public morality. New England Congregationalism was a factor in abolishing slavery, and a general Protestant objection to alcohol consumption led to a constitutional amendment outlawing its sale. When Protestant modernism could no longer hold the moral torch, the Catholic Church took over as society's moral guardian, but its own sheep no longer listen to the church's voice. To show how things have changed, consider that as recently as 1961 the Archbishop of Canterbury was consulted by the Lord Chamberlain as to what plays were morally and theologically acceptable for the London stage.[7] Today, unfavorable presentations of the prophet are

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[5] For a discussion of children as a financial burden rather than an advantage, see Paide Hochschild, "What Are Children For?" *First Things* 229 (January 2013): 39–44.

[6] Andrew J. Chrelin, "Middle Class Offers Marriage Model," *The Journal-Gazette* (December 28, 2012): 11a. Chrelin argues that those in the middle class, with more education and better paying jobs than the poor, are more likely to have stable marriages. Hence education leading to higher paying jobs will serve as a catalyst for more stable marriages.

[7] Peter Webster, "The Archbishop of Canterbury, the Lord Chamberlain and the Censorship of Theatre, 1909–49,"in *The Church and Literature*, ed. Peter Clarke and Charlotte Methuen (Suffolk, UK, and Rochester, NY: Bowdell & Brewer for the Ecclesiastical Historical Society, 2012), 437–438.

met with outrage, even by government officials, while blasphemous images of Jesus are allowed. Putting dates on when things began to change is inexact, but recently retired Harvard professor Joseph Fletcher gave a push to the rolling ball in 1966 with his *Situation Ethics*.[8] He created a sensation in proposing that intercourse outside of marriage is wrong one hundred times out of a hundred, but that an exception is still possible. To use biblical language, that one exception brought forth a hundredfold. Today, Fletcher's one-time exception morality is a quaint, outdated curiosity. Apart from substituting situation ethics' vaguely defined concept of love as the standard for concrete moral principles in determining right from wrong, Fletcher's proposal is moral hubris, with each person deciding what is best for him or herself. Satisfactory outcomes and not moral codes determine right from wrong. Referencing the book of Judges, "every man did what was right in his own eyes" (17:6; 21:25).

In 1963 J. A. T. Robinson released his *Honest to God*.[9] The English bishop and later Cambridge don combined Karl Barth's transcendental God out there with Paul Tillich's immanent God within us to produce a God who was once somewhere but was now nowhere. William Hamilton and Thomas J. J. Altizer followed up with their God-Is-Dead proposals, but were not agreed on the cause of death. The word "God" would still be bantered around, but was no longer useful as a moral authority. Signs of a disintegrating public morality in the 1960s were opposition to the Vietnam War, Woodstock, and the deaths of protesting students at Kent State University by unseasoned national guardsmen. In retrospect, the confident Pelagian morality of the Enlightenment Rationalists and Immanuel Kant's moral imperative look good. If God and a semblance of public morality were no longer in place, it is not surprising that the lives of unborn infants became expendable and were seen as having no more value than that of animals. Modern saints rescue beached whales and assist in animal shelters. Speciesism became the sin of those who think otherwise. Fanatics work to rescue the unborn, but even after death, fanatics get things done. John Brown's attack on the federal facility in Harper's Ferry, Virginia, focused the national attention on the evil of slavery, and the Union forces went off to war singing "John Brown's Body Lies a Smouldering in the Grave."

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[8] Joseph Fletcher, *Situation Ethics: The New Morality* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1966). In the chapter, "Love Justifies Its Means," Fletcher provides a number of test cases (120–130). Absolute standards of morality have no place. Just as divorce can be done out of love, so can abortion (133).

[9] J. A. T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (Norwich, UK: SCM Press, 1963).

In the 1930s and 40s, Dietrich Bonhoeffer focused Germany's attention on the anti-Semitic evils of National Socialism and, like Brown, he paid the ultimate price. Annihilation of the European Jewish population and of infants by abortion are more similar than different in that innocent human beings are put to death—which is the point: who is human? Jews were as human as Christians, and unborn infants share in the same humanity as those babies who make it out alive.[10] Ethical decisions are inherently debatable. That is why we have ethics. Bonhoeffer's political and theological views remain a point of contention, especially in the LCMS, but Uwe Simon-Netto has convincingly argued that Bonhoeffer understood his participation in the conspiracy against Hitler as a matter of the left hand to prevent further destruction of the Jewish population and the immanent devastation of Germany by Allied forces. Bonhoeffer's actions might find support in the parable of the Samaritan, for had he, the Samaritan, not stopped, the wounded man would have inevitably died. Luther's explanation of the Fifth Commandment requires helping the neighbor in physical distress.[11] Current fascination with Bonhoeffer and a renaissance of his theology have not translated into opposition to abortion among his admirers. Consider that chemicals are instruments of death in both cases. Those who weep over the holocaust but do nothing to stop abortion are the contemporary equivalent of scribes and Pharisees who lavishly decorated the tombs of the prophets whom their fathers killed (Luke 11:48). Penitential sorrow for the sins of others does not compensate for failing to recognize and relieve current moral wrongs. Even though Hermann Sasse would not consent with Bonhoeffer to the Barmen Declaration, he also opposed National Socialism. Bonhoeffer paid the consequences by a gruesome execution; by a strange twist of circumstances, Sasse was forced out of the University of Erlangen by those who said little or nothing against anti-Semitism or even offered theological reasons to support it. Greatly admired Lutherans theologians Werner Elert and Paul Althaus Jr. failed to recognize or ignored the fact that the German Christianity proposed by the National Socialist Party was Nordic-Germanic paganism disguised in Christian clothing.[12] Culture, especially when it is government supported,

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[10] Luke uses the same word for both an unborn, τὸ βρέφος (Lk 1:41, 44), and a new born infant, τὰ βρέφη (18:15).

[11] This is suggested in Peter Scaer, "Our Littlest Neighbor," *The Lutheran Witness* 132 (January 2013): 11–13.

[12] For a historical overview, see David Jay Webber, "Bonhoeffer and Sasse as Confessors and Churchmen," *Logia* 21, no. 4 (Reformation 2012): 13–20. See also John T. Pless, who notes that Werner Elert and Paul Althaus identified themselves with the National Socialists in signing the *Ansbacher Anschlag* in 1934. "Hermann Sasse (1895–1976)," *Lutheran Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (Autumn 2011): 302–303.

has the potential to take the church under its wing and smother its faith. Such was the case in Germany in the 1930s and 40s and such it is here now with the lack of full response from American Protestants to abortion. In our time, Richard John Neuhaus (1936–2009) was an example of a fearless John the Baptist as he plunged into the public square on the abortion debate.[13]

We might find an excuse for our lack of involvement in opposing abortion in the words of Jesus to Peter that those taking up the sword will perish by it (Matt 26:51), but rather than being a prohibition of the use of force to avert evil, they are the promise of the inevitability of death for those engaged in military action. Recruits for the armed services are fully informed of what may be in store for them. If ethics is nothing more than a historical study of how others came to their decisions and does little in promoting actions that carry risks, then such ethics are inherently unethical. In our tradition, monthly Monday morning circuit pastoral conferences still serve to help clergy as they walk the narrow line between right and wrong actions with the risk of uncertainty. Agreeing to an appropriate action in an ambivalent situation and taking the necessary action is a pastor's burden that the apostles also faced. James, the brother of the Lord, came to a decision allowing Gentiles as full members of the church while giving as little offense to the Jewish members as possible (Acts 15:19–20). In his epistles, Paul weaves in and around troublesome issues, remaining faithful to the commandments even as he aims to keep the congregations together.

Two contemporary instances come to mind in distinguishing right from wrong. Some years ago Neuhaus, who was a frequent guest on William F. Buckley's *Firing Line*, was asked by a pious Catholic lady why

[13] Wesley Smith details how Neuhaus came to oppose abortion: "The culture of death is an idea before it is a deed. I expect many of us here, perhaps most of us here, can remember when we were first encountered by the idea. For me, it was in the 1960s when I was pastor of a very poor, very black, inner city parish in Brooklyn, New York. I had read that week an article by Ashley Montagu of Princeton University on what he called "A Life Worth Living." He listed the qualifications for a life worth living: good health, a stable family, economic security, educational opportunity, the prospect of a satisfying career to realize the fullness of one's potential. These were among the measures of what was called "a life worth living." Neuhaus looked "out at his congregation and saw the very types of people who Montagu denigrated as having lives not worth living: In that moment, I knew that I had been recruited to the cause of the culture of life. To be recruited to the cause of the culture of life is to be recruited for the duration; and there is no end in sight, except to the eyes of faith." "The Moment I Recognized the Culture of Death," *National Review Online* (January 13, 2013), http://www.nationalreview.com/human-exceptionalism/337567/moment-i-recognized-culture-death: (accessed October 17, 2013).

Bonhoeffer's opposition to Hitler could not be used as example in preventing abortion. Both Neuhaus and Buckley are rightly remembered as intellectual giants in the field of public morality, but neither could provide an answer. They were caught off guard and said that the reason for eschewing violence should be obvious. But if it was so obvious, the woman would not have asked. There are no wrong questions, but there are only questions from whose answers we retreat because we do not want to face the consequences of our principles. In colloquial terms, we take refuge in saying that this or that situation is not the hill to die on. Bonhoeffer and his co-conspirators asked and answered the question of what should be done with a tyrannical killer. Hitler's life was of less value than the thousands who would still die, so they argued.

A second case was the May 2009 assassination—in a church—of the abortion doctor George Tiller, whose killer was given a near life sentence. After excommunication by a LCMS congregation,[14] Tiller joined an ELCA congregation, from where he was buried. Some saw virtue in his helping women rid themselves of troublesome pregnancies. Whatever issues divide the LCMS and ELCA, differences on abortion should indicate that we are entirely different churches.[15] Both pro-life and pro-choice groups condemned Tiller's assassination, yet, in contrast, President Obama's order to assassinate Osama bin Laden was seen as an act of courage. Had Bonhoeffer's co-conspirators succeeded, the morality of their actions would hardly be questioned. Had an armed teacher in the Sandy Hook school massacre killed the assassin, he would have received the honors given the pilot of the U.S. Air jet who safely landed the plane in the Hudson River.[16] Or consider this scenario: sometime around the year 2030, a person about twenty years old who had been adopted as a child might do the math and conclude that if that Kansas doctor had continued to live, he or she might

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[14] The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod states that "since abortion takes a human life, it is not a moral option except to prevent the death of . . . the mother" (1979 Resolution 3-02A).

[15] The official position of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America states that "abortion prior to viability (of a fetus) should not be prohibited by law or by lack of public funding," but that abortion after the point of fetal viability should be prohibited except when the life of a mother is threatened or when fetal abnormalities pose a fatal threat to a newborn. *A Social Statement on: Abortion* (Department for Studies of the Commission for Church in Society, 1991), 10.

[16] On January 15, 2009, US Airways Flight 1549 struck a flock of geese resulting in the loss of engine power. The crew was able to successfully ditch the plane into the Hudson River off midtown Manhattan. At Sandy Hook Elementary School, twenty-year-old Adam Lanza fatally shot twenty children, six adult staff, and his mother before committing suicide on December 12, 2012.

not be alive now. Since the 1973 court ruling, every person adopted as a child in the United States might ponder his or her possible non-existence. Contemplating non-existence might be unprofitable philosophical speculation; the over fifty-four million aborted babies will be spared such useless thoughts. Those children may not exist for those who aborted them, but they live before God and at the judgment will have equal standing with those who aborted them.

Roman Catholics are more likely to speak of sins of omission, but without recognizing sins of omission as serious sins, non-involvement in preventing abortion has no moral consequences. The pericope of the woman caught in adultery might shed some light on this. Typically, the saying that the one without sin should cast the first stone is used to show that we sinners should not judge others (John 8:3–7). In other words, the passage has to do with original sin. This can hardly be right, since Jesus and the apostles do make judgments. Without making moral judgments, law and gospel cannot be preached. A preferable interpretation is that by observing the act and not intervening, the woman's accusers were complicit. If the Samaritan proved to be the neighbor in helping the stricken traveler, the priest and the Levite did the evil thing by not helping (Luke 10: 29–37).

Politically, 1973 would be a tumultuous year for both the nation and the LCMS. That summer, Gerald Ford became the first person to be named vice-president under the provisions of the twenty-fifth amendment—a sign of more troubles to come. American withdrawal from Vietnam was inevitable as our nation was coming to terms with its first major defeat by a foreign power. By January 1973, J. A. O. Preus was in his fourth year as president of the LCMS and was weathering attacks from the right for inaction and from the left for too much action in addressing the synod's ills. Depending where one stood, Preus was guilty of the opposing sins of omission and commission. Delegates that July to the LCMS convention in New Orleans received a report concerning Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, that led to the seminary board suspending its president, John Tietjen, at its December meeting. This led to the February 1974 faculty walkout and the formation of an alternate theological training institution known as Seminex, for whose support the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC) was formed.[17] So if 1973 is remembered as the year in which abortion became legal, it was also the year in which the LCMS was facing a disruption that in less nimble hands could have led to its disintegration. *The Tale of Two Cities* has the oft quoted line that it was

[17] See Paul A. Zimmerman, *A Seminary in Crisis: The Inside Story of the Preus Fact Finding Committee* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007).

the best of times and the worst of times, but for the country and the synod it was the worst of times. Formation of the AELC by LCMS dissidents accelerated the process of bringing the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) together to form the ELCA.[18] With vast majority of Lutherans in the U. S. as its members, the ELCA has been on the forefront of promoting a secular, feminist agenda that allows not only women and homosexual clergy but also supports abortion in its insurance program. Its agenda makes it indistinguishable from a political party.[19]

Secular and religious events are woven into one cloth or mixed into one cocktail, as suggested by Luke 3:1–2, where the ministries of John the Baptist and Jesus are anchored:

> In the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea and Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, during the high priesthood of Annas and Caiaphas, the word of God came to John the son of Zechariah in the wilderness (ESV).

Secular history provides the shell in which *Heilsgeschichte,* the history of salvation, takes place and is so intertwined that completely separating one event from the other might be as difficult as it is artificial. What happens in the world reflects and shapes church life and belief. John preached a message with political overtones and ended up on the wrong side of a precursor of the guillotine. Preaching can never be entirely apolitical. Those Christians who ignore the horror of abortion or even support it have already become intoxicated by breathing in the poisoned air of the surrounding culture. After resisting government pressure, Scandinavian Lutherans allowed for women clergy and adopted the secular agenda.[20] This happens and will happen again and again.

If every gray cloud has a silver lining and every dark night is a prelude to a bright dawn, so these events were not entirely without reward. Just as

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[18] At least this was the opinion of David Preus, the last ALC president. See David L. Tiede's review of David W. Preus, *Pastor and President: Reflections of a Lutheran Churchman*, in *Lutheran Quarterly* 26, no. 4 (Winter 2012): 452.

[19] A helpful overview of the formation of the ELCA is provided by Arthur J. Clement, *Lutheranism from Wittenberg to the U. S. A.* (New Haven, MO: Lutheran News, Inc, 2012), 842–855. It was legally constituted on April 30, 1987, in Columbus, Ohio, and became the legal successor to the constituting churches on January 1, 1988.

[20] See Jan Bygstad, "Can There Be Peace? Violence in the Name of Religion," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 76 (2012): 348–358.

the practice of ordained women clergy led the church to reflect on what it means that God has created us male and female, so the court's decision on abortion directed the church to focus on what constitutes a human being and, subsequently, on how Jesus as a human being can also be God.[21] Abortion and incarnation are related subjects. Opposition to abortion in the public sphere must proceed for non-religious reasons, but in the church theological and biblical reasons must be offered. Preaching that is not theological is no preaching at all. With few exceptions, Christians in the tradition of ancient and Reformation churches are agreed that a human being consists of a body and soul, with the personhood of the individual residing in the soul that comes from God, relates to God during life, and returns to God at death (Eccl 1:13; 3:11; 12:7). This is called dichotomy. Trichotomy holds that a human being has three parts, body, soul and spirit. A variation of trichotomy is that one is born with a body and soul and given a spirit when he becomes a Christian. This view opens the door to the error of perfectionism because of the belief that in that part called "the spirit" a Christian can overcome sin.[22] The Athanasian Creed assumes dichotomy in that Jesus Christ is described as "perfect God and perfect man, of a reasonable soul and human flesh subsisting." Just as Jesus is God and man, so as a man he has a body and a soul.

Without a soul, an unborn child is arguably not a human being; Christians, however, are not agreed on the soul's origin.[23] Origen (c. AD 185–254) held that souls existed in eternity and were placed in the body at conception. Mormons believe something like this. A now long-deceased, confessional, and dear colleague argued that birth control prevented pre-existing souls from assuming bodies. These are Platonic variations. Popular among Roman Catholics and the Reformed is creationism, the view that God creates each individual soul and places it into the body. Reformed theologians say this happens by a special action of God at the time of conception. Roman Catholic theologians are not agreed as to when this takes place; supposedly, Thomas Aquinas said it happened three

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[21] Francis Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*, 3 vols. (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950–53), 1:476–477. This view is resembles those of the Gnostics and hardly fits Luther's understanding of man *simul iustus et peccator*. How this view understands abortion is unclear. Aborted children would lose their souls in death, but not their spirits which they never had.

[22] For a fuller discussion of this and other matters related to anthropology, see Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1994), 472–489.

[23] Monism holds that a human being has only a body and that the soul is the mind as an extension of the body and, in contrast to animals, is more highly developed.

months after conception.[24] Since souls take on the character of sin by being placed into sinful bodies, this view borders on Platonic dualism.[25]

Traditionally, Lutherans favor traducianism, the view formulated by Tertullian and held by Augustine and Luther, that the soul is derived from the parents along with the conception of the body.[26] In one act, a person is conceived as body and soul as a totality, a position that is the most satisfactory in opposing abortion and understanding Christ's incarnation. In one act, God assumed not only a human body but a human soul from his mother. This was a complete, not partial, incarnation. In the moment of conception Mary was fully *theotokos*, the mother of Jesus, who is both God and man with a body and soul (Luke 1:43).[27] His soul was not added later. Differences on these matters are not reasons for separating ourselves from others in opposing abortion, but our opposition to abortion is an opportunity to reflect on the nature of being a human being on the and incarnation. The Son of God became a human being at his conception, not at his birth. Theologically and liturgically, the Annunciation (March 25), which celebrates the conception of the Son of God, takes precedence over Christmas (December 25), the commemoration of his birth. Theology does not have the market on how a human being is defined. Man can be understood physiologically, psychologically, and philosophically. From a physiological perspective, what makes a person a human being, what he or she will be, emotions, personality, intellect, and hair and skin color, already are in place at conception. Before they are born, children are linguistic, intellectual, and emotional beings. They can recognize the mother's voice and distinguish one language from another, respond to music, and be adversely affected by a tumultuous environment. They experience pain

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[24] Hardon, *The Catholic Catechism*. See also *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publications, 1994), 93, para. 366.

[25] Creationism, the doctrine that a soul was created by God for each infant, is problematic. Creation came to a completion on the sixth day. God no longer creates *ex nihilo* but through multiplication of what has already been created. This view puts God in the position of creating sinless souls to be placed into sinful bodies. In the Reformed tradition, Grudem is a creationist and gets around this problem of children having bad dispositions by holding that God, in creating souls, fashions them according to the dispositions of the parents. *Systematic Theology*, 485–486. This is an innovative idea, but results in God being directly involved in creating sinful souls.

[26] Hardon, *The Catholic Catechism*, 106

[27] Yves M. J. Congar notes that we can affirm that Christ "is ontologically the Son of God because of the hypostatic union from the moment of his conception," and still "respect the successive moments or stages in the history of salvation in which the virtue or effectiveness of the Spirit in Jesus was actuated in a new way." *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3 vols., trans. David Smith (New York: The Seabury Press,1983), 3:171.

and flee in anticipation of an abortionist's knife. Unborn infants possess the characteristics of human beings.

Recently released are the results of research with children as young as three to ten months conducted by the Yale University Infant Cognition Center. It finds that a moral sense can be detected in the youngest infants.[28] In other words, children are born as moral creatures. The choices they make for their own advantage seem to affirm what the church calls original sin. They differ from the rest of the animate world in being able to distinguish right from wrong. Jonah Lehrer goes into even more detail in his *Boston Globe* article "Inside the Baby's Mind."[29] The distinction between the law and the gospel assumes everyone is in some sense moral, including children. Voltarie followed Pelagius in assuming that a child came into the world with a *tabula rasa*, a clean slate. Learning good and evil was similar to learning facts. B. F. Skinner's behaviorist psychology saw things the same way. The recent research at Yale is not that dissimilar to Immanuel Kant's moral argument for the existence of God by which he posits that we intuitively can recognize moral injustices that will be rectified by God in the afterlife when he rewards the good and punishes the bad. The Yale study leans in the direction of seeing morality as intuitive rather than learned behavior.[30]

While scientific and biblical data are not identical, they can correspond. Before their births, John the Baptist and Jesus recognized one another (Luke 1:44). That was an act of faith. The account of Jacob grabbing the foot of his brother Esau during birth might be more fact than tale (Gen 25:26). Fraternal dislike that first appeared in the Cain and Abel account (Gen 4:8) exists before birth. Twins are known to be combative before birth. As natal and prenatal research advances, accumulated evidences will

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[28] Abigail Tucker, "Born to be Mild," *Smithsonian* 43 (January 2013): 35–41, 76–77.

[29] http://www.boston.com/bostonglobe/ideas/articles/2009/04/26/inside_the_baby_mind/(accessed October 17, 2013).

[30] These studies were the subject of a November 11, 2012, feature on CBS's "60 Minutes." See http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=50135408n (accessed October 17, 2013) and published in the *Smithsonian* with the title of the article on its cover as "Born to be Bad?: The New Science of Morality? With the article the title was changed to "Born to Be Mild" with the subtitle in uppercase "ARE WE BORN KNOWING RIGHT FROM WRONG? NEW RESEARCH OFFERS SURPRISING ANSWER TO THE AGE-OLD QUESTION OF WHERE MORALITY COMES FROM." Researchers attribute this innate moral sense to evolution, but it corresponds to the biblical doctrine of original sin, i.e., not only are we born sinners but we know it. If children on this side of womb have a moral sense, do they have it in the womb itself? Should it be established that children at birth have an innate moral sense, they must have had it before they were born.

suggest that the "what" being aborted might actually be a "who," i.e., a human being. Abortion is not the destruction of a thing, the cessation of an accumulation of living cells and body parts, but a human being who consists not only of a body but also a soul. An argument for abortion might be that before birth, the fetus or the child is not a human being because it has not reached its full potential. Such an argument assumes that in life there exists an optimum moment when all our mental, emotional and physical capacities reach their full potential, ideally at the same time. If this is so, when is this? Certain potentials like physical strength and intellectual and linguistic capacities are reached early in life, perhaps the late teens and early twenties, but wisdom comes later in life, and for some it never does. Is there any stage of life when we are more human than another? Should reaching a certain potential determine our humanity, then some of us have long since reached our peak and are on downhill slide. Solomon also spoke about this in Ecclesiastes (12:1–5).

So the arguments for abortion are easily reversed into ones for euthanasia for the non-functioning aged.[31] *The Boston Globe* article goes so far as to say, "In fact, in some situations it might actually be better for adults to regress into a newborn state of mind. While maturity has its perks, it can also inhibit creativity and lead people to fixate on the wrong facts."[32] Of course Jesus said something like this first when he spoke of becoming like little children in order to receive the kingdom, i.e., to have a part in him. Over against the Baptists, we might want to say that we have no concerns about baptizing infants. They believe. We are not so sure about adults.

While we can take heart that the movements to abolish abortion have outperformed pro-choice movements and that this success is recognized in a one-third decline in abortions since their peak in the early 1980s,[33] nevertheless, the pro-life movement has suffered political setbacks. Where at one time the nation was evenly divided on the issue, 59 percent of the electorate hold that it should be legal in all or most cases.[34] Several attitudes and philosophies fuel the pro-abortion movement, but feminism is a major engine making inroads in the church where women are ordained and God

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[31] British National Health Care hospitals are already doing this. See "The Week," *National Review* 64/24 (December 31, 2012), 13. Comas are induced for both the aged and for babies with congenital defects, who are then deprived of sustenance.

[32] Lehrer, "Inside the Baby's Mind."

[33] Jon A. Smith, "Roe's Pro-Life Legacy," *First Things* 229 (January 2012), 23.

[34] Ramesh Ponnuru, "A Pro-Choice Surge," *National Review* 64, no. 24 (December 31, 2012): 15–16.

is addressed as "Our Mother who is with us when we celebrate your many names."[35] In parenting, the mother holds the trump card in determining whether the unborn child shall live or die and so the man's right to fatherhood is subordinated and actually annihilated.[36]

One reason given for my undertaking a dissertation on what nineteenth-century Lutheran theologians thought about infant baptism was my desire to provide background material that showed if and how baptized children differed from unbaptized children in receiving Christian education.[37] This goal may remain elusive, but our defense of the lives of unborn children may have a side benefit in reflecting and assessing the place of children in the church. Arguably, their subordinate state in the household of God is evident at the communion rail, where they can receive a blessing of Baptism with hands but not the second sacrament because they are said to lack the *fides reflexa*, a faith that reflects on sins, set forth as a requirement for a worthy reception (1 Cor 11:28). Claiming that infants do not have *fides reflexa*, i.e., they cannot reflect on their own faith, may be one of those "of course" doctrines, something which we believe but cannot prove. The Yale clinical study and others, however, call into question the assumption that children do not have the mental powers of reflections. We cannot base a case on a child's inability for moral reflection on a Yale clinical study, but it is hard to ignore, especially since we do not have evidences for the traditional understanding. It might be that the inability of children to have *fides reflexa* may be hardly more than a pietistic and rationalist relic without biblical or evidential support. We baptize children because, like the rest of us, each child is *simul iustus et peccator*. Studies show that children have intellectual advantages over adults. Perhaps the most notable advantage is that they have not developed the pious hypocrisy that comes with maturity. In the Roman church, the Rites of Christian

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[35] Words used by an ELCA bishop at the celebration of Holy Communion with Rite of Reception, St. Mark's Lutheran Church, San Francisco, CA, Sunday, July 25, 2010, prayed at a "'Rite of Reception' for partnered gay and lesbian pastors." Taken from "Afterword: Staying Lutheran in Changing Church(es): Why We Still Need Lutheran Theology," in *Changing Churches* by Mickey L. Mattox and A. G. Roeper (Grand Rapids; MI: William B. Eerdmans Company, 2012), 312.

[36] Amy L. Way, review of *Why Have Children? The Ethical Debate,* by Christine Overall in *First Things* 228 (January 2012): 51-53.

[37] David P. Scaer, *Infant Baptism in Nineteenth Century Lutheran Theology* (Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011).

Initiation for Adults assumes that adults are the better Christians than children.[38] Is this not the old Baptist argument to refuse infant baptism?

At the death of an infant, pastors often have to face the question of what age the child will be in heaven or at the resurrection. Though we might be tempted to say that the grieving are asking the wrong question, we can still provide the right answer that we adults will become like children, listening to and totally depending on the voice of their Father who has spoken once and for all time through his Son and our Brother, who gives us his Holy Spirit to be his children. Maybe for this reason the writer of First John addressed his hearers as little children six times.

Are unborn children human beings? Ask a married couple awaiting the birth of their first child. Ask any Englishman who awaited the birth of Kate Middleton's first child who is already regarded as the future sovereign.[39] We should defend the lives of all children, if for no other reason than the truth that God became a child not in Bethlehem but in the womb of his mother. The final stanza of "Once in Royal David's City" says it all.

> Not in that poor, lowly stable
> With the oxen standing by
> Shall we see Him, but in heaven,
> Set at God's right hand on high.
> Then like stars His children crowned,
> All in white, His praise will sound.[39]

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[38] For a summary of the current situation in the Roman church, see *Infant Baptism*, 12, n. 43.

[39] On July 22, 2013, George Alexander Louis was born to Prince William and Catherine Elizabeth, Duke and Duchess of Cambridge. George holds the official title: *His Royal Highness* Prince George of Cambridge.

[39] *Lutheran Service Book* 376:5.

CTQ 77 (2013): 229–255

Lutheran Support for the Pro-Life Movement: A Case of Faith without Works?

Peter J. Scaer

When we look at Lutheran support for the pro-life movement, how far from the truth would it be to say that we are speaking of a case of faith without works? In convention after convention, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod passes pro-life resolutions by large majorities, verging on unanimity. On paper, we are a tiger. Yet, speaking from personal experience and listening to others, I can say that pro-life groups across the nation often find themselves frustrated with us. They know our pro-life stance, but they do not see us on the front lines, at the rallies or the care centers. Over the years, I have attended numerous LCMS churches, but seldom have I heard the life issue from the pulpit or in Bible studies.

Now, why is this? Is it possible that we have been living in an abortion culture for so long that we have become desensitized to how much it has affected us? While I do not have definitive answers to this vexing issue, I offer here a few observations, as well as a few modest suggestions.

I. The Intellectual Embrace of Abortion

I was at a garage sale some time ago and happened upon an issue of *Reader's Digest*, published in May 1966, the month of my birth. *Reader's Digest* was to me a slice of apple pie. With its folksy stories and mildly amusing anecdotes, it captured a kind of Norman Rockwell vision of America. Feeling nostalgic, I purchased the issue and began to browse. Scattered throughout were ads for "Nudit," a moustache remover for women, "Prunes: the Energy Breakfast Fruit," Emily Post's revised book on etiquette, and even an ad for "Lutheran Brotherhood Insurance." In a decade marked by tumult and upheaval, *Reader's Digest* represented a kind of safe haven, where polite Americans, Lutherans included, could go for gentle humor and wisdom.

Or, at least, that's what I thought. As I made my way down the table of contents, the title of one article jumped out at me: "Let's Speak Out on Abortion," written by none other than Lawrence Lader, co-founder of the

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National Association for the Repeal of Abortion Laws (NARAL).[1] As both a political activist and the movement's leading intellectual, Lader authored an influential book, simply titled *Abortion*, in which he argued that the so-called right to privacy that protected birth control (Griswold v. Connecticut, 1965) should logically be applied to abortion.[2] For good reason, Betty Friedan called Lader "the father of the abortion movement."[3]

An astute strategist, Lader framed the abortion issue in ways that would appeal to middle America's values and fears. His *Reader's Digest* article begins dramatically with the story of an intruder who forces himself into the home of Denver housewife and then gags and assaults her, resulting in pregnancy.[4] Lader then tells of a mother pregnant with a deformed baby, followed by a report of back alley abortions performed with wire hangers. All of these cases, Lader argues, are good reasons to legalize so-called "therapeutic abortion." A wonderful con artist, Lader paralyzes the reader with fear and then performs his sleight of hand. The term "therapeutic abortion," used originally to speak of saving the life of the mother, opens the door to any physical or emotional malady a woman might face, including what Lader terms "the worn-out mother syndrome."[5]

While Lader dramatizes the plight of the woman in distress, he soft-pedals the abortion procedure, calling it the "simplest and safest" of all

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[1] Lader (in)famously organized a demonstration of women pushing empty baby strollers on Mother's Day. He was especially active in churches, organizing ministers who referred patients to abortion clinics.

[2] Lawrence Lader, *Abortion* (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1966). He also authored an unlikely sequel in which he told the story of abortion's political progress leading up to the Roe v. Wade decision: *Abortion II* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973).

[3] Betty Friedan, author of *The Feminine Mystique*, served as the first president of the National Organization for Women (NOW), and, with Lader and Bernard Nathanson (who later became a pro-life activist), was one of the co-founders of NARAL. NARAL's mission statement was as follows: "NARAL, recognizing the basic human right of a woman to limit her own reproduction, is dedicated to the elimination of all laws and practices that would compel any woman to bear a child against her will. To that end, it proposes to initiate and co-ordinate political, social, and legal action of individuals and groups concerned with providing safe operations by qualified physicians for all women seeking them regardless of economic status" (National Abortion Rights Action League Records, 1968-1976; MC 313. Schlesinger Library on the History of Women in America, Harvard University. http://oasis.lib.harvard.edu/oasis/deliver/~sch00781 (accessed November 26, 2013).

[4] Lawrence Lader, "Let's Speak Out on Abortion," *Reader's Digest* (May 1966): 82.

[5] Lader, "Let's Speak Out on Abortion," 85.

operations."[6] According to Lader, a "tiny instrument" is used to "scrape the walls of the womb." He adds, "Performed under anesthesia, the operation is painless, and the patient is rarely kept in the hospital more than one night."[7] Part of the strategy was, of course, to divert attention from the child and minimize the significance of each life. Lader minimizes, for example, the value of fetal tissue, asking, "Does it possess any more sanctity than an appendix or any other human tissue that is commonly excised when the mother's health is threatened?"[8] One wonders why few saw the contradiction in Lader's claim that abortion was merely the removal of tissue, while the same time claiming that it was necessary to protect the health of the mother.

Lader leaves no stone unturned in his advocacy of abortion. To sooth fears of promiscuity, he writes: "Many of those who insist on the status quo are concerned with the erosion of moral barriers, believing that any liberalization of abortion law would increase promiscuity, particularly in the case of the single girl. This argument is hardly borne out by reality." Legalizing abortion would make abortion safe, not more frequent, argues Lader. "Moreover, real morality is not something that can be based on fear."[9]

Ever the sensitive counselor, Lader reminds us that if a child is not killed, he may suffer. "Meanwhile those who insist that unmarried motherhood is in every case morally preferable to abortion ignore the human cost." As Pearl Buck argued throughout her career, the child bears alone the total burden of his illegitimate birth—even if happily adopted, he may carry a stigma and the burden of psychic damage all his life. The logic is frightening, but typical. It would be better to kill the child than stigmatize her. Children who are not adopted supposedly "wither away in institutions from lack of sufficient love and care. Or, kept by grandmothers or aunts while the mother works, these unwanted children become the flotsam of our depressed neighborhoods making up the core of our problem youth, the prime candidates for delinquency, perversion and jail."[10] Lader, who had previously warned about stigmatized children, now refers to them as potential perverts and criminals. In Lader's world, children have no inherent worth apart from the opinion of others. Thus, he could proclaim that with birth control and abortion our society would be on the

[6] Lader, "Let's Speak Out on Abortion," 83.

[7] Lader, "Let's Speak Out on Abortion," 83.

[8] Lader, *Abortion*, 102.

[9] Lader, *Abortion*, 233.

[10] Lader, *Abortion*, 233.

verge a new dawn, what he called "The Century of the Wanted Child."[11] Never once does he explain why an unwanted child should have to pay for another's lack of desire.

Lastly, Lader addresses the issue from the religious perspective. He speaks of it as "a theological thicket." As was typical, abortion proponents played a game of divide and conquer, marginalizing the Roman Catholic Church, which was by far the strongest opponent of birth control and abortion. The Catholic hierarchy, claims Lader, would prefer that both mother and child die than that an abortion be performed to save a mother's life. Knowing the power of flattery, Lader then notes that the National Council of Churches in Christ had made exceptions for legal abortions when the health or life of the mother was at stake, which as Lader says with a smile, "sets Protestant thinking far in advance of most state laws."[12] And finally, he ends with a gloriously religious proclamation: "The great awakening of society's responsibility will come only with the recognition that family limitation is in fact an affirmative, creative policy."[13]

So it was that Lader peddled the abortion agenda to middle-class suburbia, injecting his poison into the hearts and minds of many Americans, Lutherans included. Perhaps, though, Lader should not get too much credit for originality. His arguments for abortion are, by and large, similar to those made to promote birth control earlier in the twentieth century. This was no accident. According to his obituary in the *New York Times*, Lader "stumbled into the abortion issue while working on a biography of Margaret Sanger."[14] Indeed, Lader viewed his life's mission as a natural extension and culmination of Sanger's work. The final chapter of *Abortion* begins with two quotes from Margaret Sanger. "The most far-reaching social development of modern times," Margaret Sanger declared in 1920, "is the revolt of woman against sex servitude."[15] And again, he quotes Sanger, "No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously

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[11] Lader, *Abortion*, 155–166.

[12] Lader, *Abortion*, 233.

[13] Lader, Abortion, 237.

[14] Douglas Martin, "Lawrence Lader, Champion of Abortion Rights, Is Dead at 86," *New York Times*, May 10, 2006. http://www.nytimes. com/2006/05/10/nyregion/10lader.html?_r=0 (accessed November 19, 2013). Indeed, in 1960 Lader had written *Margaret Sanger and the Fight for Birth Control*, to which he added a companion biography, written especially for children, entitled *Margaret Sanger: Pioneer of Birth Control.*

[15] Lader, *Abortion*, 167.

whether she will or will not be a mother."[16] Lawrence Lader, the father of the abortion movement was, intellectually, the son of Margaret Sanger, the mother of the movement to legitimize birth control.

II. Margaret Sanger, Birth Control, and Planned Parenthood

The sixth of eleven children, Margaret Sanger was born in 1883 in Corning, New York. Her father was an atheist, and her mother, a supposedly frail and submissive woman, lost her life to tuberculosis at the age of forty-eight. After her mother died, Sanger came to resent her father, whom she considered a "tyrant" and a "monster."[17] Her revulsion, however, did not prevent her from making his leftist political views her own.

Indeed, she began her career as a radical leftist and anarchist, launching a newspaper in 1914 titled *Woman Rebel* under the masthead, "No Gods, No Masters." The young editor urged women "to look the whole world in the face with a go-to-hell look in the eyes; to speak and act in the defiance of convention."[18] She spoke specifically to women living in poverty whose health was jeopardized by child bearing. With an ear for the dramatic, she writes, "Women whose weary pregnant, shapeless bodies refuse to accommodate themselves to their husbands' desires, find husbands looking with lustful eyes upon other women, sometimes upon their own little daughters of six or seven years of age."[19] She warned against the emptiness of religion, while her co-conspirator Alice Groff declared that "the marriage bed is the most degenerating influence in the social order."[20]

In the years that followed, Sanger traveled to Europe, where her life's work came into greater focus. During her time in England, she met Havelock Ellis, a world renowned sex expert with whom she had an affair and from whom she learned the liberating power of the sexual experience. Not surprisingly, Sanger attached herself to the free love movement, and in time divorced her first husband and moved into an open marriage and a

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[16] Lader, *Abortion*, 167.

[17] Margaret Sanger, *The Autobiography of Margret Sanger* (New York: Dover Publications, 1971), 42–43.

[18] David M. Kennedy, *Birth Control in America: The Career of Margaret Sanger* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 1.

[19] Margaret Sanger, *My Fight for Birth Control* (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, 1931), 48.

[20] Alice Groff, "The Marriage Bed," in *The Woman Rebel* 1, no. 5 (May 1914), 39.

long series of lovers, including such luminaries as eugenicist H. G. Wells.[21] For Sanger, birth control held the key to fulfillment. Sanger compared the husband-wife relationship to that of priest and his congregation: "How he guards her lest she receive a word, inspire a new thought, and rebellion. How closely he keeps her within the boundary of his own, like a priest who watches and weeds the young ideas to keep them forever within the enclosure of the church."[22] For Sanger, the Christian church and traditional marriage had become prisons jealously guarded by priests and husbands. In order to save women from the shackles of marriage, Sanger would need to subvert the churches. Of her struggle, she writes, "Slowly but surely we are breaking down the taboos that surround sex . . . in the so-called Christian communities."[23]

If Sanger had any religion, it was sex made possible and free by the sacrament of birth control. In *The Pivot of Civilization*, she writes of birth control as "an ethical necessity" that will bring "control over the primordial forces of nature." While St. Paul spoke about mutuality in marriage, Sanger proclaimed a message of radical autonomy, "No woman can call herself free who does not own and control her body. No woman can call herself free until she can choose consciously whether she will or will not be a mother."[24] Indeed, one cannot help but be struck by Sanger's religious fervor as she envisions a time when the church would fall away and a new paradise would open up to the sexually liberated woman. She predicted that "interest in the vague sentimental fantasies of extra-mundane existence would atrophy . . . for in that dawn men and women will have come to the realization, already suggested, that here close at hand is our paradise, our everlasting abode, our Heaven and our eternity." Sanger imagined a new reality in which there would be no heaven, except that which we create on earth. She writes, "Through sex, mankind may attain

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[21] For a brief summary of Sanger's personal life, see Madeline Gray, *Margaret Sanger* (New York: Richard Marek Publishers, 1979). See also, Donald De Marco and Benjamin Wiker, *Architects of the Culture of Death* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2004) , esp. 292–294. Her open marriage to Three-in-One Oil magnate J. Noah Slee proved especially beneficial, as he subsequently bankrolled her political activism.

[22] Margaret Sanger, *Journal,* November 3–4, 1914, quoted in Kennedy, *Birth Control in America,* 27.

[23] Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization* (New York: Maxwell Reprint Company, 1969; originally published by Sanger in 1922); http://www.gutenberg.org/files/1689/1689-h/1689-h.htm (accessed November 15, 2013).

[24] Margaret Sanger, *Woman and the New Race*, 92.

the great spiritual illumination which will transform the world, which will light up the only path to paradise."[25]

Havelock Ellis, Sanger's sexual guide, was influential in another way, for it was he who advised Sanger to moderate her tactics. In one letter, he counseled, "It is no use, however, being too reckless and smashing your head against a blank wall." In order to change the law, one "needs skill even more than one needs strength."[26] Previously, Sanger had worked for socialist and communist causes, arguing that birth control would ennoble the working class no longer to "produce children who will become slaves to feed, fight and toil for the enemy—Capitalism."[27] Sanger came to realize that this type of message was doomed to failure.

Thus, Sanger began to sell her movement to polite society. Disturbed by the Democratic party's ties to the Roman Catholic Church, she began to work with wealthy Republicans.[28] Masterfully playing a game of divide and conquer, Sanger played on the fears of Protestants who were beginning to feel outnumbered in cities like Boston and New York. Instead of peddling a workers' revolution, Sander now promoted birth control as a way to cleanse society of its waste products. Taking her message to the middle and upper classes, Sanger sold birth control as a tool with which to weed humanity's garden. In *Pivot of Civilization*, for instance, she calls immigrants and poor people "human weeds, reckless breeders . . . human beings that should never have been born."[29] She promoted birth control as a method "to create a race of thoroughbreds."[30] Sanger wrote, "More children from the fit, less from the unfit—that is the chief aim of birth control."[31] Her goal was a better society through eugenics, so that America would no longer "multiply racial handicaps." Sanger held forth a grand vision of the new American melting pot: "We shall see that it will save the precious metals of racial culture, fused into an amalgam of physical perfection, mental strength, and spiritual progress."[32] Indeed, it is not without

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[25] Margaret Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization*.

[26] Kennedy, *Birth Control in America*, 30.

[27] Kennedy, *Birth Control in America*, 110.

[28] As Kennedy notes, "In the 1930s, Mrs. Sanger found that argument especially well-received among those who opposed New Deal welfare legislation." *Birth Control in America*, 117.

[29] Sanger, *The Pivot of Civilization*.

[30] Margaret Sanger, *Birth Control Review* 5, no. 11 (November 1921): 2.

[31] Sanger, *Birth Control Review* 3, no. 5 (May 1919): 12.

[32] Sanger, *Women and the New Race*, 45.

reason that after World War II, Nazi leaders claimed to have been influenced by ideas imported from America.[33]

Indeed, there was a racist undertone to the movement. In her own biography, Sanger tells of her experiences offering over a dozen lectures to various chapters of the Ku Klux Klan.[34] As Sanger wrote elsewhere, "We do not want word to go out that we want to exterminate the Negro population . . . [but it may occur to] any of their more rebellious members."[35]

Sanger also began to advocate birth control as an answer to the world's supposed problem of overpopulation. Thomas Malthus, and those who followed him, taught that children were not a blessing but a burden on the planet. Many, influenced by Malthusian notions of overpopulation and limited resources, openly worried that the planet was reaching a breaking point. Sanger capitalized on this fear by promoting her movement globally in places like Europe and Japan, saying that overpopulation threatened domestic prosperity and was one of the major causes of war. The key, of course, was birth control.

