

LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY



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2009 Reformation Lectures:

Lecture One: Martin Luther's Polemic
Against the Turks and Islam

Lecture Two: Christianity and Islam
in a Pluralistic Society

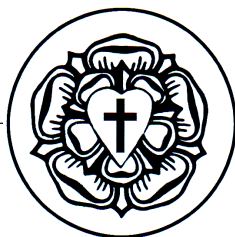
Articles and Sermons:
God, Creation, and Science

Article X of the Formula of Concord
and Lutheranism Today

Sermon for International Call Day

Book Review

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LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

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Foreword

LSQ Vol. 50, No. 1 (March 2010)

IN THIS ISSUE OF THE *QUARTERLY* we are pleased to share with our readers the 2009 annual Reformation Lectures, delivered on October 29–30, 2009, in Mankato, Minnesota. These lectures are sponsored jointly by Bethany Lutheran College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. This was the forty-second in the series of annual Reformation Lectures which began in 1967. The format of the Reformation Lectures has always been that of a free conference and thus participation in these lectures is outside the framework of fellowship.

This year there were two presenters. The first lecture was given by Dr. Adam S. Francisco, who is assistant professor of historical theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He received his B.A. in Biblical Languages in 2000 and M.A. in Reformation Theology in 2001 from Concordia University (Irvine, California). Afterward he moved to England where, in addition to pursuing further research in historical Christian theology, he studied Arabic and Islamic theology at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies. He earned both a Master of Studies in 2003 and D.Phil. in 2006 in Historical Theology and Christian-Muslim Relations from the University of Oxford. Dr. Francisco was also the Albin Salton Fellow at the University of London from 2004–2005. He then joined the history department of Concordia College (Bronxville, New York) until his 2007 appointment at Concordia Theological Seminary. There he teaches courses on Islam in the seminary's Ph.D. program, as well as several electives in Christian apologetics. He is a member of the Association for

the Study of the Middle East and Africa, the Sixteenth Century Society, the International Society for Christian Apologetics, and sits on the editorial committee of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*. He is co-editor of *Theologia et Apologia: Essays in Reformation Theology and Its Defense* (2007), and a contributing scholar for *Modern Reformation* magazine. He is also the author of *Martin Luther and Islam: A Study in Sixteenth-Century Polemics and Apologetics*.

The second presenter was Dr. Roland Cap Ehlke of Concordia University–Wisconsin. He received his B.A. from Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin, and has M.Div. and S.T.M. degrees from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary (Mequon, Wisconsin). From the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee, he earned an M.A. in history (medieval and early modern Europe) and an M.A. in English, as well as a Ph.D. in English Literature. Dr. Ehlke served as a WELS parish pastor in Little Chute, Wisconsin, for six and a half years and as an editor for Northwestern Publishing House (NPH) for 15 years. He has been a full-time faculty member at Concordia University–Wisconsin since 2000, having served as director of the Adult Education Theology and Liberal Arts programs and currently as an associate professor in the philosophy department. Dr. Ehlke spent a year of study at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. He has traveled extensively in the Middle East, and pursued an interest in the Muslim religion. He is author of *Speaking the Truth in Love to Muslims* (NPH, 2004). He has written many articles and numerous books, most recently *Speaking the Truth in Love to Jehovah's Witnesses* (NPH, 2008). He has long had an interest in comparative religions and currently is working on an updated edition of the Bible study book *Christianity, Cults, and World Religions*. He is an associate editor for the recently published *Lutheran Study Bible* (Concordia, 2009). He resides with his family in West Allis, Wisconsin, and is a member of Gloria Dei-Bethesda Evangelical Lutheran Church (WELS) in Milwaukee.

The theme of the lectures was “Lutheranism and Islam.” The first lecture, given by Dr. Adam Francisco, was entitled “Martin Luther and Islam.” The second lecture, presented by Dr. Roland Cap Ehlke, was entitled “Christianity and Islam in a Pluralistic Society.”

The Reformation Lectures centered on the relationship between Lutheranism and Islam. Here Islam and Christianity, in particular Lutheranism, were compared and contrasted. On the one hand, the adherents of Islam use the Qur’an as their ultimate authority. They believe that their life and their work following the principles of the Qur’an will earn acceptance into paradise with Allah. Lutheran Christians, on the

other hand, confess a faith in the triune God, God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit, revealed in the inspired Holy Scriptures, the Bible. The Bible declares that salvation for mankind can only be found in the incarnate Christ, who has redeemed all people through His salvific work.

Does the Bible teach that Adam and Eve were actual people, the first humans? Did human beings evolve from a common ancestor as Charles Darwin believed and does the evidence actually show this? Is every scientist an evolutionist? Is the Bible the basis of all truth: religious, moral, historical, and scientific? These and many other questions are discussed in the article "God, Creation, and Science." The article was written by the Rev. Matthew Crick, who is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in San Antonio, Texas.

The adiaphoristic controversy was one of the conflicts that occurred in the Lutheran Church during the leadership vacuum after the death of Martin Luther. This controversy and the other conflicts in Lutheranism were settled in the writing of the *Formula of Concord* in 1577. An in-depth study of this controversy and its ramifications for today is to be found in the essay "Article X of the Formula of Concord and Lutheranism Today." The Rev. Wade Johnston, who is pastor of Christ Lutheran Church in Saginaw, Michigan, is the author of this essay.

On December 10, 2009, our two students from India, Kalyan Gollapalli and Pradeep Lingala, received their vicar assignments. The Rev. Steven Petersen, who preached for the occasion, based his sermon on Mark 3:14–15. He encouraged the two men to be bold in their proclamation of Christ. That proclamation centers in the truth that God accepts Christ's death at the cross as substitute punishment for our sin and now forgives us free and clear. Pastor Petersen is the World Outreach Administrator for the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

In addition, this *Quarterly* includes a book review of *Even Death: A Novel*. In the book, Lutheran pastors, who have been friends since college, take their dream trip. They fly to Germany to tour Lutherland and see the important sites. By a tragic twist of circumstance, the dream trip becomes a nightmare. They find themselves defending the faith in Christ as the Savior, which they have confessed and preached, and they suffer persecution and more. The author of this Christian historical novel is the Rev. Wade Johnston.

Fiftieth Volume of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*

This is the fiftieth volume of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. Before 1961, it was known as the *Clergy Bulletin*, and there were twenty volumes of the *Clergy Bulletin* dating back to 1941. With its new name in 1961, the numbering of the *Quarterly* volumes restarted.

In this, the fiftieth volume of the *Quarterly*, a change in style and format is evident. We want to thank Vicar Daniel Hartwig and Elsa Ferkenstad for making this new look possible.

While there is a change in format and style in the *Quarterly*, its theology and purpose remain the same. The *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* is issued by Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary as a testimony of its theological convictions, as a witness to the saving truths of the inerrant Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and in the interest of the theological growth of the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

– GRS

Martin Luther's Polemic Against the Turks and Islam

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THE EXISTENCE OF ISLAM WAS THE most far-reaching problem in medieval Christendom," wrote Richard Southern in what was in many ways a seminal study of the west's reaction to Islam during the Middle Ages.¹ Since then a tremendous amount of literature has been published, but there has, until very recently, been very little scholarly attention on the issue of Islam for Christians in the early modern period, even though the problem remained and, in fact, grew more acute for Europeans during the age of the Reformation. This paper explores just one towering figure who wrote against Islam during the sixteenth century. Many others could and still need to be examined, but in many ways Luther serves as a proper starting point.

A Brief Historical Introduction

Islam was born in the early seventh century. Muslim tradition tells us that Muhammad successfully united most of the Arabian Peninsula under the banner of Islam, and by his death in 632 had given the following divinely-mandated marching orders: to fight all people until they acknowledged that there was no god but Allah.² This was an order the subsequent caliphs took seriously as they began the process of conquest, expansion, and imperial consolidation of the Levant, North Africa, and Spain. Shortly afterwards,

¹ Richard W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962), 3.

² Muhammad ibn Umar al-Waqidi, *Kitab al-Maghazi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), 3:113.

Islamic law and theology were refined and formalized. One development with far-reaching consequences was the political division of the world into two spheres—the house of Islam (*dar al-Islam*) and the house of war (*dar al-harb*).³ Classical Islam, as it began to take shape following the conquest of the Mediterranean rim, envisions “a global political order in which all humankind will live under Muslim rule as either believers or subject communities. In order to achieve this goal it is incumbent on all free, male, adult Muslims to carry out an uncompromising struggle ‘in the path of Allah,’ or jihad. This in turn makes those parts of the world that have not yet been conquered by the House of Islam an abode of permanent conflict... which will only end with Islam’s triumph.”⁴

This was (and may still be) the goal of Islam, but the first of the great Islamic empires—the Umayyads, who ruled from Damascus from 661 until 750, and the Abbasids, who ruled from Baghdad up until 1258—failed to reach it. In fact, to many in the thirteenth century it seemed the global aspirations of Islam were lost when descendents of Ghengis Khan made their way into Muslim heartlands and threw it into social and political upheaval. This in turn led to a fundamental restructuring of political authority in *dar al-Islam*, as numerous dynasties all vied for power in the lands formerly ruled by the Abbasids.

The most significant dynasty to emerge, from the perspective of subsequent centuries, was the house of the Turkish warlord Osman (1258–1326). He and his tribesmen had settled in the eastern parts of modern day Turkey, positioning themselves between the house of Islam and what was left of Byzantium. This had tremendous consequences for lands to the west, for the descendents of Osman—the Ottoman Turks—saw themselves as a people specially “chosen to act as Allah’s sword ‘blazing forth the way of Islam from the East to the West.’”⁵ The Ottomans made their way into Europe already by 1348. From there they began their conquest of the Balkans, eventually taking Constantinople in 1453 led by Sultan Mehmet II (1451–1481). His ambitious program of expansion and domination, motivated by his conviction that he was destined to be the “leader of

³ For a classical text on what might be considered Islamic foreign policy, see Majid Khadduri, trans., *The Islamic Law of Nations: Shaybānī’s Siyar* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1966).

⁴ Efraim Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism: A History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006), 62.

⁵ Halil Inalcik, “The Rise of the Ottoman Empire,” in *A History of the Ottoman Empire to 1730*, ed. M.A. Cook (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 17; cf. Karsh, *Islamic Imperialism*, 88; Norman Itzkowitz, *Ottoman Empire and Islamic Tradition* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 38.

Holy War against Christianity,"⁶ effectively laid the foundations for what Bernard Lewis calls the "great *jihād par excellence*" on Europe.⁷

Luther and Islamic Expansion

It was the expansion of the Ottoman Empire into central Europe that served as the impetus for Luther's engagement with Islam. From 1521 until the end of his life the Turks forced their way into Hungary with, as he and most others thought, their sights trained on Germany.⁸ The 1529 siege of Vienna, in particular, frightened everybody, for, as Luther expressed, it placed the Turks and their religion within the reach of the Holy Roman Empire.⁹ Accompanying the annexation of much of Hungary was the Islamization of eastern Europe. After hearing and reading about the surrounding events Luther was convinced that if the final judgment did not occur soon the world would "go Muhammadan."¹⁰

This expression should not be seen as complete hyperbole. According to Marshall G.S. Hodgson, if a dispassionate observer (an extraterrestrial, for example) were available at the time it—presuming extraterrestrials are gender neutral—would have reached similar conclusions. "In the sixteenth century... a visitor from Mars might well have supposed that the human world was on the verge of becoming Muslim. He would have based his judgment partly on the strategic and political advantages of the Muslims, but partly on the vitality of their general culture."¹¹

The Ottoman advance and annexation of eastern and parts of central Europe brought Christians and Muslims into close contact. Muslim enclaves began to take root in Hungary, and many Christians who found

⁶ Stanford Shaw, *Empire of the Gazis: The Rise and Decline of the Ottoman Empire History, 1280–1808*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1976), 60–61.

⁷ Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 10.

⁸ Allen Hertz has noted that the Turks themselves referred to the lands northwest of Belgrade, after they conquered the city in 1521, as *darūlcibat* or the "domain of jihad" ("Muslims, Christians and Jews in Sixteenth-Century Belgrade," in *The Mutual Effects of the Islamic and Judeo-Christian Worlds: The East European Pattern*, ed. Abraham Ascher, Tibor Halasi-Kun, and Béla Király [New York: Brooklyn College Press, 1979], 149). For the Ottoman conquests in the context of the history of Islam, see Karsh's *Islamic Imperialism*, but cf. Linda Darling's challenge to the Ottoman conquests being construed as an jihad in "Contested Territory: Ottoman Holy War in Comparative Context," *Studia Islamica* 91 (2000): 133–163.

⁹ WA 30/2:207. See John Godwin, "Siege of the Moles," *Military History* 18 (2001): 46–52.

¹⁰ WADB 11/2:381.

¹¹ Marshall G.S. Hodgson, "The Role of Islam in World History," in *Rethinking World History: Essays on Europe, Islam, and World History*, ed. Edmund Burke III (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 97.

themselves subjects of the Turks “assumed Islam without having much of a choice in the matter.”¹² There were even reports of “violent efforts to proselytize among the inhabitants of Southern Hungary.”¹³ Luther certainly did not doubt that some instances of conversion at the point of the sword occurred, but he knew that this was not always or even normally the case.¹⁴ Many Christians freely embraced Islam. “I hear and read that many Christians commit apostasy,” he wrote, “and willingly and without force believe the faith of the Turks or Muhammad.”¹⁵

Luther’s Turn toward the Problem of the Turks and Islam

The expansion of what Luther termed *Mahometisch Reich*—politically and demographically—made it vital for Christians to be able to respond intelligently to Islam. This, however, posed a fundamental problem. All the available literature, at least initially, was sensationalistic and written by Rome’s theologians. Their content was therefore suspect. Luther was convinced that they were fraudulent pieces of propaganda used to fuel hatred in order to inspire support for a crusade, for this was the only way Rome could deal with Islam.¹⁶ Its theology was built on too weak a foundation. “I understand the reason why the Turkish religion is so concealed by the papists, why only base things are told of them. It is because they sense what in fact is true, that, if it should come to the point of arguing about religion, the whole papacy with all its trappings would fall. Nor would they

¹² Antonia Zhelyazkova, “Islamization in the Balkans as a Historiographical Problem: The Southeast-European Perspective,” in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 223–266 (259). Also see Gábor Ágoston, “Muslim Cultural Enclaves in Hungary under Ottoman Rule,” *Acta Orientalia Hungaricae* 45 (1991): 181–204; Tibor Halasi-Kun, “Sixteenth-Century Turkish Settlements in Southern Hungary,” *Bulleten* 28 (1964): 1–72; Géza Dávid and Pál Fodor, “Hungarian Studies in Ottoman History,” in *The Ottomans and the Balkans: A Discussion of Historiography*, ed. Fikret Adanir and Suraiya Faroqhi (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 2002), 342–346; and Hertz, “Muslims, Christians and Jews,” 322.

¹³ József Jankovics, “The Image of the Turks in Hungarian Renaissance Literature,” in *Europa und die Türken in der Renaissance*, ed. Bodo Guthmüller and Wilhelm (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 2000), 269.

¹⁴ Despite what seems to be the consensus of scholars, there still remains some debate over the alleged tolerance of the Ottomans. See Alexander Unghváry, *The Hungarian Protestant Reformation in the Sixteenth Century under the Ottomans* (Lampeter: Edwin Mellen Press, 1989).

¹⁵ WA 30/2:185.

¹⁶ LW 46:175–176, 186, 188.

be able to defend their own faith and at the same time refute the faith of Muhammad.¹⁷

Luther cared little for the fate of any of Rome's clergy even though he was convinced that none of them "would be able to remain in their faith if they should spend three days among the Turks."¹⁸ He was very concerned with the fate of ordinary Christians, though, who finding themselves a subject of the Ottomans were bound to experience temptation and *Anfechtung* while living amidst Muslims. Thus, the ever-mindful pastoral theologian from Wittenberg began to respond polemically and apologetically to Islam.

Luther's first engagement with Islam is found in *On War against the Turk*. This little book was published on the eve of the siege of Vienna in 1529. Its chief purpose was to explain and encourage a defensive war, led solely by secular officials, against the Turks. Additionally, by evaluating the crisis, he sought to encourage the church to pray for the survival of Christendom. Because many did not understand the magnitude of the threat that the Turks posed to Europe, he included a brief analytical excursus on the nature of Islam in, as he put it, "the two estates, spiritual and secular."¹⁹ It was obviously not intended as a polemic for arguing about religion with a Muslim interlocutor, but, viewed along with his other writings—the standards by which he evaluates Islam—helps explain the development and complexity of Luther's thought on the subject. The aftermath of the attack on Vienna, where thousands of Christians were either killed or taken back to Istanbul, provided that occasion for Luther's first real attempt to provide material to help Christians to deal with whatever temptations they might face while living amongst Muslims. He took the opportunity to do this in the second half of his *Army Sermon against the Turk*, wherein he exhorted and offered consolation to "Germans already captive in Turkey or those who might still become captive."²⁰ Where his writing against Islam gets more complex and polemical is his *Refutation of the Quran*, written in the early 1540s after a period of relative calm on the eastern horizon of Germany. Reversing his earlier judgment on a work he formerly criticized, he abridged, translated, and modified a medieval polemic against the Qur'an.

¹⁷ Sarah Henrich and James L. Boyce, "Martin Luther—Translations of Two Prefaces on Islam: *Preface to the Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum (1530)*, and *Preface to Bibliander's Edition of the Qur'an (1543)*," *Word and World* 16 (1996): 260 [Hereafter H-B] (WA 30/2:207).

¹⁸ H-B, 259 (WA 30/2:206).

¹⁹ LW 46:176 (WA 30/2:121).

²⁰ WA 30/2:185.18–20.

Before an analysis of the documents mentioned above, a quick word on the demeanor of Luther's approach to Islam may be of some use. Surprisingly, or perhaps uncharacteristically, from the outset of his engagement with Islam Luther demonstrates concern with achieving as objective and reliable of an understanding of it as possible. He was convinced that much of what was being reported about the Turks was an "invented outrageous lie,"²¹ and learned polemic texts attacking the precepts of their religion amounted to straw-man arguments. "They eagerly take pains to excerpt from the Qur'an all the most base and absurd things that arouse hatred and can move people to ill-will," he charged, but they "pass over without rebuttal or cover over the good things it contains."²² Such polemical methodology was fundamentally problematic.

Those who only censure and condemn the base and absurd characteristics of the enemy but remain silent about matters that are honest and worthy of praise do more harm than good to their cause. What is easier than to condemn things that are manifestly base and dishonest (which in fact refute themselves)? But to refute good and honest things that are hidden from sight, that is to further the cause, that is to lift up and remove the scandal, to despoil the messengers of their counterfeit image of the light and to render them appropriately hateful because of their base plundering of the light.²³

While Luther admits here that there may be "good things" in the Qur'an he really has no idea that this is the case, for he had yet to read it in its entirety. His accusations were merely meant to criticize the papacy and its theologians, not to defend Islam. Luther's suspicion of medieval authors, in a way, led him to analyze Islam for himself apart from external influences. To do so, however, he knew he had to obtain a copy of a Qur'an, and until he could get his hands on one, he resigned himself to speaking only to the "few things" that he knew from the "parts of Muhammad's Qur'an" found in whatever secondary sources were available to him.

There were at least three texts dealing with Islam and the Turks from which Luther culled information for the works he published in 1529. He certainly "read the most valuable account of life and institutions among

²¹ LW 46:176 (WA 30/2:121).

²² H-B, 258 (WA 30/2:205).

²³ H-B, 259 (WA 30/2:205–206).

the Ottoman Turks in the fifteenth century which we possess"²⁴ entitled *Tractatus de moribus, conditionibus et nequicia Turcorum*. In fact he had it published in Wittenberg under the title *Libellus de ritu et moribus Turcorum*. He also had at his disposal Nicholas of Cusa's *Cribratio Alcorani* and a redaction of Riccoldo da Monte Croce's popular *Contra Legem Saracenorum*, which after being translated into Greek was translated back into Latin under the title *Confutatio Alcorani seu legis Saracenorum*.²⁵ Whether Luther read any of the other medieval works on Islam is unknown, but the latter of the three—the *Confutatio Alcorani*—with its extensive Qur'anic excerpts provided ample material for him to begin analyzing certain aspects of Islam. And because he knew that quotations from the Qur'an taken out of context could easily be manipulated to produce a "most base and absurd" picture of Islam, he therefore chose, in *On War against the Turk*, to analyze only those passages from the Qur'an that seemed to him universally prescriptive.²⁶ "I will tell my dear Christians a few things," he began, "so far as I know the real truth."²⁷

Luther's Polemic against the Turks and Islam

Luther's initial assessment of Islam, although he described it as a brief evaluation, was rather comprehensive. In just a few short pages he explained the theological, political, and domestic implications of Islamic ideology. He argued that it was built upon the conviction that Muhammad was not just a prophet, but the sign and seal of all the prophets. Thus, he superseded Christ. "The office of Christ has come to an end and Muhammad's office is still in force," he wrote.²⁸ Christ (and Mary) was held in high esteem by Muslims, but because his deity and saving work on the cross were rejected, as a universal religion, Luther saw it as an attempt to supplant and eventually destroy Christianity. Its destructive nature was especially clear in its injunctions to pursue non-Muslims until they were defeated or submitted to Muslim rule.²⁹ This ideology made the Ottoman armies "diligent to increase the Turkish kingdom;" they even saw their imperial

²⁴ J.A.B. Palmer, "Fr. Georgius de Hungaria, O.P., and the *Tractatus de moribus conditionibus et nequicia Turcorum*," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library* 34 (1951/52): 44.

²⁵ WA 30/2:205.

²⁶ WA 30/2:205.

²⁷ LW 46:176 (WA 30/2:121–122).

²⁸ LW 46:176–177 (WA 30/2:121–122). He based his critique on passages such as Qur'an 33:40, 4:136, 7:158, 57:7, 64:8, 8:1, 20, 46, 33:33, and 58:13 found in the *Confutatio Alcorani* (see WA 53:295, 329, 377).

²⁹ This is based on Qur'an 9:27 in *Confutatio Alcorani* (WA 53:303) and 21:5–7 with the added clause in the *Confutatio* (WA 53:361.24–27, 365.1–4), "but by the sword."

expansion as “a good and divine work.”³⁰ Its foreign policy was appalling enough to warrant conclusive criticism. Yet, Luther looked further. He had heard reports about the low status of women among Muslims. When he compared what he had heard to Qur’anic divorce laws, he characterized marriage and the place of women in Turkish society as abhorrent.³¹ From this he alleged that Islam was built on religious lies, an unjust political agenda which advocated unprovoked violence and murder, and was disdainful of marriage, effectively treating women as animals. These allegations led him to sum up the nature of Islam in the following terms: “Lies destroy the spiritual estate; murder, the temporal estate; disregard of marriage, the estate of matrimony. . . . Now if you take out of the world *veram religionem, veram politiam, veram oeconomiam*, that is, true spiritual life, true temporal government, and true home life, what is left in the world but flesh, world, and devil?”³²

This tripartite analysis of Islam was based on Luther’s doctrine of the three estates (*Dreiständelehre*). According to the Reformer, the three estates—identified above as spiritual, civil, and home life—were infused into the fabric of creation, and as such they established the boundaries of natural and appropriate human behavior and ideas. They were, as Bernd Wannewetsch describes them, “the elementary and paradigmatic forms of social life that are appropriate to creaturely existence from the beginning. . . . [They] are created together with man in order to provide the social spheres that are necessary for a flourishing and obedient life.”³³ Luther derived his teaching on the three estates from the Scriptures,³⁴ but he also believed that their function, with the exception of the spiritual estate (defined by the gospel), was evident from reflecting on nature and creation.³⁵ God has, since the creation of Adam and Eve, “made, and makes, all communities.”³⁶ To maintain order within and amongst the various national communities he “created and established [governors and governments], and divided up the world for them to rule.”³⁷ Force could be used to enforce justice and

³⁰ LW 46:178–179 (WA 30/2:123–124).

