

Foreword

We are now in an important year for our synod and seminary. It was 60 years ago that Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary was established in Mankato, Minnesota. The purpose of the seminary is to prepare pastors who will preach the inerrant Word of God in its truth and purity and administer the Sacraments in accord with Christ's command. This has been the purpose of the seminary throughout the past 60 years of its existence and continues to be its purpose today.

The synod and the seminary desire to maintain the doctrinal heritage of our forefathers. We hold in high regard the teaching of Luther, Chemnitz, Gerhard, Koren and Walther. The Rev. Theodore Aaberg, the first full-time president of our seminary, speaks to this point in his paper entitled *What Can and Must We Do to Preserve and Protect Our Doctrinal Heritage?* He delivered this essay at the biennial meeting of the Confessional Lutheran Forum in October 1977. The purpose of the forum, founded in 1967, is to express the fellowship enjoyed by the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

One of the ways that we preserve our doctrinal heritage is through the Christian training of our youth. The 2006 ELS Synod Convention stressed the importance of the Lutheran Schools of America (LSA) for the promotion of Christian education. In his sermon *For You and Your Children* based on Acts 2:38–39, the Rev. Brad Kerkow encouraged the convention to continue the vital task of Christian education. He is the pastor of Peace Lutheran Church in North Mankato, Minnesota.

Postmodernism, a major philosophical system in our society, is striving to erode our doctrinal heritage. Postmodernism is affecting many areas of our culture and life. Textbooks and federal curriculum standards are being influenced by pantheism (nature is god), panentheism (nature is part of god who is also above nature), and other concepts borrowed from and generated by postmodernism. The essay *Postmodernism and New Pantheism* by Mr. Allen Quist is written to assist Christians in facing this dangerous movement.

Several new Bible translations have been published recently, including *Today's New International Version* (TNIV) and *English*

Standard Version (ESV). Because of the appearance of these new Bible versions, the Doctrine Committee has again undertaken a review of translations. For the benefit of our readers, the Rev. Thomas Rank has provided a review of *Today's New International Version* (TNIV). He is pastor of Center and Scarville Synod Lutheran Churches in northern Iowa.

Modern medicine provides us with many benefits and has improved our quality of life. Yet it can present many challenges when it comes to end-of-life decisions. The essay *The Christian and End of Life Decisions* aids Christians in these difficult decisions. The essay was written by the Rev. Mark Rogers, who is pastor of Pinehurst Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin.

There appears to be no end to the unrest in the Middle East and radical fundamentalism in Islam is growing by leaps and bounds. As a result of this situation, there is a pressing need for confessional Lutherans to understand the teaching of Islam and be prepared to evangelize the Islamic world. In his essay *River of Muddy Waters: The Qur'an in Perspective* Dr. William Kessel uses the analogy of four streams flowing together to form a river to explain the teaching of the Qur'an and Islam. Dr. Kessel is a professor at Bethany Lutheran College.

In the New Testament we hear of many individuals who were demon possessed and we see our Lord's authority over the demons. It has been said that when God became flesh Satan intensified his attacks on humanity taking bodily possession of individuals. While there are not the number of demon possessions today as there were in the New Testament era, demon possession is still a very real occurrence. This is the point of the essay *Demon Possession: Biblical and Historical Testimonies* by the Rev. William Mack, who is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Oregon, Wisconsin.

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What Can and Must We Do to Preserve and Protect Our Doctrinal Heritage?

by Theodore A. Aaberg

That we have a doctrinal heritage goes without saying, at least in this Forum. Generally speaking, however, even this much should not be taken for granted, for it is true as the saying goes, “familiarity breeds contempt.”

Sometimes it takes an “outsider” to increase a person’s appreciation for his doctrinal heritage. I would suspect that many a Bethany alumnus from the ELS, in attendance at the banquet at Bethany’s Grand Homecoming this summer, went home with a greater appreciation for the doctrinal heritage the ELS received from the Old Norwegian Synod after hearing the banquet speaker, Dr. Paul A. Zimmerman, a former teacher, draw the compelling reasons for Bethany’s existence from the doctrinal position of the Old Norwegian Synod as set forth by the sainted Pastor U. V. Koren. And what pastor hasn’t been heartened, and himself strengthened, by the joy and wholehearted appreciation of an adult confirmand for the spiritual treasure he has come upon, whether in the WELS or the ELS?

That we are to seek to preserve and to protect such an heritage should be obvious. But the devil has a thousand and one different tricks either to turn us aside from such an effort, or should we say, insist on striving to direct us down a wrong alley.

For example, take the matter of divine grace, grace alone. The devil can corrupt even this for us. And he does corrupt it when he deceives a Christian into thinking that since he is saved by grace for Christ’s sake through faith without the deeds of the law, he therefore need not strive against sin and fight to live a holy life.

There is grace as the favor Dei, as the sole basis of a sinner’s salvation. But for the recipient of the favor Dei there is also gratia infusa, and on the basis of the gratia infusa the Christian is to strive, and strive mightily, against evil and for righteousness in his life out

Likewise in contending for the preservation of our doctrinal heritage. If in looking at our respective synods and our common doctrinal heritage, and recalling that it is all by God's grace that we possess it, we then lament the course of history as it pertains to the doctrinal purity of synods, twiddle our thumbs, and wait for the inevitable to happen, then we are some poor examples indeed of the recipients of God's grace.

Of course we must fight to preserve and protect our doctrinal heritage. Luther makes that clear in his treatise "That These Words of Christ, (This is My Body,) etc., Still Stand Firm Against the Fanatics." Showing that the devil is the cause of the controversy, and stating that the devil takes no vacation, he declares:

Choose, then, whether you prefer to wrestle with the devil or whether you prefer to belong to him. If you consent to be his, you will receive his guarantee to leave you in peace with the Scriptures. If you refuse to be his, defend yourself, go at him! He will not pass you by; he will create such dissension and sectarianism over the Scriptures that you will not know where Scriptures, faith, Christ, and you yourself stand (LW, 37:17).

We can fight, and we can do something to preserve and protect our doctrinal heritage. We can do it because God in his grace, having made us His own, also gives us grace to stand firm and to keep what He has given us.

The preservation of our doctrinal heritage is a part of our sanctification and there is only one way to go forward in that and that is through the route signified in our baptism – repentance and faith, as we learned in our catechism in childhood: "It signifies that the Old Adam in us should by daily contrition and repentance be drowned and die, with all sins and evil lusts and again a new man daily come forth and arise who shall live before God in righteousness and purity forever." It is only through such a daily renewal that we keep our high regard for the Means of Grace and draw from them the courage and strength to fight to keep them pure and unadulterated in our midst.

It is in this spiritual setting of sanctification that we would now address ourselves to the question of what we can and must

do to preserve and protect our doctrinal heritage, thinking in terms especially of synodical and congregational emphases even more so than policies and programs. At the same time we remember that the battle for the Truth is essentially no different for a congregation or synod than it is for the individual Christian.

It is essential that we do not come to look upon our synod or congregation as a substitute for the holy Christian church. In theory and on paper we would never confuse or mix the two. But it is possible by an overemphasis on the visible organizations accompanied by an under emphasis on the church of Jesus Christ, the believers, who are hidden there, as it were, to lead people into believing there are two churches, or to at least forget that the holy Christian church is real and actually does exist right there where the means of Grace are proclaimed and used. In this same connection it is possible to beat the drums for a congregational or synodical organization in such a way as to build up pride and loyalty to the form rather than to the true church which exists within that form. Of course our congregation and synod are to be dear to our hearts, but above all else they are to be dear because of the Gospel and because of God's people found there. Pastors and teachers and other church leaders must seek to foster this spirit, and to warn and protect the people from a false love and loyalty to an organization, which finally becomes idolatry. Such a false love and loyalty may not be so apparent or seem to be such a bad thing as long as the organization holds to and confesses the truth, but let the organization forsake the truth, and such a false love and loyalty becomes a difficult obstacle to those who would believe and confess the truth.

While organizations are very important, and not to be despised, in this respect we need to put the emphasis not on the organization but on the people who make up the organization. The church is people, and the whole purpose of the organization is that the Gospel and people, many people, an ever-increasing number of people, might meet so that the Gospel as the power of God unto salvation might bring the people to Christ and keep and preserve the people with Christ as their Savior, and that clinging to Christ as their Savior, the people might walk worthy of their calling, serve Christ, and live with Him forever.

It will likewise help to preserve and protect our doctrinal heritage if we remember and stress not only that the church is people but a pilgrim people. For example, consider pastors and professors and church officials. When a congregation or synod forsakes its doctrinal heritage for the sake of earthly prestige, numbers, influence, etc., nine times out of ten it is the spiritual leaders in the church who spearhead the move. Or when pastors, professors and other leaders are being pressured against their better knowledge to cave in, if they would go out to a cemetery and quietly measure out their grave lot, 4' x 8', give or take a little, and do a little long-term thinking on the basis of the Word about temporal and eternal matters, earthly and spiritual values, they would be renewed in a right sense of values, and go back to battle rather than to compromise.

I have stood at the graves of Norwegian Synod leaders H. A. Preus, U. V. Koren, and J. A. Ottesen who stood fast to their dying day for the truth, and I have stood also at the graves of those Norwegian Synod leaders who were torn between the truth which they dearly wanted to confess, and the preservation of earthly organizations at the expense of truth, and who tried to do both, tragic figures, such as C. K. Preus and I. B. Torrison, and I tell you the difference comes across when you know the history of it. If one remembers his Christian pilgrimage and his heavenly home, the earthly things will pale into insignificance, and one's greatest concern will be to stand up for the truth so long as life shall last, leaving a clear light to guide those who follow after.

If we remember that the Gospel is the thing, then the preservation of the Gospel in our midst rather than the preservation of an organization becomes the key issue. If we remember that not only is our spiritual life and future tied up in the Gospel, but that we must have the pure fountain of Israel to bring to unbelievers, then the preservation of the Gospel in our midst, rather than the preservation of the organization, takes priority. And not strangely, this becomes the best way and offers the best guarantee that the organization too will be kept on the foundation of the truth.

In a practical way, there are a number of dangers confronting us in our efforts for the preservation and protection of the truth in our midst.

There is the danger of a gradual deterioration, seemingly little things in doctrine or practice that, when viewed against the large body of doctrine and practice that is correct, seem of little consequence. To preserve the peace, to avoid looking like a “nit picker,” one may look the other way. But you know how it went with the nice long salami. It went piece by piece – the slicing of no one piece seeming to use up the salami as such. Finally, all that was left was the butt end with the string and price tag.

There is the danger of making our doctrine of church fellowship too shallow. By this I mean that we may so limit our preaching and teaching on the doctrine of church fellowship that it appears to consist only of a few passages such as Romans 16:17; Matthew 7:15; I John 4:1, so that our people fail to appreciate that our doctrine of church fellowship in both its so-called positive and negative aspects is closely connected to such doctrines as that of Justification, the Church, the Means of Grace, etc.

There is also the danger of omitting the positive aspect of the doctrine of church fellowship as it relates to the Holy Christian Church and also to those with whom we are in confessional agreement so that our people come to think of the doctrine of church fellowship as pretty much of a negative thing. Then they are confused and bewildered as to how to respond to the persistent emphasis of a Reformed evangelist or a liberal Lutheran on the oneness of the church of Christ etc.

There is also the danger of failing to appreciate where our people are in their understanding and grasp of the doctrine of church fellowship, and of failing patiently to instruct them in the doctrine so that little by little all come to make also this part of their doctrinal heritage their own, thus basing their church fellowship practices ever more fully on inner spiritual convictions rather than on mere outward conformity to the authoritative directives of the pastor or the congregation.

We should for our own benefit and well-being study the Missouri Synod more, especially the decades of the 1920s and 1930s before she started down that fateful path. How could such a church body, rightly orthodox not only in doctrine but also in practice, begin a march that took it to the very brink of disaster? I personally cannot

believe that the education of many of its men at heterodox graduate schools and the leadership of especially the St. Louis Seminary are wholly to blame. Is it not also possible that their doctrine of church fellowship, though orthodox, became shallow, and that their rigidly orthodox church practice, coupled with an emphasis on the Synod, tended toward regarding the Synod as being almost the equivalent of the Holy Christian Church on earth, tending toward an unhealthy pride and complacency so that they were ripe for picking, even though outwardly they appeared as the Rock of Gibraltar? We need to study them in order that we may learn and profit for the future.

I would also like to say a few words on what we can and must do in an intersynodical way to preserve and protect our doctrinal heritage.

Mutual trust and charity must prevail between us. The sainted Pastor Justin A. Petersen wrote an essay for the 1938 ELS Convention on "Our Debt, under God, To Our Brethren of the Missouri Synod," in commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Saxon immigration. Among other things he warned the ELS against picking away at little things in Missouri. He wrote that one of the ways we could pay our debt to Missouri was by:

A humble, sympathetic understanding of the position and problems of our brethren. We shall be quick to praise, and slow to find fault. We shall not act like little dogs that constantly bark and rant at every shadow. We shall look for the bright and not the shady side. Our very position as members of the Synodical and especially of the Norwegian Synod makes it so easy to develop the holier-than-thou attitude. We should shun suspicion and carping criticism as the devil himself and ever be mindful also in Synodical relations of the Eighth Commandment which admonishes us to excuse our neighbor, speak well of him, and put the best construction on everything (1938 ELS Report, p. 57).

Unfortunately the ELS did not wholly heed this good advice and it later hindered the needed testimony that the ELS did seek to give the Missouri Synod. May we do better towards our brethren today.

I hope I will not be misunderstood when I now say that we, in our intersynodical relations, should not take ourselves too

seriously. We should always keep a wholesome sense of humility and frailty so that we always recognize that we can “goof.” With the above, we also need a sense of humor. For example, a few years ago our Synod put out a brochure describing the ELS. The brochure contained a short statement of doctrine, about 18 brief paragraphs or so. In a hurry to stress the Bible as the source of revelation for our doctrine, the statement started right out along those lines, and it wasn’t until a year or two later that someone happened to notice that nowhere in the statement did the ELS confess the doctrine of the Trinity. The new brochure sent out recently took care of the matter. Our Wisconsin brethren have something in their statement, “This We Believe,” which is a well-meaning blunder too, in regard to the last things, where the intent was clearly to reject modern interpretations which do away with the truths regarding the end of the world and judgment, but which instead came out rejecting the symbolical language of Revelation. Do we not all gain when we recognize how easily such things can happen?

When doctrinal questions do arise between our synods we should not immediately go on the defensive, magnify them, think of them as a great calamity, or think we have the last word. Rather, we should welcome the opportunity to turn to the study of the Word and the Lutheran Confessions on that particular doctrine, and then to sit down together as brethren for mutual discussions, remembering that over the years we may have let slip some of the depth of this or that doctrine, and that this is an opportunity to recapture for ourselves its full dimensions on the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. We should gladly confront such doctrinal questions, doing it in the confidence that as we all bow to the Word we will come out together on it, and both be the better for it.

These, dear brethren, are some of the things that we can and must do to preserve and protect our doctrinal heritage. “The Lord our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us.” (I Kings 8:57).

*God’s word is our great heritage,
And shall be ours forever;
To spread its light from age to age*

*Shall be our chief endeavor;
Through life it guides our way,
In death it is our stay;
Lord grant, while worlds endure,
We keep its teachings pure,
Throughout all generations.*
(TLH 137)

Sermon on Acts 2:38-39

by *Bradley Kerkow*

Text: Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off— for all whom the Lord our God will call.” (Acts 2:38)

Introduction

The pastor ascended into the pulpit and began reading the sermon text. He looked up and to his disappointment he saw only three people sitting in the sanctuary – a senior lady on his right and a middle aged couple on the left. Through the doors, in the narthex he could see the two ushers. With a sigh under his breath he started preaching his sermon.

Out in the narthex one of the ushers, an older man, leaned across and spoke to the other, who was much younger. “50 years ago this place would have been crowded with worshippers.” “Is that right?!” said the young usher. “Yep, there would have been worshippers who missed out on a seat standing where you and I are right now listening to the message of Christ and Him crucified!” “Really?! What happened?” asked the young usher. The old man thought for a moment, “We forgot to teach our children. We were too busy with ourselves – with other work – and we didn’t place a high priority on teaching our children. That was back in 2006. It just took one generation. Yep...Synod Sunday at Trinity Chapel sure isn’t what it used to be!”

Dear Christian friends, today in our service we pray that this scenario would never happen. We are meeting this week in convention emphasizing the Lutheran Schools of America (LSA) for the promotion of Christian Education. We want our children to have the same knowledge that we have gathered here today to celebrate! The knowledge of our salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ!

For You and Your Children I. It starts with you II. It is important what we teach

I. It starts with you.

Christian Education starts with you and me – Christian adults. In Deuteronomy 6 the Lord speaking through Moses said, “These Words that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children.” Notice that he does not say here, “Children learn them from the adults.” The responsibility is not placed with the children, but rather with the believing parents and adults.

It starts with you – If you are to teach God’s Word to your children, first you must know it yourself. Christendom suffers (and we see so many examples of that today) when Christian adults fail to study the Bible for themselves and therefore are unable to teach it to their children.

It starts with you – What are your priorities? Our sinful natures want us to place ourselves as top priority in most aspects of life. Do you find yourself being tempted in that way when it comes to impressing God’s word on our Children? “I don’t have the time”, “I’m too busy”, “I don’t have the money for it”. When it comes to having Christian schools we can be tempted to object – “It takes too much time and money!”

A few weeks ago you probably saw in the news, the little girl who won the national Spelling Bee Competition. It was amazing watching her spell that last word with such precision. At one point the camera focused on the proud parents in the audience and the commentator remarked about all of the time, energy and money that the parents had invested in their daughter’s training for the competition. But now it was worth it, because now their daughter was the champion!

Consider the high cost of sports education for our children. Many parents (including many of us) spend quite a lot of money on sports equipment and clothing for our children and will spend quite a lot of time taking them to practices and traveling to tournaments.

While these pursuits are good, how much more important is our children’s Christian Education? Our goal with Christian Education

is that our children would grow up in the knowledge of Christ. That they would be champions in THE CHAMPION. That they would know of their victory through Christ's victory over sin, death and Satan. What amount can you place on the time required? What amount can you place on the energy needed? What amount can you place on the cost? There is no amount.

On the Day of Pentecost, the Apostle Peter said "repent and Be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." First, Peter says, "Repent." You and I are guilty before the Lord and need to repent of our sins to him, including our failures to teach His Word to our children as we should. After giving the exhortation to repent, Peter speaks the Gospel and thereby opens up the floodgates of God's mercy for us poor sinners. Dear Friends, when you were baptized your sins were forgiven through the death of Christ. Through baptism you were united with Christ in his death and also in his resurrection from the dead! You are forgiven!

It starts with you - the Gospel promise is for YOU! How terrible if the promise was just for certain people - "The promise is just for Australians!" A couple of us here today would be celebrating "Woo Hoo!" But for most of you how terrible it would be to be excluded – especially knowing how wonderful the promise is!

BUT THE PROMISE IS FOR YOU! ...AND YOUR CHILDREN!

II. It is important what we teach in Christian education.

We want our children to learn from God's perspective – not from a secular perspective. In our Christian Day Schools it is not secular education with Christianity tacked on. It is CHRISTIAN education.

After all, it's God's creation. It's God's Math – It's God's Chemistry! The perspective that one takes will permeate though the entire education.

For example, the false doctrine of evolution impacts more than just the teaching of the origin of life. A school that teaches the theory of evolution will not be able to properly teach Home Economics! Think of the home economics sowing class. The first lesson might

be on the history of sowing. The very first example of sowing in the world was done by the Lord! God sowed together garments to cover a man and a woman. They needed covering because they suddenly realized that they were naked. They realized they were naked because they suddenly had a sinful nature. Previously they had had the image of God - holy and perfect. They had a sinful nature because they had disobeyed God by eating the forbidden fruit and lost the image of God.

An evolutionist must deny the existence of Adam and Eve and therefore cannot teach correctly about sowing! This is not just dry irrelevant history. You and I today are wearing garments that have been sown together because you and I also have that sinful nature. And just like Adam and Eve we need God's promise of a Savior.

God wasn't done sowing. God the Son - Jesus Christ sowed together a perfect garment when he walked among us. He was threading it together when he loved his Father perfectly. He continued sowing it when he obeyed his Father's commands and will. He sowed it when he was the perfect educator of adults and children. This garment was pure righteousness. The Father was very pleased with it. But he gave up it up and instead he was crucified wearing my unrighteousness and your unrighteousness. He wore my sin and guilt and your sin and guilt. And he received the Father's burning anger. Jesus made full payment for every one of your sins. And your receipt is in his resurrection, which proves that God was satisfied with the payment. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." By the gift of the Holy Spirit in baptism, you received Christ's perfect garment of righteousness as your very own! Through Jesus Christ, the Father is now very pleased with you, dear believer! Only a Christian Education can correctly teach sowing from God's perspective.

Conclusion

If the Lord hasn't returned we hope that the 2056 Synod Sunday service would continue to be crowded. And that our

children's concern and high priority would be the Christian instruction of THEIR children. That they too would have that same knowledge which you have and rejoice in today – the knowledge of your salvation through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Amen. Sola Deo Gloria!

Postmodernism and New Pantheism

by Allen Quist

On November 28, 2004, syndicated columnist George Will made the following statement:

... various academic fields now have regnant premises that embed political orientations in their very definitions of scholarship: “Schools of education, for instance, take constructivist [postmodernist] theories of learning as definitive, excluding realists (in matters of knowledge) on principle ... ”
[Quotation from Mark Bauerlein, emphasis added.]

As is evident from this quotation by Will, the teacher training colleges and universities are so completely dominated by postmodernist ideology that even some individuals outside of education are aware of what is happening. Others have observed that postmodernism is now the dominant philosophy in college-level social sciences and humanities. Still others have said that postmodernism is having a huge impact on math and science education as well.

Postmodernism is the view that truth does not exist. What we think of as being truths are merely “constructs” (ideas) that we have absorbed because we are part of a particular culture. To the postmodernist truth is defined by the culture. To the subjectivist, in contrast, truth is defined by the individual.

Postmodernism is based on three primary assumptions. The first is that evolution must be applied to truth as well as to knowledge, morality, law and all institutions including the church and family. What we think of as being true, right or proper today will be outmoded tomorrow. Most postmodernists do not deny that there is such a thing as reality, but reality is seen as a matter of becoming, not being.

The second assumption of postmodernism is that what most of us think of as being true or right is really only true or right for our own culture. Other cultures may define truth and morality differently. That is, truth, morality, religion, marriage, modesty, criminal justice

and the like are all creations of a particular culture (constructs) and are not true, right or proper in any universal sense. Everything is relative to the culture and has been created by the culture. Most postmodernists would add that everything has been defined by the powerful people in the culture.

The third assumption of postmodernism is the behaviorism of B. F. Skinner. Skinner said that we see the world as we do because we have been conditioned by our environment (our culture) to see the world that way. Our thinking, therefore, is not based on abstract ideas such as truth, morality or knowledge, but rather on the conditioning process.

Education is now so completely dominated by postmodernist thinking that it would be unusual to find the words “truth” or “knowledge” in any textbook at any level. The only exceptions are proper nouns such as the name of civil rights activist, “Sojourner Truth,” and titles such as “Truth in Sentencing” and “Truth in taxation,” or an appendix which may contain the Declaration of Independence or other historical documents that use the word “truth.” Modern education recognizes no real truth and no real knowledge.

Gene Edward Veith defines postmodernism as consisting of the following doctrines:

1. *Social Constructivism*. Meaning, morality, and truth do not exist objectively; rather, they are constructed by the society.
2. *Cultural Determinism*. Individuals are wholly shaped by the cultural forces. Language in particular determines what we can think, trapping us in a “prison-house of language.”
3. *The Rejection of Individual Identity*. People exist primarily as members of groups. The phenomenon of American individualism is itself a construction of American culture with its middle-class values of independence and introspection, but it remains an illusion. Identity is primarily collective.
4. *The Rejection of Humanism*. Values that emphasize the creativity, autonomy, and priority of human beings are misplaced. There is no universal humanity since every culture constitutes its own reality. Traditional humanistic values are canons of exclusion, oppression, and crimes against the natural environment. Groups must empower themselves to assert

their own values and to take their place with other planetary species.

5. *The Denial of the Transcendent.* There are no absolutes. Even if there were, we would have no access to them since we are bound to our culture and imprisoned in our language.

6. *Power Reductionism.* All institutions, all human relationships, all moral values, and all human creations—from works of art to religious ideologies—are all expressions of the primal will to power.

7. *The Rejection of Reason.* Reason and the impulse to objectify truth are illusory masks for cultural power. Authenticity and fulfillment come from submerging the self into a larger group, releasing one's natural impulses such as honest emotions and sexuality, cultivating subjectivity, and developing a radical openness to existence by refusing to impose order on one's life.

8. *Revolutionary Critique of the Existing Order.* Modern society with its rationalism, order, and unitary view of truth needs to be replaced with a new world order. Scientific knowledge reflects an outdated modernism, though the new electronic technology holds great promise. Segmentation of society into its constituent groups will allow for a true cultural pluralism. The old order must be swept away, to be replaced by a new, as yet unclearly defined, new world order.

In the field of education, postmodernist ideology also includes specific pedagogy. Postmodernist methodology includes the following teaching strategies:

(1) Teachers are viewed as “guides,” not as “instructors.” Postmodernists insist that a teacher is to be a “guide on the side, not a sage on the stage.” Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, stated the principle as follows:

... learning takes place especially through a spontaneous and autonomous effort of the pupil with the teacher only exercising a function of friendly guide. [Antonio Gramsci, “On Education,” p. 8]

(2) Discovery learning is elevated to a high position of methodology. Postmodernists say that escaping from the constructs of the powerful requires that students must avoid the instruction of teachers and textbooks, and students must then discover knowledge on their own. Discovery learning, however, is recognized by many education scholars as being an inefficient method of education. (See the writings of E. D. Hirsch, for example.) The inefficiency of discovery learning does not bother postmodernists, however, because they do not believe that the acquisition of knowledge is a genuine goal of education.

(3) Postmodernist education methods also elevate group projects as being a critically important methodology. Postmodernists say that group learning is necessary to develop “mass consciousness” and “revolutionary consciousness.” Students must learn in groups, they say, so they will see themselves as part of a group, not as individuals. Group projects are seen as being necessary to change the values, attitudes and worldview of students. Gramsci called the process of using group projects “consciousness transformation.” Once again, group projects are generally recognized as being an inefficient method for teaching information.

