

# LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY



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VOLUME 55 • NUMBER 4  
DECEMBER 2015

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**A Brief Examination of the Authorship  
of the Pastoral Epistles**

**Counseling Parents When a Child  
Has Died Prior to Baptism**

**Increasing Mission-Mindedness in a Congregation**

**Witnessing in the Workplace**

**Defending the Christian Faith**

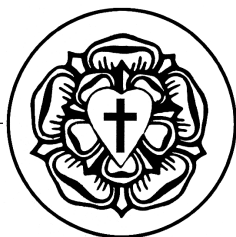
**Lutherans in America: The NALC and LCMC**

**Sermon on Luke 13:22-30: Lord, Will  
Only a Few People Be Saved?**

**Advent Sermon on Genesis 14:18-24:  
Melchizedek, a Type of Christ**

**Book Reviews**

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*The journal of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary*

# LUTHERAN SYNOD QUARTERLY

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# Foreword

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**T**HE AUTHORSHIP OF THE PASTORAL EPISTLES was never seriously questioned until the early nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, P.N. Harrison's *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* laid the groundwork still followed by many in arguing that the apostle Paul was not the author of the Pastorals. The arguments made for or against Pauline authorship are considered in "A Brief Examination of the Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles." This paper was written by Prof. Michael K. Smith, who teaches New Testament studies at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota.

It is rare to find an event more delicate in a person's life than the loss of a child. When an infant dies prior to Baptism, whether through miscarriage, stillbirth, or sudden death after birth, this adds another level of concern, and often stirs questions in the mind of a young Christian parent. In the paper, "Counseling Parents When a Child Has Died Prior to Baptism," the Rev. Donald Moldstad gives counsel and advice for such situations. The Rev. Moldstad is the chaplain at Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota.

Mission-mindedness is something which we must view in the light of God's gracious forgiveness. We deserved to be excluded from God in heaven. But, with Christ taking our place, we have the gift of eternal life! There is no greater motivation for telling the world of Christ than being saved by faith alone. God has provided so many ways and means for churches to reach people lost in sin today. Let us open our eyes

to see that the Lord's harvest is plentiful and pray that He send out workers, including us, into His harvest field. This is the point of the paper, "Increasing Mission-Mindedness in a Congregation," by the Rev. Kenneth Mellon, pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church in West Bend, Wisconsin.

Although there is growing hostility to religious speech at work, Christians have the right to witness in the workplace—subject to certain limitations. Christians may at times face difficulties when they share the gospel in these situations. In "Witnessing in the Workplace," the Rev. Thomas A. Heyn gives helpful guidelines and parameters for Christians witnessing in the workplace. The Rev. Heyn is a lawyer and is pastor of Western Koshkonong Lutheran Church in Cottage Grove, Wisconsin.

Christianity has many unique features. One of them is the ability to defend itself—no other religion has an interest in, or the capacity to, defend itself. By "defending the faith" we mean giving a reasoned and verbal defense; we mean using information to defend the faith. We are not speaking of using violence to defend the faith which is an integral part of Islam. Verbally defending the faith by using evidence and reasoning is unique to Christianity. It is the discipline we know as "apologetics." In his paper, "Defending the Christian Faith," Allen Quist shows the importance of Christian apologetics. Mr. Quist is a member of the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

The history of Lutheranism in America is one of mergers and splinter groups. The essay, "Lutherans in America: The NALC and LCMC," written by the Rev. Shawn Stafford, examines two of the church bodies that have split from the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA): Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). It considers what led to the formation of these bodies, their history, and their teachings. It also offers a critique of their teachings and practice and their place among Lutherans in America. The Rev. Stafford is the pastor of Hartland and Manchester Lutheran Churches in Hartland and Manchester, Minnesota.

Also included in this *Quarterly* are several book reviews and two sermons, the second of which is an Advent sermon using the Melchizedek typology.

– GRS

# A Brief Examination of the Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles

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**T**HE QUESTION OF THE AUTHORSHIP OF THE Pastoral Epistles (PE) did not have its true origins in the early church, especially considering that they eventually were regarded as canonical Scripture. Granted, there were some in that period who did not believe the apostle Paul penned the PE, such as the heretic Marcion,<sup>1</sup> but the remainder of the evidence seems overwhelming that the fathers and apologists of the early church recognized their Pauline authorship and made use of them as such in their writings. They were even included in the Muratorian Canon (ca. AD 200) in the corpus of Paul's works.<sup>2</sup>

The early nineteenth century brought the advent of the modern question of the authorship of the PE. The authorship of 1 Timothy was first questioned by J.E. Schmidt in 1804 and even more forcefully by F.D.E. Schleiermacher in 1807.<sup>3</sup> J.G. Eichhorn continued the onslaught of criticism in 1812 by questioning the Pauline authorship of all three of the PE. In 1835 F.C. Baur posited that someone other than Paul had written the PE as a counter-measure against Marcion's teaching.<sup>4</sup> The

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<sup>1</sup> Luke Timothy Johnson, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001), 21.

<sup>2</sup> Mark Harding, *What Are They Saying About the Pastoral Epistles?* (New York: Paulist Press, 2001), 10.

<sup>3</sup> George W. Knight, III, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1992), 21. Knight states that Schleiermacher based his objections on "language and biographical statements" (21).

<sup>4</sup> Harding, 10–11.



work that has most affected the modern debate (at least in the English-speaking world<sup>5</sup>) over Pauline authorship of the PE is P.N. Harrison's 1921 opus, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*. His study focused on the vocabulary and style of writing employed in the PE, which Harrison maintained was definitely non-Pauline but rather from a later time period.<sup>6</sup> In the past eighty-nine years the consensus of the scholarly world has become quite comfortable resting in the same camp, propping itself up with additional linguistic and stylistic studies which come to the same conclusion: Paul did not write the PE.

This paper will therefore examine the question of the authorship of the PE. Various views of this subject will be described, along with the primary proponents of these views. Thereafter the pertinent material will be analyzed, followed by a brief evaluation of the different views. Finally, the most pertinent results of the author's research will be given.

### Pauline Authorship: For and Against

Since the publication of Harrison's *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles*, what are the main tenets of the consensus view opposing Pauline authorship of the PE?<sup>7</sup> These tenets primarily focus on alleged differences between the PE and the letters generally recognized to be penned by Paul, and can be subsumed under six main topics.<sup>8</sup>

#### (1) External Evidence

The textual evidence supporting the genuine character of the PE is, according to opponents of Pauline authorship such as Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann,<sup>9</sup> arguably weak. The three letters are not listed in Marcion's canon (AD 140), while the other Pauline letters are. Basilides and Tatian rejected the letters as Pauline. Additionally, the Chester Beatty codex of the Pauline epistles, p<sup>46</sup> (ca. AD 250), does not include the PE.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Knight, 21.

<sup>6</sup> Harding, 12.

<sup>7</sup> According to Johnson (55), the majority of scholars assume the PE are not authentic simply because such has been taught and believed for so long.

<sup>8</sup> These are not listed in any particular order.

<sup>9</sup> Martin Dibelius and Hans Conzelmann, *The Pastoral Epistles*, tr. Philip Buttolph and Adela Yarbro, ed. Helmut Koester (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1972), 1–2. These authors' views about the PE are also reflected in each of the following categories of differences between the PE and the undisputed Pauline epistles (1–5).

<sup>10</sup> Knight, 13–14. See also Philip H. Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 15.

## (2) Type of Argument/Themes

Those who hold to pseudonymity of the PE maintain that the author employs polemical arguments too heavily in the PE and that the theological themes present in the PE differ substantially from the undisputed Paulines. Concerning the former, it is maintained that the author of the PE makes use of the type of argument that was prevalent in contemporary philosophical schools, and that *ad hominem* attacks are too frequent. Critics of Pauline authorship also compare the polemical methods of the author of the PE to the same type of argument in the genuine Pauline letters and note the difference in construction.<sup>11</sup> Concerning the latter, those who maintain the consensus view point out that theological themes prevalent in the accepted Pauline letters are lacking in the PE. These include no mention of the cross,<sup>12</sup> justification by faith,<sup>13</sup> and the church as the “body of Christ.” The imminence of the *parousia* is lessened in the PE, and “faith” is depicted more as a body of doctrine to be maintained and listed with various virtues such as love and holiness. Also lacking is an emphasis on the place of salvation as it is revealed in history, such as God’s choice of the Jews as his people or what role the Jewish law played.<sup>14</sup>

## (3) Anachronistic and Logistic Issue

Another question opponents of Pauline authorship of the PE ask is: How does one fit what is described in the PE into any accepted framework of Paul’s life and ministry, such as what is described in Acts and the genuine Pauline letters?<sup>15</sup> Those of the consensus view maintain that since it is impossible to know what happened to Paul after the close of Acts, one cannot make assumptions simply to create a framework into which the PE can be placed, such as supposing that Paul was imprisoned a “second” time after what is described at the close of Acts. Arguments are also offered, such as from John Knox, that one must reconstruct Paul’s life and ministry from his letters and not from Acts since the latter is not a reliable source of history.<sup>16</sup> Jerome Murphy-O’Connor believes

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<sup>11</sup> Towner, 15. Dibelius and Conzelmann state that this difference in polemic is best seen in how the author of the PE does not “argue” with his opponents, but rather simply points out how wrong his opponents were (2).

<sup>12</sup> Anthony Tyrell Hanson, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1982), 3.

<sup>13</sup> B.S. Easton, *The Pastoral Epistles* (London: SCM, 1948), 103.

<sup>14</sup> Harding, 13.

<sup>15</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 3.

<sup>16</sup> John Knox, *Chapters in a Life of Paul* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1950), 40.

that Acts has some historical credibility, and that Paul's life and ministry can be reconstructed from his letters with assistance from Acts.<sup>17</sup> Even non-biblical sources are said not to help solve this conundrum.<sup>18</sup>

#### (4) Heresy Opposed

Opponents of Pauline authorship of the PE claim that the heresy being opposed therein has more affinity to second-century Gnosticism than to anything extant in the first century. Baur was one of the first to promote such an idea, basing his argument in part on the citation of "myths and genealogies" in 1 Timothy 1:3 and "falsely called *gnosis*" in 1 Timothy 6:20.<sup>19</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann paint the particular heresy opposed in the PE as a sort of "Judaizing Gnosticism."<sup>20</sup> Other holders of the consensus view claim that the heresy attacked in the PE does not appear to be compatible with any heresy Paul attacks in his genuine epistles.<sup>21</sup>

#### (5) Ecclesiastical Structure

Those who hold to pseudonymity of the PE claim that the structure of the church evident in the PE does not reflect what is known from what is depicted in the undisputed Pauline correspondence.<sup>22</sup> Johnson states that this is one of the primary reasons for opposing Pauline authorship of the PE, and that this belief is traced directly to Schleiermacher.<sup>23</sup> Baur maintains that the organization of the church officials as described in the PE is much more developed than what is seen in the genuine Paulines. In fact, he sees no evidence in the genuine Pauline epistles of any particular officials who were to guide the church,<sup>24</sup> whereas the author of the PE supposedly details an ecclesiastical hierarchy including bishops, elders, and deacons.<sup>25</sup> According to Knight, the opponents of Pauline authorship of the PE believe that Paul and the

<sup>17</sup> Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *Paul: A Critical Life* (London: Oxford University Press, 1996), 1–31.

<sup>18</sup> Harding, 13.

<sup>19</sup> Johnson, 72. He states also that Baur maintained the PE were written to counteract Marcion. See also Bela Bates Edwards, "The Genuineness of the Pastoral Epistles," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 150:598 (April–June 1993): 134. Edwards puts forth Baur's contention that "Marcionite Gnosticism" was the heresy opposed in the PE.

<sup>20</sup> Dibelius and Conzelmann, 2.

<sup>21</sup> Harding, 14.

<sup>22</sup> For example, Dibelius and Conzelmann (5).

<sup>23</sup> Johnson, 74 (see also fn 206).

<sup>24</sup> Edwards, 135.

<sup>25</sup> Johnson, 74.

New Testament church were more concerned about spiritual gifts than they were about recognized leaders of the church.<sup>26</sup> That the PE do not reflect this concern is indicative of pseudonymity.

### (6) Vocabulary and Style

In his landmark 1921 work, Harrison put forth as the primary reason that the PE were not from the apostle Paul's pen the differences he discovered in writing style and vocabulary between the accepted Pauline epistles and the PE. His findings centered on the number of *hapax legomena* in the PE; specifically, the number of words per page in the PE which do not occur in Paul's accepted letters or in the New Testament.<sup>27</sup> Harrison also believed he had been unable to find these words in any Greek writing prior to AD 90, but they were in use in the early second century.<sup>28</sup> Harrison ostensibly demonstrated that the PE and other New Testament writers used unique words not seen in the Pauline correspondence. In addition, he listed words and groups of words from the genuine Paulines that were not used in the PE. Finally, he argued that there were too many grammatical and stylistic differences between the PE and Paul's genuine correspondence.<sup>29</sup> These findings continue to be reflected in much of the opposition to Pauline authorship of the PE, even though many have undertaken revisions thereof.<sup>30</sup>

### Analysis of the Arguments

While the "consensus" view which has been summarized above continues to be what dominates the question of the authorship of the PE,<sup>31</sup> it is not above criticism.<sup>32</sup> Can the main tenets of the consensus

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<sup>26</sup> Knight, 29.

<sup>27</sup> P.N. Harrison, *The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles* (London: Oxford University Press, 1921), 20. See also Kenneth Grayston and Gustav Herdan, "The Authorship of the Pastorals in the Light of Statistical Linguistics," *New Testament Studies* 6:1 (1959): 1.

<sup>28</sup> Harrison, 66. See also John McRay, "The Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles: A Consideration of Certain Adverse Arguments to Pauline Authorship," *Restoration Quarterly* 7:1-2 (1963): 3.

<sup>29</sup> Harrison, 30-44; Grayston and Herdan, 1.

<sup>30</sup> For example, see Grayston and Herdan.

<sup>31</sup> Johnson includes extensive lists of those who do not favor Pauline authorship of the PE. Some of these from the twentieth-century include F. Koehler, R. Falconer, B.S. Easton, C.K. Barrett, A.T. Hanson, and N. Brox (50, fn 143).

<sup>32</sup> Towner lists the following as examples of twentieth-century proponents of the "traditional" view of Pauline authorship of the PE: D. Guthrie, J.N.D. Kelly, G.D. Fee, W. Knight, and W.D. Mounce (10).

view be substantiated to a high degree? Each tenet will now be considered.

### (1) *External Evidence*

The fact that the PE are not listed in Marcion's canon should not be a cause for concern.<sup>33</sup> Marcion displayed great bias in his listing, and since there is at least some measure of anti-Gnostic polemic in the PE, logic dictates their omission from his canon. According to Jerome, Marcion and other heretics rejected the PE for invalid reasons.<sup>34</sup> He was also known to reject books that promoted a continuing need for the law, such as some see in 1 Timothy 1:8.

That the PE are not included in  $\mathfrak{p}^{46}$  is also not a cause for doubting Pauline authorship of the PE. Titus 1:11–15 and 2:3–8 are included in  $\mathfrak{p}^{32}$ , which is dated at about the same time as  $\mathfrak{p}^{46}$  (ca. AD 200). Also lacking in  $\mathfrak{p}^{46}$  are 2 Thessalonians and Philemon, while Hebrews is included. In addition, 1 and 2 Timothy are cited in the patristic literature (e.g., Tertullian and Cyprian), which predates the earliest MS evidence. Using the absence of the PE from  $\mathfrak{p}^{46}$  is an argument from silence, at best a tenuous venture.<sup>35</sup>

The external evidence for the first-century existence of the PE is considerable, the former exceptions notwithstanding. Many scholars cite the similarities between the PE and 1 Clement (ca. AD 96) as an indication of Clement's dependence on the PE.<sup>36</sup> Polycarp's use of the PE in *To the Philippians* (ca. AD 117) also points to an early acceptance of Pauline authorship of the PE.<sup>37</sup> Johnson offers citations by Tertullian and Cyprian of the PE as evidence that the PE were accepted as Pauline at least by the mid-second century.<sup>38</sup> The argument of non-Pauline authorship of the PE does not find credible support from the external evidence.

### (2) *Type of Argument/Themes*

Do the PE reflect a stronger polemic than the undisputed Pauline letters, and does the author of the PE unnecessarily employ *ad hominem*

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<sup>33</sup> Towner believes that "his relevance for the question of the early status of the letters to Timothy and Titus is negligible" (5).

<sup>34</sup> Edwards, 132.

<sup>35</sup> Johnson, 17–18.

<sup>36</sup> Knight cites Falconer (*The Pastoral Epistles* [Oxford, 1937], 5) in this regard (13).

<sup>37</sup> Towner, 4.

<sup>38</sup> Johnson, 18.

attacks? The argument that Paul engages in reasoned dialogue with his opponents in the genuine Pauline letters while the author of the PE simply issues warnings and appeals is a non-issue. Paul makes use of both these ways of addressing false teachers/teachings depending on the situation. He is understood to warn Christians away from false teaching that they may encounter, and he is also understood to issue strong warnings to Christians concerning the false teachers in their midst or that they already know.<sup>39</sup> Paul's warning in Romans 16:17 is a prime example of a strong polemic in which he does not "argue" or "reason" with any opponents, but quite bluntly instructs the Christians at Rome to stay away from false teachers. Neither does the author of the PE engage in *ad hominem* attacks as many scholars suppose. Rather, when the author mentions false teachers or errorists by name, he is simply pointing out examples of the same, such as when he mentions Hymenaeus and Alexander as those who have not held to the faith as passed along by Paul (1 Timothy 1:19–20).

Those who hold to the consensus view of PE authorship also have no solid basis for their contention that the PE revolve around theological themes different from the genuine Pauline epistles. For such a contention to be accurate, it would first have to be demonstrated that Paul consistently makes use of the same theological themes in each of his letters. The "cross" (σταυρός) is not mentioned in Romans, 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, and Philemon.<sup>40</sup> Yet who can argue that the *concept* of Jesus' substitutionary death is not prevalent in, for example, Romans 3:24–25, 5:8–9, and 6:3–4? The verb δικαιώω appears in Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Galatians but in no other of the accepted Pauline letters.<sup>41</sup> Its inclusion in 1 Timothy and Titus cannot be viewed as "proof" of Pauline authorship any more than its omission from many of the undisputed Pauline letters can be viewed as proof that Paul did not pen them. Does the church as the "body of Christ" play as prominent a role in all the genuine Pauline letters as it does in Ephesians? And as Paul nears the end of his career and life, why would it be surprising that he would emphasize the necessity of passing down the "faith" that he spent his apostolic career proclaiming?

The PE are not lacking completely in Pauline themes by any means.<sup>42</sup> What gives shape to the style and themes of the PE is their particular

<sup>39</sup> Knight refers to Philippians 3 as an example of the latter (25–26).

<sup>40</sup> Knight, 33.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 32.

<sup>42</sup> Johnson, 77. He includes "the mission to the Gentiles, the apostolic example, the necessity of suffering in order to share God's glory, the conviction that salvation

subject matter, intended audience, and overall purpose.<sup>43</sup> The criterion of differing theological themes in the PE is thus invalid as an argument against their Pauline authorship.<sup>44</sup>

### (3) *Anachronistic and Logistic Issue*

The argument that the PE cannot be placed into what is known of Paul's life and ministry is not especially damaging to the possibility of Pauline authorship of the PE. The author of 1 Timothy claims to have written from Macedonia (1 Timothy 1:3). Paul mentions his intention of going to Macedonia or was actually in Macedonia numerous times as recorded in the genuine Pauline correspondence and Acts (e.g., 1 Corinthians 16:5; 2 Corinthians 1:16, 2:13, 7:5; Philippians 4:15; Acts 20:1–3).<sup>45</sup> Concerning the possibility of a second (Roman) imprisonment, even though such is not recorded in Acts, the possibility of one exists. Both Festus (Acts 25:25) and Agrippa (Acts 26:32) called Paul innocent. In Philippians 2:24 and Philemon 22 Paul expresses hope of an early release from prison. It is not impossible that Paul was released from the imprisonment with which Acts ends and later imprisoned again. Of course, there is also the tradition drawn from 1 Clement 5:7 that Paul was imprisoned a second time in Rome, since a mission journey to Spain would require Paul to have been released from his first imprisonment. It must be granted that such a second imprisonment is a possibility which would account for the background of the PE.<sup>46</sup>

Some proponents of Pauline authorship of the PE also believe that Paul's work and ministry as reflected in the PE can be fit into the

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comes about by the grace of God through Jesus Christ and not through human works, the 'gospel' as the measure of life, and the understanding of Jesus as the one 'who gave himself' (77). For an explanation of how the PE do not omit mention of or emphasis on the Holy Spirit, see Michael A.G. Haykin, "A Fading Vision? The Spirit and Freedom in the Pastoral Epistles," *The Evangelical Quarterly* LVII:4 (October 1985): 291–305. For an explanation of how the PE do include an emphasis on eschatology, see Jerome D. Quinn and William C. Wacker, *The First and Second Letters to Timothy*, vol. 1, Eerdmans Critical Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 13–14.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, 78. This can also be said of any of Paul's letters. More will be said on this below.

<sup>44</sup> Knight states, "The conclusion must be that the supposed differences are most often not differences at all, but are at best more fairly described as more intensive use of different nuances of terms already found in the other Pauline letters" (35).

<sup>45</sup> Stanley E. Porter, "Pauline Authorship and the Pastoral Epistles: Implications for Canon," *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 5 (1995): 107. See also Johnson, 65.