³¹ Summary of Qur’an 2:226–233, 236–237 in *Confutatio Alcorani*, WA 53:317.

³² LW 46:182 (WA 30/2:127).

³³ Bernd Wannewetsch, “Luther’s Moral Theology,” in *The Cambridge Companion to Martin Luther*, ed. Donald McKim (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 130.

³⁴ See especially LW 54:445–446 (WA TR 5:218).

³⁵ See Johannes Schwanke, “Luther on Creation,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 16 (2002): 1–20; Oswald Bayer, *Schöpfung als Anrede: Zu einer Hermeneutik der Schöpfung*, 2nd edn. (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1990); “Nature and Institution: Luther’s Doctrine of the Three Orders,” *Lutheran Quarterly* 12 (1998): 125–159.

³⁶ LW 13:46 (WA 31/1:193).

³⁷ LW 14:14 (WA 31/1:234).

maintain security both internally and externally. However, the maintenance of this peace and order—not the extension of power—was or at least ought to be the status quo of civil government. Domestic, especially marital, relations also were meant to provide peace and security for a man and his spouse. Anything that undermined this such as divorce or polygamy was unnatural. These estates—the political and matrimonial—were to keep the world from lapsing into chaos. They were meant to exist “throughout all kingdoms, as wide as the world and to the end of the world” as bulwarks to “preserve righteousness in the world.”³⁸ Thus, where such stations or estates were undermined one could detect the devil at work in the world attempting to undermine the order of creation.

Luther's three-estate analysis was more than an assessment of Islam. It was also a critique employed to provide a frame of reference from which Christians could begin to think about Islam, for he had heard some of Germany's population was indifferent to the threat of Turkish occupation. “I hear it said that in Germany there are those who desire the coming of the Turk and his government,” he wrote, “because they would rather be under him than under the emperor or princes.”³⁹ Luther even envisioned his critique somehow reaching the Ottoman Sultan Süleyman. He concluded, fearing the possibility, by writing, “I know that this book will not make the Turks a gracious lord to me should it come to his attention.”⁴⁰ Interestingly, it seems that the sultan may have at least heard of Luther's denouncement of Islam, for according to the report of an ambassador sent to the Turks shortly after the publication of *On War against the Turk*, the sultan enquired about the Reformer and assured him that if they were to meet and presumably establish some sort of alliance he would find him a “gracious lord.”⁴¹

Despite Süleyman's invitation Luther had no intentions to meet the Turkish sultan, or any Muslim for that matter. He did, at least once, allude to going to the Turks as a preacher of the gospel or missionary, but he never once made plans to engage a Muslim.⁴² Still, the possibility did exist for Christians living and working in regions destined to fall to the Ottomans, and Luther saw it as his duty to prepare them for life as a subject of the Turks. His *Army Sermon against the Turks* was the first of two specific works

³⁸ LW 13:358, 369 (WA 31/1:399–400, 410).

³⁹ LW 46:193 (WA 30/2:137). Cf. LW 46:161–162 (WA 30/2:107–108).

⁴⁰ LW 46:205 (WA 30/2:148).

⁴¹ WATR 1:449, 2:508. Also see Christine Isom-Verhaaren, “An Ottoman Report about Martin Luther and the Emperor: New Evidence of the Ottoman Interest in the Protestant Challenge to the Power of Charles V,” *Turcica* 28 (1996): 299–317.

⁴² WA 17/1:509.

meant to instruct Christians in responding to Muslims and the religion of Islam. Far from a formal apologetic treatise, it provided practical suggestions for dealing with whatever *Anfechtung*—temptation and doubt—one might face while living in a society dominated by Muslims.⁴³ Luther was especially concerned that Christians would be tempted to commit apostasy and, in doubting the veracity of the Christian faith, might convert to Islam. George of Hungary, a Dominican friar, twenty-year veteran of Turkish captivity, and author of the *Tractatus de moribus, conditionibus et nequicia Turcorum*, from which Luther derived most of his information on Turkish society, reported that innumerable Christians denied their faith in Turkey due to the monolithic appearances of Islamic society and sublimity of their religious practices.⁴⁴ This could not be explained away by assuming only ignorant or nominal Christians converted either. Wise and committed Christians—even Dominicans trained in apologetics—had embraced Islam.⁴⁵ Even the author himself, it seems, was on the verge of conversion before he escaped and made his way to Italy.⁴⁶

Based on what he read from George of Hungary's *Tractatus* Luther thought there were several elements of Muslim society in Turkey which might rattle a Christian's faith. First and foremost, he believed that the piety and unity of faith displayed in the corporate worship of the Turks would be especially awe-inspiring, particularly for a recent arrival from the decaying *corpus Christianum*. Europe's churchmen were "a joke compared to them," he wrote. They likewise put Europe's churches to shame. "Their manner of prayer is with such discipline, stillness, and external beauty that among us in our churches such discipline and stillness cannot be found anywhere... in our churches."⁴⁷ Even their daily life was marked with austere devotion, at least in comparison to Europe's Christians. They did not drink wine or eat pork. Their women were not pretentious. Their buildings and decorations were modest. They did not curse. They obeyed and honoured their public officials, and the Turkish government was firm but fair.⁴⁸ Because the superstitious beliefs many Christians held

⁴³ On *Anfechtung*, see Alister McGrath, *Luther's Theology of the Cross: Martin Luther's Theological Breakthrough* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), 170–175.

⁴⁴ Georgius de Hungaria, *Tractatus de Moribus, Conditionibus et Nequicia Turcorum – Traktat über die Sitten, die Lebensverhältnisse und die Arglist der Türken (1481)*, ed. Reinhard Klockow (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 1993), 144–148.

⁴⁵ Georgius de Hungaria, *Tractatus*, 242–244.

⁴⁶ Albrecht Classen, "The World of the Turks Described by an Eye-Witness: Georgius de Hungaria's Dialectical Discourse on the Foreign World of the Ottoman Empire," *Journal of Early Modern History* 7:3 (2003): 264.

⁴⁷ WA 30/2:187.

⁴⁸ WA 30/2:189.

would predispose them to accept ecstatic and alleged miracles as signs of true religion, Luther also described some of the mystical activities of the dervish orders and religious practices found at popular pilgrimage sites in late medieval Turkey.⁴⁹ On top of the peculiar manifestations of Islam in Turkey, Luther also believed that the perception of the absence of the justice of God contributed to doubt and apostasy. According to the mind of a Christian, especially those duped for so long by Rome's theology of glory, political and military might was a sign of God's election. The Turks, he had heard, turned this theology of glory mentality against Christians by asserting that their success was due to God's favor for Islam and disdain for Christianity.

The only reason the above factors might lead to *Anfechtung* and apostasy was not because they were so convincing in and of themselves. Rather, according to Luther, it was due to the weakness and ill-conceived nature of the faith of most Christians. But he believed that when conceived rightly the Christian faith could withstand any bouts with *Anfechtung*, and, moreover, if a Turk tried to argue for the superiority of their faith based on the above factors, a properly trained Christian grounded in evangelical theology could respond in defense of his own. Luther freely admitted that European society paled in comparison to the society of the Turks. "The religion of the Turks or Muhammad is far more splendid in ceremonies—and, I might almost say, customs—than ours, even including that of the religious or all the clerics. The modesty and simplicity of their food, clothing, dwellings, and everything else, as well as the fasts, prayers, and common gatherings of the people that this book reveals are nowhere seen among us."⁵⁰ None of this matters one iota, however, with regard to the truth of religion. Thus, he counseled his readers to be prepared to be stupefied. One could even, as he did, offer qualified praise for the austerity and piety of Muslim society. Whether the ideology—or theology—it was all built upon was legitimate was an entirely different matter. Because Islam maintained a different source of authority (the Qur'an) than Christianity (the Bible) it was, as a religious factor, to be resisted. A Christian could and, in fact, should accept his lot in life if they found themselves stuck in Muslim society. They should serve their Muslim masters and neighbors faithfully, he argued, but they should resist the temptation to embrace their religion, even if it meant the burdens of being a non-Muslim subject would

⁴⁹ See Ahmet Karamustafa, *God's Unruly Friends: Dervish Groups in the Later Middle Period, 1200–1550* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1994), 65–84; Zhelyazkova, "Islamization," 256–258.

⁵⁰ H-B, 259 (WA 30/2:206).

be lifted.⁵¹ And how should they resist? Since quoting the Bible against the Qur'an was useless Luther urged that Christians, after learning the basic catechetical content of their faith—the Creed, the Ten Commandments, and the Our Father—should appeal to the person and work of Christ as the reason and cause of their faith.

The rationale behind the instruction to appeal to the authority of Christ seems overly simplistic. Yet, it must be remembered that Luther was writing for simple minds. His recent visit to various parishes throughout Saxony had revealed that even the clergy were totally ignorant on matters of basic Christian doctrine. Peasants and soldiers could not be expected to know more than a theologian. Since “they could have no preachers or books” in Turkey he wanted to keep his advice as simple as possible. Thus, because the Christian teaching on the person and work of Christ made Christian “faith... distinct from all other faiths on earth,” he chose to focus on this one doctrine for a very practical reason. It could help to bolster the assurance of one's faith, he wrote, “if you are around the scandal of the Turks or have *Anfechtung*.”⁵² Luther also believed that the doctrine of the incarnation—and, closely related to it, redemption—was the touchstone for distinguishing true from false religion. While an article of faith derived from the Scripture, it was also an historical event and thus could be employed as the chief authority in religious arguments. Regardless of how sublime Islamic culture appeared—whether it be their regimented devotion to prayer, the wisdom of their clerics, or legislated piety—Luther counseled, “If you come across such things, know and consider that they nevertheless know or maintain nothing of your article or of your Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, it must be false.”⁵³ Even if a Christian witnessed miraculous signs performed by a dervish meant to testify to the veracity and vitality of Islam they should refer to the person and work of Christ.

If you see or hear of signs in Turkey think to yourself and say: even if you wake all the dead and perform every sign, because you lie and blaspheme Jesus Christ or do not know him I believe you are the devil. From my standpoint, I would prefer to remain with my weak Christ without signs and wonders, because your strong and powerful miraculous deeds will crumble.⁵⁴

⁵¹ He gave this counsel already in 1518 when he wrote that if a person “were captured by the Turks or unbelievers... he is constrained to give obedience according to the precept of the gospel” (LW 31:122 [WA 1:553]).

⁵² WA 30/2:186.

⁵³ WA 30/2:187.

⁵⁴ WA 30/2:189.

Although no longer on earth to perform miracles vindicating his divinity and therefore “weak” Christ had still been crucified and rose from the dead. The historical and theological *fait accompli* of these events trumped all religious arguments and demonstrations of power that contradicted them.

Up unto this point Luther's arguments rested on the conviction that the doctrines of Christianity—especially the emphases of the Reformation—were true and Islam was false. He in fact summarized his pretty basic approach, in 1530, in the following manner: “These defenses are the articles about Christ, namely, that Christ is the son of God, that he died for our sins, that he was raised for our life, that justified by faith in him our sins are forgiven and we are saved, etc. These are the thunder that destroys not only Muhammad but even the gates of hell.”⁵⁵ This is perhaps how one would expect Luther to argue. Luther himself confessed that these were the best arguments he could put forward for the time. But rather than a principled restraint from offering arguments in a more apologetic mode he wanted to wait until he acquired more information on Islam. As he put it, “I will say more if ever I get my hands on that Muhammad and his Qur'an.”⁵⁶

Luther finally—and gladly—got his hands on a Latin translation of the Qur'an in 1542.⁵⁷ Now comfortable with speaking more about Islam he decided to launch an all-out assault on the Muslim religion. He apparently reread Riccoldo's *Confutatio Alcorani* alongside the Qur'an and reversed his earlier criticism of it. Despite the fact that it was written by a Dominican, who were generally despised by Luther, he described it as the best work available on the subject.⁵⁸ So rather than composing a work of his own he decided to abridge, adopt, and translate the medieval polemic into German under the title *Refutation of the Quran*.⁵⁹

The *Refutation of the Quran* is remarkably different from his earlier polemics against Islam. Like the *Army Sermon*, it was meant to equip Christians against the specific theology of the Qur'an. “What I have written, I do for this reason...that those who are now or in the future under the Turk might protect themselves against Muhammad's faith,

⁵⁵ H-B, 262 (WA 30/2:207).

⁵⁶ H-B, 262 (WA 30/2:208).

⁵⁷ WA 53:272

⁵⁸ WA 53:272.

⁵⁹ On Luther's “extremely free translation” and adaptation of the text, see Mark U. Edwards, *Luther's Last Battles: Politics and Polemics, 1531–1546* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 107; Hartmut Bobzin, *Der Koran im Zeitalter der Reformation: Studien zur Frühgeschichte der Arabistik und Islamkunde in Europa* (Stuttgart: Steiner Verlag, 1995), 95–97; *Corpus Islamo-Christianum*, vol. 6 (Würzburg: Echter Verlag and Altenberge: Oros Verlag, 1999).

even if they are not able to protect themselves against his sword.”⁶⁰ This was especially necessary. The eschatological clock was winding down, and he wanted to keep as many in the faith as possible for the end seemed imminent. “God has released his last, final wrath that the devil should spit up all his power and malice until he can do no more mischief. He has established several willful and rationally conceivable lies there in the east through Muhammad’s government and her in the west through the pope’s government.”⁶¹ Interestingly, Luther also hoped that a last ditch effort could be made to save the souls of Muslims. By showing the defects of the Qur’an and therefore Islam he hoped that those “led astray by [the Qur’an] might return back to God.”⁶² To accomplish this, the *Refutation of the Quran* followed a specific apologetic methodology, which had been established centuries earlier by the Dominican scholastic tradition of apologetics. This approach, summarized by John Tolan as, “First destroy error, then expound truth,” followed the rationale that “reason can be used to destroy rival creeds and defend one’s own doctrines from the charge of irrationality but not to prove the truth of Christianity.”⁶³

One might expect Luther to have a problem with such a methodology, for the Reformer expressed little faith in the capabilities of reason. While he certainly rejected the notion that reason—especially reason unaided by revelation—could demonstrate the peculiar doctrines of revealed theology, he did not reject its use in service of theology. He expressed that this was especially relevant for arguments about religion with non-Christians in the mid 1530s when he wrote, “When you leave the doctrine of justification and have to engage in controversy with Jews, Turks, or sectarians, etc., about the power, wisdom, etc., of God, then you must use all your cleverness and effort and be as profound and subtle a controversialist as possible; for then you are in another area.”⁶⁴ Debating with Muslims certainly fell within “another area” so he was quite comfortable with adapting the methodology of the *Confutatio Alcorani*.

The *Refutation of the Quran* is comprised of two distinct modes of arguing with Islam. “One must not deal with them at first by asserting and

⁶⁰ WA 53:392.

⁶¹ WA 53:392. This was also expressed in his contemporaneous sermon, *Erhalt uns Herr*, wherein the first stanza reads, “Erhalt uns Herr bey deinem wort und steur des Bapsts und Türcken Mord die Jhesum Christum deinen Son Wolten stürzten von deinem Thron” (WA 35:467, no. 32).

⁶² WA 53:278.

⁶³ John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 233–255.

⁶⁴ LW 26:29–30 (WA 40/1:78). See Edwards, *Luther’s Last Battles*, 183 et passim.

defending the high articles of our faith," Luther wrote, "but take this way and manner, namely, take and diligently work with their Qur'an, demonstrating their law to be false and useless."⁶⁵ After that was accomplished then one could begin to argue for the veracity of the Christian religion. The first portion of the *Refutation* therefore (chapters 3–15) argues against the Qur'an by attempting to show that it cannot be construed as a revelation of God by a rational person. The second part (chapters 16 and 17) presents a positive apologetic. Luther hoped that it, coupled with the negative polemic in the former chapters, could be directed at Muslims so that they might, "recognize and convert to the truth."⁶⁶ In addition to providing arguments for the divine authorship of the Judeo-Christian scriptures and comparing Christ with Muhammad, presuming the obvious superiority of the former, he also attempted to prove the two fundamental dogmas of Christian faith—the doctrine of the trinity and deity of Christ. Interestingly, while he had ruled out the possibility of the Qur'an being the word of God, he argued—adding to the text from which he translated—that God had deposited some truth in it. Drawing attention to excerpts of the Qur'an such as from chapter (sura) 4, which Luther rendered (from the Latin), "say nothing about God except the truth, that Christ Jesus, the son of Mary, is a messenger of God, and is God's word, which he impressed upon her through the holy spirit," he hoped to convince Muslims that Muhammad "confessed... that Christ is God's Word" and "confessed the high article of the holy trinity in God."⁶⁷

Luther's final word on Islam came shortly after the publication of the *Refutation of the Quran* when he became embroiled in the controversy over the censorship of the publication of the Qur'an in Basel.⁶⁸ When the decision to permit its printing was reached, he sent a preface to be included with the text. Although, it was meant to encourage Christians to read the text, it also argued against Islam claiming that its theological propositions were—on the most fundamental level—antithetical to Christianity.

⁶⁵ WA 53:284.

⁶⁶ WA 53:364.

⁶⁷ WA 53:366, 368, 370. This seems to militate against what seems to be a consensus on Luther scholarship on his theology of the Holy Spirit (see, for example, Regin Prenter, *Spiritus Creator*, trans. John M. Jensen [Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1953]). However, Luther could also conceive of the Holy Spirit operating "in all creation as well as in every human deed, even in every natural occurrence" (Bernard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development*, trans. Roy Harrisville [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1999], 235).

⁶⁸ See Harry Clark, "The Publication of the Koran in Latin: A Reformation Dilemma," *Sixteenth-Century Journal* 15 (1984): 3–12; Bobzin, *Der Koran*, 181–209.

From the very beginning this voice of the gospel has always been handed on: that the eternal Father willed that the Son of God become a sacrifice for sins; Muhammad scorns this sacrifice and propitiation. In the church the doctrine has always existed concerning the causes of human weakness, calamity, and death, and especially concerning sin passed on after the fall of the first parents; these Muhammad... considers to be inane fabrications.⁶⁹

Luther therefore alleged that, despite its claim to be the aboriginal religion,⁷⁰ Islam—manifest in its denial of original sin and salvation from sin through Christ’s vicarious atonement—was a theological innovation invented by Muhammad.⁷¹ He defended this charge by asserting that, first, true religion and those united under its doctrine was perpetual, and, second, the essential dogma of the perpetual church was the doctrine of original sin and promise of salvation in the gospel. According to his preface, these two doctrines could be traced from the evangelical churches in his day all the way back to the origins of humankind, from the time of Adam (*inde usque ab Adam*).⁷²

Luther developed this argument further in a sermon, which dates to the final months of his life. Like Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, and Augustine centuries before him, he defended the peculiar and essential teaching of Christianity—salvation in Christ—by appealing to its antiquity. Turning to what he believed to be the oldest record of human history, he argued that the gospel—the *ersten Euangelio*—was first revealed by God to man at Genesis chapter 3:15.⁷³ Accordingly, he argued, Adam and Eve and the remnant of believers who descended from them were believers in a forthcoming savior, and therefore it was “evident that we, who are now at the end, praise God and believe exactly [qualitatively speaking] the same and even preach the same as Adam, Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and all the patriarchs and prophets have believed and preached.”⁷⁴ Thus, religions that rejected the promise of the gospel like Islam were, at best, mere innovations and, still worse, demonic aberrations.

⁶⁹ H-B, 266 (WA 53:572).

⁷⁰ See, for example, Qur’an 19:58, 3:67 and 10:105; cf. Cornelia Schöck, *Adam im Islam: Ein Beitrag zur Ideengeschichte der Sunna* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz, 1993), 177.

⁷¹ H-B, 266 (WA 53:571, 572).

⁷² WA 53:571. “To Luther...there had existed a unified church from paradise and it would exist until Judgment day” (Heinrich Bornkamm, *Luther and the Old Testament*, trans. Eric and Ruth Gritsch [Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969], 208).

⁷³ This is the classic understanding of the text. See Andrew Louth (ed.), *Ancient Commentary on Scripture: Genesis 1–11* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 88–91.

⁷⁴ WA 51:155.

Conclusion

Luther's ongoing debate with Islam developed, and was shaped by his context. His earliest argument was written for Christians as an analytical summary of the nature of Islam. He hoped to convince his readers of the malignant nature of Turkish culture and ideology. The arguments made in his second work were intended to equip his readers for living with the Turks. He was especially concerned with securing their faith, but he also provided a few suggestions for responding to the various religious phenomena they might face in Turkey. His arguments were all based on the conviction that the death and resurrection of Christ—and all its Christian theological implications—was an accomplished fact. All theological claims that contradicted it were therefore necessarily false. While this may sound monumentally presumptuous to a postmodern mind, one must remember that Luther was convinced of the historicity of these events. Nevertheless, Luther's most involved argument with Islam was the *Refutation of the Quran*. It marks a significant shift in the Reformer's apologetics. In it he deals with Islam at its source first by showing that the Qur'an contradicted itself and could not be squared with reason and history. The second portion of his polemic is especially interesting, for he actually suggested that God had in some way moved Muhammad, although unwittingly, to confess Christian doctrine. Whether he was really convinced of this or suggested it for pragmatic reasons—to use it as a connecting point for Christian-Muslim dialogue—is uncertain. That he was using the Qur'an as a source of authority is still quite tremendous. In any case, Luther's final argument was, like his three-estate analysis and critique in *On War against the Turk*, not directed at Muslims *per se*, but still directed against Islam. In fact, his claim that the Qur'an introduced theological innovations was a direct affront to Islam. Behind his claim was the antithesis he found between what he thought was the aboriginal revelation of God perpetuated in history and recorded in the Bible and the Qur'an. By comparing the foundational authorities in both traditions he highlighted the radical differences and contradictory nature of the two religions.

Luther was convinced that the Bible was the divinely revealed word of God. It was therefore the chief authority—indeed the sole authority—in matters of theology. In arguing about religion within the abode of Christendom it stood as a deposit of truth from which both sides could negotiate and find the truth. However, when arguing about religion outside of Christendom Luther was much more subtle in his use of Scripture and its doctrine. He appealed to more than the authority of biblical teachings, too. Using the Qur'an he also revealed its untruths, elucidated its anti-

Christian content and nature, and at least attempted to demonstrate the veracity of Christianity from its pages. While his approach might leave much to be desired according to today's standards, it certainly was not simplistic. And, in fact, his insights and bold polemic and apologetic might prove instructive for us today. [LSQ](#)

Christianity and Islam in a Pluralistic Society

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MORE THAN ANY PREVIOUS GENERATION, TODAY'S American Christians live in a pluralistic society, in which they regularly—daily, for many—rub shoulders with people holding to widely differing worldviews and lifestyles. As Alberto Garcia writes in *The Theology of the Cross for the 21st Century*, “North Americans live in a global village because North America is a microcosm of the world.”¹

Although surrounded by a kaleidoscope of worldviews, today's believers have been convicted by the Holy Spirit of the uniqueness of the Holy Bible as the inspired, inerrant, and authoritative Word of God. At the heart of Scripture is the person of Jesus the Christ—the Messiah promised in the Old Testament and revealed in the New. Unique among all the people who have walked the face of this earth, he alone brings the Gospel, the good news of full, free, and eternal salvation—not through human effort or ingenuity, but through his sinless life, sacrificial death, and glorious resurrection from the dead. No one else can achieve what Jesus has accomplished, namely, earn the salvation that only the almighty God can give to this fallen world.