(4) Educational processes are defined as the deconstruction of traditional language and paradigms and the creation of new language and paradigms (called “constructs”). Postmodernists say that language—including the language of history, mathematics and other academic disciplines—does not describe “truth”; it describes “constructs,” mental images used by the powerful in a particular culture to subdue the vulnerable. For that reason the National Council for Social Studies (NCSS), for example, describes its view of education as follows:

Knowledge is constructed by learners as they attempt to fit new information, experiences, feelings, and relationships into their existing or emerging intellectual, aesthetic, and emotional constructs. [National Standards for the Social Studies, Maryland, National Council for Social Studies, 1994, p. x]

That is, education is defined as the acquisition of constructs, as well as the replacement of old constructs with new ones—education is not seen as the acquisition of knowledge and intellectual skills.

The methods of the postmodernists are seen by them as being necessary to rescue children from the “absolutist” attitudes, values and worldview that have been taught them by their parents, the church, various traditions and the culture as a whole. One of the common expressions of this postmodernist doctrine is stated as follows: “The child comes to college seeing the world in terms of black or white; our task is to help the child see the world in shades of gray.” The real goal of postmodernists, of course, is to indoctrinate the child with the ideology of postmodernism. Readings like the following are commonly used to “liberate” children from the “absolutist” thinking they have been taught by their parents and church. [The analysis is from the March 8, 2001 issue of PABBIS News.] :

The House of Spirits--required reading for International Baccalaureate [IB] 11th graders. Describes rape, physical abuse, torture and killing of animals and people, bestiality, child molestation, drug use, prostitution, and necrophilia. Vulgar and perverted content is pervasive throughout the book. Among the numerous sexual and violent passages in this book is a detailed description of a man in a sexual/strangulation scene with a 6-year-old girl. Elsewhere in this book, a child watches a man kiss her sister's naked corpse (intestines already removed) on the lips, the neck, the breasts and between the legs.

The Sailor Who Fell From Grace With the Sea--required reading for IB 11th graders. This book is about a 12-year old Japanese boy who is able to spy into his widowed mother's bedroom through a hole in the wall. He is able to see her having sex with her sailor boyfriend. The mother makes plans to marry the sailor. The boy and his friends discuss how much they hate “fathers” and they plot to kill the sailor. They experiment on a kitten, torturing and mutilating it. By the end of the book, they have drugged the sailor, brandished a knife and are donning rubber gloves to kill him. The book is full of graphic and vulgar descriptions of sexual acts and violence.

Why are students required to read these violent and obscene materials? Orientation to College: A Reader answers that question by saying:

We should teach students that knowledge is a social construction . . . The classroom should become a forum in which multicultural debates concerning the construction of knowledge takes place.”
(p. 176)

That is, obscene and violent depictions are used to desensitize children to the naturally repugnant and dehumanizing aspects of the postmodernist view that there are no absolutes. The children must accept the views that there are no absolute truths, no absolute morality and certainly no genuine modesty. Everything must be seen as a creation of a culture and as being, therefore, relative to the culture and subject to change. We may not like certain practices, but that is our problem resulting from our absolutist thinking. Marriage, traditional morality (natural law) and modesty must be viewed as cultural constructs that need to change, to evolve, to higher levels of human experience. (Modernism sees morality as being relative to the individual. Postmodernism sees morality, and truth, as being relative to the culture.)

A college-level textbook in art history promotes the postmodernist worldview this way:

Thus, all societies came to be seen as developing sets of conventions (or rituals) which enact relationships and serve as unconscious guidelines for behavior. As examples, wedding rituals redefine relationships between two people, between two extended families, and within the society at large: and criminal trial rituals, through which decisions about guilt and innocence are reached, redefine the accused person's place within society. Although we may think of these two examples as legal proceedings rather than as rituals, we do so only because their conventions are so imbedded in our consciousness as to have become societal guidelines about certain relationships, whereas our lack of familiarity with the wedding conventions or modes of determining guilt and innocence in other societies may make them seem to us merely bizarre and irrational. Thus each society develops numerous conventions that may be viewed as rituals that define societal relationships, and it seeks validation

of these conventions through religion, morality, law, or social utility. [Oscar Brockett and Franklin J. Hildy, *The History of Theatre*, Ninth Edition New York: Allyn and Bacon, 2003, p. 3, emphasis added.]

That is, Marriage, criminal law, morality and religion are all viewed as being inventions [constructs] of a particular culture. None of these things are real or true in any universal sense. It follows that none of these entities are good or bad, proper or improper, but merely the way a culture views itself and the world. Morality, law, modesty, government, our Constitution, marriage and religion are subject to redefinition and are expected to evolve into higher levels of awareness or being.

The New Pantheism

New Pantheism, also called the “new paganism” and “New Age” religion, is largely an outgrowth of postmodernist thinking. The new Pantheism is an application of postmodernism to religion. Pantheism is the religious view that God and Nature are one and the same. (One version of Pantheism is the view that Nature is God, but that God is also greater than Nature.)

If truth and morality are defined by the culture, then religious truth and practice are also defined by the culture. Theology becomes a panoply of the differing religious doctrines and practices found in the various cultures of the world which are in the process of evolving to higher levels of being. Religious universals, if they exist at all, are then defined as the common themes that the religions of the world generally recognize (see the writings of Joseph Campbell). To Campbell these universals include the doctrines that God is impersonal, that He consists of Nature (capital “N”), that there is a unity of all things, that good and evil are superficial manifestations of the same reality, that evolution is true and applies to all reality, and that morality consists of whatever is natural.

The relationship between postmodernism and the new Pantheism was illustrated in a theatrical performance by the Mixed Blood Theatre called “According to Coyote.” Mixed Blood Theatre described the play as follows:

According to Coyote is a vibrant, wonderfully entertaining anthology of tales featuring the legendary hero of American Indian mythology, it is also the unforgettable encounter with the richness, vitality and sensibilities of Native American culture. Playwright John Kauffman gloriously employs age-old techniques of music, dance, magic, and narrative to bring to life this brave/foolish/sneaky/wise character in all his guises: Coyote the Creator, the namer of animals and bringer of fire. ... Coyote the Teacher, from whom lessons of humility, wisdom, and humility are learned. ... Coyote is simultaneously a hero and villain. Using the rich Native American tradition of song, dance, and story, Kauffman tells the story of Coyote, who was the predecessor of man and creator of the world. There are hundreds of stories that describe how Coyote made the world ready for humans. He brought fire, death, the stars, the seasons, and all the natural world into order. Coyote slew a gigantic monster and from that monster he made the first human beings.

Part of the postmodernist message of such theatre is that religion is a product of the culture and that each culture, including its religion, is equally respectable, true or valid as compared to all other religions and cultures. Religion is a product of the culture and must be viewed as such.

Joseph Campbell would interpret this native mythology as consisting, not in the view that Coyote is God, but in the view that Nature, symbolized by Coyote, is God. Nature and God are one. All things are one. People, as part of Nature, are God too. The “Nature Religions” are described by Campbell as containing the universal theological doctrines that can be recognized by all people.

How will college students respond to this promotion of Pantheism? Most of them will accept it without serious question. It is the same agenda they have been fed in their educational programs since kindergarten and before and have experienced in their schools, on the T.V. and at the theaters. These students have cut their teeth on Pantheistic T.V. programs like “Captain Planet” and on Pantheistic movies such as Star Wars, the Lion King and the Harry Potter series.

They have spent 12 or more years reading literature like the following selections [the descriptions of the literature are from Children’s literature in Social Studies: Teaching to the Standards,

which is the recommended canon of children's literature developed by the National Council for Social Studies]:

GIVING THANKS: A NATIVE AMERICAN GOOD MORNING MESSAGE, ... the text of this picture book carries the 'ancient message of peace and appreciation for Mother Earth and all her inhabitants' to her family. ... Children of these native peoples are taught the concept of greeting the world each morning by saying thank you to all living things, which is what this picture-book expresses.

And:

MUSICIANS OF THE SUN, "Out of the starry night he came, invisible, untouchable, Lord of the Night. King of the Gods. Soul of the World." Dramatic language introduces the principal Aztec deity whose name means "Smoking Mirror."

Many of these students believe that all cultures have their own way of seeing the world and that all of them are equally valid. They believe we have to be tolerant of the views and actions and others. They do not believe that our culture, along with its religion and values, is any better, or any more true, than the other cultures of the world.

For these students, tolerance is the highest virtue. Truth, morality and modest are to be rejected as being absolutist and archaic thinking.

Such students may believe that Christianity is "true," but they do not believe it is true in a real, universal or absolute sense. They believe that Christianity is true for those of us who happen to be part of this culture and who accept it for that reason.

Human Rights Education

The interplay between postmodernism and the new Pantheism is also evident in contemporary human rights education. On May 17, 2005, a new human rights education program was announced that has been formulated by the University of Minnesota Human Rights Resource Center together with the Minnesota Department of Human

Rights. The program is called the “This is My Home” initiative. In the introductory letter, the program was described as follows:

May 17, 2005

Dear Human Rights Education Colleague,

We are happy to announce the launching of This is My Home: A Minnesota Human Rights Education Experience, a joint project of the Minnesota Department of Human Rights and the University of Minnesota Human Rights Resource Center. ...

The “This is My Home” Human Rights Education Tool Kit will be distributed to all Minnesota K-12 principals before school starts in September 2005. The Tool Kit (www.thisismyhome.org) will also be available to all teachers as an on-line teaching resource. An initiative of this magnitude will ensure that teachers throughout Minnesota are provided with an integrated approach that follows a scope and sequence to ensure students receive human rights education, contributing significantly to a child’s educational, cultural, and social development. ...

... The Tool Kit consists of the following components:

(1) The Introduction to Human Rights Education (HRE) CD-ROM ... The Introduction to HRE CD-Rom includes a unique needs assessment tool for schools to begin looking at the overall school climate through a human rights lens, Taking the Human Rights Temperature of Your School. This tool also offers example human rights lessons and other human rights teaching curricula and manuals.

(2) “This is My Home” 28-Minute DVD ... A great resource for those wondering what young people can do to put human rights into action.

(3) K-12 Human Rights Education (HRE) Teaching Guide offers K-2, 3-5, 6-8, and 9-12 lesson plans for integrating human rights and responsibilities through the school curriculum and into the school climate. These lessons draw on three main components:

a. The Human Rights Education Framework provides a developmental sequence for learning human rights language,

principles, skills, and practices.

b. Human Rights and Education Standards have been integrated into this learning process. These standards include Minnesota Academic Standards, the Minnesota Human Rights Act, the United States Bill of Rights, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The “Tool Kit” mentioned above includes a series of questions for “taking the human rights temperature of your church.” Questions include [<http://www.hrusa.org/hrmaterials/temperature/religious.shtm>]:

Children in my house of worship have the right to freedom of thought/religion. (Convention on the Rights of the Child, articles 13, 14)

In my place of worship or assembly, women have the right to hold religious positions.(Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, articles 1-16)

My place of worship or assembly provides equal access, resources, activities, and accommodations to liberal reformists of my religion. (Declaration on the Elimination of All forms of Intolerance and of Discrimination based on Religion or Belief [DROP], articles 1, 6; and Universal Declaration on Human Rights [UDHR], article 2)

When a debate over religion or belief turns into a conflict in my place of worship or assembly, the Board will not take side with the group that shares their opinion and punish the other one. (UDHR article 19; DROP article 2)

Diverse voices and perspectives, e.g. sexual orientation, gender, race/ethnicity, are represented in the committees of my place of worship or assembly. (UDHR articles 2, 19)

Members of my place of worship or assembly can produce and disseminate publications without fear of censorship. (UDHR article 19)

The operating principle here is that international law will now

define human rights in all countries. International law recognizes no separation between church and state. The common themes, or doctrine, accepted by the various countries, as defined by various international treaties and accords, including the Pantheistic Earth Charter, will define what is meant by international law. Human Rights Education, as defined above, will be taught to our teachers and students as being the correct criteria for evaluating the schools and churches of our nation.

What are the dictates of such international law? The Earth Charter contains many of the dictates of international law. The doctrines of the Earth Charter include [as summarized in *America's School: Battleground for Freedom*, by Allen Quist, Chaska: EdWatch publishing, 2005]:

1. Earth worship (Pantheism).
2. Evolution, broadly defined.
3. Socialized medicine.
4. World federalism.
5. Animal rights (animals are seen as our brothers and sisters).
6. Income redistribution among nations and within nations.
7. Eradication of genetically modified (GMO) crops.
8. Contraception and “reproductive health” (legal abortion).
9. World-wide “education for sustainability” which includes spiritual education.
10. Debt forgiveness for third-world nations.
11. Adoption of the gay rights agenda.
12. Elimination of nuclear weapons and the right to bear arms.
13. Redefining the media so it will support the environmental agenda, not report on it.

14. Setting aside biosphere reserves where no human presence is allowed.

As is evident from the 14 points summarized above, the Earth Charter includes a broad religious, ideological and political agenda. The focal point is religious. All the other doctrines follow from the Charter's core belief of Pantheism. The doctrines of Pantheism comprise many of the dictates of international law by which the churches and schools of the world will now be judged.

How does the Earth Charter say its agenda will be accomplished? The Earth Charter webpage answers that question by saying:

Education is the key to advancing the transition to more sustainable ways of living. Transformative education is needed: ... The Earth Charter provides a unique framework for developing educational programs and curricula aimed at transformative learning for a more just, sustainable and peaceful world.

In this way the Earth Charter makes it perfectly clear that it calls for education programs that will transform the attitudes, values, religion and worldview of the child to be consistent with the Pantheism and other doctrines of the Earth Charter. Many of the other international agreements also insist that its principles be taught in the educational programs of the various countries.

What, then, is "human rights education"? It is indoctrination in postmodernism and new Pantheism, along with indoctrination in various other positions of the political and religious left. It is the same agenda that is evident in many other areas of education at all levels. Let the buyer beware—especially in the field of politically-correct education today.

Where will we find this indoctrination in Pantheism and postmodernism? It is all over the field of education. It is in the textbooks, especially the literature textbooks and other children's literature. It is on the T.V. and in the movies. It is in the national tests such as the Iowa basics, the ACT, the SAT and the NAEP. It is in the national educational standards (Federal Curriculum) and in the state education standards and tests. One of the goals of modern testing is

that of using the test to teach (indoctrinate) the student.

Our children are getting a steady diet of postmodernism and new Pantheism. How will we respond to it? We should follow Paul's admonition in Colossians 2:1, which states:

See to it that no one takes you captive through hollow and deceptive philosophy, which depends on human tradition and the basic principles of this world rather than on Christ.

Just as the Apostle Paul and the early church took major steps to combat the Gnosticism of its day, so the church will now have to address itself to the Gnosticism of our day—the new Gnosticism known as “postmodernism” and “new Pantheism,” also referred to under the broad category of “New Age” religion.

Today's New International Version

A Critique of an Example of the Dynamic Equivalent Theory of Translation

by *Thomas L. Rank*

Today's New International Version (TNIV) is a revision of the New International Version (NIV) which first appeared in 1978. The reasons given for the revision are the progress of biblical scholarship and the changes in the English language in the past few decades.

The TNIV is part of the family of translations that uses the dynamic equivalent theory of translation. Eugene Nida, who worked on translating the Bible on the foreign mission field, is recognized as the person who promoted the use of this theory in English Bible translations. This theory is defined as: "based on the premise that whenever something in the native-language text is foreign or unclear to a contemporary reader, the original text should be translated in terms of a dynamic equivalent" (Ryken, 18). And

[It] emphasizes the reaction of the reader to the translated text, rather than the translation of the words and phrases themselves. In simplest terms, dynamic equivalence is often referred to as "thought for thought" translation as compared to "essentially literal" translation... (Ryken, 13).

Besides the TNIV (and NIV), other translations that use this theory include the New Living Translation (NLT) 1996, the Contemporary English Version (CEV) 1995, the Good News Bible (GNB, also known as Today's English Version (TEV)) 1976, and The Message, 2002. Of these translations, the NIV applies the dynamic equivalent theory most conservatively, while the others, increasingly so the newer they are, apply it more freely.

The other translation family of the Bible in English today is the "essentially literal translation." This is defined as "a translation that strives to translate exact words of the original-language in a translation, but not in such a rigid way as to violate the normal rules of grammar and syntax in the receptor language" (Ryken, 19).

Translations in this family include the King James Version (KJV) 1611, the Revised Standard Version (RSV) 1957, the New American Standard Bible (NASB) 1971, the New King James Version (NKJV) 1982, and the English Standard Version (ESV) 2001.

The translators of the TNIV affirm their commitment to the infallible Word of God, and their well-intentioned hope for an “accurate translation” that is useful for the various catechetical work of the Christian church:

From the beginning the translators have been united in their commitment to the authority and infallibility of the Bible as God’s Word in written form. For them, the Bible contains the divine answer to the deepest needs of humanity, sheds unique light on our path in a dark world and sets forth the way to our eternal well-being. Out of this deep conviction, the Committee has held to certain goals for the NIV and for the present revision: that it would be an accurate translation and one that would have clarity and literary quality and so prove suitable for public and private reading, teaching, preaching, memorizing and liturgical use. The Committee has also sought to preserve a measure of continuity with the long tradition of translating the Scriptures into English. (TNIV, “A Word to the Reader,” 2)

This is a fine list of goals for the TNIV, and it is refreshing to read of the commitment to God’s Word in written form. However, the translators spell out what they mean by the term “accurate translation”:

The first concern of the translators has continued to be the accuracy of the translation and its faithfulness to the intended meaning of the biblical writers. This has moved the translators to go beyond a formal word-for-word rendering of the original texts. Because thought patterns and syntax differ from language to language, accurate communication of the meaning of the biblical authors demands constant regard for varied contextual uses of words and idioms and for frequent modifications in sentence structures (TNIV, “A Word to the Reader,” 3, emphasis added).

The phrase “intended meaning” is shorthand for using the dynamic equivalent theory of translation. What this means in practice is that the actual Hebrew and Greek words will be scrutinized by the translation

committee to determine their intended meaning, instead of simply translating the words. A recent critic of the dynamic equivalent theory states "...the translators were committed to translating what they interpret the meaning of the original to be instead of first of all preserving the language of the original" (Ryken, 79). The same author concludes: "dynamic equivalence is based on an elementary confusion of translation with interpretation" (84). He then makes the comparison between the essentially literal and the dynamic equivalent approaches to translation:

The goal of an essentially literal translation is to keep the line of demarcation clear between translation and interpretation of meaning. For dynamic equivalent translations, on the other hand, all translation is potentially interpretation – interpretation defined as we define it hermeneutically to mean interpreting the thought of a statement or passage (Ryken, 87).

The dynamic equivalent theory of translation puts the perceived needs of the targeted reader ahead of the Biblical words themselves. This is generally true, but also has specific application to the issue of gender neutral translations. The TNIV is a gender neutral translation – not to the extent of the NRSV or the NLT, but nevertheless it makes many changes from the Hebrew and Greek pronouns to reduce the number of male-oriented references. The TNIV translators make some note of this:

Among the more programmatic changes in the TNIV are the removal of nearly all vocative "O"s and the elimination of most instances of the generic use of masculine nouns and pronouns. Relative to the second of these, the so-called singular "they/their/them," which has been gaining acceptance among careful writers and which actually has a venerable place in English idiom, has been employed to fill in the vocabulary gap in generic nouns and pronouns referring to human beings. Where an individual emphasis is deemed to be present, "anyone" or "everyone" or some other equivalent is generally used as the antecedent of such pronouns. (TNIV, "A Word to the Reader," 5)

Remember, the expected reader is the one the translators use as the guide for their translations.

One of Nida's translation principles is "the priority of the needs of the audience over the forms of language." Nida then caters to readers even more specifically: "The use of language by persons twenty-five to thirty-five years of age has priority over the language of the older people or of children"; "in certain situations the speech of women should have priority over the speech of men" (Ryken, 116).

On the issue of gender-inclusivity I will quote at length from a critique of the TNIV by Dr. Wayne Grudem. He includes many examples of the changes in the TNIV from the NIV. I have selected the following two as representative:

Psalm 34:20

Current NIV: He protects all his bones, not one of them will be broken.

TNIV (2005): He protects all their bones, not one of them will be broken.

Change in meaning: The third-person masculine singular "his" rightly represents the third-person masculine singular pronoun suffix in Hebrew, and the TNIV incorrectly pluralizes this to "their bones." This obscures the fulfillment of this verse in Christ's crucifixion in John 19:36. This part of Psalm 34 speaks of God's protection of an individual righteous man: God protects "his bones." Why does the TNIV refuse to translate hundreds of third-person masculine singular pronouns in the original languages as third-person masculine singular pronouns in English? What is the objection to male-oriented language when it accurately reflects the original Hebrew or Greek text?

Proverbs 5:21

Current NIV: For a man's ways are in full view of the Lord.

TNIV (2005): For your ways are in full view of the Lord.

Change in meaning: The Hebrew male-specific noun 'ish means "a man," as the NIV correctly translated it. The TNIV incorrectly changes this to "your," and thus restricts the statement to the "you," which in this context is the son being warned by his father in the previous verse. The text no

longer affirms God's observation of the ways of every person (represented by the concrete example of "a man").

These last two verses (Psalm 34:20; Proverbs 5:21) also demonstrate another serious result of systematically changing singulars to plurals in hundreds of cases: The TNIV will ultimately lead to a loss of confidence in tens of thousands of plural pronouns in the Bible. A preacher cannot rightly use the TNIV to make a point based on the plurals "they/them/their/those" or the second-person pronouns "you/your/yours" because he can no longer have confidence that those represent accurately the meaning of the original. Maybe the original was plural ("their"), but then again maybe "their" is a gender-neutral substitute for a singular ("his"). Maybe the original was second person ("you"), but then again maybe "you" is a gender-neutral substitute for a third-person singular pronoun ("he") or a singular noun ("a man"). How can any ordinary English reader know? He can't. So no weight can be put on those pronouns. "He" in the NIV has become "we" or "you" or "they" in the TNIV hundreds and perhaps even thousands of times.

How many pronouns are thrown into doubt? The forms of "we/us/our/ourselves" occur 4,636 times, of "you/your/ yours/ yourselves" 21,205 times, and the forms of "they/them/their/ themselves/those" 19,372 times, for a total of 45,213 pronouns. How can we know which of these 45,213 are trustworthy, and which are the TNIV's gender-neutral substitutes for the correct translation "he/him/his"? The only way is to check the Hebrew and Greek text in each case, and who is going to do that? Can you really study, or memorize, or teach or preach from such a Bible where you can't trust this many pronouns?

Another measure of the extent of the changes comes from seeing that the TNIV has 1,826 more instances of second-person pronouns such as "you/your/yours/yourself" than were in the NIV. Did 1,826 new examples of second-person verbs and pronouns suddenly appear in the original Hebrew and Greek texts? No, most of these are gender-neutral substitutes for the objectionable words "he/him/his," which were translated correctly in the NIV. And the TNIV has 2,321 more examples of forms of "they/them/their/those/themselves" than the NIV. Did 2,321 new examples of third-person plural verbs and pronouns suddenly appear in the original Hebrew and Greek texts? No, most of these again are gender-neutral substitutes for "he/ him/ his," which were translated correctly in the NIV. You can't trust

the pronouns in the TNIV. This is a deficiency so great as to render the TNIV unsuitable for widespread use in the church (Dr. Wayne Grudem, *The TNIV, A Critique*, unpublished essay.)

As Bible translations which are products of the dynamic equivalent theory of translation move ever further from its conservative use the church must ask to what extent such translations are providing the Word of God, and to what extent they are providing a committee's perception of what the Word of God should be. Should the church be teaching catechumens translations of the Bible which wander away from the actual Hebrew and Greek words? Certainly not.

Many translations based on the dynamic equivalent theory of translation may be used as examples of how a particular verse "could be" interpreted. However, due to the interpretation already included in the translation, other interpretations are excluded. Why? Because the translators used a "preemptive interpretive strike" (Ryken 289) which prevents the reader from going in any direction other than the one the translator has already chosen for that verse.

The TNIV does not meet the criteria needed for a trustworthy translation of God's Word for the teaching and edification of the Christian church. It takes liberties with the actual words of the Bible and gives instead what the translators believe is the "intended meaning." This serves as a filter, keeping the reader from truly reading God's Word in its fullness and clarity.

The crucial question that should govern translation is what the original authors actually wrote, not our speculations over how they should express themselves today or how we would express the content of the Bible (Ryken, 100).

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The Christian And End of Life Decisions

by Mark Rogers

“What man can live and not see death, or save himself from the power of the grave?” (Psalm 48:48) In light of this truth Rev. Robert Fleischmann, Director of Christian Life Resources, reminds us that we should “Prepare for death as one would prepare for any expected visitor.”¹

Both clergy and lay people need to believe in God’s promises of forgiveness and eternal life through Jesus Christ. Such spiritual preparation is the most important preparation we can make. Unfortunately many of our parishioners and perhaps even many of us pastors have not dealt with the temporal issues surrounding our own death, issues such as medical treatment, wills, insurance and other end of life matters. Many of us are not as prepared as we ought to be.

At a doctor’s visit in 1994 I had blood withdrawn for a Complete Blood Count Test (CBC). It is a test in which all of your cell counts are taken. My platelet count was 1.8 million. A normal count is 300,000. The doctor said I could have a form of leukemia or I might have Thrombocytopenia, an illness in which the bone marrow makes too many platelets. I found out that I had the latter illness and have been able to control it ever since with medication. During the time that I waited for the results of my bone marrow test I was depressed. I prayed. I put it in the Lord’s hands but I didn’t seek the help of my fellow Christians as I should have. I didn’t have a will, a living will or durable power of attorney for health care.

How would you handle it if the doctor told you tomorrow that you have a terminal illness? How would you proceed with medical decisions if you or a loved one were seriously ill? What if you or a loved one were diagnosed as being in a Persistent Vegetative State (PVS)? When does withholding treatment and/or food and hydration constitute homicide? When does it reflect responsible care?

In this paper I will present a brief overview of the euthanasia

debate including a summary of current ethical systems used for making end of life decisions. Next I will discuss Scriptural definitions of life and death and Scriptural principles for making end of life decisions. After that I will look at the issues of personal preparation for the end of life, pastoral counseling for the dying and general Christian care of the dying.