<sup>46</sup> See Towner, 11–12, for a good summary of the pros and cons of this theory.

framework of Acts.<sup>47</sup> Whether one adopts this possibility, holds to the second imprisonment theory, or arrives at another potential solution, it should be evident that sufficient reliable information on the entirety of Paul's life and ministry is not available. The Pauline authorship of the PE cannot be opposed based on this lack of information.<sup>48</sup>

#### (4) Heresy Opposed

What is the heresy opposed in the PE? While opponents of Paul's authorship of the PE point out similarities between what is opposed in the PE and second-century Gnosticism, such a comparison need not be made. Some of the aberrant beliefs and practices pointed out in the PE may have been witnessed in some of the genuine Pauline letters (e.g., 1 Corinthians 7:1, 8:13, 15:17–19; Galatians 4:8–10).<sup>49</sup> In addition, while Dibelius and Conzelmann may not be that far from the realm of possibility with their designation of "Judaizing Gnosticism,"<sup>50</sup> it is not necessary to paint the heresy opposed in the PE as being too close to what the Judaizers promoted (as reflected in Romans and Galatians).<sup>51</sup> Another difficulty encountered in evaluating this criterion of authorship is the present-day struggle to comprehend precisely the conventional manner of rhetorically opposing variant beliefs. It is difficult, therefore, to reconstruct what exactly the heresy was that the author of the PE opposes.<sup>52</sup> This criterion of opposing Pauline authorship of the PE is weak.

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<sup>47</sup> Towner cites B. Reicke, J.A.T. Robinson, S. de Lestapis, J. van Bruggen, and Johnson as examples (12, fn 38).

<sup>48</sup> Johnson concludes, "In short, if the Pastorals are difficult to fit into the Pauline mission because of the biographical information they contain, they present problems on this count of no greater magnitude than those presented by Galatians, Philemon, and Philippians. Turned another way, they also provide the basis for expanding our understanding of Paul's movements in exactly the same way the other letters do" (68).

<sup>49</sup> Porter, 111.

<sup>50</sup> J.N.D. Kelly states, "It is in fact unrealistic to look to the well-known Gnostic, or near Gnostic, systems of the second century for light on the teaching that provoked the Pastorals. Everything suggests that it was something much more elementary, and it is significant that much of the writer's polemic is directed, not so much against any specific doctrine, as against the general contentiousness and loose living it encouraged. It is best defined as a Gnosticizing form of Jewish Christianity... There is no need... to look outside the first century, or indeed the span of Paul's life, for such an amalgam of Jewish and Gnostic traits in the Levant" (*A Commentary on the Pastoral Epistles: 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, Titus* [New York: Harper, 1963], 12).

<sup>51</sup> Edwards, 133.

<sup>52</sup> Johnson, 73.



### (5) *Ecclesiastical Structure*

Johnson claims that the objection of the consensus view concerning the structure of the church, that what is depicted in the PE is more highly advanced than what is seen in the genuine Pauline letters, is not at all strong. His summary provides a cogent rebuttal of this argument by those who oppose Pauline authorship of the PE.<sup>53</sup> (1) There is no coherent “church order” in the PE, especially considering its absence from 2 Timothy and that the sparse mention of it in Titus does not correspond exactly to 1 Timothy. (2) Definitions and descriptions of the elements of church organization are missing from 1 Timothy, whereas mention of them is not. (3) What portion of the church structure that can be reconstructed from the PE resembles more closely the structure of the synagogues in diaspora Judaism rather than any hierarchy of clergy as reflected in Ignatius’ *Letters*. (4) There is a presumption, not a prescription, of church organization in the PE. (5) The development of organizations or groups progresses over time, becoming more elaborate and legitimate, but this process does not require decades- or century-long spans of time. (6) Paul uses the same designation for “officers” in the church in his undisputed letters as is seen in 1 Timothy.

Even in his earliest correspondence Paul demonstrates a concern for order and authority in the church, however simple it may have been. In 1 Thessalonians 5:12, for example, Paul states, “Now we are asking you, brothers, to take note of those who are working tirelessly with you and those who are leading you in the Lord and also those who instruct you....”<sup>54</sup> Similar sentiments are also seen in Galatians, Romans, 1 Corinthians, Ephesians, and Philipians.<sup>55</sup>

Thus the consensus view concerning supposed differences between the ecclesiastical structure reflected in the PE and the accepted letters of Paul is difficult to substantiate. Instead of outlining a specific hierarchy for the churches, the author of the PE concentrates more on outlining requisites for the leaders’ quality of character.<sup>56</sup>

### (6) *Vocabulary and Style*

Harrison’s methodology and conclusions concerning the number and significance of *hapax legomena* in the PE have been criticized

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 75–76. Selections from his summary are included hereafter.

<sup>54</sup> Author’s translation.

<sup>55</sup> Knight, 30.

<sup>56</sup> Towner, “Pauline Theology or Pauline Tradition in the Pastoral Epistles: The Question of Method,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 46:2 (November 1995): 313.

frequently since their publication. Metzger points out numerous flaws in Harrison's work.<sup>57</sup> He states that most of the *hapax legomena* Harrison cited in the PE do occur in the writings of other authors prior to AD 50. Also, concerning a majority of the *hapax legomena* in the PE that Harrison claims were also used by the (second-century) Apologists and Apostolic Fathers, Metzger posits that practically the same can be said concerning 1 Corinthians. Another example of faulty methodology according to Metzger is that Harrison counted the number of *hapax legomena* per page instead of per book. According to such methodology Romans has almost the same percentage of *hapax legomena* as 2 Timothy and Titus.

Those who hold to the pseudonymity of the PE also place much weight on their contention that the overall style of the PE differs too radically from the genuine Pauline letters. Even one of Harrison's contemporaries, R. St. John Parry, took issue with this contention, contending instead that since the PE treat subjects different from the accepted Pauline letters, a homogenous style should not be expected. In addition, even the style of the accepted letters varies when compared with each other.<sup>58</sup> Johnson is quite blunt in his assessment of studies of style: "It is a critical failure of studies of diction that they do not take seriously the way in which distinctive subject matter shapes vocabulary clusters throughout the Pauline corpus as a whole."<sup>59</sup> Another factor to consider when the criterion of style is examined is that modern perspectives about style are difficult to apply as templates to first-century perspectives. Writers of ancient Hellenistic literature tended to make use of whatever style suited their occasion, versus writing always so that their personality was evident. The latter is more of a modern (even Western) idea which has been erroneously applied to the study of the Pauline epistles.<sup>60</sup>

## Evaluation

It is difficult in a paper of this length to treat adequately all the arguments in favor of or opposing Pauline authorship of the PE. Some

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<sup>57</sup> Bruce M. Metzger, "A Reconsideration of Certain Arguments Against the Pauline Authorship of the Pastoral Epistles," *Expository Times* 70:3 (1958): 91–94.

<sup>58</sup> R. St. John Parry, *The Pastoral Epistles* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920), cxi–cxii.

<sup>59</sup> Johnson, 69. He continues later: "What is most obvious is that the subject matter of a letter has as much to do with vocabulary used as any other factor, and if the topic is left out of consideration, tests of vocabulary are meaningless" (71).

<sup>60</sup> Towner, *The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 23.

of the questions that must remain untouched herein: How did Paul write his letters—on his own? with the help of others? And if so, who were these others? How would the presumed pseudonymity of the PE affect their canonical status? How would those in the early church have viewed the PE if they were aware of their pseudonymity? Were the PE written by followers/disciples of Paul who simply wanted his teaching and theology to be preserved? Does the fact that the PE are treated as a corpus instead of individual letters affect how they are understood?<sup>61</sup>

Concerning the questions that have been treated briefly it is difficult to show support for the consensus view. In attempting to prove non-Pauline authorship of the PE it appears that numerous assumptions must be made and then evidence sought out to support such assumptions. The question of external evidence points more to Pauline authorship than not, even with the supposed lack of manuscript evidence. The theological “themes” treated in the PE do not substantially differ from the accepted Pauline correspondence, especially considering the variations in themes/subjects treated in the latter.<sup>62</sup> Fitting the PE into the framework of what is known of Paul’s life and ministry is not impossible, especially considering that an exhaustive biography of Paul’s life is not available. The question of what specific heresy was addressed in the PE as compared to the undisputed Pauline epistles cannot be answered precisely because the author of the PE does not provide details to every critic’s satisfaction. Was the church structure reflected in the PE too advanced for Paul’s day? Since it was not the intention of the author of the PE to present a specific ecclesiastical hierarchy, what he does present reflects what was already in place throughout many congregations. Finally, the question of different vocabulary and style of the PE compared to the genuine Pauline letters has been answered by numerous scholars since Harrison’s time, showing that it is false to conclude a substantial difference.

## Conclusion

In the treatment offered herein it is clear that, at the very least, the possibility of Pauline authorship of the PE cannot be excluded. The arguments promulgated over the past two centuries by those who oppose Pauline authorship of the PE have been unnecessarily and, quite

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<sup>61</sup> See Towner’s argument for dispensing with the “Pastoral Epistles” nomenclature since it tends to restrict proper scholarship (*The Letters to Timothy and Titus*, 88–89).

<sup>62</sup> Johnson makes the point that treating the “genuine” Pauline letters as a corpus is poor methodology (82).

frankly, unjustifiably given credence by far too many scholars. It appears that many who approach this subject simply adopt the consensus view of authorship and proceed in their treatment of the PE without analyzing critically their presuppositions. Considering that much of what is held to be “fact” concerning the authorship of the PE has its roots in early nineteenth-century rationalism, it is not surprising that such a low view of canonical Scripture is taken.

If one were to approach the question of the authorship of the PE with presuppositions differing from the consensus view, other conclusions might very well be reached. If attention were paid to the voice of the early church—which generally accepted the PE as being from Paul’s pen (as demonstrated in numerous ways) and which included the PE in the canon of holy Scripture—the burden of proof would rest on those who do *not* believe the apostle Paul is the author of the PE.

Thus the conclusion offered from this author is that the apostle Paul wrote the PE. The external and the internal evidence argue for, not against, such a conclusion. LSQ

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# Counseling Parents When a Child Has Died Prior to Baptism

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**W**ITHIN MOMENTS OF MY SON'S BIRTH, IT WAS evident something was wrong. The nurses placed him at my wife's side for 20 seconds, and then quickly took him away. A team of nurses began working with him trying to clear his breathing passage. Not long after, while in the recovery room, the doctor informed us that little Jacob had some respiratory problems which they would monitor for the next hour. If his condition worsened he would be taken by helicopter to the Twin Cities. I quickly ran one block to our local church, and found my pastor, the Rev. Richard Newgard, who was weeding his garden on his day off. Within fifteen minutes he had changed clothes, and was standing at the side of Jacob's incubator with the gracious water of regeneration. What heavenly comfort this was at such a crucial time, even through a wet cotton swab. Pastor Newgard's presence and the devotion he gave were almost as if an angel had come to our aid.

It is rare to find an event more delicate in a person's life than the loss of a child. When an infant dies prior to Baptism, whether by miscarriage, stillbirth, or sudden death after birth, this adds another level of concern, and often stirs questions in the mind of a young Christian parent. We may be surprised to discover how often this has happened without anyone else knowing but the mother. Someone may come to you for counsel years—or even decades—after a child has died. It may also involve the confession of an abortion.



This subject has been assigned under the category of practical theology. Our study will demonstrate that all practical matters are doctrinal in nature, and will also provide an historical path through the life of the New Testament Church. There are numerous biblical principles to keep in mind while counseling a couple in this circumstance. Consider the potential doctrines involved: Original Sin, Holy Baptism, Faith and Conversion, the Efficacy of the Word, the Great Commission of the Church, Abortion, Hell, and Life after Death to name a few. For all these reasons our subject has generated much debate and study through the centuries. In order to be prepared to provide edifying counsel, let us briefly consider some of this history.

### Nothing New

It is evident from the early fathers that infant Baptism was clearly taught and practiced in the church. Such a firm belief in this powerful Sacrament then caused great concern if the child had his or her life cut short prior to this sacred washing. The same issues that perplex the church today were not only present in the early church, but were probably discussed with greater frequency because of a higher infant mortality rate.

Pre-Augustine fathers seem to take a rather firm stand in regard to the unbaptized children being denied heaven, even those of Christian parents. St. Gregory of Nazianzus (AD 329–390) taught that such children would neither be in heaven nor hell. In his early writings, St. Augustine taught that because of original sin, “such infants as quit the body without being baptized will be involved in the mildest condemnation of all” (he refers to it as “a light damnation”). He believed that pastors who held out any hope of heaven to their members were deceiving them with falsehood. Such children, he believed, though in a milder way than more hardened unbelievers, would still share in the “common positive misery of the damned.”

The Council of Bishops held in Carthage, AD 418, did not entirely endorse Augustine’s view. However, they struggled to come up with a clear answer to the dilemma. In Canon 2 from that early synod, the pastors declared:

That infants are baptized for the remission of sins.

Likewise it seemed good that whosoever denies that infants newly from their mother’s wombs should be baptized, or says that baptism is for remission of sins, but that they derive from

Adam no original sin, which needs to be removed by the laver of regeneration, from whence the conclusion follows, that in them the form of baptism for the remission of sins, is to be understood as false and not true, let him be anathema. For no otherwise can be understood what the Apostle says, "By one man sin is come into the world, and death through sin, and so death passed upon all men in that all have sinned," than the Catholic Church everywhere diffused has always understood it. For on account of this rule of faith even infants, who could have committed as yet no sin themselves, therefore are truly baptized for the remission of sins, in order that what in them is the result of generation may be cleansed by regeneration.<sup>1</sup>

This perplexing issue caused more and more speculation to creep into the church. Medieval theologians described the underworld (Hades) in four levels: Hell of the Damned, Purgatory, Limbo of the Patriarchs, and Limbo of the Infants. Early on, the Limbo of Infants (*limbo infantium*) became one of the contributing theological issues that helped to solidify a doctrine of purgatorial degrees. Some would call it a state of "maximum natural happiness," though they believed the child was eternally deprived of heaven. Others spoke of the child's experience as minimal punishment which would always remain just short of hell itself. Some speculated that such a child lived in the highest levels of purgatory, which dispensed the least pain. There was no great unanimity on whether such children were in a lesser form of heaven, or a lesser form of hell, or some place in between.

The Eastern Orthodox handled the issue with less interest, but for the most part came to no clear and final position. In the words of Anastasius of Sinai, "It would not be fitting to probe God's judgments with one's hands."<sup>2</sup> Much of the discussion centered on whether or not man has inherited the actual guilt of Adam's sin, or merely suffered the consequences of it.

In the West, the Roman Church likewise never gave an official stamp of approval to any position, but by the late middle ages the majority of clergy leaned toward a short stay in purgatory in hopes of a final entrance to heaven. Such thinking was clearly rooted in a false notion that the child possessed a mild form of inherent righteousness, and downplayed the damning nature of original sin. Not every Roman

<sup>1</sup> "The Canons of the Council of Carthage, 418," <[www.earlychurchtexts.com](http://www.earlychurchtexts.com)>.

<sup>2</sup> Anastasius of Sinai, "Questions and Responses," International Theological Commission (ITC), 2007.

Catholic theologian has seen the issue as an open question. In the Counter-Reformation era, Italian Jesuit Bishop Richard Bellarmine declared, "The church has at all times believed that children are lost eternally if they depart this life without baptism."<sup>3</sup> Thomas Aquinas sought out a middle ground. He proposed that such children would never know the heaven which they missed, but still would enjoy some positive love from God without eternal bliss.

Even today, Rome wrestles with this issue to a greater degree than in recent years because of so many modern-day Catholics becoming less engaged with the church. In 2007, the Vatican's International Theological Commission (chaired by the present Pope Benedict) again declared that this had been and remains an open question. Yet it also encourages the faithful to have hope, because such children "do not place any personal obstacle in the way of redemptive grace."<sup>4</sup> According to modern-day Roman Catholic apologist James Akin, such unbaptized babies will have great "natural happiness, but not the supernatural happiness of the vision of God." He does acknowledge that this position remains an open question in Roman Catholicism.

### **Dr. Martin Luther's "Comfort for Women Who Have Had a Miscarriage"**

In 1541, the Rev. Johannes Bugenhagen prepared a paper on Psalm 29 for the Danish king, Christian III. He chose to show it to Luther. Noticing that his pastor had included content that involved the raising of children, Luther believed that a quick note about losing a child before Baptism might be fitting. The Reformer then penned this short treatise which was attached to the paper as an appendix. Here we can see that Luther took a different tack than most of the theologians before his time. The subject must have been fresh in Luther's mind. In his introduction, he comments that numerous families had come to him with this matter. He advises taking care not to frighten nor sadden mothers with harsh words at such a time.

Here are the comforting points he offers one who is grieving over an unbaptized child:

- 1) Trust that God's will is always better than your own.
- 2) Be confident that God is not punishing you or others.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> International Theological Commission, "The Hope of Salvation for Infants Who Die Without Being Baptized," 4/20/2007 Catholic News Service, website, ITC-LIMBO Apr-20-2007, xxxi.

- 3) God may have given this to you as a test to develop your patience in the faith.
- 4) Your prayer and deep longing for your child to be baptized will be accepted by God.
- 5) The Holy Spirit carries your longings to the throne of God, and He is able to do far more than you can ask or think (Ephesians 3:20).
- 6) God must listen to the prayers and yearnings of His faithful, as He did to the prayers of the Israelites whose children died prior to circumcision.
- 7) Leave such situations to God, and take comfort in knowing He has heard your prayer, and does all things even better than we might ask.

### The Unbaptized Children of Unbelievers

Before dealing with children of believers, let us briefly address situations involving unbaptized infants (even those aborted) of non-Christians. Some Lutheran theologians have spoken of children whom God could foresee would someday come to faith, whose lives are cut short so early, as if they would be saved despite having never been touched by the means of grace. However, this view did not receive a following. Most believed we should not say too much in such situations, since Scripture is silent. In a small tract on Baptism, George Calixt writes, “We do not wish to agonize discreetly at length. Let us rather leave the entire matter to God than to make haste with a careless judgment; it would serve us little in our practice of Christianity.”<sup>5</sup> Martin Luther recommended that we place our time and energy into bringing the Gospel of Christ to others rather than speculating in areas where God has not given us clear answers. Regarding the fate of unbaptized children of unbelievers, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession states, “[The promise of salvation] does not apply to those who are outside of Christ’s church, where there is neither Word nor Sacrament, because Christ regenerates through Word and Sacrament.”<sup>6</sup>

Our ELS dogmatics professor, Dr. W.W. Petersen, used to say, “If God has a plan for saving people apart from Baptism and the Word, He certainly hasn’t told us about it. We must stick to the means He has provided and commanded us to use.” George Walch (1693–1775),

<sup>5</sup> G. Calixt, *de baptismo*, par. CXXXVII, in Walch, *The Faith of Unborn Children* (St. Paul: Lutherans for Life, 1988).

<sup>6</sup> Apology to the Augsburg Confession, Article IX, 2.

publisher of an 18<sup>th</sup>-century version of *Luther's Works*, adds a similar caveat in his book on the faith of unborn children: “[Jesus] assures man that the use of the means of grace is indispensably necessary if it is one’s intention to attain salvation in the manner ordained. From this it does not follow that God could not be concerned with any way to salvation which departs from the common order, that is, for those who through no fault of their own are deprived of Baptism.”<sup>7</sup> Elsewhere Walch advises, “It is better to leave the matter to divine judgment than to dispute much concerning it.”<sup>8</sup> St. Paul writes, “What have I to do with judging those also who are outside [the church]? ... Those who are outside God judges” (1 Corinthians 5:12–13<sup>9</sup>).

### The Unbaptized Children of Believers

The eternal fate of unbaptized children of Christians, on the other hand, was always viewed and handled differently. Our Lutheran fathers leaned heavily upon the doctrine of the church—being a part of the family of God—in such circumstances. God’s promise to the 90-year-old Abram has often been used to highlight the distinction God has made between those who are of the household of faith and those who are not: “I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you” (Genesis 17:7). These words are echoed in the invitation to Baptism found at the conclusion of Peter’s Pentecost sermon: “For the promise is to you, and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call” (Acts 2:38).

At Sinai the Lord made a clear distinction between those who are of His church and those who are not: “I, the Lord, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generations of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments” (Exodus 20:5–6). Walch comments, “There is then a great difference between those who are in this covenant and belong to the Christian Church, and between those who despise the grace offered by God and cultivate no fellowship with Christians.”<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Walch, 17.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>9</sup> NKJV. All subsequent Bible references are from this version.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

Many have found comfort in the account of David and Bathsheba's son, taken from them for having brought such blasphemy upon the Lord's name (2 Samuel 12:14). While stricken with this illness, David pleaded with God, fasting and lying on the ground all night long in hopes of changing the Lord's mind. He would not get up or even eat any food. The son died, one day shy of his circumcision-day. David finally rises to wash and anoint himself and worships the Lord. In discussing his changed posture toward the child's life, he confidently says to his servants, "Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me" (2 Samuel 12:23). The child's salvation was not in doubt in David's mind, even though he had not yet received the covenant-rite of circumcision prescribed by God.

Not all children born to the Israelites lived until the eighth day for the rite of circumcision. Consider the infants killed by Pharaoh upon birth who were denied this ordinance of God, yet there is nothing in Scripture indicating that such an act prevented them from being a part of spiritual Israel. When the infant Jacob grabbed his brother's heel while in the womb, some see in this an act of faith obeying a divine providential mandate, and thus fulfilling the will of God (Genesis 25:26).

Walch notes examples of Old Testament believers who, through no fault of their own, were not circumcised, and are spoken of as being among the believers, despite the condemnations by God of those who are not circumcised among unbelievers.<sup>11</sup> This concept, he claims, was taught consistently among the Jews.