Finally, Sanger advocated birth control as way to plan a family that was happy, healthy, and wealthy. She has become forever tied to the sinister axiom, "Every child a wanted child."

Sanger, was of course quite successful in her endeavors. Having founded the "American Birth Control League" in 1921, and then having served as the first president of Planned Parenthood, Sanger's vision took hold in society and became part of the American culture. While Sanger began her career as an outlaw, her movement triumphed magnificently, so much so that when Planned Parenthood went international, its honorary co-chairs were Harry S. Truman and Dwight D. Eisenhower. Many of the Protestant churches that at first had opposed her completely fell under her spell. The rebel was now regnant.

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[33] Edwin Black, "The Horrifying American Roots of Nazi Eugenics," *History News Network* (September 2003), http://hnn.us/article/1796 (accessed November 26, 2013).

[34] Sanger, *The Autobiography of Margret Sanger*, 366–367.

35 Margaret Sanger commenting on the "Negro Project" in a letter to Dr. Clarence Gamble, December 10, 1939. http://smithlibraries.org/digital/files/original/d6358bc3053c93183295bf2df1c0c931.pdf (accessed November 20, 2013).

III. Smitten: Sanger in the LCMS

For a particularly interesting example of Sanger's influence, consider the work of LCMS theologian Alfred Rehwinkel.[36] It is no coincidence that Rewinkel's book title contains the names of both the organization and the movement founded by Sanger. On the back cover of *Planned Parenthood* we read, "Dr. Rehwinkel is eminently qualified to discuss planned parenthood. He was among the few who pioneered open discussion of planned parenthood and has followed its developments for 20 years."

Rehwinkel was, in fact, a great admirer of Sanger. The fourth chapter of his book is titled "The Planned Parenthood Movement, Its Struggle for Recognition, and Its Status in America Today." Here Rehwinkel introduces us to his heroine, claiming that Sanger "happily married, was the mother of three children, but later in life separated from her husband, but was not divorced until years later."[37] In reality, Sanger, was involved in the free-love movement early on, had many, many affairs, both during and after her first marriage, and entered into a second marriage with the proviso that it be open. Her own children described her as an indifferent and largely absentee mother, often uncomfortable in their presence.[38] Sanger's views of marriage as a degenerating and enslaving institutions were widely known; indeed, she had thoroughly documented them herself.[39]

Despite Sanger's views on marriage and family, Rehwinkel focuses on her sympathy for the poor and downtrodden. He speaks of how Sanger "saw the poverty, the misery, the desperation of weakened pregnant women, the appalling housing conditions, the devastating effect of the criminal abortionist."[40] Sanger's catalog of suffering would seem to match St. Paul's. Rehwinkel writes, "Very few men or women had the courage to

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[36] Alfred M. Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood and Birth Control in the Light of Christian Ethics* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959). Rehwinkel (1887–1979) taught theology at Concordia College (Edmonton), served as president of Saint John's College (Winfield, Kansas), and finally taught as a professor at Concordia Seminary (Saint Louis).

[37] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 32.

[38] Supposedly, Sanger suffered from a "nervous malady" whenever she had to take care of her children and thus spent very little time with them. Her son Grant said, "Mother was seldom around. She just left us with anybody handy, and ran off we didn't know where." Gray, *Margaret Sanger*, 61.

[39] We should add Sanger's life story was well-known in LCMS circles. In *For Better Not for Worse,* Walter A. Maier noted Sanger's association with the free love movement, as well as her militant atheism. See Walter A. Maier, *For Better Not for Worse: A Manual of Christian Matrimony* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing house, 1935).

[40] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 33.

share with her the odium of public disapproval, though they might share her general ideas. She was harassed by law enforcement agencies, repeatedly suffered imprisonment, and even her husband had to go to jail for a considerable time merely for having handed to an investigator a pamphlet published by his wife on the use of contraceptives."[41] Rehwinkel, however, does not mention that Sanger wanted to eliminate not only poverty but also the poor and the weak. Consider Sanger's words in *Pivot of Civilization*: "Every single case of inherited defect, every malformed child, every congenitally tainted human being brought into this world is of infinite importance to that poor individual; but it is of scarcely less importance to the rest of us and to all of our children who must pay in one way or another for these biological and racial mistakes."[42]

Rehwinkel shared Sanger's concern for overpopulation, writing that "unless some solution is found, the world is rapidly rushing on toward the greatest economic crisis in history, and the standard of living throughout all the world will be brought down to the level, or even below the level, of the hungry peasants of India and Egypt."[43] Whatever one thinks of Rehwinkel's advice, it is hardly consonant with Christ's teaching about mammon and children; it is, in fact the same type of rhetoric used by Sanger to win over an aspiring middle class.

Like Sanger, Rehwinkel promoted birth control as a means of bettering society: "Again, society may demand the curtailment or control of pregnancy in cases where the parents are suffering from economic or industrial disability and are either unwilling or incapable of supporting their offspring."[44] "Economic disability," of course, could mean simply that a family was poor. Rehwinkel also seems to treat pregnancy as a type of ailment that could endanger health. He writes, "A woman does not reach her full physical and psychological maturity until about the age of twenty-two or twenty-three. Pregnancy and childbirth are a great drain on the vitality and the health of the woman."[45]

The way Rehwinkel organizes his thinking is illustrative of his dependence on Planned Parenthood propaganda. Take for instance, his chapter on "The Practice and Methods of Birth Control in the History of the Human Race." Addressing the topic of abortion, he breaks it down in

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[41] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 35.

[42] See Sanger, "Women and the Future," chapter 12 in *Pivot of Civilization.*

[43] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 14.

[44] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 12.

[45] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 10.

this way: 1) Embryonic and fetal abortion, depending on whether a child is aborted before or after the fourth month; 2) Spontaneous Abortion (miscarriages); 3) Therapeutic Abortions (by "therapeutic abortion" is meant the removal of the unborn new life by competent physicians and in conformity with the existing laws of a state or country in order to save the life of the pregnant mother); 4) Criminal Abortion. "By 'criminal abortion' is meant one that is produced voluntarily and intentionally in violation of the law in order to terminate an undesirable pregnancy by a married or unmarried woman."[46]

Here, as elsewhere, Rehwinkel receives and imparts the wisdom of Planned Parenthood without critique. To be sure, doctors did distinguish between "embryonic" and "fetal" abortion, but is there a theological distinction? This would have been the place for Rehwinkel to assert that all life is precious from the moment of conception, even as Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit and so became a human being. But he does not. Likewise problematic is Rehwinkel's category of "Criminal Abortion." Does this not imply that if it were to be made legal, then it would be somehow less of a sin? The term "therapeutic abortion" is likewise problematic, as we have seen in the work of Lawrence Lader. It is one thing to say that abortion may be morally justified to save the life of the mother. But Rehwinkel notes that some physicians were already advocating laws that

> permit a legal abortion to preserve a woman's future health if she has a disease likely to be aggravated by a pregnancy. Also to eliminate grossly defective children and to guard an emotionally unbalanced woman from a possible mental breakdown. Some doctors even go so far as to advocate that therapeutic abortion be permitted to spare a woman a shame resulting from an illegitimate child or from the consequences of rape or incest."[47]

Having placed these opinions on the table, one would expect Rehwinkel to argue the Christian position that the life inside the womb is a child, created by God, and is precious no matter the circumstances of the conception. One might also expect a strong rebuke against those who advocated abortions for children with birth defects or in cases of rape and incest. Certainly, he should have addressed the issue of shame. But Rehwinkel is silent. He offers only a weak summary: "If a therapeutic abortion becomes imperative to save the mother's life, such an operation cannot be regarded as a violation of the Moral Law.[48]

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[46] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 21.

[47] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 22.

[48] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 22.

It is also striking that Rehwinkel, rather than embracing natural law, seems to fight against it. For instance, he argues that birth control is part of man's dominion over nature. He writes, "As a creature of God, man is at the same time subject to the law of nature, and lord and master over it. He is free to control, to modify, and to change nature to serve his own purpose."[49] Then, he applies what appears to be a kind of colonialist mindset to the human body, adding that "the history of human civilization is a record of man's conquest, control, and modification of nature to serve his own best interest."[50] If Rehwinkel had meant that men have built dams for the sake of irrigation, one could understand his point, but in the context of speaking about the human body, his argument is subversive. There is nothing here approaching a theology of the body or an appreciation of natural law. This neglect of the natural law would later put the Lutherans at a great disadvantage as they began to speak out in the public square on issues such as abortion and homosexuality.

Whatever one thinks of Rehwinkel's work, a prophet he was not. In the latter part of the work, he addresses the fear that a contraceptive society will result in a shrinking population. Assuring his readers, Rehwinkel writes, "Birth control is not intended to limit families to one, two, or three children . . . . Planned parenthood and normal-sized families are not mutually exclusive terms. When conditions warrant it, there are, and there always have been and can be, families of many children, within the concept of birth control."[51] Certainly that is not the message of the book cover, which displays the perfect couple with their one, perfect child, nor was this Sanger's message. In *Woman and the New Race*, the title of one of the chapters says it all: "The Wickedness of Creating Large Familes." Indeed, Sanger writes, "The most serious evil of our times is that of encouraging the bringing into the world of large families. The most immoral practice of the day is breeding too many children."[52] Had Rehwinkel, an expert on Planned Parenthood, not read Sanger's books? Or, perhaps he thought he could offer a Christian version of Sanger's philosophy.

In retrospect, we can see that Sanger's vision became reality; she proved the true prophet. The birthrate in countries infected by Sanger's philosophy, including places like Japan, Europe, and the United States, is drastically low, to the point of being unsustainable, and has become an increasing cause for concern. Indeed, within our own church body, we

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[49] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 89.

[50] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 89.

[51] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 104.

[52] Sanger, *Women and the New Race*, 57.

hear the constant refrain, "Where are the children? Why aren't there more young people?" Our own aging church body appears to be yet another dead fruit of Sanger's religion.

As to those who wondered whether the use of contraceptives would lead to sexual immorality, Rehwinkel proved again a poor prophet. He writes, "But Christians are not made virtuous or kept from violating the Moral Law of God by fear of physical or social consequences. Christians do not lead a moral or decent life because of pressure from without but are led by motives from within . . . . It is not the business of the church to make people virtuous by fear or by force."[53] This same argument, as we have already seen, was later would be used by to promote the legalization of abortion.[54]

What is clearly lacking, one can say in hindsight, is wisdom. The book of Proverbs warns not simply about sin, but about entering into situations where bad things are almost sure to happen. So now we know the reality every pastor faces, for there is hardly a couple today that does not co-habitate before marriage. Even more, Rehwinkel's advice is painfully naïve and other worldly. While he speaks about a Christian's individual moral choice, he has nothing to say about what such behavior will do to society. He says nothing of young people who will be encouraged to use contraceptives, only to find that they sometimes do not work. He says nothing about what this uncoupling of sex and marriage would do to the institution of marriage, or what would become of the children.[55] Instead, as we see in the Planned Parenthood literature, the issue is simply framed as an individual moral choice.

While Rehwinkel draws heavily from the reasoning of Sanger, it is also true that he argues directly against abortion in a number of places. He calls abortion "a universal evil among all peoples of the world" and then labels "willful abortion" a sin.[56] In answer to the question "Do the principles applicable to the use of contraceptives also apply to the practice of abortion?" Rehwinkel offers "an emphatic no."[57] He speaks against "criminal abortion," saying, "Since it is the willful destruction of human life, it must be placed in the category of murder. Christians will not burden their conscience with this crime."[58] Yet, even here, Rehwinkel's thinking is

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[53] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 103.

[54] See n. 9.

[55] Walter A. Maier, *For Better Not for Worse*, 399–400.

[56] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 23–24.

[57] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 93.

[58] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 93.

affected by Sanger's vision; he appears more concerned with the conscience of the one having an abortion than he is with the life of the child. This type of thinking, as we shall see, became widespread, even in our own church body, where abortion was talked about in terms of conscience and as a personal and private decision. Soon, of course, there would be no such thing as a criminal abortion, and Christians would in fact, have abortions in great numbers.

IV. Birth Control: A Trojan Horse

The fact that a LCMS theologian as well regarded as Alfred Rehwinkel could write the book that he wrote reveals the sad truth that many Lutherans of that time were seasoned and softened for the advent of legalized abortion by first drinking the birth control Kool-Aid. Children came to be viewed as a decidedly mixed blessing, with financial ramifications. Mother Theresa once supposedly quipped, "How can you say there are too many children? That is like saying there are too many flowers."[59] Not so Rehwinkel's book or the thinking in the church that was becoming prevalent at that time.

In retrospect, Rehwinkel's book appears to be little more than a Christian endorsement and commercial for Planned Parenthood. Every age has its blindspots, and none of us knows precisely what the future holds. Nevertheless, Rehwinkel's advice is haunting. He urged confused women to go to the experts: "Attention may also be called to planned parenthood clinics found in most of the larger cities of the United State. They are staffed with professional personnel to serve with expert advice and aid. In most cases they will be listed in the telephone directory under "Planned Parenthood Association."[60] Sadly, many took his advice, and still do.

Rehwinkel's book was popular, selling 50,000 copies in three separate printings, and won over the LCMS to birth control. Rehwinkel had to have known that Sanger's well was poison; perhaps in extreme naivete he thought he could sanitize or even baptize the movement. This naivete has persisted for many years, as evidenced in Ronald Stelzer's *Salt, Light, and Signs of the Times*, published in 1993. Stelzer writes,

> Movements in which Rip [Rehwinkel's nickname] had been a pioneer mover, or at least a strong supporter, were going out of control. A classic example is planned parenthood. Rip originally staked a claim

[59] These words are likely a highly paraphrased form of Mother Teresa's teachings. See Mother Teresa of Calcutta Center Online, http://www.motherteresa.org/08_info/Quotesf.html (accessed November 20, 2013).

[60] Rehwinkel, *Planned Parenthood*, 93.

> on this Christian no man's land in order to equip God's people to make enlightened ethical decisions appropriate to the moral complexities of the modern world. Rip's survey of this untilled territory eventually became normative for most of God's people, but when secularists adopted the cause, it was without the stabilizing norm."[61]

Stelzer's assessment, while charitable, is off the mark. The secularists were in fact the true pioneers. It may be that Rehwinkel carried the Planned Parenthood agenda, like a Trojan horse, into the minds of our people. Or perhaps, he simply ratified a societal process that was inevitable. Either way, when Lawrence Lader led the fight for legalized abortion, our church body was unprepared for the fight.

V. The "Meddling Church": Missteps and Baby Steps

When abortion became a hot political issue in the late 1960s and early 70s, the Roman Catholic Church was nearly alone at the demonstrations and protests. What kept Bible-believing Protestants from manning the front lines? Again, by way of anecdotal evidence, we may turn to the *Reader's Digest* of May 1966. Alongside the article endorsing abortion there was another, written by conservative philanthropist J. Howard Pew, titled "Should the Church "Meddle" in Civil Affairs?" Pew openly worried about two issues:

> I am concerned that many of the church's top leaders today—especially in what are called the "mainstream" denominations—are sorely failing its members in two ways: 1) by succumbing to a creeping tendency to downgrade the Bible as the infallible Word of God, and 2) by efforts to shift the church's main thrust from spiritual to the secular. The two, I believe, are related."[62]

Pew discusses the church's role in society and urges restraint: "To commit the church, as a corporate body, to controversial positions on which its members differ sharply is to divide the church into warring camps, stirring dissension in the one place where spiritual unity should prevail."[63] Pew's article explains much. Conservative Christians by and large had no taste for the 1960s radicals and their civil disobedience. Protests and picket lines belonged to the politics of the left and were activities in which law-abiding

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[61] Ronald W. Stelzer, *Salt, Light, and Signs of the Times* (New Haven, Missouri: Lutheran News, 1993), 219.

[62] J. Howard Pew, "Should the Church 'Meddle' in Civil Affairs?," *Reader's Digest* (May 1966): 52.

[63] Pew, "Should the Church 'Meddle' in Civil Affairs?," 52.

Christians did not participate. Above all, social controversy should be avoided. What mattered was the inerrant word of God.

Lutherans, in particular, were prone to this type of thinking. Though Lutheranism was born in a type of revolution, or perhaps because of it, Lutherans have traditionally stressed obedience to earthly authorities, with government serving in *loco parentis*. As an immigrant church, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod felt a special need to assimilate. This problem became especially acute during World War I, when German Americans felt compelled to pledge their allegiance, even to the point of placing the American flag alongside their altars. Lutherans, good and obedient citizens, took to heart Paul's words: "Therefore whoever resists authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment. For rulers are not a terror to good conduct, but to bad" (Rom 13:3).

Granted, Paul's words are sound teaching, but after Roe v. Wade, children in the womb had done nothing wrong and had a great deal to fear. Though we knew that it was important to give to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, Lutherans seemed less eager to hear Peter's cry that "we must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). Buying too deeply into the principle of the separation of church and state, much of conservative Christianity, Lutherans included, took the kind of advice offered by Pew and remained silent on abortion. Not wanting to become involved with social issues, and certainly not wanting to be divisive, conservatives treated abortion as a personal and moral choice. This attitude can be seen in the first baby steps the LCMS took into the abortion debate.

In 1966 Lader released both his book *Abortion* and his *Reader's Digest* article. Not ready to take up the issue directly, the LCMS chose at its 1967 synodical convention to refer the issue for study.[64] Better late than never, the 1971 synodical convention adopted a CTCR statement on abortion: *Abortion: Theological, Legal, and Medical Aspects*. Admirably, the document holds that "1. Life is a Gift from God; 2. Human Beings are Created for Eternal Life; 3. Human Life is Created for Fulfillment; 4. Life and Death Belong to the Province of God."[65]

Nevertheless, the report exudes timidity. First, the document is short, as the writers explain in its introduction, "This brevity derives from the conviction that men who are motivated by love of God and faith in Jesus

[64] The 1967 LCMS convention, held in New York City, answered the challenge with Resolution 2-28: "To refer Diaconate, Work and Leisure, Therapeutic Abortion, Sterilization, and Euthanasia for Study."

[65] Commission on Theology and Church Relations, *Abortion: Theological, Legal, and Medical Aspects* (The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1971), 1–2.

Christ do not need a detailed set of rules to follow slavishly." Instead of offering strong guidelines or prohibitions, the document encourages readers "to inquire into the general principles given in the Word whereby they can make their own decisions and judgments on the problems of life as they arise." The document ends on a similar note:

> Responsible ethical living therefore calls for making personal choices on the basis of validly established principles rather than following a detailed set of regulations in a slavish way. Accordingly, these guidelines are intended to set forth those principles of God's revelation that should guide individuals in making decisions and judgments on the question of abortion as a theological, legal, and medical problem."[66]

The report lacks a prophetic tone, a clear statement, or an emphatic imperative. When the church needed a clear trumpet, she received an essay in ethics.

As was typical at the time, abortion was treated almost entirely as a personal ethical decision. Missing is a discussion of the child itself, or any serious consideration of what it means to be human, as defined by creation and the incarnation. The church, for whatever reason, was not willing to say, "Don't have an abortion." Instead, the document gives too much weight to the experts, especially the legal and medical community. Scripture is quoted as authoritative, but then, under section three, "Medical Aspects," there is a long quotation taken from the American Medical Association's (AMA) position on abortion, as well as the AMA's Judicial Council. The document, in retrospect, appears naïve, assuming that doctors and lawyers held a certain moral authority. In fact, the AMA had nothing to offer except that abortion be done by "a duly licensed physician" and "in conformance with standards of good medical practice."[67] The CTCR then notes that Christian physicians are "guided by Biblical revelation, while the non-Christian physician is not."[68]

The document then claims that even if abortion is legalized, Christians will continue to act according to God's law, which declares abortion to be a sin. This was, of course, wishful thinking. The document does not take into account that legal abortion would result not only in the death of more children but also in the destruction of the faith of many involved in the procedure. The document then addresses the non-Christian: "But because the proposed permissive legislation would cause non-Christian brothers to

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[66] *Abortion: Theological, Legal, and Medical Aspects*, 1.

[67] *Abortion: Theological, Legal, and Medical Aspects*, 4.

[68] *Abortion: Theological, Legal, and Medical Aspects*, 5.

stumble, the Christian will continue to hope that the laws will reflect the teachings of Holy Scripture on this issue." Oddly, the concern is for the stumbling of the non-Christian brother rather than for the child who will be put to death by the one having an abortion. When Lutherans might have been spurred to action, they were instead only encouraged to "hope."

Strikingly, the report offers no real discussion of natural law. The CTCR concedes, "Few will question the abstract constitutional and legal right of the people to substitute for existing laws a policy of official permissiveness on the part of the state in respect to abortion."[69] The CTCR concedes that the argument against abortion is mainly, if not entirely, a biblical one. This is where a discussion of natural law should have taken place, but is absent, even as it was in Rehwinkel's discussion of birth control. Though living in a nation whose own credo is that every person is endowed by his creator with the inalienable gift of life, the document remains silent and concedes that the laws against abortion are arguably nothing more than "the religious credo of a minority or a diminishing majority."[70] Thus, the CTCR is left to say only that abortion is a sin, because God's word says so, as if that word were not based on a fundamental reality that recognizes the inherent dignity of human life.

While the LCMS was officially on record as being pro-life, that message was not always getting out to its pastors and people. In fact, for a time, the Synod sent out decidedly mixed signals. In 1976, Concordia Publishing House released two books on counseling by Eldon Weisheit: *Should I Have an Abortion?* and its companion *Abortion: Resources for Pastoral Counseling*. These books are remarkable in that they followed the Planned Parenthood template, according to which decisions about abortion should be left up to the personal decision of the woman in consultation with her doctor and trusted advisors.

Throughout the books, Weisheit recommends a sensitive approach when dealing with women struggling with the question of abortion. As Weisheit explains in his preface, "Since this is a people book, it is not to be rated as being for or against abortion."[71] For Weisheit it was all about making a good decision. And so, Weisheit ends the work with this open-ended advice, "It is important for you now to make the best possible choice as you consider your own situation. But it is also important that your decision fit into the plan you see in your own life. Let this decision

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[69] *Abortion: Theological, Legal, and Medical Aspects*, 4.

[70] *Abortion: Theological, Legal, and Medical Aspects*, 4.

[71] Eldon Weisheit, *Should I Have an Abortion?* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1976), 11.

lead you towards your goals in life, not away from them."[72] With striking moral ambiguity, Weisheit offers no direct guidance, no word from the Lord. What is also notable is the kind of self-centeredness that Weisheit encourages. He speaks of "you" making the best decision, and "you considering your own situation," and again about "your goals in life." Weisheit's message would have been especially soothing to those young women seeking empowerment. This message also had a ready audience in would-be grandmothers, who wanted the best for their own daughters whose goals in life surely included college and professional careers. Weisheit supposedly wrote this as a "people book," but has precious little to say about the person who is most affected by the abortion, namely, the little child.

Consider also the advice that Weisheit gives to would-be counselors, surely many of them pastors. "The counselor needs to be aware of medical facts and resources. Where can an abortion be obtained? What is the cost? What are the circumstances? What method will be used? When must it be done?"[73] Now, this is remarkable. Instead, of saying that a pastor should become aware of pro-life counselors, he must instead have, presumably the name, number, and address of the local abortionist ready at hand in his Rolodex.

If the goal was to make abortion palatable for Christians, one could not find better resources than the books of Weisheit. As women make decisions concerning abortions, Weisheit encourages them to think through the implications of their choices. Weisheit writes, "If you are determined to have an abortion, go to a doctor who is well regarded in your community. He will give you proper medical advice." As with Rehwinkel and the 1971 CTCR document, one is struck by such reliance on authority figures who are presumably wise and good. Ever the sensitive counselor, Weisenheit adds,

> The experience of an abortion may make you grateful it was available or it may make you regret either the need for an abortion or the decision to have done it. Do not let yourself get into a position of always having to defend your course of action. Be willing to grow from it, knowing that growth always involves change. You have not always been right in your decisions 100 percent of the time in past decisions. Your security as a person does not depend your totally being right this time.[74]

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[72] Weisheit, *Should I Have an Abortion?*, 101.

[73] Weisheit, *Should I Have an Abortion*?, 111

[74] Weisheit, *Should I Have an Abortion*?, 96.

With the admitted advantage of hindsight, such "advice" is beyond belief. Weisheit speaks of abortion only as a moral decision that will need wise counseling. Advising the woman that she should not beat herself up or defend herself for not scoring 100 on the test, nothing is said of the fact that her child is now dead because of her personal decision and the act of a "well regarded" physician.

Or, consider Weisheit's questions for women who are contemplating keeping their child. "The special questions for you to face are: Will the problem that has made me consider an abortion become a problem for the child? Or will it remain a problem for me and therefore cause problems for the child? Would a baby add extra strain on me and make my problems even greater?"[75] Weisheit plays the role of the serpent, offering the possibility that not having an abortion will lead to greater pain.

Weisheit seems not to be able to help himself as he encourages women and counselors to play a game of "What If?" Eldon advises the pregnant woman to "imagine what your relationship with God would be after an abortion. Will you want to avoid Him? Will you feel a need to make up for something you have done wrong? Will you feel He has helped you through a problem?" What shameful words. Weisheit, the counselor, leaves open the option of thinking about abortion as God's solution to one's problem.

How were Weisheit's books received? *Lutheran Women's Quarterly* commended the books, calling them "open ended."[76] Kurt Marquart, on the contrary, understood the danger of such open-endedness. In an aptly worded essay titled "Killing with Kindness," he wrote: "Unsuspecting Christian women naturally trust that no deadly poison will be dispensed through church-related publications. The open-ended Weisheit books constitute, in the deepest biblical sense of the word, a skandolan. Good Lord deliver us."[77] Indeed Weisheit's books injected the Planned Parenthood poison into the mainstream of our church and are a shameful reminder of the need to be ever vigilant.

In addition to Marquart, another theologian who spoke unequivocally against abortion in those early years was David Scaer.[78] Shortly after the legalization of abortion in 1973, he spoke presciently of abortion as our

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[75] Weisheit, *Should I Have an Abortion*?, 97.

[76] *Lutheran Women's Quarterly* (Fall 1976), 24.

[77] Kurt E. Marquart, "Killing with Kindness," *CTQ* 41, no. 1 (January 1977): 49.

[78] David P. Scaer, "Abortion: A Moment for Conscientious Reflection," *The Springfielder* 36, no. 3 (December 1972): 180–184.

American holocaust, challenging Lutherans to stand, this time, on the right side of history. He spoke not of a moral choice, but of the inherent value of the unborn child. He argued that the one inside the womb is indeed a human being whose life is defined by the incarnation of Christ, who as the embryonic child redeemed all embryonic children. To those who speak of unwanted children, he claimed that every child is wanted by God. Though Lutherans perhaps never acted on his word, he suggested boycotts of doctors and hospitals that performed abortions, and even suggested that nurses baptize aborted children with life still in them. As he saw it, "Such actions might only be candles in the wind, but sometimes little candles have started large fires."[79] In retrospect, perhaps, not much came of this advice, though his final word is haunting: "In this matter, I would rather stand guilty for having done too much to halt it, than too little or nothing to stop it."[80]

Such a principled stand was, in those early years, the exception rather than the rule. One might have hoped, for example, that good counseling and education about abortion would be found in *The Lutheran Witness*, which had long been one of the Synod's primary teaching tools. For some time, however, the magazine offered very little discussion on the matter, and sadly, at first, the advice was quite bad.

The January 1973 issue, published just one month before the Roe v. Wade decision, included a full-page book review by Oscar E. Feucht of David Mace's *Abortion: The Agonizing Decision*. The book's title was typical of the time as proponents attempted to frame the debate in terms of personal choice. In 1968, for example, Bantam published *The Terrible Choice: The Abortion Dilemma.* In 1971, Indiana University Press published *The Agonizing Choice: Birth Control, Religion, and the Law*. In his review, Feucht introduces Mace as "an internationally known authority on marriage and marriage counseling, a social scientist with a Christian frame of reference, to write this much needed book."[81] Again, we see the deference given authority figures.

The book is based upon the story of a woman given the name Helen who is faced with the agonizing decision of abortion. We are brought into her inner thoughts during this terrible time. Helen wonders to herself, "Abortion is a decision to take life—only a beginning of human life, it's true, and mind you, I think this could be justified for good enough reasons.

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[79] Scaer, "Abortion: A Moment for Conscientious Reflection," 184.

[80] Scaer, "Abortion: A Moment for Conscientious Reflection," 184.

[81] Oscar Feucht, "Book Review of *Abortion: The Agonizing Decision*," *The Lutheran Witness* 92 (January 1973), 15.

But I've got to be very sure my reasons are good enough."[82] Remarkably, Feucht offers no critique of Helen's assessment. Though a Lutheran, he doesn't criticize her obvious attempts at self-justification, nor does he question her evaluation of the child as "only a beginning of human life." Feucht then notes that the book encourages counseling the explores questions such as: "Keep the child? Give the child up for adoption? Abort the child? Each of these questions involves problems." So the book review reveals again a deep-seated moral ambiguity. That Feucht could recommend this book is deeply disturbing.

The emphasis on personal choice permeates Mace's book, which he concludes with this epilogue:

> It doesn't really matter what Helen decided. She clearly understood her options and she made the choice to the best of her ability. It was not my task as her counselor to influence her one way or the other—only to help her freely to decide for herself. And now, you also have to decide. I cannot know what your decision will be. But it is my hope that as a result of reading this book, you now understand the issues more clearly, and this will enable you to "take your destiny in your own two hands" and to make a choice you can live with comfortably in the coming years.[83]

Again, the advice is breathtakingly shallow and selfish, without a thought for the life of the child who will die uncomfortably and with no chance of seeing the coming years. What does Feucht in his *Lutheran Witness* review say of this work? Again, he appeals to the author's authority and expert knowledge, saying, "It comes from an internationally known authority on marriage and family life who has been a cherished contributor to Lutheran conferences on ministry to families." However cherished Mace may have been, his advice was deadly and callous, as was Oscar Feucht's review. The author, who in the previous decade had written *Everyone a Minister*, could not bring himself at this pivotal moment in history to take a stand in a lowly book review and simply say, "Every unborn child a person." This was the position marked out by *The Lutheran Witness* on the eve of the Roe v. Wade decision.

The topic of abortion appears again in July 1976 issue of *The Lutheran Witness*, coinciding with the nation's bicentennial and addressing, appropriately enough, the issue of church and state. The author of the article, certainly an authority figure, was none other than Paul Simon, the would-

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[82] David R. Mace, *Abortion: The Agonizing Decision* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), 86.

[83] Mace, *Abortion: The Agonizing Decision*, 139.

be senator who had served as Illinois' lieutenant Governor and U.S. Congressman. Indeed, guided by a strong moral compass he had begun his career as a crusader against gambling and prostitution. In his article, Simon urged Christians to become involved in politics as part of their responsibility "to be concerned about the poor and the sick and the handicapped—and particularly the hungry," for these issues can be addressed most effectively "in the arena of politics." Abortion, the killing of the unborn, was, however, another matter. Simon writes, "Another church-state issue that is much more complicated than most people believe is the abortion issue. People with strong religious convictions are on both sides, each side claiming that if you do not support them you are violating Christian principle. Obviously, both sides can't be right." To those Christians frustrated with abortion, Simon writes, "People who write to me see this issue (and most issues) as clear cut. They often do not understand the complexities of either the legislation or the problems which our society confronts."[84] So, according to this way of thinking, if some evil or misguided Christians support abortion, all Christians should remain silent. With Christian friends likes these, the unborn didn't need enemies.

But there were friends on the horizon. By the early 1980s, a prophetic voice was rising up within the LCMS, not from its elected leaders so much as from its faithful women. First on the scene was Jean Garten, whose book *Who Broke the Baby*, helped decode the euphemisms and lay bare the deceptions of the abortion movement.[85] *The Lutheran Witness* also repositioned itself as it opened its pages to this new way of framing the abortion debate. For example, in July 1982 Garton wrote "Abortion" for a continuing feature called "A Faith to Live By." Refreshingly, she spoke about abortion not simply as a moral decision, but specifically about "the unborn children and their right to life."[86] Then, in January 1983, Carolyn Blum, herself involved in "Lutherans For Life," wrote "Abortion and Apathy," in which she spoke of the unborn as "human beings," and urged readers to pray for the unborn, support pro-life education, and become politically involved. She wrote heroically, saying, "God's law is constant. His word that unborn children are valuable in His sight is still true. Man's law is changeable. The Supreme Court decision proclaimed that abortion-on-demand is legal for all nine months of pregnancy. The law can be

[84] Paul Simon, *The Lutheran Witness* 95 (July 1976): 5.

[85] Jean S. Garton, *Who Broke the Baby* (Minneapolis: Bethany Fellowship, 1979). See also Garton's account of the origins of Lutherans For Life below (337–341).

[86] Jean S. Garton, "Abortion," *The Lutheran Witness* 101 (July 1982), 25.

changed."[87] In November 1983, we find "A Prophetic Statement of Today's Holocaust," again authored by a woman, Robin Mueller, who wrote about abortion as a holocaust worse than Hitler's, and one for which our nation will be held accountable.[88] What is striking about these three articles, all written by women, is how forcefully they challenged the status quo, and how they framed the issue as one that needed to be countered both culturally and politically. By the early 1980s, it would seem, our church body was better prepared to tackle the abortion issue. Yet, our movement has remained slow. How might this change?

VI. Preachers Must Be Silent No More

While the Synod has over the years passed one resolution for life after another, why is it that members of our congregations have been so slow to rally to the cause? Why do the same Lutherans who sit in the pews not march in the streets or volunteer at the clinics? During my admittedly brief time in the parish, I worked to promote pro-life issues with only modest success. As part of a public expression of support for life, I recruited members to join in a "Life Chain," during which people of goodwill stood side-by-side along the streets of Indianapolis. Our congregation also offered some support to a local crisis pregnancy center founded to aid and care for pregnant women who were frightened or alone. However, I found recruiting difficult. A few people heartily joined in, but many remained silent and avoided the topic altogether. Why? Could it be that abortion has affected our fellow Christians as much as it has affected society as a whole?

Planned Parenthood is more than a provider of abortions; they understand that women are their customers. Birth control pills and devices are sold, with the knowledge that they will fail. According to their website, "Abortion is a safe and legal procedure." They soon add, "Abortions are very common. In fact, 1 out of 3 women in the U.S. have an abortion by the time they are 45 years old."[89] Of course, this is not simply a presentation of the facts, but a method of recruiting. If one in three women has an abortion, then it must be all right. But Planned Parenthood says nothing about the lingering pain and guilt that many feel after having an abortion.

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[87] Carolyn Blum, "Abortion and Apathy," *The Lutheran Witness* 102 (January 1983): 21.

[88] Robin Mueller, "A Prophetic Statement of Today's Holocaust," *The Lutheran Witness* 102 (November 1983): 3.

[89] Planned Parenthood, "Abortion is a safe and legal way to end pregnancy." http://www.plannedparenthood.org/health-topics/abortion-4260.asp (accessed November 20, 2013).

Some groups have stepped up to address this problem. "Silent No More," for instance, was formed by women who had abortions but now regret their decision. The problem, as I have seen it, is that women who have had abortions carry with them a special guilt. That guilt is often carried not only by the women, but often by their mothers and friends who have been complicit, even by actions as simple as driving them to the abortion clinic. Now, in one sense, no sin is greater than another. To lust is to commit adultery, and to hate is to commit murder. The good news of the gospel proclaims that all sins have been more than paid for on the cross of Calvary. Nevertheless, the fact remains that abortion does more damage to the soul and leaves behind what seems to many women a type of indelible stain, a scar that cannot be healed.

The leaders of the abortion movement are defiant. They not only deny the sin of abortion but hold it up as a virtue. Others, knowing that abortion is wrong, retreat into denial, thus shutting themselves down, which often results in a hardening of the heart. What St. Paul says of the sexual sin applies, I think, to abortion: "All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body" (1 Cor 6:18). The pain of abortion is therefore intensely personal, for it involves killing—within the body—one whom God has given us to nurture. Naturally, abortion carries with it much personal shame, pain, and guilt. At this point, corporate confession is helpful, but often not enough. Women need a place to confess this sin in its particularity, an opportunity to unburden themselves of what Margaret Sanger called "the dark secret" of our society. This is perhaps why, in my experience, there are many more Catholic women who have been open with their abortions, as well as their regrets, for among pro-life Catholics there is a more robust access to private confession and absolution, which is especially curative of such sin. Now, we might argue that we, as Lutherans also offer private confession and absolution for any who are particularly burdened. The problem, though, is that when a person is unaccustomed to the practice it appears frighteningly foreign, less like a means of forgiveness than a foreboding last resort. Better it would be to teach our children the practice of individual confession and absolution in younger days when the stakes do not feel so terribly high.

The other problem we face is a kind of self-imposed code of silence. I find it striking that within *The Lutheran Witness*, for the longest time, the only prolife articles were written by women. Shepherds often feel sheepish, feeling perhaps that as men, they cannot speak about such a sensitive woman's issue. This same thinking mirrors the phenomenon in families, where mothers would take their daughters to the abortion clinic, while the

father stayed out of the situation entirely. Concerning this matter, I have corresponded with one of the co-founders of "Silent No More," the organization designed to help hurting women who now regret their abortions. She replied with this advice: "The key to helping women connect with the confessional is to have the priest actually talk about abortion from the pulpit. Those who have had abortions must be made aware of their sin, as well as Christ's forgiveness. They need also to go through a time of personal healing where they can grieve the death of their child." So, preachers must preach and speak not only of life, in some vague or abstract way, but of the person in the womb. Here, we do well to remember that abortion is not primarily a moral problem, or a personal decision; rather, it gets to the very heart of our faith in Christ, who himself sanctified all human life from the moment of conception. What we say about the unborn child is ultimately what we say about Christ, and about what it means to be human.

Part of this preaching must also be directed to the parents of teenagers. As we think of our children, we must teach them once more that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. In essence, we must speak to them of their dignity. The other, often unspoken, problem is that as parents we want our young people to achieve certain goals, including college and access to a fulfilling career. These goals must be questioned, or at least relativized. Motherhood must be held up as noble, and our obligation to our littlest neighbor must come before our devotion to career and to lifestyle as proposed by Planned Parenthood. Children are to be celebrated and welcomed.

VII. Ecumenical Boundaries: The Pro-Life Witness

The pro-life movement is decidedly ecumenical, and historically, Roman Catholics have taken the lead. But we, as Lutherans, have much to offer, for our Christ-centered witness moves us beyond morals, and even natural law, to the very incarnation of Christ, which defines our humanity and redeems all children. The one who is the Way and the Truth is also the Life. For this reason, perhaps March 25 must become for us a new Christmas, for it is at the Annunciation that our Lord's life truly began among us. Shall we not, with John, himself in the womb, leap for joy at our coming Savior, God's lamb at his littlest? Some worry that participation in such movements will turn non-Christians off. In fact, the opposite is often true.

Consider the case of perhaps the greatest American convert of the late twentieth century, Dr. Bernard Nathanson. Nathanson was, with Lawrence Lader, one of the co-founders of NARAL and headed the largest abortion

clinic in America, where over 20,000 children were aborted. Here was a man who was so confident about what he was doing that he aborted his own child. In time, he came to question intellectually the ethics of the issue. He began to speak up for life, even though he was an avowed atheist.

Having changed his mind, what changed his heart? Nathanson speaks of a pro-life demonstration he witnessed outside of an abortion clinic:

> They began to sing hymns softly, joining hands and swaying from the waist. I circulated on the periphery at first, observing the faces, interviewing some of the participants, making notes furiously. It was only then that I apprehended the exaltation, the pure love on the faces of that shivering mass of people, surrounded as they were by hundreds of New York City policemen."[90]

By not taking a stand, we show our apathy; we tell the world we do not care, and that they need not lose sleep. But our Lord was right when he said that they will know us by our love. Looking at the Christians praying in both sorrow and joy, Nathanson felt the "vile bog of sin and evil," and yet the experience "held out a shimmering sliver of Hope to me in the growing belief that Someone had died for my sins and my evil two millennia ago."[91] The one who is forgiven much, loves much. Nathanson writes, "I am no longer alone. It has been my fate to wander the globe in search of the One without Whom I am doomed, but now I seize the hem of his robe in desperation, in terror, in celestial access to the purest need I have ever known."[92]

Is it possible that we will be able to maintain our Lutheran faith without getting involved and taking a stand? Well, as the uterine brother of our Lord might tell us, "Faith without works is . . . abortion." And for those of us who have been born not once, but twice, that choice is simply not viable.

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[90] Bernard Nathanson, *The Hand of God: A Journey from Death to Life by the Abortion Doctor Who Changed His Mind* (Washington D.C.: Regnery, 1996), 192.

[91] Nathanson, *The Hand of God*, 194.

[92] Nathanson, *The Hand of God*, 202.

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Marriage and So-Called Civil Unions in Light of Natural Law

Gifford A. Grobien

Although the natural law has not been universally respected, Christians typically have assumed that one who considers the natural law seriously could never use it to argue for homosexual relationships. However, the natural law was occasionally appealed to in antiquity to support homosexual acts and relations as expressions of mutual love. This approach has been bolstered since the 1990s, when the first scientific claims for the genetically determined nature of homosexual orientation were made. A 2010 article by Jean Porter, "The Natural Law and Innovative Forms of Marriage: A Reconsideration," argues for homosexual unions not only on the basis of mutual love, but also on the grounds that homosexual unions can support the broad sense of procreation by raising adopted children.[1]

In the face of such developments, Lutherans might be tempted to retreat to the comfortable theology of human depravity and the corruption of human reason, and to give up the argument in the public square. After all, current developments seem to reinforce the notion that sin has corrupted human reason to the extent that it is unusable, and that the only way to bring about recognition of true sexuality is to preach the gospel so that some will be converted, and then to teach the truth of sexuality directly from the Scriptures.

This study will demonstrate that although the role of the natural law is limited in the discussion of marriage, it is important nevertheless because it operates just as the revealed law does. It serves humanity by all three functions of the law. More than this, the natural law holds forth for the Christian a glimpse of the life redeemed, resurrected, and restored by Christ. The Son took on flesh to enter our natural world in order to redeem us so that we would fulfill our nature and, indeed, take on the glorious

[1] Jean Porter, "The Natural Law and Innovative Forms of Marriage: A Reconsideration," *Journal for the Society of Christian Ethics* 30, no. 2 (2010): 79–97.

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nature of the world to come. Where we still have a glimpse of the natural law today, we also have a glimpse of this redeemed, incarnate life.

While acknowledging the limits of the natural law, I submit that a recategorization of the natural law can actually reinvigorate its role. In doing so, I will review the traditional and contemporary natural law arguments in the area of marriage and show that the errors of contemporary arguments rest in a false understanding of the role of natural law.

I. What is the Natural Law?

As we begin, we should disabuse ourselves of the notions that 1) the natural law is comprehensive and that 2) all its precepts are rigidly binding.[2] The idea that natural law is a systematic structure of moral philosophy to which all people will submit after they think long and hard enough about it is a modern conception. Specifically, it is a rationalist development intended to marginalize theology. Until the Enlightenment, natural law theory worked hand-in-hand with theology. But in hopes of leaving Christianity behind, philosophers of the seventeenth century and beyond attempted to build elaborate rational arguments for universal moral laws apart from scriptural considerations. In other words, Enlightenment natural lawyers hoped to set up a system of morality that did not depend on theological presuppositions.