Nevertheless, history is replete with those who claim to be the bringers of what God alone can bring about. Consequently, the Lord Jesus warns, “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing,

¹ Alberto L. Garcia and A. R. Victor Raj, ed., *The Theology of the Cross for the 21st Century: Signposts for a Multicultural Witness* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2002), 7.

but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thorn bushes, or figs from thistles? Likewise every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit” (Matthew 7:15–17). Elsewhere, the Apostle Paul writes, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! As we have already said, so now I say again: If anybody is preaching to you a gospel other than what you accepted, let him be eternally condemned!” (Galatians 1:8–9).

Such warnings are sobering, and Christians will examine all worldviews in the light of the inspired Scriptures and compare them with the saving gospel of Jesus Christ. With the current resurgence of Islam, Christians are called on to consider this world religion and its claims to truth in the light of Scripture.

Today’s Religious Pluralism

Islam and Christianity, of course, represent but two of the world’s numerous religions. At first glance, there seems to be a bewildering montage of different belief systems. According to Adherents.com, here are the largest:

1. Christianity: 2.1 billion
2. Islam: 1.5 billion
3. Secular/Nonreligious/Agnostic/Atheist: 1.1 billion
4. Hinduism: 900 million
5. Chinese traditional religion: 394 million
6. Buddhism: 376 million
7. Primal-indigenous: 300 million
8. African Traditional & Diasporic: 100 million
9. Sikhism: 23 million
10. Juche: 19 million [North Korea]
11. Spiritism: 15 million
12. Judaism: 14 million
13. Baha’i: 7 million
14. Jainism: 4.2 million
15. Shinto: 4 million
16. Cao Dai: 4 million [Vietnam]
17. Zoroastrianism: 2.6 million
18. Tenrikyo: 2 million [Japan]
19. Neo-Paganism: 1 million
20. Unitarian-Universalism: 800 thousand

21. Rastafarianism: 600 thousand
22. Scientology: 500 thousand²

For all the many different belief systems, however, there are only a few basic ways of viewing the world. They can be summed up with terms that derive from the Greek word for God—*theos*.

The first is *atheism*. This is a materialistic view of the universe, which leaves out the supernatural. At the other end of the spectrum is *polytheism*, the idea that there are many gods. This may range from a few key gods (e.g., the twelve Olympian gods of the ancient Greeks) to many (the numerous—some say, millions of—deities of present-day Hinduism). *Pantheism* is the belief that everything is a part of god—all is divine. If everything is infused with divinity, it is not a far reach to conclude that everything is divine—such is the case beneath the canopy of Hinduism. The final option is *monotheism*, the belief that there is one God, separate from the creation. An alternative to taking a position is *agnosticism*—literally, “without knowledge”—which offers the prospect of holding belief in any particular worldview in abeyance.

With the various branches of Islam and Christianity accounting for over half of the world’s population, and with both being monotheistic religions, it has frequently been suggested that Muslims and Christians worship the same God. According to a recent posting on WorldNetDaily, “over 300 Christian leaders,” including notables such as Rick Warren and Robert Schuller, have signed a document, “Loving God and Neighbor Together,” which implies that “world peace is dependent on Muslims and Christians recognizing ‘Allah’ and ‘Yahweh’ as the same God.”³ Although the document “Loving God and Neighbor Together” does not explicitly say Allah and the God of the Bible are “the same,” it gives the impression that when Muslims and Christians speak of God, they are referring to the same deity.⁴ Moreover, since Jews, Christians, and Muslims are, to use the Muslim term, “people of the Book,”⁵ it is said that they are all recipients of God’s divine revelation.

² From http://www.adherents.com/Religions_By_Adherents.html.

³ Joe Schimmel, “Are church leaders affirming Allah?” Posted August 28, 2009 <http://www.wnd.com/?pageId=108151>. Retrieved October 17, 2009.

⁴ See “Loving God and Neighbor Together: A Christian Response to A Common Word Between Us and You,” http://yale.edu/divinity/news/071118_news_nytimes.pdf. Retrieved November 15, 2009.

⁵ The term “people of the book” is from the Qur’an; see, for example, Qur’an 3:64–65.

Such notions concerning the God and the scriptures of the three great monotheistic religions are widespread. Nevertheless, an examination of them will show that they are false.

Jews, Christians, Muslims: People of the Book

The following chart places the three monotheistic religions of revelation in their historical relationship.

Faith	Scripture	Time	Language	Key Figure
Judaism	Old Testament (TNK)	1400–400 B.C.	Hebrew	Moses
Christianity	New Testament	A.D. 50–100	Greek	Jesus
Islam	Qur'an	A.D. 610–632	Arabic	Muhammad

While at first glance the chart might appear to be a concise picture of a single line of revelation, one might come to other conclusions concerning the information.

For one thing, we might note some significantly different features of the “revelations.” The Old Testament revelation—*Tanak* to the Jews: *Torah* (Law), *Neviim* (Prophets), *Ketuvim* (Writings)—came into being over a period of 1000 years, during which God inspired numerous men who “spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:21). While the writing of the New Testament covered a much shorter span, it, too, was the product of numerous inspired writers.

The Qur'an, on the other hand, was the product of one man, Muhammad, during a mere twenty-two years, some five centuries after the writing of the New Testament. During his lifetime, Muhammad's followers memorized or wrote down the various recitations of their leader. They wrote the Prophet's “impassioned outbursts” on whatever materials were available—papyrus, palm leaves, stones, and even as tattoos on their chests. Other followers, known as “reciters,” tried to memorize his recitations. Within a year or two after Muhammad's death these recitations were collected, and during the caliphate of Uthman, the Qur'an was compiled in its final form. While the Qur'an might date close to the time of Muhammad (as, indeed, the biblical writings trace back to the times of their composition), that does not guarantee that they are in line with the previous Scriptures.

Christians are well aware of the intimate relationship between the Old and New Testament. The Old contains numerous messianic prophecies,⁶

⁶ See, for instance, Arnold G. Fruchtenbaum, *Messianic Christology: A Study of Old Testament Prophecy Concerning the First Coming of the Messiah* (Tustin, CA: Ariel Ministries, 1998).

and the New constantly refers to them, their historical context, and their fulfillment in Jesus, the Messiah, the Christ. Even details such as the place of the Messiah's birth were set forth centuries before their fulfillment (see Micah 5:2 [Hebrew text, 5:1], Matthew 2:3–6). As will become evident in the course of our discussion, no such intimate relationship exists between the Qur'an and the previous revelations, although Muslim scholars have tried their best to manufacture one. Rather than continuity, there is contradiction.

The Basics of Islam

At the heart of Islam are five basic beliefs and five duties, known as the five pillars of Islam. The beliefs are drawn from a passage in the Qur'an that asserts, "But righteous is he who believeth in Allah and the Last Day and the angels and the Scripture and the Prophets" (2:177).⁷ This verse establishes the five basic beliefs of Islam:

1. Belief in One God (Allah). The strict monotheism of Islam leaves no room for a plurality within the deity. Indeed, the Qur'an condemns the idea of the Trinity:

They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the Messiah, son of Mary.⁸ The Messiah (himself) said: O Children of Israel, worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. Lo! whoso ascribeth partners unto Allah, for him Allah hath forbidden paradise. His abode is the Fire. For evil-doers there will be no helpers. They surely disbelieve who say: Lo! Allah is the third of three; when there is no Allah save the One Allah. If they desist not from so saying a painful doom will fall on those of them who disbelieve. (5:72–73)

This runs counter to the previous revelations, which assert a plurality within the deity. The Old Testament Hebrew term for God (*elohim*) is a plural, and already in Genesis 1, the Scripture alludes to that plurality: "Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness'" (1:26; see also 1:1–2). In the New Testament, Jesus directs his church to baptize and make disciples "in the name [note the singular] of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

⁷ Quotations from the Qur'an are from Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall; numbers indicate the chapter [sura] and verses. *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an: Text and Explanatory Translation* (Mecca: Muslim World League, 1977), 5.

⁸ Abdullah Yusuf Ali translates: "They do blaspheme who say: 'God is Christ the son of Mary.'" *The Qur'an* (Elmhurst, NY: Tahrike Tarsile Qur'an, 2002).

2. Belief in Prophets. In Islam, the major prophets are Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus (Isa in the Qur'an), and Muhammad. Although Jesus makes the list of the most important prophets, the Qur'an explicitly rejects his divinity:

O People of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three" Cease! (it is) better for you! – Allah is only One Allah. Far is it removed from His Transcendent Majesty that He should have a son. His is all that is in the heavens and all that is in the earth. And Allah is sufficient as Defender. (4:171)

3. Belief in Angels. The two angels named in the Bible—Gabriel and Michael—are also mentioned in the Qur'an. Gabriel (Jibril) is mentioned by name three times; he "is one of the greatest Islamic angels since he was the channel through which the Qur'an was revealed from God to the Prophet Muhammad."⁹ Michael (Mikail) is mentioned once, in connection with Gabriel. Closely connected to the angels are the jinn, intelligent, invisible beings believed in by pre-Islamic Arabs. The Qur'an refers to Satan (generally known by the name Iblis) both as a jinn and as an angel, whose primal transgression was a refusal to bow down and worship Adam (7:11–12). In this, we see another contradiction with the Bible, which nowhere speaks of a divine command for the angels to bow down ("fall prostrate") before Adam.

4. Belief in the Holy Books. Sura 3:64 is one of a number of passages that refer to the people of the book: "Say: O people of the Scripture. Come to an agreement between us and you: that we shall worship none but Allah, and that we shall ascribe no partner unto him...." At times, the Christian and Jewish Scriptures are called the Torah and Gospel (Injil). (9:11, et passim). The Qur'an (also spelled Koran) is considered the final revelation; it is divided into 114 chapters (known as sura) with further division into verses (aya). More will be said about the Qur'an in the course of our discussion.

5. Belief in the final Judgment (Heaven and Hell): The joys of heaven and terrors of hell form a key part of the Qur'an. For example, an early sura (101), entitled "The Calamity," declares:

⁹ Jan Richard Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* (London: Curzon, 1992), 136.

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1 The Calamity!

2 What is the Calamity?

3 Ah, what will convey unto thee what the Calamity is!

4 A day wherein mankind will be as thickly-scattered moths

5 And the mountains will become as carded wool.

6 Then, as for him whose scales are heavy (with good works),

7 He will live a pleasant life.

8 But as for him whose scales are light,

9 A bereft and Hungry One will be his mother,

10 Ah, what will convey unto thee what she is!

11 Raging Fire.

This sura—as all but one (sura 9) of the Qur'an's 114 suras—begins with the *Basmala*, a term derived from the Arabic words transliterated, *Bismi Allāhi alrrahmāni alrrahēemi*, “In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.”

Despite the mention of Allah's mercy, from the verses following, it is clear that the Qur'an teaches salvation by works. The *opinio legis*—the attitude that we can save ourselves by keeping God's law—is the natural religion of mankind. Lutheran scholar Adam Francisco points out, “For Muslims it [Islam] is *the* natural religion (*din al-fitra*): the religion that was woven by Allah into creation.”¹⁰ As *the* natural religion par excellence, Islam is also the quintessential religion of legalism. Far from extolling natural religion, Scripture paints a different picture—one of a fallen world, in which the natural religion is utterly inadequate for salvation. Faith in Christ, not human effort, is the way to heaven: “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast” (Ephesians 2:8–9). Here, as in each of its five basic beliefs, Islam stands in opposition to the fundamental tenets of biblical Christianity.

Alongside the five basic beliefs of Islam are the five duties or pillars (Arabic, *arkan*), upon which all of Muslim life rests. According to one of the Hadiths (traditions of the sayings and acts of Muhammad), the pillars go back to a word from the Prophet: “...the Messenger of God (May Prayers and Peace be upon him!) said, ‘Islam is built on five [things]: the testimony (There is no god but God and that Muhammad is the messenger of God);

¹⁰ Adam S. Francisco, “The Relevance of Islamic Theology,” *Logia: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* Vol. 18, No. 4 (Reformation 2009): 14.

the performance of prayer; giving alms; the pilgrimage; and the fast of Ramadan.”¹¹ These duties are incumbent on Muslims everywhere.

1. The Creed (*Shahada*) declares, “There is no God but Allah, and Muhammad is his prophet.” Compared with the three ecumenical creeds of Christendom—the Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian—this statement of belief is simple, without the mystery of the Trinity or Incarnation.

2. Ritual Prayer (*Salat*) is prescribed for five times daily: sunrise, noon, mid-afternoon, sunset, night. Ritual prayer is distinguished from spontaneous prayer to Allah, which is called *dua*. The various ritual prayers contain verses from the Qur’an, are recited in Arabic, and are said facing Mecca.

3. Almsgiving (*Zakat*) requires that one-fortieth of a Muslim’s possessions are to be given to the needy. The word *zakat* means “purification,” and the act of giving is said to purify what one retains.

4. Fasting (*Sawm*) during the month of Ramadan is commanded in the Qur’an: “O ye who believe! Fasting is prescribed for you, even as it was prescribed for those before you, that ye may ward off (evil) . . . [during] the month of Ramadan” (2:183–185).

5. Pilgrimage (*Hajj*) to Mecca is required once in a lifetime for all Muslims who are physically and financially able: “And pilgrimage to the House [the place where Abraham is said to have prayed] is a duty unto Allah for mankind, for him who can find a way thither” (3:97).

Some Muslims see *Jihad* as a sixth pillar of Islam.¹² The word *jihad* comes from an Arabic root meaning “to strive.” This can mean a spiritual *jihad* against the sinful inclination within oneself. More often, it refers to physical striving against non-Muslims. The only Qur’anic promise of certain entrance into paradise is for those who die in the struggle against unbelievers. Sura 19, “Repentance”—the last of the suras and, notably, the only one without the *Basmalah*—is replete with calls to arms, including the following:

Lo! Allah hath bought from believers their lives and their wealth because the Garden [paradise] will be theirs; they shall fight in the way and be slain. It is a promise which is binding on Him in the Torah and the Gospel [Injil] and the Qur’an. Who fulfilleth his covenant better than Allah? Rejoice then in your bargain that ye have made, for that is the supreme triumph. (9:111)

¹¹ As quoted in Paul Lunde, *Islam* (New York: UK Publishing, 2002), 33.

¹² Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam*, 136.

That Muhammad links jihad to the Torah and Gospel attests to his lack of knowledge of these sources, for outside of the historically unique conquest of Canaan as a judgment upon the heathen nations (see Genesis 15:16), nowhere in the Scriptures has God given to his people the directive to wage war against unbelievers.¹³

The Muslim religion, then, is simple both in its belief system and in its practices, although the many rituals connected with the five pillars are demanding and a legalistic burden. Both in its beliefs and practices, Islam opposes biblical Christianity.

The Qur'an Examined

Muslim apologists like to call attention to the fact that their religion is free of the mysteries of the Christian faith—the Trinity and the Incarnation. They also assert that the books of the Bible were written and compiled years after the events they describe. In this respect, *Islam at a Glance*, a booklet prepared for Muslim youth, is typical:

As a matter of fact the main scriptures revealed before the Quran, i.e., Old Testament and the Gospel came in the book form long after the days of the prophets and that too in translation. This was because the followers of Moses and Jesus made no considerable efforts to preserve these Revelations during the life of their Prophets. Rather they were written long after their death. Thus what we now have in the form of the Bible (the Old as well as the New Testament) is translations of individuals' accounts of the original revelations which contain additions and deletions made by the followers of the same Prophets. On the contrary, the last revealed book, the Quran, is extant in its original form. Allah Himself has guaranteed its preservation and that is why the whole of the Quran was written during the life time [sic] of the Prophet (Peace be upon him) himself.¹⁴

Besides the lack of any documentation that the Scriptures were composed much later, that they “contain additions and deletions,” and that they were written “in translation,” this piece raises the obvious question: Why did God decide to guarantee the preservation of the Qur'an and not the former revelations? It is more reasonable to conclude that the earlier

¹³ See Roland Cap Ehlke, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Muslims* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2004), 107–10.

¹⁴ World Assembly of Muslim Youth, *Islam at a Glance* (Karachi, Pakistan: Siddiqi Trust, n.d.), 22.

revelations were preserved (since they were, as even Muslims agree, from God), while the last one, which came along centuries later and contradicts the former, is not authentic.

A closer look at the nature of Muhammad's revelations and transmission of the Qur'an raises other questions about the book. The fact that there are numerous variant readings of the Qur'anic texts belies the claim that the book is "extant in its original form." As Arthur Jeffery notes, "There can be little doubt that the text canonized by 'Uthman was only one among several types of text in existence at the time. . . . In the works of the exegetes and the [Muslim] philologists we not infrequently come across variant readings that have been preserved from one or other of these [displaced] codices."¹⁵

According to early sources such as Ibn Ishaq, Muhammad received his revelations under seven different conditions: dreams, visions, an angel, an angel "in the form of a young, tall man," his night journey and ascent into heaven, Allah speaking from behind a veil, and seizures. Some have concluded he suffered epileptic seizures.¹⁶ Muhammad told his wife Khadija that he feared he might be possessed by demons. She assured him that he was a prophet.

Nevertheless, rather than appearing to be the product of an inspired prophet, Muhammad's revelations often come across as self-serving. A case in point is Muhammad's marriage to Zaynab bint (daughter of) Jabsh. She had been the wife of Zayd, an adopted son of Muhammad. When Muhammad became infatuated with her Zayd divorced his wife so that Muhammad could marry her. The prophet received a special revelation, in which Allah allowed this:

... So when Zayd had performed the necessary formality (of divorce) from her, We gave her unto thee in marriage, so that henceforth there may be no sin for believers in respect of wives of their adopted sons.... There is no reproach for the prophet in that which Allah maketh his due. That was Allah's way with those who passed away of old—and the commandment of Allah is certain destiny. (33:37,38)

¹⁵ Arthur Jeffery, "Materials for the History of the Text of the Koran," in Ibn Warraq, ed., *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam's Holy Book* (New York: Prometheus, 1998), 118–9.

¹⁶ See Ergun Mehmet Caner and Emir Fehti Caner, *Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2002), 84–5.

Along with giving Muhammad the beautiful Zaynab, this special revelation allowed him to have more than the four wives are allowed to other Muslim men: “a privilege for thee [Muhammad] only, and not for the (rest of) believers” (Sura 33:50).

A closer examination of but one section of the Qur’an will expose further problems in the book.

Sura “Maryam”

Muslims know the Qur’an’s suras (also surahs, or suwar, Arabic plural of sura) more by their titles than by their numbers. These titles derive from some significant person or event within the chapter. An inspection of “Maryam” (sura 19) offers insights into the nature of the Prophet’s revelation. The entire sura contains ninety-eight verses (ayat, plural of aya); we will comment on the first thirty-six:

In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful.

1. Kaf. Ha. Ya. A’in. Sad.

This sura, like a number of the others, follows the *Basmala* with several letters from the Arabic alphabet. Muhammad Marmaduke Pickthall includes this footnote in his translation of the Qur’an: “Many surahs begin with letters of the alphabet. Opinions differ as to their significance, the prevalent view being that they indicate some mystic words. Some have opined that they are merely the initials of the scribe. They are always included in the text and recited as part of it.”¹⁷

The text now introduces the story of the birth of John the Baptist. While Zechariah is mentioned by name, Elizabeth is not. Only one woman, Mary, is named in the Qur’an.

2. A mention of the mercy of thy Lord unto His servant Zachariah.

3. When he cried unto his Lord a cry in secret,

4. Saying: My Lord! Lo! The bones of me wax feeble and my head is shining with grey hair, and I have never been unblest in prayer to Thee, my Lord.

5. Lo! I fear my kinsfolk after me, since my wife is barren. Oh, give me from Thy presence a successor.

6. Who shall inherit of me and inherit (also) of the house of Jacob. And make him, my Lord, acceptable (unto Thee).

¹⁷ Pickthall, *Qur’an*, 5.

7. (It was said unto him): O Zachariah! Lo! We bring thee tidings of a son whose name is John; we have given the same name to none before (him).
8. He said: My Lord! How can I have a son when my wife is barren and I have reached infirm old age?
9. He said: So (it will be). Thy Lord saith: It is easy for Me, even as I created thee before, when thou wast naught.
10. He said: My Lord! Appoint for me some token. He said: Thy token is that thou, with no bodily defect, shalt not speak unto mankind three nights.
11. Then he came forth unto his people from the sanctuary, and signified to them: Glorify your Lord at break of day and fall of night.
12. (And it was said unto his son): O John! Hold fast the Scripture. And we gave him wisdom when a child,
13. And compassion from Our presence, and purity; and he was devout,
14. And dutiful toward his parents. And he was not arrogant, rebellious.
15. Peace on him the day he was born, and the day he dieth and the day he shall be raised alive!

For the most part, this account of the birth of John the Baptist is a straightforward retelling of the biblical event, except that the Bible is much more detailed and records that Zechariah did not speak throughout the entire pregnancy, until the circumcision of John eight days after his birth (see Luke 1:5–25, 57–80; the annunciation of Jesus’ birth, Mary’s visit to Elizabeth and her Magnificat take up verses 26–56).

This type of disagreement in details is common when the Qur’an retells biblical stories. It is easy to understand if one considers that Muhammad heard the Bible stories secondhand through Jews and Christians, whose retelling may have been flawed.¹⁸ Nevertheless, since Muslims consider the Qur’an an exact copy of Allah’s eternal book, such explanations are unacceptable to them.

Sura “Maryam” continues with the account of the birth of Jesus. Although the Qur’anic account accepts the biblical teaching of the virgin birth, there are several obvious departures from the biblical record.

¹⁸ *The Origins of the Koran: Classic Essays on Islam’s Holy Book*, edited by Ibn Warraq, is a valuable source of Jewish, Christian, and secular writers on this topic (New York: Prometheus, 1998).

16. And make mention of Mary in the Scripture, when she had withdrawn from her people to a chamber looking East,
17. And had chosen seclusion from them. Then We sent unto her Our Spirit and it assumed for her the likeness of a perfect man.
18. She said: Lo! I seek refuge in the Beneficent One from thee, if thou art God-fearing.
19. He said: I am only a messenger of thy Lord, that I may bestow on thee a faultless son.
20. She said: How can I have a son when no mortal hath touched me, neither have I been unchaste ?
21. He said: So (it will be). Thy Lord saith: It is easy for Me. And (it will be) that We may make of him a revelation for mankind and a mercy from Us, and it is a thing ordained.
22. And she conceived him, and she withdrew with him to a far place.
23. And the pangs of childbirth drove her unto the trunk of the palm-tree. She said: Oh, would that I had died ere this and had become a thing of naught, forgotten!
24. Then (one) cried unto her from below her, saying: Grieve not! Thy Lord hath placed a rivulet beneath thee,
25. And shake the trunk of the palm-tree toward thee, thou wilt cause ripe dates to fall upon thee.
26. So eat and drink and be consoled. And if thou meetest any mortal, say: Lo! I have vowed a fast unto the Beneficent, and may not speak this day to any mortal.

