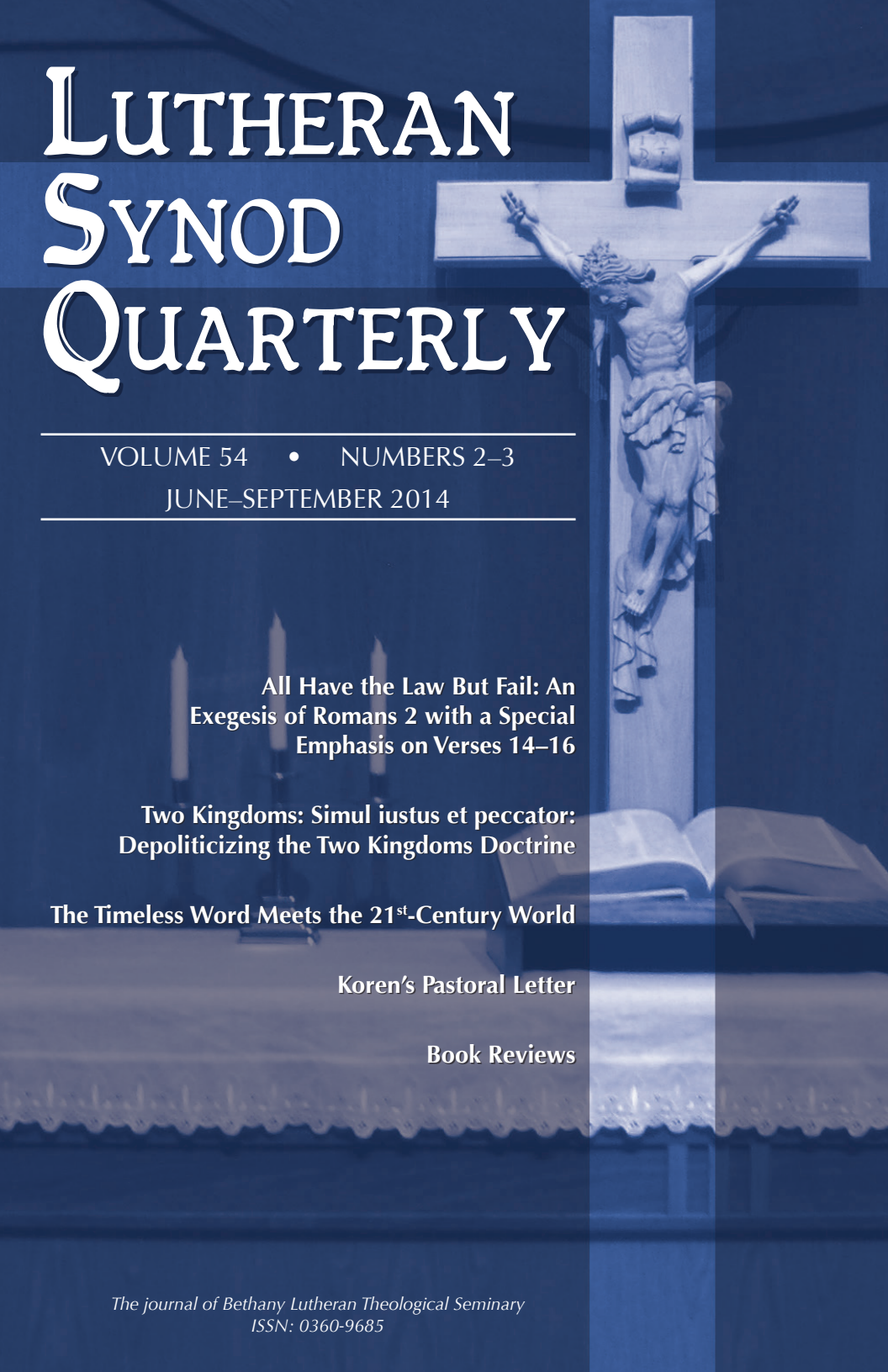


LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY



VOLUME 54 • NUMBERS 2–3

JUNE–SEPTEMBER 2014

**All Have the Law But Fail: An
Exegesis of Romans 2 with a Special
Emphasis on Verses 14–16**

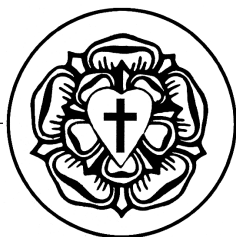
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The Timeless Word Meets the 21st-Century World

Koren's Pastoral Letter

Book Reviews

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Foreword

LSQ Vol. 54, Nos. 2–3 (June–September 2014)

THROUGHOUT ROMANS 2, PAUL ELOQUENTLY demonstrates God’s justice and His just condemnation of all people because of their original and actual sin. But on the cross of Calvary, God’s strict justice and condemnation are turned into acquittal, freedom, and eternal life for us. This important truth is explicated in the exegetical paper by the Rev. Nicholas Proksch entitled, “All Have the Law But Fail: An Exegesis of Romans 2 with a Special Emphasis on Verses 14–16.” The Rev. Proksch is pastor of Lord of Life Lutheran Church in Holland, Michigan.

The essay, “Two Kingdoms: Simul iustus et peccator: Depoliticizing the Two Kingdoms Doctrine,” gives a summary of the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. In addition it speaks to the responsibility of Christians in each kingdom. The essay was written by Professor Erling Teigen of Bethany Lutheran College.

In his essay, “The Timeless Word Meets the 21st-Century World,” the Rev. Matthew Crick discusses the Christian’s relationship to 21st-century culture, which is drastically changing. The first part of the essay identifies certain characteristics of early 21st-century culture, within which Christians live, and by which Christians, to a degree, are influenced. The second part of the essay identifies and discusses various applications of Scripture to meet early 21st-century culture. The Rev. Crick is pastor of Faith Lutheran Church in Medford, Oregon.

This issue of the *Quarterly* contains a famous letter of Ulrich Vilhelm Koren addressed to the pastors of the Norwegian Synod. Dr. Koren, who has the reputation of having been one of the greatest theologians in the history of the Lutheran Church in this country, was president of the Norwegian Synod from 1894 until 1912. The translator of this letter was Dr. S.C. Ylvisaker, who was president of Bethany Lutheran College from 1930 until 1950.

Also included in this issue are three book reviews: *The Isolscelized God, Your Questions, Scripture's Answers*, and *God's Imagery*.

– GRS

All Have the Law But Fail: An Exegesis of Romans 2 with a Special Emphasis on Verses 14–16

*Nicholas D. Proksch
Pastor, Lord of Life Lutheran Church
Holland, Michigan*

LSQ Vol. 54, Nos. 2–3 (June–September 2014)

LET JUSTICE BE DONE THOUGH the heavens fall,” is a maxim from Roman antiquity that exemplifies their fanaticism in executing justice.¹ Appropriate it is, then, that the beginning of Paul’s Epistle to the Romans meticulously seeks to preserve the truth of God’s righteous justice. Paul is dealing with the grand scope of what is a just judgment regarding humanity as it stands before God. As Christianity incorporates both Jews and Gentiles many questions of favoritism arise, just as there can be many excuses before the law. Are the Jews more righteous? How is the condemnation of the Gentiles just, if they never even had the law? Who will be declared righteous in God’s courtroom and why?

In Romans 2, Paul seeks to prove how God is perfectly just. God’s justice depends both on impartiality and equality before the law. To show equality, Paul argues that both Jews and Gentiles have the law—whether written or also on the heart—and building up to 3:20, that both fail to accomplish the law for various reasons.² That the unbelieving Gentiles fail to fulfill the law is outlined in Romans 1:18–32. Paul then explains in 2:1–11 how anyone who thinks himself superior to those Gentiles is no better because such a person does the same things as well. In Romans 2:12–16, Paul establishes that Gentiles have the law written

¹ The maxim’s origin is uncertain, but regardless it describes the strong sense of justice in Roman culture and literature.

² Romans 3:20: “Therefore, no one will be justified by works of the law, for through the law there is knowledge of sin.”

in their heart, and thus they can be justly condemned before that law. Finally, in Romans 2:17–29, Paul shows that the Jews have no advantage if seeking to work their own righteousness, because their attitude is plagued with hypocrisy, which is demonstrated most vividly in their false understanding of circumcision.

Within the framework of establishing God’s justice and accountability before the law, Paul in 2:14–16 offers the main biblical foundation for the doctrine of the natural law.³ Paul uses the natural law primarily to establish Gentile accountability before the law and the just condemnation they have in store for themselves. Yet from these verses, Paul gives the Christian insight into natural law and its relationship to both the so-called first and second uses of the law. Also, in this broader context of Romans, these verses help establish what our expectations should be concerning the extent and application of natural law in society as a whole.

Impartiality and Condemnation before God’s Justice: Romans 2:1–11

1 Διὸ⁴ ἀναπολόγητος εἶ, ὦ ἄνθρωπε⁵ πᾶς ὁ κρίνων· ἐν ᾧ⁶ γὰρ κρίνεις τὸν ἕτερον, σεαυτὸν κατακρίνεις, τὰ γὰρ αὐτὰ πράσσεις ὁ κρίνων. 2 οἶδαμεν δὲ ὅτι τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ ἐστὶν κατὰ ἀλήθειαν ἐπὶ τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας. 3 λογίζῃ δὲ τοῦτο, ὦ ἄνθρωπε ὁ κρίνων τοὺς τὰ τοιαῦτα πράσσοντας καὶ ποιῶν αὐτά, ὅτι σὺ ἐκφεύξῃ τὸ κρίμα τοῦ θεοῦ; 4 ἢ τοῦ πλοῦτου τῆς χρηστότητος αὐτοῦ καὶ τῆς ἀνοχῆς καὶ τῆς μακροθυμίας καταφρονεῖς, ἀγνοῶν ὅτι τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς μετάνοιάν σε ἄγει; 5 κατὰ δὲ τὴν σκληρότητά σου καὶ ἀμετανόητον καρδίαν θησαυρίζεις σεαυτῷ ὀργὴν ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὀργῆς καὶ ἀποκαλύψεως δικαιοκρισίας τοῦ

³ Romans 2:14–16 will be the main exegetical focus of this paper. The other portions of Romans 2 will still be treated, although not in the same level of detail and mainly to the extent that they apply to my broader arguments.

⁴ BDAG, 250, calls this an “inferential conjunction.” Thus the preceding section in Romans 1 (describing the wickedness of the unbelieving world) is closely connected to Romans 2 where Paul explains how all are under that same judgment. See also R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s Epistle to the Romans* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1961), 130–131.

⁵ Michael P. Middendorf, *Romans 1–8, Concordia Commentary: A Theological Exposition of Sacred Scripture* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2013), 152, suggests handling the vocative “attention grabber” of ὦ by a more colloquial “yes, you” instead of the more archaic “O man.” BDAG, 1101: “The ὦ interjection associated with the vocative is not only a ‘marker of personal address’ but is also used for ‘mostly expressing emotion.’” Lenski, 131: “The Greek uses ‘O’ with vocatives sparingly, hence it is strong when it is used.”

⁶ BDAG, 329, offers this ἐν ᾧ construction as an example of ἐν being a “marker of circumstance or condition under which something takes place.”

θεοῦ **6** ὅς ἀποδώσει ἐκάστῳ κατὰ τὰ ἔργα αὐτοῦ· **7** τοῖς μὲν καθ' ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ δόξαν καὶ τιμὴν καὶ ἀφθαρσίαν⁷ ζητοῦσιν ζωὴν αἰώνιον, **8** τοῖς δὲ ἐξ ἐριθείας καὶ ἀπειθοῦσι τῇ ἀληθείᾳ πειθομένοις δὲ τῇ ἀδικίᾳ ὀργὴ καὶ θυμός.⁸ **9** θλίψις καὶ στενοχωρία ἐπὶ πάσαν ψυχὴν ἀνθρώπου τοῦ κατεργαζομένου τὸ κακόν, Ἰουδαίου τε πρώτον καὶ Ἕλληνο· **10** δόξα δὲ καὶ τιμὴ καὶ εἰρήνη παντὶ τῷ ἐργαζομένῳ τὸ ἀγαθόν, Ἰουδαίῳ τε πρώτον καὶ Ἕλληνι· **11** οὐ γάρ ἐστιν προσωποληψία παρὰ⁹ τῷ θεῷ.

1 *Therefore you are without excuse, yes, you, every one of you who judges. For in whatever circumstance you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you, the one judging, do the same things. 2 And we know that the judgment of God is in accordance with truth, falling on those who practice such things. 3 But do you suppose this, yes, you, the one judging those who practice such things while doing the same things yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you despise the abundance of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, because you are ignorant of the fact that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and impenitent heart, you are storing up for yourself wrath on a day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God 6 who will give back to each according to his works— 7 eternal life to those who in accordance with the norm of persevering in good work, seek glory, honor, and immortality 8 but there will be wrath and anger for those who out of selfishness also disobey the truth and follow unrighteousness. 9 There will be affliction and distress on every person of humanity doing evil—of the Jew first, then of the Greek— 10 but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who accomplishes good—first for the Jew, then for the Greek— 11 for there is no partiality before God.*

Whom is Paul Addressing?

After Paul's introduction and personal thoughts toward the Romans in 1:1–17, he begins to speak abstractly about God's relationship to the unbelieving world. Throughout 1:18–32 Paul argues how the world should have known God and is without excuse. He further explains how God permitted them to sink deeper into immorality because of their waywardness. Thus the body of this letter begins with an impersonal tone.

⁷ BDAG, 155, describes ἀφθαρσίαν as “the state of not being subject to decay/dissolution/interruption, *incorruptibility, immortality*” (emphasis original).

⁸ The nominative case here implies something like, “there will be,” since one would otherwise expect it to match ζωὴν αἰώνιον in verse 7 with an accusative case.

⁹ BDAG, 757, describes this use of παρὰ as a “marker of one whose viewpoint is relevant, *in the sight or judgment of someone*” (emphasis original).

It should sound striking, then, when Paul goes from the abstract and impersonal to the personal with his use of εἶ. He turns on his reader whom he had set up to condemn the world along with Paul's description in 1:18–32: "Therefore you are without excuse, yes, you, every one of you who judges. For in whatever circumstance you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you, the one judging, do the same things." The tone has quickly changed; Paul is now more personally addressing his reader, "every one of you who judges."

On this question of Paul's εἶ, however, there is an opposing interpretation that understands the "you" address as not directed toward the reader. It is suggested that Paul here is using the diatribe literary style, which is essentially where the author argues against an imaginary opponent or interlocutor.¹⁰ The diatribe also can include imaginary objections or questions. Certainly elements of the diatribe style are present, especially the second person singular, not plural, pronoun, making it unsurprising that "the majority of modern commentators" conclude not only that Paul is speaking to an imaginary interlocutor but that he is "a Jew who judges himself superior to the pagan because of his people's privileges."¹¹

In spite of this prevailing viewpoint, there are several reasons to suppose Paul is engaging the reader with ἀναπολόγητος εἶ, ὃ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων and not an interlocutor.¹² First, even though εἶ is singular, corresponding to a diatribe format, it would then be anomalous to have the πᾶς in the phrase ὃ ἄνθρωπε πᾶς ὁ κρίνων. There would then be a more plural idea to an interlocutor. The πᾶς then mitigates the assertion that a singular "you" requires an impersonal diatribe. There is both an individual aspect and a broader plural idea to Paul's address to begin chapter 2.

¹⁰ Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, The New International Commentary on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1996), 125; Robert Jewett, *Romans*, ed. Eldon Jay Epp, Hermeneia—A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible (Philadelphia: Fortress, 2006), 196; F. F. Bruce, *The Letter of Paul to the Romans: An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1985), 81–82.

¹¹ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, The Anchor Bible 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 297. Moo, 125, especially draws off the second person singular "you" to assert, "This does not mean that Paul is now accusing his readers of these things; were he to do that, the second person plural would have been needed."

¹² Middendorf, 151, asserts that "Paul employs the diatribe to effectively engage 'you,' the actual listener." Unfortunately, however, he does not go into detail to prove this level of engagement against the many commentators who see merely a diatribe, which as a rule is considered impersonal and versus an imaginary interlocutor.

Second, if this is an impersonal diatribe, the shift in tone between the end of chapter 1 and the beginning of chapter 2 is left unexplained and inconsequential. Paul then would be going from speaking impersonally about the Gentiles to speaking impersonally to Jewish moralists, one a diatribe, the other not. Why not have both be diatribes if both sections do the same thing, one versus Gentiles, the other versus Jews?

Finally, Paul's lengthy and graphic attack on the unbelieving nations in chapter 1 is necessary only if the second chapter is truly addressed against his reader and not an imaginary opponent. The letter is to Christians in Rome, an ingroup, which Paul knows already agrees with everything he wrote in 1:18–32, the beginning to the body of this letter.¹³ It is clear Paul knows they will agree with him in his condemnation of the unbelieving world, because he does not bother to argue and prove things in any kind of thorough manner that should otherwise be expected of Paul. In fact, the point of the εἶ being personal is that he accuses the reader of judging, because he knows he has set up the reader to judge from 1:18–32. To be sure, he uses some literary aspects similar to a diatribe, but in view of 1:18–32, it is clear that this is a more personal address and akin to a literary sting operation.

The personal shift in tone to accuse the reader seems harsh at first glance. Perhaps that is why so many commentators conclude Paul would not address his reader in such a fashion.¹⁴ It is easy to sanitize the reading of Scripture and turn it into abstractions about others and the world.¹⁵ An impersonal diatribe here, however, would take the bite out of Paul's law preaching of 1:18–3:20. His goal of this law preaching is to have everyone recognized as worthy of condemnation, even the reader. He is building up to his conclusion of 3:20: "Therefore, no one will be justified by works of the law, for through the law there is knowledge of sin." In this early section of Romans, Paul wants not only Gentiles and not only Jews to realize their just condemnation before the law; he wants everyone, even the reader, to realize that everyone has the law, has failed to do the law, and stands equally condemned. If Paul wrote the

¹³ Lenski, 132: "Paul's line of thought is derailed when this judge is conceived as an objector. He is the very opposite. He subscribes to all that Paul says in 1:18–32, also to the part which God plays. This is the very law which he applies in his judging and his effort to get man to stop.... The astounding thing is that this judge's agreement with Paul is the ultimate of disagreement."

¹⁴ See Jewett, 196.

¹⁵ Consider in Luke 13:23–24, how also the abstract question to Jesus, "Lord, are only a few saved?" is given a more personal response: "Strive to enter through the narrow door!"

law, be it ever so severely, but permitted the reader to be a mere outside observer, he would have failed to preach the law at all to the reader. Theology and reading Scripture is never to be a spectator sport.

With that clear goal of proving a universal condemnation in mind, it should be expected that Paul's audience for Romans and especially Romans 2:1–16 is more general than Jews alone or even Jews primarily. If Paul were merely attacking a straw man, moralist Jew in chapter 2, a primarily Jewish audience may well be expected.¹⁶ However, it is not until verse 17 with his address, *Εἰ δὲ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπωνομάζῃ*, that we find Paul focusing on specifically Jewish issues. Until that point, he keeps things more general. Churches in general were clearly getting increasingly diverse with both Jews and Gentiles, as issues between the two groups continually came up.¹⁷ It should be expected that Paul wrote Romans to both Jewish and Gentile Christians, although at various points in his letter he may emphasize something with a specific group in mind.¹⁸ Paul's goal is that the reader realizes his just condemnation before the law whether he is a Jew or Gentile. At the same time, it will be evident in this build-up to 3:20 that the reader along with both Jews and Gentiles in general is equally deserving of this condemnation, all while lacking an excuse because everyone also has the law in some form.

No Partiality

With this broad audience in mind and with convicting the reader as a goal, Paul aims to depict God's justice as strict and impartial. Having established the wickedness of the unbelieving world in chapter 1, he now seeks to show how his audience, in judging the unbelieving world, is also facing judgment, because all fail to do what the law requires: "For

¹⁶ Ernst Käsemann, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. and ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1980), 54; Anders Nygren, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1949), 113–114; John Murray, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1959), 55–56; Grant R. Osborne, *Romans*, The IVP New Testament Commentary Series (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 59; and Fitzmyer, 297, argue that chapter 2 is directed at Jews.

¹⁷ A few examples of these increasing issues are Acts 6:1–7, 11:1–18, 15:1–35, 21:17–26; Galatians 2:11–21, 3:1–25; Philippians 3:1–11; and Colossians 2:6–23.

¹⁸ D. A. Carson and Douglas J. Moo, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 2nd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005), 394–398, outline in more detail why Romans appears to have a diverse audience of Jews and Gentiles in mind. See also Martin H. Franzmann, *Romans*, Concordia Commentary (St. Louis: Concordia, 1968), 48; Middendorf, 14, 171.

in whatever circumstance you judge another, you condemn yourself, because you, the one judging, do the same things.”¹⁹

Yet it is not enough for Paul to convict his readers of merely doing “the same things” as the world, he also describes what their judging really is. He asks rhetorically in verse 4, “Or do you despise the abundance of his kindness, forbearance, and patience, because you are ignorant of the fact that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?” Their judging is wrong not only because they do “the same things,” but because such judging is also premature. God shows an abundance of *χρηστότητος*, *ἀνοχής*, and *μακροθυμίας* with sinners because he wants to hold off on making a condemning judgment.²⁰ The premature judge Paul is addressing does not want to hold off on condemning and does not have repentance in mind. Thus even in this act of judging, the reader condemns himself.

It is also no accident that Paul uses the second person in the phrase *τὸ χρηστὸν τοῦ θεοῦ εἰς μετάνοιαν σε ἄγει*. He is saying that the reader’s premature judging that despises God’s kindness, forbearance, and patience with the world is also despising the fact that God shows those same things to the reader and with the same goal in mind: *μετάνοια*.

A further point Paul makes to drive at his conclusion that God shows no partiality is found in the phrases *Ἰουδαίου τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνο*s and *Ἰουδαίω τε πρῶτον καὶ Ἕλληνι* in reference to the eschatological Judgment. It is likely that he uses the word “Greek” as opposed to “Gentile,” because he expects his audience to be either Jews or non-Jews who are Greek in terms of culture.²¹ Later in verse 14, he includes the third category of “Gentile.” The distinction would be that

¹⁹ Romans 2:1.

²⁰ Johannes Brenz, *Explicatio Epistolae Pauli ad Romanos*, ed. Martin Brecht and Gerhard Schäfer, vol. 1, *Werke: Eine Studienausgabe* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986), 62, describes these three characteristics of God in this way: “The first is ‘goodness,’ namely, that although humans may be wicked, God still does good to them, Matthew 5:45: ‘He allows his sun to rise on the good and evil.’ The second is ‘patience,’ that although humans may continue to be wicked, God still patiently bears that wickedness and he himself continues to do good. The third is ‘longsuffering,’ that although humans are not moved by the blessings of God to come to their senses, God is yet slow to anger and still is not instantly moved to inflict punishment but instead delays.” *Prima est “bonitas,” videlicet quod etsi homines sint impii, Deus tamen benefacit eis. Math. 5.[45]: Sinit solem suum oriri super bonos et malos. Secunda est “patientia,” quod etsi homines pergant esse impii, Deus tamen patienter fert illam impietatem et pergit ipse benefaciendo. Tertia “longanimitas,” quod etsi homines non moventur beneficiis Dei ad resipiscentiam, Deus tamen tardus est ira nec continuo ita movetur, ut inferat supplicium, sed differt.*

²¹ David P. Kuske, *A Commentary on Romans 1–8* (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 2007), 105.

earlier he is addressing the Jewish and Greek Christian audience of this letter who, as part of this ingroup, do have the written “law,” whereas the “Gentiles” of verses 14 and following comprise a third, outgroup category of non-Christians who by definition do not have the written law. A person of Jewish background may have expected some level of favoritism in the final judgment.²² Paul, however, places everyone “on the same level” as he speaks about Jews and Greeks facing the same kind of judgment.²³ Again, this equal application of divine judgment adds to Paul’s overarching argument toward God’s impartiality and then toward his universal condemnation according to the law.

The final layer of Paul’s argument for God’s impartiality is that when God renders his judgment in the end, it will be giving back “to each according to his works.” This judgment according to works can at first seem at odds with Paul’s overall message in Romans of justification by grace through faith, but it needs to be interpreted in the immediate context with Paul’s immediate goals in mind, namely, convicting his audience with the law along with all people.

To be sure, Scripture makes unavoidable the fact that works are the “norm of the judgment (*norma iudicii*).”²⁴ This judgment based on works in Romans 2:6 is clarified in the Apology:

In all of these passages, in which works are praised, it is necessary to return to the rule given above, namely, that works are not pleasing to God without Christ, because Christ as the mediator must not be excluded. Thus, when the text says that eternal life is granted to works, it means granted to those who are justified, because good works do not please God, except in those who are justified, that is, in those who hold that they are accepted by God on account of Christ. Moreover, the justified necessarily produce good works or good fruits.... Furthermore, Scripture names the fruits in order to show that what is required is not hypocrisy but a righteousness that is efficacious and a kind of new life that produces good fruits.²⁵

²² Several commentators such as Fitzmyer, 298, Middendorf, 168, and Moo, 133, suggest that Paul is attacking a prevalent concept of Jewish favoritism, perhaps one even based on the Wisdom of Solomon 11:9–11, 12:22, and 15:1–2.

²³ AE 25:182. See also Jewett, 208, for an argument to that same end.

²⁴ Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics*, 4 vols. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1950–1957), 3:540. See also Middendorf, 163; Hoenecke, 4:287. Related Bible verses dealing with the Final Judgment and works are Matthew 12:36–37, 25:31–46; 2 Corinthians 5:10; and Revelation 22:12.

²⁵ Ap. IV:370A (4: 370–374).

Thus a judgment based on works and salvation by grace through faith are not mutually exclusive concepts. Carl Manthey Zorn clarifies this section by commenting, “God will judge on the Day of Judgment *by belief or unbelief, but he will publically prove who has been a believer or unbeliever based on works.*”²⁶ Abraham Calov and Matthias Flacius take special note of Paul’s use of *secundum* as opposed to *per opera* or *propter operum perseverantiam*.²⁷ Certainly this section is not worded in such a way as to make it contradict justification by faith.

Although Paul carefully words his presentation here so as not to contradict what he will later discuss concerning justification by faith, it is not his intention to present doctrine concerning Judgment Day here with the relationship between works and faith. It would be an anachronism for the interpreter to infuse the rest of Romans into these verses, although one can clearly see from a larger perspective that there is no contradiction.²⁸ Instead, Paul’s goal is to convict his audience with the law.²⁹ Thus Melancthon is quite right when he interprets the section in a law-gospel paradigm:

The entire divine Scripture sets forth the Law in some places, in others the Gospel.... This is the phrase of the Law: “He will reward everyone according to his works.” The meaning is: “He will give rewards to the righteous, and the unjust he will

²⁶ Carl Manthey Zorn, *Der Brief an die Römer in Briefen an Glaubensbrüder* (Zwickau: Johannes Herrmann, n. d.), 24: “*Gott wird am Tage des Gerichts nach Glauben oder Unglauben richten; aber er wird aus den Werken öffentlich erweisen, wer gläubig und wer ungläubig gewesen ist*” (emphasis original).

²⁷ Abraham Calov, *Biblia Novi Testamenti Illustrata*, vol. 2, *Epistolas Apostolicas Universas, et Apocalypsin Johanneam* (Dresden and Leipzig, 1719), 42; Matthias Flacius, *Glossa Compendiaria in Novum Testamentum* (Basel, 1570), 659. BDAG, 512, shows that the preposition *κατά* can have the idea of being a “marker of norm of similarity or homogeneity,” and sometimes especially being “the norm according to which a judgment is rendered.” Paul’s word choice could suggest that this “perseverance in good work” is an expected pattern according to which judgment is rendered, although not necessarily the reason or cause. Also noteworthy nuances to Paul’s wording would be his emphasis on “seeking” (*ζητούσιν*) as opposed to earning or meriting. Likewise, the “perseverance of good work” (*ὑπομονὴν ἔργου ἀγαθοῦ*) being singular emphasizes a life characterized by *striving toward good* (sanctification in view of justification) as opposed to a life of building up *many good works* to accomplish justification.

²⁸ Middendorf, 171–172, notes that nowhere in the law preaching of Romans 1:18–3:20 does Paul mention faith “precisely to make the point that apart from faith in Christ all people stand under God’s judgment (3:9, 19–20).”

²⁹ It also should not be surprising to find this foray into writing about Judgment Day, since as Lenski, 144, writes, “Paul is preaching the law to these moralists, and the law always climaxes in the final judgment.”

punish.” Neither is there any doubt that the explanation of who the righteous are and what works please God must be added from the Gospel. For the pronouncements of the Law without the Gospel produce despair. Never can a conscience in the midst of true terrors declare that it has works worthy of the forgiveness of sins or eternal life.³⁰

Thus with the lack of gospel in this early section of Romans, Paul wants his reader to infer that because of his doing “the same things” mentioned in chapter 1 and his judging, he will be lumped in with the rest of the evildoers. The judgment according to works is further necessary because it proves impartiality, and therefore it is important for Paul here because his immediate aim is to prove God’s impartiality in condemning both the unbelieving masses of chapter 1 and “everyone who judges” from chapter 2. Thus, with this strict endgame discussion, Paul has demonstrated not only God’s impartiality but also the failure of all humanity, even the reader, to keep his perfect law.

Natural Law: Romans 2:12–16

12 ὅσοι γὰρ³¹ ἀνόμως ἤμαρτον, ἀνόμως καὶ ἀπολοῦνται, καὶ ὅσοι ἐν νόμῳ³² ἤμαρτον, διὰ νόμου κριθήσονται. **13** οὐ γὰρ οἱ ἀκροαταὶ νόμου δίκαιοι παρὰ [τῷ] θεῷ, ἀλλ’ οἱ ποιηταὶ νόμου δικαιωθήσονται. **14** ὅταν γὰρ ἔθνη³³ τὰ μὴ νόμον ἔχοντα φύσει³⁴ τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν, οὗτοι νόμον μὴ ἔχοντες ἑαυτοῖς εἰσὶν νόμος. **15** οἵτινες ἐνδείκνυνται τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου γραπτὸν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις αὐτῶν, συμμαρτυρούσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως καὶ³⁵ μεταξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν

³⁰ Philip Melancthon, *Commentary on Romans*, trans. Fred Kramer (St. Louis: Concordia, 1992), 88.

³¹ BDAG, 189, shows how the conjunction γὰρ can often simply serve as a “marker of clarification, *for, you see*” (emphasis original).

³² Since the phrase ἐν νόμῳ is contrasted to ἀνόμως (without the law), it is best to view it as the opposite of ἀνόμως, that is, “with the law.” This would be the same classification as BDAG, 327, where ἐν can be a “marker of a state or condition.” Thus those people sin while in the condition of having the law.

³³ Gentiles here cannot refer specifically to Christian Gentiles, because they would clearly then have the law of Scripture along with their conversion. Such a view would also not fit Paul’s goal of holding absolutely everyone accountable to the law. See also Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, ed. Victor Paul Furnish, Abingdon New Testament Commentaries (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 80; Moo, 151–152.

³⁴ The dative φύσει goes with what follows, i.e., the Gentiles do the things of the law by nature, as opposed to the Gentiles not having the law by nature. Fitzmyer, 310, bases this conclusion primarily on Paul’s constructions in Romans 2:27 and Galatians 2:15.

³⁵ Jewett, 215, explains that the καὶ simply connects “two separate genitive abstract constructions.” If the latter construction explained the former, it would require the

λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων,³⁶ **16** ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ³⁷ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

12 *Indeed, all who sinned without the law, will also perish without the law, and all who sinned with the law, will be judged by the law. 13 For the hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be declared righteous. 14 In fact, whenever Gentiles who do not have the law do by nature the things of the law, they are the law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They demonstrate that the work of the law is written in their hearts, while their conscience additionally bears witness and the reasoning back and forth accuses or even defends them 16 on a day when God judges the secrets of humans for the purpose of my gospel proclamation through Christ Jesus.*

All Have the Law

Verses 12–13 summarize the ground Paul has covered up to this point. In 1:18–32, Paul dealt especially with those not having the law who nevertheless will perish without the law, and in 2:1–11 he dealt with the sinful judges of those not having the law—judges who will likewise perish—all while having the law. There is no difference or partiality. The moralist judge who thinks he has a superior position by having the law really does not have an advantage because he likewise fails to do the law. Having the law does not mean doing and fulfilling the law, and Paul shows it is that very point which is an Achilles’ heel in the theology of any moralist.

Even though verses 14–15 have a plethora of implications to be dealt with shortly, in the context of Romans 1–3, its explicit purpose is not only clear but remarkably simple. These verses are meant to show that the unbelieving Gentiles who are condemned are still condemned justly, even though they do not have the written law of Scripture. Calov clarifies the issue at hand: “Indeed where there is no law, there is no

καὶ to have “an explicative connotation, which requires an inappropriate definition of conscience as consisting of competing thoughts.”

³⁶ Although according to A. T. Robertson, *Grammar of the Greek New Testament in the Light of Historical Research*, 3rd ed. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1919), 1130, “All the varieties of the circumstantial participle can appear in the absolute participle,” it is most likely that these participles are temporal. Simultaneous action fits well in the context, and about 90% of the time, the absolute participle is temporal, as Daniel Wallace, *Greek Grammar Beyond the Basics* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1996), 655, notes.

³⁷ See BDAG, 224, where διὰ can be a “marker of instrumentality of circumstance whereby something is accomplished or effected.”

sin. Where there is no sin, there is no punishment.”³⁸ Thus it is Paul’s goal to demonstrate that while lacking the written law of Scripture, the Gentiles still have the law of God so that their condemnation is still just.

To show that the Gentiles who lack the Word still have the law, Paul offers their actions as proof. Why do even unbelievers outwardly do things that seem in accordance with the law? Any semblance of consistent kindness, love, doing good works, or social cohesion across humanity would be inexplicable, were it not for some other force besides the written Word playing a role among even unbelievers. Thus Paul latches on to the fact that the unbelieving world does, to some extent, “the things of the law.”

With “the things of the law” (τὰ τοῦ νόμου ποιῶσιν), note how Paul speaks in general terms. He does not want to say outright that the Gentiles do *the law*. He does not say they can perfectly follow the law, nor that they can necessarily do anything that constitutes a good work by meeting the law’s strict demands for more than mere external acts of obedience. Paul expresses merely a general doing “things of the law.” The Gentiles’ actions reflect the law to some extent, as they do things related to the law, and even at times do things that outwardly seem in accordance with the law.