### **Faith Comes by Hearing**

When does hearing develop in an unborn child? According to Mayo Clinic's website, a child 16 weeks from conception has developed noticeable ears and may already begin to hear. In 2013, researchers at the University of Helsinki, Finland, found that young newborn babies were able to recognize words played for them while in the womb.<sup>12</sup>

The incident recorded in Luke's Gospel (1:39–45) of the unborn John the Baptizer leaping for joy at the sound of Mary's announcement has provided great comfort and hope to many parents who have a lost a child prior to Baptism. The Spirit working through the efficacious Word of God is not repelled by the wall of Elisabeth's womb. The child's reaction is one of joy, which can only come from a heart of faith. Having

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 12–13.

<sup>12</sup> Chelynnne Renouard, "Unborn Babies Recognize and Remember Words Said to Them in the Womb," *Deseret News*, August 28 2013, <[www.deseretnews.com](http://www.deseretnews.com)>.

been blessed to be in the womb of this believing woman, in the presence of the voice of her priestly husband, and hearing of the coming Messiah, it appears that the spiritual gift of regeneration had already taken place through the Word prior to birth.

R.C.H. Lenski comments, “[This] unborn child experienced a leaping for joy at the approach of his incarnate Master. Skeptics may scoff, but the Spirit of God operates without respect to them.”<sup>13</sup> Johannes Ylvisaker explains, “By means of this salutation, the Holy Ghost was communicated to Elisabeth and her unborn child—and he that was chosen the forerunner salutes Him who was the greater, Jesus Christ, now also conceived in the womb of the virgin.”<sup>14</sup> William Arndt explains how fitting it is to use this incident to counsel grieving parents: “This passage properly is adduced to prove that it is possible for infants to become the temple of the Holy Spirit and that hence infant baptism cannot just be opposed on the ground that it is impossible for the Spirit to regenerate babies. ... Both Elisabeth and her unborn babe recognize [Jesus’] divine, kingly dignity.”<sup>15</sup> Arndt goes on to criticize those who downplay this text as providing evidence of faith in the womb.

Paul writes that an unbelieving spouse may be spiritually influenced and thus “sanctified” by the believing spouse in the home because the Word of God and confession of Christ is present by which the Holy Spirit carries out His work. Not only is an unbelieving spouse blessed through this, but also the children (1 Corinthians 7:14). They are “sanctified” because of constant exposure to the teachings of Christ through the living faith of the Christian in the home. Likewise, the same can be said of the pregnant Christian mother who sits in the pew on Sunday mornings, and who partakes of the Sacrament, where her yet-unborn-child can be exposed to the efficacious Word of Christ in readings, preaching, hymns, and liturgy.

Our omniscient heavenly Father is well aware of the plans His faithful have to bring their child to the waters of Baptism, where His Holy Spirit can and does create faith in the heart. It is not in keeping with what we know from Scripture that our gracious God would strive to work against the advancement of His own kingdom by taking a child’s life in order to prevent him or her from being connected to Christ

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<sup>13</sup> R.C.H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Luke’s Gospel*, vol. 3, *Commentary on the New Testament* (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2001), 81.

<sup>14</sup> Johannes Ylvisaker, *The Gospels* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1977), 71.

<sup>15</sup> William Arndt, *The Gospel According to St. Luke* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1956), 58.

according to the desires of the believing parents. As Walch states, “If they cannot benefit from the sacrament without any fault of their own, this cannot at all be charged against them.”<sup>16</sup>

### Practical Suggestions for Counseling

The Apostle instructs us to “carry each other’s burdens” (Galatians 6:2). There may be no better situation where the word *Seelsorge* applies to the work of pastoral care than counseling a young couple who has lost a child before Baptism. Emotional, psychological, and spiritual issues can all become easily entangled. Here are some important principles to keep in mind in such cases:

- 1) Empathize with their situation. This is a wonderful opportunity to be a true shepherd.
- 2) Be sure to speak of the child as a child. At this moment, most mothers do not want to hear the comment, “You can have another child.” Be careful not to minimize their loss.
- 3) Exercise caution not to go beyond what the Word of God would allow us to say. Be sure not to denigrate Baptism. Be careful not to imply that one can attain heaven apart from faith in Christ.
- 4) Understand that there might be feelings of guilt in the parent(s), or possibly doubts about God and His love.
- 5) The loss of the child may exacerbate others problems in the marriage. Watch for trouble signs: lack of church attendance and distance from each other or from other church members. Statistically there is a high divorce rate after the loss of a child. It is one of the most traumatic issues for a couple to endure.
- 6) It is probably best to meet with the parents in their home.
- 7) Seek the advice of other pastors if it is a challenging situation.
- 8) You will need to consider if there is a need for a funeral. This should be left to the family to decide. You may try to find some way to acknowledge the life of the child, even if it is the suggestion of a prayer service for the family. Do not offer a public prayer in a church service unless they have agreed to it.

### Conclusion

On a closing note, you will find an excellent sermon for a couple who lost a child prior to Baptism at the Concordia Theological Seminary

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<sup>16</sup> Walch, 14.



website, originally published in *For the Life of the World* 4, no. 3 (July 2000). The sermon is entitled, “Holding Dear Herman.”

God has called and equipped you to be the caretaker of souls in these very delicate circumstances. Above all, pray for His guidance through His Word that will bring lasting consolation and grace to the grieving family. “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:3–4). [LSQ](#)

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# Increasing Mission-Mindedness in a Congregation

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**Psalm 67:1–7** <sup>1</sup> *May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine upon us,* <sup>2</sup> *that your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.* <sup>3</sup> *May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.* <sup>4</sup> *May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly and guide the nations of the earth.* <sup>5</sup> *May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.* <sup>6</sup> *Then the land will yield its harvest, and God, our God, will bless us.* <sup>7</sup> *God will bless us, and all the ends of the earth will fear him. (NIV)*

**M**AY GOD BLESS OUR DISCUSSION ABOUT WHAT it means to be mission-minded and how we can promote this mindset in a gospel-oriented way to the glory of God! This paper is presented to share ideas and personal experiences regarding evangelism and hopefully to evoke continued discussion for congregations.

## 1. Is there a need to discuss mission-mindedness in our synod?

A. Almost every ELS church has at least a few mission-minded people. Our *Synod Reports* show that we continue to baptize and confirm children and adults. Yet, there is a general decline. A sample of synod records shows this trend.

Year	Baptized Members	Children Baptized	Adults Baptized	Youth Confirmed	Adults Confirmed
1994	21,614	464	65	310	190
1999	22,003	407	63	339	206
2004	20,981	407	59	296	215
2009	19,868	368	69	224	186
2014	17,670	281	17	173	125

Some of the synod's loss is due to congregations leaving the synod, but many losses are due to congregations closing or declining in membership. Some churches are in areas declining in population. But this is not the only problem.

B. In a Barna Poll released on March 19, 2015, people in the United States were asked what affected "a lot" of their personal identity?

- # 1 Family: 62% (This was higher in the midwest and lower on either coast.)
- # 2 Country (American): 52%
- # 3 Religion: 38% (Any form of religion/another 38% said "not much" or "not at all")
- # 4 Ethnic Group: 23%
- #5 Career: 23%

In another Barna Poll released on April 1, 2015 entitled "What do Americans think about Jesus?"

92% of the people believed that Jesus was a real historical person.

56% of the people believed that Jesus was God (among the younger generations the percentage was lower).

46% of the people believed that Jesus lived a sinless life (there was a higher percentage among older people).

1. In our country, a growing number of people do not know the truth about Jesus. What they have learned is misinformation from movies and TV specials. Our congregation members are challenged by a culture that views churches as offering nothing of value for them. In our country, family life has become unstable and dysfunctional. Young families often have lost their support systems of extended family and friends and don't have

the same church connections as young families did in previous generations. A family is typically smaller, affecting many of our church memberships.

2. Trinity Lutheran is in a semi-rural area, with small subdivisions and each house on three to five acres of land. Through the Board for Home Outreach we had a MAP study conducted of our area in early 2014. We found that even though we thought that we were in the middle of a “churched” area, 33–38% around the church said that they had no church involvement. The study showed the about 30% of the homes in our area included children aged 0–17. It also showed that 25% of all of the people in the area listed “providing children with good schools” as their primary concern. If that was the situation in our area which is saturated by WELS congregations in all directions around us, there certainly are prospects in other areas of the country where ELS churches are located.

*There is a need for all ELS churches to be mission-minded!*

## **2. Why does it seem that most churches lose their mission-mindedness?**

A. Tobin Grant wrote a blog entry, “5 Signs of the ‘Great Decline’ of Religion in America,” for Religion News Service (posted August 1, 2014). (His points are numbered and my comments follow.)

1. *Members get comfortable.* “It’s not wrong to be comfortable. But it can be dangerous because people stop trying new things to spur growth.”

Satisfaction or contentment in a congregation is a good thing, but it should not be a detriment when considering additional outreach to the unchurched. Members too often see their congregation only through their experiences, shown by these statements: “We don’t need to have two services or to expand. There is enough room for all the members.” “We never did things that way before, why change things if they are working?” “No one is complaining. Don’t fix it if it’s not broken.” The focus remains internal without questioning if the status quo affects outreach. Too often, members are not taking into account the needs or concerns of the unchurched. (Cf. Acts 13 where Paul and Barnabas were sent off.)

2. *Members quit dreaming.* “Dreams inspire and challenge people or organizations. What could the church do to reach its community?”

It’s easy to get into a rut. Once things are done a certain way, they tend to continue that way unless some strong external force changes it. Circumstances in and around a church may change. There may be a need for daycare or a pre-school that wasn’t needed twenty years before. “Brainstorming” on occasion may cause members to consider looking at situations in different ways. In Acts 6:1–7 we read that the Grecian widows who were poor were not getting a daily allotment of food. The disciples decided that rather than try to keep track of a growing number of people in need that seven others be chosen to help with this part of the ministry. The result? “The word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased” (v. 7). The disciples’ goal was not growth; it was to prioritize their time so they could teach more people God’s Word. It was God’s Word that caused the growth!

3. *Members stop taking risks.* “Success at anything takes a measure of risk. The call of God always involves risk-taking.”

The Old Testament is full of people called by God to take risks. By faith Abraham left Ur to travel to Canaan (Genesis 11). Moses’ parents were willing to risk death by hiding him to save his life when he was a baby (Exodus 2). The risks that our churches can take may include investing time, effort, or money. Members may be unwilling to make those sacrifices to take the risks.

4. *Members focus on maintaining.* “When you fall into the mode of protecting what you have, you’ll be less likely to encourage growth for fear of losing ground.”

The extreme case of this was when many of the Sadducees and Pharisees rejected Jesus as the Messiah because they did not want to lose their “place” at Jerusalem (John 11:48). How can a congregation know if they are in a maintenance mode? Look at the minutes of council meetings or voters meetings. How much time was spent discussing maintenance and finances and how much on ministry and outreach?

5. *Members fail to walk by faith.* “The church is supposed to be an organization based on faith. If you aren’t walking by faith in what you are doing, how can you please God?”

Living by faith does not mean that a congregation should be reckless in how it spends money. It does not mean that members blindly do things without considering all the information and the cost (cf. Luke 14:28–33—building a tower or going to war). On the other hand, how often are our members challenged to accomplish something which requires a growing trust in God? Growing in sanctification and dependence on God is a struggle against our sinful natures. We need God’s Word and Christ’s forgiveness if we are to walk by faith and not just by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

B. Below is a survey regarding a lack of mission-mindedness in all Christian denominations (“Reasons Our Churches Are Less Evangelistic Today” by Thom S. Rainer, President of LifeWay Christian Resources [he is Baptist]. This source was sent to me by WELS Mission Counselor Rev. Ed Schuppe in January 2015).

1. “By almost any metric, the churches in our nation are much less evangelistic today than they were in the recent past. In my own denomination, we are reaching non-Christians only half as effectively as we were 50 years ago (we measure membership growth to annual baptisms). The trend is disturbing.”
2. “We certainly see the pattern in the early church where ‘every day the Lord added to them those who were being saved’ (Acts 2:47). In too many of our churches today, the congregations are reaching *no one* for Christ in the course of an entire year.”
3. “I conducted an unscientific Twitter poll recently to see what church leaders and church members thought of this trend. My specific question was: ‘Why do you think many churches aren’t as evangelistic as they once were?’  
“The responses arrived quickly and in great numbers, both in public tweets and in direct messages to me. Indeed, I was still receiving responses four days after I sent my Twitter question.”
4. The Results: Here are the top fifteen responses listed in order of frequency:
  - a. Christians have no sense of urgency to reach lost people.
  - b. Many Christians and church members do not befriend and spend time with lost persons.

- c. Many Christians and church members are apathetic.
- d. We are more known for what we are against than what we are for.
- e. Our churches have the ineffective evangelistic strategy of “you come to us” rather than “we’ll go to you.”
- f. Many church members think that evangelism is the role of the pastor and paid staff.
- g. Church membership today is more about getting *my* needs met rather than reaching the lost.
- h. Church members are in a retreat mode as culture becomes more worldly and unbiblical.
- i. Some church members don’t really believe that Christ is the only way of salvation.
- j. Our churches are no longer houses of prayer equipped to reach the lost.
- k. Churches have lost their focus on training members who will be equipped and motivated to reach the lost.
- l. Christians do not want to share the truth of the gospel for fear they will offend others. Political correctness is too commonplace even among Christians.
- m. Churches have unregenerate members who don’t believe in Christ themselves.
- n. Some churches have theological systems that do not encourage evangelism.
- o. Our churches have too many activities; they are too busy to do the things that really matter.

(See Appendix A—Things any member can do to engage their neighbors with Christ.)

- C. Let me summarize the challenges we face as pastors and members of the ELS:
  1. Population shifts have made it more difficult for some of our churches to maintain their membership or to reach the unchurched in their area.
  2. Once a congregation is well established, there is a growing internal focus that seems to intensify as there are more building and financial needs. The danger is that they do not devote enough time to needs of souls.

3. Congregations can lose the sense of purpose that Christ has given to His church on earth: to grow in faith and reach the lost.
4. Congregations need to have more members in Bible study to help them better know the truth so they can share the gospel more clearly with family, friends, and the unchurched.
5. Congregations often have a growing list of delinquents who need the law and gospel as much as the unchurched in the community.
6. We need to balance member focus: being served through Word and Sacrament vs. serving others in love.
7. Congregation members need to be in the world but not of the world. We need to be watchful that people, like wolves, do not endanger our faith, but we also need to see people as lost sheep in serious trouble without Christ's rescue.

### **3. How do we help our congregations be more mission-minded?**

#### **A. Mission mindset begins with the pastor.**

1. What are personal things which can help a pastor be more mission-minded?
  - a. Personal Bible study. God has promised to bless all who take time to study His Word.
  - b. A pastor should be positive and optimistic that growth or at least an increase in gospel ministry can happen in the congregation.
  - c. A pastor should be leading by example and by teaching the importance of being mission-minded.
  - d. A pastor can show his trust in God to bless the work that is being done.
  - e. A pastor wants to have a consistent prayer life. Pray daily for members, prospects, and for those who work beside us at our churches and schools.
2. I attended a local WELS pastors' conference and heard a presentation by Prof. E. Allen Sorum ("Seeking Confessional Outreach Principles Between 'Closed Castle' and 'Weak Witness'," April 15, 2015). The question was how do pastors and congregations give a faithful Christ-centered witness to people in their community without their outreach becoming only social gospel? He made three points which I believe pastors can apply to being more mission-minded.



- a. Reflect on Jesus' restless heart and relentless focus on proclaiming the gospel.

Mark 1:14–15 <sup>14</sup>After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. <sup>15</sup>“The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!”

In Mark 1:16–20 Jesus called His first disciples to fish for men. εὐθύς—“immediately, at once” is used 7 times in Mark's first chapter. Mark paints a picture with this word that Jesus went from one circumstance to another with a sense of urgency. His time was limited. There were so many who were lost and needed the gospel now!

In Mark 1:29–39 Jesus showed a balance between His social concern in healing people and proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

Mark 1:35–39 <sup>35</sup>Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. <sup>36</sup>Simon and his companions went to look for him, <sup>37</sup>and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!” <sup>38</sup>Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.” <sup>39</sup>So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

*Note* that Jesus was praying for God's guidance in what to do. He could have relaxed at Capernaum and enjoyed the accolades of the people He had helped. But He had many other people in mind that needed to hear the Gospel.

Luke 4:42–43 is similar: <sup>42</sup>At daybreak Jesus went out to a solitary place. The people were looking for him and when they came to where he was, they tried to keep him from leaving them. <sup>43</sup>But he said, “I *must* preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.” He used the word δεῖ—“must, it is necessary.”

Matthew 9:35–38 <sup>35</sup>Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness. <sup>36</sup>When he saw the crowds, he *had compassion* on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep

without a shepherd. <sup>37</sup>Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. <sup>38</sup>Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”

From these verses we see that Jesus is not driven to reach others because of guilt. He is not trying to fill the local synagogue to get average attendance up for the annual report.

He taught and preached because He had *ἔσπλαγχνί-σθη*—“sympathy, deep compassion, mercy.”

v. 38 We pastors are not the lords of the harvest. The harvest field is God’s. We are only His workers to be directed by Him. Jesus told His disciples, “When you have done everything you were told to do, you should say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done our duty’” (Luke 17:10).

b. Reflect Jesus’ servant attitude.

Matthew 11:29 <sup>29</sup>Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

*ταπεινός*—“of no account, low status, low position, lowly.”

Philippians 2:5–8 <sup>5</sup>Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: <sup>6</sup>Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, <sup>7</sup>but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. <sup>8</sup>And being found in appearance as a man, he *humbled* himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

1 Peter 3:15 <sup>15</sup>But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with *gentleness* and respect.

Paul (above) used *ἐταπεινώσεν*—“low, humble” and Peter used *πραΰτητος*—“gentleness and humility” to describe that we are to be as Christ was as He served in lowliness.

Matthew 20:26–28 <sup>26</sup>Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, <sup>27</sup>and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— <sup>28</sup>just

as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

Paul and Peter (below) used ταπεινοφροσύνη—“lowly opinion of self, modest” to describe our attitude and love toward others.

Philippians 2:3<sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in *humility* consider others “more important” than yourselves.

1 Peter 5:5<sup>5</sup> Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with *humility* toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Pastors must battle their sinful natures as much, if not more, than other Christians. Pastors are tempted to focus only on outreach that is advantageous to them or their congregation (i.e., visiting a prospective wealthy family versus visiting a family in need). If we had a choice to wash the disciples’ feet or to anoint Jesus’ head with oil, which one would we choose? Jesus’ attitude was to be the servant, to do the more difficult tasks that didn’t have quick rewards. Jesus also considered the needs of others before His own needs. This certainly made Jesus an approachable person. He was not condescending to sinners, but at the same time He gave scathing criticism of hypocritical leaders or of the impenitent. Jesus did everything to the glory of God, His Father!

- c. Some questions to help pastors evaluate their ministry:<sup>1</sup>
1. What are the focus, mission or vision, and passions of my heart?
  2. What are my gifts and past experiences and how can that contribute to mission-mindedness?
  3. If I took another call, what would my present congregation miss regarding my work?
  4. What are the actual needs, hurts, and questions of the community surrounding the congregation?
  5. Is my heart fresh and full of the gospel?
  6. Am I doing things more for myself or for the glory of God?

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<sup>1</sup> These questions were modified from Professor Sorum’s summer course offered at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary in 2015.

7. As a pastor do I have or readily know the mission statement of my own congregation?
8. How active is my prayer and personal Bible study to keep my heart motivated in Christ's love?
3. What are practical ways a pastor can promote mission-mindedness?
  - a. In sermons—During the Epiphany season many texts in the Gospels relate to the love and concern for the lost. Share examples of mission-mindedness from the Bible and use other resources in daily life to help people think about the spiritual needs of their neighbors or friends. For mission festivals, don't only mention people who need the gospel in India, South America, or South Korea. Think of people in your community who need the gospel.
  - b. With prayers—We include a prayer for the lost in the general prayer of the church, but how often are special prayers said on their behalf? Jesus told His disciples to pray for the harvest of the Lord's fields. Not only do prayers help the congregation ask for God's blessing on outreach to unbelievers, God may answer our prayers by working through the congregation praying. Matthew 9:38—Jesus told the disciples to pray. In the Matthew 10 He sent them out!
  - c. In Bible Class—Have an annual study of the Bible that relates to outreach or the lost: Jonah (the reluctant missionary), 1 Peter (witness in word and life), Matthew 25 (the contrast between heaven and hell), Romans 1–8 (clear law and gospel distinction), John 4 (woman at the well who spoke to neighbors).
  - d. By using hymns—Consider which hymns could help the congregation think in mission-minded themes. A few examples: the Epiphany hymns, also "God Loved the World so that He Gave," "By Grace I'm Saved," and "Hark! The Voice of Jesus Crying."
  - e. Emphasize the love of God for the lost and priorities for reaching them while at voters' meetings, church council meetings, and ladies' meetings. We should consider Sunday School as another way of outreach.
  - f. Stewardship emphasis is not just about money to maintain buildings and budgets, but how it affects the lives of people

within the congregation and for reaching the lost in the community.

- g. Mission-mindedness also extends to the pastor's backing and support of the synod and to mission projects outside the congregation.
- B. Congregation leadership needs to set the example of mission-mindedness.
1. Problems that can arise when church leaders are not mission-minded.
    - a. Leaders can begin to think of the church as only an institution which needs to be preserved.
    - b. Decisions for the church are made in reaction to a problem, not with a mission plan or purpose.
    - c. The church often has problems because every member has his own agenda of what is important. Focus often is negative: budget shortfalls and decline in membership.
    - d. The church has a fortress mentality: lost souls are the enemy; orthodoxy is prized for its own sake, not for the sake of God's people or the lost; law dominates meetings; and there is a sense of pessimism.
  2. Mission-minded leaders reflect the heart and love of Jesus for the lost.
    - a. They become people-oriented (not forgetting doctrine, but applying it to the people, Mark 2:27); people have a servant attitude; the lost or straying become an urgent priority; and there is more lay involvement.
    - b. The leaders are planning, evaluating, and putting together a mission statement which members can own; problems are considered opportunities to improve; members grow to appreciate each other's gifts and talents used for outreach; priorities keep people focused on what matters the most rather than pet projects or pet peeves.
    - c. There is a proper mission excitement, welcoming visitors, assimilating new members, joy over people baptized or instructed in the faith; evangelism or outreach is seen as everyone's business; and people doing more witnessing in their daily lives.