The reference to Mary withdrawing to a palm tree rather than to the manger of Bethlehem (Lk 2:1–7) can be accounted for from the apocryphal book *History of the Nativity of Mary and the Savior's Infancy*, although in the apocryphal book the palm tree incident, including “water flowing from that fount,” took place during the flight to Egypt.¹⁹ That the region of Arabia should have been rife with Christian apocryphal stories agrees with the historical record. W. St. Clair Tisdall (1859–1928), secretary of the Anglican Church Missionary Society in Isfahan, Persia, who did extensive work on the sources of Islam in the original languages of the region, noted:

In the prophet's day, numbers of Christians in Arabia were not only an ignorant people, but belonged to heretical sects, which,

¹⁹ W. St. Clair-Tisdall, “The Sources of Islam,” in Warraq, *Origins of the Koran*, 264.

on account of their dangerous influence, had been expelled from the Roman Empire and thus had taken refuge beyond the border land. They had hardly any acquaintance with the Gospel or apostolic writings, but were conversant with heretical books and the extravagant tales they contained.²⁰

Tisdall offers examples—including that of the story of the palm tree—to prove his claim that “such form one of the sources of the Koran.”²¹ “Maryam” continues the story of Mary and the birth of Jesus.

27. Then she brought him to her own folk, carrying him. They said: O Mary! Thou hast come with an amazing thing.

28. O sister of Aaron! Thy father was not a wicked man nor was thy mother a harlot.

29. Then she pointed to him. They said: How can we talk to one who is in the cradle, a young boy?

30. He spake: Lo! I am the slave of Allah. He hath given me the Scripture and hath appointed me a Prophet,

31. And hath made me blessed wheresoever I may be, and hath enjoined upon me prayer and almsgiving so long as I remain alive,

32. And (hath made me) dutiful toward her who bore me, and hath not made me arrogant, unblest.

33. Peace on me the day I was born, and the day I die, and the day I shall be raised alive!

34. Such was Jesus, son of Mary: (this is) a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt.

35. It befitteth not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should take unto Himself a son. Glory be to Him! When He decreeth a thing, He saith unto it only: Be! and it is.

36. And lo! Allah is my Lord and your Lord. So serve Him. That is the right path.

These verses contain one of the most striking anachronisms in the Qur'an (and there are a number of them), when Mary is referred to as “sister of Aaron.” As is the case with the Hebrew, the Arabic word for Mary and Miriam is the same. It seems that Muhammad thought of the sister of Moses and Aaron and the mother of Jesus as one and the same person, even though some fourteen centuries separated the historical Miriam and

²⁰ Tisdall, “Sources of Islam,” 258.

²¹ Tisdall, “Sources of Islam,” 258.

Mary. "Maryam" is an early Meccan sura, yet the same perplexity occurs in "The Family of Imran," a sura that dates from the third and fourth years in Medina. There Mary's mother is referred to as "the wife of Imran" (3:35f), the father of Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. In his introduction to that sura, Pickthall dismisses the charge of anachronism as "absurd," and argues:

... Most Muslims believe, on the authority of the Qur'an, that the grandfather of Jesus Christ was named 'Imran, which may also have been the name of the father of Moses. In Surah xix.28, where Mary is addressed as "sister of Aaron," they hold the ancestral sense to be the more probable, while denying that there is any reason to suppose that the Virgin Mary had not a brother named Aaron.²²

While such reasoning flies in the face of the obvious explanation, it offers Muslims an avenue by which they can hold to the integrity of their sacred text.

As for Jesus talking from the cradle, the *Gospel of the Infancy of Jesus Christ* states:

The following accounts we found in the book of Joseph the high priest called by some Caiaphas: He related that Jesus spake even when he was in the cradle, and said to his mother: "Mary, I am Jesus Son of God, that word which thou didst bring forth according to the declaration of the angel Gabriel to thee, and my father hath sent me for the salvation of the world."²³

Such a miracle story contradicts John 2:11, which states that the turning of water into wine at the wedding of Cana was "the first of [Jesus'] miraculous signs." Muhammad seems to have been aware that not everyone believed the cradle story, since he added the assertion that this was "a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt."

Moreover, his next statement that "it befiteth not (the Majesty of) Allah that He should take unto Himself a son" shows how Muhammad was able to take whatever material was at hand and fit it to his template of what the nature of Allah is.

This brief excursion into a sampling from the Qur'an offers a taste of how radically different this scripture is from the Holy Bible. Rather than complement the Scriptures and fulfill them, the Qur'an contradicts and attempts to undermine them.

²² Pickthall, *Qur'an*, 47.

²³ William Hone, compiler, *The Lost Books of the Bible* (New York: Testament, 1979), 38.

Alterations and Abrogation

In a number of places, the Qur'an attacks the idea of the Trinity. Although the Qur'an mentions Jesus more than any other person—including Muhammad—it denies him the honor that he himself calls for (John 5:23). Sura "Maryam," for example, goes on to attack the notion that God has a Son: "And they say: The Beneficent hath taken unto Himself a Son. Assuredly they utter a disastrous thing" (19:88–89).

Another of the Qur'anic passages rejecting the Trinity curiously links Mary to the Godhead:

And when Allah saith: O Jesus, son of Mary! Didst thou say unto mankind: Take me and my mother for two gods beside Allah? he saith: Be glorified! It was not mine to utter that to which I had no right. If I used to say it, then Thou knewest it. Thou knowest what is in my mind, and I know not what is in Thy Mind. Lo! Thou, only Thou, art the Knower of Things Hidden. (5:116)

In light of the Qur'an's contradictions of the Holy Scriptures, Muslims assert the doctrine of *tabrif*, which *A Popular Dictionary of Islam* defines as "corruption, distortion, alteration, especially as applied to the sacred texts."²⁴

According to this doctrine, Christians either altered the text of Scripture or misinterpreted it. Since manuscript support for the New Testament is so overwhelming, some Muslims assert that "Christians have altered the original text of a proto-Gospel . . . now lost."²⁵ Others, going back to the noted Muslim theologian-philosopher al-Ghazali (1058–1111), contend that "it is not the text of the Bible that has been altered, but rather the interpretation."²⁶ In either case, Muslim apologists have difficulty in making their case. The Scriptures are clear, for example, that Jesus was crucified and rose from the dead, as Christian theologians throughout the centuries have attested. The Qur'an, however, asserts that the crucifixion never even took place:

And because of their [i.e. the Jews] saying: We slew the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, Allah's Messenger—They slew him not, nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof, save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain. (4:157)

²⁴ Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam*, 241.

²⁵ Netton, *A Popular Dictionary of Islam*, 241.

²⁶ Cyril Glasse, *The New Encyclopedia of Islam* (New York: Alta Mira, 2001), 445.

The corruption lies not on the side of those who faithfully transmitted the Holy Scriptures and expounded them before the coming of Muhammad, but on the part of the Qur'an.

Not only does the Qur'an contradict the Bible both in narrative details and in the most basic doctrines, but it also contradicts itself. One example of an internal contradiction has to do with the creation account. According to Sura 41:9,10,12:

Say (O Muhamamd, unto the idolaters): Disbelieve ye verily in Him Who created the earth in two Days and ascribe unto Him rivals? He (and none else) is Lord of the Worlds. He placed therein firm hills rising above it, and blessed it and measured therein its sustenance in four Days, alike for (all) who ask.... Then He ordained them seven heavens in two Days and inspired in each heaven its mandate....

This adds up to eight days for the creation of everything. Meanwhile, Sura 10:3 states: "Lo! your Lord is Allah Who created the heavens and the earth in six Days, the He established Himself upon the throne, directing all things...." Pickthall's notes cross-reference to other suras, which say that "a Day with Allah is as a thousand years of what ye reckon" (22:47) and "the angels and the Spirit ascend unto Him in a day whereof the span is fifty thousand years" (70:4).

Apparently, specific figures mean little or nothing in the Qur'an. The Bible, on the other hand carefully distinguishes the days of creation as specific units of time consisting of an evening and a morning, while it also states that the eternal God sees the passage of time from a perspective quite different from that of time-bound human beings: "With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day" (2 Peter 3:8; Psalm 90:4).

The doctrine of abrogation (Arabic *nasikh*) helps Muslims account for internal contradictions (and, in some cases, contradictions with the Bible). The Qur'an itself speaks of this: "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?" (2:106)

Christians, of course, recognize the abrogation of the Mosaic covenant with the coming of its fulfillment in Jesus the Messiah (see Jeremiah 31:31; Colossians 2:16-17). Qur'anic abrogation is another matter entirely. It involves changes in revelation within the lifetime of the Prophet in order to meet the exigencies of the moment.

One of the most notable applications of the Qur'anic concept of abrogation has to do with jihad. In his earlier Meccan pronouncements, as leader of a religious minority in Mecca, Muhammad urged mutual acceptance of different belief systems: "Say: O disbelievers! ... Unto you your religion, and unto me my religion" (109:1,6).

After moving to Medina, he permitted defensive fighting: "Sanction is given unto those who fight because they have been wronged; and Allah is indeed able to give them victory" (Sura 22:39). Next, he commanded defensive fighting: "Fight in the way of Allah against those who fight against you, but begin not hostilities. Lo! Allah loveth not aggressors" (Sura 2:190).

In what was probably the last sura, Muhammad called for aggressive jihad against unbelievers: "Fight against those who have been given the Scripture as believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, and forbid not which Allah hath forbidden by His messenger, and follow not the religion of truth, until they pay the tribute readily" (9:29). Today's Muslim terrorists understand the concept of abrogation and the binding nature of the final calls for jihad.

Such nuances of Qur'anic interpretation are often overlooked in the sweeping generalizations about Islam being a religion of peace. Christians, however, are called upon to look beyond the surface and at the heart of the various worldviews competing for the hearts, minds, and souls of people everywhere. Much more could be said on the topics we have briefly examined in this essay; there is a growing number of excellent books for those who seek more in-depth study into Islam. Nevertheless, our cursory examination of Islam has demonstrated that the Allah of Islam is not the God of the Bible and that the Qur'an is not a further divine revelation. Like others living without the saving gospel, Muslims need to be and, indeed, can be reached for Christ.

While we live in a pluralistic society, we cannot simply ignore religious differences as if they do not exist. Whether examining Islam or any other worldview in the light of God's unique revelation in the Bible, we will seek to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15). Jesus Christ is that truth who brings salvation. [LSQ](#)

Addendum: Muhammad and the Spread of Islam

In the general public and even among biblically knowledgeable Christians, often there is little understanding even of the most fundamental facts about Islam. Moreover, while the popular impression is given (for example, the *DaVinci Code*) that the origins of Christianity have been obscured by self-serving ancient ecclesiastical leaders, on the other hand, the opposite is the case with Islam, where the general impression is that modern-day Islamists—aka Jihadists or terrorists—have twisted the peaceful religion of Islam into a distortion of its true, original self. For some readers, a review of the background and basic history of Islam may prove helpful.

The word Islam means submission (a Muslim is one who submits) to the will of Allah. Yet alongside Allah is the Prophet of Islam, and as much as it is the religion of Allah, Islam was and remains the religion of that one man—Muhammad.

There are three basic sources for the life of Muhammad. The first is the Qur'an, which is a record of Muhammad's words to his followers. While the text reflects what Muhammad actually said, it contains little biographical information. Rather, it consists largely of moral injunctions.

A second source of information about Muhammad consists of the biographies. The earliest biography comes from Muhammad ibn Ishaq (704—ca. 770), who wrote about 120 years after the Prophet's death. Another early biography comes from al-Waqidi (748–822), who died almost 200 years after the Prophet. This gap between Muhammad and his earliest biographers is striking when we compare it with the four biographers of Jesus, the Gospel writers Matthew Mark, Luke, and John. Every one of them was a contemporary of Jesus; in fact, two of them (Matthew and John) were among his twelve disciples. All of their writing was finished within the first generation of Christians.

The Hadiths comprise the third source of information about Muhammad. These are the traditions that sprang up around Muhammad after his death. The stories were passed down from one generation to the next, and the examination of which Hadiths are the most accurate is a consuming study of Islamic scholars to this day.

The many histories of Muhammad that have come down through the ages are all based on these three sources.

Born about the year 570, Muhammad was orphaned and raised by relatives. He grew up in a polytheistic culture. Describing Arabia in Muhammad's day, University of Chicago lecturer of Arabic and Islamic history, Kay Heikkinen writes:

Both Judaism and Christianity were known there and along the trade routes (the Lakhmid kingdom [present-day southern Iraq] had been largely Christian, and Jewish tribes lived in some oasis towns). However, most Arabs still worshipped tribal gods, and believed in the existence of jinn or demons.²⁷

Heikkinen goes on to note:

The most important sanctuary to which Bedouins came was that at Mecca, a small inland town about half way up the western coast of Arabia. The sanctuary, known as the ka'ba, housed images of a number of gods; the surrounding territory was sacred, imposing the suspension of fighting on whoever entered it, and tribes assembled there annually for worship, trade, and of course socializing.²⁸

From youth on, Muhammad took an interest in religious issues. "Every year," records Ibn Ishaq, "the apostle of Allah spent a month praying at [Mount] Hira during the month of Ramadan."²⁹ In the year 610, while engaged in such meditation in this desert cave near Mecca, Muhammad received what is referred to as "the call." There he heard a voice telling him, "Read!" Muhammad responded, "I cannot read." Upon the third repetition of this exchange, he said, "What can I read?" The answer was the beginning of revelations that were to form the Qur'an, which means the "reading" or the "recitation":

Read: In the name of thy Lord Who created,
Created man from a clot.

Read: And it is thy Lord the most bountiful
Who taught by the pen,
Taught man that which he knew not. (Qur'an 96:1-4)

For three years, Muhammad shared his messages in private with his wife and a few other people close to him. After that he went public. As might be expected, not everyone in Mecca was receptive to Muhammad's revelations, which he claimed came from the angel Gabriel. Some of the fiercest opposition to Muhammad developed among the wealthy Umayyah clan, which was another branch of his own tribe, the Quraysh. Initially

²⁷ Kay Heikkinen, "World of Islam: Islamic Civilization and the Middle East," Concordia University Wisconsin, Adult Education module, 1993, updated and revised by Roland Cap Ehlke, 2005, 18.

²⁸ Heikkinen, "World of Islam," 18.

²⁹ Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad Apostle of Allah*, ed. Michael Edwardes (London: London Portfolio Society, 1964), 36.

opposition came especially in the form of ridicule, sneers, and sarcasm. As the revelations continued and the little band of followers grew, the reaction did too. Some of the lowlier Muslims were even beaten. In 615 Muhammad sent most of his followers—eighty-three of them—to the largely Christian country of Abyssinia (Ethiopia) for refuge.

In 622, the Prophet himself left Mecca and immigrated to the oasis city of Yathrib (now known as Madinah or Medina), about 250 miles north of Mecca. This migration was the Hijrah that marks the beginning of the Islamic dating system. (Since the Muslim calendar is lunar, we cannot arrive at the Muslim year simply by subtracting 622 from the year on our calendar. Many books on Islam refer to events with both dating systems.)

At Medina Muhammad was able to unite two large tribes that had been fighting each other. He told them that he would negotiate between them, if they agreed to accept his new religion. This diplomacy was successful and thus consolidated eighty percent of Medina behind Muhammad. It also marked the beginning of the concept of *umma*, or community that crossed bloodlines and brought people together on the basis of religion.

Muhammad's followers began to intercept caravans as a means of bringing pressure on his enemies in Mecca. At the battle of Badr, Muhammad together with about 300 followers attacked a caravan headed to Mecca. In defeating a force of 1000 men, Muhammad gained his first military victory. Badr was an immense turning point in Muslim history. Although he would meet with some setbacks, such as the disastrous battle at Uhud, Muhammad continued to increase in power.

Among his victories was the capture and near-extirmination of the Jewish banu-Qurayzah tribe, which had made the mistake of siding with the Prophet's Meccan enemies. In the market place of Medina, the Muslims decapitated hundreds of men of this tribe. "In number," writes Ibn Ishaq, "they [the dead] amounted to six or seven hundred, although some state it to have been eight or nine hundred."³⁰

By the year 629, Muhammad's power was such that he was able to return from Medina to Mecca and take it without opposition. He proceeded to destroy the idols of the Ka'aba, and the inhabitants of Mecca embraced Islam.

The last ten years of the Prophet's life were more than a time of military conquest. Muhammad's decade in Medina had been formative for the Muslim religion. It was during those years that he composed much of the Qur'an. One scholar sums up the importance of that final period:

³⁰ Ibn Ishaq, *The Life of Muhammad*, 129.

“Islam as it finally took shape belongs to Medina and not to Mecca.”³¹ Having established himself as master of much of Arabia and unified its many tribes under Islam, the Prophet died in Medina in the year 632.

Following Muhammad’s death, the Muslim armies spread outside the confines of Arabia and by means of the sword carved out a huge empire. Within a century, the Muslim lands stretched from Spain in the west to India in the east.

Although stopped from taking Europe in the past (Tours 732, Vienna 1529, 1683), high immigration rates make the Islamization of Europe a distinct possibility in the near future. Noted scholar of Islamic history and culture, Robert Spencer, observes:

How quickly is Europe being Islamized? So quickly that even historian Bernard Lewis, who has continued throughout his honor-laden career to be strangely disingenuous about certain realities of Islamic radicalism and terrorism, told the German newspaper *Die Welt* forthrightly that “Europe will be Islamic by the end of the century.” ...

What Europe has long sown it is now reaping. Bat Ye’or, the pioneering historian of dhimmitude, the institutionalized oppression of non-Muslims in Muslim societies, chronicles in her forthcoming book *Eurabia* how it has come to this. Europe, she explains, began thirty years ago to travel down a path of appeasement, accommodation, and cultural abdication before Islam in pursuit of short-sighted political and economic benefits. She observes that today “Europe has evolved from a Judeo-Christian civilization, with important post-Enlightenment/secular elements, to a ‘civilization of dhimmitude,’ i.e., Eurabia: a secular-Muslim transitional society with its traditional Judeo-Christian mores rapidly disappearing.”³²

Islam is the world’s second largest religion. High birth rates, along with conversions, make it the fastest growing religion in the world.

³¹ Richard Bell, *The Origin of Islam in Its Christian Environment* (London: Frank Cass and Company, 1968), 125.

³² Robert Spencer, “The Mullahs’ Europe,” *FrontPageMagazine.com*, September 22, 2004. <http://97.74.65.51/readArticle.aspx?ARTID=11381>. Retrieved October 17, 2009.

God, Creation, and Science

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Questions! Questions! Questions!

Is the Bible's teaching on creation an unscientific fairytale? If God did not create all that is seen and unseen, how did it come to exist? Does the Bible teach that Adam and Eve were actual people, the first humans? Did human beings evolve from a common ancestor as Charles Darwin believed and does the evidence actually show this? Should a believer in the Bible view science as a threat to his faith? Can scientists uncover all the answers? Is every scientist an evolutionist? Can religion be taken out of science or science out of religion? Is the Bible the basis of all truth: religious, moral, historical, and scientific? Why should any of this matter to you or me? Let's find out.

What does the Bible say about creation?

"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). With these words the factual history begins of God's creating power, the creation itself, and his relationship with it as its Creator. Before creation, there was no space, matter, time, or physical life—only God.

How did God accomplish this? He accomplished it by the power of his Word. God is almighty. His word is almighty. God speaks; it happens. In accordance with His good, just will He accomplishes anything He pleases. Nothing is difficult. The Bible tells us, "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light" (Genesis 1:3). Light did not have a choice whether or not to be created. God commanded it and there was light.

From the Bible, which is God's inspired, error-free, written Word, we learn that He created all that exists on the earth and throughout the universe in six twenty-four hour days. It all began on Day One:

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. And God called the light "day" and the darkness he called "night." And there was evening and there was morning—the first day. (Genesis 1:5)

In English the word "day" can be defined in many ways, depending on the context. From the *Webster's New World Dictionary, 3rd edition*: "1) the period of light between sunrise and sunset; 2) the twenty-four hour period (mean solar day); 3) a period of time; era; age; 4) a time of flourishing, power, glory, success; 5) an unspecified past or future time (one of these days)." In Genesis the Hebrew original for the word "day" is *yom* (pronounced with a long 'o' sound). It has one meaning in this context: a twenty-four hour day.

On the first day God created light. On the second day he created an expanse to separate the water above from the water below. On the third day he created seas and dry ground, then vegetation, plants and trees, each according to their kinds. On the fourth day he created the sun, moon, and stars. On the fifth he created fish and countless other creatures to fill the water, each according to their kinds, and he created birds to fill the sky, each according to their kinds. On the sixth day he created livestock and other creatures that move along the ground, each according to their kinds. When all was complete, God formed the human race on the sixth day. He formed the male (Adam) from the dust of the ground and breathed life into him. He formed the female (Eve) from Adam. But they were unlike any other creature. God created them in his image and set them above all other creatures. God created everything specifically for human beings to enjoy and rule over and tend. God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves along the ground." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it" (Genesis 1:26–28).

God created a flawless, pristine, mature world. In it there was no sin, disease, decay, or death. The Bible says, "God saw all that he had made,

and it was very good. And there was evening, and there was morning—the sixth day. Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array” (Genesis 1:31–2:1). This is the teaching of the Bible. Since we have not witnessed God’s act of creation during those first six days, we must take it by faith. God the Holy Spirit convinces us through the inherent power of the Bible’s testimony itself that the creation account is what it is—historical, scientific fact. “By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God’s command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible” (Hebrews 11:3).

Hasn’t science disproved the Bible’s creation account?

Let’s begin with a simple question: What is science? It is essential to recognize that science is the study of things that can be directly observed or can be proven through repeated experimentation. For instance, through a basic science experiment, we can learn the boiling point of water at sea level. Simply boil some water at sea level and place a thermometer in it. (Who would argue with the thermometer?) We apply science to determine straightforward things like the boiling point of water at sea level and to understand and harness complex things like nuclear fission. True scientific investigation limits itself to investigate what it is able to investigate: the design and function of creation. We can all agree that true scientific investigation helps us to understand the creation more so every day, even as our understanding will remain incomplete due to creation’s raw complexity. (The more we learn, the more we know; the more we know, the more there is to learn.) If scientific investigation attempts to reach beyond what can be directly observed or proven, or if it denies “what is” because of a pre-determined agenda, can it be considered actual science?

Has science proved that there is no God? Has science proved that he did not create the universe in six twenty-four hour days? Has science proved that God did not create life on earth in all its vast array? Can science prove any of these things? Science is the study of things that can be directly observed or can be proven through repeated experimentation. It can’t do more than this and remain actual science. The church reformer Martin Luther had it right when he said 500 years ago: “I shall need to have been dead several years before I shall thoroughly understand the meaning of creation and the omnipotence of God.” Would a true scientist argue? The existence of God and his act of creation over six twenty-four hour days—when he created everything out of nothing—is beyond the scope of scientific investigation. God made this point to the Old Testament believer Job: “Where were you when I laid the earth’s foundation? Tell

me, if you understand” (Job 38:4). We are limited to a study of the after effect (which is quite enough). At the same time, however, evidence of God’s power and majesty is obvious in creation. It is there to see by anyone willing to see. Romans 1:20 says, “Since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse.”