Verse 15 further elaborates three aspects of the natural human condition found in the fact that the Gentiles do “the things of the law” and are thus a “law for themselves”: (1) “they demonstrate that the work of the law is written in their hearts”; (2) “their conscience additionally bears witness”; and (3) “the reasoning back and forth accuses or even defends them.” From the grammar of this verse it is clearly an oversimplification to consider the work of the law written on the heart to be synonymous with the conscience, even though they are closely related.³⁹ The latter two points are in the genitive absolute form, a hallmark of which is that it should be “unconnected with the rest of the sentence.”⁴⁰ Thus it becomes unlikely that they are synonymous to the “work of the

³⁸ Calov, 48: *Ubi enim non lex, ibi nullum peccatum, ibi nullum peccatum, ibi nullam supplicium.*

³⁹ For example, *An Explanation of Dr. Martin Luther’s Small Catechism* (Mankato: Evangelical Lutheran Synod, 2001), 40, states, “When God created man He wrote His moral law into the hearts of all people (conscience).” Although such simplification for children and young people may be warranted, it may also perhaps indicate a broader, more extensive perception of natural law and conscience as being synonyms.

⁴⁰ Wallace, 655.

law written on the heart.”⁴¹ Consequently, each of these facets must be dealt with as separate in order to understand the full picture that Paul presents.

Paul’s first assertion, “They demonstrate that the work of the law is written in their hearts,” is the conclusion he draws from the fact that they do “the things of the law.” The doing emphasizes and demonstrates they must have the law in some sense, and if they have the law in some sense without the written law, Paul can safely assert that something has been written in their hearts, so to speak. This writing is by nature (φύσει), since it brings about the doing emphasized in verse 14. If it is part of human nature, its origin is God and it has existed since creation, as Calov states, “The law of God is sure to have been written on the heart of Adam. Its vestiges remain. They are here called the work of the law written on the hearts of the Gentiles and in fact of all people.”⁴² Of course, this law going back to Adam also confirms Paul’s emphasis on the Gentiles being without excuse because they do indeed have the law.

Paul writing that “the work of the law” is written in their hearts as opposed to merely “the law” is just different enough to raise major theological questions for interpreters. Is it inappropriate to say the law is written on the heart?⁴³ Then is it inappropriate to say that natural law exists, if only the work of the law is written on the heart?⁴⁴ Unfortunately, the common conclusion that “the work of the law” means “the requirements of the law” or “conduct, that the law demands” turns the phrase into a needless redundancy here and ultimately creates

⁴¹ See also Lenski, 166.

⁴² Calov, 48: In *corde Adami* scriptam fuisse legem Dei certum est: cujus residuae sunt reliquiae, quae hic *opus legis in cordibus gentium*, omniumque adeo hominum scriptae dicuntur (emphasis original).

⁴³ Middendorf, 184, objects to confusing “the work of the law” with “the law” as imprecision and carelessness. He cites Pieper, 1:371–372, and John Theodore Mueller, *Christian Dogmatics: A Handbook of Doctrinal Theology for Pastors, Teachers, and Laymen* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1934), 144, as examples of such imprecision, while commending Johann Gerhard, *On the Nature of God and on the Most Holy Mystery of the Trinity*, trans. Richard J. Dinda, ed. Benjamin T. G. Mayes, *Theological Commonplaces* (St. Louis: Concordia, 2007), 77, for clarity. Such praise for Gerhard is ironic, since in his actual commentary on Romans he asserts, “By τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου the thing itself is understood.” *Per τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου intelligitur res ipsa* (*Adnotationes ad priora capita epistolae D. Pauli ad Romanos* [Jena, 1645], 78). See also FC Ep. 6:2: “Our first parents did not live without the law even before the fall. This law of God was written into the heart, for they were created in the image of God.”

⁴⁴ Nygren, 124–125, latches on to the fact Paul does not simply write “the law” and concludes, “It is clear that Paul’s thought here has nothing to do with the question of a *lex naturae*.”

a theological distinction without a difference.⁴⁵ For what else is the law itself than a collection of requirements or demands?⁴⁶ The key to understanding the phrase τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου is not regarding it as Paul trying to avoid crassly saying the law is written on the heart; rather, Paul is trying to avoid saying the Law of Moses, the written Torah, is written on the heart. Such a confusion between νόμος as the Scriptures written by Moses or νόμος as general divine requirements is common in the New Testament, since the Septuagint translated the Hebrew *Torah* as νόμος. There also was a “rabbinic idea that the Gentiles had the opportunity to receive the entire written Law.”⁴⁷ Thus using the phrase “the work of the law” would have made it clear that Paul was not suggesting the Gentiles could possess the written Torah of Scripture on their hearts. Paul writes “the work of the law” to distinguish this internal law from an external, physically written law.⁴⁸ Consequently, it is perfectly appropriate to speak of the law being written on the heart or natural law, as long as that law is the collection of divine requirements and not Scripture itself.⁴⁹

⁴⁵ For examples of this interpretation in different forms, see Middendorf, 184–185; Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1988), 126; Moo, 152; and Fitzmyer, 311. The alternative of Kuske, 113, makes “the work of the law” a subjective genitive, although he mentions no reasoning behind it: “the people of this kind demonstrate that the law written in their heart is working effectively.” This understanding too is a stretch, because τὰ τοῦ νόμου parallels τὸ ἔργον τοῦ νόμου. His interpretation also requires the genitive absolutes to be causal instead of temporal, which is irregular, albeit possible per Wallace, 655, and Robertson, 1130. For such a view, see also Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, ed. Daniel J. Harrington, Sacra Pagina Series 6 (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 93.

⁴⁶ FC SD 5:17 defines the law similarly yet more thoroughly: “We therefore unanimously believe, teach, and confess that in its strict sense the law is a divine teaching in which the righteous, unchanging will of God revealed how human beings were created in their nature, thoughts, words, and deeds to be pleasing and acceptable to God.”

⁴⁷ Middendorf, 184.

⁴⁸ Gerhard, *Adnotationes*, 78: *Opponitur enim τὸ ἔργον scriptioni legis tanquam adjuncto externo.*

⁴⁹ In Romans 7:7 Paul writes, “I did not know sin except through the law. For indeed I did not understand coveting, except the law was saying, ‘You shall not covet.’” Because he quotes the written law as the source of his understanding of the law, it could sound like a contradiction of what he writes in Romans 2 about all having the law, even apart from the written law. To accommodate the two sections, however, it is best to understand Paul’s quotation of the written law in Romans 7:7 as a mere example of the law revealing sin, rather than as the exclusive means of knowing sin. Thus Lenski, 462–463, writes, “Paul had been a Jew and thus refers to the Mosaic commandment. But the deduction that only a Jew could have the experience which he had, and that only the Mosaic code could produce such an experience, is untenable. Why ignore 2:14–16, the work of the law written in the hearts of the Gentiles, their testifying conscience, their reasonings accusing and only at times excusing in view of the judgment to come? ‘Law’

Having established that the law is written on the heart, the following genitive absolute construction, συμμαρτυρούσης αὐτῶν τῆς συνειδήσεως, establishes an additional testimony placed in humans and ultimately makes them liable for judgment.⁵⁰ The conscience is different from the natural law in that it “does not demand” as does the natural law but “judges the individual acts of man” and forms that “judgment from natural knowledge of the law.”⁵¹ The conscience interprets a person’s actions, holds them up to the norm of natural law, and sounds an alarm if the two do not match up.

This alarm is most clearly described by the idiom, “pangs of conscience,” because the conscience is not a thought process. It strikes with bad feelings, even before an event has been rationally assessed. Thus Paul adds a third part consisting of two genitive absolute participles after he mentions the witness of the conscience: μεταξύ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων. The noun λογισμῶν is “the product of a cognitive process, *calculation, reasoning, reflection, thought*” and is thus far more deliberate than the feelings of a conscience, making them two different concepts.⁵² Interestingly enough with regard to the conscience, secular Hellenistic philosophy promoted a “subsequent assessment” which then entered “the sphere of the practical and theoretical deliberations which were to be so fruitful among the Romans.”⁵³ That closely parallels the back-and-forth (μεταξύ ἀλλήλων) rational assessment (λογισμῶν) that Paul calls as a witness to support his argument that the Gentiles are rightly held accountable to the law. Once the pangs of conscience strike, a person reacts with various reasons and careful deliberation, resulting in a confirmation of the conscience’s accusation or a defense against the conscience. The conscience is then somewhat analogous to a smoke detector going off. It simply detects the smoke and sounds an alarm, which results in the hearer deliberating

in general produces the realization of the sin power. In the case of inferior types of law this realization will naturally be less perfect. Paul’s perfect case illustrates what law is and does in all lesser cases.”

⁵⁰ The prepositional prefix is represented by “additionally” in my translation above, and it is important not to overlook this prefix, since it emphasizes that this bearing witness is distinct from the work of the law written on the heart. Cf. Moo, 153n56.

⁵¹ Georg Stoeckhardt, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Erwin W. Koehlinger (St. Louis: Concordia Mimeograph Company, 1943), 25.

⁵² BDAG, 598 (emphasis original). Consider also, Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 2 vols., 2nd ed. (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989), 1:351: “to think about something in a detailed and logical manner.”

⁵³ TDNT, 7:906.

whether to flee a fire or ignore it and turn it off because it is merely detecting a burnt meal.

This accusing or even defending that happens as a person deliberates the conscience's warning is then qualified by the words, ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὰ κρυπτὰ τῶν ἀνθρώπων κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ. Many commentators and translators, thinking that a judgment and a reference to a day make the verse strictly future and eschatological, connect this verse with verse 12 or 13, and make verses 14–15 a parenthetical comment.⁵⁴ There is nothing in the grammar to compel treating verse 16 as the conclusion of a verse more previous than 15. There is also no compelling reason Paul should have separated verse 16 from verse 12 or 13, if that were his intent. There would be no build-up to verse 16, since verses 14–15 would be treated as unrelated. Perhaps the biggest problem with understanding verses 14–15 as a parenthetical comment is that those verses are critical to Paul's argument that all are accountable to the law and liable for judgment. Understanding verse 16 as the continuation of verse 12 or 13 creates more anomalies than simply allowing it to conclude verse 15. Consequently, it is better to let the simple grammar stand as is, and make sense of its connection to the previous verse.

With this connection in mind, it is clear that the purpose of verse 16 is to explain how God is the one who by extension is ultimately judging and working through the natural law and the conscience. The whole ongoing process of verses 14–15, when it occurs, is “on a day when God judges the secrets of humans” (ἐν ἡμέρᾳ ὅτε κρίνει ὁ θεὸς τὰ

⁵⁴ Some examples with variations that connect verse 16 to 12/13, or consider 14–15 a parenthetical comment or marginal note include AV; NKJV; NIV; J. C. O'Neill, *Paul's Letter to the Romans* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1975), 51; William Barclay, *The Letter to the Romans*, The Daily Study Bible Series, rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975), 44–45; Frédéric Louis Godet, *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, trans. Alexander Cusin (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1881), 210–211; William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, 5th ed., The International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 62; C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans*, The Moffatt New Testament Commentary (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932), 35; Fitzmyer, 311–312; Middendorf, 175; Kuske, 115; Gerhard, *Adnotationes*, 78; and Calov, 48. See also Friedrich August Gottreu Tholuck, *Exposition of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Menzies (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1833), 133–137, who outlines various opinions from a variety of commentators and concludes that there is no parenthetical comment. The ESV, NASB, and NRSV also simply make verse 16 a direct continuation of the previous sentence.

κρυπτά τῶν ἀνθρώπων).⁵⁵ Admittedly, this process is no longer perfect but tainted by sinful corruption, just as earlier in verse 5 Paul acknowledged stubbornness (*σκληρότης*) and impenitence are also factors at work in the human “heart” (*καρδία*). Insofar as the natural law together with the conscience are correctly convicting the sinner, even of secret sins, they are accomplishing their purpose and through them God is judging the sinner and creating the fearful expectation of punishment: “They know the righteous judgment of God, that those doing such things deserve death”⁵⁶ Thus in the workings of the natural law and the conscience, there is an “already and not yet” aspect with regard to God’s final judgment and the present anticipation of it.⁵⁷

That this judging occurs *κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ* means it occurs “for the purpose of my gospel proclamation through Christ Jesus.” Even though the main verb is *κρίνει*, it would not be fitting for the *κατὰ* to be its expected “norm according to which a judgment is rendered,” because it governs “the gospel” (*τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν*). It would be strange, indeed, if the standard for judgment and ultimately condemnation as Paul is leading to (3:20) would be “good news.”⁵⁸ Such a judgment and condemnation according to the gospel would require the gospel to be understood as law in a strict sense, as demands for a norm of judgment.⁵⁹ The gospel here cannot be likely understood as the entire teaching of Christ (i.e. God’s Word in general) because Paul qualifies it as “my” (*μου*). Thus the *μου* makes *τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου* more personal and specific to Paul: “my gospel proclamation.”⁶⁰ The word order of *διὰ Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ* at the very end suggests that it qualifies *κατὰ τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν*

⁵⁵ Note how *ἐν ἡμέρᾳ* has no definite article or qualification to make it specifically Judgment Day.

⁵⁶ Romans 1:32.

⁵⁷ Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, Chemnitz’s Works 7–8, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis: Concordia, 2008), 799, also emphasizes the conscience as a judgment of God: “This [testimony of conscience] is truly the judgment of God contending against our sins.”

⁵⁸ FC SD 5:3–6 emphasizes that gospel in the strict sense is nothing but “the proclamation of the grace of God” and the gospel in a broad sense is “the entire teaching of Christ.” Understanding the *κατὰ* as according to a norm of judgment would turn the gospel here not simply into a broad sense of God’s entire Word but into the strict understanding of the law as God’s demands.

⁵⁹ FC SD 5:3–6 emphasizes that gospel in the strict sense is nothing but “the proclamation of the grace of God” and the gospel in a broad sense is “the entire teaching of Christ.” Yet the gospel strictly speaking cannot refer to the law strictly speaking.

⁶⁰ Middendorf, 189: “My Good News,’ therefore, refers to the Gospel message which Paul proclaims.”

μου and not κρίνει.⁶¹ The *διά* then refers to the “efficient cause,” which in this case is “Christ Jesus,” meaning it is by or through Christ that Paul can give his gospel proclamation.⁶² It gives Christ the ultimate credit for Paul’s work of proclaiming the gospel. All of these details suggest that it fits best to understand *κατά* as a “marker of intention or goal, *for the purpose of, for, to.*”⁶³ The judging God does in the heart from natural law and the conscience is not merely “in conformity with” Paul’s message (as the other meaning of *κατά* would say), since that borders on the self-evident.⁶⁴ Instead, the judging that happens when God works through natural law and the conscience is *for the purpose* of Paul’s proclamation of the gospel. The natural law and conscience judge and convict to prepare one for the preaching of the gospel.

In this section, Paul summarizes how God’s judgment against both Jews and Gentiles is just. Both have the law, although in a different sense, and yet both fail to do the law. Paul appeals to natural law and

⁶¹ Jewett, 218; C. E. B. Cranfield, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans*, ed. J. A. Emerton and C. E. B. Cranfield, vol. 1, International Critical Commentary (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1975), 163.

⁶² BDAG, 224.

⁶³ BDAG, 512 (emphasis original). See also Robertson, 607–609; Frederic W. Farrar, *A Brief Greek Syntax and Hints on Greek Accidence* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1867), 92–93. They point out that in its basic sense, *κατά* with the genitive emphasizes perpendicular motion (downward) and *κατά* with the accusative emphasizes horizontal motion (down along). The more abstract meanings of *κατά* are then derived from that basic imagery, making it unsurprising that a variety of meanings and nuances surface in *κοινή*. Thus Robertson, 609: “Various resultant ideas come out of different connections. There is no reason to call *κατά πᾶσαν αἰτίαν*, (Mt. 19:3) and *κατά ἄγνοιαν* (Ac. 3:17) bad Greek. If there is the idea of cause here, so in 1 Tim. 6:3, *κατ’ εὐσέβειαν*, *the notion of tendency or aim appears*. We must not try to square every detail in the development of *κατά* or any Greek preposition with our translation of the context nor with classic usage, for the N. T. is written in the *κοινή*” (emphasis added).

⁶⁴ There are two other instances where the phrase *κατά τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου* occurs in Paul’s writings (Romans 16:25 and 2 Timothy 2:8). There does not seem to be absolute uniformity in how he uses the preposition in this phrase. Romans 16:25 is somewhat ambiguous and it appears *κατά* indicates means (Τῷ δὲ δυναμένῳ ἡμᾶς στηριξοῖ *κατά* τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου *καὶ* τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ: “To him who is able to strengthen you by my gospel proclamation and the preaching of Jesus Christ.” The earlier 1984 version of the NIV likewise had “by” but switched to “in accordance with” in the 2011 edition). Note also the parallel construction of *τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου* with *τὸ κήρυγμα Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ* again suggests that *τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου* is Paul’s personal gospel proclamation and not the gospel in general. In 2 Timothy 2:8 (Μνημόνευε Ἰησοῦν Χριστὸν ἐγγηγεμένον ἐκ νεκρῶν, ἐκ σπέρματος Δαυὶδ, *κατά* τὸ εὐαγγέλιόν μου), *κατά* appears to have its common use as a “marker of norm of similarity or homogeneity” (BDAG, 512). Note that in neither instance is *κατά* a standard or “norm according to which a judgment is rendered” (BDAG, 512), which might otherwise be expected here with the verb *κρίνει*.

the conscience present in all people as his basis for the Gentiles' just condemnation. Although verse 16 is elusive to commentators and presents a plethora of challenges, I have argued that it is directly connected to the previous verses and refers to God as the one working judgment to some extent in the sinner's heart through natural law and the conscience for the purpose of the gospel proclamation. Paul only alludes to this gospel proclamation here, but with 3:20 and following, he will outline how the law promotes the awareness of sins, which makes his gospel proclamation all-important.

Natural Law: Its Extent and Application

Romans 2:14–16 is the chief section of Scripture from which a doctrine of natural law can be derived. There are parts of the Bible that may implicitly teach about natural law as well as parts that arguably give examples of natural law at work, but here in Romans is the starting point from which a scriptural system of understanding natural law must begin.⁶⁵ In the preceding exegesis I have already argued based on Romans 2 the following aspects concerning natural law: (1) natural law exists and is written on the heart of all by God; (2) natural law allows the conscience to sound its alarm when actions do not appear consistent with natural law (only to some extent because of the sinful nature); and (3) a person's reason then tries to make sense of the conscience's alarm with reasoning either accusing or defending the case. Now in greater detail we will consider the purposes, applications, and extent of a natural law theory based on Scripture.

From the context of Romans 1:18–3:20, it is clear that Paul's main purpose in bringing up natural law is to establish how God's judgment is just, even when condemning someone without the written law and Word. This purpose is the most explicit one in Romans 2:12–15, yet it is perhaps the most often overlooked purpose. Universalism is so prevalent in these modern times, and people want to find excuses for why God could not justly condemn this or that person on Judgment Day. Paul shatters all excuses in Romans 2:12–16, because he shows everyone has the law, everyone fails to follow the law, and through the conscience everyone is at some point aware of their failure to follow the law perfectly.

⁶⁵ Some such examples are Genesis 1:26, 4:1–16, 20:5–6, 37:27, 39:9; 1 Samuel 24:5; 2 Samuel 24:10; Amos 1:3–2:3; Jonah 1:2; Romans 1:21, 13:5; 1 Corinthians 8, 10:23–33; 2 Corinthians 4:2, 5:11; 1 Timothy 4:2; and Titus 1:15. The simple fact that the written code of the law was given to Moses and not to Adam after the fall shows there was a natural law that still held people accountable before Moses.

Implicitly Romans 2:14–15 teaches about the so-called first use of the law and its basis in the government. The first use of the law, also called a curb, is that to some extent it holds all people back from sinning: “Through [the law] external discipline may be maintained against the unruly and the disobedient.”⁶⁶ In Romans 2:14–15, Paul argues that from the observation of external discipline in society, the Gentiles have a natural law, which causes it. Although the threat of punishment is often associated with curbing people’s sin—and rightly so—Paul does not actually mention the threat of punishment as causing Gentiles to “do the things of the law.” Actions out of the fear of punishment do not prove natural law from God.⁶⁷ People being a law for themselves must exist before even the fear of punishment, since just government with just punishments presupposes a foundation of natural law to create it in the first place. Natural law causes people to be a law for themselves, which causes people to form government, which at last threatens punishment and only then can additionally curb people by the fear of punishment. Thus abstractly speaking, natural law is at work, even apart from the threat of punishment.⁶⁸

Natural law keeps the average person in check, but it also will be the basis for the government’s laws, since the government is made up of people who likewise have the natural law. The history of politics, revolutions, and appeals for legal changes show that there is always an appeal to some higher standard of right or wrong, which is consequently an absolute, whether or not someone calls it specifically natural law.

It is termed “natural law” because its opposite is felt to be “unnatural,” a perversion of human nature and the relationship that ought to exist between human beings. In this connection natural law means practically the same as natural rights (*jus*

⁶⁶ FC Ep. 6:1. See also Adolf Hoenecke, *Evangelical Lutheran Dogmatics*, 4 vols., trans. Joel Fredrich, Paul Prange, and Bill Tackmier (Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1999–2009), 4:35; SA 3:2:1.

⁶⁷ Obviously, the threat of punishment could come from tyranny as opposed to natural law and still achieve the desired result to some extent.

⁶⁸ Gerhard, *On the Nature of God*, 77–78: “Even those who, because of their power, have been exempt from the penalties that an ordinary person has to fear or whose sins everyone hides nevertheless have not been able to be free of the silent lashings and the inner beatings of conscience.... Plutarch mentions that after Bessus had concealed the murder of his father for a long time, the swallows filled him with fear and he confessed. In fact, he knocked down their nest with his spear and killed their chicks because they seemed to be accusing him of committing a crime and to cry out that he had butchered his father.”

naturalis). Such a development is inevitable when in the course of history an indigenous, native code of law is replaced by an alien jurisprudence and learned jurists take the place of lay judges. The protagonists of every great revolutionary movement have justified their abolition or modification of the existing legal order by an appeal to the ideal right which transcends all legal orders and social institutions. The peasants in Luther's time invoked the "natural law," the French revolutionaries the "rights of men," Karl Marx the inevitable operation of the law of economics. But even the party in power is constantly forced to modify the existing law in order to forestall revolutionary unrest by fostering "progressive" legislation.⁶⁹

Because Romans 2:14–15 teaches that to some extent, all people have and operate on the basis of the natural law, it can be expected that the government by extension also has and will operate to some extent on that same basis. It is unsurprising that likely every controversial issue for our nation's politics have appeals on both sides to some kind of higher norm or universally accepted values. There is natural law at work both in individuals and by extension the government, even though sin corrupts the expression and extent of natural law.

Since natural law is going to be at work in the government, to what extent then is natural law useful "to establish a nonsectarian basis in political lobbying"?⁷⁰ Paul's discussion of natural law does not tell us to use it to bring the government more in conformity with it as we are able, nor does it tell us to avoid using it to that end.⁷¹ It only tells us what to expect, namely, that people and the government by extension are to

⁶⁹ Werner Elert, *The Christian Ethos*, trans. Carl J. Schindler (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957), 71.

⁷⁰ Roland Ziegler, "Natural Law in the Lutheran Confessions," in *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal*, ed. Robert C. Baker and Roland Cap Ehlke (St. Louis: Concordia, 2011), 77.

⁷¹ Luther, AE 13:198, likewise stresses the limitations of Christians drawing on the Word to influence the government: "To be sure, God made the secular government subordinate and subject to reason, because it is to have no jurisdiction over the welfare of souls or things of eternal value but only over physical and temporal goods, which God places under man's dominion, Genesis 2:8 ff. For this reason nothing is taught in the Gospel about how it is to be maintained and regulated, except that the Gospel bids people honor it and not oppose it." Luther's views on natural law were far more nuanced than the spurious quote, "I would rather be ruled by a wise Turk than by a stupid Christian." See Richard John Neuhaus, "The Public Square: A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life," *First Things* 69 (1997): 63, for the debunking of the Luther misquote. For more on Luther and the natural law, see Thomas D. Pearson, "Luther's

some extent going to be a law to themselves. The verses do not, however, tell us that we should expect to be able to effect great improvements in the government by appealing to natural law through human reason. Fallen human reason may well be all too impotent to prove natural law to people whose nature has also been corrupted by sin. The effectiveness of using appeals to natural law in order to affect the government is unanswered by Scripture.

Here is where that little word “whenever” (ὅταν) in verse 14 tempers one’s expectations of natural law’s impact on a fallen world. It “pertains to an action that is conditional, possible, and, in many instances, repeated, *at the time that, whenever, when.*”⁷² Paul leads us to expect that people being “the law for themselves” happens at times, but not all the time. Whenever the government’s laws are in accord with natural law, it is clear that they are being “the law for themselves,” but these verses suggest it should be expected that they will often not be in accord with natural law.

The outlook on affecting civil government or society with natural law and reason is further diminished when Romans 2:14–15 is considered in view of Romans 1:18–32. In Romans 1, Paul makes it clear that God punishes sin by allowing people to delve further into sin: “Although they knew God, they did not honor or thank him as God, but they were rendered futile in their reasoning and their foolish hearts were darkened.... Therefore God handed them over in the lusts of their hearts to immorality of dishonoring their bodies among themselves.” Especially noteworthy in considering the natural law of 2:14–15 is the fact that Paul also mentions that the Gentiles falling further into sin involved exchanging the natural for the unnatural (παρὰ φύσιν).⁷³ At last, he even points out, “God handed them over to having a worthless mind” (εἰς ἀδόκιμον νοῦν).⁷⁴ Thus the unbelieving world is expected to be spiraling further into sin, irrationality, and the unnatural. In trying to alter that depraved mindset by appealing to natural law and reason, one must be prepared for disappointment.⁷⁵

Pragmatic Appropriation of the Natural Law Tradition,” in *Natural Law: A Lutheran Reappraisal*, 39–63.

⁷² BDAG, 730 (emphasis original).

⁷³ Romans 1:26–27.

⁷⁴ Romans 1:28.

⁷⁵ Likewise, it is probable that because of his strong view on humanity’s total depravity after the fall and the fact that natural law had been used as a vehicle for work-righteousness in the past, Luther had a fairly pessimistic view of the capabilities of natural law; AE 27:53: “All men have a certain natural knowledge implanted in their minds (Rom. 2:14–15), by which they know naturally that one should do to others what

By way of comparing Romans 1:18–32 and 2:14–16, it is clear that natural law is somewhat paradoxical. On the one hand according to Romans 1:18–32, the unbelieving Gentiles are punished and handed over to greater depravity and the unnatural as a result of not honoring the true God. On the other hand, they—though not having the written law due to unbelief—are also a law for themselves and by nature do the work of the law to some extent. There are two forces going in opposite directions; both, however, are from God. It is God who hands them over further into the lusts and worthless mind, in 1:24, 26, and 28. Yet it is also God at work in the natural law and judging of 2:14–16. This paradox then moves us to focus primarily on the observation of these two realities and what that observation tells us, as Paul himself does. It is therefore quite uncertain the level of control or impact that the Christian can have on these two realities by appealing to natural law, the conscience, and reason.

Even though the use of natural law by itself is limited in effecting conformity to it in society, natural law can be used in conjunction with the revealed Word of God to proclaim the gospel. Johann Gerhard writes, “Whoever has a natural knowledge of the Law, he also knows by nature that God exists.”⁷⁶ Paul makes use of the Athenians’ natural knowledge of the law in worshiping an unknown God as a starting point to preach the gospel.⁷⁷ So also in preaching the Word, the natural knowledge of God and the conscience can be used to establish common ground.

In my exegesis of Romans 2:16, I argued the verse explains that the conscience, instigated by a person’s dubious actions, bears witness to natural law in the midst of conflicting reasoning, “on a day when God judges the secrets of humans for the purpose of my gospel proclamation through Christ Jesus.” The natural knowledge of God can thus function as the so-called second use of the law, the mirror, which convicts a person of sinning. That fact is not meant to suggest conveying the law can be omitted before preaching the gospel, but that appealing to natural law and the conscience can be an ally in successfully conveying

he wants done to himself (Matt. 7:12). This principle and others like it, which we call the law of nature, are the foundation of human law and of all good works. Nevertheless, human reason is so corrupted and blinded by the malice of the devil that it does not understand this inborn knowledge; or, even if it has been admonished by the Word of God, it deliberately neglects and despises it.”

⁷⁶ Gerhard, *On the Nature of God*, 77.

⁷⁷ Acts 17:16–34.

the law and convicting a person of sins.⁷⁸ Luther stresses how critical natural law really is in accomplishing the task of the second use of the law:

The law is by nature in the heart. If, however, the natural law were not given and written by God in the heart, one would have to preach for a long time before the conscience would be struck. One would have to preach to a donkey, horse, ox, or cow for a hundred thousand years before they would accept the law, even though they have ears, eyes, and a heart just like a human. They can even hear it, but it does not find a place in the heart. Why? What is the soul? Their soul was not formed and created in such a way that such preaching would find a place there. But when the law is presented to a human, he soon says, "Yes, that is how it is. I cannot deny it." He would not be so quickly persuaded if it were not written in his heart beforehand. So because it is already in the heart, albeit in darkness and entirely faded, it is again aroused by the Word, so that the heart must indeed admit, "That is exactly how the commandments read: One should honor, love, and serve God, because he alone is good and does good, not only to the godly but also to the wicked."⁷⁹

Although there are limitations to natural law in using it to affect society and its worldview, the natural law is still an effective aid to preaching the law and convicting sinners for the purpose of then preaching the gospel.

⁷⁸ Pieper, 1:374: "The Law written into the heart of man serves as the point of contact when the Church preaches the Law."

⁷⁹ WA 16:447: *Das gesetz ist natürlich ym hertzen. Wenn aber das natürlich gesetz nicht von God ynn das hertz geschrieben und geben were, so müste man lang predigen, ehe die gewissen getroffen wurden, man müste einem Esel, Pferd, ochssen odder rindt hundert tausend jar predigen, ehe sie das gesetz annehmen, wiewol sie ohren, augen und hertz haben wie ein mensch, sie künnens auch hören, es felt aber nicht ynns hertz, Warumb? was ist der seel? Die seel ist nicht darnach gebildet und geschaffen, das solchs darein falle, Aber ein mensch, so yhm das gesetz wird fürgehalten, spricht er bald: ja, es ist also, kan es nicht leücken. Das künde man yhn so bald nicht uberreden, es were denn zuvor ynn seinem hertzen geschrieben, Weil es nu zuvor ym hertzen ist, wiewol tunckel und gantz verplichen, so wird es mit dem wort widder erweckt, das ja das hertz bekennen muss, es sey also wie die gepot lauten: das man einen Gott ehre, liebe, yhm diene, weil er allein gut ist und gutes thut und nicht alleine den fromen, sondern auch den bösen.*

Jews Have No Advantage in a Quest for Work-Righteousness: Romans 2:17–29

17 Εἰ δὲ σὺ Ἰουδαῖος ἐπονομάζῃ καὶ ἐπαναπαύῃ⁸⁰ νόμῳ καὶ καυχᾶσαι ἐν θεῷ 18 καὶ γινώσκεις τὸ θέλημα⁸¹ καὶ δοκιμάζεις⁸² τὰ διαφέροντα⁸³ κατηχούμενος ἐκ τοῦ νόμου, 19 πέποιθάς⁸⁴ τε σεαυτὸν⁸⁵ ὁδηγὸν εἶναι τυφλῶν, φῶς τῶν ἐν σκότει, 20 παιδευτὴν ἀφρόνων, διδάσκαλον νηπίων,⁸⁶ ἔχοντα τὴν μὴ μορφωσιν⁸⁷ τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας⁸⁸ ἐν τῷ νόμῳ. 21 ὁ οὖν διδάσκων ἕτερον σεαυτὸν οὐ διδάσκεις; ὁ κηρύσσων μὴ κλέπτειν κλέπτεις; 22 ὁ λέγων μὴ μοιχεύειν μοιχεύεις; ὁ βδελυσσόμενος τὰ εἰδῶλα ἱεροσυλεῖς; 23 ὃς ἐν νόμῳ καυχᾶσαι, διὰ τῆς παραβάσεως τοῦ νόμου τὸν θεὸν ἀτιμάζεις. 24 τὸ γὰρ ὄνομα τοῦ θεοῦ δι' ὑμᾶς βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν,⁸⁹ καθὼς γέγραπται. 25 περιτομὴ μὲν γὰρ ὠφελεῖ ἐὰν νόμον πράσσης· ἐὰν δὲ παραβάτης νόμου ᾖς, ἡ περιτομὴ σου ἀκροβυστία γέγονεν. 26 ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσσης, οὐχ ἡ ἀκροβυστία αὐτοῦ εἰς περιτομὴν λογισθήσεται; 27 καὶ κρινεῖ ἡ ἐκ φύσεως ἀκροβυστία τὸν νόμον τελοῦσα σὲ τὸν διὰ γράμματος⁹⁰ καὶ περιτομῆς παραβάτην

⁸⁰ The verb ἐπαναπαύη “conveys a sense of self-satisfaction and contentment” (Jewett, 222).

⁸¹ It may well be that Paul is alluding to a Jewish idiom, “May it be the will!” which “expresses a hope that God’s mysterious purpose will bless an endeavor” (Jewett, 222). Paul then would be attacking this person for essentially thinking he is so great that he would know even God’s inscrutable will.

⁸² BDAG, 255: “to make a critical examination of something to determine genuineness.”

⁸³ James D. G. Dunn, *Romans 1–8*, Word Biblical Commentary 38A (Dallas: Word Books, 1988), 111: “τὰ διαφέροντα is probably used in conscious contrast to τὰ ἀδιάφορα, which was already established as a technical term in Cynic-Stoic ethics in the sense of ‘things indifferent, neither good nor bad.’” See also Fitzmyer, 316.

⁸⁴ The perfect tense verb πέποιθας likely has an “intensive” force, that is, “the perfect may be used to *emphasize* the results or present state produced by a past action” (Wallace, 574; emphasis original). Paul is disparaging them that they still are self-persuaded.

⁸⁵ My translation has incorporated the reflexive σεαυτὸν into the verb πέποιθάς to mean “self-persuaded,” which may better convey Paul’s negative force.

⁸⁶ BDAG, 670.

⁸⁷ BDAG, 660: “the state of being formally structured, *embodiment, formulation, form*” (emphasis original). See also Dunn, 113; and Käsemann, 70–71.

⁸⁸ The definite articles here (τῆς γνώσεως καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας) may well be used to denote *par excellence*, as Middendorf, 192, suggests. However, such a use of the article can be difficult to distinguish (Wallace, 222).

⁸⁹ Isaiah 52:5b (LXX): δι’ ὑμᾶς διὰ παντὸς τὸ ὄνομα μου βλασφημεῖται ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν. See also Ezekiel 36:19–20.