A Historical Perspective on Euthanasia

The term euthanasia means “good death”. Practically speaking it means to cause the death of another person because they or someone else considers their life no longer to be worth living. A host of terms have been coined when speaking of euthanasia. When the person gives their consent it is called voluntary euthanasia and without their consent it is called non-voluntary euthanasia. Active euthanasia involves someone taking active steps to cause the death of another person. Passive euthanasia consists of the withdrawal or withholding of medical treatment or food and water which leads to the person’s death.² The term “assisted suicide” refers to a person taking their own life with the assistance of another person.³ Some might argue that we as Christians can accept passive euthanasia since this does not involve taking active steps to end a person’s life. But if the sole aim of refusing or withholding treatment is to cause the death of a person there is no real difference between this passive form of euthanasia and active euthanasia. The withdrawal or withholding of futile treatment is not passive euthanasia in a strict sense but rather responsible care for the patient. We shall consider examples of this later.

The practice of euthanasia is not new. In 1 Samuel 31 we read of King Saul falling on his sword after being severely wounded in battle against the Philistines. Saul’s poor example influenced his armor-bearer to commit suicide. 2 Samuel 1 tells us that a young Amalekite came to David and revealed that he had come upon Saul as he was dying. Saul pleaded with him for help in ending his life. The Amalekite told David, “So I stood over him and killed him, because I knew that after he had fallen he could not survive” (2 Samuel 1:10).

The Hippocratic Oath, an oath developed in ancient Greece and attributed to Hippocrates (460-377 B.C.) states, "I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody if asked for it, nor will I make a suggestion to this effect."⁴ Author Ludwig Edelstein, who has translated and researched the Hippocratic Oath, credits the Pythagoreans with its composition. He claims that opposition to euthanasia was peculiar to the Pythagoreans in Greek society. They viewed suicide as a sin against the gods. He says that suicide was common in antiquity and not considered disgraceful if there was a good reason for it.⁵

What of the practice of euthanasia in our modern era? In 1919 a French doctor by the name of Binet-Sangle advocated the establishment of suicide centers in France.⁶ In Germany Alfred Hoch and Karl Binding wrote a book in 1920, *Permission to Destroy Life Unworthy of Life*, in which they advocated euthanizing the mentally retarded and mentally ill.⁷ Such thinking set the stage for the atrocities of the Nazis. It is estimated that Hitler's regime put to death 80,000-100,000 mentally ill people and killed 5,000 institutionalized children.⁸

The push to legalize euthanasia picked up momentum in the 1930s. Several well known celebrities including George Bernard Shaw, Bertrand Russell and H.G. Wells joined together to found the Voluntary Euthanasia Society in England in 1935. In 1936 a bill was submitted to the House of Lords which would have permitted euthanasia in cases of terminal illness. The bill failed. King George V, who was terminally ill, was euthanized that same year with the consent of his wife Queen Mary.⁹

The nation of Uruguay has the most permissive laws as a country on euthanasia. Since 1933 the law there says that if a homicide is committed out of compassion at the victim's repeated request judges are allowed to forego punishing the perpetrator if that person has had no previous record.¹⁰

Euthanasia has been most widely practiced in Holland where it has been tolerated since 1973. In 1984 the Dutch Supreme Court decided that doctors could avoid prosecution for euthanasia if they met certain criteria and submitted a report to the Dutch Department of Justice for review.¹¹ Dr. Herbert Hendin, an American physician, has studied the practice of euthanasia in Holland. He cites the

Rommelink Report, a study done for the Royal Dutch Medical Association. In the study 20,000 cases of euthanasia were examined. In 5,000 cases competent patients were not consulted before they were killed by the doctor.¹²

Euthanasia was legalized in Holland by vote of the Dutch Parliament in November 2000 and the Dutch Senate in April 2001.¹³ The Euthanasia and Assisted Suicide Act took effect on April 1, 2002.¹⁴

Two modern protagonists of euthanasia in our country are Derek Humphry and Dr. Jack Kevorkian. Derek Humphry worked as a journalist in England in the 1970s. His wife Jean developed bone cancer and in 1975 the couple procured some pills from a doctor with which she could end her life. Within 50 minutes of taking the pills Jean died. Derek wrote a book about their experience in 1978 entitled *Jean's Way*. In 1980 he founded the Hemlock Society. In 1981 he wrote his first book promoting euthanasia and assisted suicide entitled *Let Me Die Before I Wake*. The book sold 130,000 copies. Humphry's book *Final Exit* came out in 1991. In that book he sets forth practical methods for ending one's life. *Final Exit* spent 18 weeks on the New York Times list of top selling books.¹⁵ He says, "All I ask of persons to whom any form of euthanasia is morally repugnant is tolerance and understanding of the feelings of others who want the right to choose what happens to their bodies in a free society. To every person their own way of death."¹⁶ When asked if he would consider taking his own life if faced with a terminal illness Humphry says, "I'll wait and see. If my dying is bearable, the pain being well managed, and my self-control and dignity are not damaged, then I shall hang on and die naturally. But if I am one of the unlucky few who suffer abysmally, then I shall make a quick exit."¹⁷

Dr. Jack Kevorkian began to view euthanasia as an option when he was doing his internship in the late 1950's in Michigan. He witnessed the severe suffering of a woman who was dying of cancer. He says:

"The patient was a helplessly immobile woman of middle age, her entire body jaundiced to an intense yellow-brown, skin stretched paper-thin over a fluid-filled abdomen swollen to four

or five times normal size. The rest of her was an emaciated skeleton: sagging, discolored skin covered her bones like a cheap, wrinkled frock. The poor wretch stared up at me with yellow eyeballs sunken in their atrophic sockets. Her yellow teeth were ringed by chapping and parched lips to form an involuntary, almost sardonic 'smile' of death. It seemed as though she was pleading for help and death at the same time. Out of sheer empathy alone I could have helped her die with satisfaction. From that moment on, I was sure that doctor-assisted euthanasia and suicide are and always were ethical, no matter what anyone says or thinks."¹⁸

While still a resident at the University of Michigan Medical Center Kevorkian became enamored with the concept of signing up death row inmates as organ donors, the idea being that their organs would be harvested while under general anesthesia. In October 1958 he met with Warden Ralph Alvis of the Ohio State Penitentiary and was allowed to speak with a couple of death row inmates who expressed their willingness to suffer a more productive death rather than the electric chair. He wrote an essay entitled *Capital Punishment or Capital Gain* which he delivered to the American Association for the Advancement of Science in Washington, D.C. in December 1958. He was subsequently forced to leave the University of Michigan Medical Center and continued his residency at Pontiac General Hospital.¹⁹

With the "termination" of the death penalty in the early 70's Kevorkian's crusade for death row organ donors ground to a halt only to be resurrected with the execution of Gary Gilmore in 1977. His efforts in this field of endeavor produced no fruit.

In the early 1980's Kevorkian began planning to assist people in committing suicide. In 1987 he began contacting oncologists offering his services. He also took out ads in local papers.²⁰ Dr. Kevorkian considered the use of carbon monoxide first but then invented the "Mercitron" in 1989, a machine which allowed the patient to control a trigger that administered thiopental, a medication that rendered the person unconscious, and which then would be followed up 60 seconds later with potassium chloride, a medicine which stops the heart from beating. On June 4, 1990 he utilized the Mercitron for the first time on Janet Adkins, a woman from Portland, Oregon

who was suffering with Alzheimer's Disease.²¹ Between 1990 and 1999 he assisted 130 people in committing suicide. He stepped over the line in 1999 when he directly injected the medication into Thomas Youk, a man suffering with Lou Gehrig's Disease (ALS). Dr. Kevorkian was sentenced to life in prison.²²

Between 1990 and 1996 16 state legislatures in the United States considered bills permitting physician assisted suicide.²³ They all failed. But in 1994 the efforts of the Hemlock Society and others led to the introduction of Measure 16, the "Death With Dignity Act" which was approved by 51% of Oregon voters. Implementation was delayed by the court system. It was voted on again in 1997 and approved by 60% of the voters. The law was implemented on January 1, 1998.²⁴ The law permits physician assisted suicide for patients with less than six months to live. The patient must request it three times, receive a second opinion from another doctor and then wait 15 days to allow time to reconsider. The first year 16 people were assisted with suicide. In 1999 the number rose to 27 and in 2001 a total of 90 people used it.²⁵

Nigel Cameron, a professor at Trinity International University in Deerfield, IL, spoke at the Christian Life Resources 2003 Clearly Caring Medical Ethics Seminar. He offered some perspective on where society has been and where it is going with regard to life issues. He speaks of the historical progress of the issue as "Bioethics 1, 2 and 3". He lists the issues of abortion, euthanasia and other traditional life issues under "Bioethics 1". Those issues arose after WWII and continue to challenge us. In recent years the issues of "Bioethics 2" have come to the fore, namely the possibilities arising from manipulating life including cloning and genetics. In the future Cameron sees challenges arising from the combining of machines with man (nanotechnology, cybernetics and artificial intelligence).²⁶ Perhaps the future will be even more confusing than it is today for us in terms of bioethics in general and end of life decisions in particular.

Arguments For Euthanasia

Why choose suicide or euthanasia? A number of arguments

might be cited. *Primary* among them is **the claim of patient autonomy**. The idea is that the patient has the right to determine the course their life is to take and how it will end. As Christians we would say that underlying this motivation is the desire to remove God and put ourselves on the throne of our life.

Secondly people argue for euthanasia as **a solution to the problem of fear**. Joni Eareckson Tada illustrates this motive with the story of Ken Bergstedt. Ken was ventilator dependent and wheel chair bound. He relied on his father to care for him. When his father's health began to fail his fear of being without a care giver led him to opt for suicide.²⁷

A *third* argument for euthanasia and suicide is **the issue of pain management**. Jean Humphry's severe unmanaged pain led her to seek help from her doctor and her husband in committing suicide. Unrelieved suffering is the primary reason for euthanasia requests according to Dr. David Cundiff, a hospice physician.²⁸

Dr. Cundiff cites **"poor psycho-social support"** as a *fourth* reason for euthanasia and suicide.²⁹ If a person lacks the support of family, friends, church and pastor the burden of bearing their illness alone can be too much. In our day it is not uncommon for families to view their terminally ill as a burden to get rid of. Some patients come to view euthanasia or suicide as a duty by which they relieve their families of the burden of caring for them.

A *fifth* argument for euthanasia is the **desire of care givers to show compassion**. In 1985 Dr. John Kraai of Rochester, New York administered a lethal dose of insulin to an 81 year old nursing home patient who was suffering from Alzheimer's and gangrene of the feet. He had known the patient for years and felt compelled to relieve the person's suffering.³⁰

A *sixth* argument that has been cited is the view that **the United States Constitution guarantees the right to privacy**. This concept under girded the decision of the Supreme Court in the Roe vs. Wade Case which legalized abortion in 1973.³¹

Finally it has been argued that **euthanasia is a partial solution to the problem of out of control medical expenses**. Some years ago Governor Lamm of Colorado publicly said that for economic reasons we should ration health care and encourage euthanasia for

the elderly and others who are incapacitated in nursing homes.³² Dr. Kenneth Stevens, a member of Physicians for Compassionate Care Education Foundation, a pro-life organization, serves as a professor at the Oregon Health Sciences University (OHSU) in Portland, Oregon. He cites an example of the high cost of health care where he works. In one year five patients at the OHSU Hospital required an anti-bleeding drug called Novo 7. The drug cost \$400,000 per patient for a total cost of \$1.9 million. The hospital decided not to use that drug again.³³

Ethical Systems

At this point we will briefly consider the ethical standards that are being discussed and debated in our society. Ethics are standards for conduct and moral judgments.³⁴

I am indebted to Professor Wayne Mueller of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary for his paper *The Bible and Bioethics – Dealing with the Problems of Modern Medicine*. In that paper he summarizes the two main systems of ethics that are used today.

The first system is **Deontological Ethics**. The name comes from the Greek word *deon* which means “duty” and the word *logos* which means “reasoning” or “word”. This system of ethics proposes that we judge whether an action is right or wrong based on our duty to a principle. Within this system of ethics are two main subsystems, Emotivism and Voluntarism. Emotivism establishes duty on the basis of emotional reasoning. Voluntarism, the more conservative form, looks to moral rules or laws that have been formulated to some degree outside of the individual.

Within the subset of Voluntarism is the Autonomistic form of ethics. It says that each person, and not God, makes rules for themselves. However the rules must be capable of being applied to all people equally. So this form denies absolute autonomy.

A second subset of Voluntarism is the Positivistic form of ethics. This is the system that many if not most in the medical profession use. Positivism holds that whatever the government, institution, profession or system decides is right is what we go by.

A third form of Voluntarism is Legalism. Legalism is the

form of ethics that conservative Protestants generally follow. Mueller cites Paul Ramsey as a proponent of this form of ethics.³⁵ While we as confessional Lutherans would agree with many of the conclusions of Legalism, Mueller reminds us of the fatal flaw of Legalism, namely that it fails to recognize faith as the proper motivation behind observing Biblical principles.³⁶ He says, "... the deontological model does not necessarily insure a biblical or Christian approach to decision making...This is Christian ethics only if the individual exercising his rights is a Christian making his decisions on the basis of God's will."³⁷

The other main system of ethics today is **Teleological Ethics**, from the Greek word *telos* (goal) and *logos* (reasoning). This form of ethics takes the position that the end justifies the means. According to this view what is morally right is decided on the basis of the goal which is sought.³⁸

Many Roman Catholic ethicists follow a form of this called "Natural Law Ethics" or "Prudential Personalism". Under this system Legalism in the form of Aquinas' natural law concept is combined with the teleological concept of focusing on the goal. The total depravity of man is denied. Although man has laws from God he has freedom to interpret and apply then using the intelligence and freedom God has given him even in his fallen state. Within the Roman Catholic Church there are those that follow another form of ethics called "Proportionalism". Unlike Prudential Personalism Proportionalism rejects any absolute laws or principles.

The most popular form of Teleological Ethics today is "Consequentialism". It is the purest form of Teleological Ethics as it truly removes any absolutes from moral decision making. This system is also called "Utilitarianism" since it makes rules on the basis of the usefulness or utility of bringing good from the action. The "Christianized" version of this form of ethics was formulated by Joseph Fletcher in the 1960s and is called "Situational Ethics" or "Act Utilitarianism". Mueller summarizes Fletcher's approach: "Each act in its own circumstances and with its own consequences may demand a different moral response imposed by the highest law of love."³⁹

Defining Life and Death

Before we consider a Christian approach to ethical decisions regarding the end of life we need to define life and death.

As we consider the beginning of life we need to keep some terms in mind. A “zygote” is a fertilized egg. Once cell division begins the zygote is referred to as a “blastocyst”. After the blastocyst has implanted in the uterus it is called an “embryo”.⁴⁰

We usually say that life begins at conception, the zygote stage. Not all Christian ethicists, even conservatives, would agree completely with that statement. Professor Gilbert Meilaender of Valparaiso University believes that personhood occurs in the developing embryo at about two weeks of age. He cites the fact that twinning can occur up to 14 days after fertilization. Meilaender still sees abortion as wrong yet using his definition it would be morally right to intervene medically in the case of a rape to prevent the implantation of the blastocyst.⁴¹

Lest we think that such thinking is odd for a conservative Christian ethicist consider the fact that Thomas Aquinas, looking back to Aristotle’s idea of “quickening”, believed that the soul entered the body of boys at 40 days of development in utero while the soul entered girls at 60 days of development.⁴²

When does life begin? Scripture indicates that life begins at conception. In Psalm 51:5 David says, “Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.” This verse does not directly say that human life begins at conception. However it does say that the conceptus is a responsible moral agent. Rev. Robert Fleishmann, Director of the Christian Life Resources, comments:

“Human life derives its unique value from its Creator and its endowment with a soul. Indication of a soul is its accountability for sin. Absent of that accountability the life lacks its unique value. Because of the serious nature of sin and it’s eternal consequences a presumption of life is necessary where there exists even the remotest possibility that human life is present.”⁴³

Note that Fleischmann reminds us of a compelling reason other than the Fifth Commandment for not aborting children. He reminds us

that if we destroy the body of the child we have also destroyed his/her soul's opportunity for fellowship with the Lord and sentenced them to eternal damnation.

Fleischman offers two succinct criteria for the existence of life. He says, "Human life exists when it: 1. contains the unique genetic composition of a human being; and 2. it is in a state of biological development that if placed in its natural environment and permitted to proceed without interruption, it would mature as a human being."⁴⁴ Rev. Lemke also says, "At each stage after fertilization of the egg, this developing new life has a human identity by virtue of its DNA, and is obviously alive according to any common sense definition."⁴⁵

Life begins at conception. When does it end? 150 years ago death would have been determined using two criteria, blood flow and breathing. Should you become unconscious your family or companions would put their ear near your chest to listen for breathing and heart beat. Absent those indications you were considered dead. Because such methods are imprecise people were at times buried alive.⁴⁶

The development of the respirator and dialysis machines following WWII necessitated a better definition of death. A group of doctors met at Harvard in 1968 and came up with four criteria: "1. Unreceptivity and unresponsivity (no reaction to stimuli); 2. No movements or breathing; 3. No reflexes; 4. Flat electroencephalogram (no brain wave activity)." They used the term "irreversible coma" to describe death.⁴⁷

In 1981 President Reagan convened the President's Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Medicine and Biomedical and Behavioral Research. The Commission found the Harvard criteria to be reliable but considered the term "irreversible coma" as misleading. A person in a coma still has brain function. Two criteria were proposed for determining death: "1. An individual with irreversible cessation of circulatory and respiratory functions is dead." and "2. An individual with irreversible cessation of all functions of the entire brain, including the brainstem, is dead."⁴⁸ The cerebrum or upper brain is the portion of the brain that controls our higher functions such as memory, learning and emotion. The

medulla oblongata is part of the lower brain and regulates heart beat, swallowing and breathing. According to the President's Commission death does not occur when the upper brain alone ceases to function but rather when the lower brain ceases to function as well. This is called "whole brain death". The Uniform Determination of Death Act (UDDA) arose from this commission.⁴⁹

How does the Bible define death? Physical death, according to Scripture, is the separation of soul and body. In John 19:30 when our Lord died John says, "He bowed His head and gave up His spirit." Solomon wrote in Ecclesiastes 12:7, "And the dust returns to the ground it came from, and the spirit returns to God Who gave it." Christ came to set us free from death. While many in our world see death as natural, an ordinary part of existence, God's Word tells us that death is an enemy which Christ has defeated (1 Corinthians 15:26).

Scriptural Principles Relating to the End of Life

The *first* principle that Scripture gives us with regard to life decisions is that **God is the Author of Life and therefore we are subject to His authority**. The Lord said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). The Lord's creative work continues today. David says, "For you created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb" (Psalm 139:13). Human life according to Scripture has absolute or intrinsic value. The view that life has absolute or intrinsic value is referred to as the "quantitative" view of life. Society, by contrast, generally values life from a "qualitative" point of view, how well a person can function mentally and physically. Rev. Robert Fleischmann explains:

"Sin made us unable to please God and earned for us only a justly deserved condemnation in hell. God, however, placed upon man an 'absolute' value. In ethical circles we would call this the quantitative value of human life. Despite the depravity of man before the sinless God there was nevertheless an absolute value that sustained God's love and commitment to us...God so values human life that He did not pick the healthy, wealthy and wise as the objects of His salvation. Nor did He pick the poor and unfortunate. The sacrifice He made for sin was universal..."

Society today approaches life from a qualitative perspective. It compares lives and makes judgments over which life is of a higher quality and which is of a lower quality.”⁵⁰

The value of a person’s life is not to be assessed by their ability to be independent and take care of themselves, nor by their ability to see, hear or reason. A person’s life has absolute value because they are created by the Lord.

Since the Lord is the Creator He alone has the authority to take life. He says, “You shall not murder” (Exodus 20:13). “See now that I Myself am He! There is no god besides Me. I put to death and I bring to life, I have wounded and I will heal, and no one can deliver out of My hand” (Deuteronomy 32:39). Job also says, “Man’s days are determined; You have decreed the number of his months and have set limits he cannot exceed” (Job 14:5).

Life is so precious that the Lord prescribes the death penalty for those who murder. When the Lord made his covenant with Noah following the Flood He said, “Whoever sheds the blood of man, by man shall his blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made man” (Genesis 9:6; see also Romans 13:4).

Since God is the Creator we as human beings are not autonomous but are subject to His authority. The Lord holds us accountable to Himself, body and soul. When Isaac grew old and desired to give Esau his blessing he told him, “I am now an old man and don’t know the day of my death” (Genesis 27:2). Isaac recognized that his life was in the Lord’s hands. So our children sing, “He’s got the whole world in his hands.” Therefore euthanasia or suicide is an act of rebellion against the Lord’s control.

The Lord’s authority over our lives is not exercised in a domineering tyrannical way but in love. This brings up a second principle from Scripture, namely that **the Lord is concerned about us in life and death and that through Christ we can seek His help.**

King Asa of Judah (911-870 B.C.), grandson of Rehoboam, offers us a negative example. During his reign he trusted not in the Lord but in his alliance with King Ben-Hadad of Aram. When confronted with the illness that led to his death we read, “In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his

feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians. Then in the forty-first year of his reign Asa died and rested with his fathers” (2 Chronicles 16:12-13).

We see a positive role model in King Hezekiah of Judah (715-686 B.C.). 2 Kings 20 tells us that he was near death, suffering from a boil. The Lord sent Isaiah to him to say, “This is what the Lord says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.” Hezekiah then turned to the Lord in prayer, “Remember, O Lord, how I have walked before You faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in Your eyes.” Then the Lord told Hezekiah, “I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you” (2 Kings 20:1-2, 5).

The Lord invites us to bring our needs to Him. “Call upon Me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me” (Psalm 50:15). It is through Christ that we are able to draw near to the throne of God’s grace. The writer of Hebrews encourages us,

“Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, His body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water” (Hebrews 10:19-22).

The Lord is concerned about us and promises His presence with us even when the time of our death draws near. David writes, “Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me” (Psalm 23:4).

The psalmist assures us “Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.” (Psalm 116:15). A beautiful example of this is seen in the death of Moses. The Lord took him up on Mt. Nebo and showed him the Promised Land. Then we are told, “And Moses the servant of the Lord died there in Moab, as the Lord had said. He buried him in Moab, in the valley opposite Beth Peor, but to this day no one knows where his grave is” (Deuteronomy 34:5-6). What

wondrous love! The Almighty God takes the breathless clay of His servant Moses and gives him Christian burial.

A *third* principle of Scripture is that **faith is the foundation and only proper motivation for Christian decision making**. Scripture reminds us, “And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him.” Commenting on this truth the Formula of Concord says:

“For works which belong to the maintenance of outward discipline and which unbelievers and the unconverted are also able and required to perform, are indeed praiseworthy in the sight of the world, and even God will reward them with temporal blessings in this world, but since they do not flow from true faith, they are sinful (that is, spattered with sins in the sight of God), and God regards them as sin and impure because of our corrupted nature and because the person is not reconciled with God.”⁵¹

Rev. Wayne Mueller concludes, “Even when philosophic ethics leads a doctor, nurse, patient or family to make a decision identical to that which a Christian makes, the action of the unbeliever will be unethical in the eyes of God.”⁵²

Through faith the Christian is able to make not only decisions which are morally correct but which are also God pleasing. The power for proper decision making comes from the Lord. He tells us, “I am the Vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5). Apart from Christ we can do nothing and we are without any power to please God but Scripture reminds us “If anyone is in Christ, He is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Faith always looks to God’s Word for guidance in decision making. It is important that we have a settled conscience before we decide on a course of action. In Romans 14 Paul speaks about the strong and weak with regard to the eating of food and worshipping on a particular day. Jews and Gentiles worshipped together in Rome. For many of the Jews it may have bothered their conscience to eat food that was unclean according to the Ceremonial Law and

likewise it may have bothered them not to observe the Sabbath Day. Paul warns the believers about judging one another on disputable matters. He also speaks about the importance of not acting against one's conscience. "Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves. But the man who has doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and everything that does not come from faith is sin" (Romans 14:22-23). Based on this passage Rev. Wayne Mueller concludes:

"Because of the bewildering complication of some biomedical situations and because of the many moral commands to weigh and evaluate, the conscience of those we counsel will often be in doubt. What makes it more difficult is that we as counselors may ourselves have some doubt about what is the best thing to do. But if we are not sure that what we are doing is right, we should not proceed."⁵³

Acting in faith with a scripturally informed conscience is critical as we make decisions regarding end of life issues.

A *fourth* principle that Scripture gives us is that **Christians are to bear the burdens of those in need**. On Maundy Thursday the Lord told the disciples, "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another" (John 13:34). So Paul writes, "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:2). We see this injunction fulfilled in the church of Jerusalem. Luke tells us that the believers would sell property, the proceeds of which were then used to help those in need (Acts 4:34).

The special responsibility we have of taking care of our blood relatives is emphasized by Paul in 1 Timothy 5:8: "If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." We as Christians are a spiritual family. Collectively we form the body of Christ, the Church. Paul says, "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it" (1 Corinthians 12:27).

But how often have we ourselves said or heard others say, "I don't want to be a burden on anyone." In light of the Scriptural truth that we are the body of Christ, called to love one another, Gilbert Meilaender concludes, "That others within the Body should burden

us and that we should burden them is right and proper.”⁵⁴ We live as people in community and are called to care for one another. LSQ 46: 4

Application of Scriptural Principles

In light of the scriptural prohibition against murder we must conclude *first* of all that **both active measures taken to end life as well as refusing life sustaining treatment with the aim of causing death are sinful**. I don't believe there would be any dispute in our circles regarding the sinfulness of taking active steps to end a person's life. When it comes to not providing treatment there are undoubtedly going to be areas of disagreement.

Two terms, “aim” and “result,” help us to clarify the issue. “Aim” refers to the intention of the action or inaction. The “result” is what actually happens. Two patients with the same illness and prognosis refuse treatment. Both die. The result is the same. But there may be a difference in aim. Let us suppose that the first patient refuses treatment because such treatment will not help prolong their life. It will only add to their pain and suffering. The second patient may refuse treatment with the specific aim of hastening their death.