Let’s take the Bible’s teaching on creation at face value. In order for matter, space, and life to exist, some being must have created it. Who can argue that this is not the only logical, scientific understanding? The Bible says it is God who did it. On the other hand, it is simply not logical or scientific at all to believe that matter, space, and life came about by rolling the cosmic dice of chance. (What scientific law can be appealed to here? There is no evidence that this happens.) It is also not logical or scientific to look into the complexity of life and say, “There is no intentional design.” If we look into multi-dimensional DNA and the 100 billion neurons in the human brain that are required to make it work like the finest “computer” there is, the statistical probability that this design could occur without a Creator is effectively zero.¹ Of course, the human mind is far beyond the design of any computer. For instance, it is rational and creative. It can think of things that are *not yet* and bring them into being through research into the design of creation and by the trial and error of experimentation— inventions and advancements of every kind, which improve our human condition on earth. This is not a recent capability either! When we analyze the artifacts of ancient civilizations it is obvious that the human mind has always enjoyed this finely honed capability. The artifacts “attest to a high and technologically advanced civilization in the distant past.”² Dr. Chittick states in the introduction of his book, “With the possible exception of the amazing developments of the past one hundred years or so, the further we go into the past, the higher was the level of science and technology as reflected by human artifacts. What explanation will make sense of the available evidence?” Above all, the human mind is designed to rest in the knowledge of its Creator. The Lord says, “Be still and know that I am God” (Psalm 46). If we remove God from the equation the basic questions will persist concerning origins and design, because, at bottom, they are not questions that science can answer. They require religious answers. Among all the religions of the world, only Christianity truly answers them. Only

¹ See www.pathlights.com.

² Donald E. Chittick, *The Puzzle of Ancient Man* (Newberg, OR: Creation Compass), 12.

Christianity “treats truth as objective and explains why—because the world is the creation of God... with its own inherent structure and design.”³ Christianity *is* truth (John 17:17; 19:37).

Are we to conclude, then, that religion and science are opposed? No! In fact, religion and science always walk hand in hand, with religion always *leading*. When the religion is true, it praises God as he is and leads science to praise him for the creation as it is. When religion is false, it denies some aspect of the true God as he is (or denies him entirely), and leads science to deny some aspect of the creation as it is (or to deny it entirely). When the religion is true, it gives science the freedom to interpret facts honestly. When the religion is false, it steers science to reach conclusions contrary to the facts. This brings us to **Darwinism**. What is it?

What is Darwinism—scientific fact, theory, or something else?

In 1859, Charles Darwin published his book titled, *Origin of Species*. We must understand that at the foundation of his belief regarding the origin of species is *atheism* (a religious position). The atheist believes there is no God. Therefore, in Darwin’s mind, whatever the cause was for the existence of the universe, the earth, and life on it, it was not God. From his atheistic starting point he theorized that life began in the form of a primitive, simple organism (a common ancestor). From it, all life-forms *randomly mutated* and branched out—some into bacteria and algae, others into flowers and fruit trees, others into fish and birds and mammals and so forth. He theorized that random mutation occurs over billions upon billions of years as organisms adapt to survive in the earth’s ever-changing environment. Organisms that do not adapt go extinct. He called this the process of *natural selection* or “survival of the fittest.” He theorized that the human race, without purpose or design, evolved from less intelligent primates through this process and so became dominant over all creatures. (If he is right, we might want to say on behalf of ourselves, “What a fortunate roll of the cosmic dice!”) His theory is sometimes described as the theory of *macro-evolution*—the change of a species into another species over a long period of time. (This should not be confused with the reality of *micro-evolution*, the change that can and does occur within species according to the bounds of each species’ genetic parameters.) Darwin wasn’t the first to theorize about a godless universe, but he was the first to give it a popular voice. For this reason, it is important to understand Darwinism and its far-reaching implications when it is accepted as the baseline for reality.

³ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2005), 395.

Darwin published his theory concerning the origin of species 150 years ago. What is its status today? It remains a theory. It has not been proven true. In fact, his theory is not a theory at all. An actual theory can be “put to the test” to determine whether it holds true for all occasions. If testing proves that a theory holds true, then the theory is considered a law. Can Darwin’s “theory” be put to the test when we don’t have the “common ancestor” in hand? Darwin’s theory is actually a hypothetical model, his personal explanation of the question of origins and design. Science cannot reproduce or test it.⁴ Yet this much is obvious about his model: it does not fit with the evidence that is known about origins and design. The further our knowledge advances about the universe, the earth and life on it, the faster Darwinism retreats.

Let’s look at three examples.

- 1) *The Darwin model* (1859) teaches the concept of primitive life. Darwin believed that a simple cell was nothing more than protoplasm, a bag of jelly. *The scientific reality* (2009) tells us that there is no such thing as primitive life. Each cell is an engine and a factory with specific duties that are vital to the survival of any organism. Geneticist John Sanford says, “Each human body is a galaxy of cells—more than 100 trillion—and every one of these cells has a complex set of instructions and its own highly prescribed duties. The human genome not only specifies the complexity of our cells and our bodies, but also the functioning of our brains. The structure and organization of our brains involves a level of organization entirely beyond our comprehension.”⁵ Biochemist Michael Behe accurately describes the complexity of life as *irreducibly complex*.⁶ Interestingly, in his academic response to his critics, titled, “Irreducible Complexity and Evolutionary Literature: Response to Critics,” he mentions two “competent scientists” (his description), both evolutionists, who admit the inability of Darwinism to explain the biochemical complexity of cellular systems. Behe says, “For example, microbiologist James Shapiro of the University of Chicago declared in *National Review* that “There are no detailed Darwinian accounts for the evolution of any fundamental biochemical or cellular system, only

⁴ Michael McCoy, *Creation Vs. Evolution* (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1996), 19–20.

⁵ John Sanford, *Genetic Entropy and The Mystery of the Genome* (Livonia, NY: Feed My Sheep Foundation, 2008), 4.

⁶ See www.Cmods.org Unit 3, #11. Note: Michael Behe is under constant attack by evolutionists, even though he, himself, is not a believer in a literal understanding of Genesis 1 and 2.

a variety of wishful speculations.”⁷ In *Nature*, University of Chicago evolutionary biologist Jerry Coyne stated, “There is no doubt that the pathways described by Behe are dauntingly complex, and their evolution will be hard to unravel. ... [W]e may forever be unable to envisage the first proto-pathways.”⁸

- 2) *The Darwin model* (1859) teaches that all species, plant and animal, evolved from a common ancestor through random mutation and natural selection, and that through this process all genetic material develops, increases and continues to do so. It also teaches that through this process gender specificity developed over time, male and female, for continued propagation of species. *The scientific reality* (2009) says that there is no valid Darwinian proof to explain the development of gender and sexual reproduction. “At conception, the chromosomes inherited from the sperm are paired with the chromosomes inherited from the egg to give the new organism its full chromosomal complement. Evolutionary theorists ask us to believe that random, chance occurrences brought about this marvelously interdependent process of, first, splitting the genetic information into equal halves, and, second, recombining it through sexual reproduction. Not only is an intricate process required to produce a sperm or egg cell in the first place via meiosis, but another equally intricate mechanism also is required to rejoin the genetic information during fertilization in order to produce the zygote, which will become the embryo, which will become the fetus, which eventually will become the newborn. The idea that all of this ‘just evolved’ is unworthy of consideration or acceptance, especially in light of the evidence now at hand.”⁹
- 3) *The Darwin model* (since 1859): Darwinists have been searching for any evidence to support Darwin’s model. Some of the most popular examples of “evidence” include the Piltdown Man, the Nebraska Man, Darwin’s Finches, dysfunctional fruit flies, peppered moths, and Haeckel’s Embryos. These examples have frequently appeared in science textbooks. *The scientific reality* (2009): Not one of these examples has stood up to honest scientific peer review. Each of these has been proven false or grossly misinterpreted.

No one can argue that most public school boards, teachers at universities, the majority of researchers within various fields of study, and all government agencies, including the U.S. Department of Education,

⁷ Michael Behe, “Irreducible Complexity and Evolutionary Literature: Response to Critics,” published at <http://www.discovery.org/a/443>, on July 31, 2000.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ www.trueorigin.org/sex01.asp.

subscribe to Darwinism as the basis for reality. For many, their subscription is unconditional. They are among those who refuse to acknowledge any evidence that argues against Darwinism (and all of it does). They are among those who want to outlaw—in the name of “science”—any mention of God the Creator in public school classrooms. Most science textbooks are written with this bias and the case can be made that this bias amounts to *intentional deception*. For example, most science textbooks being published today *continue* to present known falsehoods like “peppered moths” or “Haeckel’s embryos” as fact in order to validate Darwinism.¹⁰ What does this all mean?

We have arrived at the heart of the matter. Why do the vast majority of scientists (along with most educators and politicians) so invest themselves in Darwinism if it is untenable? While it is impossible to read their hearts, we can hear their words. Many of them are honest enough to confess Darwinism for what it is in reality: *a religion posing as science*, which is being used to discredit the Bible’s proclamation of the God of grace, power, and morality, who acts in ways that do not fall neatly under the so-called laws of science (the miracle of creation and other miracles of God), and to whom all must answer someday. Evolutionist Michael Ruse says, “Evolution came into being as a kind of secular ideology, an explicit substitute for Christianity.”¹¹ He defines the battle for what it is: “If this is not a rival to traditional Judaeo-Christian teaching, I do not know what is.”¹² It must be understood that this is not a battle of religion versus science or science versus religion, as Darwinists attempt to miscast the argument. *It is the battle of true religion and true science (the Bible) versus false religion and faulty science (Darwinism)*. The Apostle Peter identified this battle-line over two thousand years ago, when he recorded the God-inspired words, “First of all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires. But they deliberately forget that long ago by God’s word the heavens existed and the earth was formed out of water and by water” (2 Peter 3:3,5). (Are you ready to fight this battle?)

It is important to realize that not every scientist is a Darwinist, and even among Darwinists there is hardly agreement on evolution. (Some Darwinists theorize that if evolution had the chance to do it all over the human race might not come about, while others say that the human being is no longer evolving at all.) Many of the greatest scientists of history such

¹⁰ See www.Cmods.org Unit 1, #1.

¹¹ Pearcey, 172.

¹² *Ibid.*

as Kepler, Bacon, Pascal, Newton, Agassiz, Pasteur, and Albert Einstein, at the very least accepted the world as one of divine, created order. Many of the leading scientists today in fields such as physics, biology, physiology, and genetics see and acknowledge the fingerprint of the divine hand in creation and actively reject Darwinism. Dr. Benjamin Carson, a world leading neurosurgeon, selected by *Time* as one of the nation's top 20 physicians and scientists, and by the Library of Congress as one of 89 "living legends" says, "I just don't have enough faith to believe (in Darwinism)."¹³

Is it possible that the Bible's creation account and Darwinism contain some truth?

Many Christian churches attempt a compromise on the creation/evolution debate, and some even apologize for their past rejection of Darwin. They say that both the Bible and Darwin are correct to a point. They say that God created the universe and life on the earth, but not in six twenty-four hour days. They claim that the six days mentioned in Genesis actually represent six long epochs of time (amounting to untold billions of years). Over that time, life which God began in a primitive form he then directed and evolved into more complex organisms, with the human being coming out on top. This compromise position is known as "theistic evolution." The theory might more accurately be called "gradual creationism" because it holds that the ultimate cause for creation and development of species is God. (Doesn't compromise always sound appealing somehow?)

Let's take a look at the fossil record, with its missing links in the supposed evolutionary chain and pose the question: "If evolution or theistic evolution is true, why does the fossil record show no evidence of transitional creatures?" Even supporters of evolution now realize that the fossil record will continue to testify against their beliefs, as the author of the pro-Darwinist book, *Epic of Evolution*, acknowledges: "Fossils, in principle, ought to tell what and how evolution happened among all life-forms. Additional fossil finds will eventually fill the transitional gaps that now hamper a full understanding, all while the fossil record grows more comprehensive. But, in practice, and at present, that record is surely incomplete and will likely remain so indefinitely."¹⁴ Dr. Carson comments about the lack of evidence in the fossil record for Darwinism:

¹³ Jerry Bergman, "Benjamin Carson: The Pediatric Neurosurgeon with Gifted Hands," *Acts and Facts* (January 2009): 10.

¹⁴ Eric Chaisson, *Epic of Evolution* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 349.

It's just not there. But when you bring that up to proponents of Darwinism, the best explanation they come up with is, 'Well...uh... it's lost.' ... I find it requires too much faith for me to believe that explanation given all fossils we have found without any fossilized evidence of the direct, step-by-step evolutionary progression from simple to complex organisms or from one species to another species. Shrugging and saying, 'Well, it was mysteriously lost, and we'll probably never find it,' doesn't seem like a particularly satisfying, objective, or scientific response.¹⁵

Charles Darwin himself acknowledged that the lack of transitional or intermediate forms in the fossil record was damaging evidence against his model. He held out hope that they would be found someday.¹⁶ They haven't, and that includes a continuing lack on evidence for any link between animal and man.¹⁷ "Thus, the fossil record... shows exactly what the Bible teaches—namely clear-cut 'kinds' of organisms, each perhaps including numerous 'sub-kinds' with unbridged gaps between."¹⁸ The Bible says, "When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another" (1 Corinthians 15:37–39).

The Bible is truth. Any compromise on it will harm a person's faith in the Creator and ability to understand the creation as it is. Compromise can destroy both. *Theistic evolution compromises the truth. It is false and dangerous.*

- It fails to convey the clear message that the human race was created by God in a moment in time, unique and precious to him above any other creature.
- It sends the message that he did not originally create the human being as a moral creature with an eternal soul, set apart and above the animal kingdom.
- It denies God's unique purpose for the human race from the beginning, when he said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves along the ground" (Genesis 1:26).

¹⁵ Bergman, 10.

¹⁶ Pearcey, 166.

¹⁷ Chittick, 163–167, 236–250.

¹⁸ John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, *The Genesis Flood* (Philipsburg: NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1961), 450.

- It denies God's creation process as it actually happened and cedes religious and scientific ground to Darwin, an avowed atheist, who said of God's creation, "The universe we observe has precisely the properties we should expect if there is, at bottom, no design, no purpose, no good, no evil, nothing but blind, pitiless indifference."

For these reasons, no Christian should support the compromise concept of "theistic evolution."

What is at stake?

Faith in God is at stake

Attack on the Bible's creation account attacks God himself as the Almighty Creator. The central purpose of such an attack is to eliminate his influence on human belief and worldview. If we cease to acknowledge him as our Creator, who created us to rule over the creation in thankful appreciation to him, how can praise him, or pray to him, or look to him for all our needs? To counter this, the Psalmist King David encourages us, "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world... The precepts of the LORD are right, giving joy to the heart... May the words of my mouth and the mediation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, O LORD, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Psalm 19).

A society of law and justice is at stake

The Bible teaches that God created the human being in his image, as an immortal creature with a conscience, among other wonderful blessings. The Bible is very clear about the fact that every human being has equal worth in God's sight. The psalmist confesses, "You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made" (Psalm 139:13,14). Because of this, every human being has the right to life, love, and protection. Jesus says, "Love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31, Luke 10:27). If there is no holy God and no moral Creator, as Darwin claims, then we live in a godless universe, where there is no true morality, and no one from on high to assign each person innate equal value and no one to protect those who are often assigned less worth by their society: babies in the womb, those born with genetic defects like Down Syndrome, the elderly, the terminally ill, the poor, certain races among humans. Already in 1944, the Christian scholar and writer C.S.

Lewis saw this problem developing. In his book, *The Abolition of Man*, he warned of the consequence that will result if we reject the reality of absolute moral truth and the innate value of human life: "If nothing is obligatory (morally binding) for its own sake, nothing is obligatory at all."¹⁹ Also this, "If man chooses to treat himself as raw material, raw material he will be...."²⁰

Most people are not aware of the complete title of Darwin's book *Origin of Species*. It is: *On the Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection, or the Preservation of Favoured Races in the Struggle for Life*. What did Darwin mean by this title? Darwin himself defines what he meant in a subsequent work, *The Descent of Man*, published in 1871: "At some future period, not very distant as measured by centuries, the civilized races of man will almost certainly exterminate, and replace the savage races throughout the world. At the same time the anthropomorphous apes ... will no doubt be exterminated. The break between man and his nearest allies will then be wider, for it will intervene between man in a more civilized state, as we may hope, even than the Caucasian and some ape as low as a baboon, instead of as now between the negro or Australian (aborigine) and the gorilla." His false, low, base view of human life has consequences.

History tells us that notorious figures such as Karl Marx, Vladimir Lenin, Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, and Mao Tse Tung of China had affection for Darwin in his effort to remove a moral God from the equation of their thinking. Lenin said, "Darwin put an end to the belief that the animal and vegetable species bear no relation to one another, except by chance, and that they were created by God, and hence immutable." In short, evolution was "freeing" for them so that they could pursue their aims to evolve or improve their society as they saw fit. Marx was an advocate of violent revolution and dictatorship of the poorer (producer) classes against the upper (property ownership) classes. Under Lenin, Stalin, Hitler and Mao, millions (Jews, Christians, anyone they viewed as an enemy to their aims) were imprisoned, starved, tortured, experimented upon, and executed. Each of these men saw Christianity as a particular enemy to their aims, and systematically imprisoned and tortured and executed millions of Christians, including Christian clergy, to remove their influence from among the people.²¹ We are most familiar with the atrocities of Hitler. "Hitler used Darwin's view of 'natural selection' to justify his racist, anti-Semitic and, eventually, anti-

¹⁹ C.S. Lewis, *The Abolition of Man* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 40.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 72.

²¹ www.trueorigin.org/hitler01.asp.

Christian suppression and brutality.”²² The *eugenics movement*, initiated by Darwin’s cousin, Francis Galton, also spawned from evolutionary thought. Here is the frightening definition of eugenics from the *Merriam-Webster’s Dictionary, 10th edition*: “A science that deals with the improvement (as by control of human mating) of hereditary qualities of a race or breed.” Galton believed that it was possible to breed a “highly gifted race of men,” through what he termed, “positive eugenics.” Adolf Hitler was a huge proponent of eugenics, which he believed would enable him to create a master Aryan race. Yet in the United States too, quiet acceptance of eugenics has taken root. Statistics show that nearly 90% of parents who discover through pre-natal testing that the child in the womb has Down Syndrome decide to abort rather than give birth to a “defective” child.²³ The relative acceptance of abortion, embryonic stem cell research and euthanasia and the promotion of these practices by federal, state and local governments also apply here.

A comment about the origins and purpose of Planned Parenthood should be made. Planned Parenthood was founded in early 20th century by Margaret Sanger. Sanger’s Darwinist beliefs reflect a total disregard for value that God assigns to every human life, of every race, gender, and social class. First, Sanger supported “positive” eugenics:

While Planned Parenthood’s current apologists try to place some distance between the eugenics and birth control movements, history definitively says otherwise. The eugenic theme figured prominently in the Birth Control Review, which Sanger founded in 1917. She published such articles as “Some Moral Aspects of Eugenics” (June 1920), “The Eugenic Conscience” (February 1921), “The purpose of Eugenics” (December 1924), “Birth Control and Positive Eugenics” (July 1925), “Birth Control: The True Eugenics” (August 1928), and many others.²⁴

She was also an admitted racist, who promoted the use of birth control and abortion to limit the black population. She said, “Colored people are human weeds and they are to be exterminated.” A good question has been raised:

Planned Parenthood is the largest abortion provider in America. 78% of their clinics are in minority communities. Blacks make up

²² Sharon Sebastian and Raymond G. Bohlin, *Darwin’s Racists* (College Station, TX: Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, 2009), 61.

²³ See www.physiciansforlife.org.

²⁴ From www.BlackGenocide.org, founded by Rev. Clenard H. Childress, Jr.

12% of the population, but 35% of the abortions in America. Are we being targeted? Isn't that genocide? We are the only minority in America that is on the decline in population. If the current trend continues, by 2038 the black vote will be insignificant.²⁵

Planned Parenthood is a private organization flush with money. Yet in 2005–2006, the organization received 305 million dollars in federal and state grants.²⁶ Today 1 out of every 5 abortions is performed at a Planned Parenthood clinic. On January 22, 1973, the United States Supreme Court legalized abortion in this nation. In the July 13, 2009 issue of *The New York Times Magazine*, Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsberg offered her thinking about that decision, which may shed some light on the purpose behind the government's financial backing of Planned Parenthood: "Frankly, I had thought that at the time Roe was decided, there was concern about population growth and particular growth in populations that we don't want to have too many of. So that Roe was going to be then set up for Medicaid funding for abortion."

In addition, the United States government has, at times, provided federal funding for abortion services in other countries. To provide context, let's recognize the executive order ("Mexico City policy") that was put in effect by President Ronald Reagan in 1984, to *protect human life*, which, "required nongovernmental organizations to agree as a condition of their receipt of federal funds that such organizations would neither perform nor actively promote abortion as a method of family planning in other nations." Yet, on January 22, 1993, just days after taking office, President Bill Clinton rescinded President Reagan's executive order, freeing the flow of federal funding for abortion services in other countries. Shortly after his inauguration in 2001, President George W. Bush restored Reagan's "Mexico City policy." In January 2009, just days after taking office, President Barack Obama rescinded the restriction once again. It is a tragic disregard for human life by President Clinton and President Obama. Such funding is funneled to International Planned Parenthood (IPPF) and to the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA), which supports China's forced abortion policy on its citizens.²⁷ Is this very distant at all from Charles Darwin's casual reflections in his book, *The Descent of Man*, on the inhumane treatment of infants? "Murder of infants has prevailed on the largest scale throughout the world, and has met with no reproach.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ See article posted by Kathryn Jean Lopez on June 23, 2008 at www.nationalreview.com.

²⁷ See article by O. Carter Snead, published on April 23, 2009 at www.fed-soc.org.

Infanticide, especially of females, has been thought to be good for the tribe.”²⁸

In order to fight against these great evils, it is essential that we hold fast to the Bible’s creation account which gives every person innate value and right to life, no matter what one’s gender, race, age, economic class, or state of health. In fact, God’s Son was conceived in his virgin mother by the Holy Spirit and became human in order to redeem *all people of all races and circumstances* from their sins. He is Jesus Christ. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16). God’s love to the world in Christ is *agape* love, the wonderful Old and New Testament truth. *Agape* is a Greek word which means love that is, “proven, selfless, sacrificial.” His love saves us from our inability to love as we should—and certainly every one of us falls completely short of the *agape* ideal. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). God’s love in Jesus Christ has redeemed us from our sins. We had no hand in that. “This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

True education and knowledge is at stake

C.S. Lewis contends that, “The aim of education is to make the pupil like and dislike what he ought.”²⁹ He is expressing the biblical principle, “Test everything; hold on to the good” (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

Accordingly, all true knowledge flows from a biblical understanding and a humble appreciation of God, his true nature and characteristics, and his creation. Proverbs 15:33 says, “The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honor.” Arithmetic and music, physics and advanced mathematics, biochemistry and physiology, anatomy and biology, history and geography, the research in and practice of medicine, grammar and language and rhetoric, arts and trades, economics, astronomy and space exploration, geology and archeology, the acknowledgement of absolute moral/natural law, psychology and philosophy, individual rights and national sovereignty, the establishment and purpose of marriage and family, the reality of miracles, and faith in true biblical religion *find their footing upon the literal understanding of Genesis, chapters 1 and 2, and by extension the entire Scripture*. The Bible is truth, after all—factual, historical, religious, scientific truth.

²⁸ Pearcey, 213.

²⁹ Lewis, 16.

The Bible holds up King Solomon as an example of someone whose knowledge was built on his faith in God and acknowledgement of his almighty power in creation.