⁹⁰ TDNT, 1:765: “In R. 2:27 γράμμα is the Law as what is demonstrably written, just as περιτομή is a demonstrable sign. Neither can guarantee fulfilment of the Law... It is precisely through what is written and through circumcision that the Jew is a transgressor. He is to see that his true position involves possession of the γράμμα and περιτομή, but with no genuine fulfilment of the Law, since neither what is written nor

νόμου. **28** οὐ γὰρ ὁ ἐν τῷ φανερωῖ Ἰουδαίος ἐστὶν οὐδὲ ἡ ἐν τῷ φανερωῖ ἐν σαρκὶ περιτομή, **29** ἀλλ' ὁ ἐν τῷ κρυπτῷ Ἰουδαίος, καὶ περιτομή καρδίας ἐν πνεύματι⁹¹ οὐ γράμματι, οὗ ὁ ἔπαινος οὐκ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ' ἐκ τοῦ θεοῦ.

17 *But if you call yourself a Jew, find comfort in the law, and boast in God; 18 and if you know God's will and discern right from wrong, because you are instructed from the law; 19 and if you are still self-persuaded that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those in darkness, 20 an instructor of the ignorant, a teacher of the immature, having the embodiment of knowledge and the truth in the law, 21 then the one who teaches another, do you not teach yourself? The one who preaches not to steal, do you steal? 22 The one who says not to commit adultery, do you commit adultery? The one who abhors idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by transgressing the law, 24 for just as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." 25 Circumcision is indeed beneficial if you do the law. If, however, you are a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 If then the uncircumcised observes the requirements of the law, will not his lack of circumcision be credited as circumcision? 27 And the one who is uncircumcised by nature and carries out the law will judge you, the transgressor of the law, who has the letter and circumcision. 28 For what is outward does not make the Jew, nor does what is outward in the flesh make circumcision, 29 but what is inward makes the Jew, and circumcision is of the heart, in Spirit not letter. His praise is not from humans but from God.*

Jewish Hypocrisy and Equality with Gentiles

In this latter part of chapter 2, Paul aims his stern preaching of the law at a more specific kind of work-righteousness pertaining to the Jews. Verses 1–16 are a bit more general, likely keeping in mind his broad audience, but now Paul wants to attack the kind of Jew who is self-persuaded that he is exceptional and superior to the Gentile in general.

circumcision leads him to action. The word γράμμα does not mean 'letter' in this context. It characterises the Law in its quality of what is written or prescribed. The true meaning is 'prescription of the Law.'

⁹¹ It is debatable whether ἐν πνεύματι refers to a person's inward state or the Holy Spirit. Since the inward state is already represented by the phrase, "of the heart," it may be best to understand the Holy Spirit as what is referenced here. Then the ἐν is, "a marker of the manner in which an event occurs," as in Louw and Nida, 1:787. The emphasis would be on the Holy Spirit's work in creating this spiritual condition and circumcision. Likewise, Middendorf, 212–213: "When Paul draws the contrast between "S/spirit" (πνεῦμα) and "written letter" (γράμμα), the reference is to the Holy Spirit (Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor 3:6–7); that referent should be maintained here in Rom 2:29 as well (as in 1:4)."

Paul seeks to put Jews and Gentiles in the same class of desperate sinners, just as all of chapter 2 is meant to put everyone in the same boat: accountable to the law, yet failing at keeping the law.⁹² Thus in many ways, this section is akin to 1:18–32, except directed at Jewish vices in general instead of Gentile ones. In verses 17–20, Paul sets up the problem: a stereotypical attitude of hypocrisy that plagued Jews and was characterized first by finding “comfort in the law” that such a person thinks he has kept and being the “self-persuaded” and self-proclaimed teacher of the ignorant.⁹³ The second step to this problem is not practicing what is preached. This main malady of hypocrisy helps to explain why Paul mentions specific vices like stealing, adultery, and temple robbing. It is true that understood broadly and inclusive of thoughts, all have committed these sins. Yet it is probably best to interpret preaching against them and then doing them as the crassest examples of hypocrisy. These crass examples then are as bad as any hypocrisy whatsoever:

Paul’s intention seems to be to cite these breaches of the law as exemplary of the contrast between words and works, possession of the law and obedience of it, that is the *leitmotif* of Rom. 2. It is not, then that all Jews commit these sins, but that these sins are representative of the contradiction between claim and conduct that *does* pervade Judaism.⁹⁴

The sin of hypocrisy that was prevalent throughout Judaism is just as ugly as the crass sins of the Gentiles in 1:18–32. Thus Paul aims to move any Jew with a self-persuaded feeling of superiority down to the level of the Gentiles, ultimately so that they all can recognize their great need for a Savior.

Circumcision: the Most Outrageous Form of Work-Righteousness

Circumcision becomes problematic for Paul when Jewish Christians require Gentile converts to be circumcised or otherwise consider them inferior. Considering oneself right with God through circumcision is the height of everything that Paul finds fault in from the moralist attitude he is confronting in Romans 2. Circumcision is the worst form

⁹² Paul is ultimately leading everyone—especially those with a work-righteous mindset about the law—to realize “Therefore, no one will be justified by works of the law, for through the law there is knowledge of sin” (Romans 3:20).

⁹³ Thus this section sounds a similar tone to Jesus’ parable of the Pharisee and tax collector (Luke 18:9–14).

⁹⁴ Moo, 165 (emphasis original).

of work-righteousness, because it is purely passive and received as an infant (bearing in mind Paul is addressing Jews here based on verse 17).⁹⁵ It is essentially work-righteousness without having to do any work, and is thus the height of work-righteous arrogance. It turns gospel into law and then quickly makes keeping that one law tantamount to keeping the whole law. Consequently, Paul asserts that circumcision provides no advantage for work-righteousness and attempting to keep the whole law.

Paul also shows a distinction between ceremonial and moral law in the words *ἐὰν οὖν ἡ ἀκροβυστία τὰ δικαιώματα τοῦ νόμου φυλάσση*. By separating the keeping of the law from circumcision, Paul essentially is saying that it is hypothetically possible to fulfill the law without having the ceremonial law.⁹⁶ This distinction shows all the more that the Jew has no greater capability of following the law and working their own righteousness than the Gentile. Both have God's moral law sufficiently, and although they lack the capabilities to fulfill it, the moral law serves its purpose of establishing God's just condemnation of all.

At the end of this section, Paul alludes to faith and the gospel that he will soon more fully elucidate in the coming chapters of Romans. He mentions the inward being above the outward, the circumcision of the heart in Spirit over physical circumcision. Having thoroughly shown the Jews are equal to the Gentiles in terms of having but not doing the law, he now alludes to an equality of Jews and Gentiles through faith. There is a terrifying equality under the law but a blessed equality under the pure gospel. Although it is still to come in his epistle, Paul leads his reader to see there must be more to it than the physical and the "letter," and the reader will soon see how the inward and the Spirit are paramount, changing a focus from work-righteousness to righteousness from Christ.

⁹⁵ See Middendorff, 197–199, for the reasons this section should not be understood as addressing converts to Judaism, even those that have accepted circumcision.

⁹⁶ Paul, of course, is speaking hypothetically and is not saying a Gentile could ever perfectly fulfill the law. Moo, 171: "We therefore conclude that Paul is again here citing God's standard of judgment apart from the gospel as a means of erasing the distinction at this point between Jew and Gentile. Paul is not pointing the way to salvation but is showing Jews that their position, despite their covenant privileges, is essentially no different from that of the Gentiles: disobedience brings condemnation; obedience brings salvation. Paul's way of putting the matter in this context could, of course, suggest that there actually are people who meet this requirement for salvation; but his later argument quickly disabuses us of any such idea (cf. 3:9, 20)."

Conclusion

Throughout Romans 2 Paul eloquently demonstrates God's justice and his just condemnation of humanity, without any valid excuses or complete obedience to the law on the part of humanity. God is absolutely just, and all deserve his wrath. Paul's approaching goal later in Romans is to show Christ's work and gospel message, although in Romans 1–3 he must first establish accountability before the law and the failure of attempts at work-righteousness. The natural law finds its proper place here, mainly establishing that Gentiles have the law and are therefore rightly held accountable to it. Yet from the verses pertaining to natural law, it becomes clear that those verses have a ripple effect on theology and its application. True, there are practical details about natural law and its application we cannot fully understand because of its paradox in view of 1:18–32. Nevertheless, the natural law in presenting God's full justice, finds its ultimate counterpart in the gospel by preparing us to rejoice in his justice taking its toll on Christ crucified for us. On that cross, God's strict justice and condemnation are turned into acquittal, freedom, and eternal life for us. [\[LSQ\]](#)

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English Scripture quotations are the author's own translation.

Translated quotations from German and Latin works are the author's own.

All Greek New Testament Scripture quotations are from *The Greek New Testament*. Fourth Revised Edition. Edited by Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini et al. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1993.

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Abbreviations

Greek Resources

LXX = *Septuaginta: Id est Vetus Testamentum graece iuxta LXX interpretes*. Revised Edition. Edited by Alfred Rahlfs and Robert Hanhart. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2006.

BDAG = *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature*. Third Edition. Edited by Frederick William Danker. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.

TDNT = *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976.

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AV = The Holy Bible: Authorized Version (King James Version).

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NKJV = *The Holy Bible, New King James Version*. Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982.

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Lutheran Resources

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WA = *D. Martin Luthers Werke: Kritische Gesamtausgabe, Schriften*. 65 vols. Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1883–1993.

Ap. = Apology of the Augsburg Confession

SA = The Smalcald Articles

FC Ep. = Epitome of the Formula of Concord

FC SD = Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

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Two Kingdoms: Simul iustus et peccator: Depoliticizing the Two Kingdoms Doctrine

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IN 1821 JAMES MADISON RESPONDED to a letter from Rev. F. L. Schaeffer, who had sent Madison a copy of his address at the cornerstone laying of St. Matthew's Church in New York. Madison compliments Schaeffer on his "cordial attachment to a particular creed, untinged with sectarian illiberality. It illustrates the excellence of a system which, by a due distinction, to which genius and courage of Luther led the way, between what is due to Caesar and what is due to God, best promotes the discharge of both obligations."¹ It isn't made clear in what way Madison got his ideas from Luther. Jefferson, of course, had used the phrase "wall of separation" in his letter to the Danbury Baptist Association,² and Roger Williams, while not using the

¹ James Madison, *Letters and other writings of James Madison Fourth President of the United States* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co, 1867 Vol III), 242. This St. Matthew's was apparently founded in 1643, was a founder of the New York Ministerium, and joined the Missouri Synod in the 1880s.

² Jefferson's letter reads in part: "Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between Man & his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legitimate powers of government reach actions only, & not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between Church & State. Adhering to this expression of the supreme will of the nation

phrase, certainly described such an arrangement. John Locke, in *A Letter on Toleration* (1689) appears to base his arguments on biblical texts, though he may well have been aware at least of Luther's treatise *On Temporal Authority*. But the phrase is used neither in the Constitution nor the Bill of Rights. Whatever similarities there might be between the Lutheran teaching on the two kingdoms and the constitutional doctrine established in the first amendment they ought not be regarded as the same thing.

In the past one hundred years, a number of issues touching on the first amendment have been faced by the Christian churches and others in this country, including the Selective Service laws, military chaplaincy, ministers and Social Security, school prayer and federal aid to education, as well as the more recent questions of abortion, same-sex marriage, and end-of-life issues. These and many other issues involve our Lutheran understanding of the two kingdoms based on Matthew 22, Romans 13, etc. on both a constitutional and theological level. The questions are about the relationship between church and state and between the Christian and civil affairs and civil rights. The two spheres of concern, however, are not the same and must be dealt with on different bases—in the first case, rational, historical, political arguments that seek to understand the meaning of the first amendment, and in the other case the scriptural teaching and our Lutheran confession of what Scripture teaches. But this must be done in such a way that the biblical teaching is not politicized, or otherwise mixed with, or subordinated to secular principles.

Two Kingdoms and Separation of Church and State

The principle of the separation of church and state is not directly addressed in the Constitution itself, but is addressed in the so-called “establishment clause” in the Bill of Rights: “Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof.” Since ratification many cases have come before the Supreme Court leading to further definition of the principle of the separation. Lutherans and others have mistakenly tended to translate these concerns into concerns about the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. There may also be some good reason to argue that the idea

in behalf of the rights of conscience, I shall see with sincere satisfaction the progress of those sentiments which tend to restore to man all his natural rights, convinced he has no natural right in opposition to his social duties.... Th Jefferson, Jan. 1. 1802” (<http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>).

of “Separation of Church and State” cannot really be deduced from the First Amendment’s establishment clause, though the Supreme Court has said otherwise.³

In a recent study of Luther’s two kingdoms doctrine, William J. Wright comments that “Until the mid-nineteenth century, Luther’s ideas on the two kingdoms had not been greatly politicized, even though the concept had been absorbed into the state-church constitutions of the German territorial and dynastic states.”⁴ Wright’s study shows that this movement began a steady progression away from the original context of the Lutheran doctrine toward a political theory which was ultimately realized in the German Christians in the German Evangelical Church who lived with and along side of the National Socialist ideology, even at the points where it explicitly contradicted biblical, Christian principles and teaching.

At the outset, we need to understand that the two kingdoms doctrine is not equivalent to the principle of the separation of church and state, and also that the two kingdoms doctrine is not simply Holy Scripture’s teaching on government. Gerhard Ebeling saw that “anything like the modern separation of Church and State which is what people usually have in mind, is a totally inadequate picture of the scope of Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms.”⁵ Scripture’s teaching in Romans 13, 1 Peter 2, and other passages about government is true and

³ In *Everson v. Board of Education*, 330 U.S. 1 (1947), Justice Hugo Black concluded: “Neither a state nor the Federal Government can, openly or secretly, participate in the affairs of any religious organizations or groups, and vice versa. In the words of Jefferson, the clause against establishment of religion by law was intended to erect ‘a wall of separation between church and State’ so that the connection has been pretty much enshrined” (<http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/330/1/case.html>).

After citing the paragraph from Jefferson’s letter, the Supreme Court stated in *Reynolds v. United States*, 98 U.S. 145 (1878), “Coming as this does from an acknowledged leader of the advocates of the measure, it may be accepted almost as an authoritative declaration of the scope and effect of the amendment thus secured. Congress was deprived of all legislative power over mere opinion, but was left free to reach actions which were in violation of social duties or subversive of good order” (<http://supreme.justia.com/cases/federal/us/98/145/case.html#164>).

⁴ William J. Wright, *Martin Luther’s Understanding of God’s Two Kingdoms: A Response to the Challenge of Skepticism* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic Books, 2010), 20. This book among other things includes a detailed bibliography of both primary and secondary literature, which has sent me to sources of which I was not previously aware. In addition, reading the recent biography of Dietrich Bonhoeffer by Eric Mataxas sent me back to restudy Hermann Sasse’s 1930 and 1935 writings on Church and State in connection with the *Kirchenkampf* in Germany in the early 1930s.

⁵ Gerhard Ebeling, *Luther: An Introduction to his Thought* (Fortress 1970, Mohr, 1964, Tübingen), 178.

divinely given, but that is not the point of the two kingdoms doctrine. Even so, the biblical doctrine of the two kingdoms *confirms* the validity of the principle enunciated in the first amendment, and also makes it clear that it is pleasing to God that Christians should fully partake of the rights and privileges of citizenship. The two kingdoms doctrine also teaches that according to Scripture government is divinely instituted, so that there is no room for a gnostic or monastic flight from government and society even in a pagan world. Wright points out that “the nineteenth- and twentieth-century political doctrine, falsely ascribed to Luther, constitutes a misappropriation of Luther’s original teachings,” and that this spurious view is in radical contradiction to the sixteenth century doctrine of Luther, which was incorporated into the Lutheran confessional writings.⁶

That is not to say, however, that the principle of the separation of church and state has nothing to do with the biblical doctrine we find in our church’s confessional writings and in the writings of Martin Luther. It is quite obvious that there is a connection when we read in *Augustana* “*one should not mix or confuse the two authorities, the spiritual and the secular*” (AC XXVIII, 12). That said, a discussion of the biblical teaching on church and state becomes hopelessly muddled if we do not accurately observe the biblical setting of the two kingdoms doctrine and its place in Lutheran theology and see its relation to the gospel.

Scripture and the Confessions

As one can see in most treatments of the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms, the *sedes doctrinae* are located in these passages: “Render unto Caesar the things which are Caesar’s and unto God the things which are God’s” (Matthew 22:21/Mark 12:17); “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36); “Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except from God, and the authorities that exist are appointed by God” (Romans 13:1 ff.); “Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord’s sake whether to the king as supreme, or to governors, as to those who are sent by him...” (1 Peter 2:13 ff.); and “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29). And certainly, the Third Petition of the Lord’s Prayer (Matthew 6:10) has something to say about where the Christian lives. Other passages flesh out this doctrine, but these are the foundational texts.

⁶ Wright, 18.

Our Lutheran Confessions summarize these passages in the Augsburg Confession and Apology, Articles XVI and XXVIII. Melancthon writes in Apology XVI:

We confessed [in AC XVI] “that it is permissible for a Christian to hold public office, to render verdicts on the basis of imperial laws or other established law, to prescribe just punishments, to engage in just wars, to serve in the military, to enter into legal contracts, to own property, to take an oath when magistrates require it, or to contract marriage.”... This entire topic on the distinction between Christ’s kingdom and the civil realm has been helpfully explained in the writings of our theologians [chiefly Luther]. Christ’s kingdom is spiritual, that is, it is the heart’s knowledge of God, fear of God, faith in God, and the beginning of eternal righteousness and eternal life. At the same time, it permits us to make outward use of legitimate political ordinances of whatever nation in which we live, just as it permits us to make use of medicine or architecture, or food, drink, and air.

Melancthon here threads a careful passage between the Anabaptist, Enthusiast rejection of a legitimate participation in civil affairs, and the Roman Catholic assertion that the ecclesiastical estate has authority over the civil estate. But Melancthon simply summarizes what Luther had written, especially in his treatise *On Temporal Authority*. The chief focus in AC & Ap XVI is on the legitimacy of Christian involvement in government in opposition to the Anabaptists and Enthusiasts.

AC & Ap XXVIII, on the other hand, is a critique of the Roman doctrine of ecclesiastical authority, especially the assertion that ecclesiastical power trumps civil power, a position Luther had attacked earlier in his 1520 *Letter to the Christian Nobility*. In AC XXVIII, the line between the two kingdoms is drawn:

[The] power of the keys or of the bishops is used and exercised only by teaching and preaching God’s Word and by administering the sacraments to many persons or to individuals.... Not bodily but eternal things are given in this way, such as eternal righteousness, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life.... [S]ecular authority deals with matters altogether different from the gospel. Secular power does not protect the soul, but using the sword and physical penalties, it protects the body and goods

against external violence. That is why one should not mix or confuse the two authorities, the spiritual and the secular.

It should be noted that “mix or confuse” is not necessarily to be read as “separate.” As I remember Kurt Marquart saying (quoting someone, perhaps himself), “The most important distinction in the world is the distinction between ‘distinct’ and ‘separate.’”

To the Augustana and Apology articles can be added Luther’s remark in SA IV, 1–3, that the pope’s arrogant seizure of secular power is diabolical, but then comments parenthetically “the only exception concerns the area of political government, where God sometimes allows much good to come to a people through a tyrant or scoundrel.” In *The Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope*, Melancthon shows that Christ did not give the apostles the power of the sword, and also cites Boniface VIII’s claim “that the pope is lord of the kingdoms of the world by divine right” (Tr 30–34).

What becomes clear in these summaries of the biblical texts by the Augustana and Apology is that the doctrine of the two kingdoms is not presented as a political theory. It is important to the context that Part I of the Augustana (Articles I–XXI) were cobbled together from the Schwabach and Marburg⁷ articles, along with Part III of Luther’s *Confession Concerning Christ’s Supper*, after arriving in Augsburg and finding John Eck’s *Four Hundred and Four Propositions* maligning and misquoting the Lutherans and also attributing Anabaptist and Enthusiast ideas to them, so that the purpose of the Lutheran presentation was to show that the Lutherans *were* faithful to catholic theology, and part II was essentially the *Torgau* Articles, written before the Lutherans left for Augsburg, complying with the Emperor’s demand that the Lutherans give an account of the changes the Lutherans had made in church practices.

⁷ Schwabach Article 14: “In the meantime, until the Lord comes in judgment and all political power and lordship are abolished, we should maintain and be obedient to secular authority and lordship as a walk of life ordained by God to protect the upright and to curb the evil. A Christian, if properly called to such a walk of life, may well serve or even exercise leadership in it without damage or danger to faith and salvation. Romans 13 [1-7] and 1 Peter 2 [13-16].” Kolb-Nesting, 87.

Marburg Article 13: “[We believe] that all government, secular laws, courts, and ordinances, wherever they are, exist as a true, good walk of life. They are not forbidden as some papists and Anabaptists teach and maintain. [We believe] that a Christian who is called or born into this walk of life can quite well be saved through faith in Christ, etc., just as in the walk of life of a father and mother, husband and wife, and so forth.” Kolb-Nesting, 91.

Rather than a doctrine of political authority, the two kingdoms doctrine is established from the doctrine of the divine institution of the spiritual and the civil estates. The doctrine is rooted in the justification of the sinner as the central doctrine of the gospel, summarized in Romans 1:16f. In the more thorough explication of these texts, and in critique of both Anabaptist and Roman Catholic theology, Luther systematically lays out the ground for this distinction. It follows necessarily from the underlying reality of the life of the Christian in this world as *simul iustus et peccator*.⁸ In his sermon on the two kinds of righteousness, in the preface to Galatians, and in numerous other places, Luther defines the reality of the Christian in those terms, and in terms of a life perfectly righteous *coram Deo* [before God], and life as a sinner *coram mundo* or *hominibus* [before the world or man]. The Christian lives in God's two divinely given realms, but as a different entity in each, and each is governed by God in a different way, with a different power.⁹

Two Kingdoms as the Christian View of Reality

There is something misleading about the terminology *two kingdoms*, *two governments*, *two realms*, etc. The terms all have to do with the *polis* or *civitas* which appear to suggest a political doctrine. Wright, as we will see, holds that the doctrine of the two kingdoms, or realms, led to other distinctions between two kinds of righteousness, and even law and gospel. I am not sure that Wright is correct in suggesting that the two kinds of righteousness follows from the two kingdoms doctrine, but I believe Wright is correct when, with others like Bornkamm and Kolb-Arand, he sees the real thrust of the two kingdoms doctrine as Luther's view of reality. It belongs to God's justifying work, in which the alien righteousness of Christ is the righteousness with which man stands before God. The reality is that this justified man in this world

⁸ *Simul iustus et peccator*: the Latin term used to describe the biblical doctrine "at the same time saint and sinner."

⁹ See Kenneth Hagen's discussion of this in *God and Caesar Revisited*, 28, 29. According to Wright (32 ff.), the terminology "The Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms" came out of the discussions of the German *Kirchenkampf* of the 1930s. In one respect, the name doesn't do justice to the teaching, since there is at least one other kingdom contrasted to that of Christ, and that is the kingdom of Satan, which also became the subject of some confusion in the debates before and after World War II. However, most usually, Luther is speaking of the two — the kingdom of Christ, and the secular or temporal kingdom. The term is inadequate in another sense in that Luther sometimes writes kingdom (*regnum*, *reiche*) and other times "power," "government" or "authority" (*postestas*, *regimente*). He does not seem to be consistent in the way he uses them: sometimes they are synonymous and sometimes different.

and according to his flesh is *simul iustus et peccator*, standing both fully righteous *coram Deo* and still corrupt *coram mundo*. God communicates with these two natures with the gospel on the one side, and with the law on the other. This view of man's existence necessitates describing it in terms of two realms or two spheres of existence, and one must virtually see the Christian as being two persons at once.

While Luther offers summaries or short statements of the distinction in *On Temporal Authority*, *Whether Soldiers too Can be Saved*, and "The Argument of St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians," (Luther's preface to his 1535 Galatians Commentary LW 25, 4 ff.), most reference to, or use of the two kingdoms doctrine comes in his exegetical works and sermons—in Genesis, Romans, Galatians, Psalms, Ecclesiastes, and the Sermon on the Mount. Even though some of the sharpest and most precise statements of the two kingdoms doctrine came in polemical works, even there Luther is never far away from his Greek and Hebrew text. While in a few writings, Luther approaches the issue of two kingdoms with systematic clarity, chiefly in *On Temporal Authority*, a great deal more is added to the matter as Luther uses the concept in other connections and in his commentaries in passing. Nothing in the Augustana and Apology in these articles adds to what Luther had already worked out in his 1523 treatise, *On Temporal Authority*.¹⁰

Luther's argument in this essay on secular authority is important as a starting point for Luther's idea of the two kingdoms. Following his introductory letter, Luther refers to his earlier writing "To the Christian Nobility" as "setting forth their Christian office and functions" (LW 45, 83). But he must change his tactics, since the Catholic princes are, as he calls them, the pope's "lackeys and bullies" (85). The teaching is then set forth in six theses in dialectical form. The first one we will quote in full:

First, we must provide a sound basis for the civil law and sword so no one will doubt that it is in the world by God's will and ordinance. The passages which do this are the following: Romans 12, "Let every soul [*seele*] be subject to the governing authority, for there is no authority except from God; the authority which everywhere [*allenthalben*] exists has been ordained by God. He then who resists the governing authority resists the ordinance of God, and he who resists God's ordinance

¹⁰ The American edition's title is perhaps not so well chosen, since it would seem that "temporal" would better translate *zeitliche*. Luther's word, *weltliche*, might best be translated "worldly," but since that word carries some different baggage, "secular" is probably the better word to use.

will incur judgment.” Again, in I Peter 2[:13–14], “Be subject to every kind of human ordinance, whether it be to the king as supreme, or to governors, as those who have been sent by him to punish the wicked and to praise the righteous.”

The law of this temporal sword has existed from the beginning of the world. For when Cain slew his brother Abel, he was in such great terror of being killed in turn that God even placed a special prohibition on it and suspended the sword for his sake, so that no one was to slay him [Gen. 4:14–15]. (85f.)

While in his exegetical writings, Luther finds the divine institution for secular authority or government in many places, the two key texts are cited here and are also cited by Melancthon.

In the second thesis, Luther presents the dialectic of Christian existence found in the Sermon on the Mount and other passages describing the Christian ethic “Do not return evil for evil,” (1 Peter 3:9). The Sophists (Roman Catholic, Thomist theologians), Luther says, distinguish between those who are perfect and those who are imperfect, and these commands are “counsels’ for the perfect.” But that will not work; these words are meant for all, and Christ condemns to hell all “who do not love their enemies.” So the words have to be interpreted in a different way “so that Christ’s words apply to all alike,” and he then points out that perfection and imperfection do not have to do with outward works, but with what is in the heart (87).

In the third thesis Luther contrasts the two kingdoms. All mankind “are divided into two classes, the first belonging to the kingdom of God, the second to the kingdom of the world.” The first class are the true believers who have their perfection in the gospel. What it is that makes them perfect is here only implied, but these true Christians do no wrong: “It is impossible that the temporal sword and law should find any work to do among Christians” (89).

Who are these “true Christians” Luther has described? In his treatise *The Freedom of the Christian*, Luther had already spelled out what it meant to be a true, perfect Christian: “Since, therefore, this faith can rule only in the inner man, as Rom. 10[:10] says, ‘For man believes with his heart and so is justified,’ and since faith alone justifies, it is clear that the inner man cannot be justified, freed, or saved by any outer work or action at all, and that these works, whatever their character, have nothing to do with this inner man” (LW 31, 347).

Luther places those who are not Christians in “the kingdom of the world, under the law,” and the “few true believers, and still fewer who live a Christian life,” (LW 45, 90) are in the kingdom of God, and then distinguishes them: “one to produce righteousness, the other to bring about external peace and prevent evil deeds” (92).

The final two theses explain how it is that the true Christian lives in the kingdom of the Christ and wields the sword and law in the secular [*weltliche*] kingdom. The Christian does not need the sword and the law for himself, but the law and sword are most beneficial to the world to “preserve peace, punish sin, and restrain the wicked,” so the Christian “pays his taxes, honors those in authority, serves, helps and does all he can to assist the governing authority” (93f.). He also explains in thesis six that the Christian does not need the law, and as a Christian does not resist when evil is done to him, but one’s neighbor does need the law and sword. So the upshot here for Luther is “In what concerns you and yours, you govern yourself by the gospel and suffer injustice toward yourself as a true Christian; in what concerns the person or property of others, you govern yourself according to love and tolerate no injustice toward your neighbor. The gospel does not forbid this; in fact in other places it commands it” (96).

In the essay *Whether Soldiers too can be Saved*, written three years later, Luther offers a more compact description of the two kingdoms:

That is the sum and substance of it. The office of the sword is in itself right and is a divine and useful ordinance, which God does not want us to despise, but to fear, honor, and obey, under penalty of punishment, as St. Paul says in Romans 13 [:1–5]. For God has established two kinds of government among men. The one is spiritual; it has no sword, but it has the word, by means of which men are to become good and righteous, so that with this righteousness they may attain eternal life. He administers this righteousness through the word, which he has committed to the preachers. The other kind is worldly government, which works through the sword so that those who do not want to be good and righteous to eternal life may be forced to become good and righteous in the eyes of the world. He administers this righteousness through the sword. And although God will not reward this kind of righteousness with eternal life, nonetheless, he still wishes peace to be maintained among men and rewards them with temporal blessings. He gives rulers

much more property, honor, and power than he gives to others so that they may serve him by administering this temporal righteousness. Thus God himself is the founder, lord, master, protector, and rewarder of both kinds of righteousness. There is no human ordinance or authority in either, but each is a divine thing entirely. (LW 46, 99f.)

Luther's expressions "real Christians, that is true Christians" (89) and "few true believers and still fewer who live a Christian life" (90) are problematic and might be construed as asserting degrees of Christians—only those who have achieved a certain level of sanctity being strictly in the kingdom of heaven. The treatise on *Secular Authority* was written in 1523, before the outbreak of the antinomian controversy, which centered chiefly on John Agricola's confusion about the law and the gospel, after which Luther would guard his description of Christians and the law more carefully. However, Luther had already drawn some attention to his statements about the nature of the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator*. He had done so in his Romans commentary. In a metaphor about a sick man and a doctor who has begun to cure him, Luther asks, moving a little too quickly from the metaphor to God's justification of the sinner, "Now, is he perfectly righteous? No, for he is *at the same time both a sinner and a righteous man*" (LW 25, 260; emphasis added). Notwithstanding that there are some questions about Luther's understanding of justification in his Romans commentary, it shows that he is already thinking in the terms of *simul iustus et peccator*, which later on became the key to Luther's understanding of the justified child of God living in this world. In the Romans lectures of 1516, the *scholia* contain the expression two times. However, in later arguments, if not using the expression, Luther describes it. In the 1521 dispute against Latomus, Luther writes:

This is a most glorious pardon which comes through baptism. Surely, if you look at it carefully, it is almost greater to accept as righteous him who is still infected by sin than him who is entirely pure.... I am neither the first nor the only man to say this since the [days of the] Apostle. Augustine's words are these: "All sin is forgiven in baptism, not so that it no longer exists, but so that it is no longer imputed." Do you hear? Even after forgiveness there is still sin, but it is not imputed. (LW 32, 209; emphasis added)

And in his 1536 Disputation on Justification:

[W]e are justified daily by the unmerited forgiveness of sins and by the justification of God's mercy. Sin remains, then, perpetually in this life, until the hour of the last judgment comes and then at last we shall be made perfectly righteous. For this is not a game or delusion, that we say, "Sins are forgiven by faith and only cling to us, because that newness of life has miraculously begun." (LW 34, 367)

Thus, when in his discussions of the secular kingdom Luther talks about the true Christian, he is hardly speaking of Spener's *pietati*, of those who have reached a higher level of sanctification, but of those who are justified through faith and whose sins are no longer imputed, even though they do sin. The true Christian is not called that in contrast only to the unbelievers, but also to the nominal Christian who looks to the law and his own works for righteousness.

As a result, it becomes clear that this teaching about the two kingdoms is not a political schema that Luther has worked out simply to refute the Anabaptists and Enthusiasts, or to subdue two warring parties, the noblemen and the peasants, but that it is in fact a central, guiding principle which organizes all sorts of things around the central doctrine of justification through faith.

Further clarity is added in Luther's 1535 Galatians commentary. As he sets out the teaching on two kinds of righteousness in the Prologue, Luther writes:

We set forth two worlds, as it were, one of them heavenly and the other earthly. Into these we place these two kinds of righteousness, which are distinct and separated from each other. The righteousness of the Law is earthly and deals with earthly things; by it we perform good works. ... [B]y the righteousness of the Law we do nothing even when we do much; we do not fulfill the Law even when we fulfill it. Without any merit or work of our own, we must first be justified by Christian righteousness, which has nothing to do with the righteousness of the Law or with earthly and active righteousness. But this righteousness is heavenly and passive. We do not have it of ourselves; we receive it from heaven. (LW 26, 8)

On Galatians 2:14 (Paul's dispute with Peter), Luther writes:

Therefore whoever knows well how to distinguish the Gospel from the Law should give thanks to God and know that he is a real theologian. I admit that in the time of temptation I myself do not know how to do this as I should. The way to distinguish the one from the other is to *locate the Gospel in heaven and the Law on earth*, to call the righteousness of the Gospel heavenly and divine and the righteousness of the Law earthly and human, and to distinguish as sharply between the righteousness of the Gospel and that of the Law as God distinguishes between heaven and earth or between light and darkness or between day and night. Let the one be like the light and the day, and the other like the darkness and the night. (LW 26, 115; emphasis added)

Here, the intimate connection between law and gospel, the heavenly and earthly kingdom, and the two kinds of righteousness is made explicit. It is also clear that since his 1519 sermon “Two Kinds of Righteousness,” Luther has not shifted from his starting point:

There are two kinds of Christian righteousness, just as man’s sin is of two kinds. The first is alien righteousness, that is the righteousness of another, instilled from without. This is the righteousness of Christ by which he justifies through faith, as it is written in 1 Cor. 1[:30].... Through faith in Christ, therefore, Christ’s righteousness becomes our righteousness, and all that he has becomes ours; rather he himself becomes ours.... [H]e who trusts in Christ exists in Christ; he is one with Christ, having the same righteousness as he. (LW 31, 297f.)

On the other hand, “The second kind of righteousness is our proper righteousness, not because we alone work it, but because we work with that first and alien righteousness” (299).

Thus, when Luther has distinguished between real believers or Christians and others, he certainly is not describing relative ranks of faith, nor is he speaking the language of the Enthusiasts, Pietists, or Wesleyan perfectionists, but strictly the language of the reality of the Christian life, *simul iustus et peccator*.

Consequently, the teaching of the two kingdoms cannot be treated as a political doctrine, however excellent a social contribution it might be—and which may have influenced the thinking of John Locke, and then James Madison on the first amendment. Rather, this teaching

about the two kingdoms becomes an overarching understanding of the nature of the Christian life in this world, which becomes for Luther an organizing tool or diagram to help Christians understand their relationship to the two realities in which God has placed them—the kingdom of Christ and his righteousness, and the kingdom of men, where sin and law remain until death. How is the Christian to understand Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, and the other preachments to Christians in the New Testament, e.g. Philippians 3:20 setting the Christian’s citizenship in heaven? Were it not for the reality of *simul iustus...*, the Anabaptists and Enthusiasts might have been right, but of course, the fact was that they did not grasp the fundamentals of the central biblical teaching—the righteousness of faith.