3. Questions for church leaders to consider as priorities for ministry (adapted from *Revitalizing Parish Ministry*, WELS, 1990).
  - a. What is the main focus of discussions in council or voters' meetings?
  - b. On what activity does the pastor spend most of his hours during the week?
  - c. On which people does the pastor spend most of his time in ministry?
  - d. On what do we spend significant amounts of money in the church budget?
  - e. How will our priorities change if we consider being more mission-minded toward the lost?
  - f. If priorities are changed, in what different ways will we direct our time, effort, and money for outreach?
- C. The purpose of an outreach team or evangelism committee.
  1. Provide opportunities or training for members:
    - a. to invite unchurched to activities,
    - b. to train members to speak the gospel to the lost, and
    - c. to set examples to create a "climate" for evangelism or to express expectations for evangelism.
    - d. People will more likely engage their friends or invite them to come when they are encouraged.
  2. An evangelism team gives a constant reminder of the importance for outreach.
    - a. They seek some of the most talented people to be on the committee, not just who is left.
    - b. They clearly define roles, making them more task-oriented versus committee-oriented.
    - c. People want to serve. They don't want to meet. They don't want to serve indefinitely, but they are willing to accomplish tasks.
    - d. Prioritizing dollars for outreach communicates, "This is important!"
  3. An outreach team encourages inclusive events for the unchurched.
    - a. The team considers how often the church has events where unchurched people feel welcome.
    - b. Events offer more member involvement.
    - c. A committee or team may sponsor a special guest speaker.

- d. A committee or team will have someone who publicizes events with the local news for increased positive visibility of the congregation, including Yellow Pages, website, and other media.
4. An evangelism team can speak for the unchurched.
    - a. The congregation does not always think in the ways of a visitor or someone unchurched.
    - b. Members think about what works for them, not for the unchurched, like signs to tell visitors where things are located.
    - c. An evangelism team can remind the pastor to keep in mind visitors when he preaches so he doesn't always use terms that unchurched may not understand.
- D. The importance of groups within a church.
1. There are many reasons why it is important to have at least a few groups within any congregation.
    - a. Groups provide a less formal place to invite unchurched people.
    - b. Groups provide a place for new members to be assimilated. They obtain a sense of belonging.
    - c. Groups can strengthen present members.
    - d. Groups can help build a consensus of understanding and can be a factor in encouraging unity.
    - e. Groups can unite "veteran" members with new members.
  2. What groups do you have?
    - a. Bible Studies—This gets many members into God's Word. It is a blessing to many leaders within the congregation. Depending on the topic, even non-members may feel less inhibited in an informal setting where they can ask questions. Mission-mindedness can also be promoted more easily.
    - b. Sunday School—We recently gained a family because we offer Sunday School classes. Not every church offers classes anymore. The children are built up in their faith and knowledge; and more adults are involved with teaching or helping with Sunday School.
    - c. Fellowship Groups—These groups may have certain social activities for members. They provide an easy doorway to engage non-members and to help assimilate new members. It is a way for new and "old" members to meet.

- d. Service Groups—Men, women, or children may have activities through the year that offer help to church members or the community. Not every member has the same talents. Service projects which are not long-term but one-time events work well for many people. Trinity even has people who work together on newsletters or collate bulletins as ways of serving their Lord.
  - e. Choir or Music—Choir or playing instruments offers people opportunities to use their talents, glorify God in worship, and have fellowship together.
  - f. A combination of the above—e.g., our Ladies' Guild involves study, fellowship, and service.
- See Appendix B for other group ideas.
3. A Lutheran pre-school or school.
    - a. Instructs member children to better express and live their faith in Christ.
    - b. Students become active members as they take part in worship on a weekly basis. When they sing or use instruments in worship many non-members also attend giving them an opportunity to hear the gospel.
    - c. Our school is open to non-members. Some people eventually take instruction and join as members. People who remain non-members learn an overview of what we teach at a Lutheran school so there are no surprises when their children bring home their religion papers.
    - d. We are surrounded by larger WELS churches with schools. If we did not have a Christian school we would not be in existence. About 75% of our growth comes through our school and the other 25% through invitation from friends or relatives.
    - e. Our school children also sing at nursing homes and provide cards at Christmas and Easter to our shut-ins and to people they meet when visiting the nursing homes. They are mission-minded.
  4. How does a mission-minded congregation work with their delinquent members?
    - a. Consider the "signs" of delinquency.
      1. Lack of attendance in worship (What alternatives can we offer if they work on Sundays?)



2. Lack of participation in other events or activities at church
3. Are there friends or relatives who are active members who might help us understand if there is a problem? (E.g., alcohol, depression, fallen into a sin, lack of priorities, attending another church, etc.)
- b. What are ways of reaching these “sheep” that are wandering?
  1. The pastor visits to encourage members to return. I leave *Meditations* devotions, copies of printed sermons, bulletins, and a church newsletter if available.
  2. Elders or other members visit to encourage them.
  3. We send out monthly newsletters.
  4. The elders and I have a list of delinquent members so we pray for them on an ongoing basis.
  5. Note: the WELS Evangelism Book has a chapter on reaching delinquent members.
5. What members can do to make the church more visitor-friendly.
  - a. Ask questions regarding the church property.
    1. If a church looks run-down, why would a visitor want to attend?
    2. Would a member be reluctant to invite a guest to church if it is not kept in neat order?
    3. Is the church accessible?
    4. Is there adequate indoor signage for offices, bathrooms, sanctuary, etc.?
    5. Is there adequate outdoor signage and directional signs on roads near the congregation?
    6. Are the acoustics adequate?
    7. Is the organ/keyboard/music source adequate for the worship services?
  - b. People to welcome visitors.
    1. Do you have ushers or greeters to welcome people and ask that they sign a guest book or card?
    2. Do you have “sitters” who are unofficial, outgoing people who are willing to sit down near a visitor and try to assist them regarding what is happening

- in the service or to help with any questions they may have?
- c. Is the service easy to follow either by reference to pages in the hymnal or in a service folder?
    1. We print the service each week except for some hymns. Members and non-members appreciate it.
    2. We get copyright permission to include hymns from Christian Worship or hymns from other sources that the people know.
    3. Our love at Trinity is music—We have choirs for adult and children. We have instruments play along with the organ and keyboard for special services. We try to involve as many people as possible in the service. When we have a special service coming up, members know that it's a good opportunity to invite guests.
    4. A goal is to have members leave church saying, "We have been to worship today through the message of the Word, the liturgy, and through the music, songs, and hymns!" People who feel that they are being fed are more likely to invite others who they know are spiritually hungry.
  - d. What is the general atmosphere of the congregation?
    1. Are they feuding over a past building project or some past problem?
    2. Are they negative about the congregation from past mistakes or failures?
    3. Are there people who feel other members don't care?
    4. Are there members who think that they are out of touch with what is happening in the congregation?

These concerns must be addressed by a pastor who encourages members with God's Word to forgive and to be patient with one another. A mission-minded view asks people to forget the past and forget their selfishness and think about future outreach. We started a church newsletter to inform all members about events for them, new members, and concerns or needs of the congregation.

- e. What are the advantages of an outreach activity?
  1. The activity creates a mindset among members—participating in outreach, not just watching.
  2. The activity gives members a chance to serve meaningfully in outreach.
  3. The activity gives members something “special” to which to invite friends.
  4. The activity helps remove perceived barriers to “coming to church” and still they can hear the gospel!
  5. There is a community awareness of the church location and it is hopefully positive.
- f. What types of outreach can a congregation have?<sup>2</sup>
  1. Outreach to children—Sunday School, VBS, Christmas or Easter for Kids, and a school.
  2. New resident lists can be purchased to send invitations or mailings to them.
  3. Publicity—In the newspaper, Yellow Pages, special mailings to area residents, new church and school brochures, canvassing neighbors, and a MAP study to better reach the community.
  4. Improve signage in front of the church with internal lighting and lines for messages for the church and school to use for many occasions.
  5. A website is probably the most important way that people learn of our church and school.
  6. There also are times that people have contacted the church to ask about baptisms or weddings.
6. The importance of a congregation’s website.<sup>3</sup>

A growing number of people are finding out about our church before their first visit. When we at Trinity ask new families who enroll their children at our school, a majority say that they saw information about the church and school on our website. It is certainly important to

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<sup>2</sup> See appendix C for a list of what Trinity has done for outreach which keeps its people mission-minded. Most of the listed activities are done annually, although we are adding or subtracting events as necessary.

<sup>3</sup> Information about websites was adapted from an online article by Emily Kantner who is a Content Marketing & Communications Specialist for Elexio Church Software.

- update information on the website to keep the information current. What should you have on your website?
- a. Provide necessary information. People are not often visiting a website to browse your directory. They are searching for service times, location details, contact information, and a brief explanation of what you believe and offer at your church or school. Make sure this important information is always accurate so visitors don't arrive to an empty building.
  - b. Don't focus on donations. Online giving is a great tool for a church, but that doesn't mean it should be the first thing people see on your church website. Don't make visitors think that your church is only about money. Include giving tools within a member portal or on a menu option so it's not the first thing visitors see when they arrive at your website.
  - c. The website should have a current design. If you haven't updated your website in many years so that it looks like it belongs in this century, visitors may feel that your church has no relevance to their lives. Keep your website current and fresh so interest in your church will grow and people can return to it often to see updated calendars, sermons, newsletters, or other current events.
  - d. More people are using smartphones to get information from your website. See that your website is compatible. Make it easy for those visitors to browse your website from their current technology.
  - e. Make a website authentic. Your church website should be an accurate representation of your church. If you're using a bunch of stock photography or describing an inaccurate picture of who you are (such as: "We're a warm and friendly church!" when members don't usually greet any visitors), people will see through that and be disappointed when your church doesn't match expectations.
  - f. Trinity has written copies of sermons online. The next step is to have the audio of our services online and eventually have the complete audio/visual recording of the service as we have the funding and people who know how to work with that technology.

## Conclusion

Mission-mindedness is something which we must view in the light of God's gracious forgiveness and love in Christ. We deserved to be excluded from God in heaven. We deserved God's eternal judgment. But, with Christ taking our place, we have the gift of eternal life! There is no greater motivation to tell the world of Christ than being saved. We can communicate this by teaching people whenever possible in sermons, Bible classes, and many other ways. We also want to offer our members opportunities to invite people to church or teach them simple law and gospel presentations so the lost can hear about sin and God's grace. We can lead the church to pray for the lost and ask God to bless our work to reach as many as possible. The challenges in our current culture are great, but so is the message that we bring of Christ our Savior. God has provided so many ways and means for churches to reach people today. Let us open our eyes to see that the Lord's harvest is plentiful and pray that He send out workers, including us, into His harvest field. [LSQ](#)

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## Appendix A

Things any member can do to engage their neighbors to speak about Christ. The goal is to let your light shine regarding Jesus. The means to that goal is to have genuine personal relationships with people in your neighborhood. Not all of these are for everyone, but hopefully there will be ideas that can be used or modified to fit individual circumstances.

- Stay outside in the front yard longer while working on or watering the yard.
- Walk your dog regularly around the same time in your neighborhood.
- Sit on the front porch and let kids play in the front yard.
- Pass out baked goods (fresh bread, cookies, brownies, etc.).
- Invite neighbors over for dinner.
- Attend parties if invited by neighbors.
- Do a food drive or coat drive in winter and get neighbors involved.
- Have a game night (yard games outside or board games inside).
- Art swap night—bring out what you're tired of and trade with neighbors.

- Plant swap on a Saturday—in late spring, dig out extra plants you don't need and share them with neighbors.
- Grow a garden and give extra produce to neighbors.
- Have an Easter egg hunt on your block and invite neighbors to participate.
- Start a weekly open meal night in your home.
- Do a summer BBQ every Friday night and invite others to contribute.
- Create a block/street email and phone contact list for safety/neighborhood watch.
- Host a sports game watching party.
- Host a coffee and dessert night.
- Organize a tasting tour on your street (everyone sets up food and table on front porch).
- Host a movie night and discussion afterwards.
- Start a walking/running/biking group in the neighborhood.
- Start hosting a weekly play date for stay-at-home parents.
- Organize a carpool for your neighborhood to help save gas.
- Volunteer to coach a local little league or other sports team.
- Have a front yard ice cream party in the summer.

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## Appendix B

Meetings, Events, or Activities Where Members Can Invite Non-Church People

For Children

- Sunday School
- Vacation Bible School
- One-day VBS
- Christmas for Kids or Easter for Kids
- Lutheran Pioneers
- Lutheran Elementary School
- Child Care/Preschool
- After school programs

College-Aged People

- Singles group
- Campus ministries
- Touring group
- Hobbies group

- Wedding planning
- Something sports-related

#### Adults

- Bible Studies
- Parenting seminars
- Financial seminars
- Marriage enrichment
- Family night activities
- Game night
- Movie night
- Festival services
- Friendship Sunday

*Please note:* Too many activities can wear out members. They need time at home with families. They need time to meet neighbors and to express Christ's love in word and action. It is better to do fewer things well than to do many things poorly.

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## Appendix C

Events which we have tried or continue to do for outreach at Trinity, West Bend

### January

- Sunday Pancake Breakfast (put on by the men)—invite friends and new families
- The breakfast also serves as our New Member Welcome for the year.
- We have a Sunday School open house in later January (by the teachers).

### February

- “Special persons” day at the school when children invite family and friends to spend a half day at school with them (put on by school parents).
- Trinity has a booth at an activity called “Celebrate Families.” It is a resource fair for families in the county (our booth is organized by the evangelism committee).
- Ash Wednesday Supper—Invite people to supper and to attend a service at 3:30 or 7:00 p.m. (by the church Ladies' Guild).

## March

- Easter for Kids—There is an egg hunt, Bible lesson, craft, and singing (by volunteers).
- Postcards are mailed to households with younger children in a 10-mile radius of our church (hired).

## April

- Easter Services and breakfast (Ladies' Guild)
- Showing of a Christian movie about the resurrection (pastor)

## May

- School musical or song and skit night—all the school children involved (grade school)
- Plant sale in a nearby town with flyers about events at Trinity (school parents and volunteers)

## June

- Free plant exchange among members and neighbors with a snack to get acquainted (evangelism)
- Float built to advertise church and school for a local parade, handout Christian items (volunteers)

## July

- Patriotic service with special music
- Outdoor service and church picnic in our park with games (all groups of the church involved)
- VBS (school teachers and volunteers)

## August

- School registration; classes begin at the end of the month (school board and teachers)

## September

- Rally day with an outdoor service and emphasis enlisting for Bible Class, Sunday School, and other church organizations (evangelism committee and elders)

## October

- Bonfire in the park (parents from school)
- Mission Festival (Ladies' Guild has a dinner)

## November

- Thanksgiving services

## December

- Annual gingerbread nativity scenes made by families (evangelism and volunteers)
- Special Christmas service with the school children and Sunday School (teachers and school board)—For a few years we participated in a Living Nativity with several WELS churches in the area.



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# Witnessing in the Workplace

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**I**SN'T THAT OBNOXIOUS? THE PARAGRAPH, however, is there for a reason. It protects me from establishing an attorney-client relationship—and it protects you from thinking you have received any advice that applies to a specific situation you or one of your members may be facing. You need more specific advice for the specific facts and circumstances that apply to your or a member's situation.

So, do you think the disclaimer is obnoxious? Do you ever think lawyers are some of the most obnoxious people you know? How many of you dislike lawyers? Well, now I know where you stand, and I see I have my work cut out for me.

Let me ask you a question. For those of you who flew to this conference,<sup>1</sup> imagine you were in the window seat and you had to listen to two lawyers talking about the issue before us. How many of you would wish they would just shut up? Let me give you a different scenario. Imagine there were two Muslim men talking about their Muslim practices, and you found it obnoxious. How many of you would wish that conversation would stop? Imagine two gay men, or two lesbians, being in those seats next to you and talking openly about their views and values and how angry they are about Christians opposing them. Obnoxious? Do you realize this is not that different from the way these people and others feel about Christians witnessing to them?

Perhaps an illustration helps show one reason why Christian witnesses are sometimes seen as obnoxious. A man told about attending a Christian men's conference where they talked about sharing their faith. He was on the airplane returning home and thought he would try witnessing to the businessman in the seat next to him. He was quite sure that this man was not a believer. So he asked him, "May I share something with you?" And the man said, "Sure." So the Christian man reached into his pocket to pull out a tract. He began a short presentation of the Gospel. When he started to talk about the law, the businessman sat back in his seat and stiffened. The first man turned toward him, and the businessman said, "Did you want to ask me something, or are you telling me something?" And the Christian man knew he had lost the opportunity and the conversation was over. Then he thought, "Perhaps God put that man in that seat to teach me something. Was I treating that man as a person, or as a project? He could see right through me."<sup>2</sup>

We'll return to this story later.

## Employment at Will

A basic doctrine of employment law deals with "employment at will." This stands in contrast to "employment by contract." Under "employment at will," an employee serves at the will and pleasure of his employer. There are two consequences to this. The employee is free to terminate his employment for whatever reason he wishes, to pursue other employment, or simply to quit working. He is not bound to the employer. On the other hand, the employer also has the right

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<sup>1</sup> This paper was given by the Rev. Thomas Heyn, who is also a lawyer, at the Home Missions Seminar in Leander, Texas.

<sup>2</sup> Robert J. Tamasy, *The Gospel in the Workplace*, published May 28, 2011, Bible.org, <<https://bible.org/article/gospel-workplace>>.

to terminate employment for whatever reason or for no reason at all. However, this is where certain state and federal laws prevent termination for reasons of discrimination based upon race, gender, religious belief, etc.

So, if a Christian is working under employment at will, he can be terminated from employment for any of a host of reasons, but not for discrimination against him for religious belief or religious talk in the workplace as long as he does so within the limitations of state and federal law.

Which brings us to a discussion of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

### **Legal issues regarding this topic**

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (“Title VII”) (as amended by the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of 1972, 42 U.S.C. §§ 2000e et seq.) is the primary piece of legislation that affects our topic of witnessing in the workplace. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) is responsible for enforcing the employment-related provisions of Title VII. (Please see Appendix 1 where we will see the EEOC’s interpretation of how Title VII is to be enforced in the workplace.)

Note that Title VII covers employers with 15 or more employees. States can, and have, modified this number for enforcement within their own state. (See Appendix 2.)

So, how much can you say on the job—as an employee, as an employer, as a business owner, or as a professional? Can you openly pray on the job? Can you quote Bible verses? Can you discuss theology? Can you mention God and your beliefs? Can you get into trouble? Can you be fired?

Consider a few recent examples:<sup>3</sup>

- A state university department supervisor faced disciplinary action for violating the university’s “harassment” policy. Human Resources personnel informed him that because he was a supervisor, he could never talk about religion to another employee. This interpretation of the law was incorrect.
- An employee of a large retail establishment in Illinois frequently shared her faith with coworkers. Because this employee knew the laws regarding religious speech, she always made a point to ask her

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<sup>3</sup> The Legal Implications of Witnessing at Work, By David C. Gibbs Jr., *Copyright © 2005 Regent Business Review*, <http://www.cbn.com/finance/rbrwitnesswork.aspx>.

coworkers to tell her if they did not want to discuss religion. None of her colleagues ever complained to her, yet she was terminated for violating the store's "harassment policy."

- The employer of a Florida man warned him to cease all voluntary religious discussions with coworkers. Employees who consistently violated the company's profanity policy, however, were not disciplined.

From these few examples, we see how important it is to understand your legal rights in the workplace when it comes to expressing or sharing your faith.

### Discussions with coworkers

If a company allows other non-work-related conversations, e.g., sports, politics, family, then it cannot prohibit *voluntary* religious discussions (or prayer) between employees.

Other employees cannot stop a religious discussion simply because they overhear it. If they would not object to a different type of conversation, they cannot object to a religious conversation. Yet

despite clear legal protections, Christian employees often face discipline for sharing their faith. Incredibly, some employers will allow non-Christian religious expression yet forbid religious expression from Christians. For example, an employee was disciplined for sharing his Christian perspective on suicide and salvation with a coworker who had just expressed his belief in reincarnation and stated that he was contemplating suicide. The Christian was fired for sharing the hope of life found in Jesus Christ and for pleading with his coworker not to commit suicide!<sup>4</sup>

### Limits on Religious Discussions with Co-workers

1) The employee must not allow religious discussions to interfere with his work responsibilities. He should avoid even the perception that any religious discussion is interfering with job performance. Good performance recommendations (kept by the employee) may help in a lawsuit against the employer to prove that work performance was NOT the reason for being fired.

2) If a co-worker indicates directly or indirectly that he does not wish to discuss religious matters, the Christian employee should stop

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

talking about it. If he does not stop, he can be charged with harassment. That does NOT mean that as soon as the person enters a room where such a discussion is taking place that the Christian employee must stop, but he should be sure not to direct the conversation toward such a person. It may be wise to take the conversation elsewhere.

### **Discussions with customers**

Any employer, public or private, may stop an employee from religious conversations with customers, clients, patients, etc. The rationale for this is that such conversations may have an adverse effect upon the employer's business.

A business owner, however, may allow, or even encourage such conversations. But the decision belongs to the private business owner, not the employee.

A client, customer, patient, etc., may initiate such conversations. But if the employee has been instructed not to have such discussions, then a voluntary discussion with a client or customer who has initiated the conversation should cease in the place of business.