The natural law was never intended to operate independently of theology, or at least of moral commitments. The limitations of natural law and its dependency on some kind of foundational commitments, whether Christian or otherwise religious or philosophical, were long evident in the tradition. Historically, the actual claims for the natural law were much more modest than the goal of setting up a comprehensive moral philosophy.

In the historical Christian perspective, natural law is promulgated through a kind of participation of all creatures in the divine law.[3] Thus, natural law and divine law are fundamentally harmonious. Furthermore, this participation in the divine law differs across creatures. Organisms access or participate in the divine law in different ways, according to their natural capacity. Some participate according to biological nature. That is, the physical structure of creatures naturally aims at certain processes

[2] Jean Porter, *Nature as Reason*: *A Thomistic Theory of the Natural Law* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 24.

[3] Thomas Aquinas, ST I–II. 90, in *The Summa Theologica of St. Thomas Aquinas*, 2nd edition, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (1920), http://www.newadvent.org/summa (accessed November 20, 2012).

because of divine design. Other creatures also participate in the natural law by appetite or natural desire. Animals desire certain things that are natural, such as to defend themselves from harm, to nourish themselves, and to procreate. These appetites naturally direct animals according to divine purpose. Finally, human beings, unique in the natural world, participate in the divine mind through reason. Human reason judges certain actions to be good or evil because of its God-granted access to the divine mind. Thus, traditionally, the natural law could be considered in three categories: 1) that which nature teaches all substances—sustenance and preservation, 2) that which nature teaches all animals—procreation and raising offspring, and 3) that which nature teaches human beings according to reason.[4] Furthermore, these manners of participation in the natural law are not mutually exclusive. Trees participate as biological substances. Animals participate as substances and as animals with appetites. Human beings participate as substances, animals, and as endowed with reason. Thus, to the extent that a creature naturally participates in divine law, it is directed with respect to action.

This is a key phrase: "*to the extent* that a creature naturally participates in divine law, it is directed." The difficulty is that, while creatures were created to participate properly in the divine law, after the Fall this participation is marred. In human beings, the natural law may fail both according to knowledge and according to sin.[5] That is, a person may not properly discern the natural law, and a person may violate the natural law, even if he has proper knowledge of it, because of sin. The Formula of Concord affirms that humanity has at most a dim spark of knowledge of the divine or of the law, and that reason is capable, at best, of living honorably only to a certain extent (FC SD II 9 26). Therefore, it is impossible in our current state that the natural law could serve as a comprehensive system of morality that is compelling to all reasonable people.

In spite of this, the Christian tradition has affirmed the place of the natural law in theological and moral thought and practice. The robust natural law tradition of the medieval scholastics is well-known. Furthermore, Luther and the sixteenth-century confessors received the general contours of this tradition without disagreement. There is little primary discussion of the natural law in the Confessions or in Luther's writings because it was not a matter of controversy. Where the Lutherans do turn to

[4] Thomas Aquinas, ST I–II. 94.2.

[5] Thomas Aquinas, ST I–II. 94.4.

the natural law, they speak of it favorably and much in the way of the scholastics.[6]

Yet, if the natural law does not offer a systematic moral philosophy compelling to human reason, what is its role? Properly, the precepts of the natural law are those that are known by nature, indemonstrable. Thomas Aquinas explains the natural law by comparing and contrasting it with what he calls principles of *speculative reason*. Speculative reason refers to theory and ideas. In Thomas' terms, speculative reason understands what is *necessary*, that is, things that are true. Today we might call this scientific knowledge. Speculative reason recognizes existence and truth. The natural law, however, does not deal only with what is, but with what ought to be. It deals with the practical that is, with action. The natural law, narrowly speaking, teaches not what is true, but what one ought to do. Because this has to do with action or practice, it falls under *practical reason*, not speculative reason. And just as speculative reason deals with things that are true and necessary, practical reason deals with matters that are contingent and good. The natural law directs us toward the good thing we ought to do.[7]

So, just as there is a first principle of speculative reason—that is, the question of being, if something exists or does not exist—so also there is a first principle of practical reason, goodness. Creatures naturally seek after their good; therefore, the foundational precept of the natural law is, "[G]ood is to be done and pursued, and evil is to be avoided."[8]

Now, one might ask, "Is this whole discussion necessary just to come up with a rule that everyone knows, namely, that we should do good and avoid evil?" But, of course, that is the point. The natural law is naturally evident to all, so that, in spite of sin, the most basic and foundational precept of this natural law is known by all. We all know that we should do good and avoid evil. It is self-evident, and thus the first principle of the natural law.

Thomas goes on to say that other precepts of the natural law may be derived, but they are derived in reason by human beings. "Whatever the practical reason naturally apprehends as man's good (or evil) belongs to the precepts of the natural law as something to be done or avoided."[9]

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[6] See, for example, Roland Ziegler, "Natural Law in the Lutheran Confessions," and Gifford Grobien, "What is Natural Law? Medieval Foundations and Luther's Appropriation," in *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal*, ed. Robert C. Baker and Roland Cap Ehlke (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011).

[7] Thomas Aquinas, ST I–II.94.2.

[8] Thomas Aquinas, ST I–II.94.2.

[9] Thomas Aquinas, ST I–II.94.2.

Therefore, natural law stems from a common, universal basis, but may differ for people of different vocations and circumstances. The first precept of the natural law is universal, but as the circumstances and conditions of action develop further detail, various courses of action may be derived rightly from the precept, "pursue the good, and avoid the evil." Thus, besides the variation in action that occurs due to sin and the lack of knowledge of the natural law (because corrupt reason does not rightly comprehend the mind of God), action also varies according to circumstances. The more detailed the conditions, the more difference in action. Therefore, the natural law is not a comprehensive set of laws that stand for all circumstances; rather its precepts are derived according to one's nature and according to one's circumstances.

Thomas uses the example of property that is held in trust. The natural law generally would dictate that such property be restored to its owner. But he notes that under such circumstances where a man intended to use his property to injure others, the property should be withheld. Or again, natural law commands people to marry, except in the circumstances in which a person is celibate. Thus, variation according to circumstance is not a kind of situation ethics, which finds excuses to break the law, but rather obeys the good of the circumstance. Thus, at a foundational level, the natural law directs people to do what is good in their circumstances. Sin greatly hinders the ability of human beings to derive proper precepts in their circumstances. However, the basic, theoretical knowledge of the natural law—that one ought to pursue the good and avoid the evil—can never be blotted out. This is the singular, universal precept of the natural law that is comprehended by all.[10]

This, then, is the benefit of the natural law, not that we can set forth a system of morality to be accepted carte blanche, but that we can affirm the capacity, albeit limited, to use reason and to "distinguish good and evil and derive . . . norms" in agreement with this distinguishing.[11] Instead of announcing the moral law in the public square and assuming that all will fall in line behind it, the natural law appeals to the moral sense so that we question each other about the good. By exploring what is good, we question, challenge, and encourage one another to act rightly. When faced with a moral question, then, the natural law calls on us to clarify the situation, asking, "what is the good in these circumstances?" A fine example can be found in the failure to use natural law in this way in the

[10] Thomas Aquinas, ST I–II 94.6.

[11] William C. Mattison III, "The Changing Face of Natural Law: The Necessity of Belief for Natural Law Norm Specification," *Journal for the Society of Christian Ethics* 27 no. 1 (2007): 253.

historic discussions over abortion. The question has simply been about the best choice for the mother, without asking the more fundamental question of what is the basic good here—the life of the unborn.

In asking what the good is, however, we are faced with further difficulty, for even when we stop to reflect, we do not all agree on what the good is. This is our challenge especially in a deconstructionist and pluralistic context. Until recently, it seemed to be self-evident that sexual relations between male and female were good and that homosexual relations were evil, at least in the general understanding. But that is no longer the case, as is plain by the development of arguments for homosexual relations on the basis of natural law. Homosexual relations in this understanding are actually good. They promote human flourishing. So now we appear to have reached a foundational problem in the discussion over marriage. Natural law appears to be unusable, because there are competing conceptions of the good. In answering the question of what is the good act in these circumstances, those in favor of homosexual relations affirm its goodness, while those opposed deny it.

As noted earlier, people fail to follow the natural law for at least two reasons: the corruption of sin and the details of any given circumstances that can befuddle the unwise. Indeed, even the wise may be unable to determine the right action in a difficult dilemma. Thus, in our fallen world the natural law is insufficient. It "underdetermines" our action due to the effects of sin and foolishness. Of course, the ultimate remedy is the death and resurrection of our Lord, which forgives, heals, and grants eternal life to us who fail to keep the law, natural or otherwise. Yet even in the limited realm of the knowledge of the law, something else is needed. Direction is required beyond the use of reason. We need to be taught what is good.

In the face of reason's inability to discern the good clearly, many philosophies and religions have been developed to fill this void. We might call such philosophies and religious "systems of value" or belief commitments. In other words, what a person believes, or the values to which a person is committed, informs him of what is good. The values or commitments of a person therefore hold an authority beyond pure reason. This is not to say that reason is dismissed, but that reason is informed by belief, and choices about what is good will be determined by these beliefs.[12]

Thus, in this understanding, the natural law is still the foundational principle for practical reason. It directs us to do what is good and to avoid what is evil. This requires reflection about what is good and what is evil in

[12] Mattison, "The Changing Face of the Natural Law," 257–260.

given circumstances. Yet the content of what is good is also provided not by reason alone, but by belief commitments.

This is why two people who think reasonably can come to very different conclusions regarding what the natural law has to say about a question. A person who has commitments that affirm the acceptance of homosexual relations will be able to justify the goodness of homosexual relations and the resulting actions authorizing so-called homosexual marriage. A person with commitments that exclude the goodness of homosexual relations will not be able to justify homosexual acts or the authorization of so-called homosexual marriage.

It may be helpful at this point to consider more deeply what exactly is meant by nature and natural inclination ruled by reason, because how one understands nature is foundational to one's belief commitments and, consequently, to the way natural law is used in reflection. So-called natural arguments in favor of homosexual relations are made today on the basis of personal desires and experience and on scientific hypotheses about the genetic character of homosexual orientation. These arguments may be couched in the language of traditional arguments, such as the claim that homosexuals also can exhibit mutually loving relationships with lifelong commitment, but when the concept of nature is understood at a deeper level, the arguments fail.

Modern conceptions of "nature" typically have an empirical perspective in mind. In this view, nature is simply the facts that can be observed. Such a reductive observation of facts essentially limits its claims to the physical, chemical, or biological realms. These observations merely report the way things are. At most, this empirical notion understands nature's principles as accounting for "organic behavior." Such observations, when verified, can be called scientific law. Yet, these are laws in that physical forces, chemicals, and biological cells grow or operate in a certain way.[13] There is no claim that the facts observed suggest a natural purpose, as though forces, chemicals, or organisms act in a certain way in order to reach a goal. What things are does not, in this view, indicate an end or purpose. Nature is "mechanistic," but "non-normative."[14] Thus, natural laws, in this case, are not broadly normative.

Natural tendencies perceived at the empirical level may, however, be considered normative for that in which it was observed. For example,

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[13] Stephen J. Pope, "Scientific and Natural Law Analyses of Homosexuality: A Methodological Study," *Journal of Religious Ethics* 25, no. 1 (Spring 1997): 93.

[14] Pope, "Scientific and Natural Law," 92.

general observations about sex organs do not suggest to the empiricist that homosexuality is unnatural. It may be unnatural for most, but there is no ordered purpose to the sex organs that compels all of that species. If certain individuals of the species are inclined to engage in homosexual acts, fine for them. In fact, that they are inclined toward homosexual acts is itself a supposed argument from nature. So, in other words, if a particular individual feels a homosexual attraction, or it is perceived that he has a genetic predisposition toward homosexual acts, then homosexual acts would be natural for him. This understanding of nature is empirical and individual, not generally suggestive of norms for all of a species.

Such however, is not the understanding of nature in the natural law tradition. Classically, nature included the end, goal, or telos of natural things. The order observed in nature has purpose generally for the species. The observable development of organisms suggests a goal of maturity. Reproduction suggests the goal of perpetuation of a species. Natural acts such as birds building nests or spiders fashioning webs suggest goals of shelter and means of sustenance. Creatures are understood "through a teleological analysis tracking the ways in which the structures, functions, and organs of a given creature contribute to its overall well-being, or to the existence and wellbeing of" its kind.[15] This teleological analysis does not view the "organs or functions seen in isolation from the overall life of the organism," that is, in a simple mechanistic way.[16] In other words, the natural law argument for male-female sexual relations is not merely based on the observation that the sexual organs seem to fit well.

Among plants and animals, such natural order generally follows without extensive aberration, because order is according to biological process or animal instinct. But in human beings, order and purpose are integral with what is particular to human nature, namely, reason. Thus, following the purpose of the created order depends on human beings reasonably choosing natural action. In other words, natural order does suggest proper action that may be chosen by reason or rejected due to passion and sin. The term "according to nature" is a technical term referring to the broad structure of nature. Such structure and purpose is foundational and goes beyond the desires of particular individuals. Purpose, rather, is implicit in the general order suggested by the whole species. Aberrations, such as infertility, disrupt the natural law, but do not disprove the natural law. They indicate, rather, that the foundational structure of the natural law has imperfections. As Christians, we know that

[15] Porter, "The Natural Law and Innovative Forms of Marriage," 82.

[16] Porter, "The Natural Law and Innovative Forms of Marriage," 82.

aberration is due to sin. Sin attacks the natural law, but it does not overthrow it.

We have, then, two conceptions of nature: 1) nature as basically general and indicating what is flourishing for all of a species, and 2) nature as "personalized and subjective."[17] How people conceive of nature or belief commitments determines the role of natural law. Those who believe that nature means empirically observed facts will assume different things than those who believe nature means underlying ordered purpose.

If natural law discussions in the public square are to have any fruitfulness, then, they must aim toward that fundamental question of the natural law: What is good? Or, to put it another way, what action will lead to greater human flourishing? Rather than focusing on what naturally seems right, which quickly degenerates into following emotions and other urges, we may reflect on what leads to human health, whether physically, relationally, emotionally, or spiritually. Research into these areas of health for those in homosexual relationships, and for their children, would play an important role here, addressing such questions as: do couples in homosexual and heterosexual relationships find similar emotional and psychological fulfillment? How does the emotional and psychological health of children compare between homosexual and heterosexual parents? Do homosexual relationships serve as worse, similar, or better relationships for serving the common good as do heterosexual couples? These are just the beginning of questions that might be asked with regard to the question of human flourishing in homosexual relationships. In other words, this is one way that the natural law—the pursuit of the good—can still operate in a pluralistic society.

Furthermore, Christians do not rely only on the natural law but are informed, corrected, and sanctified in their knowledge of the good, of what human flourishing really is. Such flourishing is grounded in the incarnation, by which Christ takes on our flesh and then proceeds to bear our sin, suffer on the cross for our forgiveness, and rise and ascend for our victory and glory. This flourishing is offered to Christians in the preached word, in taking the name of God in Baptism, and in the strength and nourishment that is given in the Lord's Supper. So informed and united to Christ, Christians, too, have conceptions of what is good. Informed in this way, the Christian natural law tradition has many things to say to broaden and deepen human knowledge of God's created order of marriage.

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[17] Erik Borgman, "Unfixing Nature: Homosexuality and Innovating Natural Law," in *Homosexualities* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 73.

II. Marriage and the Natural Law

The natural law inclines toward marriage foundationally for the sake of offspring. This reason is hotly contested today. Many, including Christians, argue that the foundational purpose of marriage is mutual companionship and the qualities that go with it: a unique and personal way to express love, and, from the Christian perspective, a remedy for lust. Procreation and the raising of offspring, while integral to marriage, is secondary. Many Christians would say that procreation ought to occur within marriage, but not that procreation is the natural basis for marriage. The first purpose is to provide companionship.

Yet, the Christian natural law tradition has consistently held that marriage is commanded to serve procreation and raising offspring.[18] More broadly, in fact, the natural law tradition holds that both procreation and mutual companionship are purposes of marriage, but that they are purposes that are integral and organic to each other. They are not purposes that may be separated so that one can be thought to occur apart from the other. Mutual companionship and procreation are the purposes of marriage, and they go together.

If nature inclined merely to reproduction, then marriage, in fact would not be according to the natural law. Reproduction can be accomplished just as easily outside of marriage as inside of it.[19] But nature does not incline only to reproduction, but to the nurturing and education of offspring. For procreation to be effective, the offspring must mature. Human maturation takes not only years, but also special care in nourishment and education that are not seen among the animals. Furthermore, the education of human offspring requires the care of both a father and a mother, for "the needs of human life demand many things which cannot be provided by one person alone,"[20] and some household works are "becoming to men, others to women."[21]

In this understanding of marriage, the natural law is not a facile mimicking of animal life, but it is a reflection on the unique aspects of the whole human nature—not just sexuality per se. From the sexual and rational nature of human beings—and directed by Scripture—we conclude

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[18] Porter offers a concise and insightful survey of the scholastic understanding of the purposes of marriage in "Natural Law and Innovative Forms of Marriage," 81–89.

[19] Thomas Aquinas, ST A 41.1.

[20] Thomas Aquinas, SCG 3.122.6, in *The Summa Contra Gentiles* (New York: Hanover House, 1955–57), http://dhspriory.org/thomas/ContraGentiles.htm (accessed November 20, 2012).

[21] Thomas Aquinas, ST A 41.1. See also ST A 65.1.

that sexual relations are interwoven with the raising of offspring, and thus the long-term commitment of husband and wife. But, could we not say that once the children are raised and out of the house divorce would be permissible? Or that marriage need not be absolutely indissoluble once the needs of the children were completely met?

Here the natural law recognizes and affirms the other purpose of marriage, namely, a trusting relationship of mutual love. Because marriage includes sexual relations and the partnership in domestic activity, it is the greatest of relationships. It is the greatest friendship. The greater a friendship, the longer it will last. Therefore, the greatest friendship should have no end.[22] Modern science recognizes the physiological and psychological bonds shared by sexual partners. To rend these bonds would violate the closeness that is naturally encouraged through sexual relations.

Finally, life-long marriage is commanded by the natural law because it encourages virtue. Marriage demands fidelity, inspires the mutual care of domestic possessions, and improves relations with the in-laws.[23] That is, it calls a husband to act virtuously toward his wife and her family, as congruous to the intimacy of the relationship and mutual responsibility of raising children.

Regarding polygamy, it is true that one could procreate and provide basic educational needs to children in a polygamous marriage. Polygamy, however, violates the mutual character of marital love. The deep intimacy or greatest friendship of monogamy is inherently disrupted. Polygamy further undermines virtue because it breeds jealousy and discord. It violates natural justice, for the man is bound to multiple women, while each woman is not exclusively bound to the man. Finally, this contradicts the proper education of the children, for it sets a poor example before them. The same arguments could be used against polyandry.[24]

Again, such reasoning for marriage is not a simplistic argument from nature that just considers the biological complementarity of male and female (although this is not unimportant), but draws conclusions from a thorough reflection about the rational, social, physiological, emotional, and sexual nature of human beings.

With this understanding of nature in mind, there are some further arguments to be made regarding marriage according to the natural law,

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22 Thomas, SCG 123, 6.

23 Thomas, SCG 123, 8.

24 Thomas, SCG 123, 5; 124, 6; ST A 65.1.

specifically with respect to sexual relations. According to the natural order, the purpose of seminal emission is conception. This does not mean that every emission will lead to conception, nor that only male-female sexual intercourse is acceptable because of the physical match. Rather it is saying that sexual emission releases semen, and the purpose of semen itself is to fertilize an egg. Semen itself has no other purpose. Ejaculation, more broadly speaking, may have the purpose of fulfilling sexual desire. But the fact that ejaculation consists of semen, and not some other sterile liquid, means that the purpose of ejaculation also is to release semen for fertilization. Thus the purpose of seminal emission is procreation.

One could counter that ejaculation also fulfills sexual desire, so that this fulfillment is also a purpose of sexual relations. Indeed. From the perspective of the natural law, both purposes are in mind. Sexual relations are for procreation *and* for the fulfillment of sexual desire. The point here is that these are not to be divided from each other. Sexual fulfillment still includes the emission of semen, which purpose is fertilization. The emission of semen includes sexual pleasure. They are indivisible. Thus, according to the natural law, sexual relations are for procreation and for the fulfillment of sexual desire. When one purpose is to be fulfilled, the other purpose goes with it. Conversely, one ought not to seek one purpose apart from the other.

It is on this understanding that sexual relations themselves, as the natural act, lead to marriage. Bound up in sexual relations are not only mutual love and service and the fulfillment of sexual desire, but also procreation, nurturing, and education of offspring. These are not two separate purposes of marriage, but two organic purposes of marriage that are not separated. They serve each other. Sexual desire finds its fulfillment in sexual stimulation, which results in seminal emission for the purpose of procreation. Procreation, in turn, and the raising of offspring bind more closely the husband and wife in their complementary work in the household. In turn, this binding work serves virtue, and the greatest friendship, leading, if God wills it, to more children, and to an inseparable bond, until death does them part.

We see, therefore, all the importance of an emphasis on sexual difference for natural sexual relations. Not only the complementarity of male and female in the image of God indicates this, but also the fruitfulness that comes forth from sexual difference. The two become one flesh, not only in that complementarity reflects the image of God, but in that two become one in the procreation of new life. This one new life is the fruit of the love of the male and female. Just as the love of God, three persons, distinct yet perfectly united, overflows in creation, especially the creation

of humans whom God then invites into his fellowship through redemption, so the love of husband and wife, two persons, distinct yet united sexually, according to the natural order bears fruit in the procreation of a new human life.

When this argument about procreation is made, often the rebuttal is heard: what about infertile couples? Are they to be forbidden from marriage? By no means. The marriage and sexual relations of infertile couples in no way violates the natural law. For, as was noted previously, natural law refers to the foundational structure of creation, which nevertheless may not follow in every case due to the fallen nature of the world. Sexual relations between a husband and wife who are infertile do not violate the natural law because the couple is not seeking to avoid procreation. Their sexual act seeks and does not inhibit either sexual fulfillment or conception. That they are infertile is a tragic yet circumstantial—or to use a scholastic term, accidental—point. They are infertile ultimately by some mystery of God's will. That is God's determination. But insomuch as they have control over their actions, they follow the natural law.[25]

Marriage is built upon male-female sexual relations because the mutual love and procreation of male-female sexual relations reflects the image of God as loving and creative: "And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. And God blessed them; and God said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it"(Gen 1:27-28a, NASB).

The instituting command of procreation is constitutive with the creation of man as male and female in God's image. Thus Thomas Aquinas could say in excluding non-procreative sexual activity from the natural law:

> I am speaking of a way from which, *in itself*, generation could not result: such would be any emission of semen apart from the natural union of male and female. For which reason, sins of this type are called contrary to nature. But, if by accident generation cannot result from the emission of semen, then this is not a reason for it being against nature, or a sin; as for instance, if the woman happens to be sterile.[26]

Here we finally have the natural law argument against homosexual relations. It is a sin "contrary to nature." Yet notice carefully the basis of this argument. Homosexual relations are sinful not merely because they

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25 Thomas, SCG 122, 5.

26 Thomas, SCG 122, 5; emphasis added.

violate the male-female complementarity, but because they violate the purpose of the complementarity, procreation, while nevertheless seeking sexual stimulation and fulfillment. These are the sexual sins contrary to nature: those which seek to fulfill sexual desire separate from the procreative work of sexual relations. This includes homosexuality, but also any other sterile sexual stimulation. Homosexuality may be in many minds the paradigm of the violation of sexual complementarity, yet it is one kind of that larger category of sin, hindering the procreative end of sexual complementarity.

III. Conclusion

Proponents of homosexual unions in recent years have attempted to use natural law theory to argue for so-called civil unions or marriages in two ways: either through a changed definition of the term nature, or through the argument that homosexual unions do fulfill the purposes of marriage of mutual love and the raising of offspring, broadly understood, or both. But such arguments in fact violate natural law theory because they shift the very terms upon which natural law theory is based. They separate the purposes of marriage rather than properly distinguishing them, and they deny that the basis for the purposes of marriage lies in the very marital act itself, intercourse between sexual complements.

Christ fulfills the law, including the natural law. Where arguments over the content of nature remain, Christ forgives and sets forth the image of true incarnate life. Thus, for the Christian, the natural law, informed by Scripture, imagines the redeemed life. For the world, sexuality, love, and marriage continue to come up empty. But for the eyes of faith, they show forth the love of a Father for his creation, the new life that his love brings forth, and the final sanctification and glorification wrought by the Son for the true Bride, his church.

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Man Reconstructed: Humanity beyond Biology

Brent Waters

A human being is many things, but he is first and foremost a creature; a finite and mortal creature; a creature created by God; a creature bearing God's image and likeness. When Christians assert this creaturely status in the public square, they often encounter responses that range from bewilderment to hostility. There are many reasons why those populating the public square do not warmly receive this reminder, but I want to focus my remarks on technology as reinforcing a Promethean-like desire to overcome the finite and mortal constraints of being human.

It cannot be denied that technology has improved the human condition. People living in developed regions of the world, for instance, enjoy unprecedented comfort, affluence, mobility, and communication. Healthcare in particular has improved dramatically. Pharmaceuticals restore health, prevent disease, and extend longevity. Sophisticated prosthetics restore mobility and dexterity, and even hearing and sight. Quadriplegics can turn lights on and off, change channels and adjust the volume of a television monitor, and operate a computer by merely thinking with the aid of electrodes placed in their brains. The lame walk, the blind see, and the ill are healed because of medicine and not miracle workers.

More expansively, we may ask if these and anticipated technological advances are moving us toward the cusp of fulfilling the late modern project of mastering nature and human nature. Most people spend their time living and working in environments that are constructed or manufactured, accompanied by legions of machines and gadgets. The artificial has become our "natural" habitat; we are more at home plopping a frozen dinner in a microwave oven than hunting game or gathering berries in the forest. Technology is displacing nature as the human mode of being in the world—the way we express and project who we are and hope to become. Or in George Grant's words: "In each lived moment of our waking and sleeping, we are technological civilization."[1]

[1] George Parkin Grant, *Technology and Justice* (Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 1986), 11.

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Since the mastery of nature is seemingly on the verge of being accomplished, the more ambitious are turning their attention to mastering human nature. Through a combination of biotechnology, bionics, robotics, and artificial intelligence, they envision the transformation of humans into a superior species with enhanced physical and cognitive capabilities, as well as greater longevity. The more bold visionaries are confident that soon—2040 is emerging as the preferred watershed year—the technological capability will be in hand to begin a serious quest for immortality.[2] They look forward to a new humanity, or better, post-humanity; a posthuman world populated by self-created artifacts. The envisioned posthuman is simultaneously a self-made creator and creature.

I. Post-Humanity: Rhetoric or Reality?

It is admittedly tempting to dismiss much of the posthuman rhetoric as little more than the daydreaming of individuals who cannot tell the difference between science and science fiction and subsequently place their faith in unproven technological capabilities. Yet such a curt dismissal would be a mistake for two reasons. First, the idea of becoming posthuman is increasingly attracting public attention. The prospect of genetic enhancement and, more boldly, the possibility of merging with machines to create humans that are better than human have not prompted a response of widespread revulsion. Rather, the cyborg, for instance, has become something of a cultural icon, capturing public curiosity and forming a perception of what constitutes a desirable future.[3] This perception is important, as N. Katherine Hayles has written: "People become posthuman because they think they are posthuman."[4] Attention should be paid to an idea, however bizarre it might be, that is shaping the intellectual, religious, and moral imagination of late moderns.

Second, some provisional assessment should be made if this imagined future is troubling or even perilous, for acting often stems from thinking; ideas have consequences. As humans increasingly regard themselves as artifacts of what they want and will themselves to become, what will be the moral, social, and political consequences? And are they consequences

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[2] See, for example, Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity Is Near: When Humans Transcend Biology* (New York and London: Penguin Books, 2005), and Hans Moravec, *Mind Children: The Future of Robot and Human Intelligence* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 1988).

[3] See, for example, Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 149–181.

[4] N. Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature, and Informatics* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1999), 7.

that should be pursued? In short, envisioning the transformation of humans into so-called "superior" beings is an idea deserving critical scrutiny. Francis Fukuyama may have gone a bit over the top in labeling transhumanism as the world's most dangerous idea, but he is right in insisting that it needs to be challenged in a serious and sustained manner.[5]

Why has the idea or image of the posthuman seized public attention and subsequently formed its religious and moral imagination? How do we assess whether it is a good or bad idea? And if it should prove to be a bad idea, can a better one be offered? In answering these questions, I would like to suggest that we are not so much confronting a new idea, but a very old one in a new guise.

In the first chapter of Genesis it is written that "God created man in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them (1:27)." As creatures, humans are in a subordinate relationship with God as indicated in the following verse in which God commands them to exercise a limited dominion over creation. This is not how the story unfolds, however. The following chapters report various misdeeds through which humans utterly fail in fulfilling what they were directed to do, culminating in an attempt to build a tower reaching to heaven. They undertake this project to make a name for themselves, and God worries that if they succeed "then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them" (Gen 11:1–9 NIV).

In this biblical account of creatures aspiring to become like their creator, it should be noted that in trying to reach heaven they employed the best technology at their disposal. Such hubris is not confined to the Old Testament. According to Hannah Arendt, the ancient Greeks believed that humans were the only self-aware mortal creatures, bracketed between an immortal nature and the immortal gods. Humans thereby faced the challenge of how, as mortal creatures, they could participate in a world of endless time. One strategy was to invest oneself in activities, such as family or politics, which transcended one's death. A person lived on in an immortal lineage, city, or empire. Variations of this tactic have endured through such modern attempts of creating immortal works of art or literature, or, more broadly and ambitiously, an immortal history.

What these attempts at building a tower, city, or empire hold in common is the recognition that mortality places an absolute barrier against an individual's hopes and aspirations. Time conspires against every endeavor, for it eventually runs out. In death, humans face, in Arendt's

[5] Francis Fukuyama, "Transhumanism," *Foreign Policy* 144 (2004), 42–43.

words, the "only reliable law of life" that inevitably consigns "everything human to ruin and destruction."[6] Contributing to a future that lives beyond one's lifespan may provide some solace, but it is a cold comfort never truly to enjoy the fruits of one's labor. Such an effort merely serves to reinforce the impermanence of human lives and their activities. Shakespeare, for instance, has never enjoyed his fame over the centuries.

Embodiment, then, is the great enemy of human flourishing.[7] The body imposes severe and intolerable limitations upon what we can do and what we aspire to be. The body, for instance, constrains the will. A person cannot do everything he might want; not just anyone can be a professional athlete or rocket scientist. More troubling, the body is a source of pain and suffering. As embodied beings we are fragile and vulnerable; we can be injured or become ill. More depressingly, even if a person should be fortunate enough to avoid any serious injuries or diseases, one is allotted only a limited number of years. Embodied beings grow old and die. In short, humans must be rescued from the finite and mortal limits of their bodies. The ultimate solution is personal immortality.

II. The Technological Quest for Personal Immortality

The transhumanist response is to wage a technological war against finitude and mortality. In the words of Max Moore, a leading proponent of posthuman transformation: "Aging and death victimizes all humans," thereby placing an unacceptable "imposition on the human race." Consequently, the "technological conquest of aging and death stands out as the most urgent, vital, worthy quest of our time."[8] Aging and death, then, should be regarded as diseases to be treated and eventually cured. Through a combination of anticipated advances in biotechnology, regenerative medicine, genetic manipulation, nanotechnology, bionics, and computer science, aging can presumably be arrested while simultaneously maintaining or enhancing physical and cognitive performance. Individuals will be able to live healthy, happy, productive, and long, perhaps very long lives. While evolution has, through natural selection, bequeathed to *homo sapiens* bodies that serve as poor hosts for the information that

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[6] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 246.

[7] The following critique is adapted from Brent Waters, "Whose Salvation? Which Eschatology? Transhumanism and Christianity as Contending Salvific Religions," in *Transhumanism and Transcendence: Christian Hope in an Age of Technological Enhancement*, ed. Ronald Cole-Turner (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2011).

[8] Max Moore, "On Becoming Posthuman," http://www.maxmore.com/becoming.htm (accessed July 15, 2011).

constitutes their personalities (what the ancients called "the soul," and moderns "the will"), technological development and ingenuity can be used to negate, or eventually escape, the finite and mortal constraints that nature has imposed.

If humans are to be saved from their bodies, then ultimately death must also be conquered; dying must become a choice rather than a necessity. Through technology, humans can transform themselves into superior, and perhaps immortal, posthuman beings. To reiterate, this undertaking is a unique quest for personal immortality. The transhumanists are not endeavoring to simply live on after they die through something like a lineage, empire, or history, but to avoid death for a greatly extended period of time, if not altogether. In taking on this ambitious enterprise, however, they are seemingly crashing against the insurmountable constraints of human biology. Around 120 years appears to be the maximum amount of time a human being can live. As Leonard Hayflick discovered, cellular division and replication can only occur a limited number of times. With each sequence the telomeres on the DNA of each cell shortens. As the telomeres become shorter, they also become less efficient in replicating themselves. Eventually, they become so short that they can no longer function at all. This imperfect replication process also grows increasingly susceptible to mutations over time, leading to various diseases and degeneration associated with aging. Consequently, the quest for personal immortality appears hopeless, for human genes are apparently programmed to grow old and die.

Biological Immortality

The strategy for correcting this unfortunate coding is to develop technologies that either reprogram or bypass the mortal constraints of human DNA. There are three interrelated approaches to be taken for achieving this goal. The first may be characterized as biological immortality. Some scientists believe that with anticipated developments in genetic and biotechnologies the average lifespan can be increased dramatically, if not indefinitely. The twofold challenge is to prevent the shortening of the telomeres and to ensure that degenerative mutations do not occur in cellar replication and rejuvenation. In addition, the immune system will be genetically enhanced, and deleterious genetic defects removed or corrected to protect individuals from life-threatening and chronic diseases or disabilities. Aubrey de Gray, for instance, contends that living for 150 or 200 years will soon become routine.[9] With further technological innovation,

[9] *Strategies for Engineered Negligible Senescence: Why Genuine Control of Aging May Be Foreseeable*, ed. Aubrey de Grey, vol. 1019 in Annals of the New York Academy of

much more dramatic increases will be forthcoming, and immortality is not out of the question since infinite cellar rejuvenation cannot be ruled out in principle. For de Gray, winning the war against aging, and therefore death, is a matter of efficient engineering. The DNA that natural selection haphazardly concocted simply needs to be redesigned in line with human values and purposes. Moreover, there is a moral imperative driving de Gray's quest for biological immortality, for he insists that mortality is not simply an unfortunate aspect of being human, but is an unmitigated tragedy that can and should be overcome through appropriate research and technological development.

Bionic Immortality

If, however, human biology proves less pliable than hoped—if, for instance, the Hayflick limit can only be extended modestly—all is not lost in the war against aging and death. This leads to the second approach of bionic immortality. With anticipated advances in nanotechnology and robotics, various body parts that wear out will be replaced with artificial substitutes. Synthetic blood vessels and skin will replace their less durable natural counterparts, and as muscles deteriorate, arms and legs will be assisted or replaced with sophisticated prosthetics. Nanobots will be injected to repair or replace diseased organs, and neuroenhancers will be inserted into the brain to prevent the deterioration of memory and other cognitive functions. Admittedly, these artificial substitutes will also wear out over time, but they will be replaced with new and improved versions. Presumably, such maintenance could be undertaken indefinitely; in principle a bionic being could live forever, so long as the artificial parts are properly maintained, repaired, and replaced as needed. Additionally, physical and cognitive functions will not only be preserved but also enhanced. Individuals will enjoy the benefits of improved cardio-vascular systems, greater strength and agility, and enhanced intelligence and memory.

Virtual Immortality

There are, unfortunately, some liabilities accompanying this approach. The various electronic and mechanical systems can malfunction, and a hybrid host is still vulnerable to accidents or malicious acts resulting in death. Although a predominantly artificial body is an improvement, it is still not an ideal solution in overcoming finite and mortal limits. This leads to the third, and most speculative, approach: *virtual immortality*. Following

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Science (June 2004), and de Grey, "The War on Aging," in *The Scientific Conquest of Death: Essays on Infinite Lifespans* (Buenos Aires: Libros en Red, 2004), 29–45.

such visionary leaders in the fields of artificial intelligence and robotics as Ray Kurzweil[10] and Hans Moravec,[11] proponents suggest that the information contained in the brain that constitutes a person's memories, experience, and personality can be digitized. In the near future, highly sophisticated imaging devices will scan the brain to collect this information and, in turn, upload it into a computer. Once this information has been organized and stored it can then be downloaded into a robotic or virtual reality host. With frequently updated and multiple backups, the uploading and downloading process can be repeated indefinitely. Consequently, one's virtual self is virtually immortal.

It may be objected that a person cannot be reduced to a series of zeros and ones that can be shuffled about between robotic bodies and virtual reality programs. But Kurzweil and Moravec are quick to reply that since the mind is not a material object, but ultimately what a person is, then it cannot be anything other than information. A personality is comprised of a pattern of organized data that is created and stored over time. A biological body is merely a natural prosthetic hosting this pattern. Unfortunately, nature has not produced a very reliable or enduring prosthetic, so technology must be used to produce a better model. In liberating the mind from the biological body, nothing essential is lost, for if the information pattern of a person's identity is preserved, then, in Moravec's words, "I am preserved. The rest is mere jelly."[12] In short, technology can and should be developed to save individuals from the poor jelly-like conditions of being human.

III. Critical Reflections on Posthumanism from a Christian

Since, to paraphrase the prophet, I am neither an engineer nor the son of an engineer, I am not in a position to prognosticate whether or not these approaches toward achieving immortality are technologically feasible. In many respects, the feasibility is not the most troubling issue at stake, but, the posthuman story that is being told regarding what constitutes a good and desirable life. To a large extent it is a religious story. Not religious in a formal sense, but in the way Martin Luther speaks in the Large Catechism of having a God: wherever one places one's confidence is necessarily one's

[10] See Ray Kurzweil, *The Age of Spiritual Machines: When Computers Exceed Human Intelligence* (New York: Penguin Books, 2000), and *The Singularity Is Near*.

[11] See Hans Moravec, *Mind Children*, and *Robot: Mere Machines to Transcendent Mind* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[12] Moravec, *Mind Children*, 117.

god, or more broadly one's object of faith.[13] Posthumanism is a faith in the power of technology to shape and control human destiny by saving humans from their mortal bodies. It is a story about a new being that is simultaneously a better creator and better creature.

It appears that posthumanism and Christianity share a number of similarities, particularly in regard to soteriology and eschatology. They agree, for instance, that the finite and mortal state of the human condition is not ideal. For posthumanists, humans have failed to achieve their true potential, while Christians believe that humans are fallen creatures. In response, both agree that we require release or salvation from our current condition. For posthumanists, this is accomplished through technological transformation, while Christians are transformed by their life in Christ. Both agree that death is the final enemy; one conquerors this foe by achieving the immortality of endless time, while the other is resurrected into eternal fellowship with the triune God.

These similarities, however, are more apparent than real, for the core beliefs undergirding posthumanism are drawn, often unwittingly, from what Christians regard as heretical sources. This is not a pejorative observation, for identifying these sources does not automatically disclose that the subsequent analysis and proposed solution for relieving the human condition is wrong. Rather, it serves to demonstrate why Christians should greet posthumanism with, at best, a deep skepticism, and, at worse, grave caution. I now hope to demonstrate why such caution is warranted, by summarizing and contrasting some principal soteriological and eschatological tenets of posthumanism and Christianity respectively, and then argue why those of the former are both false and dangerous.

The urgency of the posthuman religious story is seen in Max More's article, "Technological Self-Transformation."[14] According to More: "Life is fundamentally a ceaseless process, whose quintessence is a self-overcoming, a progression, a self-transformation and self-augmentation." More expansively, the chief characteristic of human life is a "perpetual drive toward its own increase and excellence." It is not coincidental that this drive is accompanied by an innate "desire for extreme longevity and the quest for physical immortality," since they constitute the prerequisites for maximum self-fulfillment. Although technology provides the practical

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[13] See H. Richard Niebuhr, *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 119–122.

[14] Max More, "Technological Self-Transformation," http://www.maxmore.com/selftrns.htm (accessed July 18, 2011). Subsequent quotations are from this article unless indicated otherwise.

means for achieving extreme longevity and immortality, more importantly it enhances human autonomy by eliminating the constraints of DNA, religion, political ideologies, and outdated values. Consequently, we are urged to "ignore the biological fundamentalists who will invoke 'God's plan' or 'the natural order of things,' in an effort to imprison us at the human level." We should instead accept the challenge of recreating ourselves in our own image.

What exactly is this image? According to More, there is no single answer. Different individuals have differing goals, so that "self-transformation is best implemented by creating for ourselves a paradigm, and idealized model of the person we want to become." What More calls the "ideal self" or "Optimal Persona" is subject to periodic review, assessment and readjustment in order that the "higher being existing within us" is realized.

More's goal of the optimal person is problematic. He contends that human evolution is driven by a desire for self enhancement. To a limited extent this is true. In the past, however, this augmentation was intergenerational, achieved incrementally through the less invasive means of natural selection in tandem with socialization. Biological and cultural change has been driven by the quality of the species rather than its individual members. What More is proposing is a radical and rapid transformation of individuals rather than the gradual improvement of the species. Furthermore, he assumes that such technological self-transformation can be pursued without any corresponding loss of subjectivity. This assumption, however, ignores the fact that the mind develops in conjunction with the brain, and more broadly the body. There is, at best, scant evidence indicating what kind of subjectivity would result should this linkage between mind and body be reconfigured.

Moreover, even if the kind of self-transformation More proposes proves feasible, what exactly is this ideal self or Optimal Persona? More believes that individuals can refashion themselves into the kind of beings they want to become, but his proposed project of so-called "rational" self-creation fails him because of the radical libertarian rhetoric in which his argument is embedded. His ideal self exemplifies the autonomous individual, which means that he is appealing to a historically conditioned tradition rather than any so-called "pure" rationality. The eventual post-human is little more than a hyper-libertarian.

More tries to solve this problem by asserting that the "Optimal Persona is Nietzsche's *Übermensch*, the higher being existing within us as potential waiting to be actualized." What would be some of the chief

characteristics of this technologically constructed *Übermensch*? Despite More's insistence that this latent potential can be actualized, he offers few suggestions regarding what a world populated by optimal persons might be like. We may turn to Hans Moravec, however, for a glimpse of the envisioned posthuman future. Moravec describes developments in computer science, artificial intelligence, and robotics over the latter half of the twentieth century, and draws upon anticipated advances in the next few decades. Machines that are both intelligent and conscious will emerge by the middle of the twenty-first century. Once this threshold is crossed, artificial life will evolve exponentially.[15] In order for humans to take full advantage of this technological breakthrough, they will need to merge with their "mind children." Eventually, artificial life will evolve into pure thought, transforming the universe into an expanding cyberspace of pure mind.[16] Once this "Omega Point" has been reached,[17] the resulting posthumans will be far superior to their human ancestors.