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He described plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also taught about animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Men of all nations came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom. (1 Kings 4:29–34)³⁰

Biblical Food for Thought—8 Statements

1. Genesis 1 and 2 and the entire Scripture is truth. It is religious truth, actual history, and the foundation of correct scientific principles/facts. See 2 Timothy 3:16,17; Genesis 3 and Romans 5:12; Genesis 6–7 and Matthew 24:38,39; Romans 8:19–23 and Revelation 21:1–4; Luke 21:33.
2. Science has severe limitations imposed on it. See Job 38; 1 Corinthians 1:19–25.
3. The debate between Darwinism and the biblical record is not a debate between science on the one hand and religion on the other. See Colossians 1:15–17; Colossians 2:8.
4. It is impossible to take religion out of science or science out of religion. See John 1:1–4.
5. *Every* scientist enters his/her research with a foundational religious bias/starting point. See Matthew 12:30.
6. Scientists who adhere to atheism/Darwinism cannot understand the creation as it was or as it is. See 1 Corinthians 1:14.
7. When atheism/Darwinism is accepted as the basis of truth/reality, absolute moral values are rejected, human life is devalued, and the outcomes of any field of study are distorted. See Galatians 5:9.

³⁰ Note: The Bible is not using hyperbole to describe the depth of Solomon's wisdom and knowledge. Who among us, even today, compares to him who lived 3,000 years ago in so-called "primitive" times? Glory be to God!

8. The Bible is the power which opens the human mind to the treasures of true knowledge about God and humanity, creation and eternity. See Isaiah 55:10,11; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; Colossians 2:2–4.

For Further Examination

How does a literal understanding of Genesis 1 and 2 properly frame our understanding of the following?

- a. Origin of species, with special emphasis on the human being (identity, essence, purpose)
- b. Moral law/human conscience/psychology
- c. Jesus Christ
- d. Marriage and child-rearing
- e. Abortion/euthanasia/embryonic stem cell research
- f. Mathematics
- g. Environmental/ecology issues
- h. Geology/Archeology
- i. Space exploration (what should be its purpose?) [LSQ](#)

Recommended Resources

Books

The Abolition of Man, by C.S. Lewis, HarperCollins, 2001.

Creation, by Cleone H. Weigand, Northwestern Publishing House, 2000.

Creation vs. Evolution, by Michael McCoy, Concordia Publishing House, 1996.

Darwin's Racists, by Sharon Sebastian and Raymond G. Bohlin, Virtualbookworm.com Publishing, Inc. 2009.

The Flood, by Alfred Rehwinkel, Concordia Publishing House, 1951.

Genesis, by John Jeske, Northwestern Publishing House, 1991.

The Genesis Flood, by John Whitcomb and Henry Morris, Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing, 1961.

Genetic Entropy and the Mystery of the Genome, by Dr. John Sanford, FMS Publications, 2008.

The Holy Bible

Luther's Small Catechism

The Puzzle of Ancient Man, by Donald Chittick, Creation Compass, 2006.

Total Truth, by Nancy Pearcey, Crossway Books, 2005.

Websites

www.answersingenesis.org

www.Cmods.org

www.els.name

www.heritage.org

www.learnaboutJesus.com

www.nationalreview.org

www.trueorigins.org

Article X of the Formula of Concord and Lutheranism Today

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I CAN DO WHAT I WANNA do. It's my prerogative." Those were the words of a popular song in the 80s. It expressed, and still expresses, the opinion of many Americans, and that number has perhaps only increased over time. That was the "Me" decade. To be honest, though, since the fall into sin and until our Lord returns, every decade has been the "Me" decade. The 80's indeed were not a break with a previous American *Weltanschauung*, but an expansion of a long-glorified American ideal. Each man is and almost always has been in American culture an island of a sort, at least when it comes to opinions, preferences, and freedoms.

How has this translated into the American church scene, in specific, the American Lutheran church scene, which quite logically is made up of Americans? This American Lutheran, at least in his own ruggedly individualistic view, thinks that this individualism in the aforementioned matters has in a large part fed the modern Lutheran worship wars, wars which some would say have wreaked more havoc than the infamous "Battle for the Bible" waged in the last century. Why? Because worship is what the man in the pew sees, hears, and speaks. It is what grandma memorized in the hymnal, or that in which the baby-boomer mother wants to find something to make her feel "spiritual." But worship is bigger than my opinion or your whim. It is an expression of something more than emotion and taste. It is more than a question of style and method, standing and kneeling, crossing oneself and praying with open arms. Worship, *lex orandi*, is the concrete expression, in so far as this can always be concrete, of the

faith (*fides quae*), *lex credendi*, by, to, and for those who express that faith (*fides qua*), who are this side of heaven always *simul iustus et peccator*. For that reason, worship is intrinsically important to the life and vitality of the church visible as it gives birth, through the Word and Sacraments that it presents and upon which it is best founded, to the Church invisible.¹ For that reason, namely, that it is shaped to the extent that it is not dictated by our God by, to, and for those who are *simul iustus et peccator*, it is also subject to our human weaknesses, ignorance, selfishness, and personal motives. A glance at church history will prove just that. Any movement that seeks to change the teaching of the church will almost without exception at some point be compelled to change the worship of the church to meet that end. Anywhere that Scripture is not understood or taught with all clarity, in that place worship will also as a result suffer inconsistencies. Anywhere the inwardly-turned (*curvatus in se*) tastes and preferences of the old man replace in even seemingly inconsequential parts displace a humble submission to the revealed will of God and a love for the Scriptures, manage to go unchecked or to some extent and are permitted a voice on a worship committee, there one will inevitably find clear and perhaps even predominant currents of subjectivity that overshadow the universal and objective reality of the gospel in Word and Sacrament.

One glaring example of this is seen in the adiaphoristic controversy, one of the most bitter and disastrous controversies the Evangelical Lutheran Church has suffered to this day, which ultimately led to Article X of the Formula of Concord, which by God's good grace grounded the discussion in and settled the issue upon the Holy Scriptures for a majority of Lutheranism, and which, on account of Satan's wicked scheming, is in desperate need of our continuous and undistracted attention again today.

To many people this at first glance may seem a pointless task or a needless delving into nonessentials and indifferent things, things that just don't make a difference anyways. However, as David Scaer notes:

¹ Former president of the LC-MS, A.L. Barry, wrote an interesting essay entitled "Lutheran Worship: 2000 and Beyond," which can be accessed at <<http://worship.lcms.org/2000theses.html>>. He writes in Thesis I:

I am not sure whether we have adequately emphasized this important truth. God gives His gifts. We receive them. That is the main purpose of Lutheran worship. He does this as His Gospel is proclaimed, as His Word is read, as His forgiveness is announced and sinners are absolved, and as we receive our Lord's body and blood in Holy Communion. In these wonderful ways, God is present with us, His people, drawing us to Himself and giving us what we need so much--His mercy, forgiveness, love, joy, peace, power and comfort! The purpose of worship, therefore, is to be gathered by God around His gifts.

Adiaphora is a Greek word that means “things morally indifferent” or “nonessentials in faith or conduct.” It would hardly seem that the church would need an article of doctrine on things that *really do not matter*. But it was a controversy over adiaphora that precipitated the first recognizable split in Lutheran ranks after Luther’s death.²

When improperly employed, these nonessentials can become essentially sinful and thus will matter immensely. Through proper employment, these nonessentials may work as vehicles for gospel proclamation in the divine service, and thus will be, in the layman’s mind at least, to some degree associated with the gospel, and in this way indeed of immense importance. It is telling that those who sought to excuse any and every practice not commanded or forbidden by the Almighty as indifferent—almost always failing to regard the logical consequences of these ceremonies, the agenda³ behind them, and the impression they left on the Hans and Margareta in the pew—were labeled Indifferentists in this battle to maintain the doctrine of the Bible undiluted by the practice of churches. Something that is in and of itself an adiaphoron may in this way without a doubt be anything but indifferent. As one of the Wisconsin Synod’s most gifted theologians wrote in an article in the *Quartalschrift*, a publication that is a veritable treasure trove of right teaching of God’s truth and is certainly deserving of further translation efforts by so-gifted students of theology in our day and midst:

Accordingly it is highly needed that the Christian recognize the proper understanding of adiaphora so that he may, not only know that all stands free for him, but also that not everything is beneficial for him and the danger that he may fall into through the employment of adiaphora in ungodliness.⁴

Along the same lines, the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary’s statue of Luther aptly declares in the memorable words of the same, taken from *The Freedom of A Christian*, “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.”

² David Scaer, *Getting into the Story of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House,), 90-91, emphasis mine.

³ How ironic that the very same word used for the book that gives liturgical details and explanations for worship is also the word commonly used for a hidden motive or goal.

⁴ *Quartalschrift*, 9.1, part three of a three part series on adiaphora. This is my translation of the German.

In light of this truth, and to aid our further examination of this issue of adiaphora and our understanding of the adiaphoristic controversy that led to the formulation of Article X of the Formula of Concord, it is at this point most fitting that we first define adiaphoron (*Mitteldingen, res media et indifferentes*).

Adiaphora Defined

Adiaphora is a term largely familiar only to confessional Lutherans in our day, though borrowed from the Greeks, and especially the Stoics. Hoenecke in his three part work, *Von den Mitteldingen*, does not define adiaphoron rigidly but allows Scripture, the Confessions, and then Luther to describe what it is and is not.⁵ In Bente, we read, “Ceremonies which God has neither commanded nor prohibited are adiaphora (*res mediae, Mitteldinge*) and *ceteris paribus* (other things being equal), may be observed or omitted, adopted or rejected.”⁶ I would conjecture that that phrase, “ceremonies which God has neither commanded nor prohibited,” would be close to the definition one would solicit from the average Wisconsin Synod or Evangelical Lutheran Synod pastor in the parish, and it is a good one, for it is the same as that which our Lutheran fathers employed in the Formula: “Concerning ceremonies or church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word, but have been introduced into the Church for the sake of good order and propriety, a dissension has also occurred among the theologians of the Augsburg Confession.”⁷ This will be the definition employed by this study as well: “ceremonies or church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word.”

A Brief History of the Adiaphoristic Controversy

The adiaphoristic controversy was a result of the Interims of Augsburg (1548) and Leipzig (1548). The Emperor, victorious after the Smalcaldic War, bolstered by newfound political stability, and eager to throw around his quickly gained weight, sought to reunify his territories under the auspices of the Roman Church through measures intended to lead to an eventual reconciliation and reunification of Rome and the churches of the Augsburg Confession. The first Interim, the Augsburg Interim, did not find much acceptance as many territories rejected it outright and took their chances as far as reprisal was concerned. Maurice, the Judas of

⁵ This series appeared in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* in 1910.

⁶ F. Bente, *Historical Introductions to the Book of Concord* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1921), 109. This appears in Bente’s description of the anti-Adiaphorists’ position.

⁷ FC Ep X, 1; *Triglotta*, 829.

Meissen, unhappy with the Augsburg Interim, put his theologians, many of whom were the same men who had studied under and labored with Luther, to work on a new Interim, the Leipzig Interim. This Interim drew even more ire within Lutheranism, especially from the so-called Gnesio-Lutherans (Flacius, Wigand, Amsdorf, Westphal, and Aurifaber, some of whom would end up entwined in other doctrinal controversies resulting in Formula articles, some for better and some for worse). The arguments of the Interimists, as they came to be called, were based on convenience and syllogisms, not on Scripture. The reality was that the compromises were made and tolerated for fear of persecution or personal losses. The opening paragraph of the Leipzig Interim is more telling than its authors probably ever realized when read in retrospect:

Our concern is based upon our desire to be obedient to the Roman Imperial Majesty and to conduct ourselves in such a way that his Majesty realize that our interest revolves only around *tranquility, peace and unity*. This is our counsel, made in good faith; it is what we ourselves want to serve and promote wherever possible. For in contrast to what some say and write about us—without any basis—our concern and our intention are always directed not toward causing schism and complications, but rather toward *peace and unity*. We testify to that in the very presence of God, to whom all human hearts are known. Our actions will demonstrate that.⁸

How much more should the fact that they “testify... in the very presence of God, to whom all human hearts are known” have led them to confess the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth in which all real “tranquility, peace and unity” is found, even in the most violent tribulations this world can produce? This “tranquility, peace and unity” they sought was not of God, but of men, which is a mortal, transitory, and fallacious “tranquility, peace and unity” doomed to inevitable destruction. Flacius thus attributed the great harm done to the confession of Luther in Germany by the Adiaphorists to “the god which one calls the belly and the life that one calls good and peaceful, [filled with] idle days.”⁹ Like Judas, the Adiaphorists betrayed our Lord, in the form of His Church, whose marks

⁸ Robert Kolb and James A. Nestingen, eds., *Sources and Contexts of the Book of Concord* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 184; emphasis mine.

⁹ This translation from the upcoming publication from Magdeburg Press of this work, entitled, *A Book about True and False Adiaphora, wherein Almost the Entire Business of Adiaphora Is Explained, against the Pernicious Band of Adiaphorists*, published by Flacius in 1550 and foundational in the formation of Article X of the Formula.

are His Word and Sacraments, into the hands of the temporal powers of this world (a Holy Roman Emperor instead of a Roman governor), to be mocked, mistreated, and defiled.

The resultant controversy led to a disastrous and extremely personal division within the churches of the Augsburg Confession, and between two stalwarts of Lutheranism in particular, Philip Melanchthon and Mathaias Illyricus Flacius. Eventually Melanchthon would half-heartedly admit his opponents were correct in their stance, or at least that he was less than blameless in his own, though he would deny he erred doctrinally. In spite of this feeble attempt at bridge-building and reconciliation (public error requires public recantation, not public tippy-toeing), the divisions, both territorial and interpersonal, which resulted from the adiaphoristic controversy, would begin the demarcation of lines hidden beneath the skin of avowed Lutheranism according to which various other controversies would fracture (e.g. Crypto-Calvinistic, Majoristic, Synergistic, etc.), revealing the divisions previously hidden from the eye yet truly festering (one can only gloss over opposing hermeneutics and epistemologies for so long, and doing so only delays, if not amplifies, the consequences inescapable with respect to such). Melanchthon, or perhaps more accurately, Melanchthonians, his followers who would go further than their professor and mentor ever did (at least in public), would oftentimes find themselves on the wrong side of the fence in this and other battles, while the *Gnesio-Lutherans*, in their zeal to preserve Luther's Reformation and Scripture's truth, would at times err as well (e.g. Flacius on original sin and Amsdorf on good works, though, to be fair, their motives, expressed and easily inferred, were far different).

Permit two short, interesting accounts from the time of the controversy. Persecution was rampant throughout Germany as those, especially pastors, who refused to compromise on such matters as were included in the Interims were threatened with removal from office, exile, and even death in some circumstances. John Frederick, the deposed elector of Saxony, was one in particular who was persecuted by the emperor for refusing to accept such deluded though utterly deliberate white-washing of the irreconcilable differences between the two camps. "The emperor, infuriated at him, intensified his imprisonment and robbed him of Luther's writings and a printed copy of Luther's translation of the Bible. However it was in vain. 'The books,' the elector said, 'one can very well take from me; however what I have learned from them, one cannot tear out of my heart'" (476).
Second:

In Northern Germany, the common man among the active Lutheran Christians also straightaway perceived that in the reception of the Interims a denial of the evangelical truth was involved and that they wanted to gradually bring back into the church, through a back door, the entire papacy. They received those who distributed the Interims as crucifiers of Christ, and the saying ran:

Blessed is the man,
Who can rely on God
And does not accept the Interims;
For it has the scoundrel behind it.¹⁰

Thanks be to God for such resilience on the part of His children in the face of even the most venomous threats of the enemy!

The Formula itself defines the essence of the controversy as follows:

Concerning ceremonies and church rites which are neither commanded nor forbidden in God's Word, but are introduced into the Church with a good intention, for the sake of good order and propriety, or otherwise to maintain Christian discipline, a dissension has likewise arisen among some theologians of the Augsburg Confession: the one side holding that also in time of persecution and in case of confession [when confession of faith is to be made], even though the enemies of the gospel do not come to an agreement with us in doctrine, yet some ceremonies, abrogated [long since], which in themselves are adiaphora, and neither commanded nor forbidden by God, may, without violence to conscience, be reestablished in compliance with the pressure and demand of the adversaries, and thus in such [things which are of themselves] adiaphora, or matters of indifference, we may indeed come to an agreement [have conformity] with them. But the other side contended that in time of persecution, in case of confession, especially when it is the design of the adversaries, either through force and compulsion, or in an insidious manner, to suppress the pure doctrine, and gradually to introduce again into our churches their false doctrine, this, also in adiaphora, can in no way be done, as has been said, without violence to conscience and prejudice to the divine truth.¹¹

¹⁰ E.A. Wilh. Krauss, *Lebensbilder aus der Geschichte der christlichen Kirche fuer Lutherische Leser Nordamerikas ausgewaehlt und bearbeitet* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1911); my translation.

¹¹ FC SD X, 1-3; *Triglotta*, 1053.

This was the question: In adiaphora, may one submit to the demands of the enemy, whether emperor or pope, to restore by coercion ceremonies which are at the time no longer in use,¹² or which are associated with a church body that denies the gospel, or which in a duplicitous way open the door to hindrance of the clear preaching of it? FC X provides the all-important answer.

The Formula's Answer

In approaching the Formula's answer to the challenges and questions raised by this tumultuous time in Lutheran history, it would perhaps be best to first look at the Scripture on which Article X stands and from which the confessors mined what has now become this confessional treasure of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Following are some of the passages quoted by the Formula with brief comments when beneficial.

In Matthew 15:9, Jesus states, "They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men." See also Isaiah 29:13. The Roman Church of Melancthon's day had not changed its stripes from the days preceding Luther's passing to glory. It was still a church wrapped in a semi-Pelagian system prone to inducement of either self-righteousness or despair in those subject to it. In permitting Rome to invade Wittenberg under the guise of indifferent rites and rubrics, the Adiaphorists betrayed the cause of the very man buried beneath the pulpit from which some of them preached on the Lord's Day.¹³ The lay person's eyes, which Luther

¹² Some of the ceremonies being disputed were still in use in a few Evangelical territories, though this fact did not in any way change the appearance of compromise on the essentials of the faith and the surrender of the very doctrinal distinctives (biblical teachings such as justification) upon which the Reformation rested, especially since they were being forced upon churches. Some of the practices being imposed upon churches that had abandoned them, for instance, were still found in use in Brandenburg, where Elector Joachim had originally opposed Luther's teaching, and others could be found in use in Albertine Saxony, the former home of Luther's nemesis, Duke George. These areas, one must bear in mind, came to an acceptance of the Reformation much later than Ernestine Saxony and many of the Evangelical lands. While some of the liturgical rites were in use in the aforementioned lands, therefore, in the minds of many of the laypeople from the territories that had not retained such practices, they were certainly identified with Rome. Still today, for instance, one can find Lutherans in various places who, when encountering a practice retained by some Lutherans but not by their own congregation or synod, suppose such a practice to be Roman Catholic. By reintroducing such things, then, especially during a state of controversy, a true stumbling block was being placed in the way of many of the faithful.

¹³ E.A. Wilh. Krauss writes in *Lebensbilder aus der Geschichte der christlichen Kirche fuer Lutherische Leser Nordamerikas ausgewaehlt und bearbeitet*, which I have translated as follows:

had labored so tirelessly by the grace of God to pry from an unbroken fixation upon works, relics, novenas, processions, and penances, were now, whether by the intention of the Adiaphorists or not, being once again directed to the ceremonies and superstitions that had once before filled and transfixed them. Christ's warning once again needed to be sounded. Ceremonies, even when instituted for good order and with fine intentions, are nevertheless, "in and of themselves no divine worship, nor even a part of it."¹⁴

St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 8:9, "Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak." Was any congregation in the New Testament any more embroiled in an adiaphoristic controversy of its own than that at Corinth? Paul therefore lays down this felicitous principle for the congregation there, and thus we see Paul's care for the weak, which is echoed in Romans 14:13: "Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in your brother's way." The Epitome echoes Paul's call for care in regard to the weak in faith: "Herein all frivolity and offense should be avoided, and special care should be taken to exercise forbearance towards the weak in faith."¹⁵

Galatians 5:1 also clearly applied: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a

Was perhaps Wittenberg the place from which the Lutheran people began their struggle against the will of the emperor? Unfortunately, no. Indeed, in the beginning, when the Augsburg Interim appeared, Melancthon especially had still recognized that the eyes of the Lutheran Church after Luther's death rested on him more than on any other, and he had written against the Interim. Not so sharply, not so clearly as a Luther would have done it, not so decisively; however it had nevertheless happened; he still had said: "If they will also threaten us with battle and destruction, we should still regard the Word of God more highly and not deny the revealed truth of the gospel." However, as he reported, Emperor Charles V was especially enraged against him and regarded him as "one out of the *fuernehmsten Laermblaesern*," then he became weak and worked in association with his colleagues at Wittenberg to produce a writing wherein he indeed denied the truth not as coarsely as had been done by Johann Agricola, but nevertheless still indicated one could for a time tolerate the papist ceremonies forced upon them, recognize the pope as the ruler of the Church, and employ ambiguous language in the contested doctrines. In December of 1548 this writing was received in a meeting of the provincial diet in Leipzig, and this writing now was called the "Leipzig Interim." It was terrifying that Melancthon could sink so low, and that Paul Eber, George Major, and the Leipzig Superintendent Pfeffinger could support him, and that also the old Bugenhagen could find no decisive word of opposition to make against it. (479)

¹⁴ FC Ep X, 3; *Triglotta*, 829.

¹⁵ FC Ep X, 5; *Triglotta*, 829.

yoke of slavery.” Precisely when rites and practices, excepting of course the Sacraments, which are by nature mandates,¹⁶ are commanded as though they were necessary to please our God or merit salvation, those rites and practices become an affront to the gospel, robbing the Christian of the freedom that Christ has won for him at such an inestimable price.

St. Paul reminds the Galatians of his dispute with St. Peter over a matter of adiaphoron in the fifth verse of the second chapter, “We did not give in to them for a moment, so that the truth of the gospel might remain with you.” Flacius, Chemnitz, Andreae, and all the Anti-Adiaphorists could confidently profess this with Paul.¹⁷ They had not only defended

¹⁶ Martin Chemnitz (*Examination of the Council of Trent*, vol. II, tr. Fred Kramer [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978], 109) teaches in this regard:

When therefore the question is asked whether the administration of the sacraments ought to be made without any certain and particular external rites, the answer is clear and obvious. For the very name and definition of a sacrament embraces the presence of some visible and external element to which the Word must come and includes this, that the whole action is performed and administered in a certain way and with a specific divinely instituted ceremony. How this ought to be done has been stated in Scripture and traced beforehand for the church in a sure and clear word of God, namely, that those signs and those words should be used which God himself instituted and prescribed at the institution of each sacrament and that they should be performed and used as the institution ordains and directs. These rites are essential and necessary in the administration of the sacraments, for they carry out the institution. Furthermore, it is clear from Scripture that the apostolic church in the administration of the sacraments carefully observed this, that they should not be mute spectacles but that the doctrine concerning the essence, use, and efficacy of the sacraments should faithfully be set forth and explained to those present and about to receive the sacraments, from the Word of God and in a language to which they were accustomed and which was known to them, and that those who were about to use the sacraments, having been rightly instructed, should be diligently admonished concerning their lawful and salutary reception. The Acts of the Apostles and Paul (1 Cor. 11:23 ff.) describe the administration of Baptism and of the Lord’s Supper on the basis of their institution: “Preach the gospel!” Likewise: “Whoever believes.” And: “Do this in remembrance of Me”; “You proclaim the Lord’s death”; “Let a man examine himself,” etc. That also prayers were used, and thanksgivings taken from the institution of the sacrament itself, Scripture clearly testifies. For the institution testifies that Christ gave thanks and that He commanded the church to do it: “Do this.” And Paul says: “You proclaim the Lord’s death.” Likewise (Acts 22:16): “Be baptized and wash away your sins, calling on the name of Jesus.”