### **Witnessing by the employer**

There are no limitations on an employer witnessing to his customer base. The employer may place gospel tracts in outgoing mail, print Bible verses on company invoices, purchase orders or other commercial documents. The employer may answer phones with Christian greetings.

However, federal and state laws regulate the rights of Christian business owners regarding witnessing to their employees. Business owners may communicate their religious beliefs in company policies and practices provided that 1) they do not give employees the perception that employment or advancement requires workers to adopt the employer's religious beliefs, 2) the employer must accommodate an employee's objections to the employer's policies, and 3) the employer must not require employees to participate in religious worship activities.

An employer or supervisor may witness to employees as long as he accommodates employees who object to the company's religious practices and makes sure that they are clearly informed that their religious views have no affect on hiring, termination, promotion, or other conditions of employment.

## In Conclusion

Although there is growing hostility to religious speech at work, Christians have the right to witness in the workplace—subject to certain limitations. Christians who face difficulties for sharing their faith in the workplace should contact a Christian attorney who specializes in religious discrimination to help them if they are disciplined or terminated for witnessing at work.

### What do you think? Some actual cases:

The following is a summary of case law regarding commonly litigated religious practices.<sup>5</sup>

#### *Religious Practices that Are Frequently Litigated*

##### *1. Religious Expression*

An employee's religiously motivated expressions of faith are protected by Title VII. In *Brown v. Polk County*, a "born-again" Christian county department head who supervised approximately 50 employees asserted a "need to pray and quote scripture during working hours." 832 F. Supp. 1305, 1314 (S.D. Iowa 1993), *aff'd*, 37 F.3d 404 (8th Cir. 1994), *rev'd on reh'g*, 61 F.3d 650 (8th Cir. 1995) (*en banc*). Brown permitted employees to pray in his office before and during work hours. When addressing his co-workers, he affirmed his Christianity and referred to Bible passages related to slothfulness and "work ethics." 61 F.3d at 652. Fearful that such practices would "be construed as the direct support of or the promotion of a religious organization or religious activities utilizing the resources of Polk County Government," Brown's supervisor directed him to "cease any activities that could be considered to be religious proselytizing, witnessing, or counseling and ... insure a work environment that is free of the types of activities ... described." *Id.* at 652-53. Brown was also directed to remove from his office all items with a religious connotation, including a Bible in his desk. Shortly thereafter, Brown was fired. *Id.* at 653. Sitting *en banc*, the Eighth Circuit held that the county defendants were liable under Title VII for reprimanding and firing Mr. Brown for his spontaneous prayers

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<sup>5</sup> All the case summaries that follow are drawn from *The Rights of Religious Employees in the Workplace*, pp. 14ff., Alliance Defending Freedom, published February 12, 2013, available from: <<http://www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/content/docs/issues/school/The-Rights-of-Religious-Employees-3.22.13.pdf>>.

and references to his Christian belief.<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 656- 57. The court upheld Brown's right to occasional spontaneous, voluntary prayer in meetings and his use of Scripture in discussing job productivity because there was "no actual imposition on co-workers or disruption of work routine."<sup>7</sup> *Id.* at 657 (quoting *Burns v. S. Pac. Transp. Co.*, 589 F.2d 403, 407 (9th Cir. 1978)).

Likewise, a religious belief requiring a food service employee to greet customers with phrases such as "God Bless You" and "Praise the Lord" presented a triable issue of fact as to whether this belief could be accommodated without undue hardship. *Banks v. Serv. Am. Corp.*, 952 F. Supp. 703, 707, 711 (D. Kan. 1996). But an employer provides reasonable accommodation for an employee's occasional use of "have a blessed day" by letting her use the phrase with co-workers and supervisors who do not object, but not with customers. *U.S.F. Logistics*, 274 F.3d at 476.<sup>8</sup>

Even aggressive proselytizing may be acceptable behavior. When a prison guard became an Orthodox Muslim employee, he was unlawfully fired because he was "overzealous in his practices of his beliefs in his conversation with officers and inmates. He cannot be persuaded to tone down his religious practices on the job and continually gets wrapped up in conversations with the inmates." EEOC Decision No. 76-98, 1976 WL 5008, at \*2 (1976). Because there was no evidence that the employee's conduct had made him unable to perform his duties or hampered the efficient operation of the workplace, the employee prevailed in his claim. *Id.*

Employers generally cannot discriminate against employees because of religious speech expressed outside of the workplace. For example, the EEOC ruled that an employer violated Title VII when it dismissed an employee for writing a religious book that was blasphemous. EEOC Decision No. 72-1301, 4 Fair. Empl. Prac. Cas. (BNA) 715 (1972). The

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<sup>6</sup> See also *EEOC v. Univ. of Chi. Hosps.*, 276 F.3d 326, 333 (7th Cir. 2002) (holding evangelical employee alleged sufficient facts to proceed to trial on religious discrimination claim where supervisor referred to her as a religious fanatic, had a problem with her bringing her religion into the workplace, and instructed her to remove a clock and calendar containing religious references from her desk).

<sup>7</sup> Although the prayer during work hours was protected, the court also held that the county had no obligation to permit Brown to hold prayer meetings in his office before working hours as "nothing in Title VII requires that an employer open its premises for use before the start of the workday." *Id.* at 656.

<sup>8</sup> But see *Johnson v. Halls Merch., Inc.*, 1989 WL 23201, at \*2 (W.D. Mo. Jan. 17, 1989) (holding employer did not have to accommodate employee's religious belief of using "in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth" with customers).



book contained chapters entitled “Gods of Hatred – False Christian Ideas About Creation, Our Origin, Our Nature And Our Destiny,” and “Reasons Why We Must have Pro-Sex Moral Codes and Why We Must Abandon the Anti-Sex Moral Codes Of The Masturbating Christian God of Hatred.” Id; but see *Hollon v. Pierce*, 64 Cal. Rptr. 808, 815 (Cal. Ct. App. 1967) (holding California human rights law was not violated by dismissal of school transportation supervisor who had, wholly apart from his employment, produced and distributed a religious tract that led the school district to question supervisor’s mental stability).

## *2. Employment Tasks Prohibited by Religious Convictions*

Refusing to work on the Sabbath is by far the most prevalent employment requirement appearing in opinions under Title VII. But Title VII also requires employers to accommodate employees who refuse to do specific tasks because of a conflict with religious beliefs.

An employer was required to accommodate a religious worker’s objections to abortion in *Haring v. Blumenthal*, 471 F. Supp. 1172 (D.D.C. 1979). In that case, an I.R.S. employee refused to handle applications for tax-exempt status submitted by any organization which violated the Ten Commandments or God’s natural law. Id. at 1175 n.4. The court ruled that accommodating the employee would not result in undue hardship to the employer because the number of applications the employee might refuse to handle would be relatively insignificant as compared to his total workload. Id. at 1182.<sup>9</sup>

An employee may not be forced to speak in a manner that would violate his religion. In *Kentucky Commission on Human Rights v. Lesco Manufacturing Design Co.*, 736 S.W.2d 361, 362 (Ky. Ct. App. 1987), an employee was fired for refusing to answer the telephone with “Merry Christmas; Lesco.” The court found that the employer should

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<sup>9</sup> Compare *Am. Postal Workers Union v. Postmaster Gen.*, 781 F.2d 772, 776 (9th Cir. 1986) (finding accommodation required for postal clerks with religious objections to processing military draft notices); and *Hellinger v. Eckerd Corp.*, 67 F. Supp. 2d 1359, 1366 (S.D. Fla. 1999) (holding accommodation required for employee refusing to sell condoms); with *Noesen v. Med. Staffing Network, Inc.*, 232 Fed. App’x 581, 584 (7th Cir. May 2, 2007) (finding pharmacy reasonably accommodated employee by allowing him to transfer to a co-worker any customer service regarding contraceptives, but did not have to accommodate request to assign all initial customer contact to lower-paid technicians); and *Virts*, 285 F.3d at 521 (finding employer not required to accommodate a truck driver whose religious beliefs prohibited him from partnering with female drivers on sleeper runs because it would have violated seniority provisions of the collective bargaining agreement).

have accommodated the Jehovah's Witness employee's religious convictions regarding her refusal to observe Christmas. *Id.* at 364.

A company also violates Title VII by refusing to accommodate an employee's refusal on religious grounds to sign a diversity policy requiring him to value homosexual co-workers. *Buonanno v. AT&T Broadband, LLC*, 313 F. Supp. 2d 1069, 1082-83 (D. Colo. 2004). But employers can require employees to treat their co-workers with respect. *Id.*

Several courts have also held that those objecting to the payment of union dues on religious grounds should be accommodated by allowing them to contribute an amount equal to their dues to a charity.<sup>10</sup> *Tooley v. Martin-Marietta Corp.*, 648 F.2d 1239, 1242-43 (9th Cir. 1981). At least one court has held that accommodation is sufficient if the employee's dues are discounted in proportion to the amount of money spent on the objectionable union activity. *Univ. of Detroit*, 904 F.2d at 334.

Compare *Wilson v. U.S. W. Commc'ns*, 58 F.3d 1337, 1341-42 (8th Cir. 1995) (holding employee's religious belief that she must wear an anti-abortion button depicting a fetus was reasonably accommodated when the employer offered to let the employee wear the button as long as the image of a fetus was covered, or to wear a button with a similar message, but without the picture of the fetus); with *Rivera v. Choice Courier Sys. Inc.*, 2004 WL 1444852, at \*9-10 (S.D.N.Y. June 25, 2004) (finding employer's failure to even consider transferring employee to position with less stringent dress code so that he could continue his religious practice of proselytizing by wearing patch stating "Jesus is Lord" may have violated Title VII).

### *3. Religious Behavior or Beliefs Not Protected by Title VII*

When a Title VII religious discrimination claim fails, it is often because the employer is able to show the employee was fired for inefficiency or bad work product rather than the asserted religious practice. A frequent example is when an employee's religious speech is so confrontational that it inhibits cooperation with other employees. In *Minnesota Department of Highways v. Minnesota Department of Human Rights*, 241 N.W.2d 310 (Minn. 1976), the Minnesota Supreme Court held

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<sup>10</sup> Giving financial support to a cause is a form of speech protected by the First Amendment. See *Citizens United v. F.E.C.*, 130 S. Ct. 876, 898 (2010) (finding restriction on financial contributions to political campaigns implicates First Amendment freedoms); *Bd. of Regents of Univ. of Wis. Sys. v. Southworth*, 529 U.S. 217, 230 (2000) (finding use of student activity fee to fund student organizations implicated First Amendment rights of student who pays the fee).

that a state employer did not violate Minnesota's version of Title VII when it dismissed an argumentative atheist employee who proselytized on the job and switched off religious music at a Christmas party in favor of secular music. The court found that the case involved "aggressively offensive behavior exhibited by an outspoken advocate of atheism wholly intolerant of those foolish enough to admit to other views on the existence of a Deity. He was, indeed an argumentative, proselytizing polemicist." *Id.* at 313. Thus, the court determined that he was not discriminated against because of his religious beliefs, but because of "his offensive conduct in the office and in the field, his expressed attitude toward other workers, and his unproductive job performance." *Id.*

Similarly, in *Universal Services*, 360 F. Supp. 441, the court dismissed the complaint of a Pentecostal Church member after he was discharged from employment on an oil rig. The plaintiff claimed he was fired because he sang religious hymns, preached, and prophesied of disasters and the deaths of co-workers while he was working. *Id.* at 444. However, the plaintiff's supervisor "had warned him that his preaching and singing were affecting the men on the rig and told him to stop." *Id.* The facts also indicated that the plaintiff, who had a history of quitting employment, walked off the job and was not performing his tasks properly. *Id.* at 445. The court ruled that this was the reason the plaintiff was fired, not his religious speech. *Id.* at 447.

In *Cary v. Anheuser-Busch, Inc.*, 741 F. Supp. 1219 (E.D. Va. 1988), the court ruled that coercing an employee into seeking medical or psychological assistance because of religious beliefs is generally a violation of Title VII, but not when a co-worker complained that he felt threatened by the employee's religious remarks. In that case, the plaintiff believed God told him God was taking the plaintiff "to the other side" and that he could "take two people with him." *Id.* at 1220. The plaintiff proceeded to inform a co-worker of this revelation and he told the co-worker that he would be one of the two people. *Id.* The court found that the employee was discriminated against because of the possible danger he posed to other employees, not because of his religion. *Id.* at 1221-22; see also *Peterson v. Hewlett-Packard Co.*, 358 F.3d 599, 607 (9th Cir. 2004) ("[A]n employer need not accommodate an employee's religious beliefs if doing so would result in discrimination against his co-workers or deprive them of contractual or other statutory rights."); *id.* at 607-08 (finding no accommodation required for religious employee's posting of religious messages opposing homosexual behavior in his office that were intended to demean and harass co-workers).

Finally, religious beliefs that conflict with another law may not be protected by Title VII. For instance, an employer was not required to accommodate a job applicant's religiously-based refusal to provide a Social Security number because it was necessary to comply with IRS and INS requirements. *Sutton v. Providence St. Joseph Med. Ctr.*, 192 F.3d 826, 830-31 (9th Cir. 1999).

### Religious Speech by the Employer Under Title VII

In the past, Title VII has effectively required employers and those in supervisory capacities to cease any religious speech in the work place.<sup>11</sup> Courts reasoned that if employers communicated their religious beliefs to employees, the employee's own beliefs would be suppressed due to the perception that continued employment or advancement depended on acquiescence in the employer's beliefs. Recently, however, several cases have indicated that the "unwritten" restrictions on employer religious speech have been relaxed.

In *Brown v. Polk County*, 61 F.3d at 652, a county supervisor with over 50 employees allowed employees to pray in meetings during working hours and would affirm his own faith by referring to Bible passages related to slothfulness and "work ethics." He was reprimanded and directed to immediately "cease any activities that could be considered to be religious proselytizing, witnessing, or counseling and ... insure a work environment that is free of the types of activities ... described." *Id.* at 653. He was later fired. *Id.*

Sitting *en banc*, the Eight Circuit held that the county defendants were liable under Title VII for reprimanding and firing Brown for his spontaneous prayers and references to his Christian belief. The court rejected the employer's argument that Brown's affirmations of Christianity created the "perception that Mr. Brown 'might favor those with similar beliefs' in making personnel decisions." *Id.* at 656. Because there were no actual complaints that Brown showed favoritism,

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<sup>11</sup> See Thomas D. Brierton, An Unjustified Hostility Toward Religion in the Workplace, 34 CATH. LAW. 289 (1991). Use of Title VII, a federal statute, to restrict speech in order to avoid creating a hostile work environment obviously has serious First Amendment ramifications. This topic, however, is not within the scope of this paper. For a discussion of the First Amendment implications of Title VII's speech restrictions in the sexual harassment context, see Jules B. Gerard, The First Amendment in a Hostile Environment: A Primer on Free Speech and Sexual Harassment, 68 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 1003 (1993); Eugene Volokh, Comment, Freedom of Speech and Workplace Harassment, 39 UCLA L. REV. 1791 (1992); Kinglsey R. Browne, Title VII as Censorship: Hostile-Environment Harassment and the First Amendment, 52 OHIO ST. L.J. 481 (1991).

the court deemed this concern to be mere speculation as “defendants showed no ‘actual imposition on co-workers or disruption of the work routine.’” *Id.* at 657.

Other cases also permitted an employer or supervisor to speak about religion. See *Meltebeke v. Bureau of Labor & Indus.*, 903 P.2d 351, 362-63 (Or. 1995) (finding an evangelical Christian employer did not violate state law prohibiting employers from “making religious advances” by witnessing to his employee and inviting him to church); *Taylor v. Nat’l Grp. of Cos., Inc.*, 729 F. Supp. 575, 577 (N.D. Ohio 1989) (finding employer’s gift of a book endorsing secular humanism to new employees on their first day of work did not rise to the level of religious discrimination against a Christian employee). Furthermore, political comments by supervisors do not result in religious harassment even if they may have religious significance. See *Reichman v. Bureau of Affirmative Action*, 536 F. Supp. 1149, 1176 (M.D. Pa. 1982) (holding supervisor’s unfavorable comments to Jewish employee regarding Israeli prime minister and political position in the Arab-Israeli conflict did not constitute prohibited religious harassment).

Despite this progress in the area of employer religious speech, employers still should be aware of cases like *Brown Transport Corp. v. Human Relations Commission*, 578 A.2d 545, 555-558 (Pa. Commw. Ct. 1990), where a Jewish employee was wrongfully terminated for complaining about the printing of Bible verses on his paychecks and the religious content of a company newsletter. It is also well settled that employers cannot require employees to participate in religious meetings. *Young v. Sw. Sav. & Loan Ass’n*, 509 F.2d 140, 144 (5th Cir. 1975).<sup>12</sup>

*Rodriguez v. Maricopa Cnty. Comm. Coll.*, 605 F.3d 703, 710-11 (9th Cir. 2010) (holding school did not violate Hispanic employees’ right to be free from workplace harassment when it failed to censor the offensive comments of a professor. These comments were protected speech, not harassment).

Lastly, consider the following recent development.

<http://www.wnd.com/2015/01/>

[axed-for-his-christianity-fire-chief-fights-back/](#)

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<sup>12</sup> But see *Kolodziej v. Smith*, 588 N.E.2d 634, 638 (Mass. 1992) (holding employee could not be forced to attend devotional services at which prayer was offered, but requiring employee to attend a management seminar put on by Institute of Basic Life Principles which used scriptural passages to support the lessons it sought to promote did not violate Massachusetts civil rights law).

## How-To

So, keeping the above legal issues in mind, here are some guidelines for how a Christian can witness in the workplace.

### *Pray for wisdom*

Bringing up religious discussions during work can distract the Christian employee and the person to whom he is speaking from their work duties. One of the first responsibilities of a Christian worker is to give faithful labor to his employer. As Martin Luther explains regarding the seventh commandment: we have a duty to help our neighbor to improve and protect his property and business. So, we must be sure that such conversations do not cheat the employer from the labor for which he is paying. Besides, managers or coworkers who would observe this misuse of time may question the service of such a Christian employee. The result could be that the Christian employee actually causes tension and disunity among the coworkers. And so a prayer for wisdom is always in place, asking God to open doors and show opportunities for conversation that would not conflict with rendering faithful service to the employer.

### *Do excellent work*

One of the employer's key defenses against a charge of religious discrimination is to claim that the employee was disciplined or fired for failure to perform his duties. Therefore, it is important to be able to demonstrate that the employee's work performance has been not only acceptable but, even better, the work has been commendable.

This should go without saying. Ephesians 6:5: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ" (NIV). Colossians 3:22: "Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything; and do it, not only when their eye is on you and to win their favor, but with sincerity of heart and reverence for the Lord" (NIV).

As Christians, we recognize our gifts from God are to be used in his service and as a blessing to others. Therefore, we should always strive to do our best. Whether my job involves a trade, work on an assembly line, work as a service profession or as a professional, I should always strive to do my best. A byproduct of this is that I establish a good work record and it will be difficult for an employer to claim that I was fired for poor work performance if, in fact, I was fired for religious discussions with others as protected by the law.

In addition, excellent work may lead coworkers, or managers, to wonder why I work so faithfully and do such excellent work. While other workers may be doing the least that they can get by with, others may see me doing the best that I can and even going above and beyond what is required.

As an aside, during my research I came across several websites that deal with the Christian view of work. Several writers discussed the biblical teaching that God created us with the purpose that we work. Adam was given work in the Garden of Eden before the fall into sin. Although the fall into sin brought difficulties to man's work (thorns, thistles, and the sweat of the brow), this did not change God's basic plan for man to serve him by working.

A few years ago, the book *Total Truth* by Nancy Pearcey was discussed in some of our circles. In her book, Pearcey speaks of the "Cultural Mandate" in Genesis 1 wherein God gives man a mandate to work and bring culture and civilization to the newly created world. This vocation of man, given by God, is the perfect venue for taking his message into the world; after all, the average worker spends 8.3 hours a day with his co-workers. Much more could be said about this, perhaps even a paper: "Engaging Others with Jesus – Through Our Work." But for purposes of this paper, may it suffice to say, Christians ought to serve God through their work, and through work done excellently.

Returning to the subject at hand, such excellence may cause others to inquire of us what makes us so different in carrying on our day-to-day work. "Why do you work so hard? You always seem to do your work, even some of the unpleasant parts of it, with such focus and enthusiasm. What gives? Why don't you complain about the boss, or the customers, or the other workers, like the rest of us?" There's the opportunity for an answer: Because I am serving God in my work. I want to serve him well because of all he has done for me. I can tell you more, if you like. Then, also, consider Philippians 2:14–16: "Do everything without complaining or arguing, so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation, in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life..." (NIV).

And again, excellent work means supervisors and co-workers cannot accuse you of shortchanging the job if and when you do get involved in a Christian witness with others. But if you share the gospel and are a time-waster, a complainer, a gossip, or are disrespectful and careless, what impact will that have on your opportunities to speak of your Savior?

### *Seek opportunities outside work*

Although you want to take advantage of opportunities at work to share the gospel within the above-mentioned guidelines, consider also how you can involve co-workers in your life outside of work. You can invite them to recreational activities, to a cookout, or to a cup of coffee. If your church is having activities and events, invite your co-workers. If they decline your invitation, continue to show them respect and friendship.

Remember that the people you share the gospel with are people, not projects. There is nothing worse than approaching a person and sharing the gospel with that person as though that person is someone to check off your checklist. They will understand that you are treating them like a project instead of a person. But if you take some time to really get to know the person, his questions and the problems and issues he faces, you can more easily engage him in conversation and let him know that you really care about him as a person. In addition, the person will also get to know you and come to understand that you care about him. And then he may be more ready to listen to you.