This posthuman eschatology, however, does not solve the problem of the *Übermensch*, but only makes it worse. According to Nietzsche, nihilists pave the way for the *Übermensch*. Nihilists come to love rather than despise their mortal fate, enabling them to renounce any right to vengeance or dominating others. For Nietzsche, the only hope is that the nobility of the *Übermensch* will overcome the destructive *ressentiment* of the last men. But what the posthumanists fail to acknowledge is that the inspiration for a noble love of fate comes from the classic Greek philosophical embrace of suffering and tragedy. The *Übermensch* will presumably come to love the tragic fate of his or her mortality and the suffering this love requires. Yet it is precisely this fate that posthumanists are trying to avoid. Consequently, technology is not used to coax out the latent *Übermensch,* but to create an entirely new being. But this begs the question: is posthumanism simply a nihilistic expression of a technophilia (love of technology) devoid of any genuine love of fate? If the nobility of mortality and suffering cannot be embraced, is there anything noble left to will? Rather, are they not attempting to abolish this fate by effectively willing the death of humankind? The only plausible salvific answer that can be offered is that humans must be saved from their mortal bodies in order to perfect the latent qualities of the mind, and this strategy is in turn driven by an eschatological imperative to achieve this perfection through the creation of a superior posthuman creature that provides a more enduring host for the information constituting an optimal person. In short, posthumanists wish

[15] See Moravec, *Robot*: *Mere Machines,* 15–126.

[16] Moravec, *Robot*: *Mere Machines,* 163–189.

[17] Moravec, *Robot*: *Mere Machines,* 201–202.

to replace mortality with endless time as the definitive feature of the (post)human condition. But is this a religious story that should be warmly embraced?

It is admittedly an appealing story. Who would not want to live forever? Contrary to some critics of posthumanism that complain that immortality would prove boring after a while, I think I could find plenty of ways to amuse myself. An appealing story, however, is not necessarily a true and good story, and that is what must be assessed.

Christians cannot embrace posthuman religion, particularly its salvific strategy and eschatological horizon, for reasons that are similar to its earlier rejection of the Manichean and Pelagian heresies. In brief, Manicheans were dualists who believed that the material world was evil while the spiritual world was good. A person's good soul was trapped in an evil body. Pelagians believed that humans could achieve perfection, however it might be defined, through the strength of their own will power. People can will themselves to be perfect. These are old heresies they keep reappearing from time to time, for they are stubborn and seductive ideas that will not go away, as is apparent in the posthuman story. Posthumanism echoes a Manichean disdain of a corrupt, if not evil, material body from which a person (or more accurately the non-material information constituting a person) must be rescued. Yet, unlike their predecessors the solution is not found in the release of death, but in denying death by overcoming the mortal limits of the body. There is also the Pelagian reiteration of the ability of humans to will themselves to perfection. The posthuman personifies the desire of the will to become the perfect being that it wills itself to be: the optimal person.

What is worrying for Christianity is not that these old heresies have found a new voice in posthumanism, but the disquieting moral beliefs accompanying them. The Manichean cannot resist hating the body, for it is a prison incarcerating the optimal person. The resulting aggravation, however, is not limited to self-loathing, but is extended to a latent contempt of embodiment in general. If the body is merely a prison or poor prosthesis of the will, then it is easier to justify physical neglect and abuse. The Pelagian quest for perfection ultimately cannot tolerate the imperfect. Regardless how perfection might be defined—a perfect body, mind, or will, for example—that which remains imperfect or lacks the capability of being perfected should be eliminated or prevented. Alarmingly, Pelagians of every age often appeal to medical rhetoric to achieve the perfection they

envision.[18] Is it not for the sake of public hygiene that eugenic programs seek to sanitize the race and prevent the birth of those who would infect it? If the posthuman exemplifies the triumph of the will, then there is an accompanying and inescapable logic of the necessity of eliminating or preventing that which is judged to stand in the way of its final and perfect culmination.

These criticisms do not suggest that posthumanists endorse cruelty and intolerance. Rather, old heresies in new garb serve as reminders that good intentions alone cannot prevent unintended consequences that are, nevertheless, evil. The problem with heresy is not that it deliberately advocates what is wrong, but that it elevates half-truths into the whole truth, thereby distorting the good it is purportedly seeking to achieve. Following Arendt, it is, more often than not, thoughtlessness instead of malice that results in evil acts.[19] In rebutting these heresies, Christian theology has appealed to the goodness of the body, and more particularly to the good of embodiment. The particular challenge in response to post-humanism, therefore, is not to remain human, but to remain creaturely, which by definition is to be finite and mortal, and therefore inescapably embodied. It is in and through our bodies that we give and receive life, and in and through our bodies that we are in fellowship with one another and with our Creator.

This affirmation of embodiment is derived from the doctrine of the Incarnation. Through the incarnation, God vindicates and redeems creation from its futility, thereby conquering death as witnessed by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is the empty tomb that most starkly differentiates Christian eschatology from its posthuman counterpart. The soul is not rescued from the body, but rather it is as an embodied creature that one is redeemed by God. The doctrine of Christ's bodily resurrection, therefore, should not be casually discarded as a relic of a credulous age, for it serves as a powerful reminder that the body is God's good gift and not something to be despised. Christians affirm the *credo* that the resurrection of the body is part of their destiny of eternal fellowship with the triune God. For Christians, death is a real fate, but it is neither to be feared nor loved, for in Christ death has already been overcome and redeemed within eternity. Consequently, what separates Christian from posthuman eschatology is that the latter seeks immortality while the former awaits eternity. Transformation does not consist of greatly extended longevity culminating

[18] See John Passmore, *The Perfectibility of Man* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970).

[19] See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992).

in virtual immortality, but a temporal finitude and mortality that has already been transcended by eternity. It is the finitude and mortality of being human that is affirmed by the incarnation; it is not a condition from which creatures need rescuing but the condition in which finite and mortal creatures are saved. To denigrate the body is thoughtlessly to deny the very grace that sustains, vindicates, and redeems the human condition. It is the Word made flesh, and not flesh reduced to data, that is ultimately salvific.

Ironically, in their quest for extreme longevity and immortality, posthumanists become fixated upon mortality, and it is a perilous, if not deadly, fixation. Borrowing from Arendt, birth and death are the two definitive conditions demarcating the human condition.[20] It is pursuing life rather than avoiding death, however, that should provide the principal metaphor for ordering human life and lives. What Arndt calls "natality" ensures a generational continuity over time, while also encapsulating the possibility for change and improvement. Each new birth embodies simultaneously a continuous line of memory and anticipation, a self-giving which creates a recipient who is both like and yet unlike the giver. The gift of every parent is also the unique possibility of each child. Although death is not something to be embraced lovingly, mortality is not humankind's great curse. When death is perceived as nothing more than a cruel fate, natality is robbed of its power to renew and regenerate. To be fixated on mortality is to promote a social and political order that attempts to cheat that fate for as long as possible. Survival becomes *the* consuming desire that in turn corrupts all other values and considerations. The birth of a child holds no hope or promise, but serves only as a reminder of a mortal fate to be despised and despaired. Consequently, replication—as opposed to procreation—becomes the tyrannous rationale of personal survival pervading all resulting relationships and associations.

It is telling that posthumanists have little to say substantively about natality and mortality. At best, mortality becomes an *is* from which the *ought* of its negation is derived. Yet the ensuing imperative can only be achieved by relentlessly seeking the destruction of the finite and mortal qualities that makes its formulation possible. Is the surgical removal of humankind's creaturely status really the only advice posthumanists have to offer in the face of death? If so, then the underlying survivalist ethic becomes more explicable, helping to account for an equally vacuous understanding of natality. More often than not, posthumanists simply

[20] See Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 7–11.

ignore any intergenerational questions in order to concentrate on the more pressing question of extending personal longevity.

This lack of serious engagement with the religious, moral, and political significance of natality amplifies a morbid fascination with mortality. If the only meaningful way to contend against the old enemy of death is to survive for as long as possible, then it is absurd to contemplate any normative tasks of social and political ordering. There are simply no institutions or structures requiring continuity and renewal, for the future is merely a self-absorbing extension of the present. Yet to ignore or denigrate the significance of natality is to reject the underlying unity and equality that both binds and liberates generations over time. To displace this with survivalist engineering is to succumb to the tyranny of the present over the future; of the creator over the artifact, for the latter can never be genuinely free from the originating intentions of the former; the *made* cannot share fully the equal fellowship of the *begotten*.[21] Ironically, in attempting to transform oneself into a superior being, the resulting posthuman becomes enslaved to itself as a self-constructed artifact, a semblance of a semblance.

IV. Conclusion

Posthumanism is an idolatrous religion proffering a counterfeit salvation. It is counterfeit because of the inability to see finitude and mortality as nothing more than unfortunate constraints upon the will to be conquered and discarded. But the cost this victory would require is the elimination of the very creatures that need to be saved. One has to destroy humankind in order to save human beings. Despite all the survival and immortality rhetoric, at its core posthumanism is a religion predicated upon a death wish. And even if none of the envisioned technological developments come true, it remains a dangerous idea, for it exemplifies and amplifies the nihilistic ontology of late modernity in which creation and its creatures are subjected to an endless and violent process of construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction. Posthumanism is a dangerous idea not because of its futuristic orientation, but because its rhetoric is hyperbolic commentary on our present circumstances. What happens to the moral and religious imagination when posthumans view embodiment as an enemy to be despised and warred against rather than a definitive feature of a creature bearing the image and likeness of God?

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[21] This distinction between making and begetting and the resulting inequality between the maker and the made as opposed to the underlying equality of the begetter and the begotten is derived from Oliver O'Donovan's moral and theological analysis of reproductive technology. See *Begotten or Made?* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984).

I fear that something akin to posthuman rhetoric is coming to dominate the discourse of the public square. This is seen, for instance, in the ease with which the human body, and particularly prenatal life, is coming to be regarded as biological commodities to be used and exploited at will. In opposition, Christians must assert the good of embodiment and defend the status of humans as creatures created in the image and likeness of their Creator. This will not be an easy sell, but then again, when has truth ever been something easy to proclaim or easily embraced?

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The ELCA—*Quo Vadis*?

Mark D. Menacher

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), *quo vadis*? Whither goest thou? As a corporation in the United States, it is not only grammatically but also legally correct, as the Latin denotes, to refer to the ELCA in the second person singular. As many are aware, the ELCA was formed by the merger of the American Lutheran Church (ALC), the Lutheran Church in America (LCA), and the Association of Evangelical Lutheran Churches (AELC), which went into effect on January 1, 1988. The verb "to merge" comes from the Latin *mergere*, meaning "to dip, to plunge, or to sink."[1] In ELCA parlance—post-merger—one refers to the ALC, LCA, and AELC as predecessor church bodies. The ALC, formed in 1960, and the LCA, formed in 1962, each resulted from mergers of their predecessor bodies, a total of fourteen for the ALC and seven for the LCA.[2] In contrast thereto, the AELC formed in 1976 due to dissension in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Given the catalyzing role of the AELC in the formation of the ELCA and the subsequent, influential placement of some its leaders in the ELCA, in hindsight some in the LCMS may view the formation of the AELC as rather providential.

In 1982, all three ELCA predecessor church bodies voted to proceed toward the formation of a new Lutheran entity. To implement this plan, the existing Committee on Lutheran Unity was replaced by a seventy-member Commission for a New Lutheran Church. At their respective, concurrent national conventions in August 1986, the three ELCA predecessor church bodies voted to adopt the necessary procedures to achieve their own dissolution, to accept the constitution and bylaws of their new church, and to implement the proposed agreement and plan for their merger.

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[1] *The Concise Oxford Dictionary*, 7th edition (Oxford: At the Clarendon Press), 634. See also *Langenscheidts Großes Schulwörterbuch Lateinisch-Deutsch*, 5th ed. (Nördlingen: C. H. Beck'sche Buchdruckerei), 741.

[2] Lowell Almen, *One Great Cloud of Witnesses* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 9–12.

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Not all, however, were enamored with the proposed amalgamation. As the *Los Angeles Times* reported on the voting during the LCA's convention:

> Plans to announce the results [of voting] simultaneously to the assembled [at all three conventions] via a telephone hookup failed. During a lull in the wait for connections to be made, defrocked LCA Minister Daniel N. Solberg walked up to the podium microphone here to denounce the merger, beginning: "Thus says the Lord, I hate your adulterous merger, your whoring after corporate idols . . . your congregations will wither and your people fall away." The sound was turned off, delegates started clapping rhythmically to drown out Solberg and the session was adjourned. Police officers later removed Solberg from the building.[3]

Solberg, brother of pop singer David Soul, had been removed from the LCA's rolls the previous June for his political activism in Pennsylvania against corporate America. Despite his inability to alter either the course of U.S. corporate policy or the ELCA merger, Solberg's brash comments have proved rather prophetic for the post-merger ELCA.[4] Despite the ELCA's intentions to start 1,200 new congregations in the first seven years of its existence, quite the opposite has happened. According to its own statistics, the ELCA began its life in 1988 with 5.3 million members in 11,133 congregations. By 2011, those figures had withered to 4.1 million members in 9,638 congregations, declines of 23 percent and 13 percent, respectively.[5] In that light, the interrogative "ELCA, whither goest thou?" becomes indicative: "ELCA, wither goest thou." In the past twenty-five years, whither have more than one million ELCA members gone and to what depths has this merged, ecclesial corporation sunk to effect such an exodus?

By most criteria of success, the ELCA is a failed merger. The anabaptism of Lutheran terminology in the confluence of secular and religious

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[3] John Dart, "3 Lutheran Churches to Merge Into 4th Largest in Protestantism," *The Los Angeles Times*, August 30, 1986. http://articles.latimes.com/1986-08-30/local/me-14279_1_evangelical-lutheran-churches (accessed November 21, 2013).

[4] Dart, "3 Lutheran Churches to Merge into 4th Largest in Protestantism." Preceding Solberg, W. Douglas Roth was also removed from the LCA's rolls the previous year for similar political activism. An account of events from David Soul's perspective is available at http://www.davidsoul.com/the-fighting-ministers/ (accessed November 21, 2013).

[5] http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-ThreeExpressions/Churchwide Organization/Communication-Services/News/Resources/Stats.aspx (accessed January 21, 2013). These statistics change annually.

humanism, the institutional narcissism executed and enforced by its choreographed churchwide assemblies, the self-referential ecumenical harlotry, the perversion of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions in the service of socio-political agenda, the decades of internal dissension and divisions, and the precipitous loss of membership make questions of "whence" or "whither" or even "what" seemingly difficult to formulate much less answer precisely. Moreover, given the ELCA's fractious existence thus far, probing the deleterious symptoms of its malaise cannot readily reveal the aetiology of the ELCA's *Lebenslage*, or perhaps better, its *Todeslage*. Therefore, to cut to the chase, the remainder of this essay will proceed with the assertion that the ELCA is both blithely possessed by and spiritually enslaved to a false gospel, namely the false gospel of inclusivity. What does this mean?

Moving past the traditional, Lutheran-sounding language found in the first sections of the ELCA's constitution, with headings Confession of Faith, the Nature of the Church, and the Statement of Purpose, one finds in Chapter 5, Principles of Organization, paragraph 5.01.b, the following:

> This church, in faithfulness to the Gospel, is committed to be an *inclusive church* in the midst of division in society. Therefore, in their organization and outreach, the congregations, synods, and churchwide units of this church shall seek to exhibit the *inclusive unity* that is God's will for the Church.[6]

Plainly, the synergistic application of the key terms in this paragraph infers a divine mandate to reinterpret and subsume the terms gospel, church, and unity under the principle of inclusivity. Unfortunately, the ELCA's inclusivity is selectively inclusive. Preceding the constitution itself, in self-contradictory fashion, Article VIII of ELCA's Restated Articles of Incorporation reads, "Except as otherwise provided in the Church's Constitution, the Church shall have no members with voting rights . . . Members of congregations of the Church shall not, as such, have any voting rights with respect to this corporation."[7] Taken together, the

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[6] Constitution, Bylaws, and Continuing Resolutions, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, as adopted by the Constituting Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in American in Columbus, Ohio, April 30, 1987, revised June 3, 1987, 23 (emphasis added; hereafter ELCA 1987 Constitution). Notably, the ELCA's constitution has been amended at every churchwide assembly since it began operations in 1988. The current version can be found at http://www.elca.org/~/media/Files/Who%20We%20Are/Office%20of%20the%20Secretary/Constitutions/PDF/CBCR_2011_November.pdf (accessed January 21, 2013). Subsequent references will be made to the original constitution unless otherwise indicated.

[7] ELCA 1987 Constitution, 12.

ELCA's governing documents reflect the ultimate organizational principle enshrined in *Animal Farm*, George Orwell's 1940s critique of communism. Modified for the ELCA this becomes, "All animals are included, but some animals are more included than others." Like the ELCA's tripartite organizational structure, its so-called congregational, synodical, and churchwide "expressions,"[8] the ELCA's false gospel of inclusivity manifests itself primarily in three, interdependent hypostases: institutional, ecumenical, and socio-political.

I. The False Gospel of the Institutional Church

Institutionally, although the ELCA, at least as per its constitution, "confesses the Triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit" and "confesses Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior" and "accepts the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments" and "accepts the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds" and "accepts the Unaltered Augsburg Confession," and "accepts the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord,"[9] nowhere does the ELCA's constitution state that the ELCA actually believes any of that. Further, although the ELCA's constitution also states, "All power in the Church belongs to our Lord Jesus Christ, its head. All actions of this church are to be carried out under his rule and authority,"[10] given the ELCA's momentous decisions and actions contrary to both Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, as directed by its leadership and as dictated by its supreme authority, namely its own churchwide assembly, the question necessarily arises, to which christ might the ELCA's constitution be referring? Again, whereas the third article of the Nicene Creed confesses belief in the "one, holy, catholic, apostolic church," the ELCA's constitution describes the church to be "an inclusive fellowship," deriving "its character and powers both from the sanction and representation of its congregations and from its *inherent* nature as an expression of the broader fellowship of the faithful . . . . In length, it acknowledges *itself* to be in the historic continuity of the communion of saints; in breadth, it expresses the fellowship of believers and congregations in our day."[11]

Nothing in this self-referential description pertains to the work of the Holy Spirit who through the gospel "calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth and preserves it in union with

[8] ELCA 1987 Constitution, 23, Chapter 5. Principles of Organization, 5.01.c.

[9] ELCA 1987 Constitution, 20, Chapter 2. Confession of Faith, 2.01–2.06.

[10] ELCA 1987 Constitution, 20, Chapter 3. Nature of the Church, 3.01.

[11] ELCA 1987 Constitution, 20, Chapter 3. Nature of the Church, 3.02; emphasis added.

Jesus Christ in the one true faith," as Luther teaches in his explanation of the third article of the Apostles' Creed.[12] In the ELCA, faith alone appears to have been relegated to the private spheres of its non-voting, congregational members whose only real power is exercised with their pocketbooks and feet. Finally, despite "accepting" the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the teaching in Article V that God has instituted the office of preaching to give the gospel and sacraments as a means to give the Holy Spirit to obtain justifying faith,[13] the ELCA's initial constitution, "Chapter 10. Ministry," sought to establish a ministerial structure based instead on the law, and particularly law demanded by other ecclesial traditions. This paragraph states,

> *During the same period of 1988–1994, this church shall engage in an intensive study of the nature of ministry, leading to decisions regarding appropriate forms of ministry that will enable this church to fulfill its mission. During the course of such study, special attention shall be given to:*
>
> 1) *The tradition of the Lutheran church*;
>
> 2) *The possibility of articulating a Lutheran understanding and adaptation of the threefold ministerial office of bishop, pastor, and deacon and its ecumenical implication*;[14]

The question arises: what other mission and office is the church called to fulfill than to proclaim the gospel by which sinners are justified by faith alone in Jesus Christ apart from works of the law?[15]

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[12] Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism," *The Book of Concord*, ed. Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 345 (hereafter BoC). See also *Die Bekenntnisschriften der Evangelisch-Lutherischen Kirche*, 9th edition (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1982), 511–512 (hereafter as BSLK).

[13] BSLK, 58, "Solchen Glauben zu erlangen, hat Gott das Predigtamt eingesetzt, Evangelium und Sakrament geben, dadurch er als durch Mittel den heiligen Geist gibt, welcher den Glauben, wo und wenn er will, in denen, so das Evangelium hören, wirket, welches da lehret, daß wir durch Christus Verdienst, nicht durch unser Verdienst, ein grädigen Gott haben, so wir solchs glauben." Tappert's translation of Predigtamt as "the office of the ministry" (BoC, 31), apparently reliant upon the Latin title *De ministerio ecclesiasico*, does not represent the German in either letter or spirit as proclamation is chiefly a word-event to invoke faith rather than a service activity of some sort.

[14] ELCA 1987 Constitution, 48, Chapter 10. Ministry, paragraph 10.11.A87.b.1–2. italics original. For a variety of reasons, some of which will become apparent, this paragraph has been deleted from this chapter which itself has been significantly modified and moved, appearing now as Chapter 7.

[15] When the ELCA proposes to study something, that often indicates intent to move away from Scripture, the Lutheran Confessions, or both.

II. The False Gospel of Ecumenism

From the outset, the ELCA has constitutionally mandated and declared that God's word in Jesus Christ and the pure proclamation of his gospel are not enough (*non est satis*) for the ELCA's self-understanding as a Lutheran Church. By deriving its inclusive fellowship from its false gospel of inclusivity, which selectively includes the ideologies and ecclesiologies demanded by secular trends and canon laws, respectively, the ELCA has excluded more than the voice of its congregations. By exchanging the *viva vox evangelii Iesu Christi* for its false gospel of inclusivity, the ELCA has necessarily excluded itself from the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the Holy Spirit.

The ELCA's ecumenical agenda is essentially an expansion of its institutional expression. In other words, the ELCA's ecumenical agenda is not driven by ecumenism but rather by the implementation of its false gospel beyond itself and yet predominately in relation to itself. For example, at first glance, the ELCA's stated "goal of eventual full communion" with the Roman Catholic Church[16] would seem to contradict not only its broader ecumenical aspirations but also its constant socio-political activism, both of which are often diametrically opposed to Vatican ecumenical and social doctrines. Viewed from the perspective of the ELCA's false gospel of inclusivity, however, such contradictions are readily accommodated, though not reconciled, because being inclusive as understood by the ELCA is its own universal (catholic) criterion and goal. How does this work?

By the time the ELCA commenced operations on January 1, 1988, two other broad ecumenical groups were well underway, the Consultation on Church Union (COCU) in the U.S.A., founded in 1962, and the Leuenberg Church Fellowship, established in 1973 by the *Leuenberg Agreement*, which is today called the Community of Protestant Churches in Europe (CPCE), with membership incidentally not confined to Europe. Of the ten COCU churches, known since 2002 as Churches Uniting in Christ (CUIC), the ELCA has, through bilateral agreements, declared itself in full communion with five, namely the Presbyterian Church (USA), The Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ, the Moravian Church—Northern Province, and the United Methodist Church. At its churchwide assembly in August

[16] ELCA News Service, "Lutheran-Roman Catholic Dialogue Completes Round Ten" (04-084-FI), April 29, 2004. The full news release is available at http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Communication-Services/News/Releases.aspx?SearchCriteria=Completes+Round+Ten#&&SearchCriteria=Completes+Round+Ten&a=5268 (accessed January 21, 2013).

2001,[17] the ELCA also voted to become a "partner in mission and dialogue" in the nascent CIUC, which provides the ELCA with participant (i.e., associate member) status. Although the *Leuenberg Agreement* grants altar and pulpit fellowship to its now 105 member churches based on the principles of Article VII of the Augsburg Confession,[18] as they view it, the ELCA has to date no affiliation with CPCE.

If the ELCA were truly ecumenical, or at least as ecumenical as it portrays itself, then it would seem justified to argue that the ELCA not only should have but also would have from its inception pursued full (communion) memberships with the 100-plus array of churches available through both COCU and Leuenberg. Instead, the ELCA has negotiated only four full-communion accords encompassing just six church bodies, all of which have been achieved through bilateral dialogues exclusively between ELCA and these few churches.[19] Furthermore, if the ELCA were truly as inclusive as its false gospel would seem to necessitate, then again it not only should have but also would have struck full communion arrangements with all 10 CUIC denominations rather than just five. Notably, the ELCA has no full communion accords with any of the predominantly black CUIC bodies, namely, the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the Christian Methodist Episcopal Church. This disparity would seem to underscore that the ELCA's false gospel of inclusivity discriminately considers some more included than others.

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[17] http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Communication-Services/News/Releases.aspx?SearchCriteria=%22churches+uniting+in+Christ%22#&&SearchCriteria=CUIC&a=5262; (accessed January 21, 2013).

[18] See Mark D. Menacher, "Confusion and Clarity in Recent German Ecumenism," *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 13, no. 2 (Eastertide 2004): 23–32.

[19] *The Formula of Agreement* established full communion between the ELCA and three Reformed churches, the Presbyterian Church (USA), the Reformed Church in America, and the United Church of Christ in 1997. In 1999, the ELCA and the Episcopal Church began their goal of full communion with the passage of *Called to Common Mission* (CCM). In that same year it established full communion with the Moravian Church via *Following Our Shepherd to Full Communion* (http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/Following_Our_Shepherd_To_Full_Communion.pdf.pdf; accessed December 8, 2013). In 2009, the ELCA reciprocated a resolution passed by the United Methodist Church in 2008 to establish full communion based on a document titled *Confessing Our Faith Together: A Proposal for Full Communion between the ELCA and UMC* (http://www.gccuic-umc.org/index2.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_view&gid=15&Itemid=235; accessed December 8, 2013).

As self-contradictory, or perhaps as hypocritical as its ecumenical inclusivity may be, none of the preceding interdenominational undertakings has been particularly disruptive or divisive for the ELCA. In stark contrast thereto, the ELCA's full communion agreement with the Episcopal Church (ECUSA), titled *Called to Common Mission* (CCM), has created substantial dissension and division in the ELCA. More significantly yet, the ELCA's endeavors to initiate and advance the so-called *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* (JDDJ) have led the ELCA, in the name of church unity ironically, to dissociate itself from any credible claim to subsist as a Lutheran church. Both will be treated in order.

Called to Common Mission

When the *Concordat of Agreement*, the full-communion proposal between the ELCA and the ECUSA failed to be adopted by the ELCA's 1997 churchwide assembly, its defeat was not accepted by ELCA proponents of "full-communion" between these two churches. Instead, the ELCA Churchwide Assembly requested a revision of the *Concordat*, one that would enable full-communion to proceed by addressing the concerns of those who opposed the *Concordat*. In subsequent months, a small committee chaired by Martin E. Marty drafted a revision whose full title is *Called to Common Mission: A Lutheran Proposal for a Revision of the Concordat of Agreement*. Necessarily, CCM retained the *Concordat's* most controversial provision, namely the obligation that the ELCA adopt the tradition of "historic episcopacy" or historic episcopal succession to effect full-communion with the Episcopal Church.

In order to make this quintessential, Episcopalian demand, stipulated in the Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilaterial (1886/1888), appear to be "confessionally Lutheran" enough to propose to the ELCA's 1999 churchwide assembly, Marty's drafting team engaged in what may arguably be called the greatest act of deception ever cultivated by an ecclesial denomination in the history of North America. CCM paragraph 11 states,

> "Historic succession" refers to a tradition which goes back to the ancient church, in which bishops already in the succession install newly elected bishops with prayer and the laying-on-of-hands. At present, The Episcopal Church has bishops in this historic succession, as do all the churches of the Anglican Communion, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America at present does not, although some member churches of the Lutheran World Federation do. The Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilateral of 1886/1888, the ecumenical policy of The Episcopal Church, refers to this tradition as "the historic episcopate." In the Lutheran Confessions, Article 14 of the *Apology*

> refers to this episcopal pattern by the phrase, "the ecclesiastical and canonical polity" which it is "our deep desire to maintain."

When the ELCA Presiding Bishop, H. George Anderson, announced the passage of CCM to the 1999 Churchwide Assembly, assisted by this fraudulent use of the Lutheran Confessions, he is reported as declaring, "It is the will of God."[20]

Faced after its passage with continuing opposition to CCM in the ELCA by the WordAlone Network, proponents of this deceptively titled "Lutheran Proposal" continued to beat their pseudo-confessional drums. For example, David S. Yeago, formerly a professor at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, which has recently been subsumed by Lenoir-Rhyne University, boldly claimed in *Lutheran Forum*,

> We must say No to polemics, which claim to represent true Lutheranism, but obscure the clear endorsement in our Confessions of that body of practice now called the historic episcopate as a bond of communion between the Churches: "On this matter, as we often testified at Augsburg, we desire with the greatest eagerness to preserve the polity of the Church and the degrees of office in the Church, even if these were established by human authority. For we know that the Church's order was set up by the Fathers in this way, as the ancient canons describe, by a good and helpful plan (Apology XIV 1)."[21]

Not surprisingly, David Yeago was not alone in his opinion. According to Carl E. Braaten, neither Luther nor Melanchthon "nor the majority of Lutheran theologians around the world and most of the seminary faculties of the ELCA" saw any reason that "the adoption of the episcopal office in apostolic succession would contradict the Lutheran Confessions."[22]

Commenting on these developments and particularly on the ELCA's 2002 recommendation that its congregations no longer celebrate Reformation Day, Heike Schmoll of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, whose journalistic prowess also helped bring the *Joint Declaration* to its knees in Germany, observed in a Reformation Day editorial,

> In the wake of their Anglicanization, the American Lutherans are on the way from being a "confessional church," which is led by the con-

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[20] The author is grateful to Pastor John Fahning for relaying his eyewitness account.

[21] David Yeago, "Gospel and Church: Twelve Articles of Theological Principle amid the Present Conflict in the ELCA," *Lutheran Forum* 34, no. 1 (Spring 2000), 21–22.

[22] Carl E. Braaten, "Episcopacy and the E.L.C.A.," *dialog: A Journal of Theology* 39, no. 3 (Fall 2000), 220.

> tents of its proclamation, to being a "constitutional church," which is defined by its ordering of ministerial offices. For this reason, as of late, the American Lutherans have directed their interests, in a way wholly uncharacteristic of the Reformation, to the office of bishop and ecclesial structures and appear to have forgotten that an evangelical bishop is a pastor among pastors.[23]

Wherever the ELCA may be going guided by its self-referential compass, it has not gone unnoticed either in the Lutheran world or in the secular press internationally that the ELCA shall not be deterred on its path by either objective facts or by internal factions.

Unfortunately for Martin Marty and his drafting team, the erroneous confessional conjecture fabricated in CCM paragraph 11, known to be false when drafted, eventually came to light. Research originally published in 2002 in *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*[24] and later disseminated to all Lutheran World Federation (LWF) member churches would eventually lead both the ELCA and the LWF central office in Geneva to cease using their invented Lutheran confessional support for the adoption of the historic episcopacy.[25] Despite this change of mind, though not change of heart, no academic or other professional ethicist and no elected or appointed church leader in the ELCA has acknowledged or admitted to any wrongdoing in either the drafting or prosecuting of the fraud used to ensure the passage of *Called to Common Mission*.

Whereas Article VII of the Augsburg Confession states that it is enough (*ist genug*, *satis est*) for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the pure teaching/preaching of the gospel and the right administration of the sacraments,[26] the ELCA, in contrast and contradiction, has knowingly utilized grand deception in order to conform its ordained ministry to the dictates of the Anglican Chicago-Lambeth Quadrilaterial, whose principles reflect the religious intolerance enshrined in the English Parliament's 1662 Act of Uniformity. This Act, introduced during the Restoration of the British monarchy, banished all non-episcopally ordained ministers from the Church of England[27] and prescribed them to be treated

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[23] Heike Schmoll, "Kommentar—Die Wahrheit des Protestantismus," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* 253 (October 30/31, 2003): 1; author's translation.

[24] See Mark D. Menacher, "Called to Common Mission—A Lutheran Proposal?" *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 11, no. 1 (Epiphany 2002): 21–28.

[25] See Mark D. Menacher, "Ten Years after JDDJ the Ecumenical Pelagianism Continues," *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* 18, no.3 (Holy Trinity 2009): 27–45.

[26] BSLK, 61; BoC, 32.

[27] Menacher, "Called to Common Mission—A Lutheran Proposal?," 25-26.

by the church as if they "were dead."[28] Apart from a few exceptions to CCM in "unusual circumstances," known in the ELCA as the "exceptions clause" passed in 2001, seventeenth-century Anglican religious intolerance and its enforced episcopalianism now govern the ordering of the ELCA's ordained ministry.[29] The ELCA's false gospel of inclusivity calls this the will of God, but what kind of a god is that and what kind of a christ is the head of the ELCA's fraudulent decision-making process?

Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification

As should be apparent, the various manifestations of the ELCA's ecumenical Pelagianism stem from its abandonment of the gospel of justification by faith alone in favor of its own inclusive gospel of make-believe. This becomes particularly poignant in its dealings with the Counter-Reformation denomination overseen by the Bishop of Rome, especially in relation to the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification*. Obviously, a review of the events from its inception in 1993 to its non-signing on Reformation Day in Augsburg in 1999 exceeds the confines of this essay. In quick summary, however, the initial draft of JDDJ was revised twice due to the copious objections from LWF member churches around the globe.[30] Shortly thereafter, a petition drive in Germany garnering the signatures of more than 160 university theologians effectively derailed the *Joint Declaration*. Undeterred, however, the LWF central office joined in secret negotiations with Vatican representatives, one being Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, to draft a document to rescue JDDJ.[31] Instead of

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[28] See John T. Wilkinson, *1662—And After: Three Centuries of English Nonconformity* (London: The Epworth Press, 1962), 218–219.

[29] Bylaw 7.31.17 passed by the ELCA's 2001 Churchwide Assembly reads: "*Ordination in Unusual Circumstances*. For pastoral reasons in unusual circumstances, a synodical bishop may provide for the ordination by another pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America of an approved candidate who has received and accepted a properly issued, duly attested letter of call for the office of ordained ministry. Prior to authorization of such an ordination, the bishop of the synod of the candidate's first call shall consult with the presiding bishop as this church's chief ecumenical officer and shall seek the advice of the Synod Council. The pastoral decision of the synodical bishop shall be in accordance with the policy developed by the Division or Ministry, reviewed by the Conference of Bishops, and adopted by the Church Council." See *2001 Pre-Assembly Report to the Congregations* (Chicago: Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, 2001), 81.

[30] See Dorothea Wendebourg, "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der »Gemeinsame Erklärung«," *Zeitschrift für Theologie und Kirche* 10 (December 1998): 140–206.

[31] Johannes Wallmann, "Die Demontage einer fast fertigen Brücke: inwiefern die »Gemeinsame Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre« gescheitert ist," *Berliner Theologische Zeitschrift* 18 (2001), 172–173, especially note 2. Wallmann reports that the *Official*

JDDJ, that document, *Official Common Statement* (OCS) with Annex, which bore a doctrine of justification congruent with Tridentine teachings,[32] was eventually signed before the world's media in Augsburg by Vatican and LWF officials.[33]

It should be recalled that JDDJ was conceived as a vehicle for the LWF and the Vatican to declare that the sixteenth-century condemnations relating to the doctrine of justification no longer applied.[34] This admirable undertaking would have been groundbreaking had anyone at the LWF noticed that the Lutheran confessional writings contain no condemnations of the Roman Church's doctrine. In contrast, the Council of Trent generated no shortage of condemnations (anathemas) against all manner of people for either holding Protestant positions or denying papal doctrines. For example, Trent's Decree on Justification is composed of sixteen

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Common Statement was initially drafted in Regensburg on November 1, 1998, by Lutherans Joachim Track, chair of the LWF Committee for Theology and Studies, and Johannes Hanselmann, former Bishop of Bavarian, and by Roman Catholics Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger and ecumenist Heinz Schütte. Track contributed authoritatively during the final OCS consultations. Thomas Kaufmann and Martin Ohst describe the situation in context: "While JD was being worked out behind the scenes according to established usance of cabinet politics and secret diplomacy, Pope John Paul II published the Bull of Indiction of the Jubilee Year 2000 on the First of Advent 1998." See Kaufmann and Ohst, "Unvereinbar oder inhaltsleer—Der päpstliche Ablaß widerlegt die Rede vom Rechtertigungs-Konsens," *Die Zeichen der Zeit* 53 / *Lutherische Monatshefte* 39, no. 2 (September 1999): 20; author's translation.

[32] See Wallmann, "Die Demontage einer fast fertigen Brücke," 184, and also Wilfred Härle, "Lutherische Formeln—tridentinisch interpretiert," http://www.w-haerle.de/texte/Lutherische_Formeln.pdf (accessed November 21, 2013).

[33] For a fuller discussion, see Reinhard Brandt, "Der ökumenische Dialog nach der Unterzeichnung der Erklärung zur Rechtfertigungslehre und nach Dominus Iesus—Ein Überblick über strittige Aspekte aus lutherischer Sicht," in *Konsensdruck ohne Perspektiven?*, ed. Uwe Rieske-Braun (Leipzig: EvangelischeVerlagsanstalt, 2001), 11–13, 29–32.

[34] Not mentioned in the cover letter of Dr. Noko, general secretary of the LWF at that time, the impetus for the development of JDDJ arose as early as 1986, after the publication of the study *Lehrverurteilungen – kirchentrennend? I Rechtfertigung, Sakramente und Amt im Zeitalter der Reformation und heute*, ed. Karl Lehmann and Wolfhart Pannenberg (Freiburg: Herder / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1986), in English as *The Condemnations of the Reformation Era: Do They Still Divide?* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990). In light of this study, the executive committee of the LWF desired a translation of this work into English to initiate a similar process amongst LWF member churches. When this was delayed, in 1993 the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) suggested an alternative plan to prepare by 1997 an official declaration that the sixteenth-century condemnations between Lutherans and Roman Catholics no longer applied. This plan was adopted by the LWF Council. See Wendebourg, "Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der . . . ," 148–149.

chapters followed by thirty-three canons, with the latter containing the anathemas against the Reformation teaching on justification. Canon 30 anathematizes anyone who rejects purgatory,[35] and Canon 33 anathematizes anyone who contravenes any of the preceding thirty-two Canons. Thus, all Protestants,[36] and not just Lutherans, who reject the notion of purgatory are thus doubly cursed by the Tridentine Decree on Justification, except perhaps for those "crypto-Tridentine Protestant Christians"[37] in the LWF and in its member churches who adhere to "common statements" in JDDJ.

Fortunately for members of the ELCA, these Tridentine threats of anathematization are fading into the background. On All Saints' Day, 2010, the results of the eleventh round of U.S. Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogue were published under the title *The Hope of Eternal Life*,[38] and sixteen months later, "during their meetings at the Vatican [held February 14–16, 2012] . . . ELCA leaders presented 'The Hope of Eternal Life' . . . to Cardinal Kurt Koch, president of the Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity."[39] On purgatory, among other matters, this dialogue document states,

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[35] Heinrich Denzinger, *Enchiridion symbolorum definitionum et declarationum de rebus fidei et morum* . . . (Latin–German), Peter Hünermann, editor, 37th ed. (Freiburg: Herder, 1991), 521 §1580 (author's translation).

[36] Even Anglicans, who consider themselves to maintain certain aspects of "catholic" tradition such as the concept of bishops in historic succession, reject purgatory. See Article XXII of the Thirty-Nine Articles in the *Book of Common Prayer . . . According to the Use of the Episcopal Church* (New York: The Church Hymnal Corporation, 1979), 872.

[37] Brandt, "Der ökumenische Dialog . . . " 16–18, 24. Brandt refers to those who hold to the common statements in JDDJ as "*Kryptotridentisten*." Brandt also cites Bishop Walter Kasper to support the notion that only those who adhere to the common statements in JDDJ are not anathematized by the Council of Trent. In a similar way, §44 of the 1995 draft of JDDJ states, "Nothing is thereby taken away from the seriousness of the condemnations related to the doctrine of justification. They did not simply or altogether miss the point. Where the basic consensus is not adhered to they still apply today."

[38] Available on the ELCA website at: http://www.elca.org/~/media/Files/Who%20We%20Are/Ecumenical%20and%20Inter%20Religious%20Relations/Hope%20of%20Eternal%20Life.pdf (accessed January 21, 2013).

[39] ELCA News Service, "ELCA, Vatican leaders meet." February 22, 2012, 12-08-MRC available at: http://www.elca.org/Who-We-Are/Our-Three-Expressions/Churchwide-Organization/Communication Services/News/Releases.aspx?SearchCriteria=elca%2c+vatican+leaders#&&SearchCriteria=elca%2c+vatican+leaders&a=5268 (accessed January 21, 2013).

> The complex network of beliefs and practices surrounding the relation of the living to the dead—purgatory, masses offered for the dead, indulgences applies to the dead, prayers for the dead—were seen by the Reformers as *deeply antagonistic to that evangelical proclamation.*[40]

Then, just a few pages later in the concluding commentary, lurks one seemingly innocuous sentence that reads, "Ecumenical rapprochement *requires*, however, that Lutherans *not* condemn Catholic teaching about the practice of indulgences as *inherently* contrary to the Gospel."[41] By not rejecting purgatory and thus the need for indulgences, the ELCA has apparently removed itself from papal anathematization regarding justification.

From the time that the *Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification* was not signed on October 31, 1999, until the end of 2012, the Vatican has issued nineteen indulgences, and the ELCA has not objected to any of them. Not surprisingly, the ELCA's false gospel of inclusivity also apparently accommodates purgatory and indulgences. Perhaps the ELCA will also be issuing its own indulgences by the time it, as an LWF member church, celebrates the 500th anniversary of Luther's Ninety-five Theses against indulgences "*with* the Roman Catholic Church and with other Christian world communions."[42] Although the ELCA's false gospel of inclusivity can obviously be more than indulgent, such indulgence neither reflects nor embodies the propitiatory grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. The False Gospel of Socio-Political Activism

The ELCA's socio-political activism creates, arguably, the greatest controversy in and for the ELCA because such activism is the least theological or most pseudo-theological or perhaps simply a-theological

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[40] *The Hope of Eternal Life*, 60 §23; emphasis added. Luther in the *Smalcald Articles* states, "Finally, it is nothing other than simply the devil [*nichts denn eitel Teufel*], for [the pope] above and against God to advance his lies about masses, purgatory, monastic life and one's own works and divine service (which are then the papacy proper) . . . " (BSLK 432, 5–7; author's translation). Tappert's translation of *eitel Teufel* as "most diabolical" (BoC, 301) does not adequately communicate in this context the concept of lies originating from the devil. In either case, the phrase "deeply antagonistic to that evangelical proclamation" hardly reflects understanding purgatory either as "most diabolical" or as a papal lie of the devil.

[41] *The Hope of Eternal Life*, 70 §270; emphasis added. That the ELCA does not find purgatory, understood as a papal lie of the devil, to be "inherently contrary to the gospel" is rather striking.

[42] *Lutheran World Information* (LWI), September 2005, 19. http://www.lutheranworld.org/What_We_Do/OCS/LWI-2005-PDF/LWI-200509-EN-low.pdf(accessed January 21, 2013); emphasis added.

manifestation of the ELCA's false gospel of inclusivity. Characteristic thereof, the ELCA News Service routinely reports about ELCA leaders advising or admonishing secular politicians on almost every societal concern and controversy of the day. Similarly, the ELCA's numerous social statements not only mimic the machinations of parliamentary political parties but are frequently preceded by choreographed periods of "study" in which Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions are either diluted or drowned by philosophical principles that are derived from either secular humanism or religious humanism or both.

By necessity, a false gospel is law, and thus, the ELCA's socio-political expression of its false gospel of inclusivity can only be promulgated via its constitution and bylaws internally and externally via its political lobbying efforts. Moreover, this false gospel represents the first use of the law rather than the second (i.e., the *usus civilis* (or *usus politicus*) rather than the *usus theologicus*, respectively). In relation to the two kingdoms doctrine, the political use of the law pertains to the kingdom on the left, that by which God keeps some semblance of civil order over the destructive displays of power exercised by sinful human beings. The theological use of the law, on the other hand, comes to the fore in the proclamation of the word of God, where its impact on the human conscience cannot be quantified with the human senses or conformed to the human will.[43] In the ELCA, unfortunately, the line between these two applications of the law is intentionally blurred beyond recognition. According to Luther, such cooking and brewing of the two kingdoms together is the work of none other than the devil himself.[44]

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[43] In addition to Luther's famous appearance at the Imperial Diet at Worms, for example, see also *Luthers Werke*, Kritische Gesamtausgabe, ed. J. F. K. Knaake, et al. (Weimar: Böhlaus 1883ff), 12:335, 17–23 (hereafter WA): "Now if an emperor or a king would ask me what my faith might be, I should tell it to him, not because of his command but because I am obliged to confess my faith publicly before anyone. If, however, he continued and wanted to command that I should believe in this or that way, I shall say, 'Dear Lord, look after your own worldly reign. You have no authority to touch God in his kingdom. Therefore, I will not obey you at all'" (author's translation).