In 1971 a baby afflicted with Down's Syndrome was born at Johns Hopkins Medical Center. The child had an intestinal blockage that precluded normal feeding. The baby's parents refused to grant permission for surgery. No further treatment was given. After two weeks the child died of starvation and dehydration. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations of the LC-MS comments:

“The story of this infant serves as a reminder of the fact that the morality of an act, whether of commission or omission, depends on what is intended as well as on what is done or not done. Just as ‘pulling the plug’ may not be euthanasia even though a specific action has been taken, so the failure to do something, sheer passivity, may well be an act of unjustified killing belonging to the category of homicide.”⁵⁵

A *second* application of scriptural principles is that we recognize that **when the body is clearly failing and there is no hope of recovery we may refrain from futile medical treatment**. Principle 3 of Christian Care at Life's End says, “When the God-given

powers of the body to sustain its own life can no longer function and doctors in their professional judgment conclude that there is no real hope for recovery even with life-support instruments, a Christian may in good conscience ‘let nature take its course.’”⁵⁶ The National Conference of Catholic Bishops offers similar counsel:

“In the final stage of dying, one is not obligated to prolong the life of a patient by every possible means. When inevitable death is imminent in spite of the means used, it is permitted in conscience to make the decision to refuse forms of treatment that would only secure a precarious and burdensome prolongation of life, so long as the normal care due the sick person in similar cases is not interrupted.”⁵⁷

Consider this example. A man is in Critical Care on a ventilator. Sclerosis of the liver has caused his liver to shut down. The administration of IV fluids is causing him to fill up with fluid as his kidneys have also ceased to function. Kidney dialysis treatment would relieve the water retention problem and possibly prolong the man’s life. The fact that his liver has failed and shows no sign of change after several days of supportive care indicates that dialysis would be a futile treatment since it will only extend his life briefly.

Gilbert Meilaender offers a pertinent analogy from David Smith’s book *Health and Medicine in the Anglican Community*:

“A couple invite friends to dinner. Food and drink are pleasant; the conversation bubbles. The good host is hospitable and courteous to his guest, no matter what his shifts in mood. But there comes a time when the party ‘winds down’ – a time to acknowledge that the evening is over. At that point, not easily determined by clock, conversation or basal metabolism, the good host does not press his guest to stay but lets him go. Indeed he may have to signal that it is acceptable to leave. A good host will never be sure of his timing and will never kick out his guest. His jurisdiction over the guest is limited to taking care and permitting departure.”⁵⁸

Determinations regarding treatment need to be made on a case by case basis.

The terms “ordinary care” and “extraordinary care” are sometimes used with reference to this issue. The CTCR offers this

definition of ordinary care:

“Ordinary means are usually described as those measures which can be taken on the basis of the judgment that there is demonstrable or recognizable proportion between the good effect sought and the degree of hurt or hardship involved in their use. They comprise all the help a patient can obtain and undergo without imposing an excessive burden on himself and others. They are considered to be imperative for sustaining of life and are not, therefore, refusable.”⁵⁹

The CTCR defines extraordinary care as “artificial means to prolong a patient’s life once his vital processes have ceased their spontaneous functions.”⁶⁰ Four factors need to be taken into consideration:

- a. When irreversibility is established by more than one physician.
- b. When a moment in the process of dying has been reached where nothing remains for medical science to do except to offer proper care;
- c. When possible treatment involves grave burdens to oneself and to others;
- d. When there are no means left to relieve pain and no hope of recovery remains.”⁶¹

Care that would be considered ordinary in one case could be extraordinary in another.

A *third* application of scriptural principles is that **it is permissible to provide pain medication even at the risk of causing death in a terminally ill patient since the aim is not the death of the patient but pain control.** Solomon writes, “Give beer to those who are perishing, wine to those who are in anguish; let them drink and forget their poverty and remember their misery no more” (Proverbs 31:6-7).

Between 1989 and 1994 a study of terminally ill patients called “Study to Understand Prognoses and Preferences for Outcomes and Risks of Treatments” (SUPPORT) was conducted. The study cited a lack of communication between patients and doctors with regard

to their care. Dr. Joanne Lynn studied the findings of the report and discovered that four out of ten elderly and seriously ill patients who were conscious during the last three days prior to death suffered from severe pain most of the time.⁶²

Hospice physician Dr. David Cundiff commends the effectiveness of pain control efforts in the hospice system of Great Britain. 80% of patients live pain free or suffer only mild pain. 20% have moderate pain. Only about one in 100 continues to have poorly controlled pain in spite of the best efforts of medical personnel.⁶³ Pain control medications range from mild medicines such as aspirin or acetaminophen to morphine, a derivative of opium. Pain medicine should not be given reactively, merely to bring pain under control but proactively, to prevent cycles of severe pain and relief from occurring.⁶⁴

Perhaps the most controversial issue with regard to caring for the sick and those near the end of life is the issue of food and hydration. There are two valid reasons for not providing tube feeding or hydration to a patient. **Tube feeding and hydration may be discontinued or refused when death due to other causes is judged to be near at hand and that the cause of death will not be starvation or dehydration due to the withholding of food and hydration.** The Wisconsin Power of Attorney For Health Care – Christian Version allows the patient to mark yes or no with regard to giving their health care agent the authority to remove or withhold a feeding tube. It says, “My health care agent may not have orally ingested nutrition or hydration withheld or withdrawn from me unless provision of the nutrition or hydration is medically contraindicated.”⁶⁵

The addendum to the Wisconsin Power of Attorney For Health Care adds these two provisos:

“1. I believe that nutrition and hydration are basic human needs which should be provided to me even though providing them may require medical expertise and technology.

2. If I have checked “Yes” to the “Withhold or withdraw a feeding tube” option in the “PROVISION OF FEEDING TUBE” section of the Power of Attorney for Health Care Document, then a feeding tube may only be withheld or withdrawn from

me if:

- a. I have an incurable terminal illness or injury where I am in the final stage of dying, and it is medically certain that my death will occur within hours or a few days, and
- b. The withholding or withdrawal of the feeding tube would not result in my death from malnutrition or dehydration, or complications of malnutrition or dehydration, rather than from my underlying terminal illness or injury.⁷⁶⁶

Poor quality of life is often the argument that is used to deny artificial feeding and hydration. Those who are in a Persistent Vegetative State (PVS) are prime examples. On March 31, 2005 41 year old Terri Schiavo died. This concluded a nearly seven year battle by her husband Michael to have artificial nutrition and hydration withdrawn from her. The feeding tube was withdrawn on March 18. Starvation and dehydration undoubtedly were the immediate causes of her demise.⁶⁷

Terri (Schindler) Schiavo struggled with weight issues her whole life. In 1981 during her senior year in high school she was 5 feet 3 inches tall and weighed 200 pounds. She went on a Nutrisystem diet and lost 55 pounds. She met Michael Schiavo at college in 1982. They were married in 1984. In 1989 while living in St. Petersburg, Florida they began seeking help with fertility issues. Terri may have had an eating disorder. At 5:30 a.m. on February 25, 1990 she collapsed in the hallway of her apartment and went into cardiac arrest. Paramedics and doctors succeeded in reviving her. After a coma lasting two and a half months she awoke and regained a sleep-wake cycle.⁶⁸ Dr. Jon Thogmartin, Medical examiner for Pinellas and Pasco Counties conducted her autopsy on April 1, 2005. He found that her brain weighed only 615 grams, half the weight to be expected for a female of her age, height and weight.⁶⁹ This was likely due in part to dehydration resulting from the removal of the feeding tube.

To his credit Terri's husband Michael diligently sought out treatment to help her regain consciousness. Michael was appointed by the court as Terri's legal guardian on June 18, 1990. In January 1991 she was admitted to the Mediplex Rehabilitation Center in

Bradenton, Florida. Michael would take her out regularly to parks and public places hoping to spark some recovery. In July 1991 Terri was transferred to Sable Palms Skilled Care Facility where she received neurological testing and regular speech and occupational therapy until 1994.⁷⁰

Michael began to date other women. At the time of Terri's death Michael was living with Jodi Centonze by whom he had two children. Beginning in May 1998 the long legal battle to have Terri's nutrition and hydration withdrawn began. Michael's relationship with Terri's parents soured. In March 2000 they challenged Michael's guardianship of Terri citing his relationships with other women and charging him with failure to provide proper care for Terri.⁷¹

On October 15, 2003 Terri's feeding tube was removed but this was declared unconstitutional in May 2004. The Florida Legislature subsequently passed "Terri's Law" enabling Governor Jeb Bush to have the tube reinserted. The U.S. Congress eventually became involved after the feeding tube was removed for the last time on March 18, 2005. They subpoenaed both Michael and Terri to testify with the purpose of preventing the removal of her feeding tube.⁷²

While Michael Schiavo's actions were in keeping with the civil law and acceptable medical practice were they scripturally defensible? No. The primary argument for removing the feeding tube was Terri's poor quality of life. Indeed she had a poor quality of life. Some doctors believe that she was in a Persistent Vegetative State (PVS). The American Medical Association defines this condition using the following criteria:

- “1. Chronic unconscious wakefulness without awareness, though wakefulness may be accompanied by opening of eyes, unintelligible sounds, movements of facial muscles, and even smiles.
2. Lack of intelligible speech and failure to comprehend others' words.
3. Inability to make purposeful or voluntary movements – movements made are reflex responses to external or unpleasant stimuli.

4. Lack of sustained visual and auditory responses to external stimuli. Some PVS patients may turn their heads or move their eyes toward sounds or moving objects, but these movements are brief reflex reactions that do not require upper-brain functioning.
5. Lack of bowel and bladder control.
6. Presence of non-neurological functions, such as the ability to swallow and digest food. [Terri could not swallow food.]
7. Ability to breathe independently.⁷⁷³

Terri did not suffer whole brain death. Her lower brain still regulated her heart beat and breathing. She had sleep/wake cycles. Bob Schindler Jr., Terri's brother, spoke at the Plaza Hotel in Eau Claire, WI on April 17, 2006. He ran a couple of minutes of video taken of Terri when her mother came to visit. Terri's facial expression clearly changed when her mother entered the room. Neurologists Rodney Dunaway, Lawrence Huntoon, Jacob Green and James Kelly signed affidavits claiming Terri was actually in a Minimally Conscious State (MCS).⁷⁴ Dr. Kelly, co-author of the research that defined this term says, "MCS is intended to describe someone who is in a higher state of neurocognitive functioning than Vegetative State (VS)."⁷⁵

Those who argue that Terri's tube feeding was an unnatural method of keeping her alive would probably have a different outlook if she had been higher functioning. In reality their argument for removing her feeding tube was based on her poor quality of life. As Christians we value life quantitatively and not qualitatively. God is the Creator who has made us. God loves each of us no matter what our quality of life so that Christ died for the whole world (1 John 2:2).

What was the aim in removing her feeding tube? It was for the purpose of causing her death and thus a violation of the Fifth Commandment. Gilbert Meilaender comments:

"Much of the time when we cease to provide nourishment for the permanently unconscious but biologically tenacious patient, we

will not be stopping treatment aimed at disease. We will simply be withholding the nourishment that sustains all human beings whether healthy or ill, and the only result of our action can be death. At what other than death, could we be aiming?"⁷⁶

In my research for this paper I contacted Christian Life Resources (CLR) by e-mail with a question regarding feeding and hydration for a patient who suffers from Alzeheimers. The scenario I proposed was that the patient is judged by doctors to be in the later stages of Alzeheimers. He has been unable to communicate but was able to walk and eat. One day he fell and broke his hip. Doctors successfully performed surgery. Following surgery the patient was unable to eat. My question to CLR was whether it was scripturally right not to provide artificial food and hydration. Program Administrator Paul Snamiska responded. He said, "Unless there was clear indication that God was taking this man's life in a fairly short amount of time, it would be inappropriate to deny a basic need such as food and water."⁷⁷

Snamiska suggested that those making end of life decisions follow these three steps: "1. Pray; 2. Ask Questions; 3. Make decisions that glorify God."⁷⁸ Prayer is our confession of powerlessness and of dependence on the Lord. We pray for the patient and the medical staff. We pray for wisdom in the decisions we make. We need to also ask questions to determine whether or not the withholding of food and hydration is going to be the direct cause of death. If so it would be wrong to withhold food and hydration. We should make decisions that glorify God. If it is clear that death is not imminent we then conclude that the Lord is not going to take the person's life so neither should we. Snamiska concludes,

"When a Christian family rallies to the support of a suffering loved one, it demonstrates our faith to the world and lets people know that we are different in a loving and trusting way. It is easy to terminate the life of a person who is suffering, but it takes extra effort and resources to say that God is in control and we will work to glorify Him through the process."⁷⁹

If death is imminent food and hydration may be withdrawn.
Food and hydration may also be withdrawn if its administration

harms rather than helps the patient. Earlier I mentioned a patient whose liver shut down due to sclerosis. He is on a ventilator. Liquids have been administered through IV but are pooling in his body because his kidneys are not functioning. Continued administration of fluid would harm and not help him. His liver is not functioning and death is imminent. Rita Mark of the International Anti-Euthanasia Task force says,

“A patient who is very close to death may be in such a condition that fluids would cause a great deal of discomfort or may not be assimilated by his body. Food may not be digested as the body begins ‘shutting down’ during the dying process. There comes a time when a person is truly, imminently dying.”⁸⁰

Views on the withholding of nutrition and hydration have changed dramatically in recent years. Debate surrounding the case of Nancy Cruzan, a woman who was in a Persistent Vegetative State from a 1983 car accident, led to the idea that removing food and hydration was acceptable. In 1988 a circuit court judge ruled that her parents could have her feeding tube removed. The attorney general of Missouri brought the case to the Missouri Supreme court which reversed the trial judge’s decision. Nancy’s parents took the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. In June 1990 the Court ruled that there was no convincing evidence that Nancy would have wanted the tube feeding stopped. On the basis of new evidence produced by Nancy’s parents the Missouri Circuit Court ruled that the feeding could be discontinued on December 14, 1990.⁸¹

In 1998 half of the states in the U.S. forbid the withholding of nutrition and hydration. By the year 2000 only three states, Kentucky, Missouri and North Dakota, still had restrictions. Thirty states permit the withholding of food and hydration and thirteen are silent on the matter. The state of Ohio does not allow withdrawal of food and hydration unless the patient has explicitly requested it and two doctors agree.⁸² We are certainly sliding down the slippery slope as a nation.

What about the use of other forms of treatment? We must consider the overall condition of the patient. Is their brain functioning or are they brain dead, that is, are both the upper and lower brain not

functioning? Is death due to the failure of some other organ in the body imminent so that the treatment would be futile? Quality of life must not be the supreme concern but rather faithfulness to the Lord Who alone has the right to end that person's life. If the aim of refusing treatment is to cause the death of the individual then the refusal to treat is a violation of the Fifth Commandment. Rev. John Zeidler offers a pertinent quote from Professor John Schuetze's *Pastoral Care for the Sick and Dying*:

When evaluating whether one should use extraordinary care, one has to weigh the benefits such treatment will hopefully provide with the possible risks and pain it will cause the patient. Performing triple by-pass surgery on a 65-year-old male with no other significant health problems would be considered an appropriate form of extraordinary care while doing the same procedure on a 45-year-old male with terminal cancer would probably be considered inappropriate. Trying to resuscitate someone who is suffering from a severe case of emphysema would be considered an inappropriate form of extraordinary care, since the person's lungs have been devastated by a deadly disease. However, performing CPR on someone with heart disease might be an appropriate application of extraordinary care, especially if there is reasonable expectation that the person's heart and lungs will be restored to their normal spontaneous functions."⁸³

There are no pat answers that can be given for every situation however there are general principles that the Lord gives us. We need to prayerfully follow them with the godly counsel of our fellow believers to assist us. Solomon reminds us, "Plans fail for lack of counsel but with many advisers they succeed" (Proverbs 15:22).

Personal Preparation for the End of Life

Next we shall consider some issues regarding personal preparation for the end of life. Most pressing of all is the need for a right relationship with the Lord. Paul exhorts us, "As God's fellow workers we urge you not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says, "In the time of my favor I heard you, and in the day of salvation I

helped you.” I tell you, now is the time of God’s favor, now is the day of salvation” (2 Corinthians 6:1-2).

As we find reconciliation with the Lord through faith in the Savior we also seek reconciliation with others. Our Lord says, “Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift” (Matthew 5:23-24). The writer of Hebrews reminds us, “Make every effort to live in peace with all men...” (Hebrews 12:14). So we should seek reconciliation with family and others whenever this is possible.

When the Lord told King Hezekiah of his death He said “Put your house in order” (2 Kings 20:1). So we as Christians should have our house in order. We need a properly prepared will. We need to make sure that beneficiary designations are up to date. Eight years ago I had a will prepared. I realized that my primary insurance policy listed my mother Ruth as one of the beneficiaries. The only problem is that my mother died in January 1981. For us Christians it is appropriate that we write down wishes regarding hymns and Scripture readings for our funeral. We should look at our funeral as the last opportunity we have to share our faith as we leave this world.

We also need to be prepared for the unforeseen medical issues that we may face in the future. The legal documents by which a person can make their wishes known regarding medical care in the event of incapacitation are referred to as “advance directives.” The “living will” has been in existence since 1976 when California became the first state in the nation to pass a law authorizing its use. The living will is a document which permits you to authorize the withholding or withdrawal of artificial life-support measures in the event of a debilitating or terminal illness.⁸⁴

During my Seminary training at Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne, IN part of our field work training included visiting people at The Lutheran Hospital. I was given a copy of the living will that they used at the hospital (ca. 1989). That version offered the following directives:

“If at any time I have an incurable injury, disease, or illness

certified in writing to be a terminal condition by my attending physician, and my attending physician has determined that my death will occur within a short period of time, and the use of life-prolonging procedures would serve only to artificially prolong the dying process, I direct that such procedures be withheld or withdrawn, and that I be permitted to die naturally with only the provision of appropriate nutrition and hydration and the administration of medication and the performance of any medical procedure necessary to provide me with comfort care or to alleviate pain.”⁸⁵

Individuals taking out such a will had to be 18 years old and the will needed to be signed and dated by two witnesses. I would say the provisions of that living will were in keeping with scriptural principles. That is undoubtedly not the case with all living wills.

The living will is not the best choice for an advance directive. Rev. John Ruege sums up the problem: “This may be an oversimplification, but the main objection to the living will is that it is an inflexible device.”⁸⁶ Medical personnel are bound to follow the letter of the living will. Unforeseen medical conditions may arise that the living will cannot properly address. The *Explanatory Supplement of the Wisconsin Power of Attorney For Health Care – Christian Version* also states,

“Living wills appear to have been promoted primarily by the Society for the Right to Die (now called “Concerned in Dying”), a pro-euthanasia organization. They provided samples of what were clearly ‘pro-death’ documents designed to allow people the ‘right’ to refuse potentially life-prolonging treatment or care in favor of life-shortening measures.”⁸⁷

The “durable power of attorney for health care” is the best option to choose as an advance directive. Phillip Williams explains the origin of this document. For centuries the “power of attorney” document has been used to appoint an agent to act on a person’s behalf with regard to financial matters. The term “durable” means that the agent is empowered to make decisions when the person they represent is incapable of making decisions themselves. By the year 2000 every state except Alabama had statutes in place permitting the appointment of a health care agent.⁸⁸

Obviously the agent should be someone who is in agreement with the patient's views on the administration and/or withdrawal of medical treatment. The agent needs to be of sound mind and capable of making difficult decisions under stress.

The *Wisconsin Power of Attorney For Health Care – Christian Version* allows the patient to decide if their agent has authority to admit them to a nursing home and whether nutrition or hydration can be removed in accordance with the limitations previously discussed. Choices regarding organ donation can be stipulated on the form. The document requires the agent to attempt to communicate with the patient in so far as is possible to discern their wishes.⁸⁹ The health care agent is prohibited by the document from admitting the patient to an institution for the treatment of mental illness or of authorizing “experimental mental health research or psychosurgery, electroconvulsive treatment or drastic mental health treatment procedures”.⁹⁰ In the event that the patient is pregnant the health care agent may not decide to withhold or withdraw treatment that would result in the patient's death. Even if the mother has suffered whole brain death her bodily functions are to be maintained until the child is born.⁹¹ In the year 1995 the states of Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Wisconsin all prohibited the withholding or withdrawal of medical treatment from a pregnant woman whose child is viable.⁹² I am not aware of changes to that position.

It is worth noting the principles enunciated in the addendum to the *Wisconsin Power of Attorney For Health Care* entitled “My Health Care Statement of Beliefs”:

“My philosophy regarding the health care decisions I would make, if I were able to participate in medical treatment decisions, is based on my belief in the inherent value of human life and that life is a gift from God. It is my desire that all reasonable efforts be made to sustain my life and health. I believe that death is the normal end of earthly life, and that God takes life by His decision. Therefore, I reject any attempt to end my life when God would sustain it, regardless of any diminished state of quality to my life, even if I have a disability. Similarly, I reject any attempt to lengthen my life when it is clear God intends to take it. I believe life begins at conception. Therefore, if I have been diagnosed as pregnant and my physician knows of this diagnosis, I request that every effort be made to save the life of

my unborn child in full recognition that two lives are at stake, both equal in value and worthy of protection.”⁹³

I would recommend that as pastors we encourage our people to contact Christian Life Resources for a copy of the Power of Attorney For Health Care document that is appropriate to their state. See the Address in the bibliography to this paper.

A few comments are in order regarding organ donation. There is no scriptural reason for not donating one’s organs. Certainly it is important that the donor be dead (whole brain death) before organs are harvested. Some have wondered if the donation of one’s heart was contrary to Scripture as the Scripture speaks of the heart as the seat of personality. Rev. Mueller answers this:

“Although the Bible often mentions ‘heart’ as a part of man’s personality, the seat of his emotions, the controller of his will, a place of knowledge and even the receptor organ for faith, it does not identify this with the organ in our chest which pumps blood to the rest of the body...to donate a heart or to receive a heart is morally little different than to lay down one’s body and life for another or to have another lay down his life for you.”⁹⁴

One community resource that our people need to be aware of is hospice care. Hospice care originated in London with the founding of St. Christopher’s by Dr. Cicely Saunders in 1967. The first hospice in the United States was set up by Florence Wald, the Dean of Nursing at Yale, in 1974.⁹⁵ I have personally seen the benefits of hospice care, most importantly the regular contact of a nurse with the patient and family thus enabling the patient to stay at home and have proper pain management. Hospice workers also educate families with regard to the dying process and provide care givers time to take care of other business.

Pastoral Counseling for the Dying

How can you as a pastor help your members who are dealing with end of life decisions? *First* and foremost you can **encourage them to look to the Lord and the free gift of salvation He has for them in Christ**. Faith in Christ is the Christian’s foundation and

shield (Isaiah 28:16; Matthew 7:25; Ephesians 6:16). Only with that foundation can your members make God pleasing decisions.

Secondly, you can help **inform your members with regard to what God's Word tells us regarding these issues and offer them the comfort that His Word brings**. In doing so you can direct them away from worldly thinking and you can also help to correct misinformed consciences such as those who might think that "pulling the plug" is wrong even when whole brain death has occurred.

Rev. Mueller calls for "preemptive counseling and education". He says, "A pastoral approach to bioethical problems which only waits until the most conscientious Christians seek out advice in crisis situations seems not the best way to shepherd the flock."⁹⁶ The best time to educate our members regarding end of life issues is in advance of the crisis times when they are forced to deal with them. Mueller doesn't cite a specific program but urges us to make use of medical professionals in our congregations. We can also bring up the topic in Bible classes and sermons when appropriate.

God's Word reminds us that this life is brief. Our prayer should be that of David: "Show me, O Lord, my life's end and the number of my days; let me know how fleeting is my life. You have made my days a mere handbreadth; the span of my years is as nothing before you. Each man's life is but a breath" (Psalm 39:4-5).

As we offer pastoral/scriptural counsel we need to be considerate of the person's condition spiritually, emotionally and physically. This calls for proper tact. Gilbert Meilaender offers an illustration from Helmut Thielicke's *Theological Ethics, vol. 1*:

"Helmut Thielicke recalls a sexton at whose church theological students frequently did the preaching. He always had three stock answers when they asked with anxious curiosity how they had done. If they had done well he would reply, 'The Lord has been gracious'; if moderately well, 'The text was difficult'; and if badly, 'The hymns were well chosen.'⁹⁷

So Meilaender concludes, "Some truths cannot be received at just any moment. We cannot explain the 'facts of life' to a two-year-old. And we cannot bring the truth of her condition to a dying woman

simply by confronting her with it. She must herself be ready to hear.”⁹⁸

As we counsel members from Scripture we must remind them that there is purpose and meaning even in suffering. Paul reminds us,

“Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us” (Romans 5:1-5)

Our sufferings draw us closer to God. They also equip us to minister to others who are suffering. I recall reading this passage from 2 Corinthians to a member who was in the hospital suffering depression because of his health problems:

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows” (2 Corinthians 1:3-5).

He was greatly encouraged by what this passage says about the purpose of suffering. Ultimately we hold on to the promise Paul penned in Romans 8, “And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Thirdly, pastors can encourage their members to pray. Prayer is critical particularly in light of the many questions that arise with regard to medical care that God’s Word does not directly answer. Prayer is our confession of dependence on the Lord. Scripture encourages us, “If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him” (James 1:5).

Finally when our members question whether the decisions they made were God pleasing or if perhaps we come to realize that in fact the decision was wrong **we need to remind them that as Christians they live in a state of grace**. Paul says, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus” (Romans 8:1).

Congregational Care for the Sick and Dying

As the pastor offers counsel and care for the sick it is important for the whole congregation to offer care. In the congregation I serve our Ladies Aid has a “sunshine chairman” who sends out cards not only to those celebrating birthdays and anniversaries but also to those who are sick. At Christmas time our ladies make up goodie baskets for the shut-ins.

On several occasions when members have been ill our congregation has provided food for the family. I remember when my father died church members and friends of my family descended upon us with food. It was truly a sign of Christian love and compassion for us as a family.

Assistance can also be given by congregational members who can stay with a sick family member or run errands for the care givers who are tied down with the work of caring for their loved one. I had a member of the congregation I served in Oregon who had multiple sclerosis. He was bedfast. His wife stayed with him constantly and provided wonderful care for him. Several members of our church would take turns sitting with him on Sunday mornings so that his wife could go to church.

There may be occasions when the congregation can assist with fund raising for families who are struggling with bills. The congregation I serve has had several spaghetti dinners and received matching funds from Thrivent to help members in need.

Conclusion

Modern medicine provides us with many benefits that our ancestors did not have. Yet it can present many challenges when it

comes to end of life decisions. As the majority of people in our world look to a goal-oriented “end justifies the means” ethical system for making end of life decisions we as Christians stand firmly on the foundation of faith in our loving Lord. We look to Him to direct us in His Word and submit to His authority over us in life and death.

Through faith in Christ’s resurrection victory we can have comfort and confidence as we struggle with life and death issues. The prayer of the hymn “All Praise to Thee, My God, This Night” should be ours and that of our members whom we counsel:

“Teach me to live that I may dread
The grave as little as my bed.
Teach me to die that so I may
Rise glorious at the awe-full Day”
(TLH #558, v. 3).

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River of Muddy Waters: The Qur'an in Perspective

by William B. Kessel

Good books on the topic of Islam number in the hundreds and good articles in the thousands.¹ More often than not these works in the English language are written by non-Islamic observers and scholars and follow a basic outline: Introduction, Muhammad, History, Doctrine and Practice, Divisions, and Implications for the Global Community. There is no need, therefore, to add yet another rehash of what has so often been reiterated.