### **Conclusion**

Considering the world in which we live and the increasing hostility toward Christians, one can easily understand a Christian's reluctance to witness in the workplace. It is important for Christians to understand that not only can they witness at work, but there are even laws that protect their right to do so. They need to know that there are limits to how they can witness so that they are not harming their employer's business or harassing their fellow employees. But with an understanding of the legal implications discussed above, they can be witnesses of their Savior and engage others with Jesus.

Nonetheless, an extremely important caveat is in order. The law explains what a person's legal rights are. That does not mean those rights will always be respected. By understanding our rights, and pointing them out to one who is violating those rights, that may be sufficient to stop the actions hostile to the Christian's rights. But often that may not be the case. Our court systems are in place for the very purpose of addressing the violations of a person's rights. It must be remembered, however, that our court systems are far from perfect. So, the Christian, witnessing in the workplace, must remember that he may have to suffer unjustly, be disciplined, and perhaps lose his job, all because he is a witness for Christ in a world that hates Christ. But the Lord knows



those who are his and works all things for their good. That must be the ultimate assurance for the Christian witnessing in the workplace. <sup>LSQ</sup>

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## Appendix 1

*The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: Questions and Answers: Religious Discrimination in the Workplace*

Full document: [http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/qanda\\_religion.html](http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/qanda_religion.html)

### Excerpt:

*The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*

*Questions and Answers: Religious Discrimination in the Workplace*

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 prohibits employers with at least 15 employees, as well as employment agencies and unions, from discriminating in employment based on race, color, religion, sex, and national origin. It also prohibits retaliation against persons who complain of discrimination or participate in an EEO investigation. With respect to religion, Title VII prohibits:

- treating applicants or employees differently based on their religious beliefs or practices—or lack thereof—in any aspect of employment, including recruitment, hiring, assignments, discipline, promotion, and benefits (disparate treatment);
- subjecting employees to harassment because of their religious beliefs or practices—or lack thereof—or because of the religious practices or beliefs of people with whom they associate (e.g., relatives, friends, etc.);
- denying a requested reasonable accommodation of an applicant’s or employee’s sincerely held religious beliefs or practices—or lack thereof—if an accommodation will not impose more than a *de minimis* cost or burden on business operations;<sup>13</sup> and,

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<sup>13</sup> Undue hardship under Title VII is defined as “more than *de minimis*” cost or burden—a lower standard for employers to satisfy than the “undue hardship” defense under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which is defined instead as “significant difficulty or expense.” Various state and local laws may have provisions that are broader than Title VII in terms of the protected bases covered, the discrimination prohibited or accommodation required, or the legal standards and defenses that apply.

- retaliating against an applicant or employee who has engaged in protected activity, including participation (e.g., filing an EEO charge or testifying as a witness in someone else's EEO matter), or opposition to religious discrimination (e.g., complaining to human resources department about alleged religious discrimination).

The following questions and answers were adapted from EEOC's Compliance Manual Section on Religious Discrimination, available at <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/religion.html>, which contains more detailed guidance, legal citations, case examples, and best practices. It is designed to be a practical resource for employers, employees, practitioners, and EEOC enforcement staff on Title VII's prohibition against religious discrimination, and provides guidance on how to balance the needs of individuals in a diverse religious climate.

### *1. What is "religion" under Title VII?*

Title VII protects all aspects of religious observance and practice as well as belief and defines religion very broadly for purposes of determining what the law covers....

### *2. Are there any exceptions to who is covered by Title VII's religion provisions?*

Yes. While Title VII's jurisdictional rules apply to all religious discrimination claims under the statute, see EEOC Compliance Manual, "Threshold Issues," <http://www.eeoc.gov/policy/docs/threshold.html>, specially-defined "religious organizations" and "religious educational institutions" are exempt from certain religious discrimination provisions, and a "ministerial exception" bars Title VII claims by employees who serve in clergy roles.

...

### *3. What is the scope of the Title VII prohibition on disparate treatment based on religion?*

Title VII's prohibition against disparate (different) treatment based on religion generally functions like its prohibition against disparate treatment based on race, color, sex, or national origin ....

The prohibition against disparate treatment based on religion also applies to disparate treatment of religious expression in the workplace. For example, if an employer allowed one secretary to display a Bible on her desk at work while telling another secretary in the same workplace to put the Quran on his desk out of view because co-workers "will think you are making a political statement, and with everything going on in the world right now we don't need that around here," this would be differential treatment in violation of Title VII. (As discussed below, Title VII also requires employers to accommodate expression that is based on a sincerely held religious practice or belief, unless it threatens

to constitute harassment or otherwise poses an undue hardship on the conduct of the business.)

#### *4. What constitutes religious harassment under Title VII?*

Religious harassment in violation of Title VII occurs when employees are: (1) required or coerced to abandon, alter, or adopt a religious practice as a condition of employment (this type of “quid pro quo” harassment may also give rise to a disparate treatment or denial of accommodation claim in some circumstances); or (2) subjected to unwelcome statements or conduct that is based on religion and is so severe or pervasive that the individual being harassed reasonably finds the work environment to be hostile or abusive, and there is a basis for holding the employer liable.

It is necessary to evaluate all of the surrounding circumstances to determine whether or not particular conduct or remarks are unwelcome. For example, where an employee is upset by repeated mocking use of derogatory terms or comments about his religious beliefs or observance by a colleague, it may be evident that the conduct is unwelcome. In contrast, a consensual conversation about religious views, even if quite spirited, does not constitute harassment if it is not unwelcome.

Even unwelcome religiously motivated conduct is not unlawful unless the victim subjectively perceives the environment to be abusive and the conduct is severe or pervasive enough to create an environment that a reasonable person would find hostile or abusive. Religious expression that is repeatedly directed at an employee can become severe or pervasive, whether or not the content is intended to be insulting or abusive. Thus, for example, persistently reiterating atheist views to a religious employee who has asked that this conduct stop can create a hostile environment.

The extent to which the expression is directed at a particular employee is relevant to determining whether or when it could reasonably be perceived to be severe or pervasive by that employee. For example, although it is conceivable that an employee may allege that he is offended by a colleague’s wearing of religious garb, expressing one’s religion by wearing religious garb is not religious harassment. It merely expresses an individual’s religious affiliation and does not demean other religious views. As such, it is not objectively hostile. Nor is it directed at any particular individual. Similarly, workplace displays of religious artifacts or posters that do not demean other religious views generally would not constitute religious harassment.

#### *5. When is an employer liable for religious harassment?*

An employer is always liable for a supervisor’s harassment if it results in a tangible employment action. However, if it does not, the employer may be able to avoid liability or limit damages by showing that: (a) the employer exercised reasonable care to prevent and correct promptly any harassing behavior, and (b) the employee unreasonably failed to take advantage of any preventive or

corrective opportunities provided by the employer or to avoid harm otherwise. An employer is liable for harassment by co-workers where it knew or should have known about the harassment, and failed to take prompt and appropriate corrective action. An employer is liable for harassment by non-employees where it knew or should have known about the harassment, could control the harasser's conduct or otherwise protect the employee, and failed to take prompt and appropriate corrective action.

*6. When does Title VII require an employer to accommodate an applicant or employee's religious belief, practice, or observance?*

Title VII requires an employer, once on notice that a religious accommodation is needed, to reasonably accommodate an employee whose sincerely held religious belief, practice, or observance conflicts with a work requirement, unless doing so would pose an undue hardship....

*7. How does an employer learn that accommodation may be needed?*

An applicant or employee who seeks religious accommodation must make the employer aware both of the need for accommodation and that it is being requested due to a conflict between religion and work.

...

*8. Does an employer have to grant every request for accommodation of a religious belief or practice?*

No. Title VII requires employers to accommodate only those religious beliefs that are religious and "sincerely held," and that can be accommodated without an undue hardship....

Factors that—either alone or in combination—might undermine an employee's assertion that he sincerely holds the religious belief at issue include: whether the employee has behaved in a manner markedly inconsistent with the professed belief; whether the accommodation sought is a particularly desirable benefit that is likely to be sought for secular reasons; whether the timing of the request renders it suspect (e.g., it follows an earlier request by the employee for the same benefit for secular reasons); and whether the employer otherwise has reason to believe the accommodation is not sought for religious reasons.

However, none of these factors is dispositive....

*9. When does an accommodation pose an "undue hardship"?*

An accommodation would pose an undue hardship if it would cause more than de minimis cost on the operation of the employer's business. Factors relevant to undue hardship may include the type of workplace, the nature of the employee's duties, the identifiable cost of the accommodation in relation to the size and operating costs of the employer, and the number of employees who will in fact need a particular accommodation.

Costs to be considered include not only direct monetary costs but also the burden on the conduct of the employer's business. For example, courts have found undue hardship where the accommodation diminishes efficiency in other jobs, infringes on other employees' job rights or benefits, impairs workplace safety, or causes co-workers to carry the accommodated employee's share of potentially hazardous or burdensome work. Whether the proposed accommodation conflicts with another law will also be considered.

...

*10. Does an employer have to provide an accommodation that would violate a seniority system or collective bargaining agreement?*

No....

*11. What if co-workers complain about an employee being granted an accommodation?*

...Undue hardship requires more than proof that some co-workers complained; a showing of undue hardship based on co-worker interests generally requires evidence that the accommodation would actually infringe on the rights of co-workers or cause disruption of work.

*12. Can a requested accommodation be denied due to security considerations?*

...

*13. What are common methods of religious accommodation in the workplace?*

Under Title VII, an employer or other covered entity may use a variety of methods to provide reasonable accommodations to its employees. Some of the most common methods are:

- Scheduling Changes, Voluntary Substitutes, and Shift Swaps....
- Changing an employee's job tasks or providing a lateral transfer....
- Making an exception to dress and grooming rules....
- Use of the work facility for a religious observance....
- Accommodations relating to payment of union dues or agency fees....
- Accommodating prayer, proselytizing, and other forms of religious expression. Some employees may seek to display religious icons or messages at their work stations. Others may seek to proselytize by engaging in one-on-one discussions regarding religious beliefs, distributing literature, or using a particular religious phrase when greeting others. Still others may seek to engage in prayer at their work stations or to use other areas of the workplace for either individual or group prayer or study. In some of these situations, an employee might request accommodation in advance to permit such religious expression. In other situations, the employer will not learn of the

situation or be called upon to consider any action unless it receives complaints about the religious expression from either other employees or customers.

Employers should not try to suppress all religious expression in the workplace. Title VII requires that employers accommodate an employee's sincerely held religious belief in engaging in religious expression in the workplace to the extent that they can do so without undue hardship on the operation of the business. In determining whether permitting an employee to pray, proselytize, or engage in other forms of religiously oriented expression in the workplace would pose an undue hardship, relevant considerations may include the effect such expression has on co-workers, customers, or business operations.

For example, if an employee's proselytizing interfered with work, the employer would not have to allow it. Similarly, if an employee complained about proselytizing by a co-worker, the employer can require that the proselytizing to the complaining employee cease. Moreover, if an employee was proselytizing an employer's customers or clients in a manner that disrupted business, or that could be mistaken as the employer's own message, the employer would not have to allow it. Where the religiously oriented expression is limited to use of a phrase or greeting, it is more difficult for the employer to demonstrate undue hardship. On the other hand, if the expression is in the manner of individualized, specific proselytizing, an employer is far more likely to be able to demonstrate that it would constitute an undue hardship to accommodate an employee's religious expression, regardless of the length or nature of the business interaction. An employer can restrict religious expression where it would cause customers or co-workers reasonably to perceive the materials to express the employer's own message, or where the item or message in question is harassing or otherwise disruptive.

#### *14. What if an employee objects on religious grounds to an employer-sponsored program?*

Some private employers choose to express their own religious beliefs or practices in the workplace, and they are entitled to do so. However, if an employer holds religious services or programs or includes prayer in business meetings, Title VII requires that the employer accommodate an employee who asks to be excused for religious reasons, absent a showing of undue hardship.

Similarly, an employer is required to excuse an employee from compulsory personal or professional development training that conflicts with the employee's sincerely held religious beliefs or practices, unless doing so would pose an undue hardship. It would be an undue hardship to excuse an employee from training, for example, where the training provides information on how to

perform the job, or how to comply with equal employment opportunity obligations, or on other workplace policies, procedures, or legal requirements.

*15. Do national origin, race, color, and religious discrimination intersect in some cases?*

Yes....

*16. Does Title VII prohibit retaliation?*

Yes....

*17. How might First Amendment constitutional issues arise in Title VII religion cases?*

The First Amendment religion and speech clauses (“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech”) protect individuals against restrictions imposed by the government, not by private entities, and therefore do not apply to rules imposed on private sector employees by their employers. The First Amendment, however, does protect private sector employers from government interference with their free exercise and speech rights. Moreover, government employees’ religious expression is protected by both the First Amendment and Title VII. See Guidelines on Religious Exercise and Religious Expression in the Federal Workplace (Aug. 14, 1997) (available at <http://clinton2.nara.gov/WH/New/html/19970819-3275.html>). For example, a government employer may contend that granting a requested religious accommodation would pose an undue hardship because it would constitute government endorsement of religion in violation of the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment.

*18. What should an applicant or employee do if he believes he has experienced religious discrimination?*

Employees or job applicants should attempt to address concerns with the alleged offender and, if that does not work, report any unfair or harassing treatment to the company. They should keep records documenting what they experienced or witnessed, as well as other witness names, telephone numbers, and addresses. Employees may file a charge with the EEOC, and are legally protected from being punished for reporting or opposing job discrimination or for participating in an EEOC investigation. Charges against private sector and local and state government employers may be filed in person, by mail, or by telephone by contacting the nearest EEOC office. If there is no EEOC office in the immediate area, call toll free 1-800-669-4000 or 1-800-669-6820 (TTY) for more information. Federal sector employees and applicants should contact the EEO office of the agency responsible for the alleged discrimination to initiate EEO counseling. For more details, see How to File a Charge of Employment Discrimination, <http://www.eeoc.gov/employees/charge.cfm>.

*This page was last modified on January 31, 2011.*

## Appendix 2

Available from:

<http://www.alliancedefendingfreedom.org/content/docs/issues/school/The-Rights-of-Religious-Employees-3.22.13.pdf>

### The Rights of Religious Employees in the Workplace

This memorandum analyzes the rights of religious employees in the workplace. Alliance Defending Freedom is an alliance-building legal ministry that advocates for the right of people to freely live out their faith. We frequently assist students, faculty, staff, and administrators at public colleges and universities in understanding their rights and responsibilities concerning religious expression. Each legal situation differs, so the information provided below should be used only as a general reference and should not be considered legal advice. If you think your rights have been violated as a result of a restriction on your religious expression at a public college or university or if you want to protect students' religious expression on campus, please contact our Legal Intake Department so that we may review your situation and possibly assist you. You can reach us at 1- 800-835-5233, or visit our website at [www.AllianceDefendingFreedom.org](http://www.AllianceDefendingFreedom.org) and select the "Get Legal Help" button to submit a request for legal assistance.

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# Defending the Christian Faith

Allen J. Quist  
Doctrine Committee  
Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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**C**HRISTIANITY HAS MANY UNIQUE FEATURES. One of them is the ability to defend itself—no other religion has an interest in, or the capacity to, defend itself. By “defending the faith” we mean giving a reasoned and verbal defense; we mean using information to defend the faith. We are not speaking of using violence to defend the faith which is an integral part of Islam. Verbally defending the faith by using evidence and reasoning is unique to Christianity. It is the discipline we know as “apologetics.”

## **Apologetics, an integral part of the Christian faith**

The Christian Church has a rich history in apologetics. In the second century, for example, Justin Martyr (100–165), Irenaeus (135–202), Tertullian (155–230), and Clement of Alexandria (150–215) were all known for their important work in apologetics.

Going back to the time of the Apostles, we can observe that all the missionary sermons recorded for us in the book of Acts include apologetics. These sermons all contain three themes. One is the law; a second is the gospel message of Christ. The third is evidence that demonstrates that the law and gospel messages are true. *Apologetics is an important part of every one of these missionary sermons.*

Following this observation, what if a mission prospect were to ask us this question: Why should I become a Christian instead of becoming a Muslim? What would we say?

Part of our answer will be that Christianity is based on faith and God's grace whereas Islam is a religion of works. Another part of our answer, however, should be this: You should become a Christian instead of a Muslim because Christianity is true and Islam is false.

*Christianity is the only world-religion that is based on evidence.* The other religions offer no evidence whatsoever regarding their truthfulness. They are merely based on the opinions of various people or on claims of revelations of some kind for which no verification is either offered or possible.<sup>1</sup>

Islam, for example, is based on the Qur'an which Muhammed said was dictated to him by an angel. Islam, however, offers no evidence that this supposed revelation actually took place. We are simply asked to take Mohammed's word for it. The Old and New Testaments, in direct contrast, offer an abundance of evidence which demonstrates that their claims are genuine. *Christianity does not ask people to believe its message simply because someone says so.* On the contrary, the Apostles frequently offered objective and verifiable evidence to support what they said.

At the same time, however, the power to save lost souls is not in the evidence itself. That power is in the gospel message. As Paul said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek."<sup>2</sup> *The power to save souls is in the gospel—but biblical methods of evangelism include presenting solid evidence for the gospel's truthfulness.*

The study of Christianity's truthfulness is the discipline known as apologetics. Dogmatics, in contrast, deals with the content of Christianity, while apologetics deals with the truthfulness of Christianity.

*Strong's Concordance* explains apologetics: "An 'apology' in classical times had nothing to do with saying, 'I'm sorry,' but rather was a reasoned argument (defense) that presented evidence (supplied compelling proof)."<sup>3</sup> Apologetics, then, focuses on providing evidence and reasoning based on that evidence in support of a person's position.<sup>4</sup>

The Apostle Peter used the term "apologia" (apologetics) when he said, "But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to

<sup>1</sup> The occult is an exception to this principle as, for example, Pharaoh's magicians could turn their staffs into snakes by means of Satan's power. Satan is real and there is genuine evidence of his reality.

<sup>2</sup> Romans 1:16 (NKJV).

<sup>3</sup> <http://biblehub.com/greek/627.htm>.

<sup>4</sup> In Lutheran apologetics, reason has a ministerial role (that of servant) as opposed to a magisterial role (that of master).

give an answer [apologia] to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect..." (1 Peter 3:15; NIV). Peter here admonished us to be ready to give our reasons for believing that the Christian gospel message is true. This passage is the origin of our term "apologetics."

Apologetics consists of two parts: the one is the body of objective evidence which verifies Christianity's truth claims; the other is information and reasoning which answers objections to Christianity. This paper will focus on the first part of apologetics—the positive evidence which demonstrates that Christianity is true.<sup>5</sup> We recognize, however, that these two forms of apologetics are closely interrelated, and we cannot be involved in the one without some attention to the other.

### Lutheran apologetics

Lutheran apologetics rests on the foundational principles of Lutheranism. These principles are Christ alone, faith alone, grace alone, and Scripture alone.<sup>6</sup>

**Christ alone:** Lutherans believe that we are saved only by means of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus the Christ, as Acts 4:12 states, "Neither is there salvation in any other [than Jesus]: for there is no other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (NKJV).

**Faith alone:** Paul said in Romans, "Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law" (3:28).

**Grace alone:** "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast" (Ephesians 2:8–9; NIV).<sup>7</sup>

**Scripture alone:** 2 Timothy 3:15 says, "From infancy you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus" (NIV). And the Formula of Concord states, "We believe, teach and confess that the prophetic and apostolic writings of the Old and New Testaments are the only rule and norm

<sup>5</sup> For an analysis of evolution as an objection to Christianity, see Allen Quist, *Ten Truths about Evolution That Everyone Should Know* (2014). Available at Lutheran Synod Book Company, Mankato, MN 56001.

<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed definition of Lutheran Apologetics, see Allen Quist, "The Doctrine of Creation in Lutheran Apologetics," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* 55:1 (March 2015): 9–43.

<sup>7</sup> The Augsburg Confession defines justification in terms of Christ alone, faith alone, and grace alone. The Augsburg Confession, Article IV in Theodore G. Tappert, trans. and ed., *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), 30.

according to which all doctrines and teachers alike must be appraised and judged....”<sup>8</sup>

In summary, God’s Word not only explains that we are saved by faith alone in Christ, it also gives us objective reasons for recognizing that this message of Christ is true—reasons that we can share with others as Peter said we should. *The Christian faith is not a blind faith; it is a faith based on information, a faith based on real history*, based on the truth that God has declared the whole world forgiven because of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus the Christ—events that happened in real, space-time history. It is a faith based on objective, verifiable, historical evidence.

In addition, God’s Word should serve as a model for the kind of evidence we should present as we proclaim the Gospel message, and it serves as a model for how we should go about presenting that evidence. We won’t go wrong in our evangelism if we use God’s Word as our guide.

### **The biblical model for apologetics**

Apologetics is effective because it points to the cross of Christ. The power of God to create faith is in the message of the cross. The Apostle John said it this way: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30–31; NIV). Jesus’ many miracles, especially his resurrection, demonstrated that he truly is the Messiah who lived and died to make atonement for our sins. The power to save souls is in this message of the cross of Christ and his resurrection.

The gospel message of Christ contains its own evidence, especially that of the resurrection. Paul appealed to this evidence in his speech at the Areopagus when he said, “For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to everyone by raising him from the dead” (Acts 17:31; NIV). In Romans, Paul said. “[He was] declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4; NKJV). *The primary evidence for the truth of the message of Christ is in the message itself; it is in the resurrection.* The doctrine and the proof are intertwined.

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<sup>8</sup> Formula of Concord, Epitome I.1 in Tappert, 464.