¹⁷ One of the saddest things we observe about the Adiaphorists, many of them Luther’s long-time friends and coworkers, is that they not only abandoned the faith (consciously or unconsciously), letting the wolves have at Christ’s sheep, but also abandoned those who were confessing the very truths they themselves had for so long advocated and promulgated. So, for instance, when Gabriel Zwilling, once one of Luther’s fellow monks in Wittenberg and a committed proponent of the Evangelical Reformation, at a conference in

the faith but also those who held to it, together with those in generations to come, ourselves included, who would come to know it through those who remained faithful in a large part on account and in imitation of the unwavering preaching and teaching of such men.

St. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 6:14, “Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?” Where there is no commonality in teaching (*lex credendi*), there should be no impression of commonality in teaching presented through the worship practice of a congregation or church body (*lex orandi*). Church rites are to be rejected:

Namely, when under the title and pretext of external adiaphora such things are proposed as are in principle contrary to God’s Word (although painted another color), these are not to be regarded as adiaphora, in which one is free to act as he will, but must be avoided as things prohibited by God. In like manner, too, such ceremonies should not be reckoned among the genuine free adiaphora, or matters of indifference, as make a show or feign the appearance, as though our religion and that of the Papists were not far apart, thus to avoid persecution, or as though the latter were not at least highly offensive to us; or when such ceremonies are designed for the purpose, and required and received in this sense, as though by and through them both contrary religions were reconciled and became one body; or when a reentering into the Papacy and a departure from the pure doctrine of the gospel and true religion should occur or gradually follow there from [when there is danger lest we seem to have reentered the Papacy, and to have departed, or to be on the point of departing gradually, from the pure doctrine of the gospel].¹⁸

Why?

Torgau, called by the ruler Möritz so that the theologians of the realm could rubber-stamp the compromises crafted by George of Anhalt, denounced from the pulpit such weak-kneed yielding to the enemies of the gospel (drawing heavily from Flacius’ writings on the matter) and prayed for the deposed elector, John Frederick, whose title and lands Möritz had finagled away from him through betrayal not only of a fellow German prince but of the pure preaching and teaching of God’s Word, Melancthon and Bugenhagen, at a hearing after his arrest and imprisonment, not only failed to support Zwilling, but indeed slandered him as insane and fanatical.

¹⁸ FC SD X, 5; *Triglotta*, 1053,1055.

By such [untimely] yielding and conformity in external things, where there has not been previously Christian union in doctrine, idolaters are confirmed in their idolatry; on the other hand, the true believers are grieved, offended, and weakened in their faith [their faith is grievously shaken, and made to totter as though by a battering-ram]; both of which every Christian for the sake of his soul's welfare and salvation is bound to avoid, as it is written: *Woe unto the world because of offenses! Also: Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea* [Matt. 18, 6, 7].¹⁹

Paragraph 7 of the Thorough Declaration also reflects 1 Corinthians 10:23, though it is not cited. In this verse Paul answers those who cry "Freedom. Freedom. Freedom" regardless of profit and benefit for the flock of Christ, "Everything is permissible for me"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible for me"—but I will not be mastered by anything." We read in the Formula: "Likewise, when there are useless, foolish displays, that are profitable neither for good order nor Christian discipline, nor evangelical propriety in the Church, these also are not genuine adiaphora, or matters of indifference."²⁰ In other words, no smells just to have smells, or bells just to have bells, but also no touchy-feely ditty or schmaltzy sketch devoid of law and gospel, detached from Christ himself, just because "people like it." Both ditches, that of Romanizing and of Schwaermerizing,²¹ end up with "foolish displays," foolish because they are built upon the foundation of men instead of upon the Cornerstone, formulated for the will of men, whether they be incense swinging liturgophiles or Spirit-filled tambourine thumpers, rather than to serve the

¹⁹ FC SD X, 16; *Triglotta*, 1057, 1059.

²⁰ FC SD X, 7; *Triglotta*, 1053.

²¹ David Scaer states, "Questionable is whether any liturgies copyrighted by Maranatha are really *creations ex nihilo*" ("Formula of Concord X: A Revised, Enlarged, and Slightly Amended Edition," *Logia* vol. 6:4 [1997]: 31). He also notes in the same article: Rites—call them liturgies—are never randomly chosen, but flow from the character of the organization. Rites inform us about the nature of the organization and how its members relate to one another. The rites of societies are their marks. The inauguration of the American president is noticeably less elaborate than the British coronation. Each rite carries its own message. One cannot be substituted for the other without indicating a significant change. A McDonald's franchise would immediately be taken away if its proprietor offered its products in the Burger King wrappings. (29)

will of God. The question for the confessors is always, “Is it beneficial?” “Is it permissible?” is merely the steppingstone to that point.

J.P. Koehler’s second thesis on adiaphora is helpful: “The employment of adiaphora among accompanying circumstances will not depend solely upon Christian freedom, but also upon concern for one’s own edification and love towards one’s neighbor.”²² Luther, as he is wont to do, boils the matter down nicely and puts it in perspective:

Other matters will adjust themselves as the need arises. And this is the sum of the matter: Let everything be done so that the Word may have free course instead of the prattling and rattling that has been the rule up to now. We can spare everything except the Word. Again, we profit by nothing as much as by the Word. For the whole Scripture shows that the Word should have free course among Christians. And in Luke 10 [:42], Christ himself says, “One thing is needful,” i.e., that Mary sit at the feet of Christ and hear his word daily. This is the best part to choose and it shall not be taken away forever. It is an eternal Word. Everything else must pass away, no matter how much care and trouble it may give Martha. God help us achieve this. Amen.²³

Scaer aptly summarizes Article X’s answer to the challenges and questions raised at this tumultuous time in Lutheran history:

The answer given by Article X was the one adopted by Flacius, who refused to tolerate the reintroduction of Roman Catholic customs. Christians have freedom to practice or to avoid customs and rituals which are neither forbidden nor commanded in God’s Word, but they are duty bound to resist where compliance in customs would give the impression that they were complying with false doctrine. Should a human ordinance be given the stature of a divine command or be viewed as necessary for salvation, it must be resisted.²⁴

²² Joh. Koehler, *Der Gebrauch der Mitteldinge haengt um der begleitenden Umstaende willen nicht nur von der christlichen Freiheit, sondern auch von der Rucksicht auf die eigene Erbauung und von der Liebe gegen den Naechsten ab* (WELS Synod Convention, June 24-30, 1896); my translation.

²³ Martin Luther, *Luther’s Works, vol. 53: Liturgy and Hymns*, ed. J.J. Pelikan, H.C. Oswald, and H.T. Lehmann (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1965), 14.

²⁴ Scaer, *Getting into the Story of Concord*, 91.

Article X and Lutheranism Today

Lutheran disputes over worship practices are not a new development. From the earliest days of the Evangelical Lutheran Church's presence in America, Lutherans have been debating various aspects and impacts of worship. Nelson comments on revivalism and American Lutheranism:

In addition to the language difficulties there was the controversial issue of revivalism. When, in the wake of the revolutionary war and the subsequent westward movements, individuals and groups frequently became detached from their churches, revivalism offered a means to renew and reawaken spiritual life. Protracted meetings and enthusiastic and emotional outbursts were often employed in attempting renewal. Some Lutherans were not immune to such methods and considered them spiritually vitalizing. In fact, sometimes Lutherans rivaled the Methodists, Baptists, and Finneyites in employing the techniques of the revivalistic system.²⁵

Nelson also notes the logical result of the adoption of such measures. As is common in Lutheran churches that have in our day immersed themselves in Church Growth methodology, the Lutherans who adopted revivalistic methods soon began to walk, talk, and believe like the American Protestants they mimicked. Nelson notes:

A dichotomy appeared between "head" and "heart" Christians.... Where revivalistic techniques were employed consistently, the central doctrine of justification by faith in Christ was endangered and the theological complexion often became Arminian. The denial of original sin followed and the sinner was granted the ability to cooperate with God in the act of justification. Luther's catechism fell into disuse.²⁶

Wentz' account of the tensions between the Pennsylvania Ministerium and its more revivalistic neighbors who were also claiming a place under the Lutheran banner demonstrates well the strict correspondence between aberrant worship practices and aberrant doctrine and, in turn, confessional doctrine and confessional worship practices. He notes:

²⁵ E. Clifford Nelson, ed., *The Lutherans in North America* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 215.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 216.

The predominating influences in the [Pennsylvania] Ministerium were German, and they harbored a strong aversion to the remnant of revivalism and Puritanism that still lingered in some parts of the General Synod. The Ministerium was in more direct touch with the Lutheran reaction in Germany and its inspiring literature, made more constant use of Luther's Catechism and German hymns, and received a larger number of German pastors. All this deepened the Lutheran convictions of the Ministerium beyond those of other synods.²⁷

Observe the role that worship methods, styles, customs, etc. played in the doctrinal leanings of the more conservative Pennsylvania Ministerium, and that their doctrinal underpinnings played in their preference for their worship methods, styles, customs, etc.²⁸ The catholic principle, so often tested, was once again proven correct: *lex orandi, lex credendi*, but this was precisely because the *lex credendi* at the same time determined the *lex orandi*. We find in this also a strong encouragement for the continued publication of sound literature, both works of the past and those produced in our own day to carefully reflect upon and address current controversies and circumstances. Were there crime scene investigators to scour a congregation for possible causes for a shift from orthodoxy into heterodoxy, exploration of the pastor's bookshelf and the parish's library would likely have a prominent place in their investigative protocol.

This vice versa relationship of the catholic principle, so that either part, *orandi* or *credenda*, can precede the other in the formula, and indeed rightly does and ought to do so, sets the Evangelical Lutheran Church, which is by its very nature a confessional and ancient/historical church, apart from the other streams of Christian thought. Article X has no use for "We've always done it that way," "Whatever works," "It's what the people like," "must," "should," "have to," or "Who cares." Rather, the confessors look to the one fountain that truly issues "good order," "Christian discipline," and "evangelical propriety," that is, the Word of God, and seeks then to practice that which fosters such an approach, recognizing the danger of an inconsistency in follow-through.

²⁷ Abdel Ross Wentz, *A Basic History of Lutheranism in America* (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1955), 155.

²⁸ Several synods influenced by revivalism and the Americanization include the following: the Hartwick Synod, the Melancthon Synod, and the Franckean Synod. The admission of the latter to the General Synod in 1861 led to that body's eventual decline, including the withdrawal of the Pennsylvania Ministerium.

Armand Boehme writes in “But We’ve Always Done It That Way!”:

For early Lutherans, *lex credendi* had precedence over *lex orandi*. They clearly saw the “law of believing founds the law of worshipping.” Central to faith and belief is the doctrine of justification, the article by which the church stands or falls. Therefore the Lutheran Confessions emphasize the fact that “worship is thoroughly grounded in the doctrine of justification and justification becomes the touchstone for liturgical change and adaptation.” The Lutheran Confessions note that the term *liturgy* is not seen as a work or action of the people; rather *liturgy* has to do with God’s working through the office of the holy ministry to grant his grace to sinners. Thus the Confessions’ emphasis is on justification in the divine liturgy, not on the sanctified work of the people in response to God’s justifying grace.²⁹

In the same article, which deals primarily with the different approaches to tradition between Lutheranism and Anglicanism, Boehme also explains:

Thus Anglicans and Lutherans view tradition differently. For Anglicans tradition (*lex orandi*) has near (if not equal) authority with Holy Scripture (*lex credendi*). Furthermore, tradition is something that continues to unfold as the Spirit gives insight. For Lutherans good traditions are respected, but all tradition is subordinate to Holy Scripture. In fact, if tradition is contrary to Scripture it must be rejected, and all the more so if the tradition conflicts with the doctrine of justification.³⁰

These comments could also serve well to summarize to the differences in the approach to tradition, namely, as it relates to worship practice, between Romanizing (though perhaps otherwise confessional) Lutherans, and confessional Lutherans committed to the principles of Article X.³¹

²⁹ Armand Boehme, “But We’ve Always Done it That Way!” *Logia* vol. 12:4 (2003): 12-13. Boehme cites AC Ap XXIV, 79-83.

³⁰ Boehme, “But We’ve Always...!” 13.

³¹ Why and how someone does something in the realm of adiaphora, and not the fact that someone does it, makes a Lutheran Romanizing. The fact that the Church always did something isn’t necessarily a reason to do it again. In fact, it was the reintroduction of ceremonies that led to the adiaphoristic controversy. The fact that one has catechized his members and it helps them appropriate the gospel and honor God, however, may be a reason to reintroduce such things.

However, do not allow the mention of Romanizing Lutherans to diminish the impropriety of those equally deplorable indifferentist Lutherans and Church Growth enthusiasts³² who would merrily strip their church of any and all its traditional dress, vestments included, for a clouded, misguided, and unscriptural idea of evangelism. Evangelism springs from the God-given εὐαγγέλιον, the good news of Jesus Christ.³³ To separate the two, to make methods into means, and thus in essence to adopt a Jesuitical approach (“the end justifies the means”), is fundamentally un-Lutheran and more importantly unscriptural. When the Formula says in the Thorough Declaration, “Such ceremonies should not be reckoned among the genuine free adiaphora, or matters of indifference, as make a show or feign the appearance, as though our religion and that of the Papists were not far apart, thus to avoid persecution, or as though the latter were not at least highly offensive to us,”³⁴ “Papists” could well be changed to “Baptists,” “Presbyterians,” “Methodists,” or any other Protestant sect (even those unwilling to identify themselves in such a way, let alone put such an identity on a sign). What is good for the goose is good for the gander. To these Church Growth enthusiasts,³⁵ many of whom have shifted their trust from Means to methods, from Christ to the pastor, building, band, or church sign, one would properly point out Luther’s words, cited by Kurt Marquart in *“Church Growth” as Mission Paradigm*:

³² Indeed, enthusiast is often an apt term in this respect.

³³ Those from the Church Growth Movement camp who harp on addressing “felt needs” as a top priority (e.g. *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren) must be reminded that the last “felt need” the sinful nature (and they are often talking about the “felt needs” of the unchurched, precisely the people who have only the sinful nature to guide their perception of what they need) will recognize or acknowledge is the gospel in Word and Sacrament, the foundation of the Lutheran worship service.

³⁴ FC SD X, 5.

³⁵ The writings of some of these proponents of CG methods and philosophies call to mind the words of Luther in the Smalcald Articles:

All this is the old devil and old serpent, who also converted Adam and Eve into enthusiasts, and led them from the outward Word of God to spiritualizing and self-conceit, and nevertheless he accomplished this through other outward words. Just as also our enthusiasts [at the present day] condemn the outward Word, and nevertheless they themselves are not silent, but they fill the world with their pratings and writings, as though, indeed, the Spirit could not come through the writings and spoken word of the apostles, but [first] through their writings and words he must come. Why [then] do not they also omit their own sermons and writings, until the Spirit himself come to men, without their writings and before them, as they boast that He has come into them without the preaching of the Scriptures? But of these matters there is not time now to dispute at greater length; we have elsewhere sufficiently urged this subject. (SA VIII; *Triglotta*, 495)

If now I seek the forgiveness of sins, I dare not run to the cross, for I will not find it given there. Nor must I hold to the suffering of Christ, as Dr. Karlstadt trifles, in knowledge or remembrance, for I will not find it there either. But I will find in the Sacrament or gospel the Word which distributes, presents, offers, and gives to me that forgiveness which was won on the cross.³⁶

Or Marquart's own words which follow:

In the face of the lunacies now masquerading as worship, one can only admire the wit of the woman who thought it was high time for the church "to stop trying to entertain the goats and get back to feeding the sheep" It was, one must remember, the devil who invented "entertainment evangelism" and tempted the Lord with it (Matthew 4:5,6).³⁷

There is not an inherent dichotomy between spiritual/devotional and didactic/homiletical sermons, hymns, and worship forms. Carl Schalk demonstrates this point:

Such a view incorrectly implies that proclamatory hymns are merely teaching efforts, at best, or rhymed dogma, at worst. It forgets that the proclamation of the gospel is directed not only to the world as a message of hope and salvation, and to God as the community of faith pleads the good news of the gospel before the Father—just as the Son pleads for us before him—and praised him for it, but to the Christian community itself as it confesses and celebrates the faith.³⁸

A lot has been said in this section with respect to principles and cautions, while not a lot has been mentioned in specific examples. This is for good reason, because the point here is not to call out a laundry list of specific instances or endeavors, but, Lord willing, to provide a framework for applying Article X in the contemporary setting. A work exposing all the individuals and groups who have contradicted FC X in the contemporary

³⁶ Kurt Marquart, "Church Growth' as Mission Paradigm," *Church and Ministry Today: Three Confessional Lutheran Essays*, ed. John Maxfield (St. Louis: The Luther Academy, 2001), 58.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁸ Carl Schalk, "Hymnody and the Proclamation of the Gospel," *Not Unto Us: A Celebration of the Ministry of Kurt J. Eggert*, ed. William H. Braun and Victor H. Prange (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2001), 138.

Lutheran setting would unfortunately not only be immeasurably long but also well beyond the capabilities of this observer. Rather, this essay has sought to present Article X in a contemporary light with the prayer that its continuing relevance may be evident and its direction more pronounced in the midst our ever-multiplying disputes over what is truly biblical, and thus Lutheran, practice today. Perhaps as valuable as anything for our consumption and subsequent employment is the tone the Formula adopts. As the polemical ante is continually upped by the various parties involved in the current debate over worship and other practices, we would be served well as a confessional Lutherans by a call to step back and learn not only from the message of our fathers, but also from their tone. More splintered groups gathered around common preferences, more publications devoted to pushing the proverbial envelope dangerously closer to a biblical boundary line in any direction without careful consultation with brothers and sisters in the faith and careful consideration of the implications of such, more epithets, however witty, more trump-card appeals to a Christian freedom divorced from Christian love, and, in turn, more weak brother play-acting guided not by conscience but by self-serving desires are not the simple answer to a complex problem. Patient admonition and instruction, faithful exegesis, careful consideration of what worship is and strives to do, and respectful, honest, informed (yes, study must continue after seminary or confirmation class) dialogue is. Scripture tells us this. The very existence of the Confessions tells us this. History tells us this. Article X in specific tells us this.

John Donne was not a confessor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (he was an Anglican convert from Roman Catholicism), but he was a man with common sense, something, as the saying goes, that is not so common nowadays. He wrote, "No man is an island, entire of itself." The Evangelical Lutheran Church is a church of individual souls, as our scriptural distinction between invisible and visible church,³⁹ or Church within the church, shows. With this in mind, however, it is important to recognize that in their conviction that "*Dissonantia ieiunii non dissolvit consonantiam fidei*" the formulators of Article X are not advocating a reckless smorgasbord of worship practices. There is real value in an evangelical conformity in practice; hence, *The Lutheran Hymnal*, *Christian Worship: A Lutheran Hymnal*, *Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary*, and similar hymnals have been published by orthodox church bodies with God-pleasing and thoroughly evangelical motivations and results. It is hard for a pastor who has had time enough at his parish to put all his books on his shelves to doubt

³⁹ FC SD X, 19; *Triglotta*, 1059.

that questions will arise in the mind of Joe Pewsitter when, as he travels from WELS church to WELS church, or ELS church to ELS church, or WELS church to ELS church and vice versa, he observes a massive chasm in worship forms between parishes (and not mere subtle differences). These questions, if not answered with careful instruction and charitable patience, will inevitably lead to doubt and a loss of certainty in other areas of the faith. Here too Article X's concern for the weak brother is imperative. The individual church and Christian must always have a concern for the benefit of the brotherhood of the faithful as a whole.

Professor James Tiefel of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary quotes Walther in the essay, "The Formation and Flow of Worship Attitudes," which is worth citation in its entirety:

We refuse to be guided by those who are offended by our church customs. We adhere to them all the more firmly when someone wants to cause us to have a guilty conscience on account of them.... It is truly distressing that many of our fellow Christians find the differences between Lutheranism and papism in outward things. It is a pity and dreadful cowardice when one sacrifices the good and ancient customs to please the deluded American sects, lest they accuse us of being papistic.

Indeed! Am I to be afraid of a Methodist, who perverts the saving Word, or be ashamed in the matter of my good cause, and not rather rejoice that the sects can tell by our ceremonies that I do not belong to them?

We are not insisting that there be unity in perception or feelings or of taste among all believing Christians, neither dare anyone demand that all be minded as he. Nevertheless it remains true that the Lutheran liturgy distinguishes Lutheran worship from the worship of other churches to such an extent that the latter look like lecture halls in which the hearers are merely addressed or instructed, while our churches are in truth houses of prayer in which the Christians serve God publicly before the world.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ James Tiefel, "The Formation and Flow of Worship Attitudes," *Not Unto Us*, 149-150. The preceding paragraph is also worth reading:

We know and firmly hold that the character, the soul of Lutheranism, is not found in outward observances but in the pure doctrine. If a congregation had the most beautiful ceremonies in the very best order, but did not have the pure doctrine, it would be anything but Lutheran. We have from the beginning spoken earnestly of good ceremonies, not as though the important thing were outward forms, but rather to make use of our liberty in these things. For true Lutherans know that although one does not have to have these things (because there is no

Another Walther gem on the topic cannot hurt:

The objection: “What would be the use of uniformity of ceremonies?” was answered with the counter question, “What is the use of a flag on the battlefield? Even though a soldier cannot defeat the enemy with it, he nevertheless sees by the flag where he belongs. We ought not to refuse to walk in the footsteps of our fathers. They were so far removed from being ashamed of the good ceremonies that they publicly confess in the passage quoted: “It is not true that we do away with all such external ornaments.”⁴¹

To put it simply, in our study of Article X, which, if read hastily and without historical context, may seem to advocate a sort of rugged individualism and absolute freedom in worship practice (so long as nothing is explicitly forbidden by Scripture or coerced by men), one must not fail to call to mind Apology XXIV.1:

At the outset we must again make the preliminary statement that we do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it. For among us masses are celebrated every Lord’s Day and on the other festivals, in which the sacrament is offered to those who wish to use it, after they have been examined and absolved. And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments, and other like things.⁴²

The Lutheran Church is not an ahistorical church disconnected from those who have gone before her, but rather one rooted in the past and deeply aware of her indebtedness to the earlier confessors who have passed

divine command to have them), one may nevertheless have them because good ceremonies are lovely and beautiful and are not forbidden in the Word of God. Therefore the Lutheran church has not abolished “outward ornaments, candles, altar cloths, statues and similar ornaments,” [AP XXIV] but has left them free. The sects proceeded differently because they did not know how to distinguish between what is commanded, forbidden, and left free in the Word of God. We remind only of the mad actions of Carlstadt and of his adherents and followers in Germany and in Switzerland. We on our part have retained the ceremonies and church ornaments in order to prove by our actions that we have a correct understanding of Christian liberty, and know how to conduct ourselves in things which are neither commanded nor forbidden by God. (C.F.W. Walther, “The True Visible Church and the Form of a Christian Congregation,” *Essays for the Church*, tr. Fred Kramer [St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1992], 193-194.)

⁴¹ Tiefel, “The Formation...,” *Not Unto Us*, 193-194.

⁴² AC Ap XXIV, 1; *Triglotta*, 383, 385.

down to her the pure doctrine she holds so dear, and, at her best, constantly strives in whatever way possible to hand down that undeserved inheritance as undefiled as she received it.⁴³ Hence, the Book of Concord has attached to it a *Catalogue of Testimonies*, and such notable Lutherans as Chemnitz, Gerhard, and Flacius⁴⁴ wrote extensive works compiling patristic writings on contested doctrines—indeed, in many ways pioneered the field of patristics.⁴⁵ It was Carlstadt, not Luther, who gutted the churches and rejected wholesale long-standing customs and ceremonies of the church.