Politicizing the Two Kingdoms

In the middle of the nineteenth century, according to Wright, a politicization of Luther’s two-kingdom doctrine began. Until that time, there did not seem to be so much interest in the doctrine outside of Lutheran theological circles. It may be that Madison’s letter to Pastor Schaeffer is a root for the tendency in some circles to connect the doctrine of the two kingdoms and the doctrine of the separation of church and state—and the assumption that the first amendment is a doctrine of the *separation* of church and state.

In 1975, in preparation for the celebration of the two-hundredth anniversary of the American Revolution, the essayist for the Bethany Lutheran College Reformation Lectures was its former president, B. W. Teigen, lecturing on “The Lutheran Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms and its Significance for the American Bicentennial.” Dr. Teigen did not present the two-kingdom doctrine as a political doctrine, but it was interesting that in the discussion which followed there was a debate as to whether or not the American Revolution was legitimate or not.

Wright believes that the original understanding of Luther’s doctrine of the two kingdoms as found in Luther’s own writings, and as summarized in the Book of Concord, underwent a perversion and became a *spurious* two-kingdoms doctrine. It was this perverted doctrine which enabled the German Christians to embrace National Socialism and was also a convenient excuse for Karl Barth to reject Luther’s two-kingdom

doctrine, as well as natural law, and the distinction between law and gospel.¹¹

Wright points first to Christoph Ernst Luthardt who wrote, “Both the other great community circles of human society, domestic economy and state (*Haus und Staat*), in which the Christian stands belong to the territory of the natural life. Over these the Gospel does not have to make arrangements, for the Gospel has to do with the spiritual life. Reason underlies the natural life, as the source of all natural law and has its own authority and order, to which the Gospel does not have the call to alter.” Wright responds that this is one of the more objectionable facets of the modern view, “that in the institutions of the natural world reason is the source of natural law... The natural world, in this case, would be autonomous or free of God’s law, so that people could make their own rules as they go about their lives and work.”¹²

The Apology makes it clear that reason and natural knowledge are not the same thing, nor is the former the source of the latter: “Of these two parts the adversaries select the Law, because human reason naturally understands, in some way, the Law (for it has the same judgment divinely written in the mind); [the natural law agrees with the law of Moses, or the Ten Commandments]” (Ap IV, 7, Triglotta).¹³ In writing this, Melancthon certainly is summarizing Romans 2:14-15: “For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them.” It is thus clear that there are not two moral codes, but only one. Revealed law and natural law do not differ in content, but in how they come to be known, as well as the accuracy and detail in which reason understands them.

Robert Kolb and Charles Arand describe the most contemporary version of this misunderstanding of the two kingdoms:

¹¹ For a discussion of the doctrine of the two kingdoms in Reformed theology, from Calvin to Barth, see John Stephenson, “The Two Kingdoms Doctrine in the Reformed Tradition,” in *God and Caesar Revisited*, 59 ff.

¹² Quoted in Wright, 21.

¹³ The Triglotta English translation combines elements of the Latin and the German: “Ex his adversarii sumunt legem, quia humana ratio naturaliter intelligit aliquot modo legem, (habet enim idem iudicium scriptum divinitus in mente); von diesen zwei stücken nehmen nu die Widersacher das Gesetz für sich. Denn dieweil das natürlich Gesetz, welches mit dem Gesetz Mosi oder Zehen Geboten übereinstimmt in aller menschen Herzen angeboren und geschrieben ist, und also die vernunft etlichermaß die Zehen Geboten fassen und verstehen kann.” Die Bekenntnisschriften.

In the twenty-first century, even though monasticism is rarely viewed as a viable option, dividing life into a sacred sphere and a secular sphere continues to persist. Such a division brings with it, however, two quite different temptations. First such a division will always create the possibility that Christians may regard one realm of existence as superior to another.... Practically speaking, this happens when Christians regard questions related to salvation as the only really important matters that deserve their attention....

Secondly, such a bifurcation of reality allows for secular existence to claim autonomy for itself from the spiritual sphere.... Western life has thus relegated and confined the spiritual to the realm of the private life of each individual. Such a division of life creates a dilemma for Christians, who find themselves living a divided and conflicted existence in which the two spheres are pitted against each other and have no relation with each other.¹⁴

The net effect of the view of the doctrine of the two kingdoms that developed in the nineteenth century was to posit a separation and autonomy of the two kingdoms from each other which permitted one to live in both kingdoms under completely different laws, the civil law completely autonomous, unrelated to the law of God. That thinking made it possible for German Christians to accept what they deemed merely civil laws even when clear moral law was opposed. More recently for example, the same thinking has made it possible for several notable

¹⁴ Robert Kolb and Charles P. Arand, *The Genius of Luther's Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 110. Kolb and Arand describe the Christian's existence in the two realms in the context of the two kinds of righteousness. A similar misunderstanding of the two kingdoms doctrine is found in Gustav Wingren's dissertation *Luther on Vocation*. Kenneth Hagen's critique of Wingren's book argues that "Wingren confuses Luther's two kingdoms when he identifies exclusively the dying to sin with learning to die in one's vocation. Luther does speak here of belonging to an estate (in this example, the estate of marriage), with its toils and sufferings, 'in order that he may grow used to pleasure and sorrow, avoid sin, and prepare himself for death better than he could do outside of this estate'.... Wingren: 'The Christian is crucified by the law in his vocation, under the earthly government; and he arises through the gospel, in the church under the spiritual government.'" For Wingren it seems that when the Christian is freed from the law, he is free from his vocation.

"Wingren's mistake is to link vocation with law, without clearly distinguishing the civil from the spiritual use of the law. Both Wingren and American Evangelicalism confuse the first and second uses of the law. For them, the law, civil and spiritual, is to bridle the flesh, to restrain sin, to punish transgressions. But for Luther, the vocations are a part of the civil orders of creation...." "A Critique of Wingren on *Luther on Vocation*," *Lutheran Quarterly* XVI, no. 3 (Autumn 2002): 252.

congressional figures who professed to be Roman Catholic to see no connection between their religious profession and their acts as legislators. No doubt the same has also been true of Evangelicals and certainly some Lutherans in various legislative positions.

In his 1984 book, *The Naked Public Square*, Richard John Neuhaus complained:

[I]n earlier discussions of these questions it was common to attribute the modern “liberation” of politics to the influence of the sixteenth century Reformation. As discussed earlier, Luther in particular developed a rough doctrine of “two kingdoms” that seemed to grant autonomy to the secular realm. Many Christians, far from being grateful to Luther, have accused him and his doctrines of being the cause of the evangelical church’s political passivity, notably in the face of Hitler’s totalitarianism. Other scholars, more sympathetic to Luther, point out that the two-kingdom doctrine was very rough indeed, that it did not separate the two kingdoms but merely tried to illuminate the twofold nature of the rule of the one God over all things, sacred and secular.¹⁵

Actually, the two kingdom doctrine wasn’t as rough as Neuhaus thought, but was quite thoroughly worked out. Nonetheless, Neuhaus correctly saw that it was a mistake to attribute such a view to Luther’s doctrine, even as it sometimes appears Lutherans today have seen the two kingdoms doctrine simply as a doctrine separating church and state so that the two are completely autonomous and unrelated. In fact, they are distinguished, but not with an impenetrable barrier. Christians live in both, and participate in both. God has created both and exercises his power in both, but in two different ways.

Two Kingdoms and the Church in the World

What applies to the individual Christian here may also be applied to the outward church in this world, where the church has a legal status as a property-holding corporation in the form of a local congregation or a larger collective body as synod, district, diocese, or denomination. It too will be seen as living in two kingdoms. The church in its essence consists only of the congregation of all believers, the *communio sanctorum*, both in heaven and on earth. There is no spot or blemish in this

¹⁵ Richard John Neuhaus, *The Naked Public Square* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984), 174.

church, since it is made up of saints clothed in the righteousness of Christ (Ephesians 5). In that respect it belongs solely to the kingdom of Christ. But the outward church in this world also lives under law and reason. It struggles against sin, both moral and theological, operates within the bounds of the federal and state constitutions, and lives under the laws of the land. This outward church enters into contracts, seeks legal redress according to the laws of the land, and defends its interests in the courts and under the law. It is especially here that Luther's attack on the Roman Catholic Church's usurpation of power over secular rulers comes to bear. If the outward church needs to correct the state from departing from natural law, then its leaders do so *iure humano*. But acting *iure humano* is not wrong; it *is* wrong to elevate law by *human right* to mandate by divine right.

It is clear that Luther acknowledges that the church, as an entity in the world, and the church's ministers, just like the individual Christians, have functions that belong to the secular kingdom, and therefore operate by the rules of the secular kingdom. The pastors and superintendents, as leaders of the church, will make judgments on public morality, and will defend natural law when the state permits or promotes violations of it. One may dispute whether the pastors and bishops act in such matters in their ecclesiastical office, or in their role as individuals.

Not everything done by the church insofar as its outward organization is concerned is the administration of the office of the keys. The church trains the young in catechesis, instructing them in Christian teaching. That is an exercise of the keys, or the kingdom of the right. But alongside of that, the church, through its schools, trains Christian youth in the useful arts and occupations. To the extent that the church acts as agent for works of charity and for the good of the community, it is working in and for the kingdom of the left. When the ministers officiate at marriages, they were in Luther's time as well as ours acting not only in the kingdom of the right, by offering God's blessing on the marriage, but were officiating over a worldly institution—established by God, but for life in the world, not for life in heaven.

One of Luther's most practical and concrete writings to deal with two kingdoms issues is his preface to the 1523 Leisnig *Ordinance of a Common Chest*. It is written under his name, with the addition of the title "Ecclesiastic." When asked by the leaders of the parish at Leisnig to give them advice on electing their own parish priest (one who had been deposed by the abbot when the priest accepted the evangelical faith) and also about establishing a common chest (parish treasury),

Luther wrote a preface, which was attached to the ordinance written by the Leisnig Council, and approved by Luther. The ordinance deals not only with calling a pastor, but also with matters that clearly belong to the secular kingdom such as holding property and having a treasury. Luther's preface is labeled "Suggestions on how to deal with ecclesiastical property Martin Luther, Ecclesiastic" (LW 45, 169). Luther's preface concludes, "If God were to grant that these suggestions be carried out, not only would we have a well-filled common chest for every need, but three crying evils would diminish and eventually cease" (begging, misuse of the ban, and so called *zinskauf*) (176).¹⁶ Then follows the "Fraternal Agreement" which is in effect a set of bylaws for calling pastors and administering the Common Chest which was to support the parish and its school: "The parish assembly, shall have the authority and duty, with the advice and approval of our elected pastor and preacher and others learned in the divine Scriptures, to call, appoint and dismiss a school-master for young boys" (188).

One thing that becomes clear in this document is that Luther already understood that the Christian congregation, as well as the called and ordained clergy had two sides – operating simultaneously in the kingdom of the right and the left. The principle that operates here is expressed in AC XXVIII:

However, where Bishops possess secular authority and the sword, they possess them not as bishops by divine right but by human, imperial right, given by Roman emperors and kings for the secular administration of their lands. That has nothing at all to do with the office of the gospel. . . . Whatever other power and jurisdiction bishops have in various matters such as marriage or tithes, they have them by virtue of human right. However, when bishops neglect such duties, the princes are obligated—whether they like it or not—to administer justice to their subjects for the sake of peace. . . . (AC XXVIII 19, 29)

Thus, when Luther involves himself in the marriage problems of Philip of Hesse, even though he was hardly in the position of a common citizen, but a teacher of the church, he still spoke not by divine right, but by human right.

¹⁶ See 175fn13 and also LW 45, 235 where the editor's introduction to Trade and Usury explains the *Zinskauf*, also called *Rentenkauf*. By using the word *kauf* the transaction was exempted from the condemnation of usury.

Likewise in the 1524 treatise *Trade and Usury* Luther has hardly stepped out of his offices as teacher and priest but nevertheless writes on issues that involve ethics and the kingdom of the left. Luther makes this distinction at the outset: "It is our purpose here to speak about the abuses and sins of trade, insofar as they concern the conscience. The matter of their detrimental effect on the purse we leave to the princes and lords, that they may do their duty in this regard" (LW 45, 247). Luther is involved in a theological refutation, for one thing, against two evangelical clerics who had argued that since civil law was invented by the pagans, and canon law by papal legislation there should be a return to the precepts of Moses. Along the way, however, Luther not only refutes that kind of thinking, but argues against injustices and bad practices that arise from trade and money lending. He urges a Christian attitude, which he clearly derives from the Sermon on the Mount, but yet describes an ethical way of doing business, and urges examples from Moses, Solomon, and others.

The Duality of Persons

This duality of offices in one person is addressed explicitly in the commentary on the Sermon on the Mount.¹⁷ In the section on Matthew 6:19-21, Luther comments:

A sharp distinction must be made between the Christian and the man of the world, between a Christian person and a secular person.... Of course a prince can be a Christian, but he must not rule as a Christian; and insofar as he does rule, his name is not "Christian" but "prince." The person is indeed a Christian, but his office or his principedom does not involve his Christianity. Insofar as he is a Christian, the Gospel teaches him not to do injury to anyone.... But it would not make for a good administration if you were to preach that sort of thing to the prince.... So you see that each status or office is properly distinguished from the other; and yet they are combined in one person and, so to speak are contradictory.... Thus every human being on earth has two persons: one person for himself, with obligations to no one except to God; and in addition a secular person, according to which he has obligations to other people. (LW 21, 170 ff.)

¹⁷ LW 21. See the editor's introduction. The commentary on the Sermon on the Mount was first presented as sermons, probably transcribed by others, and published in different editions after 1532.

The duality of the believer is also spelled out in this dialectic:

Now if someone asks whether a Christian may go to court or defend himself, the answer is simply no. A Christian is the kind of person who has nothing to do with this sort of secular existence and law.... A related question is this: May a Christian be a secular official and administer the office and work of a ruler or a judge? This would mean that the two persons or the two types of office are combined in one man.... There is no getting around it, *a Christian has to be a secular person of some sort*. As regards his own person, according to his life as a Christian, he is in subjection to no one but Christ, without any obligation either to the emperor or to any other man. But at least outwardly, according to his body and property, he is related by subjection and obligation to the emperor.... (LW 21, 108f.; emphasis added)

And he then returns to the original question:

It is permissible for you to use orderly procedure in demanding and obtaining your rights, but be careful not to have a vindictive heart.... Thus you are not forbidden to go to court and lodge a complaint against injustice or violence, just so long as you do not have a false heart, but one that remains as patient as it was before. (LW 21, 111)

On Matthew 5:5, Luther writes,

What does it mean, then, to be meek? From the outset here you must realize that Christ is not speaking at all about the government and its work, whose property it is not to be meek, as we use the word in German [*sanftmut*, LW note 8], but to bear the sword (Romans 13:4) for the punishment of those who do wrong (1 Peter 2:14).... Here we have two different persons in one man. The one is that in which we are created and born, according to which we are all alike—man or woman or child, young or old.... He is not talking about this person here, letting it alone in its own office and rule, as He has ordained it. He is talking merely about how each individual, natural person is to behave in relation to others. (LW 21, 23)

In his 1523 *Temporal Authority* Luther wrote even more pointedly on Christ's words "Do not resist evil" (Matthew 5:39): "A Christian

should be so disposed that he will suffer every evil and injustice without avenging himself; neither will he seek legal redress in the courts but have utterly no need of temporal authority and law for his own sake. On behalf of others, however, he may and should seek vengeance, justice, protection, and help and do as much as he can to achieve it" (LW 45, 101).

Conclusions and Casuistry

While there is much more Luther material dealing with the two kingdoms doctrine—including the Genesis, Psalms, and Ecclesiastes commentaries as well as in sermons—which add rich fabric to the distinction between the two kingdoms, a clear understanding of Luther's view emerges from the key writings we have reviewed. There is a clear, biblical teaching on the two kingdoms, which Luther has treated systematically in some of his writings, made use of in his exegetical writings, and is summarized in the Augsburg Confession and Apology. This doctrine shows the Christian what it means, according to God's Word, to live at the same time in the world and in the heavenly kingdom.

In another sense, however, the doctrine of the two kingdoms represents a structure or even a *Weltanschauung* which is drawn from Scripture and which Luther himself uses as an organizing principle in diverse essays, especially the exegetical ones.

Both Kenneth Hagen and William Wright see the two kingdoms doctrine as an organizing principle or world view. For Hagen, "the two-kingdom theology does not gain a great deal set in relation with other key ideas. It is really a theological construct, a *Weltanschauung* to set up the whole picture."¹⁸ Wright has it in similar terms: "The concept represented Luther's Reformation worldview or *Weltanschauung*. When it is understood as such, it proves to be essential for clarifying all of Luther's views."¹⁹

One way of summarizing the two kingdoms doctrine is the diagram that follows the conclusion of this paper. The diagram is suggested by Hagen in his essay in *God and Caesar Revisited*,²⁰ though the arrangements and details are mine.

One of the applications that must be drawn from this study is that we cannot treat the idea of the separation of church and state, as well

¹⁸ Hagen, *God and Caesar*, 19.

¹⁹ Wright, 15.

²⁰ Hagen, 18, 28f.

as the First Amendment's establishment clause, as a biblical doctrine, although one might be able to argue it as a doctrine of natural law.

Likewise, it is inadequate to speak of the separation principle as equivalent to or even similar to the doctrine of the two kingdoms. The place of the doctrine of two kingdoms in Scripture is not to set forth a political doctrine or theory of government that may be urged on secular society. The essential function of the two kingdoms doctrine is to show Christians how it is that they live in the world in two kingdoms both of which are creations of God, and how their lives as redeemed children of God are lived in the worldly realm. It belongs to the reality of the Christian as *simul iustus et peccator*, not to the reality of the unbeliever. The doctrine of the two kingdoms, as revealed in Scripture does not speak to the secular, unbelieving ruler, except insofar as it is known from natural law and through reason. Yet the Christian ruler may certainly be helped by it.

Nevertheless, the biblical texts which deal with the kingdom of the left make it clear that government is a creation of God to which all men owe obedience, and in which the Christians participate, and that participation is pleasing to God.

Another point that we may glean from this study is that this doctrine does not provide us with rigid, inviolable borders between church and state, so that we always know how to solve the conflicts between the two. Our Lord sees the border clearly; we don't. What is clear is that the powers of the two are not to be mixed or confused. But since both the individual Christian and the church live in both and wield the powers of both kingdoms, it is not always so easy to see the lines of demarcation from the side of our lives in the secular kingdom.

Practically speaking, the separation of church and state principle is spelled out for us by legal precedent and court cases, as well as the Internal Revenue Service. They are our civil law, and we live in accord with such civil laws, even when we find them unwise. In such cases, we deal with them with the same political processes open to all citizens. The Christians and their congregations are bound to those laws, except when they contradict what God has clearly commanded. But since we will not find the rigid set of rules we might look for in the two kingdoms doctrine, there are questions of casuistry, where principles come into conflict.

Our people need to be instructed carefully in the meaning of the two kingdoms teaching so that they do not confuse this doctrine with the civil doctrine enunciated in the first amendment, or the broader

concept of separation of church and state. A couple of examples may be helpful. The Minnesota vote on an amendment to the constitution prohibiting gay marriage is now past—and lost. There already was a law on the books in this state limiting marriage to one man and one woman, and of course laws can be changed fairly easily. So can constitutional amendments, though with a higher bar. But the matter of amending the constitution is a civil matter, and some Christians who believe homosexuality to be contrary to God's law, natural and revealed, also were not convinced that making laws by amendment is a wise course, and so voted against the amendment. The line between political judgment and moral judgment is often less than distinct. Direct involvement on the part of church members and leadership would be necessary in the case that a law were passed compelling the churches to accept unrepentant homosexuals and gay couples into church membership, compelling our ministers to perform marriages of homosexual couples, or compelling our churches to accept homosexual clergy. If the penalty for not doing so were to lose our exemption from corporate taxes, we would have to refuse and tighten our belts.

The question of the HHS mandate is another case immediately at hand. It would be one thing for tax funds to be used for abortions, as objectionable as that would be. We might protest it, and inveigh against it. But it is quite another thing when the churches and their supported institutions are ordered to provide support by purchasing insurance for abortifacients or clinical abortions. I believe that it was consistent with the doctrine of the two kingdoms for President Harrison to participate in the panel appearing before the congressional sub-committee, and for presidents Moldstad and Schroeder to sign the open letter "Free Exercise of Religion: Putting Beliefs into Practice." They did so as church leaders, defending the constitutional guarantee of the First Amendment, not as defenders of the biblical two-kingdoms doctrine. Any subterfuge of acting merely as individuals is hardly necessary. The only distinction necessary is that they not act directly in their spiritual office as bishops, but as leaders of their churches which live in the civil realm, and that they act *jure humano*. It seems to me that AC and Ap XXVIII recognize such a possibility.

There may be other cases as well where our pastors and church leaders may act or write as Luther does in his advice on the establishment of the Common Chest under his title "Ecclesiastic," or when he writes his 1524 essay *On Trade and Usury*, without asserting that he was merely acting as a private person. In this treatise, Luther was not writing

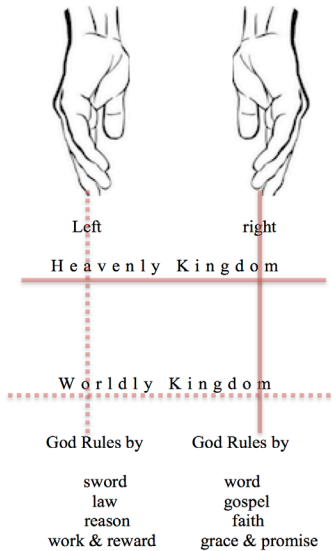
against interest as we know it, but against a corrupt and evil system which stole from the common man, Christian and unbeliever alike. As noted above, Luther distinguished between matters of conscience and political, social, or economic matters: “It is our purpose here to speak about the abuses and sins of trade, insofar as they concern the conscience. The matter of their detrimental effect on the purse we leave to the princes and lords, that they may do their duty in this regard” (LW 45, 247). Given this distinction, it is proper for churches and church leaders to address the state on clear matters of conscience, when proposed legislation would violate natural law and burden consciences on matters such as life issues, marriage and family, racial discrimination, education, freedom of religion, and freedom of conscience. This would include specific contemporary issues under discussion today such as legalization of abortion on-demand as established by *Roe v. Wade* (1973), redefinition of marriage to include gay couples, and discrimination against married couples so as to discourage marriage. Whether it is a matter of upholding the principles of the second amendment or the teaching of the two kingdoms, we hold that the state is obligated to uphold natural law, not simply because it is taught in Scripture, but because its reality is known also to reason and is the basis for an orderly society in which moral conscience and religious freedom are essential.

The application of the principle of the two kingdoms to specific situations is certainly fraught with dangers. Christians who act in the civil realm, even as they are true believers, remain sinful and prone to errors in judgment. Therefore, our pastors and bishops must remain aware of their calling as ministers of the gospel, whose office of exercising the power of the keys is given by Christ himself. And in addition to seeing to it that they do not mix or confuse the powers of the two realms, they also must not act in such a way as to confuse the flock, or to bring dishonor on the office of the gospel. What is permissible and what is wise or discrete may not always be the same thing. We also need to guard against divinizing conservative political positions with a conservative, confessional theological position, just as we are sometimes too quick to demonize liberal social doctrine.

So we can certainly learn also from Luther’s mistakes in our lives in the kingdom of the left, his miscalculations in his writings at the time of the Peasants’ War, and in his debatable solution to Philip of Hesse’s marital dilemma. Our misjudgments and errors in such things are serious enough and they have consequences, but we rest assured that they neither hasten nor delay the day of our Lord’s coming, when the

kingdom of the left will be no more, and our weaknesses in carrying out his will in the kingdom of the world will be wiped away. Meanwhile, we believe as saints, and we live as Christians in a world where our corrupt natures stumble and err. Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly. (LSQ)

God's two
Governments and Kingdoms
Regimente and Reiche



The Two Regiments

The two powers are exercised by God. But the power of the left is only used to govern the worldly kingdom, and the power of the right is only used in the heavenly kingdom or spiritual realm.

The Christian is an instrument of both powers, in their proper realms.

To say that the Christian lives in the worldly kingdom as a Christian is not to say that he does not hold the powers of the left, nor that he turns the gospel into a governing power in the worldly kingdom.

The Two Kingdoms

The Heavenly Kingdom is both in heaven and on earth – the church militant and the church triumphant.

The Worldly kingdom includes both believers and unbelievers. The Christian lives there as a Christian, but the powers of the heavenly kingdom are not used to govern the worldly kingdom.

Illustration, Kenneth Hagen, *God and Caesar Revisited*:

Luther...lived in both of the horizontal kingdoms: in the visible earthly kingdom as a citizen of Wittenberg and in the invisible heavenly Kingdom as a Christian in the company of all the saints and angels. Furthermore, Luther was an instrument of God's left hand as professor, father, and civil judge, and an instrument of God's right hand as priest and preacher. Furthermore, Luther's doctrine of *Anfechtung* meant he was in daily struggle with Satan....

Diagram based on a description suggested by Kenneth Hagen.

Regiment refers to governance or power and *Reich* to a kingdom or state. The governance of the left hand is the *potestas gladii* (power of the sword –law) and the right hand is the *potestas clavii* (power or office of the keys –gospel).

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The Timeless Word Meets the 21st-Century World

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L EAP INTO OUR MIDST
In the beginning—

Form came to the formless,
Light divided the darkness,
Clean rivers began to flow,
Life took its very first breath,
Each according to the Word.

But darkness crept
Into the realm of light and life
To build a proper serpent's nest
To make one vital strike
At the Image of God in men—
(That divine multi-dimensional DNA).

Eden's trees—
Untended on that fateful morn—
Began dropping leaves
In piles of unrest.

Humanity—
 Shamed and forlorn,
Eyes now closed in death,
 Afraid to take another breath,
(Knowing only blame).

Hope—
 A word, once conceived,
Leapt into the realm
 Of our catastrophe.

Part One

In this first part, I shall identify and discuss certain characteristics of early 21st-century culture, within which Christians live, and by which Christians, to a degree, are influenced.

Ghost in the Machine

In 1967, Arthur Koestler published his book titled, *The Ghost in the Machine*. In it he attempted to define what mankind is, how we came to be, and why we are basically self-destructive, all from (you guessed it!) an evolutionary perspective. The mis-wiring of undirected evolutionary processes in man is his “Ghost in the Machine.” He proposes that man has not one, not two, but three brains: reptilian, mammal, and human. (Don’t we learn something new about ourselves every day?)

This is so, Koestler goes on to tell us, because *Homo sapien* is a “biological freak, the result of some remarkable mistake in the evolutionary process.” The mistake resulted from the speed with which the hominid evolved (the whole thing took only half a million years), or from what is known as explosive evolution. Koestler follows the neurophysiologist Paul MacLean in stressing the “unseemly haste” with which the specifically human areas of the brain were superimposed upon the phylogenetically older structures, resulting in “insufficient coordination” between older (emotional) and newer (intellectual) functions.”¹

During my high school years, in the early to mid-1980s, my favorite rock band was called “The Police.” (Anyone *care* to remember?) Their fourth album was titled, *Ghost in the Machine*, an album which was a

¹ Robert Jay Lifton, “Man as Mistake,” *New York Times*, April 7, 1968 <www.nytimes.com>.

reflection on Koestler's book. Back then, I didn't know the album was titled after this book; I just thought it was a cool name for an album. It left to my imagination what or who the "Ghost" was, and what the "Machine" was. I still listen to the album from time to time. It remains my favorite of their five albums. I recognize now that many of the songs on the album (it did come out first as an *album*) reflect on Koestler's evolutionary, "man is a mis-wired mess," theme: "Spirits in the Material World," "Invisible Sun," "Demolition Man," "Rehumanize Yourself," "Omegaman," and "Secret Journey." As a side note, this is one example of how anti-Christian worldviews creep into the lives of youth and the culture in general. A rock band reflects on a book by an evolutionist; it writes some songs about the evolutionary theme of the book without really coming out and saying so; young people buy the music, and say, "Cool music, cool band!" At least I did.

When we consider our self-destructive nature, in thoughts, words and actions, perhaps Koestler was on to something. We fall completely short of anything good; we are not holy; we do not give of ourselves purely sacrificially; something is always in it for us; we take and hurt, hurt and take. Is mis-wiring and the "unseemly haste" of macro-evolution to blame? Well, God, through his written Word, has something to say about that, and he said it long before 1967. So let us, for the purposes of this essay, identify what God says about this. The "Ghost" is the devil and the "Machine" is mankind, the children of our first parents, Adam and Eve. The devil tempted Adam and Eve to corrupt the perfect world God had created for them, a world in which there was no disease, decay, sin, or death, and to reject God their Creator. He succeeded by leading them to commit the *original sin* unto the self-destruction of death three-fold: the spiritual death of unbelief, the physical death of the body, and eternal punishment in hell. Because of this power he gained over Adam and Eve, the devil is able to *haunt mankind*, we, the sinful children of our fallen first parents. He suggests, promotes, tempts, and wills all things evil so that we, down to the last man, destroy ourselves in death three-fold, all in obedience *to him*.

C.S. Lewis authored an interesting book which exposes the haunting work of this ghost, this evil spirit, the devil: *The Screwtape Letters*. It is a very accurate description of the work of the devil in the world—how he thinks, what his motivation is, and what his goal is. How does he think? He is corrupt, devoid of any goodness, nobility, or courage. Everything, all the time, is evil. His motivation is to oppose his very own Creator (the triune God: God the Father, God the Son,

God the Holy Spirit) and attempt to undo his good creative work. Why does this motivate him? The devil failed in his attempt to overthrow his Creator and rule heaven and earth in his place. Instead, the devil was permanently cast out of the very kingdom that he desired to rule. He, then, set out to rule and destroy mankind. Why? God loves mankind and created everything, including the angels in goodness, for mankind. How galling it must be to the devil to know that he was created to serve us in our relationship with our Creator. How galling it must be to the devil to know that everything in the universe was created for us, and not him, especially when he (still) wants it all for himself, to do what he wants with it, that is, to lay it all waste. With every evil fiber of his being (which means every fiber, period) he sought to sever us from our Creator so that we do not recognize, trust, thank or enjoy the blessings from our Creator's heart and hand. He began his work by inhabiting a creature, a crafty serpent, to tempt the first woman, Eve, and her husband Adam, into sin. Because he was successful, he *understands* the fallenness of mankind; it is his fallenness in us. It is by *self*-knowledge that he leads us into our own self-destruction.

A few quotes from C.S. Lewis' *The Screwtape Letters* highlight this difficult-to-swallow reality. Listen as Uncle Screwtape counsels Wormwood, two demons in service to the devil, their overlord:

I note what you say about guiding your patient's reading and take care that he sees a good deal of his materialist friend. But are you not being a trifle *naïve*? It sounds as if you supposed that *argument* was the way to keep him out of the Enemy's clutches. That might have been so if he had lived a few centuries earlier. At that time the human still knew pretty well when a thing was proved and when it was not; and if it was proved they really believed it. They still connected thinking with doing and were prepared to alter their way of life as the result of a chain of reasoning. But what with the weekly press and other such weapons we have largely altered that. Your man has been accustomed, ever since he was a boy, to have a dozen incompatible philosophies dancing about together inside his head. He doesn't think of doctrines as primarily "true" or "false", but as "academic" or "practical", "outworn" or "contemporary", "conventional" or "ruthless". Jargon, not argument, is your best ally in keeping him from the Church. Don't waste time trying to make him think that materialism is true! Make him think it

is strong, or stark, or courageous—that it is the philosophy of the future. That’s the sort of thing he cares about.²

(God’s) real motive for fixing on sex as the method of reproduction among humans is only too apparent from the use He has made of it. Sex might have been, from our point of view, quite innocent. It might have been merely one more mode in which a stronger self preyed upon a weaker—as it is, indeed, among the spiders where the bride concludes her nuptials by eating the groom. But in the humans the Enemy has gratuitously associated affection between the parties with sexual desire. He has also made the offspring dependent on the parents and given the parents an impulse to support it—thus producing the Family, which is like the organism, only worse; for the members are more distinct, yet also united in a more conscious and responsible way. The whole thing, in fact, turns out to be simply one more device for dragging in Love.... The humans are to be encouraged to regard as the basis of marriage a highly-coloured and distorted version of something the Enemy really promises as a result. Two advantages follow. In the first place, humans who have not the gift of continence can be deterred from seeking marriage as a solution because they do not find themselves “in love”, and thanks to us, the idea of marrying with any other motive seems to them low and cynical. Yes, they think that. They regard the intention of loyalty to a partnership for mutual help, for the preservation of chastity, and for the transmission of life, as something lower than the storm of emotion. (Don’t neglect to make your man think the marriage-service very offensive.) In the second place any sexual infatuation whatever, so long as it intends marriage, will be regarded as “love”, and “love” will be held to excuse a man from all the guilt, and to protect him from all the consequences, of marrying a heathen, a fool, or a wanton.³

Your best plan, in that case, would be to attempt a sudden, confused, emotional crisis from which he might emerge as an uneasy convert to Patriotism. Such things can often be

² C.S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 1–2.

³ *Ibid.*, 95–97.

managed. But if he is the man I take him to be, try Pacifism. Whichever he adopts, your main task will be the same. Let him begin by treating the Patriotism or the Pacifism as a part of his religion. Then let him, under the influence of partisan spirit, come to regard it as the most important part. Then quietly and gradually nurse him on to the stage at which the religion becomes merely part of the “cause”, in which Christianity is valued chiefly because of the excellent arguments it can produce.... Once you have made the World an end, and faith a means, you have almost won your man, and it makes very little difference what kind of worldly end he is pursuing. Provided that meetings, pamphlets, policies, movements, causes, and crusades, matter more to him than prayers and sacraments and charity, he is ours—and the more “religious” (on those terms) the more securely ours.⁴

Superstitions, if not recognized as such, can be awakened. The point is to keep him feeling that he has something, other than the Enemy and courage the Enemy supplies, to fall back on, so that what was intended to be a total commitment to duty becomes honeycombed all through with little unconscious reservations. By building up a series of imaginary expedients to prevent “the worst coming to the worst” you may produce, at that level of his will which he is not aware of, a determination that the worst *shall not* come to the worst. Then, at the moment of real terror, rush it out into his nerves and muscles and you may get the fatal act done before he knows what you’re about. For remember, the *act* of cowardice is all that matters; the emotion of fear is, in itself, no sin and, though we enjoy it, does us no good.⁵

Scriptures which define the devil:

THE LIAR. “When he lies, he speaks out of his own character, for he is liar and the father of lies” (John 8:44).