## Non-biblical evidence in apologetics

*It should be recognized that the missionary sermons of the Apostles as recorded in Acts make use of two kinds of evidence—biblical and non-biblical.* The non-biblical evidence includes Peter's statement in his Pentecost sermon that "Jesus of Nazareth was a man accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs, which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know" (Acts 2:22; NIV). Peter's listeners would have heard various reports of the many miracles of Jesus. The miracles were common knowledge. Peter appealed to this common knowledge obtained through non-biblical reports in his sermon.

Similarly, when talking to the Stoic and Epicurean philosophers in Athens, Paul never once quoted the Scriptures, but he instead quoted authors the listeners would have been familiar with as he said, "As some of your own poets have said, 'We are his offspring'" (Acts 17:28; NIV).<sup>9</sup>

Following the examples of the Apostles, we do well to make use of both biblical and secular sources as we present evidence for the truth of the gospel message. One secular source that is useful for this purpose is the Jewish/Roman historian and scholar, Flavius Josephus (AD 37–100). In his history of the Jewish nation, Josephus said:

At this time there was a wise man who was called Jesus. And his conduct was good and [he] was known to be virtuous. And many people from among the Jews and other nations became his disciples. Pilate condemned him to be crucified and to die. And those who had become his disciples did not abandon his discipleship. They reported that he had appeared to them three days after his crucifixion and that he was alive; accordingly he was perhaps the messiah concerning whom the prophets have recounted wonders.<sup>10</sup>

This statement from Josephus establishes a number of historical facts about Jesus. They include:

1. A man called Jesus lived in Palestine in the early first century.
2. He was known to be a good and virtuous man.
3. Many people, both Jews and Gentiles, became his followers.
4. He was sentenced to death by Pontius Pilate and executed by crucifixion.

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<sup>9</sup> The 2<sup>nd</sup>-century apologists commonly made use of both biblical and non-biblical evidence in their apologetics. See <http://www.churchhistory101.com/century2-p6.php>.

<sup>10</sup> *Antiquities* Book 18: Chapter 3, Arabic version.

5. The movement he began continued after his death.
6. His disciples claimed he had risen from the dead.
7. Some people believed he was the promised Messiah.

The Apostle Paul appealed to these well-known historical facts when he spoke to King Agrippa. Paul said, “The king is familiar with these things, and I can speak freely to him. I am convinced that none of this has escaped his notice, because it was not done in a corner” (Acts 26:26; NIV).

Perhaps the most significant fact established by Josephus is that Jesus’ own disciples claimed he had risen from the dead and that he was, therefore, the Messiah. This historical fact directly contradicts the views of liberals and skeptics who have been saying that the resurrection is a second-century invention of the Christian church. *Josephus, and, as we will see, many others, made it crystal clear that it was the eyewitnesses themselves who said Jesus had risen. That is, it was those who were there, those who were in a position to know what had happened because they had firsthand knowledge, who said he had risen and that he was God in the flesh, the King of Kings.*

Is there, then, any objective reason to doubt the historical accuracy of the eyewitness documents we possess? There is not—especially when we consider that many of the eyewitnesses faced death rather than change their story. People don’t die for what they know is a lie.

It should also be noted that Josephus was a contemporary of many of the eyewitnesses of Jesus’ life, death, and resurrection. He would have had personal access to these eyewitnesses themselves. It is extremely rare for historians to have access to this kind of high-quality information in their research.

The Roman historian Tacitus (AD 55–117)<sup>11</sup> also referred to Jesus and his followers. Tacitus said:

Nero fastened the guilt [for the fire of Rome in AD 64] and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called Christians by the populace. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius at the hands of one of our procurators, Pontius Pilatus, and a most mischievous superstition, thus checked for the moment, again broke out not only in Judaea, the first source of the evil, but even in Rome....<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> He was also a Roman senator, a consul, and was governor of Asia.

<sup>12</sup> Tacitus, *Annals*, XV.44.2–8.

This account by Tacitus is totally consistent with the records of Josephus and the New Testament writers. The “mischievous superstition” described is obviously the claim of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead.

Other writers who substantiate much of the New Testament include Tertullian (AD 150–225), Justin Martyr (AD 100–165) and the Roman historian Suetonius (AD 69–122). There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of any of these historical documents. (One of the basic principles of historical research is to give any benefit of the doubt to the documents themselves.) The reasonable conclusion is that the books of the New Testament are reliable, historical records, as well as being books of the Bible. Being included in the Bible doesn’t in any way reduce the historical value of the documents.

The biblical author Luke actually explained that he was writing carefully researched history. In the introduction to his first book, he emphasized that he had personally investigated his subject matter as a competent historian would.

Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, it seemed good also to me to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught. (Luke 1:1–4; NIV)

Luke said he “carefully investigated everything from the beginning” as he focused on the accounts of those “who from the first were eyewitnesses” of the important events. That is, Luke wrote genuine history that he had carefully and personally researched, history that was based on the testimony of people who were there. Not surprisingly, archeological research has confirmed the accuracy of Luke’s writings on numerous historical and geographical details.<sup>13</sup> We have every reason to be confident of the truthfulness and accuracy of what he wrote. One of the reasons this information stated above is so important, as noted earlier, is because it contradicts the theological liberals and skeptics of a generation ago who said that the Gospels were written in the second century by persons other than the Apostles and their companions, persons other

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<sup>13</sup> See F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1943).



than the eyewitnesses. These skeptics and liberals said that the miracles of Jesus, including the resurrection, are not historical events but are inventions of second-century Christians. The testimony of Josephus demonstrates that this old liberal view is false. It is the old liberal view that is a human invention, and it is the old liberal view that is contrary to the wealth of information at hand.

It is important to observe, however, that the liberals and skeptics of our time no longer hold to this untenable view that the accounts of Jesus' resurrection are second-century inventions. *Even the skeptics as well as the liberals—we are speaking of New Testament scholars—now admit that it was the followers of Jesus, the eyewitnesses themselves, who claimed Jesus had risen from the dead.* There is a consensus among the skeptics and liberals on this historical fact. Even the famous agnostic scholar, Bart Ehrman, acknowledges that it was the Apostles themselves who claimed Jesus had risen, and, he says, they did so shortly after the crucifixion.<sup>14</sup> Why has the scholarly consensus changed so dramatically on this matter? The reason is that the evidence showing that it was the eyewitnesses who insisted that Jesus had risen from the dead is simply too strong to believe otherwise.<sup>15</sup>

We conclude that based on the historical documents, there is no reasonable doubt that a man named Jesus lived in Judea in the early first century. There is no reasonable doubt that he was well known, that he was killed by crucifixion under sentence of Pontius Pilate and that his followers claimed he had risen from the dead and did so almost immediately after the crucifixion. The only question left to be answered is: Did it really happen?

In addition to the extensive documentary information we have about this question, there is a significant historical artifact that sheds light on this question as well. This artifact is the Shroud of Turin,<sup>16</sup> an objectively observable physical object that is often said to be the most extensively studied artifact in all human history.

The Shroud is a rectangular linen cloth measuring 14.3 feet long by 3.7 feet wide. This linen cloth contains what appears to be an actual photograph of Jesus in the tomb—a photograph taken at the moment he rose from the dead. It was produced by an energy source unknown to modern science, energy that came from inside the body itself, energy

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/>

is-there-historical-evidence-for-the-resurrection-of-jesus-the-craig-ehрман-debate.

<sup>15</sup> See Gary Habermas, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay\\_Db4RwZ\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay_Db4RwZ_M).

<sup>16</sup> The Shroud is referred to as the "Shroud of Turin" because it is housed at Turin, Italy, in the chapel of the Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist.

that was apparently released when the body of Jesus was transformed from being a dead body into a living body with far different qualities than it previously had.

All four gospels say that a linen cloth was used to wrap the body of Jesus after the crucifixion. Luke, for example, said:

He [Joseph of Arimathea] took it [the body] down and wrapped it in linen cloth and placed it in a tomb cut in the rock, one in which no one had yet been laid. (Luke 23:53; NIV)

This linen cloth bears the image, a negative image, of a man who was killed by crucifixion. The fact that the image is a negative was first observed in 1898, on the photographic plate of photographer Secondo Pia, the first person to photograph the Shroud. Pia was astonished to realize that the image on the cloth was a negative—which meant it had to be a photograph, not a drawing or painting of some kind.

There are compelling reasons to recognize the Shroud as the actual burial cloth of Jesus. Some of the reasons follow:

1. Since the image on the Shroud is a negative (a negative of a negative photograph gives a positive image), it would have been impossible to fake such an image long before the world had any knowledge of photography.
2. The Shroud demonstrates that the person was crucified with nails through his wrists, not hands. It has only recently become known that the flesh in a person's hands cannot bear the weight necessary for crucifixion; for that reason nails were driven through the wrists. The Greek and Hebrew words for hands commonly refer to both hands and wrists.
3. The energy source for the photograph must have come from within the body itself, one reason being that there are no shadows on the photograph as would have happened with external lighting.<sup>17</sup>
4. Close inspection of the image on the Shroud reveals that it is an X-ray image as well as a photographic image. Skeletal features can be observed. No scientific explanation for such an image has been found.
5. Some of the pollen grains on the Shroud, many of which match certain plants bearing flowers also pictured on the Shroud,

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<sup>17</sup> Mark Antonacci, *The Resurrection of the Shroud* (New York: M. Evans and Company Inc., 2000), 252.

- match plants that only exist in and around Jerusalem. They bloom at the time of the crucifixion.
6. Written records of the solarium (the linen cloth that was used to cover Jesus' head from the time of his death to his burial) go back to the first century and to Jerusalem. The Gospel of John states that after the resurrection, two cloths—they apparently were the Shroud and the solarium—were seen left there in the tomb (John 20:6-7). Scientific study of these two linen cloths has revealed that they are stained with blood of the same blood type and that the stains are the same shapes and in the same places on both cloths, meaning these two linen cloths covered the same body. There is no image on the solarium, however, as it would have been removed at the time of burial.
  7. Some of the pollen grains on the Shroud are from a plant that grows in Palestine and is known for its sharp thorns. Those pollen grains are especially numerous around the head of the image on the Shroud, apparently left there by the crown of thorns.

This is only a sample of the extensive evidence for the Shroud's authenticity. The actual evidence is far greater than this. It is fair to say that this evidence strongly suggests that the Shroud is authentic. The evidence is so one-sided that attorney and former agnostic Mark Antonacci described it as follows:

In the case of the Shroud of Turin, however, we have an archeological object that contains direct evidence of the crucifixion and resurrection of the historical Jesus Christ. It also contains evidence that specifically confirms the exact circumstances such as time, place location, participants, et cetera, of the written historical accounts of these events.

All of this evidence is of a very sophisticated nature, containing extensive scientific and medical evidence published independently in numerous scientific journals and other periodicals. If we were to study an important event in history, whether it be Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon, the posting by Martin Luther of the 95 theses on the door at Wittenberg, or practically any other historical event prior to this century, we

would not find such extensive scientific evidence to prove their occurrences.<sup>18</sup>

We have seen, therefore, that the evidence for the genuineness of the Shroud is very strong. This kind of evidence can never be conclusive, however. But several scientists who a few years ago were part of the study of the Shroud became believers because of the evidence of the Shroud. This should not be surprising because the power to save souls is in the Gospel message of the Christ and the Shroud points to this Gospel message.

### Evidence for Christianity in Scripture

The primary evidence for the truth of this Gospel message is recorded for us in the Scriptures. Also recorded are numerous examples of how the New Testament evangelists used this evidence. To summarize briefly, in their writing and speaking the New Testament evangelists used four lines of argumentation and evidence. They are:

1. Jesus' resurrection has proven him to be the Messiah.
2. There are many eyewitnesses of the resurrection.
3. Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament.
4. Jesus' many miracles, and those done by the Apostles in his name, demonstrated that he is the Messiah.<sup>19</sup>

Because of time and space limitations, this paper will briefly describe only one of these themes, that of eyewitness testimony. How do we know that the New Testament documents we have actually contain the testimony of eyewitnesses? In the first place, the New Testament repeatedly states that it is based on information supplied by those who were "witnesses." Jesus, for instance, told his disciples, "You are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48; NIV), and, "You will be my witnesses in

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<sup>18</sup> Antonacci, 252. There are numerous YouTube videos that can be readily accessed on the web which describe some of the evidence for the authenticity of the Shroud. Two of the better ones are: <http://www.yourepeat.com/watch/?v=rH8xQZPjSXE> (featuring Shroud expert, Russ Breault, fifteen minutes long), and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0BxmbIGQBx4> about an hour long. (This is an excellent video, but it is somewhat dated in that it predates the discovery that the much-celebrated carbon-14 dating test on the Shroud had been done on a 13<sup>th</sup>-century piece of repair cloth and not on the Shroud itself.)

<sup>19</sup> For a detailed description of all four themes, see Allen Quist, *Many Convincing Proofs: A Biblical Approach to Christian Apologetics* (Mankato: Lutheran Synod Book Company, 2008). For an extensive and scholarly account of the evidence for the authenticity of the New Testament, see F.F. Bruce, *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1943).

Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth” (Acts 1:8; NIV).

What did Jesus mean by saying they would be his “witnesses”? *When Jesus told the Apostles they would be his “witnesses,” he meant they would be eyewitnesses.* They would be witnesses in the sense that people are brought into courts of law to be witnesses—persons who can give firsthand information regarding what they have personally seen and heard.

These disciples additionally emphasized that they actually were eyewitnesses of the risen Jesus and of all the other important events they described in their written histories. John told his readers, “We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard...” (1 John 1:3; NIV). And Peter explained, “We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty” (2 Peter 1:16; NIB).

And when the Apostles chose Matthias to replace Judas, they followed this criterion:

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection. (Acts 1:21–22; NIV)

Paul the Apostle similarly stressed the reality and importance of him and the other Apostles being eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ.

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. (1 Corinthians 15:3–7; ESV)

Notice that Paul said Jesus “appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep.” Why is this important? Because if there were any question about the accuracy of what Paul was saying about the resurrection,

numerous eyewitnesses of the risen Christ were still living, and anyone could check with them and inquire as to whether they had actually seen the risen Jesus. Paul was saying, *There are hundreds of people who saw Jesus alive after the crucifixion. If you doubt what I am saying, just ask them.*

Some liberals, however, say that we are arguing in a circle by using biblical statements to show that the Bible is reliable. How do we answer them? As noted above, the biblical and non-biblical evidence act in concert in providing the answer. That is, there is also a wealth of non-biblical evidence which demonstrates that the New Testament documents actually are grounded on eyewitness testimony—either written by the eyewitnesses themselves (Matthew, John, the letters of Paul, Peter and John, and the Revelation of John), or are books based on the accounts of eyewitnesses (Mark, Luke–Acts, and perhaps James, Jude, and Hebrews).

In addition, we know the books to be historically, geographically, and culturally accurate. The following statement exemplifies the archaeological confirmation of the accuracy in Luke’s historical accounts:

There are literally hundreds of archaeological finds that support specific persons, events and facts presented in Luke–Acts, including many that were once thought to be incorrect. Especially noteworthy is Luke’s correct usage of official titles. He calls the rulers of Thessalonica “politarchs,” Gallio the “Proconsul of Achaëa,” the one in Ephesus a “temple warden,” the governor of Cyprus a “proconsul” and the chief official in Malta “the first man of the island,” a title confirmed in Greek and Latin inscriptions.

Likewise, Luke is known to be correct in chronological references. His reference to “Lysansias the tetrarch of Abiline” at the time John the Baptist began his ministry (AD 27), once thought to be incorrect, is now known by Greek inscriptions to be correct. Lysansias was tetrarch between AD 14 and 29. Other chronological references are known to be correct including those to Caesar, Herod, and even Gallio (Acts 18:12–17).<sup>20</sup>

This statement provides a small sample of the vast number of specific details in the New Testament which have been confirmed through modern research, especially archeological research. No biblical details have been found to be inaccurate. The most reasonable way to

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<sup>20</sup> Norman Geisler, *Christian Apologetics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1976), 325.

account for such accuracy is to recognize that the books contain reliable, firsthand information.

We additionally have credible historical records which attest to the eyewitness character of many of the New Testament books. Papias (AD 60–135), a disciple of the Apostle John, for example, stated:

The Elder (John) used to say also: “Mark, having been the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately all that he mentioned, whether sayings or doings of Christ, not however, in order. For he was neither a hearer nor a companion of the Lord; but afterwards, as I said, he accompanied Peter, who adapted his teachings as necessity required, not as though he were making a compilation of the sayings of the Lord. So then Mark made no mistake, writing down in this way some things as he [Peter] mentioned them; for he paid attention to this one thing, not to omit anything that he heard, not to include any false statement among them.”<sup>21</sup>

Papias also said, “Matthew recorded the oracles in the Hebrew tongue.”<sup>22</sup> And Irenaeus, who was Bishop of Lyons in AD 180 and a student of Polycarp who in turn was a student of the Apostle John, said:

Matthew published his Gospel among the Hebrews in their own tongue, when Peter and Paul were preaching in Rome and founding the church there. After their departure, Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, himself, handed down to us in writing the substance of Peter’s preaching.

Luke, the follower of Paul, set down in a book the gospel preached by his teacher. Then John, the disciple of the Lord, who also leaned on his breast himself produced his Gospel, while he was living at Ephesus in Asia.<sup>23</sup>

Such statements, along with similar remarks by other leaders in the New Testament church, give powerful testimony to the authenticity of our biblical documents.

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<sup>21</sup> Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.39.15, in Colin Chapman *An Eerdmans’ Handbook: The Case for Christianity*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Co., 1981), 234.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III.1.1, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers: The Writings of the Fathers down to A.D. 325*. Vol. 1., ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark Co., 1869), 258–259.

Notice the mention Papias makes of Mark not having been a “hearer nor a companion of the Lord.” Since Mark was not an eyewitness himself, it was necessary for him to have received his information from someone who did have firsthand information, in this case, Peter. Such statements make it crystal clear that the New Testament church would accept a book as being authoritative only if it contained the testimony of eyewitnesses.

It is evident, therefore, that the New Testament documents we possess are either themselves eyewitness accounts or are directly based on the eyewitness testimony of those who had firsthand information of the events they described. As is true in a court of law, the testimony of eyewitness has to be taken very seriously. There is no reason to doubt the accuracy of what these historical documents say.

It should not surprise us, then, that even the skeptics have done a complete reversal on this matter and they now generally agree on many of the important facts regarding New Testament history. Four of these agreed-upon historical facts are:

**FACT 1** – Jesus died by crucifixion.

**FACT 2** – The disciples had experiences which they believed were the appearances of the risen Lord.

**FACT 3** – The disciples were transformed.

**FACT 4** – Paul became a believer in Christ.<sup>24</sup>

*That is, among New Testament scholars—conservative, liberal and skeptical—there is a consensus that the above statements are historical facts.<sup>25</sup> There is really no reason to doubt what the New Testament documents say.*

## Old Testament criteria for authenticity

The documents of the Old Testament are just as trustworthy as are the documents of the New. Indeed, as was true with the New Testament, the Old Testament writers also laid down objective criteria that the people were instructed to use in order to determine whether or not any religious speaking or writing should be regarded as trustworthy.

Four such criteria are described for us in the Old Testament itself. They are:

1. *True prophets were accredited by God by working miracles.* The classic illustration of this criterion is the incident of Elijah on Mount Carmel. 1 Kings 18:16–40 states:

<sup>24</sup> As stated by Gary Habermas at <http://www3.telus.net/trbrooks/garyhabermas.htm>.

<sup>25</sup> Gary Habermas, [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay\\_Db4RwZ\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay_Db4RwZ_M).



<sup>16</sup> So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah.<sup>17</sup> When he saw Elijah, he said to him, “Is that you, you troubler of Israel?”<sup>18</sup> “I have not made trouble for Israel,” Elijah replied. “But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’s commands and have followed the Baals.<sup>19</sup> Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.”<sup>20</sup> So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel.<sup>21</sup> Elijah went before the people and said, “How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.” But the people said nothing.<sup>22</sup> Then Elijah said to them, “I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets.<sup>23</sup> Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves, and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood but not set fire to it.<sup>24</sup> Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God.” Then all the people said, “What you say is good.”<sup>25</sup> Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, “Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.”<sup>26</sup> So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. “Baal, answer us!” they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made.<sup>27</sup> At noon Elijah began to taunt them. “Shout louder!” he said. “Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or traveling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.”<sup>28</sup> So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed.<sup>29</sup> Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice. But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.<sup>30</sup> Then Elijah said to all the people, “Come here to me.” They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which had been torn down.<sup>31</sup> Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, “Your name shall be Israel.”<sup>32</sup> With the stones

he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed.<sup>33</sup> He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, "Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood."<sup>34</sup> "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he ordered, and they did it the third time.<sup>35</sup> The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench.<sup>36</sup> At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: "LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command.<sup>37</sup> Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again."<sup>38</sup> Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench.<sup>39</sup> When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, "The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!"<sup>40</sup> Then Elijah commanded them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!" They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there. (NIV)

This remarkable historical event not only established Jehovah as the true God and Baal as a false God, it also demonstrated that Elijah was a true prophet and the prophets of Baal were false prophets. The prophet Moses had been accredited by God in a similar fashion by means of the miracles he performed, especially the sensational crossing of the Red Sea. Deuteronomy 34:10–12 says of Moses:

Since then, no prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, who did all those signs and wonders the LORD sent him to do in Egypt—to Pharaoh and to all his officials and to his whole land. For no one has ever shown the mighty power or performed the awesome deeds that Moses did in the sight of all Israel. (NIV)

2. *The predictions and other statements of true prophets were accurate.* It stands to reason that if God were actually guiding a prophet, then his predictions and other claims would be accurate. If any predictions did not occur, however, then that prophet was to be recognized as false. The prophet Jeremiah said:

From early times the prophets who preceded you and me have prophesied war, disaster and plague against many countries and great kingdoms. But the prophet who prophesies peace will be recognized as one truly sent by the LORD only if his prediction comes true. (Jeremiah 28:8-9; NIV)

Some of the prophecies of the Old Testament, however, did not come to pass until long after the prophets had died. Such is the case with the Messianic prophecies. Micah 5:2 is a typical example of such a prophecy:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting. (NKJV)

This prophecy enabled Jewish rabbis to tell King Herod that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.<sup>26</sup> The fulfillment of Messianic prophecies like this and many others allows us to have even greater confidence that the prophets who wrote the Old Testament were genuine prophets of the living God. The Apostle Peter was applying this principle when he said, “We have the word of the prophets made more certain” (2 Peter 1:19; NIV). That is, we who live today have the advantage of observing the fulfillment of the most important predictions of the Old Testament writers. This fulfillment not only shows us that Jesus is the Christ, it also demonstrates that the prophets of the Old Testament were correctly identified as true prophets of God. This principle has major significance regarding the historical accuracy of Genesis, for example, since Genesis was written by the prophet Moses, and since Jesus clearly recognized the accuracy of Genesis. If Genesis is not historically accurate, then Moses and Jesus were both wrong and could not have been true prophets of God.