In addition, many of these popular works often are heavy on description and light on explanation or are very limited in scope. Thus, Christians and Jews readily weigh Islam and Christianity in the balance of comparative dogmatics, and Muslims' faith comes up wanting. Historians depict the prophet of Islam as the right man in the right place at the right time. Philosophers and anthropologists speak of the natural evolution from polytheism to monotheism. Social scientists marvel about how successfully Muslims have incorporated those of different races and ethnicities into one fold and ideology. Political scientists and Pentagon analysts develop theories in order to predict unity and disunity within Islam and how this affects the global community. Virtually everyone, meanwhile, makes at least a passing reference to 9/11 and Islamic fundamentalism.

In contrast to these, this short treatise is an attempt to step back and view as much as possible from a distant glance. It is, as much as anything, a bird's-eye view looking down upon the history and direction of Islam and the origins of the Qur'an. That is to say, this paper is an overall impression of one who has read deeply into the particulars and now stands back trying to make sense of the whole.

Before beginning the aerial view, however, the honest thing to do is to show where my feet are firmly planted while on terra firma. Muslim scholar and expert on the Qur'an, Farid Esack (2005), begins his useful book entitled *The Qur'an: A Users Guide* with a

very refreshing disclosure. He notes that those who write or speak about the Qur'an fall into two obvious camps.

First there are the Muslim authors who are divided into (1) "Ordinary Muslims" who accept the Qur'an without thinking, (2) "Confessional Muslims" who are the uncritical scholars that desire simply to extol the virtues of Allah's revelation, and (3) the "Critical Muslim Scholars" who examine not only the virtues of the faith but are aware of the wrinkles and warts as well.

Second in Esack's scheme are three types of non-Muslims who write and speak about the Qur'an. Those most friendly to Islam are the "Participant Observers" who don't accept the writing into their own worldview and faith, but have come to know and admire the work. Then there are the "Revisionists" or "Disinterested Observers" who conduct scholarly research to show the mistakes, compromises, and frailties in the Qur'an. Finally, there are the "Polemicists" who first discard propriety and decency, and I might add scholarship, and then sally forth with "blasts" targeting the holy book of Islam.

Esack is forthright in his self-identification. He is a South African Muslim who is in the camp of the "Critical Muslim Scholars." I, on the other hand, find myself in the non-Muslim group with the "Revisionists." I do not, and cannot, see the Qur'an as do Muslims, yet I attempt to be as fair and balanced as I can be given my presuppositions. As an aside, wouldn't it be refreshing if authors in the Jesus Seminar would betray or reveal their true colors at the onset of their writings?

Getting back to my bird's-eye vantage point—throughout this paper I will draw on the picture of four streams flowing together to form a mighty river. In my view, the Qur'an is the product of four separate streams of thought: local animism, Judaism, Christianity, and Muhammad's biography. These streams in the Arabian desert are not pristine, however; rather they carry with them pollutants which all combine to form the flow of the Qur'an. Let us examine these four streams in order.

Local Animism

During the 7th century A.D. the people of the Saudi Arabian peninsula (as it is called today) were animists. Simply put, animism is the belief that all things including people, animals, plants, and rocks have souls. Meanwhile, the souls of what the Western world calls animate and inanimate objects are linked at a spiritual level and share a common spiritual essence. For this reason it is not uncommon for some animist groups to feel a special kinship or mystical relationship to a class of animals, plants or objects (totemism). Animists believe that souls live or exist long after the death of the person or thing. In other words, while the body of a palm tree or Bedouin may die, the soul of each continues on. Such souls have their own particular character. The soul of an evil person can become an evil spirit. Taken together, such soul forces bring about good and evil in the form of ghosts, spirits, ancestors, and the like.

The trick for the animist is to maintain harmony with all things, for offending the soul of a being or thing can have dire consequences. Thus, over the years rules develop which are supernatural injunctions against certain forms of behavior which might throw man and/or nature out of kilter (taboos). When disharmony occurs shamans are contacted. Shamans (also called spirit-mediums, medicine men, and medicine women) most often practice sleep or food deprivation to make themselves susceptible to contact with sacred powers from within or without.² The shaman's treatment of choice is magic, which is essentially the performance of a certain ritual which is believed to compel supernatural forces to act in a particular and predictable way.³ Harmony, thus, is restored.

This brief overview of animism helps illuminate the local religion of Saudi Arabians at the time of Muhammad. Mecca, the largest city in Arabia, was the destination for pilgrims. In the city was the Ka'abah, a stone edifice which housed a black stone or meteorite along with 360 idols (one god or goddess for each day in the lunar month). Fractioned into tribes and clans, each Arab grouping had its own spirit deities. The powerful Quraysh tribe in Mecca, to which Muhammad belonged, celebrated a black stone

which was thought to have magical powers. When believers came to Mecca on pilgrimage they would kiss the stone housed in the Ka'aba for good fortune. Members of the Quraysh tribe, to extend the example, recognized a spirit god they called Allah along with three goddesses: Manat, Allat, and Al-Uzza. The hundreds of other Arab tribes each had their own preferred spirits as well. Seventh century Arabs also believed in jinns, spirits that inhabited the trees, stones, rivers and hills. In order to heighten their spirituality, people fasted during the lunar month of Ramadan.

Having said this, I must add with pun intended that Arabian animism was not a monolithic religion. In the years immediately preceding the advent of Muhammad there were those who rejected polytheism outright and promoted monotheism.

We now turn to the pages of the Qur'an and see how aspects of local animism were either rejected or incorporated. First and foremost, the Qur'an is a book written against animism. Muhammad's exposure to monotheism made him a die-hard anti-polytheist:

Then, when the sacred months are drawn away, slay the polytheists wherever you find them, and take them, and confine them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent, and perform the prayer, and pay the alms, then let them go their way; God is All-forgiving, All-compassionate (Q 9:5).⁴

The Qur'an's monotheism is clearly brought out in the first, and possibly most important, chapter:

All praise be to Allah, Lord of all the worlds, Most beneficent, ever-merciful King of the Day of Judgment. You alone we worship, and to You alone turn for help. Guide us (O Lord) to the path that is straight, The path of those You have blessed, Not of those who have earned Your anger, nor those who have gone astray (Q 1:1-7).

Homage paid to anyone or thing other than Allah is portrayed as the archblasphemy in the Qur'an:

The night and day and the sun and moon are (only) some of His signs. So do not bow before the sun and the moon, but bow in homage to God who created them, if you truly worship Him (Q 41:37).

In spite of Muhammad's attempts to stamp out all animism, some local animism was incorporated into the Qur'an. The passage quoted above is clear on the purpose of the heavenly bodies. Yet, Muhammad repeatedly swore oaths on the moon and setting or rising sun as Arabs had done for generations (Q 74:32-35; 84:16-18; 91:1-4). In other places he seems to rely on an old belief that cursed humans turn into monkeys. In context there is the Qur'anic story of how Allah tested a community of ancient Israelite fishermen to fish on the Sabbath. When they failed the test, he punished them by turning them into primates. Perhaps the entire text is of interest.

Enquire of them about the town situated by the sea where, when they did not keep the Sabbath, the fish came up to the surface of the water for them; but on days other than the Sabbath the fish did not come. We [Allah] tried them in this way, for they were disobedient. When a section of them said: "Why do you admonish a people whom God is about to destroy or to punish severely?" They replied: "To clear ourselves of blame before your Lord, and that they may fear God. But when they forgot to remember the warning, We saved those who prohibited evil but inflicted on the wicked a dreadful punishment—requital for their disobedience. When they persisted in doing what they had been forbidden, We said to them: "Become apes despised" (Q 7:163-166).

The man-to-ape scenario is also suggested in Qur'an 2:65, "You know and have known already those among you who had broken the sanctity of the Sabbath, and to whom We had said: 'Become apes despised.'"

Another murky overlay of local animism can be seen in the case of the Ka'aba in the Qur'an. The Ka'aba, as noted, is a black, cube-like structure in Mecca. Presumably it was built to house a black stone or meteorite. Ample evidence exists as that as early as A.D. 190, Arabs "worshipped" black stones. It would be more correct to conclude that, as animists, they felt black stones were imbued with spirits which had the ability to hurt or help people. Since meteorites

fall from heaven, there was also an association of them with celestial deities. The black stone in the Ka'aba was most likely an emblem or totem of Saturn. In Muhammad's day the Ka'aba was a pilgrimage destination. It was there that 360 gods were supposed to have dwelt. Devotees made seven circuits of the structure which may have been linked to worship of the inner and outer planets. Muhammad associated the Ka'aba with his favorite local deity, Allah, and made pilgrimage to the black stone a mandatory route to heaven.⁵

In like manner, Muhammad took various animistic themes and practices of his day and redefined them in terms of his own vision of proper piety and devotion. For years before Muhammad, the pious fasted and meditated during the lunar month of Ramadan. This practice was continued.

Ramadan is the month in which the Qur'an was revealed as guidance to man and clear proof of the guidance, and criterion (of falsehood and truth). So when you see the new moon you should fast the whole month; but a person who is ill or traveling (and fails to do so) should fast on other days, as God wishes ease and not hardship for you, so that you complete the (fixed) number (of fasts), and give glory to God for the guidance, and be grateful (Q 2:175).

The *jinn* in Islam might, at first glance, be seen as Islam's version of angels or demons. This, however, is somewhat naïve. Animistic Arabs in the 7th century believed that there were uncanny, hostile, and uncontrolled spirits in nature. These often took the form of harmful creatures such as snakes, lizards and scorpions. They could even possess people. When Muhammad had his first revelation while in the cave near Mecca, he was distraught until his wife assured him that he was neither insane nor possessed by a *jinn*. But not all *jinn* were harmful; some were considered to be helpful.

Muhammad's contact with Judaism and Christianity made him aware of the concept of angels and demons which he soon combined with *jinn*. Thus, the fall of Adam was the handiwork of *Ibis*, one of the fallen *jinn* (devil). Satan became *Shaytan*, who was once an angel but who refused Allah's command to bow before Adam and was cast out of heaven. It should be noted that *jinn* are not confirmed in their goodness or badness. Even as certain animals

can be both harmful and helpful, so *jinn* can “change their stripes.” Some of the evil *jinn* were converted by the teaching of Allah.

As suggested, the Qur’an has numerous references to the *jinn*. Sura 72 is entitled “The Jinns.” Allah is said to have created them from smokeless fire (55:14). Arabs were upbraided for having made the *jinn* partners with Allah (6:10) or kinsmen with the deity (37:158), or for making sacrifices to them (Q 6:128). The *jinn* were even known to have sexual relations with human women (Q 55:74).

Finally, the “evil eye” was a commonly held belief at the time of Muhammad. It was essentially the fear that if an envious person would glare or stare at someone’s favorite possession he could hurt, damage or destroy it. This belief too found its way into the Qur’an (113:5).

The dirty waters of animism clearly found their way into the Qur’an through Muhammad. Scholar and former Muslim, Ibn Warraq (2003:36) in discussing the pilgrimage to the Ka’aba in Mecca, notes that the “entire ceremony of the pilgrimage has been shamelessly taken over from pre-Islamic practice ‘a fragment of incomprehensible heathenism taken up undigested into Islam.’” Finally, he concludes, “It is undoubtedly true that in many passages of the Koran ‘the Islamic varnish only thinly covers a heathen substratum’” (2003:35).

Judaism

A drainage basin is the area that catches water for a river or stream. If local animism formed one drainage basin which provided flow into the Qur’an, then Judaism was an adjacent catchment basin.

By the 500s A.D., many Jews had relocated from Palestine to Arabia. There they acquired some of the very best land in the oases of Tayma, Khaybar and Yathrib. Their superior knowledge of agricultural techniques and monopoly of certain trade commodities such as iron made them key players in commerce and trade. The city of Yathrib, later renamed Medina, had three large Jewish tribes (*Banu Qaynuka*, *Banu Nadir*, *Banu Qurayzah*) which together

comprised nearly one-half the population! In the year 510 there was even a short-lived Jewish kingdom in the Yemen area of the Arabian peninsula.

Key Jewish teachings such as monotheism, the prominence of the Law, and the holiness of God's Word were well known. Old Testament figures such as Moses, Abraham, and Joseph had been introduced to the general populace. Jewish observances such as fastings were practiced. The Talmud, the written form of Jewish oral traditions, was also in circulation in the Arabian peninsula.⁶

The picture of Jews quietly going about their business in Yathrib, however, is inaccurate. In that great city a three-way power struggle based on ideological differences was taking place. The Jews disdained the idolatrous Arabs and vice versa. These animosities often led to fighting and bloodshed. Christians of Al Sham who belonged to the East Roman Empire hated the Jews for having tortured and crucified Jesus and raided Yathrib for the purpose of killing Jewish citizens. Even had they wanted to, the Jews would not have been able to form alliances with the pagan Arabs for two reasons: First, the Jews were decidedly monotheistic. Second, the Jews regarded themselves as God's chosen people and were not philosophically prepared to accept the notion that other people might share in their favored position. Thus, they did not expend effort in evangelism.⁷

Finally, it should be mentioned that by the time of Muhammad, the Bible had been translated into Syriac, Coptic, Ethiopic, Latin, Gothic and other languages but not Arabic. Therefore, any contact Arabs had with biblical teachings came through word of mouth.

Before discussing Judaism in the Qur'an, however, it might be worthwhile to speculate about how Muhammad gained his information about the religion of the Jews. First, and contrary to popular opinion, the prophet may have been literate. As Warraq (2003:50) remarks:

It seems unlikely, considering Muhammad's social background, that he did not receive any education. He came from a respected family, and it is unthinkable that a rich widow would have asked him to take care of her business affairs if he had been unable to read or write.

Furthermore, two tantalizing tidbits from the Qur'an seem to suggest that Muhammad had a Jewish teacher, probably a rabbi. He listened to stories dictated by another (Q 2:5), and he was taught in a non-Arabic language or dialect (Q 25:103). At any rate, Muhammad certainly was familiar with Jewish religious rites, rituals, customs, stories and legends.

We now turn to Judaism and the Qur'an. Nearly a century ago Islamic scholar S. Zwemer wrote, "Islam is nothing more nor less than Judaism plus the apostleship of Mohammad" (Zwemer 1908:17 quoted in Warraq 2003:49). Since that time, a flurry of scholarship has pointed in the same direction.⁸

Once again we are wading into dirty waters. Muhammad's understanding of Judaism and the Old Testament was a hodgepodge of fact and fiction, information and misinformation, interpretation and misinterpretation. In addition, materials from the Bible, Talmud and legends were hopelessly entangled in the prophet's mind. Consider the following: Jews were uncompromisingly monotheistic. So is the Qur'an. Jews knew their holy book. This very much impressed Muhammad (Q 2:140-141; 6:20). Thus the Qur'an was considered God's revelation to be learned and memorized. Prominent Jewish teachings and Old Testament figures jump off virtually every page of the Qur'an.

But here is where the waters become clouded or totally obscured. Arabian Jews did not have all the Bible facts straight and they commingled the Old Testament with extra-biblical sources. Additionally, somewhere in the communication process, Muhammad added yet another level of obfuscation. Several illustrations will suffice.

Creation. In the Bible God created the heavens and the earth in six days by his almighty Word. In the Qur'an, Allah did the creating in six days (Q 50:37), or was it two days (Q 41:8-11)?

Adam. In the Bible God created Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. In the Qur'an Allah created Adam out of potter's clay or black mud

and breathed life into him (Q 15:26-33; 38:72). On the other hand, did Allah create Adam out of sperm (16:4; 55; 77:20), or was it from primal water (21:30)?

Satan's fall. According to the Bible Satan most likely fell into sin because of pride. Muhammad in the Qur'an gets this right (Q 38:74), but then explains that Allah ordered the jinn to prostrate themselves before Adam. This, Satan refused to do and was cursed (Q 7:11; 18:50; 20:116). Apparently Satan was sinfully proud because he had been created out of fire and not out of clay (Q 17:61; 38:72-76).

Adam and Eve's fall. According to the Qur'an the original couple did not sin on the Earth but rather in paradise. After they sinned they were cast down to Earth (Q 7:19-25).

Cain and Abel. Cain was "induced by his passion to murder his brother. . . Then God sent a raven which scratched the ground in order to show him how to hide the nakedness of his brother" (Q 5:31). In other words, the raven showed Cain how to bury Abel.

Enoch. Enoch receives some attention in the Qur'an. It appears that he died and then was resurrected and translated to heaven (Q 19:56-57 and called Edris in 21:85). In both cases he is mentioned after Ishmael, indicating a problem with Muhammad's chronology.

Noah and the flood. Noah is mentioned in 131 verses in the Koran. According to the Bible, Noah preached to the people, built an ark, and God saved him and his entire family from the floodwaters. In the Qur'an Noah preached and built an ark, but not all of his family were saved. One of Noah's sons refused to believe and take refuge in the ark. He argued that they should flee to a high mountaintop for safety. He ran and drowned. Allah explained to Noah that the son was an unbeliever and "truly he is not of your family. He is surely

the outcome of an unrighteous act” (Q 11:46). In other words Mrs. Noah had an adulterous relationship which resulted in the conception and birth of this son. She was consigned to hell for her sin (Q 66:10). In the Bible Noah was 950 years old when he died. In the Qur’an Noah was 950 years old at the time of the flood (Q 29:14).

Abraham and Ishmael. Marching through the Bible we come to the story of Abraham which is found in Genesis 12-25 and 245 verses (25 chapters) in the Qur’an. Chapter 14 of the Qur’an bears the title “Abraham.” Here Muhammad (or Allah) adds some bizarre and not-so-scholarly emendations. Abraham was ordered to sacrifice his son Ishmael (not Isaac) in Mecca, Saudi Arabia (not Mt. Moriah in Palestine). The site, as it turns out, is where the Ka’aba is located. Recall that’s the cube which contains the black rock (Q 2:122-129; 3:96-97; 14:37). Thus Mecca became the place of pilgrimage with devotees circumambulating the Ka’aba, and prayers are addressed toward the Ka’aba in Mecca, not Jerusalem, as was the custom for Jews in that day. Incidentally, Abraham was neither a Jew, Christian, or pagan. He was a follower of Allah (Q 2:135; 3:67, 95). Finally, according to Muhammad, Abraham was the author of an inspired book (Q 97:19).

By now it should be clear that through the mind of Muhammad, biblical figures found their way into the Qur’an. But as the Dictionary of Islam (Hughes 1935 quoted in Warraq 2003:54) states, “with a strange want of accuracy and a large admixture of Talmudic fable.” All in all, dozens of Old Testament personalities are mentioned.⁹ We can outline a few further discrepancies between the biblical and the Qur’anic accounts.

Joseph. Joseph is a key character in the Qur’an. While the stories of other biblical personalities are chopped up and scattered throughout the Qur’an, the entire 12th chapter of the book is devoted to the Joseph story. This account parallels Genesis 37-48 to some degree, but there are wanderings,

deviations, deletions and detours. For example, a key point in the Bible is that Jacob believed his son Joseph was dead (as evidenced by the bloody coat of many colors). In the Qur'an (12:86) Jacob knew Joseph was alive and sent the boys out looking for him.

Moses and the Exodus. Moses is mentioned in 502 verses in 36 chapters of the Qur'an. Not surprisingly the Exodus is discussed in 27 places. However, what is surprising is that no hint is even made of the Passover.¹⁰ There are several other peculiarities about the Moses account in the Qur'an (read Q 28:2-48). When he was born he refused Egyptian wet nurses, as also taught in the Talmud (Q 28:11). Upon reaching manhood, Moses saw a member of his community quarreling with an enemy. Moses intervened and killed the man with a blow from his bare fist (Q 28:15). Moses then went to the land of Midian where he had a romance very similar to that of Jacob and Rachel (Q 28:22-29). Later when Moses appears before pharaoh (and his vizier, Haman, see below) a Tower of Babel showdown occurs (Q 28:38). During the Exodus, while at the foot of Mt. Sinai, the people demanded to see God, but upon seeing him they were struck dead by lightning (some translations say struck "senseless"). Allah revived them, and they gave him thanks (Q 2:55-56). Finally, when God gave the law to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, at first they refused to make the commitment to receive it. So God lifted up the entire mountain and positioned it over their heads. Surmising that God was about to drop the mountain on them, they relented (Q 7:171). This story most likely came from Jewish tradition.¹¹

Other tales of Moses are found in the intriguing 18th chapter of the Qur'an. As Islamic scholar Charles Torrey (1998:343) notes, "While in every other part of the sacred book Muhammad draws either upon the biblical and rabbinic material or else upon Arabian lore, in sura 18 we are given a sheaf of legends from world literature." Beginning in

verse 60 stories from the Gilgamesh epic and legends about Alexander the Great are combined and attributed to Moses.¹² In the Qur'an, Moses searches for the juncture of two rivers where he will find immortal life. When he and his attendant arrive at the destination it is a dried fish they had taken for food that is the recipient of immortality. Moses then becomes a pupil of an immortal saint, a servant of Allah. The servant scuttles a boat, kills a youth, and rebuilds the city wall for people who had refused them hospitality. Moses expresses his concern regarding these three events, and the third time is censured, for he had been forewarned not to question the servant regarding such events. It is at this point that Moses meets up with Alexander the Great, "Two-Horned" or Dshu'l-Qarnain in the Qur'an (18:83-93). Moses and party follow Alexander until they come to the place where Gog and Magog are oppressing the land. They remain safe by building an iron and brass wall keeping the two menaces apart (Q 18:94-101). Torrey (1998:347) concludes that all of the varied stories in the 18th sura of the Qur'an were "derived from a Jewish collection of stories and parables . . . designed for popular instruction and entertainment."

Saul. Muhammad confused Saul with Gideon. In the Qur'an he has Saul selecting warriors to fight Goliath who either refrained from drinking water or whom he observed scooping up water in the palms of their hands (Q 2:249-251).

Solomon. Much of the information on Solomon in the Qur'an apparently originated in Jewish tradition. Solomon was supposed to have carried on conversations with birds (Q 27:16). Winds (or possibly spirits, a throwback to animism) were obedient to his desires and carried his sailing ships in the designated directions (Q 21:81). And demons, beasts and birds labored for his war machine or were part of his standing army (27:15-44; 34:11ff; 38:35).

Jonah. The Jonah account in the Qur'an (37:139-148) reads

like a Reader's Digest condensed version.

Verily Jonah is one of the apostles. When he fled on the laden ship, and lots were cast, he was rejected. Then he was swallowed by a large fish as he was worthy of blame. Had he not been one of those who struggled hard, he would have stayed in its belly till the day the dead are raised. So We cast him, sick, on a barren shore, and We made a gourd tree grow over him. We sent him to a hundred thousand men or more, and they came to believe; so we allowed them the good things of life for an age.

Notice a few additions and missequencing from the biblical account.

Haman. The Qur'an makes Haman from the Book of Esther a vizier, and hence, a contemporary of the pharaoh who lived some 900 years earlier (Q 28:5-8; 29:39; 40:24).

In addition to people and events, Muhammad extracted key teachings from Judaism and incorporated them into the religion of Islam. Obviously there is the six-day creation common to Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Next, there is the concept of seven heavens (Q 2:29; 17:44; 23:86; 41:11-12; 65:12; 67:3; 71:15) also called the heaven of seven strongholds (Q 78:12) and the seven paths (Q 23:17) which too were lifted from the Talmud.

Key ingredients in the Qur'anic cake mix are the concepts of final judgment, heaven and hell (which will be mentioned in more depth in the next section). The Qur'an's seven hells with seven gates (Q 15:43-44) are taken from the Talmud (the Chegiga 9:2 and Zohar 2:150 to be exact). Malik, a corruption of Molech (mentioned in Leviticus 20:2, 1 Kings 11:33 and Jeremiah 32:35), presides over the tortures of the damned (Q 43:77). A current Jewish teaching in the day of Muhammad described how the unbelievers in the Flood literally found themselves in boiling water. The Qur'an (11:42; 23:27) incorporates this into its teachings as well. The Talmud teaches that in the Judgment a man's limbs will testify against him. The Qur'an (24:24) states, "The day their tongues and hands and feet bear witness to what they had done, God will pay them on that

day their just due in full, and they will come to know that God is the tangible Reality.”

Perhaps we have plunged deeply enough into the Qur’an by now to show that Muhammad filtered the Jewish Old Testament stories, extra-biblical writings (Talmud, Haggada, Midrash) and popular legends through his fertile imagination and incorporated them into the Qur’an. The reader who wishes to dig more deeply into the Jewish connection is especially encouraged to review the articles by noted experts on the Qur’an Abraham Geiger (1998), William St. Clair-Tisdall (1998) and Charles Torrey (1998) all conveniently summarized and reprinted by Ibn Warraq (1998, 2003).

Christianity

The third tributary flowing into the holy Qur’an of Islam was Christianity. One need only look at a historical map at the time of Muhammad to appreciate the influence of Christianity on Arabia. The Arabian Peninsula was surrounded by Christianity: Syria to the north was Christian for all intents and purposes; Egypt and Abyssinia (including modern Ethiopia) to the west were as well; Christianity had made significant inroads into Persia to the northeast of Saudi Arabia; and believers in Christ were to be found in Yemen on the Arabian Peninsula itself.

Insofar as Arab traders made frequent trips into Christian areas, they were exposed to that faith. Likewise, more than a few Christians themselves lived in what is now Saudi Arabia. Numerous ascetic monks seeking solitude lived in caves and crevices along the caravan routes where they felt they could commune with God. Other Christian people lived in key cities such as Mecca and Yathrib. The minor Christian settlement in Mecca, for example, consisted of “caravan leaders, monks, merchants from Syria, curers, healers, doctors, dentists, smiths, carpenters, scribes, Christian women married into the Quraysh [prominent Arab tribe to which Muhammad belonged], and slaves from Mesopotamia, Egypt, Syria, and Byzantium sold in the market place of the town” (Farah 2000:29). In addition, two Christianized Arab tribes, the Judham and ‘Udhram, were semi-nomadic wanderers in the Hijaz, the western portion of

Saudi Arabia in the area comprising Mecca, Medina, Jedda, and At Ta'if. Local tradition even suggests that some Christian artifacts were placed in the Ka'aba in Mecca.

The Christian presence in Arabia is also shown by a legendary or historical account in which Muhammad is said to have befriended a Christian monk by the name of Bahira and to have worn clothes which were gifts to him from other Christian monks. Finally, one of Muhammad's wives was a Christian.