⁴³ Barry (“Lutheran Worship: Beyond 2000”) writes:

Let us examine the flip side of this thesis. If Lutheran worship is a reflection of Lutheran theology, what do you think might happen if we were, for example, to begin to conduct our worship services in a manner similar to what one might find in a Baptist church, a Pentecostal church, or a non-denominational Evangelical church? Do you think it is reasonable to assume that if Lutherans worship like Baptists, it will probably not be too long before they believe as Baptists do? Or, if Lutherans worship like Charismatics, how long will it be before we embrace the doctrine and practices of the Charismatic movement? If we Lutherans recognize our roots and why we worship the way we do, it will probably also be true that we will wish to remain with that basic pattern of worship. As we contemplate changes in this pattern, we exercise restraint, care and caution, for we recognize that genuine Lutheran worship is a reflection of genuine Lutheran theology.

It should be noted, however, that if Lutheran pastors and lay people are not educated in what worship really is and should strive to be (according to Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions), they will not appreciate the tradition that they have received from our fathers in the faith. A knowledge of church history, especially in the area of worship practices, will also only enhance our appreciation for why we do what we do. Catechesis, as in every area of the church’s work, is essential.

⁴⁴ Oliver K. Olson (*The Reformation Theologians: An Introduction to Theology in the Early Modern Period*, ed. Carter Lindberg [Boston: Blackwell Publishers, 2002], 88) writes:

Where Aldus collected the classics, Flacius, having embraced the Reformation, turned Europe upside down searching for medieval manuscripts. As an answer to the reproach that the Reformation was a break with the Catholic tradition of the church, he published texts from his researches in a *Catalog of Witnesses to the Truth*. He was confident that such historical records demonstrated that Luther’s reform was faithful to the Catholic tradition. According to his “remnant” argument, derived from 1 Kings 19:8 and Romans 11:4, there had always been a few faithful to the authentic tradition of the church. Catholicity, consequently, must be traced through the *successio doctrinae* rather than in the *successio personarum* of the “historic episcopate.

Notice that in Flacius’ view catholicity is found first and foremost in teaching, not ritual. It is this catholic doctrine that will lead to truly catholic ritual, whether or not that ritual has widespread and longstanding precedent. Many widespread and longstanding rituals, however, are found to be vehicles of a very catholic *fides quae* and therefore worth preserving.

⁴⁵ The preface to AC XXII and the subsequent articles “on the abuses which have been corrected,” the Lutheran Church confesses:

Luther, like the churches the Reformation inherited, left the majority of the Western Rite intact. Changes were made when the *lex credendi* required it (the canon of the Mass), when ceremonies were misunderstood or irreparably associated with papistic idolatry (the elevation of the host in some areas, the eucharistic prayer, etc.), and when a superior way of communicating the gospel was available (placement of the Words of Institution within the communion liturgy and their being spoken aloud). Luther and the subsequent Confessors had anything but a scorched earth approach (such an approach, as Napoleon learned, seldom leaves one well-fed and grounded), where everything was to be destroyed and rebuilt from the foundation, as was the case to a large extent among the sects, but rather, as Charles Porterfield Krauth called it, theirs was “the conservative Reformation.”⁴⁶ As Chemnitz states in his *Examination of the Council of Trent*, Part II, “And indeed, for the sake of order and decorum it should not be permitted to everyone willfully, without the decision and consent of the church, just because he desires it, either to omit or change anything even in external and indifferent things.”⁴⁷

Freedom, while not free, as every crucifix ought remind us, does however exist.⁴⁸ It is Christian freedom, though, and thus a freedom

Inasmuch, then, as our churches dissent in no article of the faith from the Church Catholic, but only omit some abuses which are new, and which have been erroneously accepted by the corruption of the times, contrary to the intent of the Canons, we pray that Your Imperial Majesty would graciously hear both what has been changed, and what were the reasons why the people were not compelled to observe those abuses against their conscience (*Triglotta*, 59).

⁴⁶ The title of his great work on the nature of the Lutheran Reformation and on the place of the Lutheran Church within Christianity and its history is *The Conservative Reformation and Its Theology* (St. Louis:Concordia Publishing House, 2007).

⁴⁷ 108. Please note that this is not some underhanded attempt, common in modern scholarship, to read into the intentions of the Formula by examining the numerous writings of the formulators to which we do not subscribe, but rather an attempt to show the opinion of a revered father of our church who also happens to be a formulator of the confession and article in question.

⁴⁸ Chemnitz writes (*Examination*, Part II, 115) about the freedom in ceremonies that existed also in the ancient church, which flies in the face of many a modern day liturgicists who hold to the delusion of an utopian ancient liturgical community:

In the seventh place, the observance of these rites was free in the church; neither were such rites similar and the same in all churches; often also some of the most ancient rites were abrogated and omitted, such as the tasting beforehand of milk, honey, and wine, of which Tertullian and Jerome make mention. Some were changed and others newly instituted, as it was judged to serve the edification of the church. For the church used and preserved, not confused license but a godly and wholesome liberty in ecclesiastical ceremonies of this kind, instituted by men, so that by free discontinuance it abrogated, omitted, and changed also the most

flowing from, grounded in, and governed by the gospel and Christian love, not a willy-nilly permit for frivolity.⁴⁹ As St. Paul warns, “You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love.” This freedom has existed from the earliest days of the Christian Church and will exist until Christ comes to rescue His bride. *Ecclesia semper reformanda est*, and for that reason she has and must have the freedom and the responsibility to constantly adapt, improve and appropriate in each successive generation the traditions that have been passed onto it. Yet this adapting, improving, and appropriating, so necessary in every land and age, when it is done best and most rightly, however, will be done not on a whim and overnight, but thoughtfully, deliberately, and in accordance with and upon the foundation of the one infallible, unchanging, and salvific tradition: the Word. The Formula reminds us:

ancient such ceremonies when it was judged that by reason of circumstances they no longer were very important for piety, or when the cause for which they were first instituted and observed had either been removed or changed and they had thus ceased through the changed times to be useful for edification, or when they had turned aside from the purpose and use for which they had initially been instituted and had degenerated into abuse and superstition. But our opponents are delightful reformers who, when they have *ex professo* instituted a debate about ceremonies of this kind, do not with one word even make mention of these necessary reminders but only seek by their anathemas to burden the consciences, that at least the shadow of such rites, no matter what they are, which seem to have a certain pretext of custom in the Roman Church may be religiously observed, although now there is no true reason why they should be observed, no salutary purpose and use for edification; there are many such in the Canon of the Mass and in the ceremonies of Baptism, in the period of Easter and Pentecost.

⁴⁹ Marquart (“Article X: The Formula of Concord: Confessions and Ceremonies,” *A Contemporary Look*, 265-266) observes:

The a-liturgical orientation of our modern Reformed-pietistic environment moreover jumps only too easily to the conclusion that Article X simply consigns everything liturgical to the realm of *adiaphora*, so that as long as Word and sacraments still come to expression somehow, all outward arrangements are free and “indifferent” That too would be a grave misunderstanding. The term *adiaphora* applies only to the strictly circumscribed area of external details neither commanded nor forbidden in God’s Word. In no way does FC X abrogate Article XXIV of both the AC and the Apology, in which the Lutheran Church officially confesses its doctrinal stand on the nature of Christian worship—including such particulars as the divinely given relation between preaching and the sacrament (Ap XXIV, 33-40, 71-71, 80, 89), and the “right use” of the historic Christian “mass” (AC XXIV 35 German; Ap XXIV 74-77, 87). It would be a reductionist fallacy to confuse all such deeply theological issues with mere *adiaphora*.

Thus [according to this doctrine] the churches will not condemn one another because of dissimilarity of ceremonies when, in Christian liberty, one has less or more of them, provided they are otherwise agreed with one another in the doctrine and all its articles, also in the right use of the holy sacraments, according to the well-known saying: *Dissonantia ieiunii non dissolvit consonantiam fidei*; “Disagreement in fasting does not destroy agreement in the faith.”⁵⁰

Also:

Therefore we believe, teach, and confess that the congregation of God of every place and every time has, according to its circumstances, the good right, power, and authority [in matters truly adiaphora] to change, to diminish, and to increase them, without thoughtlessness and offense, in an orderly and becoming way, as at any time it may be regarded most profitable, most beneficial, and best for [preserving] good order, [maintaining] Christian discipline [and for εὐταξία worthy of the profession of the gospel], and the edification of the Church. Moreover, how we can yield and give way with a good conscience to the weak in faith in such external adiaphora, Paul teaches Rom. 14, and proves it by his example, Acts 16, 3; 21, 26; 1 Cor. 9, 19.⁵¹

Flacius’ summary at the beginning of his great work on the subject of true and false adiaphora still serves us well:

All ceremonies and church practices are in and of themselves as free as they will always be. When, however, coercion, the false illusion that they were worship of God and must be observed, renunciation [of the faith], offense, [or] an opening for godlessness develops, and when, in whatever way it may happen, they do not build up but rather tear down the church of God and mock God, then they are no longer adiaphora.⁵²

⁵⁰ FC SD X, 31; *Triglotta*, 1063.

⁵¹ FC SD X, 8; *Triglotta*, 1055.

⁵² This translation from the upcoming publication from Magdeburg Press of this work, entitled, *A Book about True and False Adiaphora, wherein Almost the Entire Business of Adiaphora Is Explained, against the Pernicious Band of Adiaphorists*, published by Flacius in 1550 and foundational in the formation of Article X of the Formula.

In closing, Pastor Mark Schroeder, President of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, succinctly stated the crux of the issue in his recent address to the 2009 convention of that synod: “In other words, when something is determined to be an adiaphoron, that’s not where the discussion *ends*; that is when discussion among Christians *begins*.” May God grant us, as heirs of the Formula’s bold confession of God’s truth in this regard, extensive, elaborate, and edifying discussion regarding such matters! Amen. LSQ

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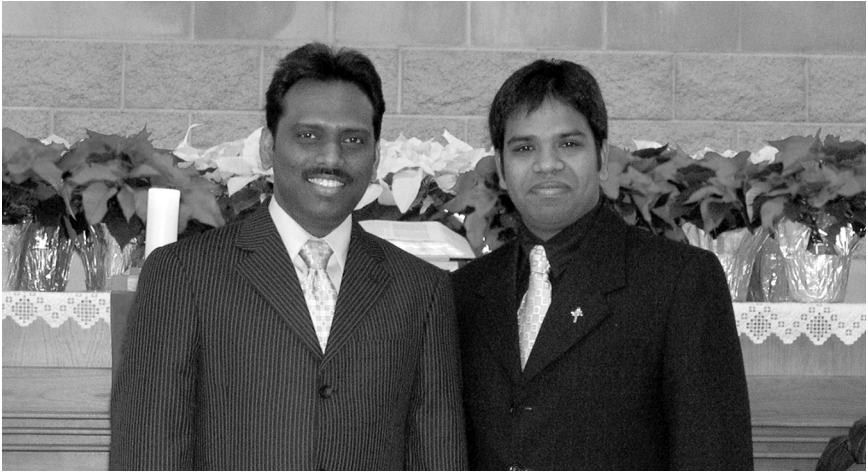
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Sermon for International Call Day December 10, 2009

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Mankato, Minnesota

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Note: *At the end of first semester, the seminary said farewell to two students from India, Kalyan Gollapalli and Pradeep Lingala. They have completed their three-year course of study at the seminary and will begin vicaring in India in February. The purpose of the vicar year is to give students practical experience in ministerial duties, under the direction of a supervising pastor. The Rev. Solomon Mamidi and the Rev. Ananda Raju will serve as the supervisors for the two Indian students. The India Vicar Assignment Service occurred on December 10, 2009 in Trinity Chapel at Bethany Lutheran College. The Rev. Steven Petersen, the World Outreach Administrator of the ELS, was the preacher and Profs. Adolph Harstad, Michael Smith and Gaylin Schmeling participated in the service. In the sermon, based on Mark 3:14–15, Pastor Petersen noted the challenges of Christian ministry among the Hindu and Muslim population in India. He encouraged them to return to their homeland to preach the true Gospel of Christ, who lived, died and rose to win forgiveness for all sin. Kalyan Gollapalli will be vicaring in the Rajahmundry District, and Pradeep Lingala will be vicaring in the Hyderabad District. We wish them the Lord's richest blessings as they proclaim the Gospel of the Christ Child in their homeland.*



Kalyan Gollapalli and Pradeep Lingala

Text: *Jesus... appointed twelve – designating them apostles – that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. (Mark 3:14–15)*

HERE IN THE UNITED STATES, WE'RE pretty private about our religion. But we're sending Pradeep Lingala and Kalyan Gollapali back to India to become pastors there, and India is a place where everyone's religion is in everyone else's face. Sometimes its even on a person's face, like the red bindi you see on a Hindu's forehead, indicating devotion.

Religion is public in India, like the wailing music and shouted call to worship blasting from the loudspeakers on the roof of the neighborhood Muslim mosque, and soon there are sandals by the door and prayer mats on the floor as the faithful come to worship Allah. Once I saw a group of men escorting a man toward the public water pump. When they arrived, they took cups of water and poured them over the man and washed him clean: he was Hindu and his friends were ceremonially cleansing him so he could go attend to a death in his family. In certain places you can sit in a grandstand and watch the cremation of the dead – they are placed on bundles of wood on iron stanchions and the ashes fall through grates in the floor and at the end of the day it's all washed out into the river. Nearby you might see a wedding procession like this: in the middle of the street, four men with sticks are holding up a colorful canopy above the heads of a young couple getting married. A drum is booming and a tambourine is shaking and the young groom has a head-dress on with a live flame

burning on it – and in the middle of the traffic he and his bride will walk to the temple and make an offering to Ganesh, the pot-bellied elephant god which is a stereotype symbol of India. Ganesh is a good one to pray to, because like an elephant, he can push obstacles away from the path newlyweds plan to travel in their new life together. On their way they may pass the tree where a sign identifies that a snake god lives among the roots, or they may pass the statue of the monkey god – almost as large as a water tower in an American small town.

And we're sending these two back to preach the Gospel to that culture so religious, so wrong, so going to hell without Christ. A daunting task. But here's comfort: what has happened to Pradeep and Kalyan here at Bethany Seminary is exactly what Jesus did in the text. Look again at what Mark says: Jesus *appointed 12 men that they might be with him*. The Apostles were enrolled in the first and best seminary, walking down the dusty paths of Palestine with Professor Jesus. And they studied so *that he might send them out to preach*. Our Indian friends have come here to be with Jesus Christ, to study his Word, and now we're sending them out to preach – we're sending them back to India to preach the Law and the Gospel.

What will they preach and teach? It is pretty simple: The only place we can find the true God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is in the Means of Grace, God's Word and Sacraments.

The only spiritual cleansing that counts is Baptism, in which God comes to individuals and washes sins away. He offers forgiveness in that cleansing and creates faith to trust that truth.

The only true resolution for the problem of death is the forgiveness of sins in Christ. God credits Christ's righteous life to our account and considers us innocent because our representative was holy in our place. God accepts Christ's death at the cross as substitute punishment for our sin and now forgives us free and clear. Christ's resurrection is proof all is well between ourselves and our God and that one day we will rise to life eternal.

We receive the blessings Christ won for us through faith in God's promises and that faith itself is a gift of God to us which he creates in our hearts through the work of the Holy Spirit in the Means of Grace. Since we are God's children through faith in Christ, now he is with us in our lives, our marriages, our classrooms, and our work places.

Pradeep and Kalyan, go back to India and preach the Law and Gospel to the Muslims who think they can earn Allah's favor by following five rules, and to the Hindus who think that nothing really matters because we're all just randomly recycling toward eternity. In your country preach

this message which transcends the nuances of culture: that God the Father loves this fallen world with all his heart, that he forgives all the sins of all the sinners in all of human history for the sake of Jesus Christ His Son, that he is with us every day, and that someday he will take us to be with him forever.

In the text, St. Mark says Jesus gave his disciples authority to drive out demons. God's Word does that. Proclaim God's Word in your ministry because it drives away the satanic influence of all that is false and brings to light the blessed truth that Jesus Christ is the only Savior this world will ever have or ever need. That is true in the United States and in India and around the world. It is true today and always will be. God bless your ministry! [LSQ](#)

Book Review

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Book Review: ***Even Death: A Novel***

Johnston, Wade R. *Even Death: A Novel*. Saginaw, MI: Magdeburg Press, 2008. 255 pages. \$13.99

The book *Even Death* is an example of an interesting genre of literature. In the past, the Christian historical novel was common in our midst. Historical novels were produced by both Concordia and Northwestern Publishing Houses. For example Northwestern produced a number of novels by Gustav Harders concerning the Apache mission in Arizona: *Jaalahn*, *La Paloma*, and *Dohaschtida*. More well known in the Christian world are the historical novels *Ben-Hur* and *The Robe*. The Christian historical novel gives our people

good leisure reading and at the same time inculcates Christian doctrine and life. It keeps one from the latest romance novel, mystery, or war story. *Even Death* is a historical novel that is of special significance for confessional Lutherans.

In the book, Lutheran pastors, who have been friends since college, take their dream trip of a lifetime. They fly to Germany to tour Lutherland and see the important sites. This trip, however, does not turn out as one would expect, with a camera full of pictures and materials for a congregational presentation. By a tragic twist of circumstance, the dream trip becomes a nightmare. They find themselves defending the faith in Christ as the Savior, which they have confessed and preached, and they suffer persecution and more.

This novel has several levels of interest. The novel, first of all, has a midwestern connection. The novel is built around four young pastors from the Midwest: two from Michigan, one from Wisconsin and one from Minnesota. They refer to themselves as confessional Lutheran pastors. They could easily be four pastors from the Evangelical Lutheran Synod or from the Wisconsin Synod or from the Missouri Synod. They serve the typical midwestern parishes, a large congregation in Milwaukee, a rural congregation in Michigan, etc.

Reading between the lines, one discovers that all four of the young men attended a Lutheran college and then went to seminary together. Their experiences in the past have bound them together. Interestingly enough, they call their course of study “the system,” a common designation in the Wisconsin Synod. The system, a four-year preparatory track, a four-year college track and a four-year seminary track, was the common requirement to be a Lutheran pastor in midwestern, German Lutheran synods.

The second level of interest in the novel is the German connection. These four young pastors are on a trip to see the Reformation sites in Germany. This is a trip that most Lutheran pastors have taken or would like to take. They begin in Munich and travel north to the Wartburg Castle,

where Luther was taken after the Diet of Worms. Then they turn east to Erfurt and Leipzig, where the plot of the novel thickens. They intend to reach Wittenberg, but something in the Thomaskirche occurs, and they go no farther. The book gives an interesting travelogue of these areas of Germany. There are many incidents recorded that everyone who has taken this trip has experienced. They even remember that there is more to the Thomaskirche than Johann Sebastian Bach. They find the plaque honoring Nikolaus Selnecker (1530–1592), who was one of the writers of the Formula of Concord. Interestingly enough, they do not find the memorial on the other end of the church to Johann Benedikt Carpzov (1607–1657), a professor at Leipzig and the father of symbolics. This novel is of interest as we begin to look forward to the five-hundredth anniversary of the Reformation.

Third, the novel has a catechetical level of interest. It points out the importance of the Christian faith in the life of each of these young pastors and in the life of each and every one of us. Jesus loved us so much that He gave His life to free us from the bondage of sin and chose us as His own in Baptism. This truth gives us meaning and purpose in this life and comfort and strength in all the problems of life. The novel shows that in times

of difficulty the Christian will turn to the Lord in prayer basing that intercession on the Word. A fine example of this:

“Would you like to pray?” the pastor asked.

“I think we should,” Mike answered.

“Where should we begin?” the pastor asked.

“You know your Small Catechism?”

“I like to think so.” The pastor grinned.

Mike began praying the explanations to the petitions. “Heavenly Father, You tenderly encourage us to believe that You are our true Father and that we are Your children, so we come before You confidently and with all assurance, as dear children come before their dear father...”

When he came to the seventh petition, he broke down. “Father in heaven,” he wept softly, “deliver us from all evil, of body and soul, property and honor. And finally, when our last hour comes, grant us a blessed end and graciously take us from this vale of tears to Yourself in heaven.”

“Amen, yes it shall be so,” the pastor concluded the

prayer, putting his arm around Mike. (112)

The fourth level of interest in this novel is an Islamic connection. It is an excellent apologetic and polemic against Islam. It shows the infiltration of Islamic thought in Western Europe and helps one understand the worldview of many in the Middle East.

Islamic radicals and terrorists see Western culture as hedonistic and decadent. They imply that the only hope for the West is the stability of Islam. The terrorists in the novel state,

Islam alone can fill the moral vacuum that has developed in the once great nations those reading this inhabit. It alone can offer structure, community, and hope as your families, faiths, and long-cherished values crumble like the ruins of ancient Greece and Rome. It alone can preserve civilization. The West is ill-equipped and unable to fight the long war into which some of its leaders are foolishly and recklessly thrusting its citizens. (122–123)

The novel explains many of the customs of the Islamic faith. For example, there is a reference to the *Shahada*. This is the Islamic creed, which is paraphrased, “There is no

god but Allah and Mohammed is the messenger of Allah" (120).

Fifth, the novel encourages Christians to stand up for their faith in the Savior. It reminds us that at our confirmation we vowed to suffer all, even death, rather than to fall away from Him. Nothing in the world, including our physical body, is more important than our faith in Christ's redemptive work, which gives comfort in this life and hope for the life to come. The novel vividly portrays the biblical truth, "For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36–37).

Sixth, the novel is very beneficial reading for Christian formation. Through the Word and Sacraments, the entire Trinity makes its dwelling in us and we have union and communion with the Divine and are conformed to the image of Christ. When our faith-life is so formed, nourished and strengthened, we will be a living epistle of Christ (2 Corinthians 2:1–2) and a little Christ to those around us. The way in which the Word comforts and strengthens the Christian is evident in the courage of the pastor's wife in the novel, who, having heard about the fate of her husband, participates in the divine service.

"This true body and true blood of our Lord and Savior

Jesus Christ strengthen and preserve you in the true faith unto life everlasting. Depart in peace. Your sins are forgiven. Amen," the pastor pronounced, making the sign of the cross. Hannah signed herself and started to her feet. Pulling a pouting Jeremiah behind her, she returned to the pew where the older children were flipping through their hymnals as the congregation began singing the second distribution hymn.... "Jesus Christ, our blessed Savior," she listened to them sing, "turned away God's wrath forever; by His bitter grief and woe He saved us from the evil foe. As His pledge of love undying, He, this precious food supplying, gives His body with the bread and with the wine the blood He shed," Mary the oldest, was belting out the hymn vociferously, proud to be able to read the words off the page all by herself. (249)

The one criticism that I would have of this novel is its ending. It did not end as I expected it would. I was looking for a happy ending, and it was only partially so. However, the novel was certainly true to the theology of the cross.

This is an excellent Christian historical novel that is beneficial

literature for both our pastors and our congregations. It is not only good pastime literature, but it inculcates Christian doctrine and models the Christ-like life. It would be good material for a book club Bible study and a fine addition to any church library.

This book may be ordered from Magdeburg Press by writing to: 8765 Ederer Road, Saginaw, Michigan, 48609 or by visiting www.magdeburgpress.com.

– Gaylin R. Schmeling

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