THE TEMPTER. “Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. And after fasting

⁴ Ibid., 34–35.

⁵ Ibid., 162–163.

forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. And the tempter came and said to him..." (Matthew 4:1–3).

THE MASQUERADER. "And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Corinthians 11:14).

THE DESTROYER. "Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

In 2010, Rev. David Thompson published a book aptly named, *What in the World is Going On?* In it, he identifies various philosophies of mankind (our fallen ways of thinking about the world and our place in it). They include philosophies such as Naturalism, Darwinism, Secular Humanism, Neo-Marxism, Constructivism, Multiculturalism, Pantheism, and Paganism. Why do such destructive philosophies find fertile ground to grow in the fallen heart and mind of man? The devil, in his successful temptation of Eve and Adam, as described in Genesis 3, gained not only a foothold on the beachhead of the human heart and mind, but conquered it entirely. Adam and Eve accepted his lies for truth while God's truth became to them the total lie. (Evil became good and good evil.) So, the devil owns us as well, the fallen children of our fallen first parents. All of us would remain fully committed to his lies as the rock solid truth, and enter a state of permanent self-destruction because of our sins against our holy Creator. To the judgment furnace of hell God would condemn us if not for his promise to Adam and Eve after their fall. In their hearing he proclaimed to the devil that he would send an almighty divine Savior in human form, born of a woman, to save Adam and Eve, and all mankind. We learn of this promise in Genesis 3:15 as God spoke to the devil, "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head and you will strike his heel." Just as the devil tempted the woman into self-destruction, so his destruction would come from a woman. Her offspring—denoted by the singular masculine pronoun "he"—would come with power to crush the devil's head, though "he" would be wounded by the devil in this fight. This Savior, born of a woman, would be none other than God himself, the Creator of the angels himself, therefore, the only one with the power to crush the devil. This promise was fulfilled when God the Father sent his eternal, almighty Son into the world, conceived by the Holy Spirit in a virgin, and born of her in sinless human (male) form, Jesus Christ. He entered the world as Good

News, to defeat the devil at the cross, bearing all the sin of mankind in hell there, dying, and then rising again from death. All who believe in him by the power of the Holy Spirit (the good Ghost!) receive new spiritual life, renewal of knowledge, eternal salvation from sin, death, and the devil, and bodily resurrection.

Life Behind Fig Leaves

The evil genius of the devil is seen in his temptation of Eve: one carefully phrased question, one carefully phrased assertion. The question, “Did God really say...?” The assertion, “You will not surely die...eat of it and be like God...” The question served to soften up Eve for the assertion to follow. The question attacked God’s Word, and so did the assertion. God told Adam that he was *free* to eat from any tree in the garden but death would surely come to him if he ate from the one tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was to be Adam’s altar and pulpit (Luther). But the devil called into doubt that assertion, and Eve, seeing “that the fruit of the tree was good for food, and pleasing to the eye, and desirable for gaining wisdom” (Genesis 3:6), took some and ate, and gave some to Adam, who was with her, and he ate.⁶ The result? “The eyes of both of them were opened and they realized they were naked, and so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves” (Genesis 3:7). In other words, they became like God in their own eyes, the sin of the devil’s own pride. Pride is a wedge-driver, and drive a wedge it did between mankind and God and between the man and his wife. One outcome of this? It corrupted mankind’s desire to fulfill God’s holy command through marriage and family, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, and over every living creature that moves along the ground” (Genesis 1:28). This is so because, in the fall, mankind lost the ability to be chaste. By chaste I mean, keep the Sixth Commandment perfectly, a moral law written first on the conscience of Adam and Eve, and later revealed to Moses at Sinai. “Do not

⁶ Matthew Crick, Sermon on Ephesians 6:1-4, “Fatherhood and the Fourth Commandment”:

So the devil set his sights on Eve, to cause her to rebel, and Adam too. Notice that the devil did not address the head of the house, Adam, but first coaxed Eve to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil both spouses were to honor. It wasn’t that Eve was spiritually weaker than Adam. The devil, in tempting her to eat from the tree, was tempting her to rip the reins of leadership from her husband, and tempting Adam to allow it. This is what happened.

commit adultery,” it says, and that means in thought, word and deed. This Commandment protects God’s institution of marriage, in which one man unites with one woman for the purpose of life-long companionship (spiritual, emotional, and physical), the bearing and raising of children, and the foundation of a stable family life which makes for a stable society and culture. Outside of the Sixth Commandment, there is no chastity, only deviance. This deviance affects how men and women see themselves and each other. In this, men do not understand what it means to be a man (glad godly leader), nor do women understand what it means to be a woman (willing vital helper). Neither understands how the sexes are to relate: men to men, women to women, or with each other. So began humanity’s “life behind fig leaves.” What is going on behind fig leaves today?

A Brief

Chastity until marriage mocked as prudish, unrealistic.

Homosexuality not only accepted, but even preferable, even courageous. (The culture does not associate Christian chastity as courageous; but to be homosexual *is*, especially if one “comes out” to declare their “true” selves. Think about the power of this messaging on our youth!)

Bisexual and transgender, the next battle fronts for complete acceptance in our culture? (What shall transgender marriage look like, or bisexual marriage?)

Rampant divorce, broken families, unwed parents: Not a new issue, remains a big problem. Example: www.washingtonpost.com 12/6/08 by Kay Hymowitz, “Enduring Crisis for the Black Family.” In 1950, 85% of black children born into two parent homes; today, 70% are born to single mothers.

“Lust,” in all its forms, sells, pornography at the casual click of a computer mouse. A multibillion dollar industry.

Abortion: a murderous form of birth control, about 1.2 million abortions/year in America; 19.4 abortions per 1,000 live births, highest rate in western industrialized world; 47% of women who give birth in any given year have had an abortion, 4 in 10 of unintended pregnancies end in abortion (www.operationrescue.org “Abortion in America”).

STDs (even early death) through promiscuity: Homosexual men and women face a *much* shortened lifespan, about 20 years shorter because of sexual disease (“The Dark Side of Gay,” www.chick.com). Our present culture is now beginning to *encourage* this lifestyle, even to our youth, with no concern for the self-destruction of shortened lives.

Heterosexual STDs also increasing especially in the 15–24 year old demographic (www.cdc.gov).

Women “ascending,” men “descending”: more on this in a moment.

Couples with few or no children as a lifestyle choice: Look at the birthrates: In America, 2.0 (Hispanics bumping up this rate); Britain, 2.1 (Muslims bumping up this rate); Germany, 1.4; Italy, 1.4; Spain, 1.4 (www.forbes.com 10/16/12, “Warning Bell for Developing Countries: Declining Birth Rates” by Lee Kuan Yew); Japan, 1.4 (www.zerohedge.com 6/7/13, by Tyler Durden), these numbers are barely sufficient (2.0) or dramatically insufficient to sustain population—huge family, church, and economic implications. See also *Time*, “Having It All Without Having Children,” by Lauren Sandler, August 12, 2013.

Overuse, misuse of contraception: This has led to smaller families; some “contraceptives” are actually abortifacients. (Remember that Margaret Sanger, founder of *Planned Parenthood*, was a huge proponent of contraception and sterilization to destroy the black population; www.blackgenocide.org).

Children being “multiculturalized” to hold the politically-correct positions regarding sexuality. (Public school sex education, Chicago Public School, www.hotair.com August 30, 2013, Ed Morrissey, “Kindergartners Taught Sex Ed,” “I’m okay with it,” said Ayesha Ahmad. “I’d like to think it’s not necessary, but I think our culture dictates you can’t start early enough.” Stephanie Whyte, CPS Chief Health Officer, says, “Whether that means there are two moms at home, everyone’s home life is different, and we introduce the fact that we all have a diverse background.”)

Denigration of Christian chastity as raw bigotry: A well-reasoned response on sexuality as God has designed it might result in the unthinking, unreasoned, flippant accusation, “Are you a homophobe?”⁷

Let’s expand on one of these: *the ascent of women in the culture and the corresponding decline of men, to the harm of all*. This is a direct curse of the fall itself. Eve took the lead from Adam, and he stood silently by, unwilling to protect his wife (and himself) from danger. In fact, we don’t even know the man is with his wife until he took the fruit from her! God’s Word lays most of the blame on him as a failed leader. The fall causes the ongoing power struggle within marriage and between the sexes generally, macho-ism, chauvinism, feminism, physical and

⁷ David C. Thompson, *What in the World Is Going On?* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2010), 1.

emotional abuse, role confusion, and stereotyping. Let's take a look at the world around us.

Some Facts

- Since 2000, 57% of all college enrollments are women.
- In 1970, 80 percent of 25-29 year old men were married; in 2007, only about 40 percent were. In 1970, 85 percent of 30-34 year old men were married; in 2007 only 60 percent were.
- Since 1997, the percentage of men who consider a successful marriage important dropped from 35% to 29%.
- Since 1969, the median wage for American men has declined \$13,000 adjusting for inflation, a decline of 28%.
- In the U.S. 4 in 10 women, in households with children under 18, are now primary breadwinners.⁸
- Only 16-18% of elementary and middle school teachers are male; 2% of kindergarten and preschool.
- An offbeat stat: Running event finishers, 1990, 75% male, 25% female; 2012, 44% male, 56% female, with the numbers becoming more female every year (www.runningusa.org). In the 1970s race event finishers were nearly 100% male since most races disallowed female entries until the early 1970s. (I insert this stat because of my own participation in running events, and see this occurring first hand. The corresponding "racing culture" has changed. Once it was about the competition to do one's best. Now it is more about finishing with friends. As a competitive runner, I find I am increasingly asking myself at the races in which I compete: "Why am I here?")
- In divorce, women get the primary custody of the children 80% of the time.
- Infidelity is often not considered as a factor in dividing up an estate, or in the custody of the children.
- From January 2010-May 2010, church attendance, 47% women, 39% men; www.gallup.com

Cultural Anecdotes

- Home Depot commercials are now geared to the woman. In their commercials you see the wife featured more prominently than

⁸ Catherine Rampell, "U.S. Women on the Rise as Family Breadwinners," May 29, 2013 <www.nytimes.com>.

the husband in the decision making and completion of the home projects.

- Television programs in the past 20 years, featuring the husband/dad as the goofy bumbler, and the wife/mother as the mature, moral superior. Remember *Home Improvement* and *Everybody Loves Raymond*? Same concept in children's books, such as the "Berenstain Bears" series.
- Television shows featuring feminized or homosexual men like, *The New Normal* (thankfully, off air now).
- October is Breast Cancer Awareness Month, which advertises with the color pink. Every October the National Football League (NFL) has its players, coaches, and TV graphics cloaked in pink. Yet NFL viewers and followers skew solidly male. Consider: in 2013, there will be an estimated 232,000 women diagnosed with breast cancer, but 238,000 men will be diagnosed with prostate cancer (www.cancer.org). Where is the NFL's interest, its public advocacy, for the health of men, if health of its fans is what the NFL is truly after?
- The absence of "Men's Studies" programs and "Men's Centers" on college campuses: Apparently men are not allowed to self-advocate where the free exchange of ideas is supposed to be taking place.
- In very recent politics, the 2012 Democratic presidential campaign played its "war on women" card against conservative men and their motives, suggesting that men, particularly Republican men, seek to keep women down. The address at the Republican National Convention by Ann Romney: the thrust of her speech was, as I came away with it, was that moms care for their children more than dads. This, of course, was designed to combat the Democratic messaging. "We Republicans think women are great too." In the end, the message sent by Ann Romney ended up confused to me, essentially saying, "Between Mitt and me, I love our children more, being the mom. However, please vote for Mitt, he really is a good guy!" I don't believe she actually thinks this way, but men were *persona non grata* in the 2012 presidential election, with both parties trolling for the women's vote.
- www.nymag.com, "Alpha Women, Beta Men," by Ralph Gardner, Jr.: "Indeed, there's little evidence to show that as women acquire financial muscle, relations between the sexes have evolved successfully to accommodate the new balance of power. Neither the newly liberated alpha women nor their shell-shocked beta spouses seem comfortable with the role reversal."

Additional Commentary

From *Men on Strike*:

In her book, *The War Against Boys*, (Christina Hoff) Sommers explains in detail the efforts of feminists and their sycophants to turn the educational system into one that favors girls at the expense of boys. Boys and their masculine traits and needs are often frowned upon in U.S. schools, and boys are now seen as “defective girls” in need of a major overhaul. According to Sommers, “gender experts” at Harvard, Wellesley, and Tufts and in the major women’s organizations believe that boys and men in our society will remain sexist (and potentially dangerous) unless socialized away from conventional maleness.... The belief that boys are being wrongly “masculinized” is inspiring a movement to “construct boyhood” in ways that will render boys less competitive, more emotionally expressive, more nurturing—more, in short, like girls....⁹

Helen Smith’s interview of Christina Hoff Sommers, regarding decline in male college enrollment: “HELEN SMITH: Men are attending college at lower rates now than even in 2000 when you wrote your book. Why do you think they are bailing out? Are they on strike? Does disengagement in school at an earlier age correlate to fewer men going to college? What about the notion that men are just going into the military or can get better jobs without a college degree? Does this ring true to you? CHRISTINA HOFF SOMMERS: The moment a young man arrives on the college campus, he is treated as a member of a suspect class. One popular freshmen orientation program is called ‘She Fears You.’ Next there are ‘Take Back the Night’ marches, performances of the Vagina Monologues—accusatory posters plastered all around the school—and lots of classroom readings—all driving home the point that women are from Venus and men are from hell.”¹⁰

In the 1990s, if a woman and man make love and she says she is using birth control but is not, she has the right to raise the

⁹ Helen Smith, *Men on Strike* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013), 69–70.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 84–85.

child without his knowing he even has a child, and then to sue him for retroactive child support even ten to twenty years later (depending on the state).¹¹

Maybe there is no incentive to grow up anymore. It used to be that being a grown-up, responsible man was rewarded with respect, power, and deference. Now you get much less of that, if any at all. You have spent much of your youth confronted with “Boys are Stupid,” T-shirts, listened in health class as you are told you are a potential rapist.... By college, you realize that the hostility is coming at you like a knife. And as you get older, it only gets worse, and the younger guys know it. As a post-college man, you are now seen by the media as a buffoon, a potential pervert, a bumbling dad—if not a deadbeat—and your wife gives you a death stare if you don’t satisfy her every whim. You might even have a child and find out later that it’s not yours, yet you still have to pay up.¹²

From *Total Truth*:

In short, instead of challenging the growing secularism among men, the church largely acquiesced—by turning to women. Churchmen seemed relieved to find at least one sphere, the home, where religion still held sway. Whereas traditional church teaching had held that fathers were responsible for their children’s education, in the early 1800’s, says one historian, “New England ministers fervently reiterated their consensus that mothers were more important than fathers in forming ‘the tastes, sentiments, and habits of children,’ and more effective in instructing them.” As a result, “mothers increasingly took over the formerly paternal task of conducting family prayers.” Once again, we detect a disturbing dynamic: the churches were releasing men from the responsibility of being religious leaders. They were turning religion and morality into the domain of women—something soft and comforting, not bracing and demanding. Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard spoke for many at the time when he complained of the intellectual flabbiness—he called it the “unmanliness”—of religion.¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 42.

¹² Ibid., 10–11.

¹³ Nancy Pearcey, *Total Truth* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2005), 335.

Parroting Intelligence

God created mankind in the persons of Adam and Eve in his holy image. “Let us make man in our image” (Genesis 1:26), God said. This means Adam and Eve were created to be like God in several important ways. First, they were created in holiness, that is, in sinlessness. They also were created with the spiritual capability to recognize their Creator as the only true God, the triune God, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, co-equal Three-in-One, and to trust him, love him, serve him, and do what he wills with a perfectly glad spirit. God also created Adam and Eve with an immortal soul, a moral conscience, rationality, creativity, the ability to think and speak in intricate (distinctly human) language capable of putting into words very complex thoughts concerning even the most complex subject matter. These gifts would enable the generations of man which would spring from them to rule over the creatures of the earth in love and thankfulness to their Creator. All of this reflects the Creator himself, who speaks to us of the wonders of *his* being, and the wonders of the works of his hands by the speaking of his Word. It all began on the first day, when, “God said, ‘Let there be light, and there was light.’ God saw that the light was good, and he separated the light from the darkness. God called the light ‘day,’ and the darkness he called, ‘night.’ And there was evening and there was morning—the first day” (Genesis 1:3-5). On day two, he created sky, including the atmosphere, and seas. On day three, he created dry land and vegetation, seed bearing plants and trees, according to kind. On day four, the sun, moon, and stars to govern the day and night, and to mark the passage of time. On day five, the creatures of water and sky, which would reproduce according to kind. On day six, all creatures that live on the land, which would reproduce according to kind. Finally, also, on day six, Adam (the husband) was formed from the dust of the ground as leader, and Eve (the wife) from the rib of Adam as helper. (And talk about the “unseemly haste” of man’s development! It all happened during the part of one normal day.) All of it was very good, designed to endure in perfect life and harmony forever.

In the fall of our first parents, mankind is now prideful in knowledge, so much so that we claim knowledge of things that the Bible says are not so, and are not supported by clear evidence. In fact, we are merely parroting the whisperings of the devil. Therefore, we “know” wrong things we think are right. We know right things *incompletely* but think we know it all. What right knowledge we do have we improperly *apply* to work against the purposes for which God created us: to

worship him as our Creator, to fill the earth with new generations of children through the institution of marriage, and to tend the creation he has given us for our living and breathing. The devil, of course, rebelled against his creation by God and his God-given purpose, and sought the same rebellion in the heart of man, beginning with Adam and Eve, the first husband and wife, before they had any children, so that all to be born from them would live in constant rebellion against the Creator. The devil tempted them to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Once desiring and eating the fruit, they forgot, even rebelled against, true knowledge: who their Creator is; their purpose and position in the created world; the origin, purpose, design, and destiny of the creation itself. In the sin of our first parents, we parrot the devil, whom Jesus describes as “a liar, and the Father of lies” (John 8:45). And we think we are so wise!

Three Examples

1) Darwinism

Darwinism is not science, unless we accept it as a science of *conjecture*. Science is the study of things that can be directly observed or can be demonstrated through repeated experimentation. For science to remain science it must remain in the realm of what can be seen or proven. Darwinism, with its basic premise that all life originated genetically from a common ancestor, and then branched out into life forms of all types, plant and animal, is neither seen (no, not even in the fossil record) nor can be proven. There can be no retracing of the genetic trail back to the common ancestor, that is, even if it were not an imaginary creature that Darwinism *assumes* to have once existed. There is no evidence that kinds change kinds, although this is assumed to have happened, not once or twice, but over and over, kinds crossing the genetic chasm of kinds through natural selection.

So let's ask: Where (and what) is the common ancestor? How did its genetic language develop from nothing? Was it a single cell creature? Was it a plant or an animal? Where is the documentation of change of kinds, the macro-evolutional proof of transitional forms? How did gender develop in even one creature, not to mention every creature that procreates “according to their kinds” (Genesis 1:24), through the sexual union of a male and a female? If male and female evolved over extremely long periods of time, how was any species of any kind able to produce a single offspring before “mom and dad” were genetically and biologically

and anatomically able to do so? Not to mention, where did the parents come from? What is the purpose of an eye to a creature, if that eye, in the slow process of evolution, could not yet produce sight? What is the purpose of a hoof, paw, or foot, which was not evolved sufficiently to support weight and mobilize? What is the purpose of a wing that had not evolved sufficiently to lift a bird from the ground, a fin that could not propel through water? What is the purpose of skin that was not yet skin, fur not yet fur, scales not yet scales, a heart that could not yet pump blood, lungs or gills that could not yet extract oxygen? What is the purpose of an immune system not yet fully evolved to protect a creature from infection and disease? How could a creature survive while it waited on its sense of thirst or hunger to evolve? Survival of the fittest? How about survival of the *unfit*?

If Darwinists are honest with themselves they must admit that no creature had any chance to survive, even exist. Obviously there are no answers to any of these questions in Darwinism. Darwinism cannot get past *the very first question*: why is there anything at all? Darwinism is considered the jewel of human knowledge. In actuality, it is a sticky web of lies and half-truths. How many people are caught helplessly wriggling in this web, considering Christianity discredited because of it? How many Christians have been caught or are now caught (including seminary professors, theologians, and pastors) by its claims? How many among us in the world today consider this settled science and are no longer open to debate or consideration of creation? It is a lie of the devil. Its purpose: to “ungod” the creation in the minds of all people.

Additional Commentary

From *Secrets of the Sixth Edition*:

The earth’s origins evidence is, by natural law, public domain by virtue of the fact we all reside equally on the planet and can make no special claims on the origins evidence. So when Darwin determined to interpret the earth’s origins evidence exclusively to fit his personal belief system, he was confiscating public property. This could not have been done had a segment of the science establishment not aided and abetted. The time is long past due when the earth’s origins evidence is wrested from the evolution dogmatists and returned to the public. Legitimate scientific methodology, educational idealism, and compassionate consideration of alternative beliefs all stand opposed

to a curriculum that is unconstitutional, unscientific, indoctrinating, and discriminatory.¹⁴

From *Darwin on Trial*:

He described *The Origin of Species* as “one long argument” and the point of the argument was that the common ancestry thesis was so logically appealing that rigorous empirical testing was not required. He proposed no daring experimental tests, and thereby started his science on the wrong road. Darwin himself established the tradition of explaining away the fossil record, of citing selective breeding as verification without acknowledging its limitations, and of blurring the critical distinction between minor and major innovations. The central Darwinist concept that later came to be called the “fact of evolution”—descent with modification—was thus from the start protected from empirical testing.... The central concept is all-important because there is no distinction between the “fact” of evolution and Darwin’s theory.¹⁵

From *Secrets of the Sixth Edition*:

Julian Huxley, grandson of T.H. Huxley and one of the chief spokesmen for the hypothesis, declared, “He was an atheist, and Darwin’s real achievement was to remove the whole idea of God as a creator of organisms from the sphere of rational discussion.”¹⁶

From *In The Beginning God*:

Professor Richard Lewontin is one of many evolutionists who has admitted frankly, “We take the side of science in spite of the patent absurdity of some of its constructs in spite of its failure to fulfill many of its extravagant promises of health and life, in spite of the tolerance of the scientific community for unsubstantiated just-so stories, because we have a prior commitment, a commitment to materialism. It is not that the methods and institutions of science somehow compel us to accept a material

¹⁴ Randall Hedtke, *Secrets of The Sixth Edition* (Green Forest: Master Books Printing, 2010), 70.

¹⁵ Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1993), 151.

¹⁶ Hedtke, 136.

explanation of the phenomenal world, but, on the contrary, that we are forced by our a priori adherence to material causes to create an apparatus of investigation and a set of concepts that produce material explanations, no matter how counter-intuitive, no matter how mystifying to the uninitiated. Moreover, that materialism is an absolute, for we cannot allow a Divine Foot in the door.”¹⁷

2) *Climate Change*

The science of “climate change” has all the hallmarks of Darwinism, making it another science of conjecture. First, it argues against Christian doctrine in the same way as Darwinism. It assumes there is no God, and therefore, no Creator. Climate and weather can only be understood materialistically (no God in control). Man is an alien destroyer of the planet. “Climate change,” in this sense, is another attempt to “ungod” the human mind and culture. Scientifically speaking, “climate change” fails as real science. Temperature has crept up in the last century or so by such a small amount that without modern instruments no one would notice it. Even this increase is debatable, considering the inaccuracy inherent in determining worldwide temperature averages. Yet the claim has been made that one factor (or variable) among the many that influence climate, greenhouse gasses, mainly the CO₂ put into the atmosphere by man’s activity, is to blame for this insignificant rise. The claim has been made that there is a direct and strong correlation between increasing of greenhouse gasses and temperature. What are the facts? CO₂ is a *trace* gas in our atmosphere, just 4% of the earth’s total atmosphere. Mankind’s contribution to this 4% is a mere 4% (or 4% of 4%)! CO₂ is *necessary* for life on earth—plant life requires it—as we rightly learned in school. We require plants to do their job so we may breathe oxygen! This is scientific fact. But, now, the EPA is allowed to legally classify CO₂ (again, a gas *necessary* for life on earth as God designed it) as a *pollutant*, which is not a fact, but a political determination. There is no scientific way to isolate the effect of greenhouse gas from all the other factors that influence climate, including the sun, and its relative activity, weather patterns, ocean currents and temperatures, volcanic activity, water vapor, cloud cover, forestation, etc. The climate is extremely complicated. There is much we don’t understand about it.

¹⁷ Joel Heck, *In the Beginning God* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 79–80.

There is much we don't know that we don't even know. But God knows and God controls. Finally, what is the perfect worldwide temperature for our planet to thrive? Is there one? Can anybody beside God know?

"Climate change" once was known as "global warming," a movement that began soon after the global cooling scare of the 1970s. Problem is, since 1997, there has been no warming at all, but even a slight cooling, so the term "global warming" lost its impact, and we began to hear of "climate change," a much vaguer term that can serve to explain everything. A theory that explains everything explains nothing. Perhaps the climate *is* changing ... getting colder again! The Antarctic ice sheet continues to *grow*, setting modern records. The Arctic ice sheet now has 62% more ice than a year ago at this time (September 2012), or 533,000 additional square miles.¹⁸ More cold temperature records were set in 2012 than warm. (Too much cold, by the way, is far more dangerous to human life and society and economy than too much warmth. Yet we *want* it to get colder?) This year, 2013, there were no hurricanes in the Atlantic basin until September 11, tying a record slow start to the hurricane season in the satellite age. Weren't they supposed to become more frequent and stronger? Yet, "climate change" is settled science, identified as the cause for extreme weather, warm weather, cold weather, dry weather, and wet weather. "The earth is losing its ability to cool itself," said my favorite local weatherman in San Antonio, Texas (exact quote). If the projections are wrong, and currently the climate models are way off, with global temperatures dropping below the low end of projections, everything can be explained by a new speculation cloaked in the garb of science-speak. (Does this sound a little like Darwinism?) And the solutions to "climate change" all involve, not surprisingly, the growth of the state over/against the freedom of the private citizen. Consider: why are the scientists invested in "climate change" theory unhappy that there has been a "pause" in the warming for 15-16 years? Shouldn't they be happy that the earth is not warming as they predicted? But they are not happy, not at all, and this says a lot. It says this is not science any more than Darwinism is, and the proponents of it are not dispassionate scientists, but cheerleading advocates, living off government grants (a big business), which support their research into the causes and effects of "climate change." Let us not forget the numerous and mounting climate scandals, the fudging of evidence by scientists to make it fit their dire projections.

¹⁸ www.climatedepot.com.

Additional Commentary

From www.dailycaller.com; “MIT Professor: Global Warming Is a Religion:”

Throughout history, governments have twisted science to suit a political agenda. Global warming is no different, according to Dr. Richard Lindzen of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. “Global climate alarmism has been costly to society, and it has the potential to be vastly more costly. It has also been damaging to science, as scientists adjust both data and even theory to accommodate politically correct positions,” writes Lindzen in the fall 2013 issue of the *Journal of American Physicians and Surgeons*. According to Lindzen, scientists make essentially “meaningless” claims about certain phenomenon [sic]. Activists for certain causes take up claims made by scientists and politicians who respond to the alarmism spread by activists by doling out more research funding — creating an “Iron Triangle” of poor incentives. “How can one escape from the Iron Triangle when it produces flawed science that is immensely influential and is forcing catastrophic public policy?” Lindzen asks. Lindzen compares global warming to past politicized scientific movements: the eugenics movement in the early 20th Century and Lysenkoism in the Soviet Union under Stalin. However, the MIT professor argues that global warming goes even beyond what these past movements in terms of twisting science. “Global Warming has become a religion,” writes Lindzen. “A surprisingly large number of people seem to have concluded that all that gives meaning to their lives is the belief that they are saving the planet by paying attention to their carbon footprint.” “There may be a growing realization that this may not add all that much meaning to one’s life, but, outside the pages of the *Wall Street Journal*, this has not been widely promulgated, and people with no other source of meaning will defend their religion with jihadist zeal,” he added.¹⁹

¹⁹ “MIT Professor: Global Warming Is a Religion,” 8/29/2013, www.dailycaller.com.

From *New England Runner* by Nancy Clark, nutritionist, Jan/Feb 2013 (an example of how the science of “climate change” affects the “thinking” of a human mind open to such messaging):

Mushrooms have an “umami” (meaty, savory) flavor that allows them to easily substitute for meat. How about adding more mushrooms to your next beef stew, spaghetti sauce, or meatballs to save calories and saturated fat—as well as help save the environment? According to the Center for Science in the Public Interest, for every two pounds less beef we eat, we spare the environment about 60 pounds of greenhouse gasses. This adds up; we don’t need more super-storms like Sandy.²⁰

From www.nationalreview.com by Jay Richards:

I love it when radical environmentalists come right out and say what they’re thinking. Some UK outfit called the “*Optimum Population Trust*” is urging Britons to *stop at two children* in order to combat global warming. John Guillebaud is the co-chairman of the organization and also “emeritus professor of family planning at University College London.” He gives Al Gore a run for his money when it comes to overheated rhetoric: “The greatest thing anyone in Britain could do to help the future of the planet would be to have one less child.” Of course, the conclusion follows logically from a misanthropic but quite popular assumption: human beings are basically consumers and despoilers, not producers and creators. We’re the problem, not the solution. Given this apparently indisputable truth, why encourage even two kids? Why not encourage just one, or none? Perhaps the OPT is being as wise as serpents, and recommending the two child policy as merely a starting point, you know, just to get the conversation going.... What’s troubling is not that some academic in Britain says crazy things. What’s troubling is that, since his logic follows from assumptions widely held on the environmental left, given enough time, the culture—and the state—could easily begin to treat childbearing as a crime. Check out the detailed OPT website for a vision of the future if the extremists prevail.²¹

²⁰ Nancy Clark, *New England Runner*, Jan/Feb 2013, 19.

²¹ Jay Richards, 5/7/07, www.nationalreview.com.

3) *Multiculturalism*

Included under the umbrella term “multiculturalism” we find racialists and feminists and sexual identity advocates. These voices attempt to sound reasonable and empathetic. Isn’t there racism in the world? Haven’t women been discriminated against? Aren’t gays, lesbians, bi-sexual and transgender born that way? These voices pose the questions and then answer them with a form of knowledge—empty of knowledge—but accepted by many as knowledge! We hear these voices speak through public education, media, government, and corporations. They seek to create and perpetuate suspicion, anger, victimhood, and vengefulness in the culture, with the objects of scorn being white (Christian) men.

Consider Republican New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, who declared that homosexuals are born that way, and, on this basis, conversion therapy is now outlawed in New Jersey.²² There is *no scientific proof* for his contention, yet he signed this into law based on *non-existent* science, which will have a huge impact on Christian therapists operating in the state. Yet, what we do *know* is that homosexuals have been and are continually rescued from their sin through Christ and with the help of God the Holy Spirit are able to live new lives in him. The Apostle Paul indicates as such. Do we think that the apostles did not minister successfully to homosexuals and those addicted to temple prostitution in their day (1 Corinthians 6:9-10)?

Additional Commentary

From *Postmodern Times*:

Contemporary scholars seek to dismantle the paradigms of the past and “to bring the marginal into the center” (rewriting history in favor those who have been excluded from power—women, homosexuals, blacks, Native Americans, and other victims of oppression). Scholars attack received ideas with withering skepticism, while constructing new models as alternatives. Those who celebrate the achievements of Western civilization are accused of a narrow-minded “Euro-centrism”; this view is challenged by “Afro-centrism,” which exalts Africa as the pinnacle of civilization. Male-dominant thought is replaced by feminist models. “Patriarchal religions” such as Judaism

²² “Chris Christie Signs New Jersey Ban on Gay Conversion Therapy,” April 19, 2013, www.politico.com.

and Christianity are challenged and replaced with matriarchal religions; the influence of the Bible is countered by the influence of “goddess-worship.” Homosexuality must no longer be considered a psychological problem; rather, homophobia is. The new models tend to be adopted without the demands for rigorous evidence required by traditional scholarship. If Eurocentrism is a fault, one would think Afro-centrism would be similarly narrow-minded. If patriarchy is wrong, why would matriarchy be any better? But these quibbles miss the point of post-modernist scholarship. Truth is not the issue. The issue is power.²³

Fighting to Lose an Unholy War

Fourteen hundred years of Islamic militancy, jihad, Sharia law, denigration of women, murder of Christians and now terrorism! You would think that, by now, more would see Islam for what it is: a destructive force in the world. Yet how strangely a-historical we are about this, although we have easy access to its history via the internet. We hear that Islamic militancy, jihad, is something new; a corruption, an aberration, of true Islam. What does history *say*? Militancy, violence, murder of the “infidel” has been present wherever Islam has been present, a religion built on the devil’s lies about God and his Son Jesus Christ. Islam is the reason that formerly Christian lands in North Africa and the eastern Mediterranean (Syria and Turkey) are no longer Christian, and the ancient library in Alexandria destroyed. The Middle Ages were largely dominated by the politics of “What to do about the Turk?” God made use of such politics to preserve Martin Luther’s excommunicated head as the Ottoman Empire was surging north in a two pronged attack through Spain and Vienna. Islamic nations invested themselves in the African slave trade well before the European slave trade of the 18th and 19th centuries, and continued long after the Christian William Wilberforce, through God’s hand, successfully outlawed the slave trade and finally slavery itself in the British Empire.²⁴ President Jefferson employed U.S. naval forces to destroy the threat of Islamic pirates on the open waters during his term in office. What is happening now, throughout the world, is nothing new. Yet, national leaders and state department officials, of both political parties, say glowing things of

²³ Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1994), 57.

²⁴ www.answering-islam.org/green/slavery.htm.

Islam, calling it one of the world’s “great religions,” and, “a religion of peace,” that has been hijacked only recently by “extremists.” Can anyone recall these same leaders say such glowing things—recently, directly, or prominently—about Christianity? In some U.S. military training materials, Christianity is now being identified as a potential enemy of the state, Evangelicals and Catholics examples of potential extremism, and Christian military chaplains being required to remove Bibles from their desks, all so that Muslims (among others) won’t be offended.²⁵ The FBI has been destroying instructional materials that explicitly tie Muslims and their affiliated terror groups to terrorism.²⁶

It is well-documented that Islamist groups like the “Council on American-Islamic Relations” (CAIR) have gained great influence with some in Congress and the White House.²⁷ I wonder about the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). Are the security screenings at airports, where people are pulled out of line for extra screening, truly random? Is there courage to pull a Muslim out of line without fear of CAIR filing a complaint of racial profiling? Consider how the U.S. Army turned the other way in regard to the enemy in its midst, Major Nidal Hasan, despite warning flags he was running up the pole. Even now, convicted on all charges and sentenced to death, our government calls his act “workplace violence” rather than an act of war. Those soldiers killed or wounded by him are not eligible for purple hearts or military benefits for themselves or family.²⁸ We see multiculturalism at work through the U.S. government’s handling of the Islamic threat.