Care must be taken not to come away with the impression that Arabs were exposed to orthodox Christianity. Rather they were exposed to the debates, arguments and fractures within the Eastern church. By the 6th century A.D. the so-called Arian controversy, which centered on whether or not Jesus was co-equal with God the Father, along with the Trinitarian controversy, had begun to wind down. The controversy about the two natures of Christ, however, was in full bloom. To make matters worse, the Monophysites were flexing their theological muscles.¹³ Roland Cap Ehlke (2004:12) explains:

One key term in the debates was theotokos, a Greek word applied to the virgin Mary as the "bearer of God." The term gave way to mater theo, "mother of God." In their use of such terminology, some raised their devotion to Mary to that of a cult. These people were known as Monophysite Christians, because they believed that Jesus had only one nature (monophysis), and they failed to recognize the biblical truth that he is true man as well as true God. This is of interest because the Christianity to which Arabs were exposed was mainly of the Monophysite persuasion.

Hand in hand with the four Gospels of Jesus Christ, Arabs were also exposed to writings that were not part of the biblical canon (the New Testament apocraphy and pseudepigrapha). These too clouded, confused or contradicted the teachings of Scripture.

Some of the waters which formed the Qur'an came from polluted Christianity. Apparently Muhammad knew nothing of St. Paul and his writings. Most of the New Testament materials, therefore, came from the gospel accounts. As we will now see, either in transmission or reception these were hopelessly garbled.

Mary, the mother of Jesus, is the only woman mentioned by name in the Qur'an, and, in fact, the entire 19th chapter is named after her. Interestingly, Mary is named more often in Islam's holy book than in the New Testament. But who exactly was Mary? Muhammad confused Mary with Miriam, the sister of Moses and Aaron who lived some 1,400 years earlier (Q 19: 27-28; 66:12).

Mary's ancestry is only lightly touched upon in the Scriptures; the Qur'an, however, apparently drew on what St. Clair-Tisdall (1998:259) has called "apocryphal writings of the heretical sects." The account goes as follows:

Remember when the wife of 'Imran prayed: "O Lord, I offer what I can carry in my womb in dedication to Your service, accept it, for You hear all and know every thing." And when she had given birth to the child, she said: "O Lord, I have delivered but a girl." --But God knew better what she had delivered: A boy could not be as that girl was. "I have named her Mary," (she said), "and I gave her into Your keeping. Preserve her and her children from Satan the ostracized" (Q 3:35-36).

Young Mary was cared for by Zechariah (Q 3:37) and shut off from anyone else in a special chamber, most likely in the temple. Apparently Zechariah won the guardian position through the casting of rods (Q 3:44) which involved some 26 priests who threw their rods into the water and all sank but that of Zechariah. An angel also came to tend and provide her with food.

In time Mary experienced an immaculate conception (Q 3:42). Pregnant Mary went off into the desert and dwelt by the trunk of a date palm. There her thirst was quenched by a rivulet of water and when she shook the tree she had dates to eat. In time she gave birth to Jesus the Messiah (Q 19:22-26; 3:45). Apropos is St. Clair-Tisdall's careful correlation of these accounts of Mary with those found in various heretical "Christian" writings extant during Muhammad's day.¹⁴

Finally, Muhammad believed that Christians considered

Mary to be the third person of the Trinity (Q 5:116), no doubt a misconception gleaned from the Monophysites.

Jesus. There is no shortage of material in the Qur'an on Jesus. Ironically, He is mentioned 97 times while Muhammad is named only 25 times.

Before discussing what Islam teaches about Jesus' life, it is important to first note who the Qur'an teaches that Jesus was and was not. While the Qur'an calls Jesus the Messiah (Q 3:45; 4:171) as well as righteous prophet, messenger to Israel, sign, and Spirit from God, he was neither a savior nor the Son of God:

Infidels now are they who say, 'God is the Messiah, Son of Mary;' for the Messiah said, 'O children of Israel! worship God, my Lord and your Lord.' Whoever shall join other gods with God, God shall forbid him the Garden, and his abode shall be the Fire; and the wicked shall have no helpers (Q 5:72).

Muhammad clearly rejected the deity of Jesus and adamantly, and repeatedly, rejected the concept of the Trinity, which he believed referred to God the Father, Jesus and the Virgin Mary.¹⁵ The Qur'an (Q 4:171-172) teaches:

O people of the Book, do not be fanatical in your faith, and say nothing but the truth about God. The Messiah who is Jesus, son of Mary, was only an apostle of God, and a command of His which He sent to Mary, as a mercy from Him. So believe in God and His apostles, and do not call him 'Trinity.' Abstain from this for your own good; for God is only one God, and far from His glory is it to beget a son. All that is in the heavens and the earth belongs to Him; and sufficient is God for all help. The Christ will never disdain to be a votary of God, nor will the angels close to Him.

In chapter 5 (v.73) of the Qur'an Muhammad calls down the wrath of Allah on those who hold to the Trinity. "Disbelievers are they surely who say: 'God is the third of the trinity;' but there is no god other than God the one. And if they do not desist from saying what they say, then indeed those among them who persist in disbelief will suffer painful punishment" [some translations say

The Qur'an, nevertheless, suggests that Jesus was sinless. An angel appeared to Mary promising that she would have a "faultless son" (Q 19:19). Muhammad, meanwhile was a sinner who had to seek forgiveness for his own sins (Q 40:55).

Who then was Jesus? He was not a normal child. He was born of the Virgin Mary (Q 3:45-47; 19:16-22). As an infant he spoke while in the cradle (Q 19:29-33). During his childhood, He made a clay figure of a bird and breathed life into it (Q 3:49; 5:110). A fanciful story about Jesus and how clay birds came to life is found in The Gospel of Thomas and the Arabic Gospel of the Infancy (St. Clair-Tisdall 1998:265-266).

As an adult Jesus healed one born blind, cured a leper and even raised the dead (Q 3:49; 5:110). He prayed to Allah, who sent down a table of food from heaven.

When the disciples said: "O Jesus, son of Mary, could your Lord send down for us a table laid with food?" he said: "Fear God, if indeed you believe." They said: "We should like to eat of it to reassure our hearts and to know that it's the truth you have told us, and that we should be witness to it." Said Jesus, son of Mary. "O God, our Lord, send down a table well laid out with food from the skies so that this day may be a day of feast for the earlier among us and the later, and a token from You. Give us our bread, for You are the best of all givers of food." And said God: "I shall send it down to you but if any of you disbelieve after this, I shall inflict such punishment on him as I never shall inflict on any other creature" (Q 5:112-115).

This account contains elements undoubtedly taken from the Lord's Supper and possibly from Luke 22:30 where Jesus promises his disciples that they might "eat and drink at my table in my kingdom."

The concept of Jesus' death on the cross is central to Christianity. The Qur'an clearly denies that He was even put to death,¹⁶ but it affirms an exaltation or ascension to heaven. Jews are condemned for saying:

"We killed the Christ, Jesus, son of Mary who was an apostle of God," but they neither killed nor crucified him, though it

so appeared to them. Those who disagree in the matter are only lost in doubt. They have no knowledge about it other than conjecture, for surely they did not kill him, but God raised him up and closer to himself; and God is all-mighty and all-wise (Q 4:157-158).

St. Clair-Tisdall (1998:268) suggests a parallel heresy which Irenaeus attributes to a certain Basilides. “He suffered not, but Simon of Cyrenian was compelled to carry the cross for him; and he through error and ignorance was crucified, being transfigured by him, that it might be thought that he was Jesus himself.”

John the Baptist. John was obviously an important figure in Christian teaching during the 7th century A.D. It is not surprising, therefore, that he is mentioned in the Qur’an (under the name Yahya). As in the Scriptures, John was the son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, born to them in their old age. Zechariah prayed for an heir and Allah responded. Zechariah then asked for a sign and Allah deprived him of speech for three days (Q 3:38-41; 19:2-15; 21:89-90).

John served as a witness that the teachings of Jesus were true. The Qur’an describes John as “wise, noble, chaste, a prophet, righteous, devout, and kind to his parents” (Esposito 2003:161).

Other New Testament figures find their way into the Qur’an, but one is conspicuous by his absence. As mentioned before, Muhammad apparently was totally unaware of the writings of St. Paul. The Christian doctrine of justification by faith alone without the performance of good deeds, so central to Paul’s theology, is neither taught nor refuted. Rather, Muhammad assumes work righteousness. Allah rewards good works (Q 2:195-196; 3:76, 146, etc.). The Qur’an, in fact is filled with what believers do. They give thanks (Q 25:61-64), walk the straight path (Q 2:213), are patient (Q 2:44), are not distracted by the pleasures of the world (Q 3:14-17), pray (Q 29:45), fast (Q 2:185), go on pilgrimage (Q 3:96-97), give the mandatory charity money (Q 2:110), and the like.

Their reward for good deeds is heaven:

Round each man's neck We have hung his ledger of deeds, and on the Day of Resurrection will present it as a book spread out (and say): "Read your ledger; this day you are sufficient to take your own account. He who finds the right path does for himself; and he who goes astray does so to his own loss; and no one who carries a burden bears another's load" (Q 17:13-15).

Islam's teachings concerning hell and heaven seem to reflect both a strange awareness and unawareness of Christianity. The Qur'an's teaching of hell is not totally dissimilar to the New Testament picture. Hell is portrayed as a place of unquenchable fire, of boiling water, running sores, peeling skin, burning flesh, dissolving bowels, and skulls crushed with iron maces (Q 70:11-18; 6:70; 104; 4:10; 54:48 and elsewhere). On the other hand, the Qur'anic heaven is just the opposite of the biblical heaven. In Christianity, heaven is a place where believers go to be with God and forever to be separated from the sins of this world. In the Qur'an, heaven is a place where believers go in order to do those things which were considered sins on Earth. Muslim heaven is a place of unlimited wine to drink and countless gorgeous dark-eyed virgins with whom to have sex (Q 38:50-55a; 55:54-78; 56:10-38). This description is typical about the believers in heaven:

Surely those who fear and follow the straight path will be in a place of peace and security in the midst of gardens and of springs, dressed in brocade and shot silk, facing one another. Just like that. We shall pair them with companions with large black eyes [virgins]. They will call for every kind of fruit with satisfaction. There they will not know any death apart from the first death they had died, and will be kept safe from the torments of Hell (Q 44:51-56).

Some of Muhammad's followers apparently were concerned that they might reach heaven to find no virgins left. In the Qur'an Allah takes this potential problem into account:

Lo! We have made them a (new) creation. And made them virgins, lovers, friends, for those on the right hand; A multitude

of those of old. And a multitude of those of later times (Q 56:35-40).

In other words, the huris or virgins of heaven are re-created virgins after each time they are deflowered whether by men or angels (Q 55:74).

I have repeatedly made reference to the muddy waters of the Qur'an. Muddy implies pure water which has been polluted. The pollution to Christianity which finds its way into Islam came from Muhammad's own rejection of Christianity as well as from polluted sources from within the pale of Christianity. Author Tarif Khalidi in his book *The Muslim Jesus: Sayings and Stories in Islamic Literature* (2001:6-7) correctly concludes:

It is well to remember that when Islam arrived on the scene of history, the Church of the Great Councils had not yet enforced its dogmas in the Near East. In other words, Islam was born amid many, often mutually hostile Christian communities and not in the bosom of a universal church.

Muhammad

The fourth and final flow which joined the confluence of the Qur'an was the biography of Muhammad himself.¹⁷ The story of the prophet is well known.¹⁸ Rather than reiterate it here, an interpretative retelling that mixes social theory, history and biography will be given.

Sociologist Peter Berger (1963:66-121) makes a useful distinction between "man in society" and "society in man." The basic concept of "man in society" is that society surrounds the individual. It is external to him and applies huge pressures on him to conform. Without realizing it, a person's "location" in society (gender, race, class, and the like) "predetermines and predefines almost everything we do, from language to etiquette, from the religious beliefs we hold to the probability that we will commit suicide" (Berger 1963:91). If this were not enough, there is also the pressure of society from within. By this Berger means that the socialization of the individual is based on how he sees himself in society and how he feels that those in society view him. In other words:

Society, then, is not only something “out there” . . . but it is also “in here,” part of our innermost being. . . . Society not only controls our movements, but shapes our identity, our thoughts and our emotions. The structure of society becomes the structure of our own consciousness. Society does not stop at the surface of our skins. Society penetrates us as much as it envelops us. Our bondage to society is not so much established by conquest as by collusion (Berger 1963:121).

Applying this to Muhammad, we might begin with the premise that society shaped him from outside in and inside out and that who he was in society was reflected in the Qur’an. Muhammad was a product of his location, culture, and social group. He grew up in a society of winners and losers, of power and submission. Animists, Jews and Christians vied for power and domination in economics and ideology. Men held women in submission in the home and in the social world. Social control was achieved through violence and intimidation. The tribe or group with the strongest or at least most cunning armies prevailed. Slash-and-dash tactics worked. Treachery was an acceptable means of achieving an end. Consistent with this view was Arabian society in which there were the haves and the have-nots. There were the rich and powerful tribes and those best described as down and out. City dwellers held both nostalgia and contempt for the Bedouins. The literate/scientist/poets contrasted with the lowly social grunts.

At the same time, the Arabs were pragmatists. People went with whatever worked best. Jewish iron for armor and weapons was coveted. Jewish horticultural techniques worked better than time-honored gardening and were closely observed. The overwhelming confusion surrounding rampant polygamy and the disunity which it produced in society seemed less workable than the monotheism introduced by the Arab Christian Hanifs and the Jews. Some authors, having perused the literature, have concluded that Arab society on the eve of Islam was ripe for change. This may be a shallow way of saying that change was socially approved.

Muhammad was embedded in a particular society at a particular time. Much of the Qur’an reflects the societal norms and acceptable forms of behavior current at that time. As previously noted, submission was a key value in Arabian society. It could be

argued that “submission” is the single word which best describes both Islam and its holy book.¹⁹ Technically a Muslim is a person who submits to the will of Allah. The Qur’an, meanwhile, is a parade of examples of those who either submitted to the will of Allah and were saved or those who refused to submit and were damned. Twenty-five prophets are named in the Qur’an, 21 of whom are mentioned in the Bible. Their basic message was that there is only one God, Allah, and that people must submit to him. Allah says, “When I inspired the disciples [through Jesus] to believe in Me and My apostles [prophets], they said: “We believe, and You bear witness that we submit” (Q 5:111).

Paul Wendland (1989) in his paper entitled *Islam: The Religion of Submitting to Allah*, notes that the only way for a Muslim to relate to Islam’s transcendent god “is by submission as a slave to a master.”

Thus it is no accident that the religion of Muhammad is called “Islam” (=submission), and that a devotee is called a “Muslim” (=a submitting one). This God works all in all. There is no resisting him. There is no changing his inalterable purpose. One can only discover what that purpose is and submit to it.

The Qur’an is the exact word of Allah’s will for all people. This life then is a test. Those who submit to Allah save themselves. Those who refuse to submit are sentenced to hell. Again Wendland (1989) states, “The Qu’ran gives infallible divine guidance in living a life of submission.”

Muhammad lived during a day and age when conflict was settled with violence. Warring factions fought. Survivors won. This social theme of “might makes right” roars through the pages of the Qur’an. By the count of popular evangelical author Don Richardson’s, there are no fewer than 109 war verses in the book (which amounts to one out of every 55 verses in the entire volume). This number does not include wars mentioned in stories like David and Goliath. Neither does it include the passages which discuss how Allah afflicts the infidels.²⁰ In the Qur’an, theology reflects politics and military stratagems. Much of Islam’s holy book is a

manual of warfare, to wit, warfare is necessary at times (Q 2:216; 9:5, 29) and soldiers should be ready to fight for Allah (Q 2:224). Ultimately, warfare is a struggle against idolatry and polytheism (Q 4:76). If infidels make treaties they should be honored (Q 9:4), but in the absence of treaties the idolaters should be put to death (Q 9:5). Some further samples can be cited:

O Prophet! Strive [make war] against the disbelievers and the hypocrites! Be harsh with them. Their ultimate abode is hell, a hapless journey's end(Q 9:73).

When you meet the unbelievers in the battlefield strike off their heads . . . (Q 47:4).

But when these months, prohibited (for fighting), are over, slay the idolaters wheresoever you find them, and take them captive or besiege them, and lie in wait for them at every likely place (Q 9:5).

The faithful who sit idle, other than those who are disabled, are not equal to those who fight in the way of God with their wealth and lives. God has exalted those in rank who fight for the faith with their wealth and souls over those who sit idle (Q 4:95).

Fight them till sedition comes to end, and the law of God (prevails). If they desist, then cease to be hostile, except against those who oppose (Q 2:193).

So, fight them till all opposition ends, and obedience is wholly God's. If they desist then verily God sees all they do (Q 8:39).

And the Lord said to the angels: "I am with you; go and strengthen the faithful. I shall fill the hearts of infidels with terror. So smite them on their necks and every joint [every finger]," for they had opposed God and his Apostle; but whoever opposes God and his Apostle [should know] that God is severe in retribution (Q 8:12-13).

And those who die in war are not counted as the dead but as the living (Q 3:169), for those who die in jihad have instant heaven:

O you who believe, may I offer you a bargain which will save you from a painful punishment? Come to believe in God and His Apostle, and struggle [jihad] in the cause of God, wealth and soul. This will be good for you, if you can understand. He will forgive you your sins and admit you to gardens with rivers flowing by, and excellent mansions in the garden of Eden (Q 61:10-12).

Social forces external to Muhammad certainly made him who he was. But as Peter Burger suggests, he was a social being from the inside out as well. Thus, the prophet played socially acceptable roles in society. After his fortuitous marriage to a wealthy widow, Muhammad was able to play the part of a seeker of religious enlightenment. His fastings during a particular lunar month, his self-inflicted forms of physical deprivation, his contact with the jinn, in this case Gabriel, were all time-honored spiritual techniques.

Later Muhammad played the role of a politician by negotiating a peace between factions in Yathrib but soon saw himself as a military strategist and general as he set out to destroy a major portion of the population, the Jews. Both roles were modeled for him by the society in which he was reared, and he conformed to societal expectations.

Muhammad filled popular social roles in his private life. His polygamous marriages, dealings with concubines and slaves were all patterned after what he saw all around. During his lifetime Muhammad had 12 wives. In the Qur'an he calls for a less excessive number of four:

If you fear you cannot be equitable to orphan girls (in your charge, or misuse their persons), then marry women who are lawful for you, two, three, or four; but if you fear you cannot treat so many with equity, marry only one, or a maid or captive. This is better than being iniquitous (Q 4:3).

The prophet Muhammad himself took a Jewish woman as his concubine after a battle with the Banu Quraizah “and also Maria the Copt, who was sent him as a slave by the Governor of Egypt” (Hughes 1965:59). How is it that Muhammad had more wives than he allowed the devotees of his religion? Allah OK'd it (Q 33:37-38).

This biography of Muhammad may give the impression that he was both a prisoner and victim of society without and society within, and that he acted as a social automaton. Peter Berger, the sociologist cited earlier, would be the first to agree and then disagree. Society can be confronted or circumvented by such forces as individual charisma, deviance, ploy, detachment, manipulation, and ecstasy. Like an actor on a stage, Muhammad had the opportunity for improvisation and interpretation. In other words, the prophet himself was not bound to social and cultural norms. His own life experiences and personality also permeate the pages of the book. For better or for worse, he was his own man.

Part of what made Muhammad unique was his first ecstatic experience. In A.D. 610, 40-year-old Muhammad was fasting during the lunar month of Ramadan and meditating in a desert cave in Hira near Mecca. There he received his “call” to be a prophet. The summons was delivered by Gabriel on behalf of Allah. Muhammad’s emotional state was not described in the Qur’an but rather in the Hadith.²¹ Muhammad was contorted and convulsed and left it up to his wife to tell him whether the experience was from hell or heaven. She assured him of the latter.

For three years, beginning with his “call,” Muhammad shared his experiences and teachings with relatives and close friends. Then he went public in his hometown of Mecca. But most residents of this cosmopolitan city did not take kindly to his new religion. Lutheran author Roland Cap Ehlke (2004:16) summarizes:

Some of the fiercest opposition to Muhammad developed among the wealthy Umayyah clan, which was another branch of his own tribe, the Quraysh. Initially, opposition came especially in the forms of ridicule, sneers, and sarcasm. As the revelations continued and the little band of followers grew, the reactions did too. Some of the lowlier Muslims were even beaten. In 615, Muhammad sent most of his followers—83 of them—to the largely Christian country of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) for refuge.

Between 610 and 622, Muhammad had a series of revelations, now known as the “Early Qur’anic Revelations” or the “Mecca Revelations.” For the most part these constitute the latter chapters of the Qur’an. A careful reading of these reveals that Muhammad

was virulently opposed to the polytheism which was part and parcel of Arabian animism. Yet, at this time his desire was to win the hearts of the people rather than slay the bodies of the opposition. This hope for conversions is intoned in these chapters.

By 622 opposition to Muhammad's religion was so fierce that the prophet feared for his life and fled from his hometown of Mecca to Yathrib, some 250 miles or "eleven camel days north of Mecca" (Lings 1983:7). This event, known to Muslims as the hijrah, constitutes the beginning of the Islamic calendar. As previously noted, Muhammad was able to unite much of the population of Yathrib (from henceforth known as Medina, "City of the Prophet"), and became both the political and religious leader of the majority. Now his attitude about life changed from victim to conqueror, from passive to active.²²

The so-called "Medina Prophecies" constitute the longest chapters of the Qur'an.²³ Two themes resound—that the Qur'an is the only valid scripture, and that Islam is the only path to salvation. In addition, however, the prophecies of Muhammad at this time reflect the socio-political events which were taking place. Esack (2005:50-51) explains:

During the Medinan phase of Qur'anic revelation, much of its focus was on the immediate needs of building a socio-religious community as well as the political challenges facing them. The Qur'an's response was a combination of immediate injunctions and exhortations which had a long term impact on the community's social and spiritual foundations.

Muhammad through the Qur'an was trying to form a society or community of the righteous.

Those who believe, men and women, befriend one another, and enjoin what is right and prohibit what is wrong. They observe their devotional obligations, pay the zakat [tax for the poor] and obey God [Allah] and His Apostle [Muhammad]. God will be merciful to them, for God is all-mighty and all-wise (Q 9:71).

Warfare is a dominant theme in the Medina portion of the Qur'an as well. Islam's holy book explains Muhammad's bloody campaigns and battles (Badr in 624, Uhud in 625 and the Trench

in 627) as defensive operations (see Q 22:39 and 2:190). Allah was responsible for the victories, while Muslim mistakes or refusals to carry out the prophet's injunctions led to the defeats (Q 3:120-123). Such verses stand in contrast to his earlier writings. Earlier I cited Don Richardson's list of 109 war verses in the Qur'an (see footnote 20). Only four of these verses come from the time when Muhammad was in Mecca. The other 105 war verses come from the Medina years. The Mecca verses focus on the blessings due those who "strive" for Muhammad's religion:

But (to) those who were victimised (sic) and left their homes and then fought and endured patiently, your Lord will surely be forgiving and kind (Q. 16:110).

He who strives does so for himself. Verily God is independent of the creatures of the world (Q 29:6).

We shall guide those who strive in Our cause to the paths leading straight to Us. Surely God is with those who do good (Q 29:69).

He [Allah] knows some among you will be sick, and some will be travelling (sp.) over the earth in search of the bounty of God, and some fighting in the way of God . . . And what you send for yourself of the good, you will find it with God better and greater in reward (Q 73:20).

Meanwhile, there is an entirely different flavor of the Medina verses. These are active, not passive; duty is emphasized rather than blessing; victory is showcased rather than endurance. A few examples:

Remember when you set forth in the morning from your house assigning the faithful positions for the battle, God heard everything and knew all. . . For God had helped you during the Battle of Badr at a time when you were helpless (Q 3:120, 123).

Those who barter the life of this world for the next should fight in the way of God. And We shall bestow on him who fights in the way of God, whether he is killed or is victorious, a glorious reward (Q 4:74).

Muhammad was raised in a male-oriented society, yet women played an important role in his life. His father died shortly before his birth; thus, the only parent he knew in his formative years was his mother. Muhammad's mother, Amina, died when he was only six and then he was passed off to first a grandfather and then an uncle. During this time he spent time with Bedouins in the desert and learned to be a camel driver and sheep and goat herder. By the time Muhammad was 25 years old, again a woman played a major role in his life. He served a wealthy widow, Khadija, some 15 years his senior. Eventually they married and their only surviving child was a daughter, Fatima. When Muhammad had his first revelation from Gabriel, he did not know if it was from heaven or hell. It was Khadija who assured him that it was of God and became his first convert.

More could be said, but this should suffice to demonstrate that Muhammad's personal biography gave him a different view of women than, perhaps, was typical. From society he believed that men were more valuable than women, and, hence, were to receive more of the inheritance. "As for the children, God decrees that the share of the male is equivalent to that of two females" (Q 4:11). Similarly men were more trustworthy than women:

If the borrower is deficient of mind or infirm, or unable to explain, let the guardian explain judiciously; and have two of your men to act as witnesses; but if two men are not available, then a man and two women you approve, so that in case one of them is confused the other may prompt her (Q 2:282).

Then there is the disparaging remark about women—that Allah made angels male, not female, lest women become haughty (Q 37:150). Clearly the most quoted passage about the inequality of men and women is quoted below. Here Allah gives men permission to beat their wives:

Men are the managers of the affairs of women for that God has preferred one of them over another, and for that they have expended of their property. Righteous women are therefore obedient, guarding the secret of God's guarding. And those you fear may be rebellious admonish; banish them to their couches,

and beat them. If they obey you, look not for any way against them; God is All-high, All great (Q 4:34).

If Muhammad processed societal expectations concerning women into the Qur'an, then he also added his own personal appreciation for women. In theory men and women come from a single soul (Q 4:1) and stand equal before Allah (Q 16:97; 33:35). Allah is said to accept the work of men and women (Q 3:195). Men and women are expected to live together in peace (Q 30:20-21) and help each other (Q 2:187; 9:71).

Muhammad was a man of incredible drive and energy. Especially during the Medina years, he simultaneously wore many different hats. He was an administrator, warrior, religious leader, family man, and ruler over all Arabia. As noted earlier, as his perspective changed so did Qur'anic revelations. He certainly realized that there were blatant contradictions in his teachings. Since he could not undo what had been done and unsay what had been said, he taught the doctrine of Abrogation. It is clearly spelled out in a passage which dates to the Medina years:

When We cancel a message or throw it into oblivion, We replace it with one better or one similar. Do you not know that God has power over all things (Q 2:106)? Because of the central significance of this doctrine, it bears repeating but in a different translation: Such of Our revelations as We abrogate or cause to be forgotten, we bring (in place) one better or the like thereof. Knowest thou not that Allah is Able to do all things (Q 2:106)?