[44] "I must always drum in, grind in, drive in, and wedge in such difference between the two kingdoms, whether it is written or spoken so often as to be irksome. For the vexatious devil also never ceases to cook and to brew these two kingdoms into one another. In the name of the devil, the secular lords always want to teach and master Christ, how he should run his church and the spiritual regiment. Likewise, the false parsons and the fractious agitators always want, not in God's name, to teach and control how one shall order the secular regiment. Thus, the devil is so very intemperate on both sides and has much to do. May God bridle him, amen, if we are worthy." WA 51:239, 22–30 (1534/35); author's translation.

The crowning jewel in the ELCA's efforts to sequestrate the two kingdoms took place on August 21 at its 2009 churchwide assembly. At that gathering, the ELCA asserted thus:

> RESOLVED, that the ELCA commit itself to finding ways to allow congregations that choose to do so to recognize, support and hold publicly accountable life-long, monogamous, same-gender relationships (Resolution 1; adopted 619-402).
>
> RESOLVED, that the ELCA commit itself to finding a way for people in such publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church (Resolutions 2; adopted 559-451).[45]

From the previously issued social statement, *Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, also adopted at that same assembly on August 19 (676-338),[46] it becomes plain that the ELCA's notion of a "publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationship" is to be equated with the institution of marriage. Furthermore, by recognizing and legitimizing such relationships to be effectively defined as marriage, including provision for partners in same-sex relationships to participate as spouses in the ELCA's health insurance program, the ELCA has made itself as a legally incorporated entity into a promoter, purveyor, and protector of same-sex "marriage" on a national level. How can the ELCA justify its actions?

As may be anticipated, the ELCA's social statement on human sexuality starts with a ruse to the kingdom on the right and seeks to center itself on the notion of love. After quoting Matthew 22:36–40, that the greatest commandments involve loving God and one's neighbor, the document continues, "This social statement addresses the question: how do we understand human sexuality within the context of Jesus' *invitation* to love God and love our neighbor (Romans 13:9–10; Galatians 5:14)?"[47] Further on, with reference to the kingdom on the left, the social statement explains,

> Lutherans understand that God's law, in its civil use, permeates and undergirds basic structures of human society to support life and pro-

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[45] Mark S. Hanson, Message to Rostered Leaders, August 22, 2009, available at http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/JTF-Human-Sexuality/Message-to-Rostered-Leaders.aspx (accessed January 21, 2013).

[46] http://www.elca.org/What-We-Believe/Social-Issues/Social-Statements/JTF-Human-Sexuality.aspx#Table%20of%20Content (accessed January 21, 2013).

[47] Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, *A Social Statement on Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust*, available at http://www.elca.org/~/media/Files/What%20We%20Believe/Social%20Issues/sexuality/Human%20Sexuality%20Social%20Statement.pdf (accessed January 21, 2013); emphasis added.

> tect all people in a world that remains under the sway of sin. Such social structures, (11) as the Lutheran Confessions identify them, include ministry, marriage and family, civil authority, and daily work. (12) Because these structures are temporal, anticipating the arrival of God's promised future, they must respond continually to human needs for protection and flourishing.[48]

Then, mixing the two kingdoms together, the sexuality study later states,

> Recognizing that this conclusion differs from the historic Christian tradition and the Lutheran Confessions, some people, though not all, in this church and within the larger Christian community, conclude that marriage is also the appropriate term to use in describing similar benefits, protection, and support for same-gender couples entering into lifelong, monogamous relationships.[49]

Notably, because the ELCA "does not favor cohabitation arrangements outside of marriage"[50] but has nonetheless approved "publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships," one can only conclude that by putting itself in the same-sex "marriage" business, the ELCA has elevated itself on par with, if not above both the kingdom on the left and the kingdom on the right. As the political and theological controversies within the ELCA have shown, this situation raises a number of basic concerns that have by and large gone unaddressed.

Amidst all the controversy and commotion, what proponents and opponents of the decisions made by the ELCA's 2009 Churchwide Assembly have apparently failed to fathom is how deceptively vacuous the concept of "publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships" actually is. Purely logistically, if the ELCA has put itself in the same-sex "marriage" business, then the ELCA must also obligate itself to conduct, record, and certify all such "weddings" as would any state or national government. So, what provision has the ELCA made for overseeing its same-sex "marriages" on either a synodical or national basis? Similarly, if the ELCA has put itself in the same-sex "marriage" business, then it is also obliged to be in the same-sex fidelity and, if necessary, divorce business. So, how is the ELCA to oversee the state of, and if necessary, the dissolution of its same-sex "marriages"?

More critically, if the ELCA does not undertake this pseudo-statutory obligation required of itself, then any and every such ELCA same-sex

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[48] *A Social Statement on Human Sexuality*, 7 (notes in parentheses are original).

[49] *A Social Statement on Human Sexuality*, 18.

[50] *A Social Statement on Human Sexuality*, 32.

"marriage" would be little more than an illegitimate manifestation of a homosexual[51] couple's subjectively shared fantasy, which has been ecclesially externalized, socio-politically sanctioned, and ritually blessed by the ELCA's wholly unaccountable, churchwide legislative authority. Given that the ELCA has no statutory authority whatsoever, none of its same-sex "weddings" will in reality render anything other than successive incidents of cohabitation paradoxically rejected by the ELCA. Most hypocritically, if the ELCA is actually, though misleadingly, in the pseudo-marital business, then why has it not granted the same sex opportunities to heterosexual couples seeking to sleep together, on occasion in the parsonage, in mutually agreed, sexually active, public displays of cohabitation lasting for the self-determined lifetime of such relationships?

Led by its false gospel of inclusivity, in which "some are more included than others," the ELCA has legislated to endow homosexual relationships and their homoerotic activities with legitimacy and privileges that it denies to heterosexuals. Furthermore, whereas the ELCA has invoked Christ's commandment to love God and neighbor to legitimize this socio-political expression of its false gospel, Luther was critically aware of the sophists' use of natural opinion and reason to replace Christ with a bejeweled notion of love.[52] Finally and perhaps most incisively, the ELCA's advocacy of homosexual love metaphorically represents the nature and orientation of the ELCA itself. Etymologically, the prefix *homo-* connotes the "same." Subsequently, the words homosexual and homoerotic describe a passionate desire for the same, and nothing is more the same than the self. Viewed from this perspective, both homosexual orientation and homosexual expression arguably represent a highly concentrated and yet extremely animalistic form of narcissism. By granting to homosexuals its full, institutional legitimacy to be accountable effectively only to themselves, the ELCA has merely proffered to homosexuals what it already grants to itself. Unbridled narcissistic love is the antithesis of kenotic divine love.

Viewed comprehensively, whether the testimony of Scripture or the witness of the Lutheran Confessions, whether the rigor of intellectual integrity or the demands of basic honesty, whether the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, or the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:14), nothing in all creation seems able to separate the ELCA from being

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[51] Notably, the ELCA's social statement does not address or discuss the topic of homosexuality as a term, thus sidestepping the issue altogether.

[52] "*Eiiciunt gemmam Christum, et dicunt eam gemmam esse charitatem*." "The jewel Christ is cast out, but they say it is the gem of charity." WA 40, 1: 165, 5-6; editor's translation.

wholly enamoured with itself and thereby accountable only to itself. The ELCA's self-justification by faith alone in its false gospel of inclusivity alone constitutes its institutional, ecumenical, and socio-political agenda. With reference to Resolution 3-21A passed at The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod's 2001 Convention, the ELCA is no longer an orthodox Lutheran church body.[53] Neither is it a heterodox Lutheran body. Instead, the ELCA is a homodox, ecclesial corporation teaching itself as gospel (cf. Matthew 15:9).

IV. Conclusion

Viewed theologically, the ELCA's plight is plainly discernable and easily diagnosed and was done so nearly 500 years ago. Lecturing on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans during 1515–1516, Luther redeveloped Augustine's use of *incurvatus in se,* based on the Hebrew עָוֹן, commonly translated as "iniquity," to describe our sinful, human nature. According to Luther, this nature "knows nothing but its own good, or what is good and honorable and useful for itself, but not what is good for God and other people." Turned in on itself in this manner, it "uses not only physical but even spiritual goods for [its] own purposes and in all things seeks only [itself]."[54] Vainly magnifying the light of such crooked, human nature and comparing it to the light of grace,

> It sees, seeks, and works only toward itself in all matters, and it passes by all other things and even God Himself in the midst, as if it did not see them, and is directed only toward itself . . . . [This nature] sets itself in the place of all other things, even in the place of God, and seeks only those things which are its own and not the things of God. Therefore it is its own first and greatest idol. Second, it makes God into an idol and the truth of God into a lie, and finally it makes idols of all created things and of all gifts of God.

Further,

> This is spiritual fornication, iniquity, and a terrible curving in on itself [*fornicatio spiritualis et iniquitas et curuitas nimia valde*]. Therefore, this wisdom is not a light, but it can much better be called darkness, [and] . . . insofar as it turns all knowledge in upon itself, it is the most

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[53] See Response to "Request for CTCR Opinion Concerning Continued Eligibility of an Inactive Emeritus Member Under Article VI of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," 3, available at: www.lcms.org/Document.fdoc?src=lcm&id=259 (accessed January 21, 2013).

[54] *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols., ed. J. Pelikan and H. Lehmann (Saint Louis and Philadelphia: Concordia and Fortress, 1955–1987), 25:345; (hereafter AE); WA 56:356, 1–9.

> complete darkness. Nor can it by its nature do anything else than turn in upon itself. For it cannot love God and His law, as the apostle here says.[55]

Finally,

> [Human] nature has been so deeply curved in upon itself [*in seipsam incurua*] because of the viciousness of original sin [*vitio primi peccati*] that it not only turns the finest gifts of God in upon itself and enjoys them (as is evident in the case of legalists and hypocrites), indeed, it even uses God Himself to achieve these aims, but it also seems to be ignorant of this very fact, that in acting so iniquitously, so perversely, and in such a depraved way [*inique, curue et praue*], it is even seeking God for its own sake.[56]

So, *quo vadis* ELCA? *Incurvatus in se*. Round and round and round it goes. Where it stops, nobody knows.

To conclude, the ELCA was conceived in 1988 to be a new Lutheran church, but in twenty-five years it has twisted itself into a non-Lutheran ecclesial corporation. Turning ever more quickly in upon itself, the ELCA simultaneously spins ever further from God and sheds ever more members, as if by centrifugal force. Such *incurvatus in se* in the ELCA has become a vicious circle, in Latin *circulus vitiosus*, in German, most fitting, *ein Teufelskreis* (a devil's circle). As it spins with ever greater velocity, the ELCA also sinks to ever greater depths of institutional, ecumenical, and socio-political depravity, all in the name of God. At this juncture, the only creedal formulation credible for the ELCA to confess would be that, like itself, which has no direct biblical foundation, namely, "descended into hell."

However, all is not lost. The ELCA News Service may soon be reporting that the ELCA has *recycled* its Lutheran roots, is entering another *round* of ecumenical dialogue, and will continue to *circumscribe* Scripture and Lutheran Confessions to *revolutionize* post-Christian society—*soli ELCA gloria*.

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[55] AE 25:346–347; WA 56:356, 18–357, 17.

[56] AE 25:291; WA 56:304, 23–29.

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Suffering as a Mark of the Church in Martin Luther's Exegesis of 1 Peter

Kenneth J. Woo

Over a lifetime of conflict with church and empire, in addition to deep personal losses, it is not surprising that suffering is a recurring theme in Martin Luther's writings.[1] Even so, it is notable that Luther in effect canonizes suffering by including it as a mark of the church in his 1539 treatise *On the Councils and the Church*, stating that Christians are known by affliction. The church is "externally recognized by the holy possession of the sacred cross" because its members "steadfastly adhere to Christ and God's word," such that "wherever you see or hear [of such suffering], you may know that the holy Christian church is there . . . . This too is a holy possession whereby the Holy Spirit not only sanctifies his people, but also blesses them."[2] Written near the end of Luther's life, these words articulated a mainstay of his theology for decades, namely, the idea that God's people are a suffering people.[3] Indeed, for Luther the cross is

[1] The author would like to thank G. Sujin Pak and Jon Balserak for their helpful suggestions after reading early versions of this article, as well as David M. Whitford for his insightful questions and comments.

[2] "On the Councils and the Church, 1539" in *Luther's Works*, American Edition, 55 vols.; ed. Jaroslav Pelikan and Helmut T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Muehlenberg and Fortress, and St. Louis: Concordia, 1955–86), 41:164–65 (hereafter AE); "Von den Konziliis und Kirchen, 1539" in *D. Martin Luthers Werke: kritische Gesamtausgabe* (Weimar: H. Böhlau, 1914), 50:641–42 (hereafter WA). For more on how Luther distinguished the true/hidden church from, respectively, the "visible church" and the "false church," see Mark A. Noll, "Martin Luther and the Concept of a 'true' Church," *Evangelical Quarterly* 50 (1978): 79–85.

[3] This same idea appeared, for example, nearly ten years earlier in his *Sermon at Coburg on Cross and Suffering* (1530), and over a decade prior to that in 1518 in both the *Heidelberg Disputation* and *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses*. Robert A. Kelly has noted how this theme of a suffering church recurs in connection with Luther's *theologia crucis* more broadly, as well as with his theology of the two kingdoms (of Christ vs. of the world). See "The Suffering Church: A Study of Luther's *Theologia Crucis*," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 50:1 (1986): 3–17. See also Timothy J. Wengert, "'Peace, Peace . . .Cross, Cross': Reflections on How Martin Luther Relates the Theology of the Cross to Suffering," *Theology Today* 59, no. 2 (2002): 190–205. Wengert relates Luther's *theologia crucis* to Christian suffering and how this confirms God's promises exper-

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intrinsic to Christian identity, to such an extent that "whoever is not a 'Crosstian' [*Crucianus*] . . . is not a Christian."[4] An element of Luther's doctrine of suffering as a mark of the church that generally has been neglected, however, is its rich presence in his biblical exegesis.[5] An example of this appears in his *Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter* (1523), which unfold important features of Luther's ecclesiology from an epistle he considered "pure gospel."[6] Yet instead of typical ecclesiological topics like church order and office, Luther concentrates here on defining Christian suffering and its significance in a way that anticipates his explicit identification of suffering as a mark of the church. Do these sermons, then, contain exegetical support for the doctrine of the suffering church that would find more succinct expression years down the line?

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ientially. On *theologia crucis* and the idea of the church on pilgrimage, see Albert Brandenberg, "Luthers Theologia Crucis und die Auffassung von der Pilgernden Kirche," in *Volk Gottes. Zum Kirchenverständnis Der Katholischen, Evangelischen Und Anglikanischen Theologie. Festgabe für Josef Höfer,* ed. Heimo Dolch and Remigius Bäumer (Freiburg: Herder, 1967), 323–335.

[4] "Genesisvorlesung," WA 43:617; cf. AE 5:274.

[5] There are exceptions, of course. Kelly connects Luther's comments in "On the Councils" regarding suffering as a mark of the church with similar ideas in the reformer's exegesis of the Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount (1532), and Galatians (1535), and in the *Sermon at Coburg* (1530); "The Suffering Church," 5–11. More recently, Michael Parsons has examined the theme of God's suffering people in terms of the increasingly urgent eschatological outlook of Luther's interpretation, over time, of five "royal" Psalms. "Luther, the Royal Psalms and the Suffering Church," *Evangelical Review of Theology* 35:3 (2011): 242–254. For Luther's *theologia crucis* worked out in his biblical exegesis, see Marc Lienhard, "Christologie et Humilité dans la Theologia Crucis du Commentaire de l'Epitre aux Romains de Luther," *Revue d'Historié et de Philosophie Religieuses* 42 (1962): 304–315. None of these studies, however, focuses on Luther's view of suffering as sanctification. Ronald K. Rittgers does point out how Luther increasingly conceives of suffering as a means of testing and strengthening the gift of faith as this theme appears in various works, including Luther's exegesis of Romans, Hebrews, the Psalms, 1 Peter and Genesis. *The Reformation of Suffering: Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012, 84–124). The present study agrees with Rittger's analysis and intends to offer a more focused treatment of Luther's 1 Peter sermons. For an analysis of the development of Luther's theology from the reformer's sermons on 1 Peter, but without specific reference to the topic of suffering and its relation to Luther's ecclesiology, see Martin Brecht, "Die Entwicklung der Theologie Luthers aus der Exegese, vorgefuehrt an der Epistel S. Petri gepridigt und ausgelegt (1522/1523)" in *Luthers Erben: Studien zur Rezeptionsgeschichte der reformatorischen Theologie Luthers*, ed. Notger Slenczka and Walter Sparn (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 1–24.

[6] Foreword to "Sermons on the First Epistle of St. Peter," AE 30:4; "Epistel S. Petri gepredigt und ausgelegt, 1523," WA 12:260. Luther praises 1 Peter for its place among "the noblest books in the New Testament."

In considering this question, an awareness of the events immediately surrounding Luther's composition and delivery of these 1 Peter expositions situates them within a period of deep personal turmoil for the reformer. Luther had recently returned to a Wittenberg reeling from disturbances that were traceable, in part, to interpretations of his own theology. He also found himself in the midst of his decisive break with his longtime colleague and co-reformer, Andreas Karlstadt.[7] Could these factors have influenced Luther's choice of 1 Peter—with its prominent treatment of suffering—as a text for preaching, or at least guided his selection of themes to emphasize from this epistle? Would it be too much of a stretch to see in Luther's preaching of suffering as *sine qua non* of true Christianity an attempt to validate his own election in the face of doubts arising from his present trouble? Whatever might be the answers to such questions, they remind us that theological formulations, while aspiring to claim normative value for all times and places, also arise from particular circumstances, concerns, and pressures. Luther's sermons are no exception.

The present study will contend that an examination of Luther's 1 Peter sermons locates, nearly two decades prior to *On the Councils and the Church*, the basic contours of his teaching on suffering as a visible mark of the church that we find articulated explicitly in this later work. It is important to stress that the view of suffering Luther presents in the 1 Peter sermons is neither unique to these expositions nor something that had not appeared in earlier writings. That said, 1 Peter offers Luther a particularly apt exegetical locus from which to articulate his position, bringing together in a single canonical book both overt soteriological themes and an emphasis on suffering. In order to present Luther's 1522 teaching from 1 Peter with sensitivity to concurrent and later developments in the reformer's life, the present study makes three observations. First, Luther uses 1 Peter to carve out a conceptual framework for the Christian life in terms of three key themes: pilgrimage, Word, and sanctification through affliction after Christ's example. This lays a foundation for his insistence that suffering marks the true church, particularly that unjust suffering is an indispensable means of sanctifying God's people. Second, Luther's deep personal distress at the time of these sermons must be permitted to enrich our understanding of his preaching in 1522 in ways that might explain his particular emphases. Finally, setting the 1 Peter material alongside earlier

[7] See Martin Brecht, *Martin Luther: Shaping and Defining the Reformation 1521–1532*, trans. James Schaaf (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1990), 61–66, 157–172. A helpful account of the public dispute between Luther and Karlstadt, told through key primary texts, remains Ronald J. Sider, ed., *Karlstadt's Battle with Luther: Documents in a Liberal-Radical Debate* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1978).

and later writings reveals the importance of what might be called "cruciform ecclesiology" to Luther's biblical exegesis, which, in turn, supports his use of this theme elsewhere. Despite variations of circumstance, one ultimately finds over the course of time a basic coherence and consistency to Luther's insistence on suffering as a mark of the church.[8]

I. Sanctification through Affliction in Luther's 1 Peter Sermons

Pilgrimage and Word as Conditions for Suffering

Luther's sermons on 1 Peter were delivered on weekday afternoons to his Wittenberg congregation from May to December 1522 and reveal close attention to an epistle beloved by the reformer.[9] While containing the core gospel teaching (so critical for Luther) of Christ as the object of justifying faith, 1 Peter also sets this concern for true faith against the sober reality that Christians live as "strangers and exiles," God's "holy" people set apart in a world where suffering is a given (1 Pet 2:9, 11; 4:12).[10] By couching the gospel in an idiom of exile, hardship, and holiness, 1 Peter invites Luther to reflect on Christian identity as that of pilgrims in a foreign land. Home remains a destination. This pilgrimage motif supplies the situational context within which Luther's doctrine of suffering as a mark of the church both arises logically and resonates experientially for believers as a means for God to validate their faith. Luther also finds here an emphasis on God's word as the catalyst for a uniquely Christian variety of suffering. In what follows, we will show how pilgrimage and word converge to produce

[8] This is not to say that the nuances of Luther's views on the matter did not change or evolve, but only that the basic link he draws between suffering and the visible church is a consistent emphasis in his thought that is evoked by way of recurring themes that cannot simply be explained by situational factors. For an analysis of Luther's views on suffering and the Christian life across a wide range of the reformer's writings as this reflects his developing views on the centrality of faith for both soteriology and suffering, see Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering*, 84–124.

[9] Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 57–59; see also Kurt Aland, *Hilfsbuch Zum Lutherstudium* (Bielefeld: Luther-Verlag, 1996), 137–138. By Luther's assessment, 1 Peter ranks with the Pauline epistles, John's Gospel, and John's first epistle as the "true kernel and marrow of all the books" of the New Testament, because these books present most clearly "how faith in Christ conquers sin, death, and hell; and gives life, righteousness, and salvation." "Preface to the New Testament (1522)" in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writing*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor, 1962), 18. Luther's 1523 foreword to the 1 Peter sermons reiterates that "St. Peter does the same thing that St. Paul and all the evangelists do; he teaches us the true faith and tells us that Christ was given to us to take away our sin and save us." AE 30:4; WA 12:260.

[10] All scriptural quotations are from *The Holy Bible, New Revised Standard Version* (New York: National Council of Churches, 1989).

conditions under which Luther saw suffering to be both unavoidable and, at the same time, a blessing for Christians.

The pilgrimage motif in 1 Peter pervades Luther's reading of the letter, which teaches him that the time of pilgrimage is both transient and purposeful. First, "The Christian life is only a night's lodging."[11] The "living hope" into which 1 Peter says Christians are born through Christ's resurrection (1:3–4) indicates, for Luther, both that "this life and the life to come are mutually exclusive," as well as the continual movement from one to the other: "Here there is only a stopover where we cannot remain. We must proceed on our journey . . . . We are citizens of heaven; on earth we are pilgrims and guests."[12] Meanwhile, the presence of suffering sharpens the pilgrim's hope. Luther contrasts the present life with the greater, lasting possession that awaits pilgrims by juxtaposing faith today to what later will be seen.[13] 1 Peter urges believers to "rejoice, even if now for a little while you have had to suffer" (1:6). For Luther this is the consoling promise of a future in which the pilgrim's patience will be rewarded: "Your mourning will last for a short time. Then you will rejoice, for salvation is already prepared for you."[14]

The second basic quality of this present life is its purposefulness, a teaching for which 1 Peter 1:7 is key: "Live in reverent fear during the time of your exile."[15] For Luther, such reverence requires attention to good works as the expression of one's faith: "[God] will ask you: 'If you are a Christian, then tell Me: Where are the fruits with which you can show your faith?' . . . Since you have the kind of Father who does not judge according to the person, conduct yourselves with fear throughout the time of pilgrimage."[16] The reverence shown by beloved children is not a servile fear, but nevertheless remains the deliberate addition of piety to faith that, for Luther, together makes up "the sum total of the Christian life."[17] Thus,

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[11] AE 30:35; WA 12:291.

[12] AE 30:11, 67; WA 12:267, 322.

[13] AE 30:11; WA 12:266–67.

[14] AE 30:16; WA 12:271–72.

[15] Why bother at all with what Luther has already deemed a transient and relatively deficient existence? For Luther, the present life remains part of God's plan and accountable to God's commands. Thus, the proper response is reverence expressed in faithful obedience to God, particularly regarding service toward one's neighbor: "We have no other reason for living . . . than to be of help to others. If this were not the case it would be best for God to kill us and let us die as soon as we are baptized and have begun to believe." AE 30:11; WA 12:266.

[16] AE 30:35; WA 12:290.

[17] AE 30:35; WA 12:290.

Luther reasons from 1 Peter, the Christian life is a transient and purposeful journey, eliciting hope and reverence from self-aware pilgrims who have glimpsed God's design for their present existence. Yet, while life in a world passing away explains a kind of suffering common to all, what we have shown above hints at how Luther also believes that God's word produces affliction unique to true believers. Pilgrimage is a time of testing in which suffering for the word confirms one's faith.

In a 1530 sermon on the theme of Christian suffering, Luther characterizes the Word of God as both the source of Christian "consolation even in the worst of suffering and misfortune" and the principal cause of that same misery: "We suffer because we hold to the Word of God, preach it, hear it, learn it, and practice it."[18] This paradoxical view of God's word is a consistent motif in Luther's theological writings, including his 1 Peter exegesis, wherein he reflects on 1) Scripture's necessity, 2) the right order of its teaching, and 3) its relation to suffering in the Christian life. Luther saw God's word as a catalyst for suffering along the Christian pilgrimage.

Ground zero for Luther's theology is the necessity and centrality of Scripture. 1 Peter affirms Scripture's message and power. Above all, there is no church apart from God's word preached and believed, because this is how people encounter Christ: "St. Peter teaches us to outfit and equip ourselves with Scripture," Luther writes, because it is through preaching that "[we] cling to the proclamation of the Gospel . . . . God does not let His grace be offered to anyone in any way than through Christ . . . . Through the Gospel we are told who Christ is, in order that we may learn to know that He is our Savior."[19] The mutuality of word and church are such that "God's Word cannot be without God's people, and conversely, God's people cannot be without God's Word."[20] Preaching also has power to regenerate and nurture Christians: "How can we build ourselves? Through the gospel and preaching. The preachers are the builders. The

[18] "Sermon at Coburg on Cross and Suffering, 1530," AE 51:200–201; "Ein Sermon vom leiden und Creutz, 1530," WA 32:31–32. Luther's texts for this sermon are Matthew 27, Luke 25, and John 19.

[19] AE 30:25, 29–30; WA 12:280, 284–85. According to Luther, this knowledge of Christ mediated by Scripture subsequently must be embraced by faith to be of any value to the individual: "You must know and believe that [Christ] did all this for your sake, in order to help you." Scripture is critical to Luther's ecclesiology. In the same 1539 treatise that lists suffering as a mark of the church, Luther had first named Scripture "preached, believed, professed, and lived" as the only indispensible sign of the true church. "On the Council and the Church," AE 41:149–50; WA 50:629.

[20] AE 41:149–50; WA 50:629. Luther continues, "Otherwise, who would preach or hear it preached? And what could or would God's people believe if there were no word of God?"

Christians . . . are those who are built."[21] Regarding regeneration through the word in 1 Peter 1:23, Luther comments, "We have been born anew through a seed . . . . How does this take place? In the following way: God lets the Word, the Gospel, go forth. He causes the seed to fall into the hearts of men. Now where it takes root in the heart, the Holy Spirit is present and creates a new man . . . . You are completely changed."[22] Luther further asserts Scripture's necessity when he makes its proclamation the sole reason for a separate ecclesiastical office: "To give pasture is nothing else than to preach the Gospel, by which souls are fed and made fat and fruitful, and that the sheep are nourished with the Gospel and God's Word. This alone is the office of a bishop."[23] Scripture, then, is indispensible to constituting, nourishing, and governing the pilgrim church.

A second theme in Luther's theology of the Word that finds exegetical grounds in 1 Peter is the proper order of biblical teaching. For Luther, justification unquestionably is by faith alone, but true faith always responds with faithful obedience. The exhortation in 1 Peter 2:2 to "long for the pure, spiritual milk" leads Luther to reflect on two ways of offering Christ in the gospel: first as gift, then as example. The latter Luther calls "a strong potion and strong wine," and he urges preachers first to "preach gently to the young Christians. Let them enrich themselves and grow fat in the knowledge of Christ. Do not burden them with strong doctrine, for they are still too young. But later, when they grow strong, let them be slaughtered and sacrificed on the cross."[24] Luther counsels preachers to be sensitive to the needs of different experiential stages along the pilgrim's journey—from an initial acquaintance with Christ's sweetness as pure gift to the need later to experience Christ's pain as an example for our own. Luther thus draws the conclusion that the same word that enlivens and nurtures Christians simultaneously creates the conditions for a uniquely Christian suffering as children of God who now find themselves at odds with the world, the flesh, and the devil.[25] The 1 Peter sermons help us understand how Luther can say in 1530 that Christians suffer precisely because they "hold to the Word of God."[26] This is neither suffering in

[21] AE 30:50, 52; WA 12: 304, 306. Commenting here on 1 Peter 2:2–5, Luther adds, "It is not enough to hear the Gospel once; one must study it constantly, in order that we may grow up."

[22] AE 30:43–44, WA 12:298.

[23] AE 30:134; WA 12:388.

[24] AE 30:49; WA 12:303.

[25] AE 30:70–72, 141; WA 12:325–27, 395.

[26] AE 51:200; WA 32:31.

general nor suffering as a result of one's misdeeds, but affliction received "unjustly," "for doing what is right," and "for the name of Christ" (1 Pet 2:19, 3:13, 4:14). Pilgrimage and word converge in experience to make suffering inevitable for believers. Luther does not leave the discussion there, but goes on to unfold how such unjust suffering can bless the ones it afflicts.

Unjust Suffering as Means of Grace and Mark of the Church

There is a further Christological dimension to suffering: "If we are Christians, we have to say: 'My Lord suffered for me and shed his blood. He died for my sake. Should I, then, be so worthless as not to be willing to suffer?"[27] Pilgrimage is a time in which the church is molded into the image of its Head through suffering that reflects Christ's. Perhaps the most remarkable feature of this teaching is how Luther insists on the necessity of real pain in order to receive genuine consolation. Luther argues from 1 Peter that God intends for the church to bear Christ's suffering not only as visible mark of its union with him, but also as a means of effecting this union.

Specifically, Luther's reading of 1 Peter exhibits an understanding of suffering as both communion and consecration for believers, with both categories undergirding his view of suffering as a mark of the church. First, there is a nexus between believers and Christ in his suffering that, for Luther, transcends theoretical reflection on Christ as the object of faith.[28] Taking his cue from Peter's urging to "rejoice insofar as you share Christ's sufferings" (4:13), Luther insists that Christians "have communion with the Lord" through unjust suffering.[29] In one sense, the kind of communion with Christ that such suffering brings about is intellectual, to test "the genuineness of your faith" (1:7): "God has imposed the cross on all Christians to cleanse and to purge them well, in order that faith may remain pure, just as the Word is, so that one adheres to the Word alone

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[27] AE 30:118; WA 12:373.

[28] Others have pointed out how Luther's theology of the cross takes Christ's suffering to be both distinct from and present in the church's suffering. See Regin Prenter, *Luther's Theology of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971); also Brandenberg, "Luthers Theologia Crucis," 326.

[29] AE 30:127; WA 12:382. Luther does not crassly equate our suffering with Christ's Passion: "St. Peter does not say that we should feel Christ's sufferings in order to share them through faith." Rather he sees in Christ's willing acceptance of unjust suffering a pattern for interpreting both isolated instances and the general unfolding of the Christian life as a whole, in which suffering is given and need not be actively sought. AE 30:110; WA 12:365.

and relies on nothing else."[30] Insofar as suffering causes Christians to rely on God's word, which conveys teaching about Christ, this also draws them nearer to Christ. But for Luther this communion with Christ in suffering goes beyond increasing assent to the word. Commenting on 1 Peter 4:13, Luther contrasts unjust temporal suffering with its eternal significance for believers: "Although this is physical suffering, it should be a spiritual joy, in order that you may rejoice forever. For this joy *begins* in suffering and *lasts forever*."[31] Christian suffering becomes a means of bringing eternal realities to bear upon this present life. More specifically, suffering alone is able to make the gospel's saving power tangible in one's experience: "Where suffering and the cross are found, there the Gospel can show and exercise its power. It is a Word of life. Therefore it must exercise all its power in death. In the absence of dying and death it can do nothing, and no one can become aware that it has such power and is stronger than sin and death."[32] Only death's sting can make the promise of life so meaningful and God's power so evident—as power that delivers us not from a theoretical curse, but from a real and felt one. This idea that suffering creates experiential communion with Christ that deepens even as affliction increases reveals what is perhaps the most striking feature of Luther's reflections on suffering in 1 Peter: the link between suffering and sanctification. By exercising faith in the midst of trials, a profound transformation occurs within believers. To be certain, Luther speaks of mental assent to God's word, but he also envisions sanctification via suffering to go beyond thinking like Christ or about him—even beyond feeling his presence—to embodying Christ himself. It is in this regard that suffering emerges most clearly as a visible mark of the church.

Two key texts in 1 Peter guide Luther's thinking on suffering as consecration. 1 Peter 3:19–22 connects Christian baptism and the Flood, inviting Luther to compare the safety of Noah's ark with Christ and the church, so that "we are saved, just as Noah was saved in the ark. Thus you see that the analogy summarizes what faith and the cross, life and death, are. *Now where there are people who cling to Christ, there a Christian Church is sure to be*." [33] Setting aside the question of whether Luther has adequately

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[30] AE 30:17; WA 12:272.

[31] AE 30:127 (emphasis added); WA 12:382.

[32] AE 30:126–27; WA 12:381–82. Luther continues: "[God] lays the holy cross on our backs to strengthen us and make faith powerful in us. The holy Gospel is a powerful Word. Therefore it cannot do its work without trials, and only he who tastes it is aware that it has such power . . . . God inflicts no glowing fire or heat—cross and suffering, which make you burn—on you for another purpose than 'to prove you,' where you also cling to His Word . . . . When you suffer you have communion with the Lord Christ."

[33] AE 30:115–16 (emphasis added); WA 12:370.

explained this notoriously difficult text, he has told us where he locates the true church. It is manifest where "there are people who cling to Christ." This is represented sacramentally in baptism, which identifies those who escape God's judgment and cling to the safety of Christ in the church.[34] As seen above, Luther views clinging to Christ—here the quintessential characteristic of the baptized—as something realized experientially through suffering.[35] When Christians take hold of Christ in their trials, they in effect display their baptism, manifesting that God has taken them into the "ark," so that they "are saved, just as Noah was saved." If the Word is how Christians primarily come to Christ, suffering becomes the vehicle God uses to complete their solidarity with Christ. The safety represented in baptism is experienced not apart from, but only in the midst of affliction. This is no mere intellectual maneuver. God's consolation for Christians who suffer unjustly is that they have actually become the present embodiment of the grace and final victory over death signified in their baptism. By provoking the faith that unites believers to Christ, suffering continues the work of baptism and, if we might be permitted to speak of it this way, makes the church visible.

This idea that suffering makes manifest the promises of baptism in a people who cling to Christ is carried forward when Luther uses the discussion of suffering in 1 Peter 4:15–16 to critique contemporary veneration of relics:

> St. Peter says: When you suffer in this way [i.e., for Christ], you should not be ashamed . . . . What good does it do to put the cross in monstrances? *Christ's cross does not save me*. To be sure, I must believe in his cross; but *I must bear my own cross*. I must put His suffering into my heart. Then I have the true treasure. St. Peter's bones are sacred. But what does that help you? *You and your own bones must become sacred.* This happens when you suffer for Christ's sake.[36]

Luther makes a move here that is critical for understanding his subsequent decision to name suffering as a mark of the church. Christ's work is not effective for an individual so long as what Christ has done remains external to this person—an object to be seen, believed, and even venerated from a distance. Salvation, for Luther, requires nothing less than inter-

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[34] Luther confusingly identifies the "ark" interchangeably with "Christ," "church," "Gospel," and "body."

[35] AE 30:126; WA 12:381.

[36] AE 30:129 (emphasis added); WA 12:385. Luther adds, "We are not worthy of this suffering."

nalizing Christ's redemptive work.[37] This happens when Christians stop merely seeking relics of Christ, but actually *become* these: "You and your own bones must become sacred." Suffering, as both the means and evidence of union with Christ, consecrates the church by making it an authentic relic of the living Christ. The true church will point to its cross to prove its identity, since apart from such affliction any so-called "church" does not actually possess Christ. Luther can see cruciform suffering as a mark of the church because, for him, this pattern of life that defines the pilgrim's journey is never optional. It is intrinsic to one's salvation. Therefore the true church is always also the cruciform church.

Our survey of Luther's exegesis of 1 Peter has shown how his close reading of this letter results in a robust doctrine of suffering that both teaches its unavoidability for those who adhere to God's Word and insists on the necessity of such affliction for sanctification. Not only does suffering confirm the gospel's truth in the believer's personal experience, but in this process it turns the church into a visible embodiment of its message, a living relic of its suffering Savior.

II. Situating the 1 Peter Sermons: Was Luther Preaching to Himself?

When Luther took up the preaching of 1 Peter in May 1522, he addressed citizens of a city newly restored to relative peace after disruptions led by those who were zealous to bring about liturgical and clerical reform quickly and without compromise. Indeed, Luther's own preaching earlier that year, especially his series of eight "Invocavit" sermons delivered the first week of Lent (March 9–16), is credited with regaining public order by persuading both the government and inhabitants of Wittenberg to slow the

[37] The "treasure," as he puts it, must become a part of you. Likewise, the value of Peter's bones derives from the apostle's union with Christ, which only points to, but never replaces one's own union with Christ. John Calvin argued along a similar logic when he insisted on the absolute necessity of union with Christ for one's salvation: "We must understand that as long as Christ remains outside of us, and we are separated from him, all that he has suffered and done for the salvation of the human race remains useless and of no value for us." *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, ed. J. T. McNeill, trans., F. L. Battles, Library of Christian Classics, vol. 20–21 (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1960), III.1.1; John Calvin, *Ioannis Calvini Opera Quae Supersunt Omnia*, ed. Willhelm Baum et al., 59 vols., Corpus Reformatorum (Brunswick: Schwetschke [M. Bruhm], 1863–1900), 2:394. Calvin will go on to elaborate extensively on the Holy Spirit's role in effecting this personal, salvific union, whereas Luther does not discuss in detail any of the pneumatological mechanics of union with Christ in his 1 Peter exegesis. Yet we should not underestimate the role of the Holy Spirit in Luther's theology. See Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator: Luther's Concept of the Holy Spirit* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953).

pace of change and repeal the more radical liturgical innovations introduced during Luther's absence by others such as Karlstadt and Zwilling.[38] Viewed in terms of their immediate intent, it would appear that the Invocavit sermons were a complete success, curbing public unrest and marking Luther's official return to his position as leader of the Reformation in Wittenberg following nearly a year of incognito exile at the Wartburg. However, as Brecht observes, Luther's correspondence at the time was filled with the melancholy concern that the social unrest was but indicative of the ongoing "struggle with Satan."[39]

Several thematic connections may be made between the Invocavit sermons and the 1 Peter expositions that followed them almost immediately. Luther's exhortation to trust in the power of the word to bring about reform without resorting too hastily to external compulsion or pressing matters is couched in the overall call to express Christian love through patience and humility.[40] We have shown how both the centrality of the Word and the importance of good works as an expression of true faith feature prominently in the 1 Peter sermons, although it can be argued that these themes recur throughout Luther's entire corpus. At the same time, we must not discount the possibility that Luther chose to take up 1 Peter right after the Invocavit sermons precisely to reinforce such key ideas from a biblical book especially well-suited to this purpose.

It is when we come to their common emphasis on suffering that the choice to follow the Invocavit sermons with a series on 1 Peter takes on the appearance of greater intentionality. Luther opens his first of the eight Invocavit sermons with the somber reminder that "every one must fight his own battle with death by himself, alone."[41] Beyond imbuing the coming week's preaching with a sense of urgency—as containing "the chief things which concern a Christian" in his preparation to face death—this initial reference to death finds resonance with several reflections on Christian suffering that Luther goes on to offer.[42] Part and parcel of the Christian's preparation for death is the daily persecution and affliction that requires patience and strengthens faith.[43] Those who are seasoned through such testing are reminded that "we do not travel heavenward alone, but

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[38] Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 59–61; see "Eight Sermons at Wittenberg, 1522," AE 51:69–100; WA 10^3:1–64.

[39] Brecht, *Martin Luther*, 61.

[40] AE 51:70–77; WA 10^3:1–18.

[41] AE 51:70; WA 10^3:1.

[42] AE 51:70; WA 10^3:1.

[43] AE 51:71–72; 10^3:1–9.

bring our brethren . . . with us."[44] Thus Luther, in a manner that anticipates his 1 Peter sermons, exhorts believers to accommodate the needs of fellow pilgrims who might require special gentleness in the presentation of doctrine for their particular stage in every Christian's homeward journey. Also finding parallels in the 1 Peter material is Luther's insistence that suffering is necessary for proper reception of the sacrament, insofar as only "those who suffer tribulation, physical or spiritual . . . outwardly or inwardly . . . so that you do not know how you stand with God . . . when he casts your sins into your face" can receive the grace that God means to seal in the sacrament of Christ's body and blood.[45] Only those who experience such affliction to the point of despair are "worthy to receive" the sacrament, because it is "in such terrified and trembling hearts alone God desires to dwell" as the one who comforts and consoles through the sacrament that confirms God's promises as "food" for "a hungry soul."[46] Luther uses this striking imagery of weakness and hunger as the locus of God's dwelling in order to chastise arrogant Wittenbergers who, in their zeal for reform, lack love. Solidarity with Christ through suffering, and how this is uniquely reflected as God's people participate in the sacraments, is a theme Luther will take up again when he expounds 1 Peter to the same audience.

On the one hand, Luther's robust argument in the Invocavit sermons that suffering is the mode of genuine Christians lends support to the possibility that he selected 1 Peter as his next text for weekday expositions in order to reinforce this idea and thus maintain the peace of the city. Seen from this perspective, preaching from 1 Peter becomes a pastoral decision to meet the reformer's own congregation at a particular place of need in their pilgrimage. They required the "strong wine" of teaching on the cross to learn from Christ's example, so that they in turn might recognize their own duty to reflect Christ's humility in their dealings with one another. Perhaps there was also the recognition, in Luther's opinion, that a defective understanding of suffering may have left some desperate for the comfort that God dwells with "trembling hearts." It is not a stretch to imagine such pastoral motives behind Luther's selection of 1 Peter, from among all the options, as the place from which to resume his regular preaching ministry. What remains to be asked, however, is whether this choice had particular relevance to Luther himself.

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[44] AE 51:72; WA 10^3:6–7.

[45] AE 51:93–94; WA 10^3:51–52.

[46] AE 51:94–95; WA 10^3:52–55.