Here’s the multicultural rub: In our day, many have come to blame Islamic terrorism on *religious fundamentalism* generally. The danger of religious fundamentalism, we hear it said, exists among Christians too, especially among orthodox biblical Christians, who believe, teach, and confess the fundamentals of Christianity just as Jesus commanded in the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20). How does (or will) the blurring of this difference between Islamic terrorism and traditional Christian mission work hinder our work as Christians among our fellow citizens open to such messaging? Already, are we not terrorists

²⁵ Robert Spencer, “U.S. Army Equates Catholic and Evangelical Christianity with Al-Qaeda and Hamas,” April 8, 2013, www.frontpagemag.com.

²⁶ “U.S. Bans Linking Terrorism to Muslims in Agent Training,” Feb 15, 2012, www.judicialwatch.org.

²⁷ Joseph Klein, “CAIR’s Campaign Against Truth,” Nov 11, 2011, www.frontpagemag.com.

²⁸ Jeff Jacoby, “Fort Hood Victims Deserve Purple Hearts,” August 14, 2013, www.bostonglobe.com.

to many because we confess that abortion, euthanasia, and embryonic stem-cell research is murder and that chastity occurs only within the marriage of one man to one woman, and that Christ is the only way to heaven? “What do you mean homosexuality is a sin? What do you mean a woman doesn’t have a right to ‘end a pregnancy’? How hateful you are! What do you mean Christ is the only way to heaven? How intolerant you are! You are just one of those religious fundamentalists that cause wars! Conversation over!”

Additional Commentary

From *Christianity in an Age of Terrorism*:

Christians can be both patriotic and, when necessary, critical of their government. They are to submit to the lawful authorities and, when necessary, exercise their office of citizenship by voting them out of office. In a time of terrorism and war, they can support their nation’s efforts to protect their fellow citizens and to exact retribution against its enemies. But good citizens need to be vigilant, not only against the threat of terrorism, but against the threat of bad government. In the new cultural climate after 9-11, we must continually assess the political climate as the years unfold. Could the culture go from the extreme of anything goes, the extreme of permissiveness that characterizes postmodernism, to the other extreme of social oppression? The government’s initial responses to the terrorist threat have surely been appropriate. Having to be physically frisked in airports, though, like criminals caught in the act, rubs Americans the wrong way. Such indignities are minor, but what might lie ahead? Left wing politicians are rejoicing that the era of distrust of government is over. Whereas the Bible assigns the government one major task, namely, to restrain evil and to punish evildoers (Romans 13:3,4)—which it is now fulfilling, which arguably neglecting [sic] this task before—this may become a pretext for assuming control over many other spheres of life, which are properly the business of other vocations. Many in the timorous public seem willing to give up freedom for security—just as the great Christian culture critic Francis Schaeffer warned decades ago. Whatever happens, Christians must not surrender their say in these matters or allow themselves to be silenced just because their concerns (about the terrorism of

abortion, for example) are motivated by their Christian faith. This would be to abandon one of their divine callings.²⁹

All the King's Horses (And His Men Too)

Civil government often has an uneasy relationship with Christians in its midst. Civil government often sees Christians—no, Christ himself—as the enemy of its aims. Psalm 2 says so! Of course, civil government has been established by God to govern people, with this basic *good* goal: hinder wickedness so that the law-abiding may enjoy the relative (though not complete) protection of life and property. Because government is only an abstract concept until actual people begin to govern (in America that means elected leaders, bureaucratic employees, police, fire, military, etc.), it is people who influence how the government operates. What “government people” believe about the aims of government, their role in achieving these aims, and their determination and ability to achieve these aims, largely shapes the type of government people will have. This is true, irrespective of constitution, as we have seen in the political history of this country. There is constant debate over the meaning of the words of the U.S. Constitution, even though, in their historical context, they are clear, and written to be so. Every election cycle is a fight over the wording of the U.S. Constitution! Christians are those who pray their leaders to remember their place under God, so that all may live peaceful and quiet lives (1 Timothy 2:1-2) while, at the same time, resisting the self-glorifying tendencies present in all civil governments (Daniel 6:1-11). This “resistance” explains why civil government often attempts to throw Christians to the lions, so to speak.

One type of governing philosophy tends to devour everything else over time, even well-written constitutions, and that is statism. The *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition, says statism is a “concentration of economic controls and planning in the hands of a highly centralized government.” I would suggest that statism encompasses more than this today. I would include also the control and planning of religious thinking/morality/public education/health care/environmental controls by that same highly centralized government. In statism, everything is its business, and everything intersects with everything else, right down to the type of diet a private citizen decides to eat, for the common good. Statism is state *self-glorification*. World

²⁹ Gene Edward Veith, *Christianity in an Age of Terrorism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2002), 112.

history teaches us that statism is hardly rare. In fact, we see statist-type governments dominate much of the history of the Old and New Testaments of the Bible: Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, Persia, Rome, and the statisticians who led these governments: pharaohs, kings, and emperors. Even in Old Testament Israel, a civil government structure which God, through Moses, established and defined in his law, statisticians came and went: evil kings like Ahab who vacated their vocation by ruling opposed to God's Word, and therefore viewed Christ as the enemy and God's true prophets like Elijah (who preached Christ) as troublemakers to their statist "control" aims.

What is my point? In our day and age statism is dominant, the economic systems in place, and heads of state to run them. Since President Woodrow Wilson (or before), statist philosophies have taken root in America. Presently, is not President Barack Obama a statist? President George W. Bush clearly had statist tendencies. Remember his "Compassionate Conservatism" slogan? Personally, when I heard him utter this, my "small government" warning flag went immediately *up*. I didn't need conservatism to be compassionate, just conservative, which, in turn, allows the private citizen to serve his neighbor freely, vocationally, with compassion. In order to grow the state, statisticians must shrink God and Christ, who is the Good Shepherd of daily bread and eternal salvation. For this reason, in part, Jesus warned his apostles against shepherding His Church in this fashion, saying, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that" (Luke 22:25).

The 20th century was a good century if you like statisticians and their experimentation in social, religious and economic theory. Think of the "wonderful" overlap of Lenin, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini, the Japanese emperor Hirohito, and Mao Tse-tung. There were many in Britain and America who were envious of the command and control economies implemented by Mussolini, Hitler, and Stalin. Did these statisticians bring peace, freedom, and prosperity to their people or destruction of the same? History gives us the answer: it all came to a head in World War II. When World War II was over, Hitler and Mussolini were dead. Hirohito witnessed the intense destructiveness of atomic power and then presided over a ruined post-war empire. Yet, two on this list grew in strength: Stalin, who was already firmly entrenched in power before the war, and especially Mao. After the war they continued their merry way, establishing atheist worship of the state as "God," and they, themselves, as "divine" heads of the state. They promised to all those who acquiesced

to them a national Eden, and this, *even after the “nation-against-nation” mass-destruction just witnessed by all during World War II.* They pillaged and murdered millions. Persecution of Christians—those would never worship the state as their God—was most severe! They accomplished all this largely by focusing their efforts on the “next generation” through state-controlled education, which turned children against their parents and Christian belief.

World War II achieved some good for the United States, though not in the way most people think. I contend that one of the greatest benefits of World War II for our country was that it slowed the implementation of totalitarian theory here. Suddenly Mussolini and Hitler (and Stalin) weren’t so fashionable, even among our nation’s elitist journalists, politicians, and academics. But American statisticians did not die; they simply cloaked themselves and their projects in careful words until it was safe for an open return to power. It has become fashionable (at least, sufficiently) to be an open statist in early 21st-century America. Statisticians in our nation are seeking to complete the work begun by Wilson and FDR. The current push toward single-payer nationalized healthcare is a certain example of this, a long-held goal of American statisticians. Through changes in tax law prompted by the New Deal, health care became tied to one’s corporate job as an untaxed benefit in place of direct salary. But this made individual coverage increasingly unaffordable, which placed an extra burden on the self-employed. This highly influences the employment Americans today seek: does the job provide health care coverage? The “Patient Protection and *Affordable* Care Act” and its state exchanges is merely the next layover on the way to single payer. If our nation does not turn from this course, the state will soon be the only one in the game; private coverage and payment by cash a thing of the past.³⁰ Even now, due to this legislation, premiums are rapidly increasing, previously held coverage plans are being canceled, access to medical care and facilities restricted, and companies dropping their employees onto the state exchanges. Suddenly, a citizen’s health care involves not only his physician and insurance plan (or cash payment), but also the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the IRS itself. The citizen will soon find his most private details becoming an open digitalized book to the state. Considering the favoritism the IRS showered on the political allies of the Democratic Party in the 2012 election cycle, how should a conservative Christian church body think when it is being mandated to report its health insurance coverage to this same IRS?

³⁰ “The Attack on Self-Insurance,” September 12, 2013, www.online.wsj.com.

Some further considerations. Congress, for decades, has been handing its constitutional authority to legislate to the executive branch by passing hollow laws and authorizing departments like the EPA or the HHS to fill in and modify the details as they see fit, all of which carry the force of law. Consider the EPA's growing control over energy production in America. It hinders the development of energy sources it does not favor (stable production of electricity by coal, oil, gas, and nuclear power) and promotes energy sources it does favor (intermittent, inefficient and expensive wind and solar) to "save the planet," even handing out financial favors to its environmental friends like defunct solar panel manufacturer Solyndra. But the private citizen ends up paying for it to heat and cool his home. Consider the HHS and its granting of health coverage waivers to big business, while at the same time testing the resolve of religious organizations by mandating that contraception and abortifacients be included in the health care coverage offered by these organizations. Yet, at the same time it defines "church" so narrowly that most religious organizations are not considered church, and therefore not exempt from the mandate on conscience grounds. Consider the Supreme Court's 2012 ruling that grants the U.S. federal government the right to mandate American citizens to purchase a product (health care coverage) under its taxing power. Consider the growing surveillance state in the name of security.³¹ Consider the Department of Homeland Security's (DHS) militarization of local police forces and the growing willingness by police to use such firepower.³² Consider the multiculturalism of the public education and university system which indoctrinates our young with anti-Christian, evolutionary "morality" and worldviews. The private citizen—does he feel free in today's America? If so, in what

³¹ Peggy Noonan, "What We Lose If We Give Up Privacy?" August 16, 2013, www.online.wsj.com:

What is privacy? Why should we want to hold onto it? Why is it important, necessary, precious? Is it just some prissy relic of the pre-technological past? We talk about this now because of Edward Snowden, the National Security Agency revelations, and new fears that we are operating, all of us, within what has become or is becoming a massive surveillance state. They log your calls here, they can listen in, they can read your emails. They keep the data in mammoth machines that contain a huge collection of information about you and yours. This of course is in pursuit of a laudable goal, security in the age of terror. Is it excessive? It certainly appears to be. Does that matter? Yes. Among other reasons: The end of the expectation that citizens' communications are and will remain private will probably change us as a people, and a country.

³² J.D. Hayes, "DHS Helping to Fund Militarization of Local Police Departments," May 9, 2013, www.naturalnews.com.

sense? If not, is this not a most dangerous development in the heart of our nation going forward?

Surely, however, we are not entering the age of Hitler, Stalin or Mao in our country. No, I don't think we are. Statists do not have to be mass murderers to be statist. American statist *are*, however, seeking to make the state "God" in place of the true God of the Bible. What does a state god promise? To remove risk for its citizens. "If you, citizen, are willing to give up a little more freedom, just a little more, we'll be happy to take care of you, just a little bit more, a little bit more." This is not the vocation of government as God established.

Consider the statist philosophy expressed in a speech given by President Barack Obama in Chattanooga, Tennessee, on July 30, 2013: "I've come to Chattanooga today to talk about that first and most important cornerstone of a middle-class life: a good job in a durable, growing industry." And again, "*A growing economy that creates good, middle-class jobs.*" And again, "What we need is a serious, steady, long-term American strategy that reverses the long erosion of middle class security and gives everyone a fair shot to get ahead. More good jobs that pay decent wages. A better bargain for the middle class. An economy that grows from the middle-out."³³ These comments trouble me in two ways. First, that the government bureaucracy, as President Obama gives it voice, sees as its personal task to provide jobs within the economy for the citizens of the state. Second, that the same government bureaucracy is prompting American citizens to lower expectations, to trim aspirations, to think in terms of jobs "to find" of that safe, decent, durable "middle class" variety. Historically, the citizens of and immigrants to this country did not think in these self-limiting terms. Rather, this was a nation where one could freely aspire to put an idea to work and see where it goes according to God's blessing. You might succeed or fail, but you were free to do either, and try, try again. It should not surprise us that the human spirit longs to live in this way. God has created man to work and to tend (Genesis 2:15), and that for the life-long provision of one's family (Genesis 3:19). I suggest that the American statist doesn't want the citizenry too poor (offer government benefits) or too rich (tax ambition and transfer wealth), and that he will control each end. So, middle class contentment—that would be fine by the American statist, I believe—as long as the people recognize that it is the government successfully arranging the pieces on the board to get them a "fair

³³ "Obama Calls for a Grand Bargain on Middle Class Jobs in Tennessee," July 30, 2013, www.tndp.org.

shot” at that “good job.” It is the government that will pick and choose the companies it would like to see survive and thrive, and support those companies that are willing to serve its version of morality (race, gender, sexual identity, religious, environmental) enforced through regulation. Is it not just this sort of regulation that has made it increasingly difficult for a private citizen to muster the energy and capital to survive the gauntlet of regulation to get their product, service, or idea to market, and so support himself and his family independently, without having to twist himself into various contortions, those in which the state desires to see him?

Clearly, we live in a corporate economy, largely brought about by the New Deal, where only the “big” have the means to navigate the maze of statist burdens and regulation and to lobby and gain favors from the same state if they will offer something (like no open criticism of the state) in return. Some mourn the loss of the local hardware store. But who understands why it is corporate Home Depot that took its place? Has this created a sense of resignation about one’s future in the workplace? Is this de-masculinizing men as heads of family? Who is promoting freedom today, that is, freedom to freely dare, and through daring (that is, freely trusting God), provide for one’s family this way without undue intersection with state promises, policies, and morality (environmental, multicultural, etc.) power plays?

Additional Commentary

From *Liberal Fascism*:

Woodrow Wilson candidly observed that the primary mission of the educator was to make children as unlike their parents as possible. Charlotte Perkins Gilman stated it more starkly. “There is no more brilliant hope on earth to-day than this new thought about the child ... the recognition of ‘the child’ children as a class, children as citizens with rights to be guaranteed only by the state; instead of our previous attitude toward them of absolute personal (that is, parental) ownership—the unchecked tyranny ... of the private home.”³⁴

From *Robert Frost, The Years of Triumph, 1915–1938*: (A quote by poet Robert Frost of New Hampshire who believed that local economy was preferable to the acceleration toward corporatism through FDR’s New Deal. He was deeply concerned over the direction it would take the

³⁴ Jonah Goldberg, *Liberal Fascism* (New York: Double Day, 2007), 326.

nation. One day he was having dinner with the president of Harvard, James Bryant Conant, a supporter of FDR, who praised the president during their dinner for bringing in the Teamster's Union, promising the Union support by the White House. The poet replied to the president the way he saw it.)

Frost, disgusted by this the latest sign of New Deal largesse, sarcastically suggested to Conant that a good title for that speech of assurances might be, "Every Man's Home His Own Poorhouse," because all of those Teamsters would eventually be living on government charity. Not amused, Conant answered gruffly, "You have a bitter tongue."³⁵

From *Robert Frost, The Years of Triumph, 1915–1938*: A quote by Ferner Nuhn, an academic and friend of Frost, spoken in support of New Deal liberalism as he responded to Frost's poem on economic individualism *Build Soil*:

I stand on it, and feel "inside in it" in it: that, as once we changed modes from monarchy to democracy, so now we are changing modes from individual to corporate economics.³⁶

From Robert Frost's *Build Soil*:

Keep off each other and keep each other off. You see the beauty of my proposal is it needn't wait on general revolution. I bid you to a one-man revolution—the only revolution that is coming.

From *Liberal Fascism*:

The past shows unvaryingly that when a people's freedom disappears, it goes not with a bang, but in silence amid the comfort of being cared for. That is the dire peril in the present trend toward statism. If freedom is not found accompanied by a willingness to resist, and to reject favors, rather than to give up what is intangible but precarious, it will not long be found at all.³⁷

³⁵ Lawrence Thompson, *Robert Frost, The Years of Triumph, 1915–1938* (Holt, Rinehart, and Winston of Canada, LTD, 1970), 448.

³⁶ Thompson, 457.

³⁷ Goldberg, 391.

From *The Rage Against God*:

Soviet citizens all knew life was like this. While most struggled to survive, a secret elite enjoyed great privileges—special living spaces, special hospitals with Western drugs and equipment, special schools in which their children were well taught in English, special waiting rooms in stations and airports, and special lanes (one ran down the middle of the street on which I lived) along which the Politburo's giant armored limousines roared at 90 miles an hour, shouldering aside anyone who dared get in the way. The elite had privileged access to good food, foreign travel and books, and the groveling servility of the organs of the state, which oppressed the common people and extorted money from them. This society, promoted by its leaders as an egalitarian utopia, was in truth one of the most unequal societies on earth.³⁸

I came to a conclusion—and nothing has since shifted it—that enormous and intrusive totalitarian state power, especially combined with militant egalitarianism, is an enemy of civility, of consideration, and even of enlightened self-interest. I also concluded that a high moral standard cannot be reached or maintained unless it is generally accepted and understood by an overwhelming number of people. I have since concluded that a hitherto Christian society that was de-Christianized would also face such problems, because I have seen public discourtesy and incivility spreading rapidly in my own country as Christianity is forgotten.³⁹

From *Liberal Fascism*:

The state's role is not so much to make every decision as to be the metronome. In a properly ordered progressive society, the state wouldn't take over Harvard or McDonald's, but it would certainly ensure that the Harvards and McDonald's had their priorities straight. The politics of meaning is ultimately a theocratic doctrine because it seeks to answer the fundamental questions about existence, argues that they can only be answered

³⁸ Peter Hitchens, *The Rage Against God* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010), 82–83.

³⁹ Hitchens, 91.

collectively, and insists that the state put those answers into practice.⁴⁰

“Business enterprises,” according to Reich,⁴¹ “are rapidly becoming the central mediating structures in American society, replacing geographic communities as the locus of social services and, indeed, social life.”⁴²

When Your Fifteen Minutes Are Never Up

Hardly a man takes a half hour’s nap after dinner, but when he awakes he holds up his head and asks, “What’s the news?”⁴³

I think most people are familiar with the saying concerning fame: everybody gets their “fifteen minutes.” One dire effect of the internet—I say *dire*—is that it is easier than ever to gain that fame and the fame often has no redeeming value at all, perhaps over some crude sexual dance. In a sense, the fame that one gains today is more fleeting than ever before, yet also more enduring. It is fleeting because internet sensations come and go within days, even hours. Sometimes we hear of a video clip posted on YouTube going viral, getting hundreds of thousands, even millions of hits. How and why? The video tickled the culture somehow. It, then, becomes a permanent fixture on the internet, yet we move on.

Consider the dynamic of Yahoo! News. I have a Yahoo! email account. Every time I check my email I am brought to the Yahoo! News homepage first. Wow, the stories that lead sometimes! Daily I am presented with important information: which celebrity wore what dress, and how high (or low) the dress was, and whether it wowed or offended the fashion tastes of high society. More exactly to my point, I routinely learn about regular people who are suddenly smiling at me on Yahoo! News for any strange quirk they might have. I remember one young girl, I think she was in her early 20s, who was said to have the health of an 80-year-old woman. Why? She has been eating nothing but Ramen noodles for years. She is literally killing herself off. Yet there she is, smiling at me from her hospital bed, happy as could be, on the

⁴⁰ Goldberg, 336.

⁴¹ Robert Reich was the Secretary of Labor under President Bill Clinton.

⁴² Goldberg, 310.

⁴³ Henry David Thoreau, *Walden* (New York: The Heritage Club, 1939), 99.

Yahoo! News home page. That story ran for a day or two and then was gone. (I wonder how she is doing. Has she changed her diet? Has her family tried an intervention? Is she even alive?) More recently was a story of a mom who greatly regretted the name she gave her daughter, and yet there she was, telling the world her story, with her picture and her daughter's on Yahoo! News. (How upset could she really be?) The story is gone, but it lives on forever ... online. I feel like I have grown up with Justin Bieber, an unknown, who gained his fame on YouTube. Now Yahoo! News keeps me informed how celebrity is affecting this young man as he nears twenty. Yet I have no idea what his voice sounds like, so no, I haven't purchased any of his albums, I mean, CDs, I mean, downloaded any of his songs.

Psychologists say that there is an exploding narcissism in our culture, and they pay special focus on "Millennials" in this regard.⁴⁴ Psychologist and author Jean Twenge says, "Personality does not exist in isolation. This increase in narcissism in individuals ... is just an outcome of a massive shift in culture toward a greater focus on self-admiration."⁴⁵ This "massive shift" occurred at the moment of the original sin, when Adam and Eve succumbed to the temptation to "be like God" (Genesis 3:5). But each age of man exhibits its own favored expression of narcissism, which is, basically, "egocentrism," or "love of or sexual desire for one's own body."⁴⁶ Who of us is not a narcissist in our sinful nature, where nothing but "self as God" lives?

Is the early 21st-century tattoo culture a symptom of this narcissism? In our country, tattoos were, historically, for the "Popeye" type, some tough old salt with an anchor (but just one) tattooed on his forearm. Native American tribes commonly employed tattoos as a cultural *bond*, such as tribal identification.⁴⁷ The modern day tattoo culture is built on the very opposite: it is done to set oneself *apart* in individualized expression. Now you can go to any public pool and see a dad pushing a double

⁴⁴ "Pictures: Ten Personality Traits of Millennial Generation." June 26 2012, www.baltimoresun.com/entertainment/bthesite

1. Can we have that yesterday? 2. Our attention spans are shot. 3. We still haven't grown up. 4. We remember what it was like before. 5. We're all going to be famous. Briefly. 6. We have multiple personalities. 7. After we die, we live on. Online. 8. We care less about cars. 9. This will be on our permanent record. 10. We are expert multi-taskers.

⁴⁵ Jean M. Twenge and Keith W. Campbell, *The Narcissism Epidemic* (New York: Free Press, 2009), 38.

⁴⁶ *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th edition.

⁴⁷ www.indians.org.

baby stroller with jungle vines twisting around both arms and stars on his knee caps. If tattoos are symbols of non-conformity in our culture, the uniqueness of one's own self-expression, how does that work when you can see the same tattoo displaying itself on many people many times in one day? This seems to defeat the purpose to me, but is anyone in the tattoo world really paying attention to anyone else's tattoos? No, probably just their own ... so narcissistic!

Has communication technology found a perfect partner in this narcissistic age or has it driven it? Who can know? Consider Facebook. The blessings of it are obvious, especially the contact it enables with family and friends concerning day-to-day living. But is there not a pressure to put yourself out there and keep up with everyone else in your family of friends on all things personal? Is Facebook real, a real book of your real face? This is a basic question, asked over and over again. Do people, especially teenagers, have the confidence to be real on Facebook, or at least, make the effort to restrain self-embellishment? Can Facebook quickly become a competition with oneself, a three-way competition between the way you *think* others want to see you, the way you *want* to see yourself, and the way you really *are*? (I compete with myself this way constantly, engaging in this three-way battle, "facebooking," you might say, without actually having an account with Facebook, the publically-traded company.) Question: Does Facebook lend itself to open discussion of important issues or Christian topics? Are Facebook mores developing that frown or smile on this sort of use?⁴⁸

At bottom, the focus on self-embellishment, the seeking of fame, is a search for meaning for one's life apart from Christ and the vocational life defined by the Ten Commandments. The craving for fame tells us something about ourselves who live in 21st-century culture: we feel empty. Fame, we hope, will fill the void. But fame is always very fleeting ... fifteen minutes ... then we move on. Yet the internet enables fame to endure: just type in the right key words. Also, careless or compromising photos that are texted out to friends will be preserved someplace by someone, and can suddenly appear on the World Wide Web without our approval at the most inopportune time. There are lots of young people not only "texting" today but "sexting" and think it's cool. "Look at the body I've got!" (That is, whether they've got the body or not.) But how cool will it be in fifteen years when that photo reappears at the worst possible moment and an open door of opportunity is suddenly closed hard because of it? This digital trail is already leading to many

⁴⁸ www.internetevangelismday.com.

embarrassed front doors, and that, without much passage of time at all. Think of the politicians already destroyed by this.

Additional Commentary

From *The Narcissism Epidemic*:

American culture has embraced the value of self-admiration with a big warm hug. As an NBC public service announcement puts it, “You may not realize it, but everyone is born with their one true love—themselves. If you like you, everyone else will too.” One young man expressed this view by covering his entire right side with a tattoo saying “Believe in Yourself” in graffiti-style writing (with “Rely on No One” written underneath). Every culture is shaped by its fundamental core beliefs, and in America today there are few values more fiercely held than the importance of self-admiration. Most of us don’t tattoo it on our bodies, but it is tattooed onto the flesh of our body of cultural beliefs....⁴⁹

Parents who want to stick with the older model of child rearing that downplays materialism and emphasizes politeness and discipline are swimming against a cultural tide. If you don’t let your children do something, but every other message that your children hear—from the media, friends, school, and other parents—tells them it’s OK, your resistance only lasts so long. We know—we’ve been there. Many parents’ resolve has crumbled in the face of permissive norms. Parenting is always a struggle of one sort or another, and these days it’s often the struggle of concerned parents against an overwhelming tide of narcissistic values.⁵⁰

When a group of 1920s mothers listed the traits they wanted their children to have, they named strict obedience, loyalty to church, and good manners. In 1988, few mothers named these traits; instead, they chose independence and tolerance. Throughout the 1980s and ‘90s, the importance of obedience steadily declined until it was ranked second to last. The rankings

⁴⁹ Twenge and Campbell, 13–14.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 74.

of obedience reached an all-time low in 2004, the last year for which data is available.⁵¹

From *Generation Me*:

Grade inflation has also reached record highs. In 2004, 48% of American college freshmen—almost half—reported earning an A average in high school, compared to only 18% in 1968, even though SAT scores decreased over this time period. “Each year we think [the number with an A average] can’t inflate anymore. And then it does again. The ‘C’ grade is almost a thing of the past,” noted Andrew Astin, the lead researcher for the study. These higher grades were given out even though students were doing less work. Only 33% of American college freshmen in 2003 reported studying six or more hours a week during their last year of high school, compared with 47% in 1987. So why are these still getting better grades? “Teachers want to raise the self-esteem and feeling good attitudes of students,” explains Howard Everson of the College Board. “We have become a Lake Wobegon nation: all of our children are above average.”⁵²

From *The Narcissism Epidemic*:

Social networking sites encourage users to highlight only certain aspects of themselves. First, users can choose to present only the most attractive or cool pictures of themselves—some people call this “the angles” (for example, you show your good side, or if you’re overweight you only show your face.)⁵³

Even apart from the search for fame, narcissism is a significant risk factor for aggressive and violent behavior. In our culture of self-admiration, it seems paradoxical that a narcissist—who, after all, ascribes to the idea that if you like yourself, you will like other people and thus won’t be aggressive. However, narcissists are aggressive exactly because they love themselves so much and believe that their needs take precedence. They lack empathy for

⁵¹ Ibid., 75.

⁵² Jean Twenge, PhD, *Generation Me* (New York: Free Press, 2006), 63.

⁵³ Twenge and Campbell, 113.

other people's pain and often lash out when they feel they aren't getting the respect they deserve....⁵⁴

If the narcissism epidemic continues, there will be even more entitlement, materialism, vanity, antisocial behaviors, and relationship troubles. First, there has been a giant transfer of time, attention, and resources from the reality to fantasy. Rather than pursuing the American Dream, people are simply dreaming. Our wealth is phony, driven by credit and loose lending; this part of the narcissistic dream has already been dashed. Second, narcissism has corroded interpersonal relationships. There has been a switch from deep to shallow relationships, a destruction of social trust, and an increase in entitlement and selfishness.⁵⁵

Part Two

In this second part, I shall identify and discuss various applications of Scripture to meet early 21st-century culture.

Swallowing Heidelberg ... Whole

Where shall we begin in our efforts to engage the people of today's culture with God's Word in Jesus Christ? I think a great place to begin is with Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation*, that is, consume and digest it whole *first*. Every thought, belief, expectation that we have is digested *by* it.

The *Heidelberg Disputation* presents twenty-eight theses which flesh out *two types of theology or, if you prefer, two types of theologians*: the theology (or theologian) of glory against the theology (or theologian) of the cross. The theology of glory is the devil's lie concerning salvation by works and the ease over which this can be achieved. Its corresponding theologian is the unbeliever in us that believes and follows the devil's lie into the self-destruction of self-belief. The theology of the cross is the hiddenness of God's Son in sinless male form for mankind's salvation, Jesus Christ. In this hiddenness he kept the law in the place of mankind, was judged by his Father at the cross in the place of mankind, suffered hell to take away the sins of mankind, died, and then rose again from death to testify that he is God and he has done it. Under the theology of the cross we also find the hiddenness of God working in

⁵⁴ Ibid., 196.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 276.

human hearts not through outward glory but through the Word of God and the humble, outwardly underwhelming *visible* Word, the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are the Holy Spirit's means to work repentance and faith in the human heart and preserve these gifts there. Its corresponding theologian is the new man of faith that is born in human hearts, created in Christ Jesus by the Holy Spirit working through Word and sacrament. In the unbeliever, there exists only the theologian of glory, and so he is undivided. He runs with the crowd on the broad road, finding security and a sense of rightness in the raw numbers of people he finds on this road, all heading the same way, they *think* to glory. In the Christian, there are two theologians, one of (self-) glory and the other of the cross. They are in constant and complete conflict. They walk different roads, in opposite directions. The theologian of glory continues on the wide road, he (still) thinks to glory. The theologian of the cross knows better, and so walks the narrow road of Christ alone, which does indeed end in glory, but the earthly portion of that walk can be very lonely, as the Old Testament prophet Elijah voiced it: "I am the only one left" (1 Kings 19:14)! What does the Christian learn in this conflict? "Anyone who gets some glimpse of what it means to be a theologian of the cross immediately realizes that the bane of the theology of glory never vanishes. It is the perennial theology of the human race."⁵⁶

Why is it essential to live and speak only as a theologian of the cross and never of glory as we Christians engage 21st-century culture? The theology of glory is a theology only of despair and death. It is easy, of course, and natural, to employ its theology to find strength in numbers, and produce numerical growth in the church, but such growth will never be "faith in Christ." Gerhard Forde says,

I have come to wonder if the very theology of glory is not in a state of severe crisis. If it is true that no one is trying anymore, what does that portend? Does it mean, as a post-modernist might say, that the "Holy Words" no longer signify meaningful destiny? Have we lost the thread of the story? Is the "official optimism of North America," as Douglas Hall spoke of it, finally running off into sand? Could that be one of the reasons for the despair and chaos in our homes and in our streets? Has

⁵⁶ Gerhard Forde, *On Being a Theologian of the Cross* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1997), xiii.

the thirst for glory finally issued in the despair that Luther foresaw?"⁵⁷

Only the theology of the cross saves.

Let's consider a couple of the introductory thoughts expressed by Forde in *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*.

In the absence of clear understanding, the theology of the cross tends to become sentimentalized, especially in an age that is so concerned about victimization. Jesus is spoken of as the one who "identifies with us in our suffering," or the one who "enters into solidarity with us" in our misery. "The suffering of God," or the "vulnerability of God," and such platitudes become the stock-in-trade of preachers and theologians who want to stroke the psyche of today's religionists. But this results in a rather blatant and suffocating sentimentality. God is supposed to be more attractive to us because he identifies with us in our pain and suffering.... A theology of the cross, however, is not sentimentalism. To be sure, it speaks much about suffering. A theologian of the cross, Luther says, looks at all things through suffering and the cross. It is also certainly true that in Christ God enters into our suffering and death. But in a theology of the cross it is soon apparent that we cannot ignore the fact that suffering comes about because we are at odds with God and are trying to rush headlong into some sort of cozy identification with him. God and his Christ, Luther will be concerned to point out, are the *operators* in the matter, not the one operated upon. In the gospel of John, Jesus is concerned to point out that no one takes his life from him but that he lays it down of his own accord (John 10:18). In the end, Jesus suffers and dies because nobody identified with him. The people cried, "Crucify him!" One of his disciples betrayed him, another denied him, the rest forsook him and fled. He died alone, forsaken even by God.⁵⁸

Forde continues:

We no longer live in a guilt culture but have been thrown into meaninglessness—so we are told. Then the language slips out of place. Guilt puts the blame on us as sinners, but who is

⁵⁷ Ibid., xiv.

⁵⁸ Ibid., ix.

responsible for meaninglessness? Surely not we! Sin, if it enters our consciousness at all, is generally something that “they” did to us.... Since we are victims and not really sinners, what we need is affirmation and support, and so on. The language slips and falls out of place.... When we operate on the assumption that our language must constantly be trimmed so as not to give offense, to stroke the psyche rather than to place it under attack, it will, of course, gradually decline to the level of greeting card sentimentality. The language of sin, law, accusation, repentance, judgment, wrath, punishment, perishing, death, devil, damnation, and even the cross itself—virtually one-half of the vocabulary—simply disappears. It has lost its theological legitimacy and therefore its viability as communication. A theologian of the cross says what a thing is. The theology of the cross, that is to say, provides the theological courage and the conceptual framework to hold the language in place. It will, no doubt, also involve critical appraisal of the language and its use. It will recognize indeed that the half of the vocabulary that has disappeared can be frightening and offensive. But we will see precisely that the cross and the resurrection itself is the only answer to that problem, not erasure or neglect.⁵⁹

And so, the Word of God may go in and out “of style” when the culture *says so*, but it is never out of touch. Whatever the characteristics of one’s culture, and the underlying “theology of glory” sins which provide its framework, the Word of God directly exposes them all, with an efficiency of words. How I wish I could get to the point of the matter with people like Jesus did when he spoke the Word with such direct efficiency. (Maybe I can, but am afraid to *do* it.) This is the beauty of brutal honesty, however, the preaching of the law in all its severity. We Christians need to keep at this, even as uncomfortable as it makes us feel to preach the law to ourselves or to our neighbor. The law (the Ten Commandments)⁶⁰ demands perfection of us, and says, “Do this

⁵⁹ Ibid., xii.