Here is how it works. During the Mecca years, Muhammad allowed for the drinking of alcoholic beverages (Q 16:67). During the Medina years he abrogated it and forbade the practice (Q 2:219). Or again, in 124 verses Allah is said to practice patience and tolerance for idolaters. In one fell swoop he abrogates these by demanding that non-Muslims be slain (Q 9:5).²⁴

We see glimpses of the unique man, Muhammad, in his unbridled joy during the most extraordinary and then the most mundane of circumstances. At the terminus of the Battle of Badr the head of the enemy leader was thrown down at Muhammad's feet. The gleeful prophet is reported to have said, "It is more acceptable

to me than the choicest of camels in Arabia” (Shorrosh 1988:58). Meanwhile, one of his wives, Aisha (whom he married when she was only nine years old), reported that Muhammad liked to quietly stay home, mend his own clothes and that he “laughed often and smiled much” (Shorrosh 1988:50). Muhammad was a man in society and society was in the man. He was chained to society and, at the same time, his individuality and creativity showed through. Both society and Muhammad are reflected in the Qur’an.

Conclusion

In this paper I have not pretended to provide an exhaustive presentation of the history, doctrines and practices of Islam. Such an undertaking would be virtually impossible. Rather, I have taken a different approach. In discussing the Qur’an I have used the analogy of four separate streams flowing together to form one river.

The first stream was that of local animism as practiced in Saudi Arabia before and during the lifetime of Muhammad. Next there was Judaism, not pure Old Testament Judaism but Jewish religion, including parts of the Bible, teachings of the Talmud, various Jewish traditions, and folk tales or stories. These were not carefully codified but were transmitted in haphazard fashion through word of mouth. Then, there were murky, polluted forms of Christianity mingled with massive misunderstandings. Finally there was the prophet Muhammad himself. He operated within the cultural and social confines of his society, yet his personal history and biography allowed him to add his own personal dimension and perspective on life.

Taken together, local animism, garbled Judaism, heretical Christianity, and Muhammad’s normal and abnormal life came together. They formed the Qur’an, “the river of muddy waters” as I have phrased it.

In retrospect, it is not surprising that the Qur’an was written. As it is, the book forms a useful glimpse of the chaos and confusion that was Saudi Arabia in the 7th century A.D. Herein lies its value. Furthermore, the book is a personal psychology and expose into the psyche of its author, Muhammad. As a source of ultimate and

timeless truth, however, its waters are so polluted that they must not even be sipped.

Endnotes

¹There is no shortage of books on Muslims. The reader is encouraged to peruse the writings of Braswell (2000), Ehlke (2004), Farah (2000), Miller (1995), Wagner (2004), and Warraq (2003). Likewise papers, both published and unpublished, abound. The web site of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Seminary, for example, has conference papers which can be downloaded. The following appear under the heading “Muslim”: Hartwig (1993), Wendland (1989), Schmeling (1981), Geiger (1970), Cloute (2002) and Siggelkow (2001). The ink is barely dry on a paper by Evangelical Lutheran Synod pastor David Russow (2005).

²Definitions and discussions of animism can be found in Angrosino (2004), Bolle (1987), Grunlan and Mayers (1988), Haviland, Prins, McBride, and McBride (2005), Hoebel and Weaver (1979), Hunter and Whitten (1976), Keesing (1976), Pals (1996), Schlagel (1985), Taber (1981), Tanney (1998), and Tylor (1871).

³Definitions and discussions of magic can be found in Durkheim (1969), Ember and Ember (1977), Frazer (1975), Gmelch (1978), Heider (2001), Hoebel and Frost (1976), Hunter and Whitten (1976), Johnstone (2004), Keesing (1976), Malinowski (1954), Wall Malefijt (1989) and Winick (1964).

⁴The translation used here is found in Cook (2000:34). In addition to this reference, the translations of the Qur’an used in this paper include Ali (2001), Rodwell (2004) and the often used translation of Pickthall (2000). Comment should be made about the referencing of the Qur’an used in this paper. Passages from the Qur’an are cited Q (for Qur’an) followed by chapter or sura followed by a colon and then the verse, as in (Q 3:120-123). It should be noted that while the various English translation of the Qur’an all identify the same chapters, there is some discrepancy on verses. The reader may have to look at the verse(s) before or after the cited reference to located the desired passage.

⁵Good information on the Ka'aba and its connections to various deities can be found in Warraq (2003:34-41) and Miller (1995:230-239). Various Qur'anic passages which deal with pilgrimage and the Qur'an can be found in 2:125, 189, 196-203; 3:97; 5:1-2, 95-96; 9:3; 14:37; 17:1; 22:26-29; etc.

⁶Snippets of information about the Arabian Jews at the time of Muhammad can be found in Ehlke (2004), Miller (1995), and Warraq (2003) while standard histories such as that of Farah (2000) go into more depth.

⁷This bit of intriguing information comes from Haykal (1993:151).

⁸The reader is invited to check *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book*, edited by Ibn Warraq (1998). Three essays in that volume drive home the point: "What Did Muhammad Borrow from Judaism?" (Geiger 1998), "The Sources of Islam" (Clair-Tisdall 1998), and "The Jewish Foundation of Islam" (Torrey 1998). Meanwhile, Warraq's (2003:49-61) own summary of this topic is succinct and worth reading.

⁹Aaron (Harun), Abel (Habil), Abraham (Ibrahim), Adam (Adam), Cain (Qabil), David (Daud), Elias (Ilyas), Elijah (Alyasa), Enoch (Idris), Ezra (Uzair), Gabriel (Jibril), God (Yajuj), Goliath (Jalut), Isaac (Ishaq), Ishmael (Ismail), Jacob (Yacub), Job (Aiyub), Jonah (Yunus), Joshua (Yusha'), Joseph (Yusuf), Korah (Qarun), Lot (Lut), Magog (Majuj), Michael (Mikail), Moses (Musa), Noah (Nuh), Pharaoh (Firaun), Saul (Talut), Solomon (Sulaiman), Terah (Azar). This information is provided by Warraq (2003:54). To this list we might add the name Haman and others.

¹⁰The point about the omission of the Passover is emphasized by Richardson (2003:33). Reader beware—Richardson is guilty of sloppy scholarship and biased reporting. His book is an unabashed polemic and does not treat the Qur'an or Islam in a fair-minded fashion.

¹¹This, anyway, is the belief of H. P. Smith in *The Bible and Islam* as well as Charles Torrey (1998:296).

¹²For more specifics see Torrey (1998:343-348).

¹³In conjunction with the Monophysites, the reader also may wish to investigate the Jacobite and Nestorian presence in Saudi Arabia at the time of Mohammad.

¹⁴St. Clair-Tisdall (1998:260-264) quotes at length from the *Protevangeliem* of James the Less, the *History of our Holy Father the Aged, the Carpenter (Joseph), History of the Nativity of Mary and the Savior's Infancy*, and other sources.

¹⁵Muhammad may have gained the impression that Christians worshiped Mary as part of the Trinity through his contact with Monophysites, as has been noted.

¹⁶Some have tried to link this heresy with that of the Docetism. This seems a bit far-fetched, however, since the Qur'an portrays Jesus as flesh and blood rather than a shadow-figure.

¹⁷Before proceeding any further, the reader must realize that the notion that the Qur'an is the end product of the amalgamation of various traditions is not original with this writer. No doubt many have made the case more convincingly than I. Muslim author Farid Esack (2005:8), for example, laments the writings of Crone and Cook (1977) and Wansbrough (1977) who, according to him, see the Qur'an as the "illegitimate offspring of Jewish parents" or "Jewish and Christian parents." Such people he labels "voyeurs," "revisionists," or "disinterested observers." Again, I must confess that I place myself in this camp.

¹⁸Most libraries contain books with the word "Islam" in the title. If not the first, then at least the second chapter will contain a history of Muhammad's life. Typical examples include *Islam the Straight Path* by Esposito (2005), *Islam Beliefs and Observances* by Farah (2000),

Islam by Rahman (1979), and Islam edited by Williams (1962). The reader who is willing to plow through 639 pages of text is invited to study *The Life of Muhammad* by Haykal (1993).

¹⁹Personal conversations with [REDACTED], a former Muslim converted to Christianity, confirmed that Islam and the Qur'an are all about submission.

²⁰Richardson (2003:254) bases his verse notations on the Dawood (1999) translation of the Qur'an. According to him the 109 war verses are found in:

Sura	2	178, 179, 190, 191, 193, 216, 217, 218, 244
	3	121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 140, 155, 165, 166, 167, 169, 173, 195
	4	71, 72, 74, 75, 76, 77, 84, 89, 91, 94, 95, 100, 102, 104
	5	33, 35, 38
	8	5, 7, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17, 39, 42, 45, 59, 65, 67, 69, 71, 72, 74, 75
	9	5, 12, 13, 14, 16, 19, 20, 24, 25, 26, 29, 36, 38, 39, 41, 44, 52, 73, 81, 83, 86, 88, 92, 111, 120, 122, 123
	16	110
	22	39, 78
	29	6, 69
	33	7, 18, 20, 25, 26
	47	20
	48	16, 22
	59	2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 14
	60	9
	61	4
	63	4
	64	14
	66	9
	73	20

²¹The Qur'an provides few details of the life of Muhammad. The Hadith, written over two centuries after his death, contains the oral

traditions about the sayings and deeds of the prophet. It might be regarded as historical fiction, and if this is the case much of the biography of Muhammad is shrouded in uncertainty.

²²In Medina, through diplomacy, Muhammad united two large tribes that had been fighting and which constituted about 80 percent of the population. When diplomacy failed to achieve his ends, he slaughtered the local Jews following his success in the Battle of Badr.

²³The 28 chapters of the Qur'an which were revealed while Muhammad was in Medina are 2-5, 8-9, 13, 22, 24, 33, 47-49, 55, 57-66, 76, 98-99, and 110. The remaining 86 chapters were revealed in Mecca. Some scholars maintain that no one can properly interpret the Qur'an without taking this into account. Thus, Cook (2000:130) writes:

According to Hisham ibn 'Urwa (d. about 763), everything in the Koran which speaks of the communities and generations of the past, or establishes the credentials of the Prophet, was revealed to him in Mecca. By contrast, everything that prescribes duties and norms of behaviour was revealed to him in Medina. A division of this kind (with allowances for a limited amount of material revealed elsewhere) is fundamental to Muslim scholarship on the Koran, and it has likewise been adopted by Western scholars. Both proceed by allocating each Sura to one of the two cities, but both are then prepared to assign particular passages of the Sura in question to the other city.

²⁴The doctrine of Abrogation is all-important in understanding contemporary political posturing. Since 9/11 many Muslim speakers have gone to universities advocating that Islam is a religion of peace (rhetoric also used by President George W. Bush). They back up their statement by quoting peace passages from the Qur'an. Meanwhile, to non-Western audiences the war passages are accentuated. Adherents are told that the message of peace has been abrogated by the message of jihad.

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Demon Possession

Biblical and Historical Testimonies

by William C. Mack

In the sixteenth century Doctor Daniel Sennert, a physician, believed that demon-infested bodies should be treated so violently that the demons would be forced to leave. (1.) Voices challenging his views sprung up decades later. Reacting to the horrible and inhumane mistreatment of so many mentally disturbed patients, belief in demons was discarded by many along with the tortuous methods that had been prevalent for years. The “baby”, so to speak, was “thrown out with the bath water.”

The question for us today is, how should we Confessional Lutherans think of demonic possession?

Demonic possession is a phenomenon largely ignored by the American people and mostly sensationalized by the American media. However, the reality of this occurrence cannot be verified by personal experience nor dismissed by human reasoning. We must base our beliefs (regarding demonic possession) on Holy Scripture; embracing the witness of our fore-fathers and our dogmaticians in the light of God’s inerrant Word.

Let us first consider the Biblical evidence for demonic possession.

In the Old Testament, while “Satan” is mentioned in three books (I Chronicles, Job and Psalms) and “devils” in four (Leviticus, Deuteronomy, II Chronicles and Psalms- all from the N.K.J.V.), the only case the author could find of (coming close to) demonic possession is found in I Samuel (16: 14-23 & 19:9) where an “unclean spirit was upon Saul.” (2.) Perhaps Leviticus 20:27 (referring to “familiar spirits” (N.K.J.V.)) can be considered in that category as well.

However, the New Testament has over 100 references to “devil, devils, demons”, 36 listings of the use of “Satan” and 13 listings for the term “possessed with devils” (δαίμονιζομαι). (3.). For the writers of Scripture, Satan and his demons were as real as God Himself.

Concentrating on the subject of demonic possession we see, in the Gospels, demons possessing people in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

In the first Gospel, Matthew records a boy falling into fires or bodies of water because a demon had control of his body (Mt. 17: 15-16, also Mk. 9: 14-29 & Lk. 9: 37-43a). In that same Gospel, Jesus “gave them (His disciples) power over unclean spirits, to cast them out”. (Mt.10: 1 & 8). Matthew also records the story of a Gentile woman whose daughter was “severely demon-possessed.” (Mt. 15:22).

Saint Mark records the casting out of a demon from a Gentiles’ daughter (Mk. 7:26 & 30). He also writes about Christ casting out demons from a man in a synagogue (Mk. 1: 21-27, Lk. 4: 32-37, cf. Mk. 1: 32-34). The Lord would, in addition, give His disciples “power...to cast out demons” (Mk. 3: 15, 6:7).

Saint Luke, too, records Christ’s bestowal (to His disciples) of the ability to have “power and authority over all demons” (Lk. 9:1). Perhaps the best known case of demon possession is found in Luke 8:26-39 (also, Mk. 5: 1-20 & Mt. 8: 28-34) where “a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time” was healed. In this Gospel Jesus also gives a description of the actions of a demon “when (it) goes out of a man...” (Lk. 11:24, also Mt. 12:43) and of souls being “healed” who had demons (Lk. 6: 18, cf. Lk. 7:21).

Perhaps the most infamous case of demonic possession in the Gospels is found in Luke, which says, “Then Satan entered Judas...” (Lk. 22:3).

Overall, there is no question that demonic possession was real, according to the Gospel accounts.

Demons/devils are also referred to in the New Testament as “unclean spirits” (ακαθαρτος) (4.). (Used over 20 times in the New Testament).

Aside from passages already mentioned in the Gospel accounts, we also see demon possession in the book of Acts. In Acts 5:16, the apostles healed those “who were tormented by unclean spirits”. Philip caused unclean spirits to “cry out with a loud voice” and to “come out of many who were possessed”. (Acts 8:7). A slave girl in the town of Philipi who was “demon-possessed” was relieved

of that demon by Saint Paul (Acts 16: 18). While in Ephesus, the apostle Paul worked miracles “so that...evil spirits went out of them”. (Acts 19:12).

There is no question that demonic possession was real, according to the book of Acts.

II. The Testimony of the Patriarchs

The evidence in the Holy Scriptures is overwhelming as to the reality of demon possession. But what do the “patriarchs” of the faith say? Do we have any testimony from the early church fathers? Yes.

In the epistle of Barnabas, written about the beginning of the second century, men are warned to hate the works of iniquity “lest the ‘black one’ should enter into them”. (5.).

Justin Martyr (105-167 AD), in his second Apology addressed to the Roman senate, says, “(There are) numberless demoniacs throughout the whole world and in your city (and) many of our Christian men- exorcising them in the name of Jesus Christ who was crucified under Pontious Pilate- have healed and do heal, rendering (help to the) helpless, and driving the possessing demon out of the men, though they could not be cured by all other exorcists, and those who use incantations and drugs.” (6.).

Tertullian (160- 230 AD) says in his Apology addressed to the rulers of the Roman Empire, “....Let a person be brought before your tribunals who is plainly under demoniacal possession.” (7.).

Cyprian (200- 258 AD) said, “Nevertheless these evil spirits adjured by the living God immediately obey us, submit to us...and are forced to come out of the bodies they possess.” (8.).

Athanasius (293- 373 AD) writes, “Let him (the believer) use the sign of the Cross, which the heathen laugh at, and they shall see how the devils fly away affrighted, how the oracles immediately cease, and all the enchantments of magic remain destitute of their usual force.” (9.).

Whether we agree with the early church father’s approach to demonic possession or not, there is no doubt that they considered it a reality.

We now travel to the “age of orthodoxy”.

In the Book of Concord “demon/demonic” and/or “demons” are mentioned 20 times. (10.). “Devils” and “devilish” are used 14 times. The term “devil” is listed 214 times! The reality of demons/the Devil is unquestionable as far as the writers of our Confessions are concerned.

Indeed, Luther writes in the Smalcald Articles, “”They (those who ‘neglect their parishes, their wives, and children, etc.’) do so simply because the devil has possessed the pope to praise and approve of these practices in order that great multitudes of people may turn aside from Christ to their own merits and (what is worst of all) become idolaters.” (SA, II: 19). It appears that Luther took the presence of demons seriously.

In his anthology of “What Luther Says”, Ewald M. Plass gives 43 citations from Dr. Martin Luther’s works, pertaining to the reality of the devil. (11.). Humorously (I assume), in Table Talk, Luther said of the devil, “I often drive him away with flatulence.” But on a more somber note, Luther writes elsewhere concerning demonic possession itself, “We cannot now and also should not drive out the devils with certain ceremonies and words as previously the prophets, Christ and the apostles did. We should pray in the name of Jesus Christ and seriously admonish the church to pray that the dear God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ will free the possessed person through His mercy. If only such prayer is made with faith in Christ’s promise in John 16:23, then it is strong and powerful so that the devil must retreat from the person, as I could relate some examples. Otherwise we cannot drive out evil spirits and also do not have the power to do it.” (emphasis mine) (12.). There is no doubt that Doctor Martin Luther believed in the reality of demonic possession!

Johannes Quenstedt (1617-88), an orthodox, Lutheran dogmatician in Wittenberg writes, “The proper marks of physical (demonic) possession are:

1. The knowledge of foreign languages as well as arts and sciences which the possessed persons have never before learned and, if they are freed, no longer know.
2. Knowing and stating things which are hidden, which have

happened elsewhere, in very distant regions, or which are in the future.

3. Superhuman or supernatural power and strength
4. The exact reproduction of the voices of birds, sheep, cattle, etc., without the disposition of the (speech) organs necessary for it.
5. Obscenity in speech.
6. Monstrosity in gestures.
7. Horrifying screaming (Mark 5:5).
8. Blasphemy toward God and scorn for the neighbor.
9. Fury and violence against one's own body and against the others watching (Mt. 8: 26, 17:15, Mk. 5:5, Acts 19:16).

Physical (demonic) possession can be recognized from these and similar signs, which, however, do not all occur at the same time in every possessed person but sometimes more, sometimes less. But a special caution is required so that those who are severely ill are not considered possessed.” (13.). Needless to say, Quenstedt believed in the reality of demonic possession!

In the 18th century, King Christian V commissioned “some of the foremost clerics here in the our kingdom of Denmark” to “humbly prepare a ritual, according to the order and reason” to introduce “the conduct of the Divine Service and the Church ceremonies in our kingdom Denmark and Norway”. (14.) Chapter six of this Church Ritual is entitled, “How One Shall Deal With The Afflicted, Possessed, Imprisoned and Evil-doers”. Article three (of same) is entitled, “On The Possessed and Those Who Are Plagued By The Devil Or His Evil Instruments In Some Other Way” (see appendix 1). The Lutheran king of Denmark and Norway in the 18th century believed in the reality of demon possession.

Another “patriarch” we now turn to, in the latter part of the 19th century, is C.F.W. Walther. He writes, “As far as bodily possession by the devil is concerned, the preacher must know that

physical possession can be imposed by God even on devout children of God. J.W. Baier writes: “Satan’s works include also physical possession, by virtue of which Satan dwells essentially in the bodies not only of godless persons but sometimes even of devout persons, and works in them by divine permission. Namely when God either directly or indirectly (that is, through people, either through good ones, for example, ministers of the church when they exclude coarse sinners by excommunication (I Cor. 5:5, I Tim. 1:20), or through evil ones who intend to harm others, for example, by means of spells and curses) permits people to be subjected to Satan.

For although the purpose of this possession from Satan’s side is harm and corruption, in part to the person himself, in part to other people; yet from God’s side, Who permits it and is thereby either visiting severe sins (despising God’s Word, carnal security, blasphemies, conspiracy with the devil) with His serious judgment or is rebuking and testing devout persons through physical chastening, the purpose is the revelation of His power, righteousness and goodness, and the repentance, faith, and salvation of people, if not of the possessed person himself, at least of others, namely the eye and ear witnesses.” (15.). Walther, too, accepted the reality, not only of demons, but of their ability to possess people...even Christians! Perhaps he was referring to the demon-possessed man who “worshipped Him (Christ)” (Mk. 5:6) before being delivered from demon-possession.

III. The Testimony of Modern-day Theologians.

But what of more modern-day theologians? In spite of all the testimony of the Scriptures and the earlier Church fathers, conservative, highly respected men like Dr. Paul E. Kretzmann would write, “In regard to the question whether this peculiar malady, possession of evil spirits, is still found in our days, and especially, whether this is true in individual cases, it is best to hold opinion and judgment in abeyance...We have no Scriptural ground for assuming the existence of this form of disease in our days.” (16.). Even a man who thoroughly documented the activities of Satan in the New Testament with his conservative commentary questioned, for no

apparent reason, the ability/activity of the Devil today in possessing people! Could the school of German higher-criticism, active at that time, sowed seeds of doubt even in this renowned theologian? Separating the historical facts of the New Testament from application in “our days” (without Biblical reason) is a dangerous spiritual precedent to set indeed. From such thinking liberalism, modernism and post-modernism have sprung up; enemies of the Christian Church.

From denying the existence of demon possession to denying it occurs to believers, we turn to Neo-Pentecostals/”Charismatics.” They are perhaps best well known today for “casting out demons” in their “worship” services. But they, too, like post-modernists, deny that believers can be possessed. “The Assemblies of God denomination issued a 15 page position booklet refuting the idea that Christians can have indwelling demons. It concludes that such teaching is unbiblical and erodes the biblical concept of salvation and peace.” ((Gospel Publishing House, Springfield, MO. 1972). So speak the “holiness” errorists.

However, a few years after P.E. Kretzmann’s work, Doctor John Fritz, professor at Concordia Theological Seminary and author of Pastoral Theology wrote, “Demonic possession-”.....Among those who were afflicted and healed by Jesus four different kinds of sick people are mentioned..... “2.) those which were possessed with devils... We have no reason to believe that cases of demoniac possession were limited to the time of Christ and the Apostles, and to the early Church. Nevertheless, great care must be exercised in the diagnosis, especially if demoniac possession is suspected in a person who is known to be a sincere Christian, a child of God.” (17.). (He continues by listing the same symptoms as Quenstedt had listed previously).

We now turn to the testimony of Professor Joh. Ylvisaker; author of The Gospels (published originally in the Norwegian language). This conservative Lutheran writer states, “When a person is possessed (by demons), the situation is, however, somewhat different (than illness). The personality is also, to be sure, in restraint, but the condition is quite different from mere bodily disease. Human nature is then wholly stifled under the alien power of the devil - it

is unresisting and submissive. In obsession, the devil employs the human organism as his personal instrument, he speaks and acts as if it were his own. Even the spirit is forced from its central position in the personality of the possessed person, and the human entity is null and void. It is the demoniac spirit which rules and controls the individual. It is the rational principle of the demon which operates through the human personality, thinks its thoughts, speaks its words, and acts its deeds. A foreign entity has forced out the human, and had taken the entire personality into its service. The relation is, so to speak, purely mechanical.” (18.).

Doctor John T. Mueller, author of *Christian Dogmatics*, writes “Bodily obsession (possession) occurs when the devil immediately and locally inhabits and governs the body, controlling it according to his will, (Mk. 5: 1-19, Lk. 8: 26-39). Bodily obsession is an affliction which may befall even true, believing Christians, as the passages just quoted show. In all cases of bodily obsession a person has no intellectual, emotional, and volitional functions of his own, but as long as the obsession endures, Satan, who is personally (κατ ουσίαν) present in him, acts in and through him, so that in all cases of bodily obsession human responsibility ceases. (Cp. cases in which persons who are bodily obsessed deplore in moments of recovery the blasphemies which they uttered)”. (19.).

Doctor Francis Pieper in his *Christian Dogmatics* books writes, “Bodily possession (obsessio corporalis) presents an entirely different case. Also children of God may suffer this affliction; by it the devil, under God’s sufferance, takes possession of a man by personally (κατ ουσίαν) dwelling in him, so that the demoniac, bereft of the use of his reason and will, becomes the involuntary instrument of Satan. The human personality no longer functions; the devil in person (αυτοροσωπως) becomes the acting subject. The demoniac is no longer responsible for his actions.”(emphasis mine) (20.).

In reference to the doctrine of the Lord’s Supper, Pieper writes, “...Excluded (from the Sacrament) therefore are children, the sleeping.....and possessed while not in their right mind, etc..” (21.)

Doctor William F. Arndt, orthodox Lutheran writer and author of *A Greek-English Lexicon of The New Testament and*

Bible Commentary: Saint Luke , writes an entire page and a half (!) on “Demonic Possession” (not to be reprinted here in full!). He says, in part, “The real nature of this terrible scourge (demonic possession) can be spoken of only with awe. The evil spirit or spirits control the victim in such a way that what the latter says and does is the work of the demoniac visitor in him. Demonic possession means that the person afflicted constitutes a dual personality. He has a will, but his will is in the power of a visitor who has come to occupy him....Why were there many cases of demoniac possession at the time of Jesus? The only reply we can give is that Satan saw a Stronger than He had come to deprive him of his power (Lk. 11:22), and he was now making a desperate effort to keep his dominions.” (22.).

IV. The Testimony of other, modern-day, orthodox Lutheran theologians.

Let us now turn to other, modern-day, orthodox Lutheran theologians. Professor Armin W. Schuetze and Professor Irwin J. Habek (both W.E.L.S.), co-authors of *The Shepherd Under Christ* , write, “Demonic Possession: Older textbooks of pastoral theology go to some length in discussing this phenomenon. That it can still appear is beyond question. We know from the gospels that the symptoms resembled those of insanity. But both the term and our Lord’s treatment of the cases with which He met show that demonic possession was different, due not to natural causes but to direct intervention of the devil. If a pastor were to encounter a case where a supernatural cause seems indicated, his resort will be prayer; both on his part and on the part of his congregation....