While mind reading makes for hazardous historiography, the question of Luther's own acquaintance with suffering in 1522 should at least be considered in any attempt to fill out the wider context for his preaching at that time. We have already noted that Luther's return to Wittenberg coincided with the deterioration of his friendship with Karlstadt, who was among the leaders of the reforms Luther attempted to rein in. Brecht observes that Luther did not consider the matter resolved despite the return of peace and stability to Wittenberg after the Invocavit sermons.[47] Indeed, a glance at Luther's letters immediately before and after his return from the Wartburg reveals the reformer's grave assessment of the Wittenberg disturbances as reactions to his own teaching which, if not corrected, could provoke God's wrath and have repercussions in the form of political rebellion and upheaval throughout the German territories.[48] These same letters also indicate Luther's willingness—even his expectation—to suffer as a result of returning to Wittenberg against his Elector's wishes, as one who has already been proclaimed a heretic by the church and an outlaw by the empire.[49] Luther sees his return from the safety of exile as the next round in a battle with Satan, "who has intruded into my fold in my absence." Luther must fulfill his Christian duty to follow Christ's example and "lay down my life" for his pastoral flock, "to die for my neighbor's sake."[50] Thus the reformer frames his own return from exile in terms of the Christian's personal reckoning with death—the theme with which he opens the Invocavit sermons—as well as the necessity to suffer after Christ's example as intrinsic to one's identity as a child of God, which is a pervasive concern of the 1 Peter sermons. Lacking any explicit textual evidence that Luther chose to preach from 1 Peter in 1522 as a means of validating his own sense of calling to suffer whatever consequences might follow from his return to public life, our ability to assess his motives is limited. However, what we read of Luther's self-understanding at the time of his 1 Peter sermons clearly suggests reasons why this text could have been a boon to him.

Raising the question of whether Luther might have needed personal encouragement when he looked to 1 Peter's teaching that affliction is intrinsic to the Christian life is not to relativize Luther's doctrine entirely, as if establishing such connections to his personal situation would limit its

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[47] Brecht, *Martin Luther,* 61.

[48] Letters to Elector Frederick, AE 48:390, 396–97, 399; WA, Briefwechsel 2: 455, 461–62 (hereafter WA, Br).

[49] Letters to Elector Frederick and George Spalatin, AE 48:392–94, 49:4; WA, Br 2: 456–57, 459; WA, Br 2:490.

[50] Letter to Elector Frederick, AE 48:395–96; WA, Br 2:460–61.

relevance only to these circumstances. The idea that authentic Christianity involves personal acquaintance with suffering after Christ's example recurs throughout Luther's writings.

III. "Cruciform Ecclesiology" as a Recurring Theme in Luther's Writings

What remains now is briefly to demonstrate how Luther's "cruciform ecclesiology"—as it is worked out in the 1 Peter sermons as the confluence of pilgrimage, word, and cross to identify and sanctify the church—is not unique to these 1522 expositions. We have already noted the mature integration of these themes when he explicitly names suffering as a mark of the church in 1539. While more can be said about how Luther justified the church's existence apart from Rome, his choice of these particular marks in 1539 cannot be dismissed as haphazard or unrelated to his wider theology. That same year, Luther stressed the necessity of affliction (*tentatio,* German *Anfechtung*) for biblical exegesis: "This is the touchstone which teaches you not only to know and understand, but also to experience how right, how true, how sweet, how lovely, how mighty, how comforting God's Word is, wisdom beyond all wisdom."[51] The Word precedes suffering, but not by much. Only the latter makes biblical teaching ring true. We conclude with three other instances of Luther's "cruciform ecclesiology." These examples affirm the logic of suffering as sanctification displayed in the 1 Peter material; they also benefit from the exegetical support this feature of Luther's thought derives from those 1522 sermons.[52]

In a 1530 sermon on the theme of Christian suffering, Luther characterizes the Word of God as both the source of Christian "consolation even in the worst of suffering and misfortune" and the principal cause of that same misery. The 1 Peter sermons help us understand how Luther can say in 1530 that Christians suffer precisely because "we hold to the Word of God, preach it, hear it, learn it, and practice it."[53] The same sermon also repeats 1 Peter's emphasis on the proper ordering of gospel teaching,

[51] "Preface to the Wittenberg Edition of Luther's German Writings, 1539" in AE 34:286–87; WA 50:600. For a discussion of this concept in Luther's thinking more broadly, see David Scaer, "The Concept of *Anfechtung* in Luther's Thought," *Concordia Theological Quarterly* 47:1 (1983): 15–30.

[52] The near ubiquity of suffering as a theme throughout Luther's writings has already been noted. Hence what follows is but a highly selective sample of places in which particular aspects of Luther's reflections on this topic in the 1 Peter materials are reflected on other occasions.

[53] "Sermon at Coburg on Cross and Suffering, 1530," AE 51:200–201; WA 32:31–32.

namely that Christ is presented as both promise and responsibility.[54] Others have examined how this inseparable connection between suffering and the word appears in Luther's exegesis of the Psalms, the Sermon on the Mount, and Paul's letter to the Galatians.[55]

In Luther's 1518 *Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses*, his discussion of Theses 15 and 58 ground his theology of the cross in personal experience and confirms the real but penultimate role of suffering in God's salvific promise.[56] The theologian of the cross can tell the plain truth about suffering—that it is a curse—and yet also see in the good news of Christ's suffering and resurrection the power of God in his word to turn death into life both for Christ and for believers. For Luther the gospel reveals God's power "to declare suffering to be what it can never be in and of itself."[57] Against those who seek Christ in relics of wood, bone, and cloth, Luther exhorts believers to find Christ in their afflictions, which are a gift reserved for "the hearts of the faithful which are incomparably more precious than every piece of gold and every precious stone."[58] Suffering as communion

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[54] Responding to charges of antinomianism, Luther acknowledges an aspect of gospel preaching beyond the promise of salvation received by faith alone. The gospel also places upon Christians a burden to receive Christ as an example for good works and suffering (AE 51:198; WA 32:29). Luther complains, "Since there are many false fanatics abroad, who only distort the gospel and accuse us and say that we have nothing else to teach and preach except faith alone, that we leave out the doctrine of good works and the holy cross and suffering; and that they have the true Spirit, who moves them to teach as they do, we shall at this time speak only of the example which this Passion gives to us, what kind of cross we bear and suffer, and also how we should bear and suffer it."

[55] See, for example, Kelly, "Suffering Church," and Parsons, "Royal Psalms."

[56] Wengert notes that especially Thesis 58 "and its explanation constitute Luther's single most important public statement on the theology of the cross, far more widely published in the sixteenth century than the Heidelberg Disputation and yet almost completely ignored by scholars today. Here is the theology of the cross intended for public consumption, so to speak, and forged in the heat of public controversy." "'Peace, Peace . . . Cross, Cross,'" 198–199.

[57] "'Peace, Peace . . . Cross, Cross,'" 202.

[58] "A theologian of the cross (that is, one who speaks of the crucified and hidden God), teaches that punishments, crosses, and death are the most precious treasury of all and the most sacred relics which the Lord of this theology himself has consecrated and blessed, not alone by the touch of his most holy flesh but also by the embrace of his exceedingly holy and divine will, and he has left these relics here to be kissed, sought after, and embraced. Indeed fortunate and blessed is he who is considered by God to be so worthy that these treasures of the relics of Christ should be given to him; rather who understands that they are given to him." "Explanations of the Ninety-Five Theses, 1518" AE 31:225–26; WA 1:613.

with Christ and relic of God's saving power reappear as themes four years later in the 1 Peter sermons.

Finally, the theology of suffering developed exegetically in the 1 Peter expositions is soon thereafter applied to the 1520s peasants' insurrections. Maligned by some as political opportunism or elitist indifference to the plight of social inferiors, Luther's stern rebuke of peasant violence nevertheless reflects a consistent theological synthesis of Christian suffering and ecclesiology that had been maturing for years.[59] Citing 1 Peter 2:23, Luther warns peasants in 1525 that their actions have called their salvation to question. To reject unjust suffering at the hands of political superiors is incompatible with the name "Christian" and essentially to align with a counterfeit church:

> [Christ] did just what St. Peter says. He committed the whole matter to him who judges justly, and he endured this intolerable wrong . . . . Now, if you are genuine Christians, you must certainly act in the same way and follow his example. If you do not do this, then give up the name of Christian and the claim that Christian law is on your side, for then you are certainly not Christians but are opposing Christ and his law, his doctrine, and his example . . . . Christians do not fight for themselves with sword and musket, but with the cross and suffering . . . . [If you reject this] you should let the name of Christ alone.[60]

Not to exclude the more powerful, Luther's 1523 treatise on *Secular Authority* asserts that every Christian ruler who rules according to God's word should expect suffering. When a prince thus rules, "then his state is right, outwardly and inwardly, pleasing God and to his people. But he must expect much envy and sorrow—the cross will soon rest on the shoulders of such a ruler."[61] Admittedly, Luther is harsher on the peasants. He accuses them of rejecting Christ—essentially renouncing their baptism. We see how deeply embedded suffering has become in Luther's view of what it means to be a Christian on pilgrimage through this present exis-

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[59] For a summary of the traditional Marxist interpretation of Luther by Marx, Engels, and their followers, see Lewis William Spitz, "Images of Luther," in *Concordia Journal* 11:2 (1985): 44–45. The present study has shown, to the contrary, how Luther's emphasis on suffering for the church was not merely a "situational" response to current events, but rather the manifestation of convictions that have deep Christological and ecclesiological roots.

[60] "Admonition to Peace," AE 46:30, 32; WA 18:312, 315–16.

[61] "Secular Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed (1523)" in *Martin Luther: Selections from His Writing*, ed. John Dillenberger (New York: Anchor, 1962), 400; "*Von weltlicher* Obrigkeit, wie weit man ihr Gehorsam schuldig sei, 1523," WA 11:278.

tence. Both princes and peasants should expect it. Yet the peasants are more wrong for trying to avoid it. Understood in this regard, Luther's unrelenting critique of the peasants is so stinging not because he hates them, but because he cares deeply for their souls. To reject his teaching on the necessity of suffering is, according to Luther's cruciform ecclesiology, to reject the very stamp of Christ on his church.[62]

IV. Conclusion

Luther's position in 1539 that suffering marks the true church reflects a theological trajectory that began at least twenty years earlier and was a consistent feature of his thought long before it was identified so neatly as such. Perhaps the best example of a full-orbed exegetical grounding of this doctrine is found in the 1 Peter sermons of 1522/23.[63] My examination of this material has shown how Luther derived, from at least this one major biblical source, key links between suffering and sanctification that support the position, expressed in a variety of places, that where there is no suffering for Christ, there are no true Christians and thus no true church.

I have also attempted to show how these exegetical insights recur in Luther's other writings in the form of conscious application to various situational contexts. Unpacking biblical themes that would shape Luther's theology for years to come, the 1 Peter sermons treat the nature and necessity of Christian suffering, giving special attention to its significance for sanctifying the church. This provides the basis for a "cruciform ecclesiology." Our suffering mirrors Christ's example and embodies the grace of baptism. Ultimately, it is also God's way of bringing about the believer's personal union with Christ, moving beyond simply making us aware of our need for Christ to actually becoming a relic of Christ. This high view of God's good purposes for Christian suffering is behind the otherwise outrageous assertion in 1539 that "those who hang, drown, murder, torture, banish and plague [Christians] to death are rendering God a service."[64]

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[62] "[If you will not change your name to reflect your violence] and keep the name of Christian, then I must accept the fact that I am also involved in the struggle and consider you as enemies who, under the name of the gospel, act contrary to it, and want to do more to suppress my gospel than anything the pope and emperor have done to suppress it." "Admonition to Peace," AE 46:30; WA 18:312.

[63] Luther's 1517–1518 lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews is another important exegetical source for his *theologia crucis* in particular. However, no other biblical book allows him to bring together pilgrimage, word, suffering, and sanctification the way that he is able to synthesize these themes through his close reading of 1 Peter.

[64] "On the Councils and the Church," AE 41:165; 50:642.

Finally, 1 Peter allows Luther to link *theologia crucis* to Christian experience within a comprehensive temporal scheme that encompasses all of life in the present age. This letter is, for Luther, a manifesto of Christian vocation, teaching believers that the holy cross is both comfort and a calling for their pilgrimage. The true church is found where believers cling to Christ, who is present most intimately with his people in their pain. For Luther, this church—a genuine relic of Christ and embodiment of Peter's "living hope" in a fallen world—will suffer on its pilgrimage "because they want to have none but Christ, and no other God. Wherever you see or hear this, you may know that the holy Christian church is there . . . . [Suffering] is a holy possession whereby the Holy Spirit not only sanctifies his people, but also blesses them."[65] For those who suffer as Christ did in obedience to God's word, salvation becomes a present possession with eternal consequences. Their "bones . . . become sacred." Suffering is at once both the Christian pilgrim's harshest reminder that the blessings and peace of home remain a future reality, and his deepest assurance that God's promise is nonetheless powerfully in effect, right now—as surely as he bears in his own body the indelible imprint of that most precious treasury of all: Christ's suffering to defeat sin and death forever.

[65] AE 41:165; 50:642.

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Research Notes

"... submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ [ὑποτασσόμενοι ἀλλήλοις ἐν φόβῳ Χριστοῦ]" (Ephesians 5:21)

A popular way of understanding Ephesians 5:21 is to suppose that husbands should submit to their wives out of "self-sacrificial love and voluntary self-submission" and wives should "return the same."[1] Tranquility between genders at this juncture would seem to require such reciprocal give-and-take, and a version of mutual submission is all but assumed in domestic relationships, of course, but also increasingly at school (in the socialization of our young), in the way the two sexes relate to one another in secular society (e.g., television, movies, NPR), and now, apparently, at church and among Christians. And yet, one may ask, does Ephesians 5:21 really support mutual submission as popularly understood? Perhaps not.

A major confusion stems from where translators and translation committees have chosen to place Ephesians 5:21 in the context of the overall letter. There is no finite verb in the verse, meaning that the participle ὑποτασσόμενοι ("submitting") could be construed with what precedes (5:18–20),[2] with what follows (5:22–33),[3] or as a pivot between the two blocks.[4] I offer here no complete comparison. Nevertheless, the various possibilities demonstrate that many otherwise accurate translations vary drastically as to where what is essentially a participle clause should be placed. What to do?

Here I defer to a brother in office who has been working on Ephesians for a very long time. I have recently been in correspondence with Thomas M. Winger, President at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catherines, Ontario, Canada, and forthcoming author of *Ephesians* in the Concordia Commentary series. He proposes that Ephesians 5:21 is indeed a pivot that goes both with what precedes and with what follows.[5] A good starting point, Winger suggests, is the imperative in 5:18: "be filled with the Spirit

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[1] So suggests Alan G. Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church: A Biblical Understanding of Leadership and Mutual Submission* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 41–42.

[2] cf. ASV, NAB, TNIV, HCSB, and ESV.

[3] cf. UBS[4,] NA[27,] RSV, Jerusalem Living, AAT, NRSV, and CEB.

[4] cf. KJV (1611 edition), NEB, NIV, and REB.

[5] A first email was sent from Thomas Winger to Paul Grime on Friday August 16, 2013, then forwarded to me on the same day at 1:51 p.m. I received a second email giving me permission to use the contents of the first post on Wednesday September 11, 2013, 4:30 p.m. I would like to thank Dr. Winger for taking a look at an earlier version of this paper and offering constructive criticisms.

[πληροῦσθε ἐν πνεύματι]." Then a number of participle clauses (including the one in 5:21) illumine the imperative in 5:18:

18 Be filled [πληροῦσθε] in the Spirit,

19 speaking [λαλοῦντες] to each other in psalms and hymns and songs of the Spirit,

singing and [ᾄδοντες καὶ]

psalming [ψάλλοντες] with your heart to the Lord,

20 giving thanks [εὐχαριστοῦντες] always for all things in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to [our] God and Father,

5:21 being subordinate [ὑποτασσόμενοι] to one another in the fear of Christ:

5:22 Wives (αἱ γυναῖκες) . . .

6:1 Children (τὰ τέκνα) . . .

6:5 Slaves (οἱ δοῦλοι) . . .

6:9 Masters (οἱ κύριοι) . . .[6]

Winger suggests, then, that taking one's subordinate place in each earthly relationship is a fruit of the Spirit's greater work and an act of worship in daily life. Now that the Christians are connected to the Spirit on account of their proximity to the Word at the Divine Service, 5:22—6:9 constitutes a major block that might be summarized as the way that Christians in their different offices relate in a God-pleasing manner to one another. Thus,

Be filled [πληροῦσθε] in the Spirit . . . (5:18)

(How is this done? Here is how):

Being subordinate [ὑποτασσόμενοι] to one another in the fear of Christ (5:21),

Wives to their own husbands as to *the Lord* . . . (5:22)

Children heed your parents in *the Lord* . . . (6:1)

Slaves heed your fleshly *lords* . . . (6:5)

Masters, realize that both the slaves' *Lord*, and yours, is in heaven and there is no partiality with him (6:9).

The common referent in the latter relationships is *the Lord* (forms of ὁ κύριος occur in 5:22; 6:1, 5, 9) to whom the Christian's respect, obedience, and servitude really are due, regardless of the subordinate party's relative office. Hence, to take Ephesians 5:21 in isolation as somehow advocating mutual

[6] This and other translations of the Greek text are the author's.

submission is quite a *misinterpretation* of the verse, as Winger maintains; rather "being subordinate" to one another in 5:21 is a kind of title[7] suggesting a pattern of headship and submission for several relationships operable among Christians who hear the Gospel and then relate to each other in the way here suggested:

Christ	husbands	fathers/ parents	lords/ masters
← *loves, sacrifices* / *submits, fears* →	← *love, sacrifice* / *submit, fear* →	← *discipline, instruct* / *heed, honor* →	← *treat well, don't threaten* / *heed, fear* →
Church	wives	children	Slaves

Thus far, I am grateful to Winger for sharing his thinking with me.[8] I would like now to provide some exegetical insights I developed independently while reviewing the book by Padgett referenced earlier.[9] I have three points to make, fleshing out the rather lean exegetical notes provided in Peter T. O'Brien's commentary on Ephesians.[10]

First, in the New Testament ὑποτάσσω ("to submit") regularly describes the submission of someone in an ordered arrangement to another who is above the first—that is, in authority over that person. Here it is instructive to consider the examples that support this admittedly sweeping assertion: the submission of Jesus to his parents (Luke 2:51); of demons to the disciples (Luke 10:17, 20); of citizens to the governing authorities (Rom 13:1; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet 2:13); of all things in the universe to Christ (1 Cor 15:27 [citing Ps 8:7 LXX]; Eph 1:22); of angels, authorities, and powers to Christ (1 Pet 3:22); of Christ to God the

[7] Another scholar who views Ephesians 5:21 as a "title" for the following household code (5:22–6:9; cf. Col 3:18–4:1) is Andrew T. Lincoln, *Ephesians*, Word Biblical Commentary 42 (Dallas: Word, 1990), 365.

[8] He reports that his draft on Ephesians 5:21–33 is nearly seventy pages in length.

[9] See my review of Padgett's *As Christ Submits to the Church* at Blogia, the Blog of *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* (http://logia.org/blogia/?p=170); accessed September 15, 2013.

[10] Peter T. O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, Pillar New Testament Commenary (Grand Rapids and Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1999), 401–405.

Father (1 Cor 15:28); of church members to their leaders (1 Cor 16:15–16; 1 Pet 5:5); of the church to Christ (Eph 5:24); of slaves to their masters (Titus 2:9; 1 Pet 2:18); of Christians to God (Heb 12:9; James 4:7); and of wives to their husbands (Col 3:18; Titus 2:4–5; 1 Pet 3:5). In none of the passages wherein the verb ὑποτάσσω appears are the relationships ever reversed. Thus, Joseph and Mary are not subject to the boy Jesus; the disciples are not subject to demons, the governing authorities are not subject to the citizens, nor Christ to the universe nor the unseen powers, nor God the Father to Christ the Son, nor leaders to the church members, nor Christ to the church, nor masters to slaves, nor God to Christians, and (here is the pertinent relationship that all the others lead up to) not husbands to wives. Therefore, according to the textual evidence, ὑποτάσσω does not describe "symmetrical" relationships at all, but rather *ordered* relationships wherein some persons are "over" and others "under."

Second, Padgett's reciprocal interpretation of Ephesians 5:21 rests mainly upon that little pronoun ἀλλήλοις ("to one another"): "the term *one another* (*allēlois*) in Ephesians (4:2, 32) and in Paul's letters in general indicates something that applies to each member of the church and not merely to a few."[11] Closer examination reveals, however, that the pronoun ἀλλήλοις is not always reciprocal. Sometimes it is, to be sure, in which case the translation "everyone to everyone" is in order;[12] however, as is often the case with words that occur frequently in Scripture, context determines meaning and one size does not necessarily fit all. Thus, the reciprocal pronoun appears in an admittedly few New Testament passages where symmetrical relationships cannot be in view. One such passage is Revelation 6:4: "so that people should slay one another [ἵνα ἀλλήλους σφάξουσιν, ESV]." This need not mean, however, that the slayers killed each other reciprocally, as if locked in mortal combat, but simply that some in more advantageous position killed others who were in less advantageous position.[13] Likewise, "Bear one another's burdens [ἀλλήλων τὰ βάρη βαστάζετε]" (Gal 6:2) does not have to mean that everyone should exchange burdens with everyone else, but that "*some* who are more able should help bear the burdens of *others* who are less able."[14] There are more passages of this sort,[15] each requiring analysis and thus interpretation on a case-by-case basis. I would argue, then, that Ephesians 5:21 falls into the latter category—especially if, as has been shown, the submission is not reciprocal but follows an ordered pattern.

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[11] Padgett, *As Christ Submits to the Church*, 41. He points to Romans 1:12; 15:5; and Galatians 5:13, 17, 26 in defense of his claim.

[12] Thus, in addition to the passages Padgett cites in the preceding footnote see John 13:34, 35; 15:12, 17; Eph 4:25, etc.

[13] Thus, O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 403.

[14] O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 403 (emphasis original).

[15] O'Brien lists 1 Cor 11:33; Luke 2:15; 21:1 (in error for 12:1); and 24:32; *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 403.

Third, the flow of Paul's argument as expressed in the Greek text does not permit the egalitarian interpretation. Ephesians 5:21 ("being subject to one another in the fear of Christ") introduces programmatically the notion of "submission" in the letter, and this concept is further unpacked in the household code of 5:22—6:9. The "general heading" (as Lincoln calls Ephesians 5:21)[16] is closely connected to what follows immediately in 5:22, where the relationship between wives and their husbands begins. There is no verb in the latter passage,[17] so readers of the Greek may naturally carry forward the idea of "submit" from the present middle participle ὑποτασσόμενοι (5:21) that begins the period. Indeed, variants consisting of a second or third person imperative—"ye women submit [ὑποτάσσεσθε] to your own husbands as to the Lord"[18] or "let the women submit [ὑποτασσέσθωσαν] to their own husbands as to the Lord"[19]—have had long and ample attestation in the textual apparatus as the two preceding footnotes demonstrate. Such additions, however, produce a verbosity that violates "the succinct style of the author's admonitions"[20] and are unnecessary in any case. In Ephesians 5:24a, where the verb ὑποτάσσεται does indeed occur ("as the church submits [ὑποτάσσεται] to Christ"), Paul adds the clause, "so also the wives [submit] to their husbands in everything [οὕτως καὶ αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἀνδράσιν ἐν παντί]." Again, Paul does not have to add the verb "submit" in the second clause to clarify what he means. The adverbial phrase οὕτως καί ("so also in the same way") in 5:24b indicates that, in the succinct style of the author, the ὑποτάσσεται of the church submitting to Christ is supposed to be applied to the wives submitting to their husbands—"in everything [ἐν παντί]" Paul adds.

The issue here is not so much substance as style. Paul, as is the case with all other writers of Greek and Latin, never adds a superfluous word (here the appropriate form of the verb ὑποτάσσω) to clarify his thinking—even though,

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[16] O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 365.

[17] Literally, "the wives to their own husbands as to the Lord [αἱ γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς τῷ κυρίῳ] . . ." (Eph 5:22, my own hyper-literal translation of the Greek text as it stands).

[18] γυναῖκες **ὑποτάσσεσθε** τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὡς . . . D F G it$^{d, g\ txt}$. Later variants, keeping the second person plural imperative ὑποτάσσεσθε ("submit ye!"), transpose the verb so that it occurs later in the sentence, thus γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν **ὑποτάσσεσθε** ὡς . . . 075 0150 424* 1852 1912 2200 *Byz* [K L] *Lect* it^{f} syr^{h} geo slav Chrysostom (emphasis added).

[19] γυναῖκες τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν ὑποτασσέσθωσαν ὡς . . . א A I P (Ψ ὑποτασσέσθωσαν after γυναῖκες) 6 33 81 104 256 263 365 424^{c} 436 459 1175 1241 1319 1573 1739 1881 1962 2127 2464 *l* 596 *l* 895 *l* 1178 it$^{ar, b, g\ v.\ r., mon, o}$ vg syr^{pal} (cop$^{sa, bo}$) arm eth Origen$^{gr\ lem, lat}$ Basil Theodore$^{lat\ lem}$; Victorinus-Rome Ambrosiaster Ambrose Jerome^{lem} Pelagius Augustine.

[20] Bruce H. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft/German Bible Society, 1994), 541.

to be sure, many writers of *English* do in order to clarify a point. Paul, however, cannot be beholden to *English* style: he thinks and writes in *Greek*, an accommodation to which any acceptable interpretation of the passage must pay heed. An unworthy argument (that Padgett does not actually make) would be that because the verb ὑποτάσσω is not actually paired with "women" in Ephesians 5:21, 22, and 24b Paul could not be thinking of wives submitting to their husbands in the overall passage. But that he does have such submission in mind is clear enough from context, as has been amply shown here, *and* he makes the point about wives submitting to their husbands explicitly in the following passages:

> Wives, submit to your husbands [ὑποτάσσεσθε τοῖς ἀνδράσιν], as is fitting in the Lord (Col 3:18 ESV);
>
> . . . to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands [ὑποτασσομένας τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν], so that the word of God may not be reviled (Titus 2:5 ESV).

That this was not so much a Pauline teaching as an early Christian one is suggested by the presence of recognizably the same admonition outside the Pauline corpus:

> For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands [ὑποτασσόμεναι τοῖς ἰδίοις ἀνδράσιν], as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening (1 Pet 3:5–6 ESV).

Preceding arguments should scupper the possibility that Paul was establishing any type of mutual submission in Ephesians 5:21. Instead, it is as though Paul were saying in the household code of which Ephesians 5:21 marks the beginning, "Submit to one another, and what I mean is, wives submit to your husbands, children to your parents, and slaves to your masters."[21] Another worthy interpreter has written, "Let each of you subordinate himself or herself to the one he or she should be subordinate to."[22]

I hasten to add that the subordination of the wife to her husband in the marital relationship does not entail an inherent inferiority to him. It is simply the case that order in marriage implies asymmetry: the one in authority (husband) is set over the one under his authority (wife). Hence, this biblically-revealed asymmetry should be reflected in the vows taken at marriage so that all involved understand that there is a distinction of roles in marriage: husbands love, nourish, and cherish their wives as Christ does the church (Eph 5:25, 28, 33), whereas wives submit to their husbands and respect them as the

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[21] O'Brien, *The Letter to the Ephesians*, 403.

[22] S. B. Clark, *Man and Woman in Christ* (Ann Arbor: Servant, 1980), 76.

church submits to Christ (Eph 5:24, 33).[23] This divine order is completely overturned in homosexual "marriage" and in churches that equate the gospel with egalitarianism and fairness. Christianity's gospel, however, is not "fair" in the usual understanding of that term (e.g., Matt 20:1–16), nor should Christian spouses attempt merely to be "fair" to each other in the sense of not treading on the other's toes. Such "space" between spouses seems at best to be a dim shadow of that blessed communion between a husband and wife that God intends in holy matrimony. God surely created the husband to be a godly *man* to his wife, and the wife to be a godly *woman* to her husband—his "helpmeet," if one may employ the terminology of an earlier age. Nor have I had space here to sketch out more thoroughly the distinctive role of the husband as the "Christ-like" figure in the marital relationship. The divine initiative in the role of salvation—from God to man—is reflected in the quite masculine roles of seeking out a prospective mate from the feminine half of the human race, of wooing her by various and sundry means, of committing to her and to her alone, then of "nourishing and cherishing" (ἐκτρέφει καὶ θάλπει, Eph 5:29) the wife, even if—or perhaps I should say, *especially if*—she does not at first willingly or joyfully comply. But the husbandly role, which most definitely reflects the divine initiative (cf. Is 40:2; 62:5; Hos 2:14, 19–20) and willing self-sacrifice of Christ (cf. Jn 10:11, 18; 15:13) endures even the wife's scornful unwillingness if only to win her to himself so that, as he ardently hopes, she *will* come to return his love and respect him in the end. Such dynamics at least were expressed by St. John Chrysostom in a splendid homily intended for petulant wives and their grasping husbands in the late fourth century.[24]

Toward the end of his treatment of wives and husbands, Paul resorts to citing Holy Scripture nearly verbatim (Eph 5:31). Not just any Scripture, however, but the same words that described Adam and Eve at creation (Gen 2:24) and Jesus' repetition of the same while under the baleful gaze of some contemptuous Pharisees (Matt 19:5; Mark 10:7): "Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh [καὶ ἔσονται οἱ δύο εἰς σάρκα μίαν]" (Eph 5:31 ESV). Of course, this passage is cited in all the Lutheran agendas on marriage, as well it should be.

A part of the passage that really got me to thinking, however, is the final clause: "and the two shall become one flesh," followed immediately by Paul's "this mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church" (Eph 5:32 ESV). In his e-mail, Winger states that his thinking on

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[23] See "*LSB* Service of Holy Matrimony: The Right Rite for Our Times" in the Theological Observer of this issue (335–336).

[24] Cf. "Homily 20: On Ephesians 5:22–33," in *St. John Chrysostom: On Marriage & Family Life*, Popular Patristic Series, trans. Catherine P. Roth and David Anderson (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press), 43–64. The Greek text is available in John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Epistolam ad Ephesios* 20 (*PG* 62: 135–150).

Ephesians 5 and holy marriage relied heavily upon John Kleinig's article, "The Subordination of the Exalted Son to the Father."[25] I tracked the article down and read it carefully. Kleinig makes scant reference to marriage itself in the piece, but I agree with Winger that inter-Trinitarian relationships between especially God the Father and Christ the Son suggest also how matters stand between a man and woman in Christ in holy marriage. For example, Kleinig writes that the three persons of the Holy Trinity—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—work together in all aspects of humanity's salvation, yet they "like a man and a woman in the conception of a child" operate differently according to their position and relation to each other as separate persons in the Trinity.[26] Kleinig peppers his piece with such terms as "the order of relations" and "the Trinitarian dynamic." Christ is equal to the Father as touching his Godhead, yet inferior to the Father as touching his manhood (Athanasian Creed; cf. 1 Cor 3:23; 11:3; 15:28). Such statements do not imply an inferiority of *essence*, but rather differences in *office* in the relationship between the Father and the Son. The persons are not simply *the same* but carry on diverse tasks harmoniously together within the one Godhead. So might not these Trinitarian relationships be suggestive of marriage also wherein the husband and the wife carry on differing, yet at the same time, complementary roles in the one marital relationship? Doctrinal purists might scoff at the possibility because human marriage, to be sure, is marred by sin. And yet, there may be some instructive parallels nevertheless. God did, after all, create man—both male and female—in his image (Gen 1:27). So perhaps the connection between the Holy Trinity and human marriage is not so far-fetched as some may think.

I shall have to leave it there. Winger's commentary is about to be unleashed upon a world that is profoundly confused about marriage and sexuality, and the deleterious effects of this confusion are increasingly felt among us. I submit that the challenge, however, provides great opportunity for the church and the on-going need for pastors and deaconesses to engage in good thinking on controverted matters, witness faithfully no matter what, and serve courageously—perhaps in the face of stout opposition (see Jesus vs. the Pharisees in Matt 19:5 above). The world may rage and foam, yet the Lord of the church has promised never to leave us nor forsake us (Matt 28:20). We cling to him.

John G. Nordling

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[25] John Kleinig, "The Subordination of the Exaulted Son to the Father," *Lutheran Theological Review* 18 (2005–2006): 41–52.

[26] Kleinig, "The Subordination of the Exaulted Son to the Father," 44.

CTQ 77 (2013): 335–358

Theological Observer

LSB Service of Holy Matrimony: The Right Rite for Our Times

Lutheran Service Book has been available to our congregations for over seven years. With each passing year, calling it the "new" hymnal will become harder to do. Now, with something as massive and complex as a hymnal, which includes all of the attending volumes, such as the *Altar Book, Agenda,* and *Pastoral Care Companion*, it should not come as a surprise that it takes time for pastors to become familiar with its many resources. This is especially true in cases where services that existed in previous books have been altered. If a pastor has not had the opportunity to note the differences, he may simply revert to the version in previous books with which he is familiar.

A case in point is the service of Holy Matrimony in *LSB* (pew edition, 275–277; Agenda, 64–70). Over the past few years, I have attended weddings where this rite was not used, even though *LSB* was in the pew racks. Now, I fully understand that weddings are one of those facets of a pastor's calling where he develops a way of handling them early in his ministry and then pretty much sticks to that practice. If it works, why fix it?

To such pastors I would, however, offer the suggestion that they take a closer look at the rite in *LSB*. For example, the Agenda Committee made revisions to the opening address. In order to hold up the goodness of God's created order we find this line: "Marriage was also ordained so that man and woman may find delight in one another." Yet, in the context of our hedonistic, no-fault divorce culture, they also wrote: "Therefore, all persons who marry shall take a spouse in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust, for God has not called us to impurity but in holiness."

Without question, the most significant change in the marriage rite is found in the consent that both the bride and groom give. The consent consists of a series of questions beginning with the words "will you," to which each person responds "I will." During my years in the parish, I invariably ran into questions or concerns about the consent, specifically, the word "obey" that was included in the question that was put to the bride. While the inclusion of this word dates at least as far back as the first edition of the *Book of Common Prayer* (1549), I am not aware of any source that explains the purpose for its inclusion. My best guess is that with that one word Cranmer was attempting to show the complementary relationship between husband and wife. Both persons, to be sure, make the same promise of faithfulness to "love, honor, and keep" the other in "sickness and in health." This promise of fidelity, however, is made within the unique roles that each will bear within the marriage.

The problem, of course, is that the word "obey" is hardly the best choice to tease out the distinctions within the male-female relationship that Paul so beautifully delineates in Ephesians 5. Now, it is true that "obey" is one of the meanings of the Greek υποτάσσω, the most significant word in Paul's discussion. But that translation hardly does justice to the relationship that Paul describes. (See the fine discussion concerning this particular topic in the Research Notes on 327–334 above).

For my purposes here, I wish to focus on one particular change in the *LSB* rite. Drawing upon language that appeared in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod's 1993 hymnal, *Christian Worship*, the consent now reads:

> *Name of groom*, will you have this woman to be your wedded wife, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? *Will you nourish and cherish her as Christ loved His body, the Church, giving Himself up for her?* Will you love, honor, and keep her in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to her alone, so long as you both shall live?
>
> *Name of bride*, will you have this man to be your wedded husband, to live together in the holy estate of matrimony as God ordained it? *Will you submit to him as the Church submits to Christ?* Will you love, honor, and keep him in sickness and in health and, forsaking all others, remain united to him alone, so long as you both shall live? (*LSB* 276; emphasis added).

Note the second question in each part of the consent. Rather than relying solely on one word ("obey") to allude to the relationship between husband and wife, specific language from Ephesians 5 is incorporated in question form. When a pastor sits down with a couple to help prepare them for marriage, he can walk them through the marriage rite, using this language in the consent to catechize them concerning the biblical understanding of marriage. And in the service itself he might consider highlighting these words in his sermon, instructing both family and friends in the truth of God's good gift of marriage.

But why the fuss? Aren't the old marriage rites sufficient, especially for pastors who have been using them for years? Sufficient, perhaps, but optimal, no. As we have seen again and again in just the past several years, the institution of marriage is under assault. Same-sex marriage is now legal in a number of states, and the Supreme Court has paved the way for more to follow. Our very understanding of what it means to be male and female seems to be disintegrating before our eyes. In the midst of this moral confusion, the church must stand firm and speak with a clear voice. The time for allowing couples to write their own marriage vows is long past; nothing less than a clear witness of the truth will do. And even the language enshrined in our previous agendas is perhaps not up to the challenge that the church faces today. So here is my plea for anyone who is not yet using the rite of Holy Matrimony from *LSB*: take a look and ask whether this just might be the right rite for our times.

Paul J. Grime

The Pro-Life Movement in the LCMS: Some Reminiscences

[The following was delivered January 24, 2013, as an after-dinner speech for the annual Symposium on the Lutheran Confessions at Concordia Theological Seminary on the occasion of the fortieth anniversary of the Supreme Court decision Roe v. Wade. The Editors.]

The year was 1968. The Feminist Movement was gaining momentum while another movement was just beginning to form. Its goal was to liberalize abortion laws throughout the country. The year before, Colorado was the first state to take action by legalizing abortion within certain restricted situations. For the most part, people in the pew were unaware and uninformed about the brewing legal battle that was about to impact the entire American culture.

In 1970, New York became the second state to liberalize its law, enacting changes far more permissive than those of Colorado. By then, I had already joined an abortion rights group where, at meetings, we learned to argue *for* abortion using the verbal gymnastics necessary to erase the humanity of the unborn child. One evening a program sponsored by a local medical society featured a discussion panel consisting of three men and one woman. The men were all professionals and all prominent in their fields—a physician, a lawyer, and the city's medical examiner. All were clearly pro-choice and focused their arguments on a woman's choice, a woman's right, and a woman's privacy.

The fourth member of the panel, a woman, was introduced this way: "Our next speaker is Mary Winter, President of Women Concerned for the Unborn Child. Mrs. Winter is a housewife and mother of six children." What the audience was hearing was Mary . . . lots of kids . . . obviously Catholic . . . spouting the party line. I could sense the derision in the room. Mrs. Winter went to the lectern and, addressing her comments to the other panelists, said in a calm, soft voice: "But what about the baby? At 18 days the baby's heart begins to beat. By 21 days it is beating with a regularity that doesn't stop until death. The baby's brain waves can be detected at 43 days, and the baby can feel pain long before leaving the mother's womb." Talk about junk science, I thought.

The day after that meeting, I called Mary Winter, hoping to learn the source of her claims in order to better demolish them. We met a number of times during the next six months, and each time she challenged me to research history, sociology, embryology, fetology and other " -ologies" that informed the abortion argument. The Reader's Digest version of what happened after those six months is that I became a member of the Board of Directors of Women Concerned for the Unborn Child and soon found myself speaking on behalf of the unborn at Catholic venues around the country.

There was another member of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod on that same speaking circuit, a pastor from New York City named Richard John Neuhaus. One day I received a phone call from him asking if I would meet

with a few other Lutherans who were concerned about the issue. Dr. C. Jack Eichhorst, a theologian of the American Lutheran Church, had proposed the formation of a pan-Lutheran organization to give witness to the sanctity of life from the Lutheran perspective. Representatives of the three major Lutheran church bodies in the U.S. agreed to fly into Philadelphia on a scheduled day.[1] Unfortunately, a severe storm struck the East Coast, the airport shut down, and the formation of Lutherans For Life would have to wait a few more years.

In 1971, the LCMS passed Resolution 2-39, which made clear the position of our church. It stated that (1) from the moment of conception the unborn are persons in the sight of God; (2) the unborn stand under the protection of God's prohibition against murder; and (3) abortion is not a moral option except as a tragic unavoidable by-product when trying to prevent the death of another person (e.g., a tubal pregnancy).

Eighteen months later, on January 22, 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court announced its opinion on the abortion case titled *Roe v. Wade.* It was the pivotal action that, in effect, made abortion legal for any reason at any time in a pregnancy.

Coincidentally, on the next day, January 23, 1973, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) convened a one-day meeting to discuss two topics: (1) the role of women in the church and (2) the abortion issue. Six women had been invited to participate in the discussion,[2] and it was evident that there was not unanimity of opinion on either subject among the women or even among members of the CTCR. When I announced that the Court had ruled in favor of abortion-on-demand at any time for any reason in every state, many at the meeting were certain that information was incorrect, believing that the Court would never hand down such a sweeping ruling. Forty years later and 55 million legal abortions later, that is exactly what the Supreme Court imposed upon the entire country.

Soon after, the U. S. Senate announced hearings on a Human Life Amendment to the Constitution that would declare that life begins at conception. I received a call from the Synod's headquarters asking if I would testify as to the position of the Synod. The hearing was held in a large room filled with media from around the world. Cameras flashed as the first to testify, four Catholic Cardinals, sat before microphones. A day earlier, as I traveled to Washington, I was in awe of the privilege I had been given to testify . . . until I heard the Cardinals. All four were lawyers, and they were impressive, informative, and very articulate. I remember thinking, "Lord, You

[1] C. Jack Eichhorst, Jean Garton, Robert Jensen, Leigh Jordahl, Samuel Nafzger, Richard John Neuhaus, and Michael Rogness.

[2] Signe Carlson, Jean Garton, Janet Larson, Florence Montz, Marlys Taege, and Lucille Wassman.

promised to come again. Now would be a really good time!" However, when the next speaker arose to oppose the Life Begins at Conception Amendment, I quickly changed my mind and couldn't wait for my turn at the microphone.

That speaker's name was Bella Abzug, a member of Congress from my hometown of New York City. She had the nickname of "Battling Betty." Wearing her signature big hat and speaking with her famous deep, raspy voice, she said: "I speak for the women of America!" That did it! She didn't speak for this woman or for the women of the LCMS.

The significant part of that hearing is that while there were many individuals from various committees and groups who spoke that day, apart from the Roman Catholics, the LCMS was the only other church body in America to give testimony. In March 1976, the House of Representatives also held a hearing on a Human Life Amendment, and I was again asked to present the position of the LCMS. Once more the LCMS and the Catholic Church were the only church bodies to testify to their official position. I had an even stronger hand to play this time because a number of LCMS Districts had since adopted the Convention's 1971 resolution.

The testimony before the Senate and House was not as tricky as when the Synod accepted an invitation to testify in Pennsylvania. The bill before that state legislature would have required parental consent for any minor girl seeking an abortion. I agreed again to testify for the Synod and traveled to Harrisburg for the hearing. However, when my name was called to speak, the chairman said: "Mrs. Garton, there has been a challenge to having you testify because you are not a resident of Pennsylvania and, therefore, have no standing. I am sorry you have traveled so far for no reason." He was sorry, I thought. I was sorry I had spent so much time preparing the testimony. However, I took a deep breath, thought quickly, and said: "Mr. Chairman, you are correct. I do not live in Pennsylvania at this time. However, I do have property in the state where I intend to retire." He hesitated a moment, huddled with the committee, and then announced that I would be permitted to speak. And I did. It has been thirty-six years since that day, and I still have that property in Pennsylvania. It is a very small parcel of land—big enough, though, for retirement. It is six feet long and six feet deep where I do, indeed, intend to retire.[3]

In the years immediately following the Supreme Court's ruling, the Synod's Social Concerns Committee (SCC) of the CTCR sent notices to various entities of the church, informing them of a seminar the SCC was prepared to provide concerning the implications of the abortion opinion. A dozen re-

[3] The cemetery of St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church in Millvale, PA, which was the first congregation my husband served after graduating from the seminary.

sponses from colleges and districts were received, and during 1974 and 1976 programs were presented throughout the Synod.[4]

Frankly, there was not much interest at most of the events, and at one of our colleges we were even boycotted. The school president was so embarrassed he went knocking on dorm doors to recruit an audience, but to little avail. However, our spirits picked up when we received an invitation to present our program to a large seminary of one of the other Lutheran church bodies. We were so delighted that we scheduled a full day at the school and included some ALC and LCA pastors on the team.