⁶⁰ 1) You shall have no other gods. 2) You shall not take the name of the Lord, your God, in vain. 3) You shall keep the day of rest holy. 4) Honor your father and your mother, that it may be well with you and that you may live long on the earth. 5) You shall not kill. 6) You shall not commit adultery. 7) You shall not steal. 8) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor. 9) You shall not covet your neighbor’s house. 10) You shall not covet your neighbor’s wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is his.

and you will saved,” and then tells us, “But you can’t do it.” Desiderius Erasmus, a Roman Catholic scholar and humanist and contemporary of Luther, was offended at this reality and so published *On the Freedom of the Will* (1524). He surmised that God would never require something of us that we can’t, in fact, do, that is, earn salvation from him by the exercise of our will. That just wouldn’t be fair of God, and we all know God is fair. Erasmus didn’t understand the role of the law in exposing sin in us *by the very demand it makes of us*: be perfect in love. He was looking at it from the perspective of glory, the beauty of his own human will, and he, of course, a noble humanist scholar! Only the brutality of law brings us to this spiritual despair: “It’s true, after all. (I can’t believe I am hearing myself say this, but...) I deserve hell for my sins, but can’t save myself from it, not at all. God, have mercy on me, a sinner.” This language, then, the language of law, is the language of judgment and of repentance. The right preaching of it keeps the language in place even when “is” no longer means “is.” This language serves to save us from our thoughts of personalized glory and/or eternal victimhood.

In turn, the language of the Gospel stays in place, right where it needs to.

“Now the whole world closes in upon you....” Conscience can no longer defend us. Luther thus projects for us an inescapable awareness of being drawn into the event: “You must get this thought through your head and not doubt that you are the one who is torturing Christ thus, for your sins have surely wrought this.... Therefore when you see the nails piercing Christ’s hands, you can be certain that it is your work. When you behold his crown of thorns, you may rest assured these are your evil thoughts, etc.” Thus the cross story becomes our own.⁶¹

So Jesus says, “God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life” (John 3:16).

Additional Commentary

T.S. Eliot, in his poem *Burnt Norton*, speaks of language never remaining in place on its own:

⁶¹ Forde, 8.

Words strain, crack and sometimes break, under the burden,
under the tension, slip, slide, perish, decay with imprecision, will
not stay in place, will not stay still.⁶²

From *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*:

The theologian of the glory calls evil good and good evil. A theologian of the cross calls a thing what it is. The great divide in seeing leads to a completely different ways of speaking. It leads to plain and honest talk about what we do and what happens to us. The theologian of glory has all the value signs exactly reversed. How can we grasp this? Suffering we insist, is bad. If it comes upon us we immediately begin to wonder if we have failed somehow in our works. Since theologians of glory shy away from the depths of the cross and its forgiveness, there can be no honesty about reality and the ways things are. The self that invests in its own works has no recourse but to defend itself to the end.⁶³

From *On Being a Theologian of the Cross*: A few key theses from Luther's *Heidelberg Disputation*.

Thesis 21: "A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is."

Thesis 23: "The law works the wrath of God, kills, curses, accuses, judges, and damns everything that is not in Christ."

Thesis 25: "He is not righteous who works much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ."⁶⁴

⁶² T.S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton," *Collected Poems 1909-1935* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1936), 219.

⁶³ Forde, 82–83.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 81, 95, 103.

When Victory Really Means Victory

And so surprised were Pilate's men—
Resurrection bursting upon them!
They stood stiller than stone,
Frozen to the very bone,
Sensing only *threat*,
These poor experts in death!⁶⁵

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Was Paul resolving only to preach the details of the crucifixion to the neglect of everything else? Well, no. Really, Paul, in resolving to know nothing but Christ crucified, was resolved to preach the theology of the cross: In the sinful heart of man, good is evil, evil good, salvation is by works, not by grace, salvation is of self, not of God, salvation is achieved through exertion of one's power to personal achievement and glory, not through the humility and apparent defeat of a substitute in our powerless place. So Paul, in resolving to know nothing but Christ crucified, was preaching everything that sinful heart of man thinks false (according to the lies of devil) and that means he preached salvation by Jesus Christ alone. This begins with the Old Testament promises, and how they were fulfilled by the Son of God, beginning at his conception by the Holy Spirit in the virgin to become the God-man, two natures, divine and human, in one Christ, then his birth in its humble circumstances, his humble obedience under his parents, the laws of the land, gainful employment (with stepdad?), his baptism by John, temptation, lack of daily bread (no place to lay his head), rejection, betrayal, arrest, trial before religious authority, as well as Gentile and Jewish civil authority, crucifixion, mockery, hell, and death. It includes his perfect trust in the Word of God, his preaching and teaching and fulfillment of it, a prayer life like no other. In these details is our salvation, which the sinful heart of man, in its love for glory, rejects as *useless*. But what about the resurrection? Where does this fit in the theology of the cross? Does it fit?

Consider these words: “The stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone” (Acts 4:11). This verse speaks of the resurrection, foretold in Psalm 118, fulfilled on Easter morning. It is this vital event which unfolded itself upon his disciples so interestingly throughout that

⁶⁵ Matthew Crick, from the poem, “Linen and Stone.”

first Easter: first to the women, then Peter and John, then the disciples on the road to Emmaus and the return of those disciples to Jerusalem, and finally, Easter evening behind locked doors, minus Thomas. It took a number of appearances throughout this one day, plus the consuming of a piece of fish by Jesus' living flesh-and-bones body that finally convinced them to tell Thomas, "We have seen the Lord" (John 20:25)! Then the Lord Jesus, risen from dead, patiently ministered to the last of his doubting disciples one week later, showing him his hands and side. The power and implication of his resurrection did not instantly embolden the disciples. They, for a time, found safety in numbers behind locked doors. Then Pentecost arrived. On that harvest festival day the Holy Spirit, which Jesus promised them, was sent by him. The Spirit blessed them with understanding and courage. Peter stepped out onto the plank in Jerusalem and preached, "God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ" (Acts 2:36). Three thousand men were baptized that day as a result of his resurrection preaching! The harvest was indeed ripe, and the preaching of the risen crucified One was the wondrous sickle to harvest and bring it all into God's grace-barn. In some English translations a little word appears—translated "behold"⁶⁶—before some very important events. "Behold!" Sennacherib's army slain at dawn! "Behold!" Christ is born! But the greatest of all "beholds" is the resurrection itself. It is the foundation of Scripture, the capstone above the cross, the empowering truth for salvation, and the fact to be debated on its *historical* grounds, upon which all else stands or falls. It is the life of courage, that is, it empowers the Christian to step forward and do his duty even when afraid, to put all at risk if that is the calling of his vocation in the moment of concrete opportunity.

Where does the resurrection figure in our testimony? How do we employ it? Better, how is it *to be* employed? The Apostles, including Paul, tell us. This event proclaims to the world, objectively: Jesus is not a false Messiah, who gained a small following for himself for a time, only to be crushed by the mighty boot of the Roman military, never to rise again. No, Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, died, and was buried, but on the third day, rose again from the dead! He lives! The resurrection is the prime *historical* event of the Bible, and of the history of the entire world, one that the Word of God presents to us that we may employ it in such a fashion. It is not a debate about ideas and philosophy, just facts. It is, as John Warwick Montgomery lays out in *History and Christianity*, an objective event, testified by Scripture

⁶⁶ In Old Testament Hebrew, *hinneh*; in New Testament Greek, *idou*.

with witness/evidence of most excellent quality. By the quality of that witness, we are to present it to the world's jury to render a verdict, "Who is Jesus, based on this evidence?"

Truly, the resurrection witness/evidence would be accepted into a court of law. The witness/evidence tells us, "Something obviously happened there, far more powerful than, 'Jesus lives as long as we keep him alive in our memory.'" It forces the skeptic to evaluate Jesus, "Who is he? What *did* happen?" Why did the Apostles act the way they did for the remainder of their lives, suffering abuse, rejection and martyrdom if they were lying about the resurrection? How did they keep their story straight while independently authoring cohesive gospels and epistles at different times and places? What of the five hundred others who saw the risen Lord alive at one time? Did they also not testify publicly of the Lord's resurrection, supporting the Apostles' testimony over the decades following? If the Apostles *had* stolen the body, as the lie was told, how did they, with not one skilled military man among them, overpower the Roman guard which was posted to prevent just such a thing from happening? If their overpowering of the guard and stealing of the body is not really plausible, Pilate *must have remained in possession of* the dead body of Jesus. If so, why didn't Pilate simply produce the body after the apostles began their preaching in that very city, ending the movement right then and there? If he could have, he surely would have, considering his nervousness about having anything to do with this innocent man on that Good Friday. If he had, Jesus would have been relegated to the dustbin of forgotten failed messiahs.

In the end, victory really means victory when it comes to the resurrection. It is not a pyrrhic victory, but a joyful one. It is not a moral victory, but an absolute one. It is the capstone of the theology of the cross: God, in sinless human form, judged himself in the world's place at the cross, died, and then took up his life again, the vital miracle of miracles! It declares who Jesus Christ is: God's almighty, eternal, co-equal Son, and removes Christian testimony from the realm of endless debate about philosophy and ideas. (How essential in our world today that loves to get itself lost in half-baked—or unbaked—ideas!) How did the Apostle Paul preach to reach those in Athens? He cut to the chase with the Greek talkers with his own talk of the resurrection, God in flesh, dying and then rising from death. He confronted them with it, and this astounded those philosopher kings, leaving them to scratch their heads: "What is this babblers trying to say?" Others remarked, 'He seems to be

advocating foreign gods.’ They said this because Paul was preaching the good news about Jesus and the resurrection” (Acts 17:18).

Additional Commentary

From *What They Need to Hear*:

It seems to me that the only way you can explain the virgin birth story, unverifiable and unfalseifiable as it is, is if Jesus rose from the dead. And if you can believe that Jesus miraculously rose from the dead, then you can certainly believe that He was miraculously born of a virgin.... If the resurrection is historically true, then the claims of Christianity are true.⁶⁷

From *Many Convincing Proofs*:

It seems evident that if it can be shown that Jesus actually did rise from the dead, then Christianity has been proven true. On the other hand, if it can be shown that Jesus did not rise, then Christianity has been proven false, as was clearly stated by Paul, “And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile: you are still in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17). Christianity stands or falls with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. In order to evaluate this critical question of whether Jesus actually did rise from the dead, let us consider the relevant historical facts and allow them to speak for themselves.⁶⁸

From *History and Christianity*:

Like Cambridge professor C.S. Lewis, I was brought “kicking and struggling” into the kingdom of God by the historical evidence in behalf of Jesus’ claims.⁶⁹

Give Me Liberty or Give Me Death

Patrick Henry’s words live on ... at least here in this essay. They reflect the founding principle of this country, that men are *created by God to be free*, but not only this. Patrick Henry declares it is preferable

⁶⁷ Klemet Preus, *What They Need to Hear* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2013), 29.

⁶⁸ Allen Quist, *Many Convincing Proofs* (Mankato: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 2008), 10.

⁶⁹ John Warwick Montgomery, *History and Christianity* (Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1965), 13.

to die than to live *in bondage*. The Founding Fathers may have had differing ideas about God, humanity, and exact forms of government, but they were united in this thing called “freedom,” *God-given* freedom of the private citizen to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, which the government has no right to restrict. One U.S. state’s motto reflects this spirit of freedom: New Hampshire’s “Live Free or Die!” as you see it emblazoned on New Hampshire license plates. In the one New England state that still acknowledges some level of freedom of private citizens to live their lives without undue interference from government, there is no seat belt law, helmet law, or state income tax. (Okay, it’s not much, but it is *something*.) I was born and raised in Massachusetts, but in spirit I am much more New Hampshire. We sing of our nation, “Land of the Free!” How many citizens truly consider freedom today, what it looks like, and why it is important? For many, has freedom come to mean freedom from *risk*? That is not freedom. There is risk in freedom, but, even more, there is *life* in freedom. Without freedom, life, aspiration, and sense of adventure in vocation shrink. Consider the German couple who recently had their children ripped from them by German authorities simply because they were invoking their God-given right and responsibility to educate their own children! Home schooling is illegal in Germany.⁷⁰ Many wish it were here.

The Christian message is *all about freedom*! Paul said, “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Galatians 5:1). He was reflecting Jesus, who said to his fellow Jews suffering under the civil boot of Caesar, under the works-righteousness of the Pharisees, and under the lies of the devil: “When the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed” (John 8:36).

One of the greatest mischaracterizations of the Christian message is to call it *strict*. The more orthodox one’s confession is as a Christian the more “strict” one is accused to be! We have all heard the Christian message described this way. “Christianity denies freedom,” it is said, “to live any way one chooses. Christianity just doesn’t *allow* certain things, sexual freedom for instance, and looks down on anyone who supports sexual freedom.” But is such freedom—for instance, to do whatever one chooses sexually—freedom? I suppose I could free myself from my marriage and choose become a polygamist, and live this way. And what freedom would there be in that? To live with many women, all in competition with each other for me (at least until they lost interest). Oh,

⁷⁰ “Police Storm Homeschooling Class Take Children by Force,” August 30, 2013, www.conservativebyte.com.

the jealousies that would rage! I would also be breaking U.S. civil law. And how would my wife or my children be served in this new freedom of mine? I suppose I could decide to become a homosexual and pursue a relationship with another man, even enter a marriage. This would be a childless relationship; it would put me and my partner at constant risk and in constant worry of sexual disease, HIV, AIDS; it would shorten my lifespan. I would leave my wife and children abandoned. Where is the freedom in this? Yet I would certainly find many allies, the devil and the culture, which would tell me that I am doing the *right* thing, because the most important thing is to be true to myself, no matter what God's moral law and my previous commitments demand of me. If a friend sought to turn me from this course, would that be "strict" on his part?

Christianity is not strictness, but freedom. Under God, we *freely receive* salvation from sin through faith in Jesus, his Son, who has forgiven all our sins against God's law. In this we are freed to live the life God has planned for us, not to save ourselves (which would be a burden indeed), but to commit ourselves freely to serve our neighbor in the godly vocations outlined by *God's law* in marriage, parenting, family, church membership, schooling, citizenry, employment, military, business, etc. The Christian life is a free life in the following ways:

- Freedom in Christ, in the forgiveness of sins, which frees the conscience from the burden of guilt and fear.
- Freedom of life in heaven, a life not earned by works or fame or wealth or state, but a life freely won by Christ in the place of all mankind, received by faith worked by the Holy Spirit through Word and baptism. It is the kingdom "from another place" (John 18:36).
- Freedom to pursue God's law in godly decisions and vocations. This gives one's life on earth meaning in the service of others, rather than the imposter's freedom in the service of finding oneself, which flees vocation.
- Freedom to strive after goals once thought impossible due to limits we place on ourselves, all that we convince ourselves we *can't do*. "I can do everything through him who gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

In a world where statism reigns more and more, and freedom to serve one's neighbor is being legislated away by socialistic, multicultural-style regulations, Christianity offers freedom, even to those who are called to live their earthly days under the most severe anti-Christian dictator. Here, let's remember the freedom of Polycarp: When he was

offered the opportunity by Roman authorities to deny Christ and live, he confessed Christ and chose martyrdom. Now he lives with his Lord in heaven's free kingdom. Would strictness compel a Christian to *choose* execution as Polycarp did, or *does* freedom? What evil or worldly power can steal the freedom of faith and conscience, which dwells in the heart? Only if we hand over that power to them. Polycarp did not.

Additional Commentary

From *Luther on Vocation*:

Man does not have freedom in that which he is to proffer no works; he only accepts that which God accomplishes. Man does not have freedom in that which is "above" him, in the heavenly kingdom, before God. There he is to proffer no works; he only accepts that which God accomplishes, he is passive before God. Facing upward, man can only believe and pray. There the bound will obtains. But in those things which are "below" man, man is free, for before man he is not to be merely passive or enduring, but active and working. Toward what is below him, he is to effect works, for earth is the arena of his vocation. In heaven the gospel rules; hence the bound will. On earth law rules; hence freedom of will.⁷¹

Freedom in conscience or in faith means freedom from the law, freedom from the demand for works. The gospel is something which man hears and receives, not something which he does. But this hearing and receiving, this "freedom," is identical with helplessness before God, identical with the bound will. Man has freedom in outward matters, for there he must effect something, there lies his station in life with multitudinous works.⁷²

Likewise one may trust the children of God with liberty. The result will be service to others.⁷³

Christian liberty of conscience, indissolubly united with love for others means that in external matters one must "do" according to the law, follow the accustomed course, or "leave," break away

⁷¹ Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation* (Evansville: Ballast Press, 1994), 93.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 94.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 98.

from the accustomed course. Christian love would break away because something else would be better for others, for love lives in the heart of him who “leaves” the accustomed course, and love impels to a new action in preference to the old practice. Thus the changeable element in vocation is represented in love born of faith (liberty of conscience). This love acts quite as it pleases, as it discerns God’s will.⁷⁴

From *God at Work*:

“What do you want to be?” is indeed a good question. But what you are is in many ways a given. Even your wants—your desires, your dreams, your choices—are a function of who you are. That is to say, God—making use of your family and your culture—created you as you are. The doctrine of vocation has to do with the mystery of individuality, how God creates each human being to be different from all of the rest and gives each a unique calling in every stage of life.⁷⁵

In our choice-mad culture, people exalt willpower to the point that they even imagine that they “choose their own values.” When it comes to getting an abortion or having a baby, staying alive or being killed by one’s doctor, either action is considered moral as long as there is a “choice.” ... Morality has to do with moral absolutes, not human desires.⁷⁶

What Does It Mean to Be A Man?

I laid out a (brief) case that men are on the decline in the culture in terms of respect, influence, participation, and legal rights even as women are increasing in these ways. Coupled with this is the growing acceptance of homosexuality, the claim to be transgender, and bisexuality. We hear increasing mention of something called metrosexuality:⁷⁷ boys and men are being discouraged to understand themselves as God created them to be—male, or better, men. The homosexual boy or man gives up part

⁷⁴ Ibid., 99.

⁷⁵ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *God at Work* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 2002), 52.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 53.

⁷⁷ According to merriam-webster.com, “Metrosexual” is a usually urban heterosexual male given to enhancing his personal appearance by fastidious grooming, beauty treatments, and fashionable clothes.

of himself, seeking sexual companionship with others of the same sex. They have feminized themselves and behavior corresponds. Transgender boys and men are not homosexual; they do not believe they are boys or men at all, but rather girls or women trapped in the DNA mistake of godless evolution. Bisexual boys and men might find sexual companionship in either sex, but the effect remains: the feminization of their being, losing a part of themselves so that they stand against the purpose of their creation as men by God. Why is this happening? Perhaps it is easier to be “feminine” in our feminized culture and participate on that level, rather than stake out one’s maleness in a culture distrustful of it. Men in our culture who exhibit true maleness, humble Christian maleness, whether in marriage as husband, in family as dad, in leadership as bread winner, as educator of children, in the community, might expect in our day and age to receive criticism: “You are a chauvinist. You are intimidating. Where is your feminine side?”

I am not seeking to frame this argument in terms of power gained/power lost in a zero-sum game between men and women. God warns us against waging such power struggles: “But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such ‘wisdom’ does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, of the devil. For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice” (James 3:14-16). My question is this: Are men *free*, that is, *free to participate in the arena of ideas without feminizing themselves and their natural inclination to think, speak and act as men, created to lead, provide, protect and teach?* “As soon as I think of my neighbor, all vocations no longer stand on a common plane, but a certain vocation comes to the fore as mine.”⁷⁸ To be a man is a vocation *in itself*. It requires unique God-given gifts, skills, talents, and to deny this to men is to deny what God created them to be and do. If the culture denies this to men, it is certain that women will also become confused about their role in the world. No one will be at rest in this role-confusion.

Who will uphold the man, whom God created first from the dust, and the woman from him, to be a leader, educator, protector, provider, if not the Christian Church? Here is an opportunity. Ask the culture, both men and women, boys and girls, the questions: What does it mean to be a man? Why is it important to be clear about this, to the benefit of all, beginning in the family? Then answer the questions. Keep asking and keep answering so that all may hear, and that men, by the power

⁷⁸ Wingren, 65.

of God's Word, begin to reclaim themselves and their God-ordained role in the world, and that boys will learn what it means to be a man as God designed them to be and *aspire* to it. In the home with wife and children, that's where it begins. Fathers are the greatest influence on the spiritual, moral, and emotional development of their children, both sons and daughters. A church-going father (typically) means church-going children into adulthood. Men are also needed in community, school, business, military, government, police and fire, the sporting arena, the political arena, you name it, mature *Christian* men, who confess their sins, look to Christ alone, and learn from him what it means to lay down their lives freely for wife, children, neighbor, and country, and who will hold the door for anyone coming up behind them. In this, the next generation of men, today's boys, will also be prepared to lead.

Additional Commentary

From *Spirituality of the Cross*:

The word "calling," or in its Latinate form "vocation," had long been used in reference to the sacred ministry and the religious orders. But the Lutherans were the first to use "vocation" to refer also to secular offices and occupations. Today, the term has become commonplace, another synonym for a profession or job, as in "vocational training." But behind the term is the notion that every legitimate kind of work or social function is a distinct "calling" from God, requiring unique God-given gifts, skills, and talents.⁷⁹

From Luther's *Large Catechism*:

Young people must therefore have it impressed upon them that they should look up to their parents as representatives of God and bear in mind that, however humble, poor, infirm, or eccentric they may be, our father and mother are nevertheless God's gifts to us. They are not to be robbed of their honor because of any peculiarities or failings. We are not to be influenced by their persons, whatever these may be, but rather by the will of God.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Gene Edward Veith, Jr., *Spirituality of the Cross* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1999), 77.

⁸⁰ Martin Luther, *Large Catechism* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1978), 29–30.

From *God at Work*:

The husband loves and serves through giving himself up. He is called to do for his wife what Christ did for the Church. And what was that? He denied Himself, took up His cross, and died for her.... This is no husband lording it over his battered spouse, no lazy slob in his Barcalounger demanding that his wife wait on him hand and foot. This is not the way Christ treated His Bride, the Church; this is not the way he treats us. The husband is to give himself up for (his wife's) spiritual welfare. Someone who does that, by the same token, is much easier for the wife to submit to; great would be her trust, her faith, in a husband who loves her like that.⁸¹

The husband and the wife are to satisfy each other sexually. Their bodies do not belong just to themselves but to the other person: The wife's body belongs to the husband, and the husband's body belongs to the wife. They should not "deprive each other" of sex except when both agree to devote themselves to prayer, but this should be only "for a limited time," and after that they should "come together again." This sexual freedom within marriage is very different—and far more liberating—than today's secular attitudes toward sex.... Sex is to find its full expression in marriage.⁸²

The Reformation catechisms assign the instruction of children in the truths of the faith not merely to pastors but to the "head of the family." Part of the way parents exercise their responsibility is to see that their children are raised in church. But the family is something like a mini-church unto itself, with "the head of the family"—normally the father...being a mini-pastor to the family flock.⁸³

From *The Culture of Life*:

The culture of life recognizes that all earthly institutions derive their proper authority from the office of fatherhood. The culture of life respects fathers for their divinely established

⁸¹ Veith, *God at Work*, 80–81.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 83.

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 85.

office of leadership, provision, and protection. God calls upon and equips men to lead, provide for, and protect their wives and children. Godly husbands honor their wives as they “dwell with them with understanding” (1 Peter 3:7). A godly man provides for his household—but if he refuses, then Scripture labels him “worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8). Most importantly, a godly man brings up his children “in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). The culture of life honors the authority God has bestowed upon fathers to serve the people whom God has entrusted to their care. Abortion, says the Supreme Court of this land, is a woman’s issue. But pregnancy, says the culture of life, is a man’s issue, for God calls upon husbands to serve their wives as loving heads of household (Ephesians 5:25; Colossians 3:18) and to protect and provide for their children’s needs.⁸⁴

Raising Free-Range Children

“Helicopter parents” is a *term* that has been around for a while. The reason? Well, helicopter *parents* have been around for a while. What is a helicopter parent? It is a parent who drops in on their children, seemingly from the sky, when anything goes the slightest bit wrong, when the slightest bit of uncertainty develops, when the parents sense their children might need protection from the cold cruel world of school, playgrounds, play dates, karate and dance class, and soccer matches. Parents who employ the helicopter technique do so mainly out of fear that their children might be scalded for life or whisked away by a stranger, never to be seen again. As a parent of five, oldest sixteen, youngest three, I know the helicopter parent well. It is the dominant parenting style of my generation. This reality dawned on me over time: parenting has really changed. Now I more actively try to resist it. I use my own childhood as a guide.

Like most kids in my day (okay, not so long ago) I was not parented this way. In fact, I had amazing amounts of freedom to roam and play and fend for myself in the neighborhood. There was a lot of adventure in that, and sometimes I was forced to stick up for myself against trouble-makers that lived around the corner, but there is nothing wrong with a kid learning to defend himself. I didn’t much inform my parents either

⁸⁴ Ryan C. MacPherson, *The Culture of Life* (Mankato: The Hausvater Project, 2012), 11–12.

about the ebb and flow of each day. I would guess that most of you were raised in a similar fashion. The good in this is that it forces a child to pay attention to his surroundings because there is no one else there that will do it for him, to learn to detect danger, to navigate himself safely home for dinner, to make and develop friendships without mom and dad hovering overhead managing play, to develop an accurate worldview, one that sees the world as it is, neither more or less dangerous than it is in actuality.

Most children today do not enjoy this type of freedom because of helicopter parenting, very in vogue among parents of my generation, even Christian ones. My daughter has a good friend from school who is not allowed by her dad to play in her own front yard alone out of fear of abduction, and she is in fourth grade. The view that her parents have of the world is, I think, skewed. Sure there is danger. Life, as we all know, has risk. The devil and his demon followers, his lies, unbelievers, and sin within our hearts pose real danger. It is around us and in us. Perhaps our instant information age has caused this skewing, where any kidnapping, any instance of bullying, which appears instantly (and continually) on our favorite internet news sites, becomes the rule rather than the exception. Perhaps the cause is a steady diet of “Law and Order, Special Victims Unit.” Perhaps it is the sense of fear emanating from other parents that increases our own anxiety: “Am I being a bad parent by allowing my daughter to play in the front yard without supervision?” But what message is sent to our children? I think the message is: there is deadly trouble lurking in every shadow; it is not safe to go outside; even one’s front yard is not safe. Such thoughts never entered into me as a child. I would guess that this is so because I never sensed such fears emanating from my dad and mom. Helicopter parenting carries the risk of causing a generation of children to be unduly fearful and therefore unprepared to handle themselves in the world, with their natural sense of adventure in vocation and desire for it, suffocated.

The Christian Church, I think, has an opportunity to reintroduce to the culture what it means to be a parent as God has established the vocation. (And no, it does not mean: be a *Christian* helicopter parent!) This begins with a leading father, and supporting mother in the household, who will teach the children about the true nature of the world (good and evil), true threats (hot burners, false teaching in public school or in the church), how to handle the threats by Word of God and prayer, and how to make a stand in Christ without mom and dad always holding their hands. These skills need development in children, and part of that

development is allowing children the freedom to test what they have been taught, fail or succeed. In either case, it is a lesson learned. This is how the Gospel is naturally taught by parents to their children. “God has saved you from sin, death, and the devil through Jesus!” “Through Jesus, God has promised to be with you wherever you go!” “Through Jesus, God has promised to protect, provide, and direct you along the way, for your spiritual good, with the help of the angels, until you enter heaven!” “Through Jesus, God has a plan for your life!” Jesus says, “I will lose none of all that he has given me” (John 6:39). God has given parents this responsibility: to prepare their children to enter the world in the confidence and strength of these promises, that they may seek the vocations into which God will place them as leaders and helpmeets.

Additional Commentary

From *Free-Range Kids*:

About a year ago, I let my nine-year-old ride the subway alone for the first time. I didn’t do it because I was brave or reckless or seeking a book contract. (But look!) I did it because I know my son the way you know your kids. I knew he was ready, so I let him go. Then I wrote a column about it for the New York Sun. Big deal, right? ... Well, the night the column ran, someone from the Today Show called me at home to ask, *Did I really let my son take the subway by himself?* Yes. *Just abandoned him in the middle of the city and told him to find his way home?* Well, abandoned is kind of a strong word, but ... yes, I did leave him at Bloomingdale’s. *In this day and age?* No, in Ladies’ Handbags. Oh, she *loved* that. *Would I be willing to come on the air and talk about it?* Sure, why not? I had no idea what was about to hit me. A day later, there across from me was Ann Curry looking outrageously pretty and slightly alarmed, because her next guest (the one right before George Clooney) just might be criminally insane. By way of introduction, she turned to the camera and asked, “Is she an enlightened mom or a really bad one?” The shot widened to reveal ... me. And my son Izzy. And some “parenting expert” perched on that famous couch right next to us, who I soon learned, was there to TEACH US A LESSON.⁸⁵

⁸⁵ Lenore Skenazy, *Free-Range Kids* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009), xiii.

From Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*:

The old and infirm and the timid, of whatever age or sex, thought most of sickness, and sudden accident and death. To them life seemed full of danger—what danger is there if you don't think of any?—and they thought that a prudent man would carefully select the safest position, were Dr. B___ might be on hand at a moment's warning. To them the village was literally a *community*, a league for mutual defense, and you would suppose that they would not go a-huckleberrying without a medicine chest. The amount of it is, if a man is alive, there is always danger that he may die.... A man sits as many risks as he runs. Finally, there were the self-styled reformers, the greatest bores of all.... I did not fear the hen-harriers, for I kept no chickens, but I feared the men-harriers rather.⁸⁶

From www.thefederalist.com, "What Your Neighborhood List-Serv Tells You about the Demise of America":

But the signs of this crushing of America's spirit of risk-taking are everywhere. I see it every time I take my children to a suburban playground. The dangerous metal slides, rickety merry-go-rounds and tall monkey bars are a thing of the past, a casualty of federal regulations and rapacious lawyers. The benefit is supposed to be fewer injuries, although the evidence of that is surprisingly thin. Those old playgrounds had a progressive danger to them that taught kids how to assess risk. When you grow up thinking that every fall will be cushioned by safety mulch or fall height-rated rubber flooring, turns out you have trouble when it comes to real world rock-climbing.⁸⁷

⁸⁶ Thoreau, 159.

⁸⁷ Mollie Hemingway, "What Your Neighborhood List-Serv Tells You about the Demise of America," 9/20/13, www.thefederalist.com.

*Paul Picked Himself Up and Went Back into the City**Hinneh*⁸⁸

My Sennacherib—he approaches me again,
One hundred divisions full in tow.

Here I stand,
Gazing down upon him
From the safety of your holy hill.
(How shall it turn out well for him?)
Yet I fear, I fear.

I see thickets of forest spears;
I hear unsheathing of swords.
The siege towers—they draw too near.
(They creak and roll,
Creak and roll, creak and roll.)

Shall I leap like a deer?
Shall I sing like a sword?
(Shall I swallow my fear?)

Lord, you just say the word
“Behold!”

I can't pinpoint the exact time it struck me, but it was not too long ago. The account of Paul and his stoning in Lystra did just that: the account struck *me*. Here it is, Acts 14:8-23:

Now at Lystra there was a man sitting who could not use his feet. He was crippled from birth and had never walked. ⁹He listened to Paul speaking. And Paul, looking intently at him and seeing that he had faith to be made well, ¹⁰said in a loud voice, “Stand upright on your feet.” And he sprang up and began walking. ¹¹And when the crowds saw what Paul had done, they lifted up their voices, saying in Lycaonian, “The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!” ¹²Barnabas they called Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker. ¹³And the priest of Zeus, whose temple was at the entrance to the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates

⁸⁸ Matthew Crick.

and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds. ¹⁴ But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their garments and rushed out into the crowd, crying out, ¹⁵ “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men, of like nature with you, and we bring you good news, that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them. ¹⁶ In past generations he allowed all the nations to walk in their own ways. ¹⁷ Yet he did not leave himself without witness, for he did good by giving you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness.” ¹⁸ Even with these words they scarcely restrained the people from offering sacrifice to them. ¹⁹ *But Jews came from Antioch and Iconium, and having persuaded the crowds, they stoned Paul and dragged him out of the city, supposing that he was dead.* ²⁰ *But when the disciples gathered about him, he rose up and entered the city,* and on the next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe. ²¹ When they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, ²² strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God. ²³ And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, with prayer and fasting they committed them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

The key verses for me, the ones that struck me, are verses 19 and 20, which I have italicized above. After Paul was pelted with stones, knocked unconscious, dragged outside of the city and left for dead, he regained consciousness even as his fellow Christians gathered about him, I assume to mourn. What did he do next? He got up, brushed himself off, and went back *into* the very city that had just stoned him. This is not normal behavior! I'd like to think I am ready for such a trial. But the answer to my pondering is not found in navel gazing (I'm sorry, self). The preparation and strength to conquer in such a trial is the power of the Gospel, that message outside of ourselves which comes in to live by the Holy Spirit. What the Gospel can do I have *barely learned*. It is the power to convert us; it is the power to teach us of the grace of God the Father through the innocent life, sacrificial death, and victorious resurrection of Jesus, his Son; it is the means by which these merits of Jesus are applied to us for salvation, and for Christian living, that we might

live with his heart; the Gospel is our motivation to serve Christ, not to benefit (or save) ourselves, but only others. Jesus did all the things he did only to benefit fallen mankind! Jesus' innocent life is one of keeping the law in love for his Father, in service to his neighbor—mankind itself—which spans all time, from Adam and Eve to his second coming on the Last Day in glory as the God-man. His sacrifice is the culmination of his innocent life, although we look at it often from the perspective of what was done *to* him—that he passively allowed it. Yet even this was *action* on his part. His resurrection is that scorning of the cross, where he endured all things for the sake of mankind and his elect. As a pastor, I have been called to preach this Christ as I seek to serve my neighbor in my vocation, wherever my vocation leads me, to whomever it leads me, whatever “the risk” involved.

Let us keep our attention for a moment on the call and work of a pastor, a very dear vocation. I don't have to go out of my way to be stoned, even as Paul did not. I am to accomplish my regular work, care for my flock, spread the Gospel in my community as God gives me opportunity (he, who opens doors). If I am preaching the law of God and the Gospel of Christ, seeking to administer the sacraments properly, laboring behind the scenes to draw back straying members, spreading the Gospel in the community, proclaiming the resurrection, teaching the whole counsel of God from Creation to Revelation, the threat of “stoning” is ever present. The stoning may be a verbal one, or it may be a literal one, as some pastors experience today in those parts of the world where it is dangerous for Christians to live (Iran, Iraq, Syria, Egypt, Pakistan, India, and many more places). The devil, of course, is the one casting the stones; his aim is always good, aiming for heart and head; he shows no reluctance and no remorse in casting stones (his lies) at us; his arm never tires; he seeks to knock us unconscious, even better, dead—physically, he'll take that—but his goal is our spiritual death, that we give up on Christ and the resurrection hope. Indeed, he looms up like Sennacherib with his 185,000 soldiers loomed over Jerusalem long ago. King Hezekiah felt fear and the whole city too. Do pastors feel that sort of fear?