If he (the pastor) should encounter a bona fide cause of demonic possession, the pastor will fervently pray for the deliverance of his afflicted member. In counseling with the troubled person, I point out again and again that he or she is a redeemed child of God and that the demon has no right to that person’s body!” (23.).

Pastor Werner Franzmann (W.E.L.S.), author of *Bible History Commentary- New Testament*, writes, “From Luke’s account of this incident it is still more clear that we have here a case of demoniacal

possession....First of all, Scripture makes a clear distinction between demoniacal possession and ordinary diseases. Note that in this case (Lk. 4:33), as in others, Jesus addressed, not the person dominated by the evil spirit, but the demon who had taken possession of the sufferer. He did not address a mere disease, but a personal being.

This evil, personal being knew things concerning Jesus which the person afflicted by him could not possibly have known. Note also that the demons often did physical violence to the body of the person they possessed.....

Another point we should observe is that often those who want to reduce demoniac possession to insanity or epilepsy do so in the interest of taking the miraculous out of Jesus' healing of the demon-possessed. But the healing of the insane would be a miracle too. So what do they gain by their contention?

Now we take up the most serious aspect of this matter. If Jesus did not know that the people he healed were mere mental cases, then our Savior was as ignorant and superstitious as the people of his time are alleged to have been. If Jesus really did know the true condition of the afflicted people, and yet acted as though they were demon-possessed, then we are asked to believe in a Savior who was a deceiver. We reject either conclusion. We have a Savior who knows all things and in whose mouth there is found no deceit." (24.).

He continues in another place, "Recall especially that in such cases (of demon possession) it was not the person possessed by demons who acted and spoke, but that demons used the bodies of their victims as their unwilling instruments. And note once again that Jesus always addressed the demon or demons, not the person in the grip of demons." (25.)

Pastor Harold E. Wicke (W.E.L.S.), author of *Mark- The People's Bible* says, "Many theologians deny the possibility of demon-possession then (in Jesus' time) and now. It is true that we, today, do not identify many such cases. Perhaps the trouble is with us- we fail to recognize them. But we also know that Satan and his evil angels are sufficiently wise to adapt themselves to the times." (26.).

In a paper written for the North WI District, Rhinelander Conference (W.E.L.S.), Rev. Robert Smith writes, "Can there be

demon-possession today? Since there was demon-possession in the days of the apostles after Christ ascended into Heaven, there seems to be no reason to claim that there can be no demon-possession today. In a country such as ours, where human reason has accomplished much and where supernaturalism is considered unreasonable, reported cases of demon-possession are few....Indeed, in cultures that do not lay so much stress on science and human reason, there are many reports of demon-possession....Dr. Nevius (a missionary to China in the late 19th century) later studied cases of demon possession and came to the conclusion that there were real cases of it in 19th century China. His study led him to come up with certain classical signs of possession.” (listed in J.W. Montgomery’s book, *Demon Possession*, 1976, pg. 224) (27.).

In his book *Wizards That Peep*, Dr. Siegbert Becker (W.E.L.S. seminary professor) said, “I would be inclined to agree with Dr. Walther that we can assume that also believers can be possessed, but that they should be comforted with the assurance that the Lord Jesus has taken away their sins and will not hold them accountable for obscenities and blasphemies which they have uttered involuntarily. On the other hand, they should be reminded of the promise of God that says, ‘Resist the devil and he will flee from you.’” (28.).

In his conference paper, *Exorcism in The Bible and Today*, written for the Metro North Pastoral Conference, Rev. Arthur Koepsell (W.E.L.S.) writes, (under sub-section, “Possession Today”), “Naturally there are many who oppose the idea that possession exists today or even the Scriptural truth that it existed at the time of Christ and that He actually performed exorcisms. There are essentially three theories that oppose the Biblical truth. First, there is the ‘Mythical Theory’. The basic idea of this hypothesis, advanced notably by David Fredrich Strauss and the Mythical School, is that the whole narrative of Jesus’ demon expulsions is merely symbolic; without actual foundation of fact. Demon possession, so called, is but a vivid symbol of the prevalence of evil in the world, and the casting out of demons by our Lord, a corresponding figure of triumph over evil by His doctrine and life. The second theory is the ‘Accommodation Theory’. The proponents of the accommodation theory say that our Lord and the Evangelists, in making reference to demon possession,

spoke only in accommodation to the prevalent ignorance and superstition of their auditors, without making any assertion as to the actual existence or non-existence of the phenomena described, or the truth or falsity of current belief. The third theory is the ‘Hallucination Theory’. Demon possession is explained, under the hypothesis of hallucination, as a mere psychological delusion on the part of the victim, who, diseased and distraught, becomes wrought up to such a high pitch of emotional frenzy or mental excitement that he imagines himself possessed and controlled by another and more powerful being. Under the suppression of human consciousness and the dethronement of reason, he speaks in the character of the fancied demon. The cure of this strange illusion is virtually the same as the ejection from him of a real demon.

It simply must be said that with our view of Scripture which is merely the view that Scripture gives us of itself, all three of these theories can be shot full of holes. It’s merely an attempt to deny the existence of God and His divine intervention in man’s affairs.” (29.).

Thus “endeth” the testimony of the Scriptures, the early Church fathers, the early and latter patriarchs of the faith and more modern-day, orthodox Lutheran theologians (as far as this paper is concerned). However, this research is but the “tip of the ice-berg”. Needless to say, there is an overwhelming plethora of information on this subject by other Lutheran sources, other reformed and Roman Catholic writers.

V. Practical Suggestions

We now come to the sub-section of this paper entitled, Practical Suggestions. With all of the aforementioned information in hand, we must answer for ourselves, “What do we do with it?” If we do, in fact, accept the testimony of the Holy Scriptures and that of the fore-fathers of the faith, how shall we orthodox, Lutheran theologians handle cases of demon possession today?

First let us differentiate between actual, demon possession and conditions which have physical roots which may be confused with demonic possession. Broadly speaking, these include organic,

As Doctor Rodger K. Bufford, editor of “Counseling and the Demonic” writes, “Organic mental disorders may result from a host of biological causes, including the effects of aging, toxic effects of prescription drugs, alcohol or substance abuse, brain tumors, strokes and hardening of cerebral arteries, brain injuries, infections, and nutritional deficiencies or excesses. The symptomatic manifestations are quite diverse; including such features as delirium, delusions, hallucinations, impaired judgment, dementia, amnesia, apathy, lethargy, incontinence, psychomotor impairment, anxiety, and depression.” (30.). These conditions/disorders, however, do not negate the reality of true, demonic possession.

So how should we handle demon possession? As already noted, Dr. Martin Luther did not believe that demons can be cast out “as they were in the time of the apostles”. Neo-Pentecostals and “Charismatics” of today, however, profess to have the same miraculous gifts of the apostolic era; including that of casting out demons. Should we, then, seek out the “gift of miracles” so we might cast out demons? No! I agree with Luther and Walther that demons must be dealt with differently today.

Why? While Mark 16: 17-20 says, “And He (Jesus) said to them (11 apostles) and these signs (σημειον) will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons....(etc.)” , these miraculous gifts (tongues, healing, casting out demons, etc.) were given to the apostles and they, solely, were able to bestow them upon other believers. These “confirmatory (βεβαιω) signs” (Mk. 16:20, Heb. 2:4), while publicly validating the preaching of the apostles as divine, were apostolic (2 Cor. 12:12); ceasing when all of the apostles, and those who came into contact with them, passed away.

Walther, for example, says (re: “the ancient gifts of the Holy Spirit”), “For in the beginning of the churches the manifest gifts of the Holy Spirit were given to the people when the apostles laid hands on them.” (31.). (emphasis mine). This is exactly the main theme of Concordia Theological Seminary Professor Douglas Judisch’s book “An Evaluation of Claims To The Charismatic Gifts”. (32). Reverend Arthur Clement (W.E.L.S.) writes in his book (Pentecost or Pretense?), “By the second century the number of men upon

whom the apostles laid hands and bestowed miracle-working power was dwindling. Only Saint John lived to the end of the first century (or close to it).” (33.). (Former) dean of the W.E.L.S. seminary, Rev. David Valleskey, writes in his “Gifted to Serve” set, “Gifts for the apostolic age: 1. Foundational: a. apostle, b. prophet and discernment, 2. Confirmatory: a. miracles/healings, b. tongues/interpretation.” (34.). Even P. E. Kretzmann says, “The most extraordinary gifts of the apostolic days are not found in our congregations today...” (among them the gift of miracles, ex., casting out demons). (35.). Finally, in its first edition, the Lutheran Cyclopedia (1954) states, “Among special gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit upon the Early Church were some of a miraculous character- speaking in tongues, prophesying, healing the sick, and casting out demons. I Cor. 14; Matt. 10:8, Mk. 6:13...In apostolic times these were bestowed by the laying on of hands, (Acts 8:17, 19:6).” 36.)(emphasis mine). They are no more.

We, therefore, need not be “wooded”, nor intimidated, by the Neo-Pentecostal movement of today because we do not have the “gift of casting out demons!” No! Satan, I believe, is working with the methods of the Charismatics and the Roman Catholics. They (the “Charismatics”) are not working against the Prince of Darkness but are in league with him (insofar as their false doctrines and false methods)!

However, this is not to say that God (in answer to the Christian’s prayer and in conjunction with His efficacious Word) does not cast out demons today. In fact, He does ! The Lord heals, protects us from harm and miraculously bestows upon Christian souls many gifts and abilities that we, naturally, could never attain.... And He casts out demons!

Thanks be to God, demons are cast out today by the Lord Himself as the faithful fathers of the past have encouraged us. We should pray in earnest for, and with, those who are possessed by Satan or his demons. After speaking with the individual and carefully discerning, to the best of our Christian knowledge (and, perhaps, with the assistance of a physician) that we may indeed be dealing with such a case, we must pray boldly and with conviction; using the Gospel as our defense (Eph. 6: 12-18) and the Law as an offensive

weapon, when needed (Heb. 4:12); ex., Jesus in the desert, tempted by Satan.

Obvious signs, such as those already noted by Walther, Quenstedt, etc. lead us to immerse the possessed soul in the love, mercy, grace and forgiveness of Christ; both audibly in their presence and privately in our own devotions. If possession is publicly known, the congregation can be asked to intercede in prayer.

Let us not forget that counseling the demon-possessed has for its purpose to bring the soul back to, or strengthen them in, their baptismal reality; to the salvational joy and certainty of being Christ's own, forgiven child. Many "trips to the Cross" may follow but what blessings await those who were snared by the father of lies, now released, find themselves in the arms of their Savior. "Songs of thankfulness and praise, Jesus, Lord to Thee we raise" echo throughout the grateful soul.

For the Christian counselor willing to endure the vicious assaults of the devil through the possessed, incredible blessings also await. To actually be a part of God's plan to cast out a demon from a soul possessed is a rare privilege; albeit hard work!

Though threatened by the unwanted "guest"(demon) and seemingly thwarted by demonic determination to stay within the soul of the possessed, the counselor works as a loving friend and (if a believer) a brother in Christ; knowing that (beyond all doubt) the Holy Spirit is there working on the soul of the possessed and on the mind of the demon(s) through the medium of the Word of God. As Luther reminds us, "We cannot separate the Spirit from His Word", so we cling tenaciously, and solely to It in our care of these precious souls. The "sword of the Spirit" (Eph. 6:17) cuts (Heb. 4:12) and heals (Ps. 94:19); hence acting for the defense of both our soul and that of the possessed, for powerful attack on Satan and for the balm and healing of the possessed. Divine defense, powerful offense and much-needed healing; all found in God's Word.

It cannot be emphasized too often that the soul of the possessed need to hear the promises of the Gospel often; for defense and for strength to attack Satan themselves. The comfort of the Cross and empty Tomb, the many "facets" of Baptismal grace, and the blessed peace offered in the forgiveness of the Lord's Supper are

all sources of healing and strength.

To those pastors who simply “cannot deal with it” (demonic possession), the souls need to be referred to an orthodox Lutheran shepherd who will. The reformed and Roman Catholic “pastors” know little, or nothing, of God’s grace; hence the absence of comfort and true defense. Too often they just exacerbate the problem. Satan also, being the second most intelligent being in the universe, (God being the first) knows “how to work a crowd”; that is, he will work with errorists as long as they use sinful techniques. Threats (ex., physical harm) and superstition (anointing homes with “holy water”, etc.) may give the illusion of validity to the error. But it is yet another lie! Demons also seem to thoroughly enjoy psychoanalytic psychologists, psychotherapists and psychiatrists who draw the possessed into a continual review of their demonic experience; focusing the individual’s source of healing to be “from within”. This, in my experience and contacts, only serves to deepen the nightmarish experience! One “orthodox” brother pastor I know continually tells those who come to him with “severe problems” to “go to a psychiatrist and he’ll give you a pill”. The sad part is that he is serious!! “Pills”, while needed for many conditions (perhaps even needful, in part, for a short period for this situation due to organic situations that arise (already noted)) are not the overall, final “answer” for demonic possession! Essentially it is a spiritual problem. The answer lies in the pure Gospel.

Caring, understanding shepherds are needed for this traumatic side of the ministry. Respecting the soul, especially if one of our brothers or sisters-in-Christ, and assuring them that we will work with them, regardless of difficulty and inconvenience, brings loving reassurance and care to souls reaching out in desperate need and hope. Unfortunately, too many who cannot find help “end it” (demonic possession) by suicide.

The Word of grace needs to be the daily companion of one possessed. In-depth study of the many “facets” of the Gospel is invaluable for the pastor. I have found blessed help, for example, in ministering to these souls by personally meditating on “An Explanation of the History of the Suffering and Death of our Lord Jesus Christ”, by Rev. Johann Gerhard. (37.). Personal contact

by the pastor must also be supplemented by daily exposure to the Scriptures through private and family devotions (which focus on God's grace in Christ). Hymns and Christ-centered songs are an additional blessing of spiritual defense and nurture for the soul. As mentioned, a continual reminder of Baptismal blessings and the frequent reception of the Lord's Supper (to those, of course, in spiritual fellowship), both in worship and in private, also aid in recovery from demonic possession.

Suddenly, or gradually, the soul can be healed. Satan can be forced to leave. Possession can be stopped! As the soul learns more and more of demonic defeat through the "armor of grace", the traumatic nightmares, voices within, "blackouts", feelings of extreme hopelessness, etc., will become a thing of the past. The Holy Spirit, working through the means of grace, reclaims His own children; reassuring them of forgiveness, everlasting life and their status as His beloved, cleansed lambs.

The challenge is great! With all of our other responsibilities demanding our attention, counseling the demon-possessed often seems like the "straw that broke the camel's back". We simply, at times, are overwhelmed!....But God has given us the "tools", the weapons and "medicine", we need in the Law and in the Gospel (the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ). Whether we refer to another pastor, or ask the Lord for strength in dealing with it ourselves, we know (ultimately) that the victory lies within our Savior. May we learn to use God's Word of grace even more effectively so that we may valiantly "hold our ground" and "fight the good fight", to the glory of God and to the casting out of many demons from souls who are hurting beyond imagination. Let us bring them Jesus; their Savior, Friend and loving Shepherd.

In summary, we see that in the light of God's holy Word we cannot deny, nor ignore, the reality of demonic possession today. May the encouragement of the testimony of our spiritual fore-fathers and modern, orthodox theologians inspire us to delve into the Scriptures as never before so that we may "Lift High the Cross" and the empty Tomb of Christ to comfort and enlighten those poor, hurting souls possessed by demons. We end with these faith-building words:

*“Though devils all the world should fill,
All eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill,
They shall not over-power us.
This world’s prince may still
Scowl fierce as he will,
He can harm us none,
He’s judged; the deed is done;
One little word can fell him.”*
(Martin Luther - E.L.H. - #250)

Appendix 1

CHURCH RITUAL of Denmark and Norway
Copenhagen 1761

Published and paid for by Andreas Hartwig Godiche
the University Book Publishers and found at his shops
[©Translation by Mark DeGarmeaux]

ARTICLE III

ON THE POSSESSED AND THOSE WHO ARE PLAGUED BY THE DEVIL OR HIS EVIL INSTRUMENTS IN SOME OTHER WAY

If a pastor is called to someone who is considered to be possessed or plagued by the devil in some other way, then he must in no way refuse; but, according to the duty of his call, after first continually praying and interceding to God, he ought immediately to go to the sick person, in the Lord's name, and perceive his condition.

Even if he is not called, and it is known that there is such a person in his congregation, then he ought to go on his own, and, if he considers it wise, he can take with him his assistants or some other believers from the parish.

He must not be too hasty to judge in such a way as to make either too little or too much of it. For such examples (for which God be praised!) are rare nowadays in Christendom, since the Stronger One has come upon the strong, since the Lion of Judah has won the victory, and since the Angel from heaven, the great Serpent-Bruiser, Christ Jesus, has shown His power over Satan, and bound him with the chains of His eternal omnipotence, so that he cannot rule now as before (Rev. 20:1). Yet one still ought not to consider it fables, dreams, melancholy whims or other uneasiness of mind, when such are heard of among us, and should not think that we now are completely free from such afflictions of Satan, as though there was no place for him in Christendom any more, so that he is not so bound to the abyss. He still walks about on the earth daily,

as a roaring lion, to seize, tear, and devour whomever he finds (1 Pet. 5:8). And why shouldn't he be found among Christians now, as he was before among the Ephesians and Philipians, since Christ is taught and preached just as well among us (Acts 16:16; 19:15)? Satan was even in paradise and did not spare the perfect inhabitants (Gen. 3:1,13). He was even in the holy Temple, and did not spare God's own only-begotten Son (Matt. 4:5). What peace can we expect from him then, while we live here in this church militant on earth? And, unfortunately, we have all too many examples here and there in Christendom, both of his cunning and great power, as well as his ferocity, force, and tyranny, which he exerts on men inwardly and outwardly, and sometimes on the most God-fearing and innocent of them.

Nor shall a servant of God be too quick to believe the common talk about such a sick person. But he ought to be careful in his judgment, and in such a case well know how to make a distinction in such works of Satan, so that he does not mistake the one for the other, and judge someone to be possessed, who either is only plagued outwardly by the devil or by poison or if other witchcraft is brought in the situation, or if perhaps such a thing can be caused by a natural weakness, just as there are several diseases that in one way or another resemble one who is possessed, such as insanity, rage, epilepsy, and others like them.

Therefore when the pastor comes to someone who is afflicted in this way, before anything else he shall first pay attention to the condition of the sick person, and find out from him exactly how this affliction came upon him. He shall immediately inform the Superintendent of this, according to all the circumstances, and meanwhile diligently wait on the sick with prayer, comfort, and exhortation, as well as by daily noting what things happens, for a better understanding of the nature of the illness.

Then the Superintendent shall summon any such pastors around, who together with the parish pastor the in the place, should be called upon to wait on the afflicted with prayer and reading.

These shall gather around the afflicted, first in the presence of some doctors, and indeed together consider whether the infirmity can be natural or not; and if not, whether it may be, as can happen, a

mockery and trick of Satan (Wisdom 17:17), by which he sometimes blinds men, and thus alters their mind and senses, so that they think they see before their eyes, yet it is nothing; or even if such a person can indeed be considered to be bodily possessed by the devil, so that he doesn't have control over his whole body and all his members, as well as his mind, reason, and all the properties of his soul, or even, so that he only has control over one or another certain parts of his body, which he himself inhabits, and shows his power especially, just as he did with the mute in the Gospel (Luke 11:14).

For although for many and great reasons, it may be more difficult now in these last times to discern the spirits, and really to know for sure and to search out such bodily and personal possessions of Satan in men, yet a servant of God cannot go wrong when he asks God for advice about it, and conducts his test according to God's holy and saving Word, in which all Satan's attacks against us poor men are revealed to us by God himself together with a powerful prescription and cure for each one of them.

And as Christ himself says that such devils do not go out except by prayer and fasting (Mat 17:21), which Paul also saw for himself when Satan's angel buffeted him, and he prayed to the Lord three times, often and many times, to remove the plague from him (2Co 12:8), then a servant of God shall chiefly deal with such afflicted persons, so that they resist Satan with all their might, and with a heartfelt pious and earnest prayer keep their great need and affliction before God their heavenly Father, so that for the sake of His Son Jesus Christ He would graciously have mercy on them.

And in such cases the bishop shall finally add a special prayer for the gracious deliverance of the afflicted, according to God's good will, which the pastor together with the other believers present shall pray on their knees with the afflicted at least twice a week with earnest zeal and piety, and always close with the Lord's Prayer, and Benediction over the one who is suffering.

Otherwise close friends and those who are in the house, should read the same prayer to him twice a day: likewise also at all hours of prayer, as well as at each service, prayer should be made for the same person both before and after the service, not only in the parish church of that person, but also in all other churches in the city,

as well as all the churches in the township if it is in the country. Yet the sick and afflicted himself should not be brought to the church, while this prayer is said, as has been done in other places, but less for the sake of each circumstance thus it may be commended, so that the congregation with great earnest and piety may make their prayers for him.

If the afflicted himself with his depravity has been the cause of this great affliction, either by entering into a pact with Satan and in such a way binding himself willingly to his service, or if with any depravity he has given Satan room to perpetrate his tyranny against him, then the pastor, always from God's Word, should hold before him how gravely he has sinned against his Lord and God, show him what power Satan has over those who despise God (Job 1:8, Tobit 6:17, Eph 2:2), how wickedly he [Satan] deals with his servants, and what a horrible reward they finally receive for all their service. He [the pastor] shall also continually admonish him to acknowledge his sin, for which he is so harshly afflicted, and in God's stead finally offer him God's grace and salvation if from his heart he rejects his evil ways, denies Satan all his service, and resists him with fervent and pious prayer, seeks God with his heart when he cannot pray with his mouth, and finally in firm confidence turn to the most precious merit and satisfaction of Jesus Christ, his dearest Redeemer and Savior, for whose sake he [the pastor] forgives him in God's mercy and steadfastly hopes, according to God's fatherly will, that he will be delivered from this snare of the devil, so that after this he may honor and praise God always and eternally.

But if he has been God-fearing and of a Christian life, so that no one can say that in one way or another he has caused this great trouble and wickedness himself, as a sign of God's wrath, and a just punishment for any gross devilish deed, then the pastor shall diligently comfort him from God's Word and show him that also in the end God for special reasons often thus gives the faithful and God-fearing a time to be plagued by Satan, as He did with Paul (2Co 12:7), and with good Job in the days of old (Job 1:12 and 2:6), just as God gave himself as witness that his body was not in the land, a faithful and upright man, who feared God, and fled the evil one, and in all this a child of God shall say with David: "The Lord is righteous,

and all his judgments are just," (Ps 119:137). "For we know that all things work together for good to those who fear the Lord" (Rom. 8:28). Therefore he shall exhort him not to look at Satan or his evil instrument and give them the glory as though they had such power in themselves and could deal with God's children as they themselves want to. Not at all! But he should look to God alone, from whom all things come, the evil, as well as the good (Job 2:10, Deu 28:59). "Not a hair can fall from our head unless He wills it" (Mat 10:30). And until He will say to Satan: "Let him be in your hand," never dare Satan lay his hand on any child of God, nor can he trouble or hurt him any longer than God himself will allow as can further be seen from the story of Job. So such an afflicted sinner should not immediately think that God has forsaken him or delivered him completely into Satan's power and tyranny, for He allows him to be plagued and hurt outwardly; but he should receive it as a fatherly chastisement from God, and go back and consider his sinful ways, and say with God's people to the prophets: "I will bear the Lord's wrath; for I have sinned against Him" (Micah 7:9). Perhaps He shall also thereby test his firmness in faith, hope, and Christian patience, if finally he also regards God and Jesus so highly that he will gladly suffer in the world for the sake of his honor, and not therefore deny them. But in all things be of the confidence of Job: "Even if the Lord slay me completely, yet I will still hope in him" (Job 13:15), because even in the midst of his great anguish, he knew that God is a gracious God and that he would not tempt him beyond his ability (1Co 10:13). He will never give Satan power to touch his soul, but that he may be preserved blameless for the day of our Lord Jesus Christ; for "there is no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8:1). And no matter how much he tried, either with force or violence, Satan shall never be able to separate any child of God from the love which is in Christ Jesus (Rom 8:39).

If the pastor then finds the afflicted one full of faith and love toward God, patient under the burden of the cross, confident and zealous against his enemy and especially yearning for participation in the most holy Body and Blood of his Savior Jesus Christ, then sometimes he can serve it to him in the same name of Jesus, when he is free from the afflictions of the evil one and can give proper

attention, for which he briefly reminds him of the promise, which he has made with God in Baptism up to now, which he has now repeated here, so that he renounces the devil and all his ways, and with the shield of faith in the perfect armor and equipment of God fights manfully against his own and God's great enemy, who is already sentenced, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ, so that he may keep faith and a good conscience to the end, and joyfully see and know the power of Jesus' death, by which He destroyed the devil, and took from him all power over those who love and fear the Lord.

He closes with the Lord's Prayer and Benediction over the afflicted each time he leaves him, as the pastor always does.

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Book Review: God So Love the Word, A Study of Christian Doctrine

God So Loved the World, A Study of Christian Doctrine by Lyle Lange, Northwestern Publishing House, 2005. 730 pages. Hardcover.

Available from Lutheran Synod Book Company for \$36.40.

Lyle Lange is a professor of religion at Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota. In his preface the author lists three reasons for the title *God So Loved the World*. In the first place, Jesus Christ and the good news of the salvation He won for us are at the center of biblical teaching. Secondly, it is to be a reminder that all doctrines of the Bible relate to the central teaching of Scripture: that God sent His Son to save us, and thirdly because God's revelation of salvation is intended for all people.

God So Loved the World consists of 30 chapters which expound all the doctrines of Scripture. The author follows two principles stated by the apostle Paul: 1. "I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God" (Acts 20:27) and 2. "I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

He goes on to say that Luther and the other writers of the Lutheran Confessions were guided by three great principles in their teaching of Christian doctrine, namely Scripture alone, grace alone, and faith alone. That comes through loud and clear in this book.

A special feature of *God So Loved the World* is a chapter on marriage and the family. This would be helpful in counseling couples for marriage and also after marriage as problems may arise.

This reviewer read the entire book and he feels the richer for it and he highly recommends that it be in each pastor's office and that it be studied along with other dogmatics books. It comes to grips with current doctrinal problems that are not covered, say, by Pieper and Hoenecke. Look upon it as a supplement to their fine dogmatics books.

You will also appreciate the devotional tone of the book. It is not just a recitation of dogmatic facts but it is a book that could well serve as a part of a pastor's daily devotions. God bless your study of this fine book!