The experience at that school was even worse because the students not only boycotted the information sessions, they also boycotted us at chapel and at lunch. Nevertheless, we stayed the entire day as scheduled, though we left as a dejected band of witnesses. As we walked down the empty hall to exit the building, coming toward us was a student, books in his arm and feeling his way with a cane. We greeted him as we passed by, causing him to stop. He said something about not recognizing our voices and asked if we were the people who were there to talk about the sanctity of life. When we said we were, he told us he had not been able to attend the sessions but that he wholeheartedly agreed with us. "Keep spreading the message," he said. As we left the building, one of the team members said, "Here was a whole school of bright, gifted students, but it was only the blind student who could really see."

Another response of the Synod occurred in 1977 when then LCMS President J. A. O. Preus hosted a dinner meeting in St. Louis to which he invited the department executives of the Synod. He had asked me to invite a few representatives of the national pro -life movement so the synodical executives could get a sense of the broad spectrum of activities being carried on in the country. Those included Judith Fink, an officer of Baptists for Life, which at that time was the oldest and largest of the denominational pro-life groups. She spoke of the value of such groups and the need to combat the rhetoric that abortion was "a Catholic issue." Joseph Lampe, Executive Director of Minnesotans Concerned for Life, discussed the role of political action committees, and Dr. C. Jack Eichhorst, an ALC theologian, spoke of the need for a Lutheran witness on abortion both in the church and the community.

At the end of the meeting, I asked those present if they saw the value of a Lutherans For Life and, if they did, would each LCMS member contribute $100 to provide seed money to help with the mailing and phone costs needed to put

[4] The seminar team consisted of two permanent members (Samuel Nafzger of the CTCR and Jean Garton of the SCC). Other members participated, depending on their availability and on the location of the program.

together a network of interested people. Only one executive declined, but with the funds collected from the others Lutherans For Life was born.[5]

In the early years, LFL assisted in the establishment of Lutherans For Life of Canada and Lutherans For Life of Australia. As President, I did a daily radio commentary, titled "Speaking of Life", which aired from 1992 to 1996 over satellite from the LCMS radio station in St. Louis. During the 35 years of its existence, LFL has had three LCMS members of the clergy serve as Executive Director[6] and three LCMS women have served as President and Chairman of the Board.[7]

So much for ancient history! This is now—40 years later and 55 million dead babies later. I do not believe the Father grieves over 55 million aborted babies. I believe he grieves over each individual and unique unborn, unheard, unseen, unwanted aborted baby—each one created by him, precious souls for whom Christ died.

It is our time now . . . because just being alive places a debt on us.

It is our time now . . . because too many church members are living in the aura of Christianity but not in its substance.

It is our time now . . . because we know we are not the children God planned. He planned perfect children and we are all handicapped by sin.

It is our time now . . . because we are not the children God wanted. He wanted obedient children and we are all rebellious by nature.

God could have aborted the whole human race but, instead, through the sacrificial death and resurrection of his only Son, he has made us his children by adoption.

Yes, it is *our* time now . . . *our* time to say: Here *I* stand . . . on the side of life.

Jean S. Garton
Founder and Past President of Lutherans For Life
Bryant, Arkansas

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[5] On August 22, 1978, the founding meeting of Lutherans For Life was held on the campus of Concordia College, St. Paul. Dr. Eugene Linse, a political science professor at the school, hosted the gathering and was chosen Executive Director. Dr. Leigh Jordahl, an LCA professor was chosen secretary. Dr. C. Jack Eichhorst, ALC theologian, became Vice-President and Dr. Jean Garton became President.

[6] Dr. Eugene Linse (1976–1985), Rev. Edward Fehskens (1985–1995), Dr. James Lamb (1996 to present).

[7] Dr. Jean Garton (1978–1995), Linda Bartlet (1995–2004), Diane Schroeder (2004 to present).

Can the Shoes of Richard John Neuhaus Be Filled?

[These reflections concerning the legacy of Richard John Neuhaus were delivered at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana, on January 24, 2013. The Editors.]

My primary qualification for writing on this topic is that I am the nephew of my subject. As such, I feel a little bit like I assume Kareem Abdul Jabar Jr. must have felt when he came to play basketball at Valparaiso. He was a decent college prospect, but nobody was going to confuse him with his father. It is a daunting thing to live in the shadow of a famous relative, but it also is a blessing, not only to know a great man in a different way but also, in my case, because it gives me opportunities to write about him and about the possible future of our collective relationship with and voice toward the public square.

The question before us is whether the shoes of Richard John Neuhaus can be filled when it comes to issues of the church in the public square. The question itself assumes a couple of things that might require some explanation. When we ask if someone's shoes can be filled, we are assuming that it would be both difficult and desirable that it happen. As for difficulty, I think we all agree that Neuhaus embodied a rare blend of gifts that do not come along very often. More on that to follow. But what about the desirability of it? Why not ask, "Should the shoes of Richard John Neuhaus be filled, even if they could?" It is remarkable that we are here at an LCMS seminary wondering how to replace a man who died three church bodies removed from his tempestuous LCMS days. The disputes over his departure decades ago have mostly centered on whether he left in disgust or was kicked out in exasperation, but he was certainly encouraged by many not to let the door hit him on the way out. What has changed? Few people would have predicted back in the 1970s that an LCMS seminary theological symposium would be wondering how we can possibly replace this guy. I think in many ways it is we who have changed, and for the better. Neuhaus saw some things quite clearly, especially concerning civil rights and later abortion, that took the Synod some time to digest before coming around to agree with him. Which brings us to another question—if Neuhaus's shoes were filled, where would they stand? Would there be room for them in the LCMS, such that he could join with us in saying, "Here we stand"? Or perhaps in one of the new Lutheran bodies? Would those shoes inexorably wander home to Rome again? Might they would stand here with Luther and Lutheranism?

To answer these questions, we must ask first of all what was so special about the man that we feel his absence so keenly? For one, he was incredibly smart. But that really is not so rare as to make someone irreplaceable. If we are merely talking measurable intelligence quotient, I will bet there are a few people in and around any campus community who are pretty close to being just as smart, in a purely clinical sense, as Neuhaus was. Genius IQs are by definition rare, but not that rare. I have no idea what Neuhaus's IQ was or

what he would have scored on an SAT, but I suspect that what is true in Lake Wobegon is true for the real world—smart doesn't count for much. There is no shortage of smart people. For whatever it is worth, Neuhaus himself considered David Hart—author of *The Beauty of the Infinite*, which Neuhaus considered likely to become a major, lasting work, and monthly contributor for the back page of *First Things*—to be the smartest man he had ever met. And Neuhaus knew a lot of smart people. So if all we are after is brains, we have got an upgrade over Neuhaus in Hart. But, of course, that isn't all we are after.

Nor was it a matter of formal education. If you are a fourth-year student here today, you are only a few months away from being just as educated as Neuhaus ever was, at least in terms of formal education. In fact, you are probably ahead of him, because he never graduated from high school. He went to boarding high school at Concordia College Seward, but, like several of his older brothers, he had the knack for being invited to go elsewhere, and so, after taking a break from school as a teenager, he decided to re-enroll at Concordia in Texas where he had been staying with relatives. The high school enrollment line was right next to the college enrollment line, so he stepped over and enrolled in college. When the registrar pointed out that they did not have his high school transcripts yet, he simply said that he hoped they would be receiving them soon. When he caused controversy later in life by saying he hoped everyone was saved, well, you have to know what he meant by hope. He went on from college to seminary but never life went beyond the M.Div. degree, though the stairwell heading down into his dank basement was littered with honorary doctorates stuffed between the banister and the wall, one of which should probably be sent back to Concordia Austin in lieu of the hoped-for high school diploma.

I think that lack of a Ph.D. in combination with a host of honorary degrees speaks of the particular something, the first truly rare quality that Neuhaus had. For lack of a better term, I will call it intellectual entrepreneurship. It is a standard thing in academic circles to tout the "earned doctorate," with the not-so-veiled implication that honorary doctorates are not really earned. But it seems to me that such an attitude is almost precisely wrong. In some ways, an earned degree is far easier to get and represents less in terms of the special quality embodied by Neuhaus that we're considering than would an honorary doctorate. Most of us here today have probably gone to college. Do a little thought experiment—consider your whole class. If I consider my class in Christ College at Valparaiso or my first year of seminary here in Fort Wayne, I think it is fair to say that on average we were a fairly academically inclined group of students. Lots of As. Lots of high test scores. But if you gathered that group of capable students in a room and assigned one half of them to get a Ph.D. and the other half to get an honorary doctorate, I suspect the first half would eventually succeed at a much higher rate. Why? Because that process is mapped out for you. If you are relatively good academically and you have the time and the money (and perhaps a spouse with enough patience), there is a

pretty good chance you will succeed in getting a Ph.D. It would be hard, to be sure, and the catalogues and advisors cannot do the work for you, but they do exist. The long and difficult road to a Ph.D. is at least on a well-marked map. For those trying to get an honorary doctorate, there is no catalogue of course offerings, no schedule of how long it will take. You have to invent the process. That intellectual entrepreneurship, which includes the habits of thinking big, considering all possibilities, studying not for the credit but for the helpful knowledge—is the first thing (no pun intended) that Neuhaus had that was truly rare, much more rare than a high IQ or decades of higher education.

The second thing that was extraordinary about Neuhaus, and this may seem somewhat strange to say—but I think it is important to understanding him—is that he was deliberately single. This was not simply a case of the church ladies at his vicarage congregation failing to introduce him to their nieces; this was someone who apparently had the gift of celibacy and took seriously St. Paul's words about the blessings of having the opportunity for single-minded devotion, for whole-life commitment to ministry. His father was a pastor who was also married and had eight children. Richard, on the other, took a vow of celibacy while still in seminary. He set out to be single in order to be undistracted. I don't in any way mean to disparage the married-pastor model that dominates Lutheranism and by which I myself and almost all of my pastor friends live. In fact, I don't think I know any married LCMS pastors who are not, by my estimation at least, drastically better men and even better pastors for being married. We all tend to marry up. But our common model of ministry, as St. Paul so plainly stated, does tend to prevent one from living a St. Paul sort of life.

Nothing prevented Richard John Neuhaus from pursuing things wherever his intellectual entrepreneurship and passion for church and ministry took him. Being single allowed him to attend protests and go to jail; most respectable parish pastors with families can afford to spend a very limited amount of time in jail. It allowed him to set up the Community of Christ in the City, an apartment building where he lived and where the other residents could live a semi-communal life with daily devotions, something of a combination of a Christian family household and a monastery. And when, like so many institutions in his life, the Rockford Institute abruptly invited him to go elsewhere and threw him and his bewildered employees literally out on the street, Neuhaus was able to treat it as yet another adventure, deciding that the very first thing to be done in that case was to go to a nice Italian restaurant in order to make a plan. A man with a wife and children and Concordia plans to think about will tend not to find nearly as much adventure in such circumstances. It allowed him, like St. Paul, to know both plenty and want with contentment; his ups and downs weren't ruining anything for anybody else. However much or little you might know about the man and his life, you cannot even picture him married with children.

A very related third uncommon thing about him was that he was bi-vocational as a pastor. The combination of his talent and singleness gave him that freedom. He gave up his call to a wealthy, suburban New York congregation in order to take a call to an inner city parish on a bi-vocational basis that forced him to find his own salary, which he did as a hospital chaplain. A lot of guys would be open to that in theory, but the facts suggest few are open to it in practice, largely because of family and salary considerations, the need to pay off student loans and save for retirement, and other tame and domestic considerations. If the Director of Placement told the fourth-year class that there was a congregation interested in calling a candidate, with the caveat that the student would be responsible for his own salary, how many would be jazzed at that prospect? We don't like to admit it, but money is a huge factor in our lives as pastors. But it always comes at a cost, the cost of being considered an employee of the congregation in many people's eyes. Those who pay the piper like to call the tune, and they rarely call for their pastor to go off and do stuff that benefits the congregation in tangential ways at best. I don't know how much this attitude afflicts other Lutheran bodies, but it is a plague in the LCMS. Congregations more and more want to know how they personally benefit from everything the pastor does during the work week. And who can blame them for that since they are the ones paying the bills. A bi-vocational pastor is set free from that bad dynamic; he can do Word and Sacrament ministry as the pastor without incessantly trying to justify his salary. Neuhaus had many, many sources of funding, but he never let anyone else call the tune.

Of course, you have to be able to make money doing something else to be bi-vocational, and to do what Neuhaus did—the amazing amount of reading and writing especially—would have to be good enough to get paid mostly for doing that. When I was ordained, he wrote to me and said, "May your duty be your delight," and that was certainly true for him. By making his living reading and writing, he was getting paid to do what he was going to be doing anyway. What the harmonizing of duty and delight gives as an added gift is time. Without family obligations and without the need to earn a salary doing something else, Neuhaus had all the time in the world on which to focus on the things he wanted to focus. James Neuchterlein, who had been the editor of *First Things*, told me the quality that my uncle had was the power of concentration. Most writers and academics can concentrate and get in a zone for a little while, but it is exhausting. He said Richard John Neuhaus could routinely concentrate intensely on something all day. And he shares the story that when he first moved to New York to work on *First Things*, he asked Neuhaus on a Friday afternoon what his plans for the weekend were. Neuhaus replied, "Same as every weekend. I'm going to read and write."

A fourth thing Neuhaus had was a sort of naïve sense of possibilities. Perhaps because he had such an entrepreneurial mind, he had a sense of being able to do big things no matter the obstacles. Sometimes this had almost comical effects, such as when he purchased a piano on the theory that he

would be able to play it without too much trouble; after all, he was used to things coming easy and was genuinely surprised if they did not. But one could interpret it alternately as hubris or naivete that Neuhaus would begin projects like Clergy Concerned about Vietnam or Evangelicals and Catholics Together on the theory that such project could make a large-scale difference. Sometimes they fizzled, other times they had a lasting effect, as when his book coined the phrase "naked public square," which still has currency. But whether they succeeded or failed, they were based on large-scale thought. This can be dangerous. Recall the line from Bonhoeffer's *Life Together*: "God hates visionary dreaming; it puffs up the dreamer with pride."[8] Certainly a man of prodigious talents and big ideas would constantly be tempted toward pride.

Which leads to the last peculiar thing I want to mention about Neuhaus, which is that he was passionate about the topic of holiness and was personally dedicated to the pursuit of it in a way that few Lutherans are. And though it is tough to pinpoint what exact difference this made, I suspect much of Neuhaus's lasting impact through the decades depended upon it. If all you had to go by was accounts of Richard as young man, I think you would probably conclude that he was a bit arrogant, pugnacious, and too clever by half—a first-year seminarian who acts like the professor and can back it up just often enough to get a reputation for brilliance. His father was fond of saying to him, "If you were half as smart as you think you are, you'd be twice as smart as you are." When he officiated at my parents' wedding, he did not even see them off from the parsonage when they left on their honeymoon because the family theological discussion with his dad and brothers was too intense to be interrupted by such trivialities.

That was back in the early 1960s. Yet, when I talked to people at his funeral who only knew him for the last decade or two of his life, they were unanimous in reporting that the things they remembered him most for were his generosity of spirit, gentleness, and humility. Had that spiritual progress never taken place, he might have become a cranky old man, endlessly recounting old battles and the zingers with which he had won arguments back in the day. To pursue holiness is to inhabit an ever larger world by becoming ever smaller in it and never to live in the past. I think this passionate pursuit played a big role in his greatness. It allowed him to do some visionary dreaming without being puffed up with pride.

But even taking all those qualities for granted, so what? Even if he was super-talented and dedicated and special and all that, what is the real nature of the void he left that causes us to ask whether he can replaced? What we are missing—the shoes that need to be filled—is someone for whom the public square has to account, a voice of vibrant, traditional, orthodox Christianity who thinks with the church yet thinks about everything else in a way that the

[8] Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together* (London: SCM Press, 1954), 17.

wider culture considers relevant. Public intellectuals who claim to be Christians, but who think with the culture and critique Christianity accordingly, are a dime a dozen. Sincerely Christian intellectuals who can articulate a solid orthodox take on any subject, but to whom nobody but their students and blog followers feel any urge to listen, are also a dime a dozen. What is missing is someone who thinks with the church and about everything else in such a way that popes and presidents, liberals and conservatives, Christians and others consider worth taking seriously, even if they disagree. This, I think, is why someone, for example, like Wendell Berry cannot replace Neuhaus for us. For one thing, he isn't "our guy," so to speak. But more importantly, you cannot absolutely rely on Berry, who is a Christian, to think first with the church. He might and he might not, but it isn't essential to his writings.

So assuming there is no shortage of smart, educated, orthodox, entrepreneurial, creative thinkers, how might one of them manage to find a national platform on which to stand and fill the shoes of Neuhaus? In other words, if we suddenly found ourselves with another Neuhaus in the LCMS or any of the Lutheran bodies, what would we do with him? Would he be synodical president? I once heard that Neuhaus had been nominated to be the first presiding bishop of the ELCA but that he did not get very many votes. Imagine how different Lutheranism might be today if he had gotten a majority. Or would he be a seminary professor? A parish pastor? I think this is part of the problem. How does one speak for "us" in broad terms without being a mere official spokesman of a denomination or institution?

For starters, it would require an ecumenical sensibility that is neither mushy nor sectarian. The sort of mushy, diversity-and-tolerance celebrating ecumenism that rules liberal Protestantism, at least as it affects Christianity and the public square in America, is indistinguishable from secularism. That is not to say they are the same voice—I am not accusing all liberal Protestants of being unbelievers—it is just that on every particular issue of controversy in which the voice of traditional, orthodox Christianity might have something to say, liberal Protestantism takes the other side. The voice of liberal Protestantism in the public square speaks in almost perfect unison with the voice of secularism. A horrendous example of that came to light just recently when the United Methodist Church published a document commemorating the fortieth anniversary of Roe v. Wade by celebrating forty years of safe and legal abortion and dreaming of a kingdom of God in which every child will be a wanted child. As we think about both Neuhaus and the topic of abortion on this anniversary week, we feel his absence perhaps most keenly by not getting to see what he would write in response to the United Methodist document. A mushy, tolerant ecumenism fails to be any voice at all.

On the other hand, sectarianism does no better. Liberal Protestantism can stake a claim to be mainstream in a way that no single church body can, not because the mainline churches are so vibrant but because they agree with the

predominating culture. American institutions—universities, newspapers, museums, etc.—"get" liberal Protestantism. They understand each other. There is currency between them. By contrast, in our national consciousness even the Roman Catholic Church, which boasts a worldwide membership almost four times the size of the entire population of the United States and predates the United States by millennia, is quickly dismissed as sectarian or fringe whenever it disagrees with mainline liberalism. Look at how that church's perfectly rational and historically Christian view on artificial birth control is simply dismissed by our government as some fringe kookiness that need not be protected by law. And certainly no other traditional Christian or conservative church body could do any better that the Catholics.

Neuhaus, by way of contrast, was able to write in a non-sectarian way without embracing mushy, secular ecumenism. For example, I recently had a chance to work through his book *Freedom for Ministry* with a clergy study-group that includes people of many, mostly mainline denominations. A Methodist, a Mennonite, an Episcopalian and three liberal ELCA Lutherans all agreed it was one of the best books on pastoral ministry they had ever read and said they wished it had been part of their seminary curricula. Such a book, as with much of his writings, speaks broadly while also being bracingly orthodox. That is an almost impossible thing to pull off. Most attempts lapse into conservative sectarianism or liberal mushiness. Some writers, like Chesterton or Lewis, can pull it off to a certain degree, but not many; Neuhaus was in the company of the rare writers who could.

How was he able to do that? By being on good terms with a huge range of thinkers without agreeing with them on everything. As a liberal turned conservative, Lutheran turned Catholic, Neuhaus managed to make new friendships without always breaking old ones. But more importantly, he was able to focus on the *crux* of the matter apart from other loyalties. Ironically, it was sometimes precisely his sense of ordered loyalties that caused people to feel betrayed by him. His friends from the Civil Rights days thought he betrayed them by becoming a conservative, his LCMS friends thought he betrayed his heritage, his Lutheran friends felt he betrayed them when he became Catholic. None could really be mad at him because they understood that Lutheranism meant something to him, as did heritage, as did civil rights. All those loyalties, however, needed to be in order.

I think that is what the Catholic Church gave him that he could not find elsewhere: an order to his loyalties that reconciled his sense of loyalty with his intellectual entrepreneurship. Entreprenuership is dangerous and unsettling to orthodoxy and to loyalty. To confessional orthodoxy, intellectual entrepreneurship implies a defect in the existing scheme, something improvable or incomplete about our Confessions. It does the same to loyalty—always looking elsewhere implies something insufficient about here. But when his loyalty to his Lord, loyalty to the truth, and loyalty to the church merged in taking a leap

of faith that the church, uniquely, would be guided unerringly through time by the Holy Spirit, he was set free. Thinking with the church no longer felt like a limitation. This freedom comes through in his last work, the posthumously published *American Babylon*. The thesis is that every era and every place is a place of separation from the New Jerusalem, a Babylon in which God's people are captive, but with nothing to fear because the final victory is assured. So Babylon offers plenty for the intellectual entrepreneur to explore fearlessly as long as he thinks with the church, and plenty of places to get lost as soon as he stops thinking with the church.

The need for engagement in the public square will never go away. In every era there have been issues in the public square in desperate need of being informed by critical Christian insights. Today is no different. The collapse of marriage, the acceptance of abortion and euthanasia—these are public issues that will certainly destroy many lives and will certainly never be remedied apart from Christian voices in the public square. How might we in the LCMS cultivate new voices? Years ago, I managed to get into an ongoing clergy group called the Pastor-Theologian program run by the Center of Theological Inquiry in Princeton. I am pretty sure my getting accepted into that program was another perk of being Neuhaus's nephew; be that as it may, it was a great experience. I was the only conservative involved. The thing that stuck with me was a question I got from a moderator who was from the United Church of Christ. He asked, "What will it take to get the Missouri Synod to start producing theologians again, like Neuhaus, Marty, and Pelikan, who speak to and for more than just the LCMS?" I think it is a good question, especially when you consider that even when we were producing great public theologians, they often did not stay in the LCMS.

The first obstacle, obviously, is ecumenism. I think Neuhaus left us a good blueprint with the initiative Evangelicals and Catholics Together, which by rights ought simply to be a long-hand way of saying Lutheran. Sadly, I would say the liberal mainline does not factor into the ecumenical equation anymore, and I don't think Neuhaus saw much ecumenical future in that direction either. There could be no "Evangelicals and Catholics and Mainliners Together" initiative. I would say his pessimism on that score was justified; the ELCA way of being Lutheran and marching in step with liberal Protestantism is, as far as I can tell, a dead end, ecumenically. But even focusing on the fact that Lutherans are Evangelical and Catholic brought together like peanut butter and chocolate, we too often advertise that fact in the wrong ways. Instead of being confidently catholic among Evangelicals and confidently evangelical among Roman Catholics, we end up being obsequiously evangelical among Evangelicals as though desperate to prove to them that we, too, are saved, so they can let us into their club. And then we are obsequiously catholic among Catholics, desperate to prove that we are not Protestants. So instead of us bringing Evangelicals and Catholics together and being the bridge between them, we allow them to divide us into competing camps. We

have parishes that are virtually indistinguishable from Assemblies of God parishes in their architecture, music, videos, and even sermons. At least, no Evangelical would find anything very foreign about the goings-on at some LCMS parishes. And we have parishes where there is so much genuflecting and people crossing themselves and Gregorian chant and layers of garb that most Catholics I know would go there and think, "What are they, putting on a play?" If we are going to raise up a voice to the public square, we will need offer a solid Lutheran platform big enough for both feet, the Evangelical one and the Catholic one, to stand on, a comfortable and confident Lutheran identity as Evangelical and Catholic together.

Secondly, we will need to be more deliberate about raising up people who live it, not just think it. The old Concordia system did that for many people—your life was a mission defined by the church from a young age. Whether it was his civil rights work, his celibacy, his Community of Christ in the City, Neuhaus lived it. Too often, I think, we use the idea of vocation as a cloak to justify living lives that in all the concrete ways are just like everyone else's. We use outreach and the goal of being all things to all people to justify bringing in new members without transforming them or even holding forth that possibility. We often fail to teach about holiness in any concrete ways for fear people will take it as works righteousness.

If we somehow managed to provide a unified platform for someone to be a powerful voice to the public square, that man would need to be a holy man. His whole life would have to concur with his message. Of course, part of true holiness is seeing one's own shortcomings keenly, because that in itself is a message. Smart? Yes. Educated? Sure. Creative and insightful? Of course. Pastoral and wise? Yes. But perhaps, most importantly, someone who takes holiness seriously enough for the way he lives his life to be noticed. Whether we are talking about liberals or conservatives, Christians or others, the sort of great minds who actually make a difference are those like Ghandi, Bonhoeffer, Mother Theresa, Albert Schweitzer—and the list goes on and on—people whose lives put their own ideas to the test. This was one of Neuhaus's devastating criticisms of the notorious ethicist Peter Singer, advocate of infanticide and euthanasia; it was all just ideas to Singer. He wrote about the absurdity and even immorality of spending precious resources caring for the old and incurable, but then he spent lots of his own time and money caring for his mother in her last years. In his case and to his credit, his humane example disproved his demonic theories. But when Neuhaus pointed out the discrepancy at a debate, Singer grew angry. At the time, the crowd agreed with Singer. History will justify Neuhaus's critique. By refusing to live his message, Singer proved himself false. For us, if nothing else, I think this means taking the whole catechism seriously, not just the six chief parts, which are the ideas of our faith, but ordering the day with prayer, truly preparing for Holy Communion, and understanding our lives by the Table of Duties, which are

the actions of our faith. If we choose not to live it, we ought to stop talking about it.

A third thing that might not be a problem in every Lutheran church but certainly is in the LCMS, is the congregationalism that makes pastoral ministry a job, the congregation an employer, and the salary a fee for services approved by the congregation. Neuhaus was insistent that the congregation—Word and Sacrament ministry to those to whom one is called—is primary but not exclusive, and that there needs to be a place for clergy to be involved in things beyond the congregation or Synod. At this moment, our theologically trained folks are locked in a pattern of careerism.

Those three things—a unified voice with which to be ecumenical toward Evangelicals and Catholics, a sense that personal sanctification matters in voices from the church to the public square, and a focus on the parish that does not limit the pastoral ministry entirely to the parish—would help make it more likely that we could replace Neuhaus.

Neuhaus did not really die young, but nor did he live to a ripe old age, dying as he did in his early seventies. We feel the loss. But I suspect that, as usual, God knew what he was doing. What I mean is this: when God raises up great men, he often has them diagnose the coming problems in advance of the age. New secular plans for ordering society always come pre-debunked by Christian thinkers. Dostoevsky went ahead and debunked Nietzsche before Nietzsche wrote, which did not stop the world from following Neitzsche. Or consider the two twentieth-century men Neuhaus sought to emulate in many ways, G. K. Chesterton and C. S. Lewis. Chesterton was known for his cheerful, angelic, friendly ways of defending the faith. He warned and warned against bogus race theories, imperialism, what he termed "prussianism." Yet, God in his mercy did not allow Chesterton to live to see the Holocaust. Seeing his warnings ignored and thereby proved correct might have been too much for him to bear. Perhaps he would not have been able to keep his innocent cheerfulness in the face of Auschwitz and the end of officially Christian Europe. Similarly, C. S. Lewis wrote *The Abolition of Man* in early 1940s and completely debunked postmodern deconstructionism as nonsense, but he did so when someone like him could still be a leading voice of academia. He died at a comparatively young age in 1963—the same day that John F. Kennedy was assasinated—as though God in his mercy were saying to Lewis, "Okay, you've done your job. I am not going to make you watch this," as the sexual revolution swept through and Lewis's beloved academia was overrun with the very deconstructionists he had already demonstrated could never be more than agents of cultural destruction. Neuhaus spent his days warning of the dangers of a naked public square, trying to be the voice of the church at the table, like a man with one foot on the dock and one on the boat, and it seems to me God took him when he did as though to say, "Good job. I'm not going to make you watch this," as we drift rapidly apart, as we enter an era in which there cannot

be a Neuhaus, not because there are no capable people but because there is no longer a seat at the table or a listening ear. But that is all just speculation. I do not claim to know why God in his wisdom took Neuhaus when he did, leaving us, especially those in the pro-life movement, feeling his absence with seemingly no one to take his place. I simply think we should brace ourselves to be a part of an era that perhaps Neuhaus could not have borne the sight of. Perhaps the next Neuhaus will not be a public intellectual like the later Neuhaus at all, but a passionate man of action like the early Neuhaus, again called upon to know the inside of a jail. Again, just speculation.

But in the end, I think if we asked Neuhaus whether he could be replaced, he would answer, "no," with a sly smile as though to recognize how arrogant that would sound at first blush, at least until you caught his meaning. He would explain that he cannot be replaced, not because he was too great a man but because that is not how God works in history. It isn't "next man up" like replacing an injured player in football; rather, it is an unfolding divine drama in which each unique person fills a unique role. When he himself was devastated at the loss of someone he deemed irreplaceable, Pope John Paul II, he noticed in himself and in the people around him the temptation to look for the next John Paul II. To this he had to say: no, there will be no next John Paul II and we shouldn't be trying to find one; we should trust in what God has in store. He was a great page in God's story, but it is now a page that is turned. Now is the time to see what God will do next. The stories that made John Paul II what he was, the stories of Poland in World War II, the stories of Soviet domination and resistance, those things are gone; they cannot produce another story, another life like the one they produced in John Paul. The same is true of greater and lesser men, all of us, including Neuhaus. What made him who he was—the old "system" in which you went off to boarding school at fourteen and lived a life immersed in church and theology, the 1960s and the Civil Rights movement and the sexual revolution that finally sundered him from his allies in the Civil Rights movement—those are the things that produced a man who could be "our guy" so to speak, but who was also influential on a national and international level the way he was. None of those eras and events are coming back. People who try to force patterns onto history find themselves engaged in pathetic absurdities because they are stuck in a rut, like claiming the fight for gay marriage is this decade's Civil Rights movement, Iraq is the next Vietnam, this is the next that, which, in most cases, it is not.

I liken this idea to the book of Judges. The human condition remains the same, but God keeps coming up with different stories out of it. The refrain keeps coming back—the people were unfaithful, God punished them, they cried out, God had mercy and . . . did what? Send Samson after Samson? Gideon after Gideon? Deborah after Deborah? No. When Ehud, the patron saint of lefties like me, died, there were probably people looking for a sly and crafty man who could defeat their enemies with schemes and intrigue. And after a brief interlude they got Deborah, who sat around under a tree giving

wise counsel. Hardly the next Ehud. Then when they had to find the next Deborah they got Gideon, a total loser of a general who won battles through goofiness. And Samson was certainly not cut from the same cloth as Deborah or Gideon. The only thing they had in common was that God worked through them to build up his people.

I think Neuhaus would say that trying to replace the great man actually prevents you from appreciating the great man for what he was. It interferes with true thankfulness to God. It prevents you from being a theologian who sees God in history because you are too busy being a sociologist who sees nothing but human patterns. Waiting for Gideon, you miss out on Samson. The human side of history is predictable and boring, like the refrain in Judges. The divine side of history is every bit as reliable—we know God will do something great—but we can never see how in advance. It always looks hopeless, which is the necessary backdrop for the glory in God's story, which, because it is not predictable, is therefore exciting. There will never be another St. Paul, another Joan of Arc, the next Luther—we shouldn't be looking for them. Trusting that God will address the needs of the era in unexpected ways is part of thinking with the church. If we would replace Neuhaus, we ought first to learn to think with the church, and when we do so we see that looking for the next Neuhaus is not thinking with the church. It is to go by sight, trying to capture something safely known rather than expecting something unknown with the hope that cannot disappoint us.

So I offer no suggestions. I foresee no next Neuhaus. I think we are entering a new and ill-defined era in which voices like Neuhaus will very likely be impossible—there is too much fragmentation, too much crumbling at the foundations. The days of a public intellectual thinking with the church on the issues of the day and being taken seriously by the culture may be over, at least for now. I am thankful for what God did through one of his many servants and for securing the church through a tumultuous era, but it will take a different story, a different voice to handle the future. And it is partly from Neuhaus, that faithful servant of the previous era, that I have learned to trust that no matter how hopeless the backdrop, whatever comes next in this particular Babylon, there is nothing of which we should be afraid.

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Postmodern Attitudes among Lutherans about the Lord's Supper?

Recently I was teaching an adult Bible class about the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper. At various points the discussion addressed differences between what Lutherans believe and what other Christian churches believe

regarding Christ's presence. Toward the end of the class, one parishioner protested what she thought to be unfair labeling of the differences of opinions. She acknowledged, on the one hand, that most Protestants had an incorrect understanding, which encouraged all kinds of false beliefs about spirituality and about how one really could become close to Jesus. And, on the other hand, she recognized abuses in Roman Catholicism that emphasize the adoration of the Sacrament and detract from the biblical institution to eat and to drink for forgiveness, life, and salvation. Nevertheless, she appealed to me and to the class that we not perpetuate and aggravate divisions in the church by saying that we Lutherans have the teaching right while the Reformed and the Roman Catholics do not. These other groups are sincere in their beliefs, and it is not helpful, she said, to set up an antagonism between Christian groups that suggests that we're right and they're wrong.

Traditionally her argument would be refuted by its logical inconsistency, which she herself acknowledges: other churches do in fact have a wrong understanding. Therefore it is not incorrect to point this out and to refute it with the true teaching.

Yet it is no longer sufficient to point out the logical inconsistencies, because the problem is not so much with logic as it is with epistemology. Postmodernism is essentially an epistemological shift from rationalistic modernism. Postmodernism is dismissed by some as an imaginary category and lacking clear definition, but only because these critics think from a modernist point of view. Postmodernism simultaneously camouflages itself from criticism (by not fitting the modernist category of reason and therefore going somewhat undetected) and covertly undermines reason (by relativizing it). Nevertheless, postmodernism is a definable epistemology that recognizes a person to receive identity not as an individual consciousness (as with Descartes), but as a construction of experiences, relationships, intuitions, and tradition, as well as a reasonable intellect. Postmodernism is not anti-rational per se, but it relativizes reason, factoring in the shaping of a person through unanalyzed experiences, relationships, intuitions, and traditions. Like-minded individuals form communities in which their identity is affirmed and reinforced, even while the community acknowledges that other people may find identity in different, competing communities with different experiences, relationships, and traditions.

Thus, this young woman was not speaking illogically, but under a different epistemological framework from the traditional dogmatic response: other Christians may be wrong in their understanding of Christ's presence in the Lord's Supper, but it is fruitless to declare this dogmatically, because, as postmodernists, they are shaped by more than a bare, rational reading of the text. They are also shaped by their experience in church services, what their tradition has verified for them, and how they feel about all of this. In postmodern terms, Christian communions have become distinct communities.

A contemporary, faithful response, then, needs to recognize postmodernism for what it is, without capitulating to relativism. It is important, first of all, to perceive that postmodernism does not abandon reason, but relativizes it. For the postmodernist, reason is not useless, but it is so colored by other factors shaping the person that one can never be certain of truth. (The significance of deconstruction plays in here.) The contemporary response is not to assert the primacy of reason over the other factors of human formation, but to integrate all of them. Reason, intuition, experience, and tradition work together. (One benefit of postmodernism is that it presents the opportunity to restore a fuller anthropology to a modern worldview that reduced the human person to bare reason).

Alisdair MacIntyre (*Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 1988) recognized that a community could come to judge its own beliefs to be inadequate or wrong through interaction with another community. The path to such conversion is arduous, for it requires the communities first to understand each other, and then for one to be willing to recognize its inferiority or error in some way. But, MacIntyre argues, this is possible when communities engage each other with clarity, with openness to understanding each other for the sake of translating social and cultural meaning, and by perceptively questioning and criticizing each other. This last step demands communities to work rigorously to justify their actions and beliefs. Seeking the truth, then, still requires us to make claims about the truth and even to make judgments about others. We ought to do so with courtesy and gentleness, for postmodernism claims to truth strike not only at reasons and arguments, but also at souls of people who has been formed by their communities, for better or for worse.

The church, also, may embrace that opportunity that the postmodern mind presents, that is, the increasing role of tradition. For some in the church, tradition has poor connotations, suggesting a dry repetition of rituals whose meaning has not been passed forward to today. This is not what I mean. When a postmodernist speaks of tradition, he has in mind foundational stories or narratives which give definition to his community. For the church, such a foundational narrative is the Scripture. Of course, the Scripture is more than a foundational narrative or a tradition. I call Scripture "narrative" or "tradition" only to correlate it to the postmodern epistemology. Scripture is not mere narrative or tradition in the dogmatic sense, that is, something crafted by human imagination or repetition.

The postmodern challenge, then, calls us to reinvigorate our study of the Scriptures, to proclaim the truths presented therein, and to articulate Jesus Christ and his redemptive work in the depth, breadth, and richness that the Scriptures themselves present. Proof texts continue to have their place, yet not as the final answer of a dogmatic dispute, but as the wide-open entrance into the profound revelation of God's salvation. Disputes with other Christians and non-Christians are insufficient when they only show error. They must further

positively teach Christ in all the Scriptures, so as to beckon the hearer into the reasonable story of Christianity. And, thanks be to God, the Holy Spirit does this beckoning and converting through such faithful proclamation.

There are differences between Lutherans and Protestants and Roman Catholics. It does no good to minimize these. Even from the postmodern perspective, clarity gives definition to each community, so they know where they stand. Yet unity in the church will never be achieved solely by argument, and simply declaring "the Lutheran Church has the truth" does little to soften the hard heart. "[I]t is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments" (AC VII 2). The unity of the church does not depend on teaching a particular denomination's doctrine. Neither the Roman Catholics, nor the Methodists, nor the Lutherans, as particular groups, are the one church. Rather, the one church is wherever there is agreement concerning the teaching of the gospel and the sacraments, wherever this may be found, whether among Lutherans, Methodists, and Roman Catholics. It is ours to be about the teaching of this gospel and administering the sacraments as the Scriptures in their fullness and truth proclaim them.

Gifford Grobien

Looking Ahead: Celebrating Martin Luther and the Reformation in 2017

In less than four years, Lutherans around the world will celebrate the 500th anniversary of the Reformation. Its beginning is identified with the date of October 31, 1517 when Martin Luther posted the Ninety-five Theses on the doors of the castle church in Wittenberg. The question for the worldwide Lutheran community is how this anniversary will be celebrated. Considering the locality where it all started, one might assume that not much will happen. Wittenberg is a small, quiet city of 50,000 citizens, with no more than two significant streets and an annual visit of merely 85,000 overnight tourists, which means that many hotel beds are left unoccupied throughout the year. Perhaps this is all because Lutherans have never made much ado about commemorating sites of their heroes; in contrast to others, they do not have a central place, no Rome or Mecca. In a way, Luther himself would have been proud of his followers in that it is not he whom one should revere, but Christ alone.

Yet all this will apparently change in view of 2017. In a 2012 article in the Sunday edition of the famous German newspaper, *Frankfurter Allgemeine*, Ralph Bollmann and Inge Kloepfer announce that great business is planned with the Luther year in 2017 ("Martin Luther kommt groß ins Geschäft," July 29, 2012, pp. 30–31). Already in 2008, the Luther decade officially began with

the goal of making Wittenberg a center for worldwide Lutheranism. To serve that promotion, a wide range of events is taking place, including concerts, art exhibitions, and the publication of many books on Luther and the Reformation. In fact, Luther will not be boxed in: plans are underway to make the Luther year both a theological *and* cultural event, a church affair *and* one for tourists as well that will, in turn, benefit the economy of that region. Commercialization and church seem to have been at odds in Luther's mind, but the church is not the sole planner of this anniversary. The German parliament has officially set aside 35 million Euros in its budget. The state of Sachsen-Anhalt, where Wittenberg and Eisleben are located, will invest 75 million Euros in these cities, with such projects as converting the house in Eisleben where Luther died into a museum. And the churches have pledged 17 million Euros. The infrastructure, too, will be improved, and Wittenberg will receive a train station that is state of the art in terms of being built environmentally conscious. If current plans come to fruition, the castle and the castle church, where Luther nailed the theses, will receive a face-lift, and the city church, too, will be freshly renovated for the occasion. A notable name listed among the donors and Luther supporters is Friede Springer, wife of the late German newspaper tycoon, Axel Springer, and a member of the Independent Lutheran Church in Germany (SELK), a partner church of the LCMS.

The target group of all this future bustling activity is the worldwide Protestant community, located in countries like the United States, Scandinavia, and even China with its forty-plus million Protestants, where there is great interest in visiting Germany and especially the sites of the great Reformer. The minister of culture, Stephan Dorgerloh, is of the opinion that every Protestant should have visited Wittenberg at least once in his or her lifetime. Reiner Haselhof, the president of the state of Sachsen-Anhalt, though a Roman Catholic himself, recently made a promotional tour through parts of the United States to raise interest for Luther. After all, the United States has 160 million Protestants, more than any other country. The German Central Board of Tourism has also announced that from 2015 onward it will promote sites where Luther lived and worked as compelling reasons to visit Germany. These not only include Wittenberg where Luther spent most of his life, but also Eisleben, the place of Luther's birth and death; Mansfeld, where his parents moved and where he attended school; Eisenach, where Luther learned Latin for three years and later translated the New Testament in just eleven weeks during his stay in the Wartburg Castle; Erfurt, where he began his theological studies at the Augustinian cloister as an eighteen-year-old; and finally Worms, where Luther defended his Ninety-five Theses on April 17, 1521.

Beyond the political, cultural, and economic investment, the churches are also stakeholders in 2017. The official spokesperson elected for promoting the anniversary year is the former bishop of the Lutheran Church of Hannover and chairperson of the council of the alliance of all Protestant churches in

Germany, Margot Käßman. Her popularity and charisma will guarantee significant exposure in the German media. As she effectively assumes responsibility over Luther's theological legacy, certain accents in Luther' thought are being viewed as unbecoming. His supposed anti-Semitism, even his so-called "discovery of the Gospel," seem to stand in the way of forging ecumenical relations and overcoming present discords. Käßman hopes that the year 2017 will show itself as a gesture of reconciliation between Protestants and Roman Catholics and thus become something different than past anniversaries.

The LCMS cannot and will not be a silent observer in all of this, especially since it now has in its possession a historic school building in Wittenberg. Its renovation and refurbishing is yet to be completed. There is some urgency in this Wittenberg Project, which is owned by the International Lutheran Society of Wittenberg, since no one wants this centrally-located gem to become a sore spot in the midst of all the upgrading that has begun and, if promises are kept, will continue all around the city. With its presence in the city, the LCMS and its German partner church, the SELK, can bring a message that is no longer heard with clarity both to the Wittenberg community and worldwide. Luther is not a folk hero for the Germans alone. This anniversary has to do with the gospel itself, which is connected to the person of Christ and which, according to Luther, calls out every person to repent daily in order to be forgiven. By making Luther and 2017 part of its missionary obligation to the world, the LCMS will undoubtedly set itself apart from the message of reconciliation from Käßman and the churches uniting behind her. The SELK, the partner church of the LCMS, will share that missionary charge but will thereby ruffle the feathers of many in the neighboring state churches.

The question for Lutherans worldwide is whether the 500th anniversary will be true to Luther and not just to the spirit of the twenty-first century—if this is genuinely meant to be an anniversary of Luther at all. It will have to be a celebration of the gospel that freely bestows God's grace because of Christ that is not forced into the straightjacket of human effort, metrics, and rapprochements based on ideology but speaks out clearly to every individual sinner in this world. As simple as that message is, it is losing its footing in Germany and all over the world. For many reasons, people are turning their back on the church in search of alternative soteriologies, all of which cater to natural religiosity that wants to have a part in establishing a relationship with God.