I'll continue to speak for myself: I have to admit, oftentimes I do. But the fear is not that I have ever feared for my beating-heart life. “My Sennacherib,” rather, is the sense of being asked to do what is beyond my human capabilities to accomplish: The day-by-day labor required of a pastor, to be a leader who encourages the troops rather than demoralizes them (even when he himself feels demoralized), to be a theologian

who does not ascend his tower to study in the sacred privacy of self-benefit, but remains with the people as Jesus did, preparing to proclaim good news to needy sinners, including himself, to be someone who is willing to take a “risk” when, in the regular vocation of pastoral work, a door opens to do something or reach somebody that seems *nothing but risk*. Like Old Testament Jacob (Genesis 32:22-32), it seems I’ve gotten myself into a wrestling match with God but didn’t know it at first. (Or did he enter that match with me?) Basically, this is the three-fold challenge of cross-bearing. First, it is the challenge to believe, to trust in Christ alone for salvation, come what may. Second, it is the challenge of confession. In bearing the cross, we are telling the world, “This is what I believe.” Third, it is *transport*: Overcoming one’s fear to carry the cross to the people of the world, saying, “It is for you too!” This is a blessed three-fold challenge laid upon all Christians!

So, am I willing to be stoned by the community (and nation) in which I labor, to be dragged out and left for dead? Am I willing to pick myself up and go back *into* the city, not because I am a degreed professional, but rather a free servant of the Lord Jesus, who did great things for me, completing my salvation apart from my call to serve him in the ministry, that I may walk in his footsteps and become nothing at all in the eyes of the world? Such a willingness and determination to overcome my fear of stoning comes from the Lord, through his Gospel in the Word of God, in the Sacrament of the Font, where the Lord placed his saving name on me “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19), and in the Sacrament of the Altar, where Jesus, in his risen body and blood with bread and wine, enters me for “the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:28). He carefully nurtures and fosters a courage in me that overcomes fear. *Consider this truth for your own vocational life*. Then, together, let us consider Paul, Athanasius, John Hus, Martin Luther, among many others, who labored, not knowing what tomorrow would bring, and put *all at risk* because they considered life in the world nothing to that of knowing the Lord and attaining his resurrection, and that others, too, may attain it. Can such courage undergird the entire Christian Church this way, like a bass line undergirds a powerful Easter hymn booming out in the world, but *not* that any *particular* church body may grow necessarily? (Shall we evaluate success by numbers or worry when the numbers don’t look so hot? Why put our spirits at risk in this numerical way?) The goal of Christian witness is simply this: that through our manner of living (and speech) all people may *hear*. Then God will do what he does: call his elect to faith in Christ

(Ephesians 1:3-10) through this witness so that not one of them will be lost. Then Christ, on Last Day resurrection glory, will appear to collect the elect to eternal glory. Hallelujah! Paul said something about this “fear swallowing” labor didn’t he? From a Roman prison, with execution drawing near, he wrote triumphantly to his friend and fellow minister Timothy, “Remember Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel, for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound! Therefore, I endure everything for the sake of the elect, that they also may obtain the salvation that is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory” (2 Timothy 2:8-10). As a pastor, I am to do nothing with these words but *take them to heart and live in them*. How about you? [LSQ](#)

Recommended Reading

Part 1.1

What in the World Is Going On? by Rev. David Thompson

The Screwtape Letters by C.S. Lewis

Part 1.2

Men on Strike by Helen Smith

Total Truth by Nancy Pearcey

Part 1.3

Fed Ed by Allen Quist

Postmodern Times by Gene Edward Veith, Jr.

Darwin on Trial by Phillip E. Johnson

Genetic Entropy by Dr. J.C. Sanford

www.climatedepot.com

www.answersingenesis.org

Part 1.4

Christianity in an Age of Terrorism by Gene Edward Veith, Jr.

www.frontpagemag.com

Part 1.5

The Rage Against God by Peter Hitchens

Liberal Fascism by Jonah Goldberg

Part 1.6

The Narcissism Epidemic by Jean Twenge, PhD

Part 2.1

On Being a Theologian of the Cross by Gerhard Forde

The Theology of the Cross by Daniel M. Deuschlander

www.issuesetc.org (This is recommended *listening*)

Part 2.2

History and Christianity by John Warwick Montgomery

Many Convincing Proofs by Allen Quist

What They Need to Hear by Klemet Preus

Tough-Minded Christianity by William Demski and Thomas Schirrmacher. See essays, "Preventing Theological Suicide," by L. Russ Bush; "Christianity Needs More Lutheran Apologetes," by Alvin J. Schmidt.

Part 2.3

Luther on Vocation by Gustaf Wingren

God at Work by Gene Edward Veith, Jr.

Walden by Henry David Thoreau

www.patheos.com

Part 2.4

Spirituality of the Cross by Gene Edward Veith, Jr.

The Culture of Life by Ryan C. MacPherson, PhD

Part 2.5

Free-Range Kids by Lenore Skenazy

Part 2.6

Captive in Iran by Maryam Rostampour and Marziyeh Amirizadeh

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Koren's Pastoral Letter

Ulrich Vilhelm Koren

LSQ Vol. 54, Nos. 2–3 (June–September 2014)

Editor's Note: *Dr. Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker translated this famous letter of Ulrich Vilhelm Koren addressed to the pastors of the Norwegian Synod. Although this translation was done especially for the Synod's Centennial celebration in 1953, it is beneficial for members of the ELS today. These excerpts were reprinted in the Lutheran Sentinel in 1951–1952.¹ Dr. Koren, who has the reputation of having been one of the greatest theologians in the history of the Lutheran Church in this country, was president of the Norwegian Synod from 1894 until 1912.*

DEAR BRETHREN:

Grace, Mercy, Peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ,
Our Lord.

Upon the death of my dear friend and co-laborer Preus I was obliged last summer to lay aside my former and dearer position as president of the Iowa District and assume the general presidency of our Norwegian Synod. I was then asked if the pastors might expect a communication from me at the time of my induction into office. At the time I did not think there was any call for this: essentially my relation within the Synod was unchanged. It had so often been my lot to address the pastors through lectures and synodical papers, that on this occasion

¹ See *Lutheran Sentinel* 34:19 (October 12, 1951): 296–299; 34:23 (December 12, 1951): 357–361; 35:1 (January 12, 1952): 4–5.

I did not seem to find any real call to say what I had not already said at other times.

Nevertheless, when I now by this epistle come to you, my dear fellow laborers in the ministry of the Word, I have been urged on by a consideration of the conditions under which so many of you live—far away from brethren in the office, experiencing only rarely the encouragement of association with these. And though there are many of whom this may not be said, there are still those who are forced by the demands of their office to trudge the weary way of their labors and their cares alone through the greater part of the year. Then too, even if this were not the case with some, I have considered that a word of encouragement might not be unwelcome to one or the other who in the daily returning burdens and cares of the office experiences how easily indifference and weariness or discouragement secretly gain the victory in an otherwise willing heart.

About Our Personal Christianity

Who of us has not tasted this? Who has not often felt disinclined to undertake the proper preparation of an impending sermon or instruction class? Who has not been tempted to be neglectful in his own personal Christianity, slow to pray and to supplicate in behalf of the congregation and its individual souls? Tempted to delay or neglect such activities as would tend to awaken, develop and advance the congregations in the knowledge and acceptance of the truth—such as preparation for communion, meetings of various kinds, work for the spread and use of good literature, etc.? Who has not felt tempted to impatience and carelessness regarding those things which should increase the establishment and the spread of the truth in synodical affairs and the cause of God's Kingdom in general? Nay, who has not only been tempted in these things, but has succumbed and actually neglected much that he should have done?

The Pastor's Reading

The conditions that prevail about us are hardly conducive to make us "bookworms" through much studying. There may be more danger that we are led into temptation by a foolish choice of reading material. The old adage applies here too: "Tell me who your friends are, and I'll tell you who you are." He who continually, as a matter of habit, seeks the company of Reformed writers, who are strangers to that which is characteristically Lutheran, i.e. Biblical, will gradually himself become a

stranger to the same. He who seeks his growth and spiritual sustenance at the hands of such modern teachers who in more ways than one and in a pregnant sense are children of their age and upon whom the spirit of the time has only too clearly left its mark, will with difficulty learn to appreciate the writings of those teachers who are lifted up above the ephemeral vagaries of the times, those teachers whom God has given the church to be a light throughout all ages, in whom faithfulness toward the eternal, unchangeable Word of God is the essential mark, while the marks they reveal of their age, however clear they may be, still are only the accidental, the external and the unessential. The miserable stuff which was being read, devoured and praised toward the close of the last (18th) century, by many even highly intelligent young theologians, and the pitiful caricature of Christianity into which they thereby were misled, brings a striking testimony of the need to be on guard in this particular. In many regions conditions are not better now at the close of the present (19th) century.

How the World Causes Frustration

However, since this ministry demands a strenuous and close attention, and an uninterrupted activity about that which by nature is foreign to us, and since we, as we examine ourselves, continually are made conscious of mistakes and failures and faults in our ministry, it is no wonder that we become downcast, discouraged and unhappy. This is no late discovery. As Ambrose says, "I do not believe that a pastor dies happy, though he may die blessed."

Nay, even the happy experiences we have enjoyed in our study or in our ministry can make us downcast when we discover later on that we are so cold or lazy or confused and become fearful lest this may possibly be a proof of our having fallen away. There is so much that would confuse and separate us from the one thing that should reign in our mind, the contemplation of Christ.

S. Kierkegaard says in a certain place: "It is one thing to grasp the Highest when a person sits undisturbed in his quiet study, alone with God and His Word; it is quite a different thing to sit inside a large copper kettle as the blacksmiths belabor it from all directions, and still own a collected mind to grasp the Highest."

The world is that "great copper kettle." We are in the world, Our Savior says in His Intercessory Prayer: "I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one" (John 17:15). In the world there is a buzzing in our ears in

the busy race for the goods of the world, first and foremost for money, money, money. Everything becomes money. The value of time is that it is money. The fracture of a leg becomes money. A fire becomes money. The fear of God becomes money. Good deeds become money. "Prayers and tears" become money. Farther men do not reach, except in the Church of Rome where purgatory has become money and for money they enter into heaven. And why is money such an essential thing in the world? Because, when men "eat and drink, buy and sell, plant and build, give in marriage and take in marriage," when they speculate and play politics and work intrigues then, they in all this find their real life, and the more money, the more successfully this life is lived.

But to us the word comes that we must "use this world, as not abusing it" (1 Corinthians 7:31). It will benefit us not one whit to depart into the desert or into the cloister.

A Needed Warning

It is not a rare thing to hear this or that one among us complain about his congregations. Let us not be too quick to do this. Only then do we have a right to do this when we are able to say that we have done for them all we could. And who is there among us who does not become anxiously concerned when he is faced with this question? But if this be the case, we are all the more in need of such encouragement as can grant us new zeal in our ministry and make us cheerful and willing to assume the burden of our ministerial cross.

Here we go, steadily occupied day after day, rarely quite happy, at times quite depressed and tired. Just what shall encourage us? We need a wider and truer field of vision than that which the monotonous drudgery of our daily life provides. When we live down in deep valleys, our field of vision is narrow and confined. The heights close in upon us. We need to reach out beyond the high mountains. It is striking that many of the most glorious revelations in Scripture are made from the mountains—from Sinai, Nebo, Carmel, Mount Transfiguration, the Mount of Olives.

The Christian's View of Time

Luther has said, "We view time length, while God views it crosswise, so that Adam and the last man born on the Day of Judgment are both equally near." In another place he says: We view time, as it were, along a far extended measuring line, while Christ views time as a rolled up ball of thread. A thousand years are in His eyes as yesterday as it passes by,

and as a watch in the night. Let us therefore not stare at time and the days that are long so that we become nearsighted, nay, blind. "Though the day be weary and time be long—at the close will sound the bells of evensong." How long does God count time since that Good Friday when our Lord Jesus was extended on the Cross? How long is it since Luther preached in a voice of thunder from the pulpit in Wittenberg while Veit Dietrich, George Rorarius and the others sat below in the pews and wrote "for dear life" to reduce the powerful words to paper? How long is it since we ourselves by holy baptism were dedicated to Christ? With God it is all as if it were today.

And how long before we die and the three shovelfuls of earth are cast on our bier? The hour is near, for one or the other of us possibly very near. How long until all of you are dead to whom I write this? After 50 or 60 years, by 1950 or 1960—if the world lasts—not one will likely be living. Where will we then be? In what circumstances? In what company?

Small Services Are Not Trivial

Our circumstances, our work, our battles, our strivings become so insignificant that we begin to think that we cannot count them as being of any importance. But here the Word of God again comes to our rescue. For just as nothing is great before God, so also nothing is insignificant in His Presence. The same God, Who says that "nations are as a drop in a bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales" (Isaiah 40:15), has also caused the word to be brought to us that He considers each little child, "even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish" (Matthew 18:14). He cares for us. He was merciful to Epaphroditus when he was ill and close to death in Rome and much concerned at the thought of how the congregation at Philippi worried about him. He was concerned about Paul, that he be not deprived of this co-laborer and fellow-soldier of his, that he should not experience grief upon grief. He regards too our humble service and our simple labor, so long as the purpose is to serve Him. A certain woman poured precious ointment on the head of Jesus when He sat at meat in Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper. To all appearances this occasion was not so important, and yet we note that God saw to it that the tidings of her deed has followed the preaching of the Gospel into all the world. Andronicus, Junias, Amplias—what do even the Christians know about the services of these men? And yet, note how their names and their labors are regarded by God and their memory

preserved in His record (Romans 16). Here we find a fulfillment of the words of Hebrews 6:10: "For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister." Has He not said that He will not forget the cup of cold water by which a loving heart has refreshed the weary servant of God? How lovely He helps to ward off the temptation to adopt a discouraged and envious view of the insignificance of our labor, when He says that what we have done for one of the least of His brethren that we have done for Him. And in possibly no passage has He so helped us to overcome the temptation of a frivolous view of any part of our work or to consider it unimportant or insignificant as in the passage where He says: "He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

We Preach Comfort Also for Ourselves

Just as we, then, must apply to ourselves the words of St. Paul in Romans 2 with reference to the Law: "You therefore who teaches another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, 'Do not commit adultery,' do you commit adultery?" etc.—thus we must also apply to ourselves the gospel which we preach to others. Or do we encourage and comfort only our hearers? Has our Savior not borne also our sins? Does He not love also us? Does He not pray also for us? Does He not bear also our infirmities? Does He not know the many and dangerous temptations which we more than others must face? Do you not suppose that He sees and knows that we even more than others need the daily help of the Holy Spirit "that our faith fail not?" Yes, surely. And when we encourage others by all means to honor God by believing His sacred promises, let us above all believe them ourselves and rejoice in that to which He has added His own Word that we, too, have received mercy. It is, after all, in this spirit God wants us to believe it. To Timothy Paul writes (2 Timothy 2:1): "You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus." Only when he is thus strengthened—in the faith that he himself has received grace—he is enabled to heed the next bidding: "You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (2 Timothy 2:3). Timothy had been a Christian and a teacher many years when Paul wrote these words to him, and yet he evidently needed this admonition again to be strengthened by the grace of God.

When we make these great, all-inclusive words of comfort our own, as for instance, "My grace is sufficient for you" and "Casting all your care

upon Him, for He cares for you," it is not as if we now have before us a finished task. Though you may comfort yourself today by casting all your care upon Him so that you feel happy and content, still the morrow will bring new burdens which you cannot bear alone and a new need to realize that if you own the grace of God you have all that you need.

It is this very personal, daily use of the gospel of grace that alone can strengthen us to the right faithfulness, wisdom and patience in our calling, and it is to this very thing we should be helped by looking upward and forward to that which awaits us "quickly."

Our circumstances are not such that we find much time and opportunity for quiet meditation, as the servants of the Church at other times have been given to experience and enjoy. For this reason it becomes the more important for us to use the time we do have for this, that we may be trained to keep our mind on our service and our eye on the goal. It is necessary for us so to keep the Word of God in our heart that we be fashioned into life eternal and stand in the presence of our Lord. If we succeed in this, we shall be only too happy to get as many of our parishioners with us as possible, and God will surely see to it that our endeavor does not fail.

Differences in Gifts

I can well imagine that one or the other of you, my Brethren, will say to yourself at this point: "Yes, I am glad to be a believer; thank God, I am happy to belong to my Savior; but—I should not have been a pastor. I should not have entered upon this difficult office. If I had realized what it is, I should never have undertaken it." How well I recognize these thoughts in your case or in others.' What brings them about? The cause may be different in each case. With some it is the flesh which shrinks back at the thought that the daily cross will not leave him free to follow his own choice. With some it may be a household cross which adds a double burden to the pastoral office. In the case of others, again, it is the thought that they seem to lack the gifts which the work demands.

However, is it not true, that if we let such thoughts prevail, it is simply because we neglect to take the Lord, Who is the Lord of the Church, along in our deliberations? And yet, as we are troubled by such thoughts, it is His very call to us that should clarify the whole matter. Or—was He not our companion along life's way? Did He not know us? Was not His hand in ours when we were counseled by others and started our course of study, and thus also later when we were inducted into office?

It is very true, that not everyone has the proper qualifications. The Word of God demands a certain measure of “gifts,” some natural, others acquired, some physical, others spiritual and mental. If it can be demonstrated that a person lacks some of these, there the call is not a right call because the rule of the Word has not been followed. We must not, however, confess a natural lack of these gifts with a lack which may arise from neglect to use gifts or “talents” that God has actually given, or to use them with the proper zeal and forethought.

One thing that may lead to the danger that these gifts are not utilized is discouragement at the thought that our gifts are so insignificant. I am aware of the fact that there are those among us here and there who realize with pain that they have no great abilities and possess few and insignificant gifts for their exalted office, though I may not be able to point out this or that individual and prove that he is of their number. To such a one I would say: Let not these be your thoughts, dear Brother, and let not such lack of confidence set at naught the abilities God has given you. God does not measure with the measure of men. He does not judge as these judge by outward repute or talents that are to be seen by men. Where there is faithfulness, zeal, steadfastness of purpose—i.e. earnestness—there is the greatest gift of the Spirit, far greater than mere glittering gifts. Sometime it will be made manifest how far different is the judgment of God from that of men. In this the case is the same among the servants of the Word as it is among Christians in general. One is rated high, regarded as superior both in understanding and zeal, and possibly even in Christian virtue, but some day we may be given to see a poor despised old woman, a plain, innocent and humble man rise among the foremost and highly honored, while many a one of those who were here regarded among the chief are among the very last—possibly not even there. Who is at hand now to recite the story of a man like Epanetus or of a woman like Persis? The history of the Church has no place for them—it is silent. But in God’s record their names are written in indelible ink, and they shall remain there as long as the world itself, while they personally long since have been received into the number of the saved who sing praise before the throne of God.

Of these things I have desired to remind those of the Brethren who are least well known among us, who rarely are able to attend conferences, who prefer to remain silent in these conferences, and seem in their own eyes (possibly also in the eyes of others) to be among the least in gifts or position or influence. Many of you undoubtedly know the beautiful allegory about the two holy angels whom God called upon to

serve Him on a journey to earth: the one to rule an empire, the other to perform the lowliest task, to sweep the street before the other. Just as it did not enter the mind of these two heavenly princes to make proud and envious comparisons between the two forms of service, the one in pride because of his glorious position, the other in discontent because of the humbler task—and just as both were only zealous to do the will of God, thus our Lord Jesus taught us what we should be minded (Cf. Matthew 20:26; John 5:44; etc.). The important thing is that we be the servants of God and heirs of eternal life. The small and unimportant are the temporary and passing differences that may appear between servants. The thing to be rejected and despised and feared is that we look upon these differences in temporal matters as of great importance and significance. “Naar Döden har fra vognen spondt i gravens ormestrade, da skal det ikke blive kjendt, hvo höist har siddet i saede” (When death is unhitched in the wormy street of the grave, none shall know who sat on top in the driver’s seat). The common service shall cause us to “be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind,” and the common great hope shall make us humble, glad, watchful, careful and patient, so that we do not “grow weary” (Cf. Romans 12:12; 1 John 3:2; 2 Corinthians 4:16f).

Our Synod's Position

The special experiences too, by which God has guided our Synod, are there to strengthen and invigorate us to new faithfulness in our ministry. Through the labors and battles in the church during all these years God has clearly indicated to us that we in our synod have a task to perform on which the attitude of the succeeding generations toward the eternal Gospel in a great degree depends. This should grant us strength, make us zealous and untiring, “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

But this purpose is not gained without the experiencing of many hardships. It can be no secret among us that the position which we hold, as those who walk in the footsteps of our orthodox fathers, with regard to Scripture itself as well as its chief doctrine, Justification by faith without the works of the law, *sola fide*, in the future as in the past will reap for us hatred and opposition from all sides, if we continue to be in earnest about this confession.

It is no pleasant or easy thing to bear this in mind, for war in the Church is a heavy and bitter cross. Therefore woe to those who dote

“about questions and strifes of words,” what shall we do when the Word of God itself is attacked and saving Truth is ridiculed? Do we then have the right to remain silent? Do we, for the sake of peace, have the right to avoid giving a clear testimony that is not to be misunderstood? Have we the right to remain silent in the face of these many human inventions which raise their voice so repeatedly against the Word? Have we the right to tolerate the doctrine of men in those things which concern the Kingdom of God and the salvation of sinners? Do we dare to attempt in this manner to avoid the charge of being exclusive, hidebound, super-orthodox slaves of the letter, insisting on doctrine but neglecting Christian life, etc.? Surely not, and woe be to us if we in this way buy friends and a good name among men! Those who would demand this of us, or would praise us if we did this, they have not learned to see what the Word of God is, or, more correctly, they do not believe that what we find in Scripture actually is the very Word of God. They do not “think through” what is implied in the expression, “The Word of God.”

As surely as the Holy Scriptures are the Word of God, so surely this Word will tolerate no contradiction, no departure, no reasoning away. Our Lord Jesus has said: “For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him the Son of Man also will be ashamed when He comes in the glory of His Father with the holy angels” (Mark 8:38). God grant, dear Brethren, that these words may be inscribed deeply and indelibly in your hearts!

Because of His words the Savior was damned as a revolutionary and a disturber of the peace. His disciples can expect no better. Only let us be on our guard lest it be a “strange fire” and a fleshly zeal that taint our testimony and that we give no unprovoked occasion for strife. Where a personal cause is at stake, we may well withdraw. Where the clear Word of God is at stake, there we must rather accept the loss of all rather than lose one tittle of the Word. If we are of this mind, strife will inevitably be our lot, though in reality we be the most ironic of all men.

Whence will such a strife arise, one may ask. To this I reply: Only preach law and gospel without abbreviation and without adulteration. Stay close by what God has said. Do not ask what men prefer to hear. When you hear someone falsify the Word of God, use as humble and friendly a manner of speech as you can when you correct him. Do all of this, and you will soon verify what the Jews in Rome said to Paul: “for concerning this sect, we know that it is spoken against everywhere” (Acts 28:22).

Conclusion

One thing I would add. While I have been composing this letter to you and in my humble prayers have implored the help of God for the tasks, the thought has pursued me that I ought to be the last one to say anything to you by way of correction, admonition or guidance, since I myself more than anyone else stand in need of all of this. But in this matter, too, my "call" has prompted me, the responsibility which my office carries with it. I have therefore found it necessary to meet my own scruples with the reminder that this is an official duty which I have tried to carry out as well as I could. I dare say that this letter has been composed in love. Then I may also be assured of this that you will receive it in love.

May the God of Patience and Comfort be with us all in our sacred calling, and grant us the spirit of Power and Love and Soberness for the carrying out of the same, that we may all be preserved in the knowledge of the Truth and in brotherly love! LSQ

Book Reviews

LSQ Vol. 54, Nos. 2–3 (June–September 2014)

Book Review: The Isoscelized God

Shawn Kauffeld. *The Isoscelized God*. Menomonie: Books of the Way, 2014. 84 pages. \$8.00.

In this book Shawn Kauffeld speaks of the essential Christian doctrine of the holy Trinity and its misuse in our society. The isoscelized God is the major theme of the book. Using this intriguing picture-language piques one's interest. One of the most common symbols of the Trinity used in our churches is the equilateral triangle, which reminds us that as the angles and the three sides of the triangle are equal so each person of the Trinity is equally God and still God is one. We confess that each person—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—is distinct, but the deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is one.

There are three persons in the divine Godhead and yet there is

only one God. When we consider the internal workings of the Trinity, or as God is unto Himself, we say that the Father is unbegotten (John 1:14), the Son is begotten (Psalm 2:7; John 1:14), and that the Holy Spirit proceeds (John 15:26). The Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and the Son (John 15:26; Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6; and 1 Peter 1:11). When we speak of the external workings of the Trinity, or how God is toward and for us, we especially ascribe to the Father the work of creation (Malachi 2:10); to the Son, the work of redemption (Matthew 20:28); and to the Holy Ghost, the work of sanctification (2 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Peter 1:2).

Whenever it is taught that a person of the Trinity is less important than another, the author points out that we are isoscelizing the Trinity. Then the symbol of the Trinity is not an equilateral triangle, but an isosceles triangle, that is a triangle that does

not have equal sides and angles. To isoscelize God means that the doctrine or work of one person of the Trinity is denigrated in comparison to the other persons. The author shows that this is often done in our culture in relationship to the Son and the Holy Spirit. In this way we lose the important teaching of the Scripture and wonderful comfort for the Christian.

On the basis of Scripture the author refers to the Son and the Holy Spirit as the advocates and comforters. The work of both persons is essential to our salvation. The Lord Jesus, the second person of the Trinity, became flesh to accomplish our salvation. He lived a holy life in our place (Romans 5:19) and then gave His life to pay for all our sins on the cross (Galatians 3:13). This wonderful treasure of salvation will do us no good unless it is brought to us by the Holy Spirit through the Word and the Sacraments and is received through faith alone in the Savior, which is worked through the means of grace (Romans 10:17; 1 Corinthians 12:3). The work of both persons is essential for salvation. Connecting this important truth with the symbol of the triangle, the author writes:

With this in mind, is there honestly any question as to how the third angle of the triangle representing God is formed? Absolutely not! There is no question. C, the angle of the Holy Spirit, is equal to B, the Second Angle, the Son of God, and both angles were sent out from the same point, A, the Father. Now if C, the

Holy Spirit, is equal to B, the Son of God, in Divinity, and B, the Son of God, is equal to A, the Father, then the only possible symbol that can be used to describe God is an equilateral triangle. Any and all reductions will result in an isoscelized God. (49)

When one deprecates the work of the Holy Spirit or the other persons of the Trinity he isoscelizes the Trinity.

If the Holy Spirit is equal to the Father and the Son, why does it seem that the Scriptures say so much more about the Father and the Son than they do about the Holy Spirit? The author responds to that question in this way:

That such a question should be asked comes as a surprise, but that it is often asked by people who feel they know their Bible is incredible. In the Gospel of John, how often is John identified as the writer and the one who is participating in all of the activities? The answer is not once. Yet it is easy to identify John in the Gospel. Why didn't John identify himself more clearly? It was because his message was about Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the World. In the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts, how often does Luke mention himself by name? The answer is not once. Yet it is easy to identify Luke in his Gospel, and in the travels of Paul. Why didn't Luke identify himself

more clearly? It was because his message was about Jesus, the Son of God and Savior of the World, and the book of Acts was about the growth and mission outreach of the early Christian Church.

Who is the One who inspired the words of Scripture? The author of Scripture is identified as the Holy Spirit. Now, what is His role in the Salvation of mankind? He was sent to take the knowledge of the Savior and work that faith into the hearts and minds of mankind. It would only be natural that He would stress the Author of Salvation's work. (50)

In this quote the author is alluding to the words of St. John, which explain that the Spirit is not sent to speak of Himself or glorify Himself but rather Christ (John 16:13-14). The author then gives an exhaustive list of the references to the Holy Spirit in the New Testament, which is much longer than expected (50-59).

An important strength of this book is its use of biblical history and particular biblical characters to show how the Spirit works in the life of the believer. In the text one travels through the Old Testament, the Gospels, and the New Testament church. The work of the Spirit is seen in the lives of great heroes of faith such as Job, Abraham, Joseph, Joshua, Caleb, David, and Paul.

The twenty-first century is a time when more and more people are denying the doctrine of the Trinity. Consider for a moment the growth of sects such as the Mormons and

Jehovah's Witnesses. Far more disheartening is the fact that even in conservative Christian congregations the doctrine of the Trinity is neglected with the result that many simply assume that believing in God is salvific but know nothing more about who He is or what He has done. Thus God is isoscelized in the hearts and minds of many. This book is an important remedy and corrective for this problem. It would be a beneficial read and excellent study for any Bible class. We thank the author for his interesting and thought-provoking book.

— Gaylin R. Schmeling

LSQ

Book Review: Your Questions, Scripture's Answers

John F. Brug. *Your Questions, Scripture's Answers*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2013. 373 pages. \$19.99 softcover; \$15.99 e-book.

The "question-answer" format for studying theology has proven to be effective in many respects. Consider the basic format of Luther's *Small Catechism*, for example. In more recent times, periodicals of church bodies make use of the question-answer format in columns such as "Pastor, I Have a Question" in the *Lutheran Sentinel*. This format has also been used in the official magazine of our sister synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS): the *Northwestern Lutheran* and now *Forward in Christ*

("Your Questions, Please"). With the proliferation of material made available on the internet, the WELS web site includes a "Q & A" section which lists questions submitted by people of all walks of life with answers given by pastors and other theologians.

One such theologian, Dr. John F. Brug, professor of systematic theology and Old Testament at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, has compiled many of the answers he gave in print in the synod's magazines or on the WELS web site into *Your Questions, Scripture's Answers*. Brug's purpose in creating this compilation is not to "present a systematic or comprehensive treatment of any of the topics discussed, but simply [to] provide a cross section of the questions that are on people's minds" (v). He also does not intend to answer every question exhaustively, but hopes the reader would use the question asked and the answer given as a springboard into additional study of Scripture.

The range of topics addressed in this volume is relatively broad, covering eleven different headings: the Bible; biblical doctrines; ministry; the Sacraments; church fellowship; last things (eschatology); other churches and religions; creeds and confessions; Christians and government; sexual morality, marriage, and divorce; and adiaphora. If the reader is searching for information about a subtopic within these topics, an index of Scripture references is included along with an index of subjects. Both of these indices are quite helpful for research purposes.

Dr. Brug also includes a two-part list of resources for additional study. One part lists sources pertaining to Christian doctrine in general; the list is ordered from easier reading to more difficult. A shorter part is a subject-specific list which addresses some of the subjects covered in the book.

One interesting aspect of this book is that the questions asked are not all from people within our fellowship. Thus Dr. Brug's answers to these questions provide a good source of apologetic material that one could use in answering similar questions from their non-fellowship relatives, neighbors, or co-workers. For example, in the "biblical doctrines" section, a person from a non-denominational background asks a page-long question regarding the differences between their understanding of conversion and that of the Lutheran Church. In the question alone a few assumptions Lutherans might make about a non-denominational Christian are addressed. Dr. Brug masterfully responds to this question by commending the questioner's faith and addressing the key issues involved.

Your Questions, Scripture's Answers would make a good resource for personal study for pastors and laypeople alike. It would also be interesting to use this book as material for group Bible study, taking on a topic at a time by using this book as a starting point.

— Michael K. Smith

Book Review: God's Imagery

Joel C. Seifert. *God's Imagery: Interpreting Scripture's Symbols, Parables, and Word Pictures*. Bible Discovery Series. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2013. 148 pages. \$16.00 softcover; \$12.80 e-book.

To say that the Bible is filled with various types of imagery might seem like an understatement. It is pretty obvious that God did not always speak to us in his Word in direct, declarative statements. Many times he chose instead to give us his truths via concrete pictures or symbols. What a blessing for us that he did!

As part of the "Bible Discovery Series," Rev. Joel Seifert has written *God's Imagery*, a concise look at many of the symbols, parables, and word pictures we encounter in Scripture. His examination is divided into eighteen chapters covering these three categories of illustrative speech. The section regarding "symbols" receives the longest treatment, followed by "parables" and "word pictures." Each section provides the reader with an adequate number examples of the type of illustration being considered so that they should be able to grasp the general thrust of the illustrations. Seifert states, "...The goals of this book are (1) to give the reader a basic understanding of the different ways our Lord communicates through pictures, (2) to provide explanations to the most common and most important symbols, and (3) to give the reader greater appreciation for the message of God's grace that

is repeated in beautiful words and pictures throughout God's Word" (6).

Some detail on selected portions of this book are in order. In the section of the book dealing with "symbols," Seifert dedicates a chapter to "Sacrifices: Symbols of Sin and Salvation." He points out rightly that all the sacrifices commanded by God and carried out by his people up to the time of Christ Jesus "*did absolutely nothing to change the worshiper's relationship to God*" (18; emphasis original). Rather, the sacrifices served as powerful symbols of what God does about sin: sin requires death. The animal was sacrificed in place of the sinner himself; God accepted it as a substitute as he would eventually accept Jesus' death as a substitute for all sinners. Seifert then gives a brief description of the four different types of bloody sacrifices required by God of his people: the burnt offering (a voluntary offering as an expression of faith), the fellowship offering (celebrating restored peace with God), the sin offering (a mandatory sacrifice for certain sins), and the guilt offering (to celebrate restored peace with a wronged neighbor). The description of each sacrifice is concluded with present-day application to the reader.

The second section of Seifert's book treats the parables of our Lord. After giving a brief definition or description of parables (extended similes or metaphors), Seifert encourages the interpreter of any of Jesus' parables to "stick to the point of comparison" (81). While this reviewer may not agree that there is always only one point of comparison in a parable, Seifert's caution against allegorizing

Jesus' parables is warranted. Each chapter in this section of the book treats a subset of Jesus' parables, such as those regarding the Kingdom of Heaven, "Life in the Upside-Down Kingdom," "Working Hard in the Kingdom of Grace," etc. The explanation of each parable is interwoven with much law-gospel application.

In the final section of the book, Seifert takes a brief look at various word pictures in the Bible. He begins by differentiating between symbols and word pictures: "The meanings of symbols are assigned to them; they don't naturally flow from the words themselves. A word picture is different. These figures of speech are more basic and universal. The pictures they paint flow from the very nature of the words and are fairly easy to understand" (115). Seifert also points out that while symbols may be presented in specific and limited contexts, word pictures tend to appear throughout the Bible in various contexts. Some of the word pictures he examines touch on the subjects of death, eternal life, sonship, redemption, and ransom. The final chapter of the book treats

types: "A type is a special kind of symbol. While a *symbol* doesn't actually teach any new information but rather reminds us of what we already know, a *type* actually reflects a truth about something in the future" (137; emphasis original). Seifert then shows how Melchizedek, Moses, and David were types, or prefigurements, of Christ. He concludes with a caution that a true type in the Old Testament is only such if it is specified as such in the New. While this caution is common within our fellowship, this reviewer would prefer to allow for a little more latitude in understanding types. That is, one may see a particular person, object, or event in the Old Testament as a type, but he must not *insist* it is a type unless specified in the New Testament.

This short volume by Seifert would serve pastors well in providing much practical material for sermons, devotions, and Bible studies. Laypeople would also benefit from this book for their personal edification.

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