Klaus Detlev Schulz

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Book Reviews

***Man and Woman, One in Christ: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Paul's Letters*. By Philip B. Payne. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2009. 511 pages. Softcover. $29.99.**

Gymnastics can be a truly enjoyable athletic competition to watch. The flexibility and power of such athletes is often breathtaking. Yet, while gymnastics may invite the interest of spectators, it does not often move them toward participation. The mere thought of turning around the high bar or leaping upon a balance beam is terrifying. Philip Payne's book, which considers the relationship between man and woman in Paul's letters, is truly clever and ingenious in the intellectual gymnastics it demonstrates. His work claims to be both an exegetical and a theological analysis of Paul; yet, his offering is certainly heavy on the exegetical aspect. In this regard, Payne's exegesis offers much that is intriguing, insightful, and thought-provoking. Yet, the moves he makes, while interesting to observe, did not inspire this reader to a similar participation. The following are a few examples of my engagement with Payne's work

Payne's work is structured around those Pauline texts that relate most directly to the issue of women's roles in the church. Payne begins with Galatians 3:28 and 1 Corinthians 11:11–12. In these texts, Payne argues against any hierarchical interpretation of man's relation to woman. He emphasizes that Paul uses *kefalh,* in the sense of "source" rather than "authoritative head." This reader certainly resonated with much of Payne's argument; however, Payne's conclusion seemed to go beyond Paul when he maintains that man is "merely the instrumental source" of the woman (197). As "instrumental source," man bears an essential equality with the woman. Indeed, Payne interprets 1 Corinthians 11:11 to mean that woman is source of the man in the same way that man is the source of the woman. Yet, Paul never speaks of the woman as *kefalh,* of the man. Man is not just the instrumental source; he is the ontological source out of whom God forms the woman.

Thus, while this reader agrees with Payne that, for Paul, man and woman are essentially equal and interdependent; nevertheless, they are not interchangeable. *Kefalh,* does not merely establish an essential unity, but also expresses a hypostatic distinctiveness. While both the man and the woman are equally essential to the procreative relationship, they are not interchangeable. The man is the source of procreative life in an ontologically different way than the woman. For Paul, this relation is connected to the Father's relationship to the Son (1 Cor 11:3). While the Father and the Son are equally divine on the level of essence, they are not interchangeable on the level of *hypostasis* or person. The Son is God in a different way than the Father is God. Hypostatically,

the Father is and will always be the source of the Son through the mystery of begetting. Thus, the Father never becomes Son nor does the Son interchange with the Father as was suggested by the second-and third-century Modalists. In the same way, while equally human on the level of essence, the man and the woman are absolutely distinct *hypostases*; the man cannot be mother nor can the woman be father. In such a relation, the office of the ministry finds its identity. In his efforts to repudiate the view of Arius that man and woman relate in a hierarchy of will or power, Payne tends toward the modalist error that the essential equality of the man and the woman implies functional interchangeability.

Payne continues with a discussion of 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. His argument is passionate but somewhat tedious, including a fourteen-page section analyzing textual marks in codex Vaticanus. His analysis even includes a comparison between apricot-colored distigmai and those of the chocolate brown variety. Yet, such detail is necessary to support his argument that 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 is a foreign interpolation. The strongest evidence that these verses are alien to Paul's original text would be their actual omission from early manuscripts. The other two comparable interpolations mentioned by Payne are John 7:53ff and Mark 16:9ff. Yet, while both of these texts are missing from early manuscripts, Payne cannot show the same for 1 Corinthians 14:34–35. Thus, Payne must emphasize the evidence he has, and he certainly makes the most of it.

After considering Payne's argument, this reader was certainly ready to admit that the textual questions surrounding 1 Corinthians 14:34–35 are intriguing and the answers unclear. Yet, Payne seems overzealous; the weakness in his argument is that, while Payne argues the serious nature of the textual difficulties against his opponents, his own solution seems too self-assured. For instance, on the one hand, Payne chastises his opponents for suggesting "that Western scribes had the audacity to change the order of Paul's argument" (231). Here Payne emphasizes the faithfulness of the scribes to reject any explanation for the fact that these verses (1 Cor 14:34–35) appear in two different positions. Some manuscripts place these verses after 14:33 and others place them after 14:40. Yet, while the faithfulness of the scribes works for Payne against his opponents, his own solution accuses an early scribe of a male chauvinism that compels him to insert a foreign thought into Paul's letter. Thus, Payne writes, "It is not at all surprising that a scribe copying 1 Cor 14 would want to clarify the text . . . . Male chauvinist editorial patterns evident in the Western text demonstrate that these attitudes pervaded the church as well as society in general" (264). For Payne, when it comes to explaining the textual issues surrounding 1 Corinthians 14:34–35, a chauvinist conspiracy is easier to believe than scribal error.

Finally, Payne's argument concerning 1 Timothy 2:12, like his consideration of 1 Corinthians 14, is thorough to the point of exhaustion. His con-

clusion is that Paul's words forbidding women to teach does not represent a universal prohibition. Payne's interpretation demands that "women (*gunaiki*)" must be understood in a qualified sense. Thus, Paul does not mean women in a universal way, but those particular women who are troubling the Ephesian church with false doctrine. Yet, Payne's argument is precisely the kind of proposal he rejects in his discussion of 1 Corinthians 14. In his analysis of 1 Corinthians 14, Payne argues against any interpretation that reads Paul's command about women's silence in "some qualified sense" (219). For Payne, the obvious meaning of "silence" is a universal, unqualified silence. It is for this reason that he rejects these verses as authentic to Paul, originating instead through scribal chauvinism. However, this obvious sense does not prevail in Payne's interpretation of 1 Timothy 2:12, even though Paul himself roots his own command in the relationship between Adam and Eve established by God in Genesis 2.

Payne's analysis on Paul's argument is rich in exegetical and historical detail; abundant insights can be gleaned from the pages of this monograph. However, the limited scope of this work seems to be a weakness. Payne's emphasis on the specificity of these texts may blind him to the catholicity of Paul's letters. Payne seems to forget the most fundamental of presuppositions, namely, that Paul writes as an apostle. Paul sees himself as a member of a theological community. For Paul, this apostolic college has its ontological root in the narrative of Jesus. Thus, Paul does not intend his letters to be read as independent opinions, but as the authoritative traditions that originate in the apostolic preaching of Christ. Thus, the roles of man and woman must be interpreted from within the narrative of Christ's incarnation, death, resurrection and ascension. The exclusion of woman from the apostolic office does not have its root in a chauvinist scribe, but in the person of Jesus and his sending of the twelve. One must either engage Paul within the framework of Jesus' evangelical narrative or launch into the terrifying realm of gymnastics.

James G. Bushur

***Perspectives on the Sabbath: 4 Views*. By Charles Arand, Craig L. Blomberg, Skip MacCarty, Joseph A. Pipa. Edited by Christopher John Donato. Nashville: B&H Academic Press, 2011. 420 pages. Softcover. $24.99.**

Perspectives on the Sabbath is the tenth book of a very interesting series. The idea is simple: take up a theological topic, in this case, the Sabbath, and then hear what the representatives of various Christian traditions have to say about it. Each author offers up an essay to which the other three essayist respond, after which the original essayist is afforded an opportunity to respond to the responders. There are a number of reasons why the format has been successful. First, the reader can learn what a person believes by actually reading what he has to say. Second, the tone of the series is irenic, and the debate, while

vigorous, is not heated. What results is a discussion that is lively, but without acrimony. Third, though—and this is what is especially intriguing—is that it affords a window into the way people think about larger theological and biblical issues. Sometimes, it is the discussion of smaller, seemingly peripheral issues that offers a better window into a person's worldview.

Skip MacCarty, who represents the Adventist tradition, clearly has much at stake and knows the issue very well. From his work we learn that Adventists take the Scriptures seriously and see that the Genesis account tells us something about our God as creator and who we are as a people. In a day when same-sex marriage is promoted and the understanding of man and woman is debated, this is refreshing. And indeed, one learns rightly from MacCarty the various ways in which the Sabbath functioned to the benefit of God's people, promoting worship, as well as rest and delight in God. If there is any glaring weakness to MacCarty's approach it is that the Sabbath day rest does not find its completion in Christ. Thus, when McCarty concludes that "The Sabbath Provides Rest," he nowhere in that section mentions that it is precisely in Christ where that rest is found.

The next essay by Joseph Pipa, a Presbyterian who holds to the Christian Sabbath view, is also illuminating. Many of his arguments are very similar to those of MacCarty, with the result that he tends to view the debate as an accounting error, as if the Seventh-Day Adventists had not taken into account the new data that demonstrates that Christians in fact had made Sunday their new Sabbath. If anything, Pipa emphasizes the law of the Sabbath more than MacCarty, speaking of it as a "Creation Ordinance" (119) which has a strong "Moral Ground" (123). Pipa shows that whatever one thinks of the Sabbath law, the New Testament does give evidence that Christians did gather for worship regularly on the Lord's Day, that is, Sunday. If a pastor lived in an area where the Adventists thrived, Pipa's review of the New Testament and early church evidence would be useful.

The final two essays are written by Charles Arand, a Lutheran, and Craig Blomberg, an evangelical with Lutheran roots. What is striking is that both Arand and Blomberg emphasize the role of Christ, who is the Sabbath. Arand's essay, "Luther's Radical Reading of the Sabbath Commandment," emphasizes Luther's "radically Christological hermeneutic." This is, of course, delightful to Lutheran ears. If there is anything in the essay that should urge caution, though, it is how little time Arand spends in the biblical text. The other three authors explore the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, hitting on key passages. Arand, instead, spends much of his essay quoting from Luther and explaining the reformer's position. Thus, we are told in great detail how Luther understood the Ten Commandments. This fact is noted by all his respondents, who criticize Arand for not appealing vigorously enough to Scripture. Arand responds by saying that he is simply laying his cards on the table, showing more broadly how Lutherans approach the issue. Arand's essay does include many

points of interest, including Luther's emphasis on hearing the word of God, which is the essence of the Sabbath command. He also speaks about the Ten Commandments as a way by which we can "embrace the creaturely." Thus, Arand notes that the Ten Commandments are not arbitrarily given, but are "woven into the very fabric of creation and written into the heart" (223). Arand notes that it was Luther's genius to embrace the God of creation and to move "away from a Neoplatonic way of life in which the spiritual was deemed to be of greater importance than the material" (222). As evidence of this, he notes that while in the 1520s Luther referred to daily bread in a spiritual or eucharistic sense, after 1529 he never did so again, instead emphasizing the physical gifts of creation given to us by God. I wonder though whether Arand's critique is helpful, as if the Eucharist were a spiritual as opposed to a physical gift. Similarly, Arand's understanding of the Ten Commandments seems to speak of the creaturely, practical aspects of the Ten Commandments, as if that precluded a spiritual dimension.

Finally, Craig Blomberg offers his essay, which among the four has to rate the highest in being both biblical and Christological. In many ways, his essay complements and compliments Arand's work, strengthening Arand's position with the biblical evidence. Bloomberg shows how the Sabbath is clearly fulfilled in Christ, who is our Sabbath rest, but also speaks about creative and practical ways in which we might incorporate little Sabbaths into our life that might accomplish the goal of resting in the Lord and hearing his word.

In summary, this book, representative of much of the series, is well worth the investment. In fact, it might be a good template for ecumenical meetings and discussions with others in our communities. In this way we can both learn from others as they truly are and are able also to offer a witness to that which we ourselves believe.

Peter J. Scaer

Discovering Intelligent Design: A Journey into the Scientific Evidence **by Gary Kemper, Hallie Kemper, and Casey Luskin. Discovery Institute Press, Seattle, WA, 2013. 285 pages. Softcover. $34.99.**

Science textbooks explain the origin of the universe and living things typically in terms of Darwin's theory of evolution. Materialists teach that the universe somehow came into existence, followed by the formation of the first living cell, which then produced all living things by mutations and the survival of the fittest. However, in recent years a new theory has emerged. It is called Intelligent Design. It uses recent research results to prove that living things are far too complicated to have arisen by chance. Rather, the scientific evidence points to a design. That means there must be a designer.

Defenders of Intelligent Design theory say that it is not a religion. It does not seek to identify the designer. But evolutionists are furious. Recently, the President of Ball State University (Muncie, Indiana) censored what the university's science instructors may say, ordering them not to discuss the evidence for Intelligent Design in science classes. The claim is that it is a religion and therefore has no place in public institutions.

Discovering Intelligent Design is a unique text in that it is designed for middle-school students and adults who are not familiar with the science underlying the theory. Each chapter closes with discussion questions. DVDs that coordinate with the book are also available.

The book begins with a discussion of theories regarding the universe. There is evidence that the universe had a beginning. It is finite in size and age. It originated with a single powerful expansion event called the Big Bang, and appears to still be expanding. The authors point out that our friendly earth is no accident. Our sun is in a good place. We are just the right distance from the sun. Any closer and it would be too hot for life; any farther away and it would be too cold. Our earth has a rich supply of heavy elements as iron and copper. Other planets are largely gases. We have just the right balance of oxygen, nitrogen, and carbon for living things to exist. We live on privileged planet. All this points to design, not just good luck.

A basic problem for any theory of evolution concerns how life first appeared. In Darwin's day, biologists regarded a living cell as just a blob. They supposed that life came spontaneously from non-living matter. Today, however, the problem of the origin of the first living cell is a major problem. We now know that every cell is a complex chemical factory. Amino acids, sugars, fats, proteins, DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid), RNA (Ribonucleic Acid), molecular machines that move chemicals about in the cell., and others all combine to make the cell function. A simple cell is said to contain bits of necessary information comparable to a hundred million pages of the *Encyclopedia Britannica*. To say that this complicated self-operating factory came into existence by evolutionary chance is to expose the utter weakness of Darwinian evolution.

The authors also show that the fossil record does not provide proof of evolution. Studies of the fossil record show that new species typically appear without similar precursors. Darwinism cannot explain the fossil record of the Cambrian period, dated at 530 million years ago. During this era an explosion occurred. The fossils record shows that nearly all the major animal phyla, including many diverse body plans, suddenly appeared. This is contrary to the slow, gradual development that Darwin's theory calls for. The abrupt appearance of new fully formed body plans in the fossil record is best explained by intelligent design.

Discovering Intelligent Design provides many examples from nature that evolution by slow gradual changes cannot explain. For example, evolutionary theory teaches that birds descended from reptiles. But here too there are serious problems. For example, reptile hearts have three chambers; bird hearts have four. Evolving a four chamber heart would require a rerouting of blood flow through the system. Again design appears to be the better answer.

The authors have a section answering the critics of Intelligent Design. They also state that there is no problem with the concept that mutations may produce changes within a species. This is called "micro-evolution." The difficulties begin when evolutionists attempt to prove "macro-evolution," the development of new species, genera, families, and phyla. Here Intelligent Design is the better answer.

The closing section of the books contains many treasures for those seeking to study more. These include a list of nine web sites, seven DVDs, and thirty books.

Discovering Intelligent Design is truly a remarkable book, one of a kind!

In closing, it is well to note once again that the Christian knows who the great cosmic Designer is. Hebrews 11:3 states, "By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear." Other references to the Creator are found throughout Scripture. Psalm 94:9 asks "He who planted the ear, does he not hear, He who formed the eye, does he not see?"

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***Ezekiel, Daniel*. Edited by Kenneth Stevenson and Michael Gleru. Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture. Old Testament vol. XIII. Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity Press, 2008. 380 pages. Hardcover. $40.00.**

The Ancient Christian Commentary series styles itself a "Christian Talmud" that attempts to collect in one place the comments of the church fathers on each text of scripture. The stated purpose of the series is to give pastors, students, and laity easy access to the way in which Christian preachers and teachers of the first seven centuries of the church engaged a pericope. The comments span from Clement of Rome to John of Damascus and include such teachers as the Venerable Bede. The editors have supplied very helpful introductions for each book, in which they give overviews of the message of the particular prophet or apostle, followed by the main patristic interpreters who have substantial comments or homilies on the text. An interesting insight offered herein is that much of the Christian commentary on Daniel is shaped as an apologetic against the Jewish demotion of Daniel from prophet (note the location of his book in the LXX and in the Dead Sea Scrolls) to writing (where

he now resides in the MT). Theodoret of Cyrus (c. 393–466) specifically challenges this canonical movement in the preface to his commentary.

The formatting is very helpful for quick reference, with the biblical text beginning each section, followed by a brief overview/summary of the fathers' comments. This overview is followed by longer excerpts that are headed by what the editor understands as the key point, so that one can quickly jump from the overview to the specific comment.

As a student I have found this commentary invaluable. I would recommend it to anyone who is interested in how these texts have been used and interpreted by the church. Yet this volume is not without weaknesses, the most frustrating of which is Stevenson's propensity to offer only very short quotations from Origen and Jerome, whose commentaries and homilies still remain largely intact. For example, twenty-two of thirty comments on Ezekiel 16:1–14 are of two sentences or less. Significantly, Stevenson completely omits Origen's wrestling with the suffering of God contained in his sixth homily on Ezekiel. The overall effect is that, at least for this pericope, one is not given the opportunity for an authentic encounter with one of the chief commenters on this text. Fortunately, Origen's homilies on Ezekiel are now in English in the Ancient Christian Writers series.

Yet, in spite of this weakness, the Ancient Christian Commentary on Ezekiel and Daniel remains a valuable tool and serves as a great beginning for further study, especially by indicating who has commented on this text. One is then easily able to access the context through sources cited in the footnotes.

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***Isaiah 40–55.* By R. Reed Lessing. Concordia Commentary Series. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011. 737 pages. Hardback. $49.99.**

In Martin Luther's preface to his *Lectures on Isaiah*, he insists that "two things" are necessary to explain the prophet: "The first is a knowledge of grammar, and this may be regarded as having the greatest weight. The second is more necessary, namely, a knowledge of the historical background, not only as an understanding of the events themselves as expressed in letters and syllables but as at the same time embracing rhetoric and dialectic, so that the figures of speech and the circumstances may be carefully heeded. Therefore, having command of the grammar in the first place, you must quickly move on to the histories, namely, what those kings under whom Isaiah prophesied did; and these matters must be carefully examined and thoroughly studied." (See "Preface to the Prophet Isaiah" in AE 16:3.)

Unfortunately, the deconstructive tedium of the last century's examination leaves today's student of Isaiah in poverty, straining under the weight of grammatical arbitrage that bankrupts any attempt to gain the more necessary knowledge of the prophet's histories, nearly all of which have been exiled to the realm of poetic license and redaction.

But how beautiful upon the mountains of solid exegesis and faithful scholarship are the feet of him who brings good news and publishes salvation. R. Reed Lessing (Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, when this commentary was written and now once again a parish pastor) prepares the way for precisely that with his volume on Isaiah 40–55. Promising "to pay careful attention to the chapters' literary, historical, and canonical contexts," Lessing seeks "to equip God's servants for the great task of preaching and teaching Isaiah 40–55 in ways that are relevant, meaningful, and applicable to life in the twenty-first century" (4, 11–12). The equipping begins with a ninety-nine page introduction that proves to be worth the effort.

After a few comments on his method, one that focuses on the gospel in Isaiah finding fulfillment in the Suffering Servant who hung dead upon a tree, while also pointing toward the eschatological consummation of Isaiah's promise, Lessing unapologetically announces his conviction of a single author, Isaiah ben Amoz, that rests in no small part upon the book's own superscription and bolsters the arguments for Isaiah's literary unity and historical honesty. Though an exhaustive treatment of the subject is not provided (and, I think, ought not be expected of a commentary that modestly acknowledges its penultimate place both in the church's work and interpretive task), Lessing does offer a brief overview of the scholarship surrounding Isaianic authorship and then continues with a quick but informative survey through the history of Isaiah studies.

Consistent with Luther's advice, Lessing's introduction moves "quickly on to the histories," providing a wonderfully written biography of Israel through exile that enlightens his readers with insights into Babylonian beliefs, policies, and tactics and leads into the theology of Isaiah that describes Israel's Yahweh as unique among the gods of the nations. Not only is Yahweh personally active in time and space, depicted with human imagery, but he is shown also to be affected by his creation, even to the point of suffering. To that end, Lessing's commentary on the Servant Songs clearly and convincingly identifies two servants, the unfaithful servant who is Israel and the Suffering Servant who is Jesus Christ alone.

The textual notes preceding the commentary sections are equally helpful, demonstrating that Lessing's interpretive remarks flow from a "command of the grammar in the first place." Each verse is thoroughly analyzed and explained in a way that takes full advantage of the text and its grammar while remaining accessible to those whose Hebrew language skills are either nonexistent or quickly heading in that direction. In fact, I was pleasantly surprised

to find in Lessing's notes what amounts to an inductive review of grammar and syntax, neither tiring for an intermediate student of Biblical Hebrew nor overwhelming for a novice.

Throughout, Lessing's refreshing confession of the divine inspiration of the text keeps his reader in the posture of receiving the prophet's gifts in a way that countless other Isaiah commentaries do not. At least for me, this characteristic of Lessing's book makes it all the more salutary as a resource for Bible class and sermon preparation. Such preparation is further informed in the commentary sections written from a distinctively Lutheran perspective, often referring to Isaiah's place within the New Testament and always directing attention to the One in whom Yahweh reveals himself and his redeeming ways of rescue.

Finally, Lessing offers reflections after each commentary section that I can only think to describe as homiletical helps. Taking advantage of the opportunity this Concordia Commentary series provides, Lessing's eloquent and insightful reflections demonstrate the "for you" message of Isaiah, punctuating the devotional comments with the church's historic hymnody and liturgy and steadfastly pointing toward the font, altar, and pulpit where the Servant gives himself.

Any student of Scripture would benefit from Isaiah 40–55. Particularly, though, Lessing's commentary has the potential to make the feet of those given to preach and teach Isaiah more beautiful than they would have been without it. I suppose that means we servants of the word will only have ourselves to blame if what our feet bring stinks.

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***The Reformation: Faith & Flames*. By Andrew Atherstone. Oxford, England: Lion Hudson, 2011. 192 pages. Hardcover. $24.95.**

This handsome volume would make a fine edition to anyone's coffee table. It is replete with photographs and pictures of many of the locations, people, and documents described and discussed. Yet behind this colorful and well-presented exterior, there is a well written history that makes this book far more than just any coffee-table book. Atherstone delivers a glimpse into the Reformation era from the Renaissance and humanism to the reign of Queen Elizabeth I.

Faith & Flames is an apt subtitle for this book as it brings into view a sometimes overlooked part of Reformation history, namely, the violence that ensued from the political shifts and upheavals that occurred due to the shifting

theological alliances of the various territories of Europe. Often macabre at points, Atherstone brings the reality of that era into stark contrast with our often idealized vision. Atherstone portrays for us, through his account of Reformation history, what the price of confessing Christ can truly be.

It would serve as a useful textbook for high school or college-aged students (defining terms and having historical vignettes throughout), but it would be illuminating to anyone who picks it up. While *Reformation: Faith & Flames* eventually focuses more on the Reformation in England, it is still a helpful book for Lutherans. Atherstone helps to put Luther in his proper European context, and, with the book's theme properly in view, Lutherans can see how blessed the Reformation in Germany was by not being as bloody as it could have been. Full of information, Atherstone's *Reformation: Faith & Flames* is a wonderful history. It would surprise anyone who discovers it with not only its pictures but also its content.

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***Reading the Apostolic Fathers: A Student's Introduction*. By Clayton N. Jefford. Second Edition. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2012. 196 pages. Softcover. $29.99.**

Next to the documents of the New Testament itself, no collection of writings is more important for understanding the earliest church than those that of the "Apostolic Fathers." The term is relatively modern (1672). It is common habit to include under the "Apostolic Fathers" the following: the (first) letter of Clement of Rome, the seven letters of Ignatius of Antioch, the letter of Polycarp of Smyrna to the Philippians, the Martyrdom of Polycarp, the homily referred to as the second letter of Clement of Rome, the letter of Barnabas, the fragments of Papias of Hierapolis, the Shepherd of Hermas, the letter to Diognetus, and The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles (the Didache). These are the documents covered by this *Introduction*. One may quibble with the category: Diognetus is an apology and belongs more with Quadratus and Justin Martyr; Second Clement is a homily; the Martyrdom of Polycarp is better classified along with other martyr texts. Nonetheless, more is better in an introduction for students and the general reader.

This is a most handy book and for those beginning their study of the Apostolic Fathers it is a book highly recommended. After a general introduction to the collection as a whole, ten chapters follow which introduce each of the writings. Each chapter is divided into four sections which address nine topics: manuscript tradition, literary form, authorship, date, setting, purpose, primary elements, special images, and relationship to Scripture. Included as well are brief summaries/outlines of the contents of each work and brief lists

of relevant secondary literature. Throughout the book Jefford includes "Figures" which provide other interesting information, such as a listing of the creedal passages in the Ignatian corpus or a listing of the use of a writing by later patristic authors.

The discussion is straightforward and uncomplicated, just right for those who are at the beginning of their study. Obviously, even an introduction—perhaps especially an introduction!—must interpret in the selection of topics, in its summaries of controverted topics, and in the positions it adopts. This is true also of this book. But overall the treatment is balanced and fair and reflects the work of a scholar who loves his subject matter enough to want it taught.

William C. Weinrich

***Offenbarung, Vernunft Und Religion*. By Jan Rohls. Ideengeschichte Des Christentums. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012. 1116 pages. € 59.00.**

Jan Rohls, ordained Reformed pastor, has served as professor of Systematic Theology at the Ludwig Maximilian University in Munich since 1988. His publications are in German, but available is a translation of his work on *Reformed Confessions*, published by Westminster John Knox press in 1998. With his *History of the Ideas of Christianity*, he intends to place an enormous project in front of the dedicated reader. The ten volumes that are planned grow out of lectures that have been held at the Ludwig Maximilian University. The reader's task is enormous on account not only of the number of volumes, but also of the length of each: Volume one, the subject of the second half of this review, is 1116 pages long. Volume two, which arrived in April 2013, weighs in at 1027 pages. The volumes planned are: 1) *Revelation, Reason, and Religion*; 2) *Scripture, Tradition, and Confession*; 3) *God, Trinity, and Spirit*; 4) *World, Creation, and Providence*, 5) *Man, the Image of God (Gottes Ebenbildlichkeit), and Sin*; 6) *Christ, Incarnation, and Reconciliation*; 7) *Rebirth, Grace, and Freedom*; 8) *Word, Sacrament, and Divine Service*; 9) *Office, Church, and State*; 10) *History, the Kingdom of God, and Eternal Life*. These translations are mine; the volumes are in German.

The introduction to the series at the beginning of the first volume is an informative survey of the post-enlightenment discipline *Dogmengeschichte*. Rohls sees himself in this tradition and intentionally links his work to that of Walther Köhler, a student of Ernst Troeltsch. Köhler's work treated the history of dogma as the history of the Christian consciousness coming to full knowledge of itself. Hegel is more than just in the background. It is this approach that leads to Rohls' title. The history of dogma is the history of the basic ideas of Christianity finding expression by Christian thinkers. In this way, Rohls distances himself from the history of how the accepted doctrines of the church (according to which confession is insignificant here) came to their expression. He rather contends that these accepted doctrines—dogmas—are

only one piece of the whole *History of the Ideas of Christianity*. Of course, this means that Rohls distances himself from the idea that theology has to do with expressing revealed biblical truths. It is made clear at the end of the volume—and of this review—that he regards this understanding of theology as pre-critical.

Volume one focuses constantly on the relationship between theology and philosophy, revelation and reason. The conclusion to the introduction is telling: early Christian thinkers followed Philo of Alexandria's example in the synthesis of Greek philosophy and biblical revelation, and this synthesis is the key to understanding the development of Christian theology. It seems also to be the case that those approaches in history that internalize this synthesis receive more attention than those that challenge it. The critique of Luther's well-known attack on reason, for example, is tempered and above reproach, but the take-away for this volume is only that Luther valued the positive relationship between reason and revelation in the natural knowledge of God.

The eight chapters show how quickly Rohls moves through 'earlier' church history in order to direct the bulk of his efforts at describing the modern era—a perhaps unavoidable approach. The chapters are 1) *Ancient Times / Early Church*, 2) *the Middle Ages,* 3) *Renaissance, Reformation, and the Age of Confessionalism,* 4) *the Enlightenment,* 5) *the Age of Idealism*, 6) *Pre-March and Post-March* (referring to the March revolution in German states in 1848; Rohls covers approximately the 1st two-thirds of the nineteenth century in this chapter), 7) *the Late 19th Century*, and 8) *the 20th Century*. On the heels of the final chapter is a concluding summary that reduces the content of the book down again to thirty intense pages. Rohls concludes not with a theologian, but with a Vittorio Hösle, a philosopher of religion. The conclusion is a sober reminder of the current state of the synthesis Rohls sees at the foundation of Christianity: "Such a permeation (of religious content with rational justification, JC), though, is so necessary in [Hösle's] eyes, because the substantiation of the truth of the Christian religion through references to the authority of scripture, tradition, and confession, has not been credible since the rise of historical criticism."

The sheer depth of Rohls' treatment of the history of theology impresses and assures the signficance of the contribution, but it remains that Rohls' "ideas" encompass not only confessional dogmatics as biblical revelation, but with equal interest all manner of error. As a historical work, the volumes will be valuable while demanding a critical evaluation of this principle for sorting the historical material. In a dogmatic perspective, it will be interesting to see how Rohls navigates the connections between the "ideas" and their respective volumes.

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***The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* By Michael Rydelnik. New American Commentary Studies in Bible & Theology. Nashville: B&H Publishing Group, 2010. 224 pages. Softcover. $19.99.**

In this book Michael Rydelnik advocates strongly for the position that the Hebrew Bible (i.e., the Christian Old Testament) is indeed messianic—that is, it contains predictions that were, or will be, fulfilled by Jesus Christ. This, of course, is not a new idea and has been denied for many years by those practicing the Historical Critical Method. What might be surprising to the readers of this journal, however, is that more and more evangelical scholars—known as usually having a more conservative stance toward Scripture—are moving away from seeing direct prophecies in the Hebrew Bible concerning the future Savior. Instead, they view these writings as presenting a story that finds its climax in Jesus, but recorded by authors who did not have an intentional messianic meaning. Rydelnik shows that this is the new reality by quoting leading, well-known representatives of evangelical scholarship who hold this viewpoint.

The author proceeds to summarize contemporary explanations as to how the Hebrew Bible is, or is not, messianic. He then examines text-critical evidence, arguing that in a number of places the messianic hope is clearer in the variant readings and that often these variants are the better readings. In other portions of the book, Rydelnik endeavors to show that the Hebrew Bible reads itself in a messianic fashion (later Old Testament writers understood passages written earlier to be messianic), and that Jesus and the apostles believed the Old Testament writers knew they were writing about the coming Deliverer. Rydelnik also discusses what he considers to be the (negative) influence of the great Jewish interpreter Rashi on Christian interpretation of the Hebrew Bible.

Rydelnik, in addition, reviews the variety of ways the New Testament uses the Old. He explains that while the New Testament largely understands the messianic hope in a direct (rectilinear) fashion, it does not exclusively do so. In this regard, there are four ways, he suggests, that the New Testament uses the Old: the direct, typical, applicational (deriving a principle from an Old Testament text and applying it to a New Testament situation; e.g., Mt 2:16–18), and summary (using an Old Testament verse as a summary of what is taught in a number of Old Testament passages; e.g., Mt 2:23) methods.

In the last portion of his book Rydelnik carries out a thorough study of one passage from each of the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible: Genesis 3:15, Isaiah 7:14, and Psalm 110. Examining evidence within the passage, in its immediate context, in the whole book in which the passage appears, and in the entire Old Testament, he interprets the three texts in a direct (rectilinear) manner.

I found Rydelnik's book to be helpful, one which gave me some new ideas, and one to which I will refer in the future. This is not to say that I have total agreement with all aspects of his writing. In a few places he stretches a bit too far his assumptions and conclusions, omits other possible explanations, or makes questionable assertions. In general, however, I appreciated the purpose and spirit of this book (written with appropriate fervor by a Jewish convert who was brought to faith in Christ as a teenager), and I commend Rydelnik for making a convincing case for the messianic nature of the Hebrew Bible.

Jeffrey H. Pulse

***Christian Social Teachings: A Reader in Christian Social Ethics from the Bible to the Present,* Second Edition. Edited by George Wolfgang Forell. Revised and updated by James M. Childs. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013. Paper. 533 pages. $39.00.**

George Wolfgang Forell (1919–2011) was born in Breslau and immigrated to the United States in 1939. His long career included service as a Lutheran pastor, a distinguished professorship at the University of Iowa, and numerous publications in the areas of Reformation studies, doctrinal theology, and theological ethics. This present work is a revised and updated version of a book Forell edited in 1966. The revised version was executed by James M. Childs of Trinity Lutheran Seminary in Columbus.

Beginning with "The Biblical Heritage" and concluding with "Trinitarian Theology and Social Ethics," the volume spans Christian history, including short readings from representative authors in each period with brief introductions that set the writer and texts within their historical context. The book is divided into eleven parts, each concluding with a basic bibliography for further reading.

Selections from the Early Church are fairly predictable: sections of the Epistle to Barnabas, Tertullian, Irenaeus, Origen, Chrysostom, and Augustine are included. One would have thought something of the *Didache*'s "two ways" might have been used. Part 3, the Medieval Church, offers examples of monastic and mystical writers as well as a substantial sampling of Thomas' *Summa Theologica.* Under the heading of Reformation (Part 4), there are fourteen pages from three of Luther's writings as well as some material from Calvin's *Institutes,* a few bits of Anabaptists material, and two pieces from the Counter-Reformation Jesuit, Francisco De Suárez. Parts 5 and 6 include voices from Europe and North America in a broadly defined Post-Reformation era (Rationalism, Pietism, Puritanism, Wesleyan movement, Quakerism etc.).

The bulk of the volume (pages 196–522) covers the nineteenth century through the first decade of the current century. The majority of contemporary ethicists included in the anthology are from a mainline, liberal Protestant

perspective. Noticeably absent are any texts from Gilbert Meilaender, Oliver O'Donovan, Robert Benne, Richard John Neuhaus, Carl Henry, or Alasdair MacIntyre, even though a broad range of topics are included: ecological ethics, liberation, biomedical ethics, war/peace, feminist/womanist, and sexual ethics.

Like its predecessor, the second edition of *Christian Social Teaching* will no doubt find its use as a text in undergraduate or seminary classes in Christian ethics. A more balanced selection of sources in sections of the book which cover the twentieth and twenty-first centuries would have enhanced the book's usefulness in the classroom.

John T. Pless

***Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*. Edited by Joel B. Green. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011. 889 pages. Hardcover. $59.99.**

Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics is a massive and wide-ranging volume consisting of topical entries as well as three introductory essays by Allen Vehrey ("Ethics in Scripture"), Charles H. Cosgrove ("Scripture in Ethics: A History") and Bruce Birch ("Scripture in Ethics: Methodological Issues"). Vehrey's essay argues that, while biblical ethics assumes a unity on account of the fact that there is only one God, there is no singular biblical ethic, even as there is "no simple unitive understanding of that one God or that one God's will" (5). Variety within the canon leads to variegated and contextual approaches to ethics. Cosgrove provides an overview of how the Scriptures were used for ethics in each period of church history from the early church to twenty-first-century postmodernism. Birch's methodological treatment is largely condensed from the book he co-authored with Larry Rasmussen, *The Bible and Ethics in the Christian Life* (Augsburg, 1989). Birch sees the Scriptures not as normative canon for doctrine and life, but the entry point into a world where Christians can communally engage in moral deliberation. Thus, the reading of the Scriptures requires the use of critical skills and a community of interpretation. He concludes, "Clearly, the reading of Scriptures to Christian ethics is a rich and complex conversation that is both historical and global. We are invited into the conversation not for the discovery of fixed moral truths, but rather to experience the moral power of life lived in the presence of God and as part of God's people" (33). This hermeneutic appears to govern the majority of entries within the dictionary.

There are three types of entries: articles on the relationship of ethics and Scripture, articles on ethics within Scripture, and articles on particular classical and contemporary issues. Some entries serve as "orientation" articles, giving the reader a broad introduction or orientation to a particular issue, such as "Just-War Theory" by Gary Simpson (445–449). There are articles on each book of the Bible (or, in a few cases, multiple books, such as 1–2 Kings, 1–3 John)

that focus on ethical themes within the particular writing. Most often, the movement is from the biblical text to some sort of relevance for or application to specific moral issues. In other cases, the article begins with an issue such as abortion or pornography and seeks to retrieve biblical material that informs the ethic. There are entries that examine the use of the Bible for ethics in major Christian traditions such as Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Anabaptist, Eastern Orthodoxy, and others. Contemporary topics such as feminist ethics and health care ethics are also included. There is even an entry on artificial intelligence, but it lacks an effort to connect it with the Bible, save for a passing reference to the *imago Dei.*

There is an entry on "Liturgy and Ethics," but there is nothing on ethics and Baptism or the Lord's Supper. This seems strange in light of the fact that there are surely ethical dimensions to Baptism (Romans 6) and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11) in the New Testament. Doctrinal topics such as atonement, salvation, creation, and eschatology are included. There is an article on sanctification, but nothing on justification. Antinomianism rates an article, but the author fails to mention the Reformation controversy that gave rise to the label. Lutherans will search in vain for a separate entry on "Two Kingdoms" or "Law and Gospel" in Christian ethics.

The authors are from a variety of denominational backgrounds, but mostly mainstream Protestants or Neo-Evangelicals. Most of the articles represent a "balanced" approach in that the authors attempt to point out competing approaches and describe them without undo prejudice. As is to be expected with a work involving so many different scholars, the quality of individual entries varies greatly.

Given the easy accessibility of ethical articles on the internet, especially on new and developing topics, one is led to wonder whether dictionaries such as this one have a future. Even though this work was just published in 2011, some of the articles are already dated.

John T. Pless

***Who Is Jesus? Disputed Questions and Answers*. By Carl E. Braaten. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmanns Company, 2011. 154 pages. Softcover. $20.00.**

This relatively short book accomplishes a lot in 150 pages. Carl E. Braaten, one of the most influential American Lutheran theologians of the latter twentieth century, gives an insight-filled and useful overview of current issues in the doctrine of Christology and its related field of Gospel studies.

The first two chapters consider epistemological issues that have confronted Christian theology ever since the writings of Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694–1768) were published by Gotthold Lessing as the *Wolfenbüttel Fragments* (1774–1778). In these two chapters, Braaten revisits his doctoral

research on Martin Kähler, written under the supervision of Paul Tillich at Harvard University.

In the first chapter, Braaten also describes and evaluates three "Quests for the Historical Jesus." Quest One was started by Reimarus and concluded by Albert Schweitzer. Quest Two was started by Rudolf Bultmann and continued by his disciples: Ernst Käsemann, Günther Bornkamm, Ernst Fuchs, Gerhard Ebeling, Hans Conzelmann, and others (15, n.27). Quest Three has as its most prominent practitioners the "Jesus Seminar," John Dominic Crossan, Marcus Borg, and Robert Funk—on the "negative critics" side; and N. T. Wright, E. Sanders, James D. G. Dunn, Luke Timothy Johnson, Richard Bauckham, Pope Benedict XVI, and others—on the "positive critics" side (23, n.43).

In the chapters that follow, Braaten examines several Christological issues: the resurrection of Jesus, the incarnation of God in Jesus, the exclusive claims of the Gospel, the atonement and its various "theories," the relation between Jesus and the early church, and Jesus' view of politics. The book also includes "Questions for Discussion" at the end of each chapter, which will be helpful if the book is used in a group study.

In his conclusion, Braaten states that: "the answers in this book have been constructed unabashedly in sync with the classical creeds and dogmas of the church" (142). This is more carefully explained in the chapter on salvation, where Braaten states: "Orthodox Christianity has never promulgated a particular dogma on salvation, as it has on the Triune God and the person of Christ" (85). I disagree. The ecumenical creeds do proclaim a particular doctrine of salvation—called the "vicarious atonement." Nevertheless, I am glad to see Braaten's affirmation of the orthodox dogmas of the Trinity and Christology.

Orthodox Lutherans will find the chapter on the exclusive claims of the Gospel to be the most troublesome. Braaten affirms that there is no salvation outside of Christ and that Jesus is the only reconciling mediator between God and man (85). But then he states that "Christians have a good reason to hope that God will . . . find a way to accomplish his desire that all should be saved" (86), appealing to "Paul's kind of universalism in Colossians and Ephesians" (86; see also 56).

My strongest criticism of the book is Braaten's glib dismissal of the third quest "positive critics," such as N.T. Wright. On the one hand, Braaten brilliantly explains that "we have the eyewitness testimonies in the canonical manuscripts, and if we do not meet the real Jesus there, we will not meet him at all" (25). But then he writes, "we must still ask about the relevance of even the most positive reconstructions of the 'historical Jesus.' The results of historical research are never certain, always a matter of higher or lower degrees of probability" (23). And so, like Calvin and Barth, Braaten retreats to the mystical safety net of the *testimonium Spiritus Sancti internum* (32–33).

Braaten's criticism of the Three Quests is the most useful part of this book for orthodox Lutherans. For neo-orthodox Lutherans, this book could become part of an advanced catechism for their doctrinal position.

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Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective. **By Fred Sanders & Klaus Issler. Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2007. 244 pages. Softcover. $24.99.**

We live in a contemporary context characterized by the growth of pagan spiritualities, the capitulation of mainline churches to postmodern social morality, and the retreat of traditional Christianity from the center of society. Such circumstances encourage a certain despair, and despair tempts one toward a moral and theological paralysis. Thus, the church seems consigned to a defensive posture as she suffers constant attacks against her theological and moral heart.

In the midst of a fierce battle, the good soldier seeks stable ground upon which to mount a proper defense. A good fortress begins with a solid foundation. The construction of persuasive arguments demands a return to the building blocks of vocabulary and grammar. In this regard, a new book, *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective*, calls the church back to the fundamental pillars of her life. Indeed, it calls us to return once more to him who is the cornerstone, Jesus Christ, in whom the whole structure of the church and the whole of her theological and moral life are constituted.

We might expect such a call to christology to spring from Lutheran, Roman Catholic, or Orthodox circles. However, *Jesus in Trinitarian Perspective* is a collection of articles compiled from Protestant Evangelical authors who teach at Biola University, Erskine Theological Seminary, Dallas Theological Seminary, and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. These authors have found it necessary and salutary to return to the trinitarian and Christological creeds of the ancient church. By returning to patristic foundations, these authors have discovered the stable ground from which to mount a solid defense. Their essays consistently call the Evangelical community to return to the theological grammar without which the church's confession simply cannot stand.

Perhaps the most surprising aspect of this book is the emphasis that is given to the second council of Constantinople (AD 553). The genius of this council is the intimate connection made between the church's Trinitarian grammar established through the battles of the fourth century and her Christological confession forged in the fifth century. The second council of Constantinople summarized the church's theological grammar in a simple

orthodox formula: "One of the Holy Trinity suffered for us." In this sentence, the church summed up her trinitarian, Christological, and soteriological vision. It is this fundamental formula that the authors of this volume recall for the church and promote as a solid foundation for renewed theological conversation.

While the return to the patristic tradition is worthy of praise, there are a couple of weaknesses. First, the father's theological grammar is considered in terms of modern psychological theory. The ancient understanding of "person (*hypostasis, persona*)" especially suffers from this association, being defined as "center of consciousness." Here theological personhood is equated with the fragmented individualism of our fallen existence. Second, the essays do not consider the ecclesial implications inherent in the ancient church's confession. It remains a challenge for Protestant theologians to confront the eucharistic reality that informs the whole patristic perspective.

In spite of these weaknesses, this book is a very positive sign on our modern theological landscape. Indeed, this return to the foundations of the catholic tradition is the stable ground upon which a solid fortress can again be constructed; it is a healthy and vibrant seed from which, it is hoped, a bountiful and joyful harvest may be produced.

James G. Bushur

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