3. *True prophets agreed with the teaching of Moses.* Once Moses was identified as a true prophet, which he was on numerous occasions and in very sensational ways, especially by the miraculous crossing of the Red Sea, then it was evident that anyone else who claimed to be a true prophet would necessarily be proclaiming a message that was consistent with his. To that end, Deuteronomy explained:

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<sup>26</sup> Matthew 2:4-6.

If a prophet, or one who foretells by dreams, appears among you and announces to you a sign or wonder, and if the sign or wonder spoken of takes place, and the prophet says, "Let us follow other gods" (gods you have not known) "and let us worship them," you must not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer. (Deuteronomy 13:1-3; NIV)

Jesus' antagonists used this principle of Moses being the gold standard for true prophets in an attempt to discredit Jesus because he had said that divorce should not be allowed except for cases of adultery. And if Jesus' enemies could demonstrate that his views on divorce were contrary to the teaching of Moses, he would then be discredited. Matthew recorded the conversation for us as follows:

[Said Jesus,] "So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." They said to Him, "Why then did Moses command to give her a certificate of divorce and send her away?" He said to them, "Because of your hardness of heart Moses permitted you to divorce your wives; but from the beginning it has not been this way...." (Matthew 19:6-7; NASB)

Jesus, of course, was not in the least bit discredited by this accusation against him in view of his explanation that Moses allowed divorce because of the "hardness of their hearts." For that reason, Jesus was not at odds with Moses in his teaching.<sup>27</sup> Easy divorce was not what God intended.<sup>28</sup> The point for us here is that the Jewish leaders of Jesus' time were familiar with agreement with Moses as a primary criterion for true prophets, and they attempted to use this criterion to their advantage.

4. *True prophets avoid the characteristics of false prophets.* The Old Testament described the marks of false prophets as well as the true. False prophets, according to the criteria laid down in the Old Testament itself, had the following trademarks:

1. False prophets told people what they wanted to hear. Micah explained, "If a liar and deceiver comes to you and says: 'I will prophesy plenty of wine and beer,' he would be just the prophet for this people" (Micah 2:11; NIV).

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<sup>27</sup> We should keep in mind that Moses was responsible for both the moral law and the civil law. Civil law often follows a lesser of evils approach, of necessity.

<sup>28</sup> Matthew 19:8.

2. False prophets proclaim that which was in their own interests. Micah again said, "This is what the Lord says: 'As for the prophets who lead my people astray, if one feeds them, they proclaim 'peace'; if he does not, they prepare to wage war'" (Micah 3:5; NIV).
3. False prophets made predictions that did not come true. Ezekiel said, "I am against you, declares the sovereign Lord. My hand will be against the prophets who see false visions and utter lying divinations" (Ezekiel 13:8-9; NIV).
4. False prophets proclaimed a message contrary to what Moses had said, especially regarding adherence to gods other than Jehovah. Jeremiah explained this characteristic as follows: "Among the prophets of Samaria I saw this repulsive thing: They prophesied by Baal and led my people Israel astray" (Jeremiah 23:13; NIV).

As can be seen, God's Word laid down clear and objective criteria for identifying those spokesmen who should be accepted and those who should be rejected. These criteria are straightforward and reasonable. It is difficult to imagine how the standards could have been more explicit or more rational.

### **Applying the criteria for authenticity in our time**

Throughout history individuals have made good use of these very reasonable criteria for authenticity. One such application was made by the Samaritan woman at the well of Sychar. After Jesus told her that she had had five husbands and that the man with whom she was living was not her husband (the miracles and accuracy criteria), she immediately responded to what he had said by saying, "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet" (John 4:19; NIV).

Skeptics and liberals don't disagree on the criteria specified above as being the proper standards, and they use some of the same standards as well. Until a few years ago, for example, skeptics and liberals commonly argued that the towns of Sodom and Gomorrah never existed because no records had ever been found of their existence except in the Bible (the accuracy criteria). But in 1975 the discovery of the Ebla tablets revealed trade records between the city of Ebla and the cities of both Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>29</sup> More recently, skeptics have said there is no evidence that the Israelites ever lived in Egypt. Modern research, however, has revealed that there is actually an abundance of both archeological and

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<sup>29</sup> *National Geographic*, December 1978.

historical data showing that the Israelites indeed lived in Egypt and did so exactly when the Scriptures said they did.<sup>30</sup> This research has even identified what is still called “Joseph’s Canal.” This waterway is in use today. Joseph had it constructed to improve the food supply during the seven years of famine.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, there are many today who erroneously believe that scientific research has shown the Genesis account of creation to be in error. Once again, however, the most recent scientific evidence has demonstrated that any such criticism concerning the accuracy of Genesis is unfounded.<sup>32</sup>

In truth, we have every reason to be confident in the reliability of the biblical documents. *The biblical documents meet all the tests for authenticity.*<sup>33</sup> There will always be skeptics and critics, of course. In the face of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, most of his antagonists refused to acknowledge that he really was the Messiah after all, but, instead, took steps to cover up the astonishing event that had clearly taken place. No amount of evidence will convince those who refuse to believe. The Apostle John explained it this way: “This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil” (John 3:19; NIV).

As noted above, John gave us this simple and accurate statement: “Jesus performed many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name” (John 20:30-31; NIV). *If we are willing to apply accepted standards for authenticity and truthfulness, then we should see that there is more than enough evidence to show us that the message of the Christ is true—that the accounts of the risen Lord and the message of salvation through him and him alone are true. The amount of evidence that verifies the accuracy of the biblical documents is really quite overwhelming.*

Returning now to the question someone could ask us: Why should I become a Christian instead of a Muslim? We can answer: You should

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<sup>30</sup> See Tim Mahoney, *Patterns of Evidence: Exodus* (see both the book and the movie documentary by that title). See also *The David Rohl Lectures* (Minneapolis: Thinking Man Films, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> See Allen Quist, *Ten Truths About Evolution That Everyone Should Know* (2014), available at Lutheran Synod Book Company, Mankato, MN 56001.

<sup>33</sup> The biblical documents also meet all the criteria for normal historical research. See John Warwick Montgomery, “History, Law and Christianity,” *CILTTP* First Canadian Edition (June 30, 2002).

become a Christian because Christianity is true and can be demonstrated to be true. No other religion, including Islam, can make that claim. Nor can atheism make that claim. Christianity is the religion of truth, the only religion of truth, as was emphasized by Jesus when he said to Pilate, “You say that I am a king. In fact, the reason I was born and came into the world is to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me” (John 18:37; NIV).

The truth of Jesus the promised Messiah actually leaps off the pages of Scripture. If we wish to be on the side of truth, we will join with Thomas and address Jesus as he did by exclaiming: “[You are] My Lord and my God” (John 20:28; NIV). <sup>LSQ</sup>

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### Recommended recent books on apologetics:

Gary Habermas, *The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus*, Kregel Publications; First Edition (September 25, 2004). (This and other works by Habermas are among the best contemporary works on the evidence for the truth of Christianity. These works are very scholarly and are easy reading at the same time.)

Allen Quist, *Proclaiming the Truth of Jesus to a Postmodern World* and *Ten Truths About Evolution That Everyone Should Know*. Both are available at Northwestern Publishing House, Milwaukee WI, and the Lutheran Synod Book Company, Mankato, MN. Both are copyrighted 2014.

Jonathan Wells, *Icons of Evolution: Science or Myth?* Regnery Publishing Company, Washington D.C., 2002. (This is the classic and excellent scientific analysis of the shortcomings in Darwinian Evolution. It does not deal with the age of the earth question, however.)

### Recommended recent videos on apologetics:

Gary Habermas, “The Resurrection Argument that Changed a Generation of Scholars,” available online at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay\\_Db4RwZ\\_M](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ay_Db4RwZ_M), 2012. (This is an outstanding video of a lecture by Habermas. Other lectures and debates by Habermas are available online including a YouTube debate between Habermas and Antony Flew.)

Tim Mahoney, "Patterns of Evidence," 2014, first shown as a movie documentary, now available for purchase from Thinking Man Films, 6900 W. Lake St., St. Louis Park, MN 55426. (This informative and entertaining documentary relies largely on the work of premier Egypt scholar, David Rohl.) David Rohl, "The David Rohl Lectures," 2014, Thinking Man Films, 6900 W. Lake St., St. Louis Park, MN 55426. (David Rohl is a preeminent scholar in the field of Egyptian archeology and history. This video series explains in detail the interplay between the history of Egypt and the history of Israel from the time of Joseph up through the reign of King Solomon.)

Lee Strobel, *The Case for Christ: A Journalist's Personal Investigation of the Evidence for Jesus*, Lionsgate, 2007. The same information is available in book form from Thomas Nelson Publishing (December 24, 2013). (Both the DVD and book are suitable for Bible classes, youth groups, and/or other church activities.)





# Lutherans in America: The NALC and LCMC

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**T**HE HISTORY OF LUTHERANISM IN AMERICA IS one of mergers and splinter groups. It stands to reason that the largest merger of American Lutheran denominations, the 1988 merger of the LCA, ALC, and AELC to form the ELCA would also result in splinters. In anticipation of the ELCA merger, the American Association of Lutheran Churches (AALC) was formed in 1987, finding its basis on the doctrinal position of the 1962 American Lutheran Church (ALC). The AALC has since aligned itself with the LCMS, with whom it has established pulpit and altar fellowship. The ELCA merger was a heterogeneous arrangement, bringing together the relatively conservative, pietistic ALC, the high-church liberal LCA, and the LCMS liberal outcasts AELC or “Seminex.” The Seminex group has proven to be the “little leaven that has leavened the whole lump,” pushing the ELCA to adopt radical positions with regard to the homosexual agenda and “inclusiveness.”<sup>1</sup>

The last decade has seen a mass exodus out of the ELCA as renewal movements and splinter denominations have formed. The ELCA had 5.2 million members in 1988 but is now down to 4 million members,

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<sup>1</sup> See Robert Benne, “The Trials of American Lutheranism: The Torments that the Two Major American Lutheran Churches Have Visited on Themselves,” *First Things*, May 2011, <<http://www.firstthings.com/article/2011/05/the-trials-of-american-lutheranism>>.

a loss of 23% of their membership.<sup>2</sup> This decline for the most part can be traced to two decisions made at church-wide assemblies. The first is a passage of the fellowship agreement, “Called to Common Mission,” between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church in 1999. The passage of this statement by the ELCA implied a change of polity, namely, tacit acceptance of the historic episcopate, undermining the Lutheran understanding of the universal priesthood of all believers. The second major controversial decision by the ELCA was the 2009 decision to allow non-celibate homosexuals to serve as pastors and other church leaders.

This paper examines two of the church bodies that have split from the ELCA: Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC) and the North American Lutheran Church (NALC). It will look at what led to the formation of these bodies, their history, and their character and teachings. It also will offer a critique of their teachings and practice and their place among Lutherans in America.

## **Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ (LCMC)**

### *LCMC History*

We will begin with LCMC since it is the older of the two bodies. LCMC has its roots in the Word Alone Network, a movement seeking to reform the ELCA from within. LCMC formed in reaction to the fellowship agreement between the ELCA and the Episcopal Church USA. On August 19, 1999 in Denver, Colorado, the Churchwide Assembly of the ELCA adopted “Called to Common Mission” (CCM). The LCMC website describes this decision to be “in violation of our Lutheran Confessions.”<sup>3</sup> Opponents of this agreement argued, “By its nature, the historic episcopate meant that Christ alone would no longer be sufficient for the unity of the church” and that the agreement “required conformity to rites and traditions ... contrary to the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions.”<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Rev. Kevin Vogts, “ELCA Has Biggest Split in American Church History,” Brothers of John the Steadfast blog, July 12, 2013. <<http://steadfastlutherans.org/2013/07/guest-article-elca-has-biggest-split-in-american-church-history/>>.

<sup>3</sup> <<http://www.lcmc.net/history/232>>.

<sup>4</sup> Rev. William Bakewicz, “A Look at LCMC (Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ) from Within: Its Origin, Its View of Scripture, and How it Distinguishes Itself from the ELCA and the LCMS,” “What’s New in Lutheranism”: Emerging Associations in the Lutheran Family, 23<sup>rd</sup> Annual Minnesota Lutheran Free Conference, October 30, 2010, Redeemer Lutheran Church, St. Cloud, Minnesota.

In November 1999, a gathering of those committed to resisting the requirements of the CCM and the direction of the ELCA was held in Roseville, Minnesota. Soon afterward, on March 26–29, 2000, the Word Alone Network was formed at St. Andrew’s Lutheran Church in Mahtomedi, Minnesota. At this meeting, the first board of the Word Alone Network was commissioned to begin crafting an association for congregations who believed that they could no longer remain in the ELCA. One year later, at a March 25–27, 2001 meeting in Phoenix, Arizona, the constitution of LCMC was adopted. There were 25 charter members received into the association. The first national convention of LCMC was held in October 2001 in St. Louis Park, Minnesota. By this time, 46 congregations were part of the association. By the second annual convention in April 2002, there were 62 congregations. This convention was significant in that it was decided to have the association become autonomous from Word Alone and to establish its own office. By the third annual convention in October 2003, LCMC was separate from Word Alone and had grown to 81 congregations. There were 115 congregations in 26 states and 17 international congregations, 3 in Mexico and 14 in Vietnam, for a total of 122 by the fourth annual gathering in 2004. In 2007, Thrivent gave a grant to LCMC to help support its growing ministry, which then totaled 210 congregations. By its 10<sup>th</sup> annual gathering in 2010, LCMC had experienced exponential growth, with over 550 congregations, 500 of them in the U.S.<sup>5</sup>

There are no LCMC seminaries. On its website, LCMC lists a number of seminaries that have a working relationship with LCMC and are familiar with its certification requirements.<sup>6</sup> These include Bethel Seminary, historically a Baptist seminary; the Master’s Institute in White Bear Lake, Minnesota which claims to be Lutheran but uses charismatic language on its website; Faith Evangelical Seminary in Tacoma, Washington, which offers a Lutheran track; and Sioux Falls Seminary, formerly North American Baptist Seminary. Among specifically Lutheran seminaries listed are the Institute of Lutheran Theology in Brookings, South Dakota; St. Paul Theological Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota; and Niagara Lutheran Theological Institute in Wilson, New York. Concerning the agreements made with Baptist seminaries, Rev. Joshua Scheer, editor of the blog “Brothers of John the Steadfast,” asks, “Do we as Lutherans have such small differences with Baptists that

<sup>5</sup> The information in this paragraph is drawn from the timeline of the significant events of the LCMC’s nearly fifteen-year history from their website at <<http://www.lcmc.net/history/232>>.

<sup>6</sup> <<http://www.lcmc.net/seminaries/242>>.

three courses be required to make a Lutheran pastor from one otherwise trained to be a Baptist? What will these poorly or even falsely trained pastors do to the congregations of LCMC?”<sup>7</sup>

### *LCMC Character*

What is LCMC like? What sets it apart from other Lutheran church bodies? LCMC describes itself as “an association of congregations and individuals who are: free in Christ; accountable to one another; rooted in the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions; working together to fulfill Christ’s Great Commission to go and make disciples of all nations.”<sup>8</sup> Rather than as a synod or denomination, LCMC views itself as “an association of congregations.” As a loose affiliation of autonomous congregations, it is similar to the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations (AFLC) and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren in America (CLBA). This congregationalism is an expression of “the reality that the church is where the people of God gather together around Word and Sacrament. The local congregation is where the church becomes a concrete reality for God’s people.”<sup>9</sup> In reaction to the top-heavy polity of some denominations and the difficulty of congregations trying to leave the ELCA, “we intentionally have made joining and leaving the association simple.”<sup>10</sup> An older version of LCMC’s online explanation, “Who We Are,” stated,

Some have said, “LCMC is a vibrant and faithful association of congregations rather than a denominational church body.” LCMC has referred to itself as a “post-denominational association of congregations,” as a way of acknowledging that its horizontal structure is different than the more vertical structure of many classic denominations.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time,

LCMC is recognized as a church body (denomination) by the IRS, by the ELCA, and by other denominations. LCMC does have structure that is defined in its Constitution and bylaws. LCMC has member congregations, association-wide meetings,

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<sup>7</sup> Rev. Joshua Scheer, “An Expanded View of the LCMC by an LCMS Pastor” at <<http://steadfastlutherans.org/pdf/ExpandedViewLCMCbyLCMSPastor.pdf>>.

<sup>8</sup> <<http://www.lcmc.net/who-we-are>>.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> <<http://www.lcmc.net/blog/what-is-a-denomination/a57.html>>, July 17, 2011.

a clergy List (roster), a retirement and health plan, and regional and otherwise configured Districts for congregational support. LCMC does endorse chaplains for the military and its pensions and health plans transfer. Seminary students have a candidacy process and clergy a certification process. While we understand our association to be post-denominational, we are a denomination by most societal definitions.<sup>12</sup>

In the pamphlet, “Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ: Questions and Answers” the following are listed in answer to “What is distinctive about LCMC?”

LCMC is a centrist Lutheran church body, recognizing Scripture as the sole source and norm of faith and life, and therefore being a light to, rather than a reflection of, the world.

LCMC is congregationally based. It recognizes that the congregation, gathered around Word and Sacrament, is the church.

LCMC celebrates the priesthood of all believers at every level. LCMC also constantly strives to support and uphold the pastoral ministry of the men and women called to serve its member congregations.

Congregations are entitled to send representatives to the annual gathering and convention of LCMC. Constitutional changes made at the annual convention require approval by two thirds of the member congregations in order to take effect. By-law changes made at the annual convention do not take effect if a majority of congregations register a negative vote.<sup>13</sup>

Also, as opposed to traditional denominations, “It is our position that congregations may retain membership in Christian denominations as well as associating with LCMC.” This understanding is part of what makes LCMC “post-denominational.” “LCMC congregations may belong to as many groups as can assist them in fulfilling the Great Commission from Jesus, providing they subscribe to LCMC’s statement of faith and constitution.”<sup>14</sup> Rather than practicing fellowship at the denominational level, LCMC, like the AFLC, allows congregations to practice fellowship on the local level with whom they see fit.

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> <[http://www.firstlc.com/App\\_Documents/LCMC-QA.pdf](http://www.firstlc.com/App_Documents/LCMC-QA.pdf)>.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

### *LCMC Doctrinal Position*

The statement of faith in LCMC's constitution declares,<sup>15</sup>

We believe,<sup>16</sup> teach, and confess the Triune God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

We believe, teach, and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe in him.

Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.

The proclamation of God's message to us as both law and gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy in the person and work of Jesus Christ through whom God was pleased to reconcile all things to himself.<sup>17</sup>

The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God. Inspired by God's Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God's revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them God's Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.

We believe, teach, and accept the canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the sole authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith, and life.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> <<http://www.lcmc.net/statement-of-faith/231>>.

<sup>16</sup> The ELCA statement begins "This church," while LCMC's constitution begins "we" because it does not identify itself as "church" but as an "association of congregations." Cf. ELCA Constitution 2.01.

<sup>17</sup> While the first two paragraphs are virtually identical to the ELCA statement of faith, here the ELCA statement reads, "b. The proclamation of God's message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy *through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ*" (emphasis added). ELCA Constitution 2.02.b.

<sup>18</sup> While this paragraph is nearly verbatim from the ELCA statement, the ELCA statement does not have the word "sole" but simply reads "the authoritative norm." ELCA Constitution 2.03.

We accept the Apostles', Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the scriptural faith we believe, teach, and confess.<sup>19</sup>

We believe, teach, and accept the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and the Small Catechism as true witnesses to the Word of God, normative for our teaching and practice.<sup>20</sup> We acknowledge that we are one in faith and doctrine with all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

We believe, teach, and confess the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, the Treatise, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid expositions of the Holy Scriptures.<sup>21</sup>

We believe, teach, and confess the gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the priesthood of all believers for God's mission in the world.<sup>22</sup>

The ELCA and LCMC have nearly identical statements of faith in their constitutions.<sup>23</sup> LCMC's official position on the Scriptures is stronger than ELCA's, stating that the Scriptures are the "sole authoritative source and norm of our proclamation, faith, and life." While its constitution describes Scripture as "the authoritative source and norm," in practice the ELCA modifies the witness of Scripture by appeals to

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<sup>19</sup> Here the ELCA statement uses the phrase "true declarations of the faith of the Church," while the LCMC adds the reference to the Scriptures and the phrase from the Formula of Concord, "we believe, teach, and confess." ELCA Constitution 2.04.

<sup>20</sup> Here the ELCA Confession of Faith does not include the Small Catechism or the phrase "normative for our teaching and practice." ELCA Constitution 2.05.

<sup>21</sup> Here the ELCA Confession of Faith describes the other confessional writings in the Book of Concord as "Further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church," rather than as "further valid expositions of the Holy Scripture." ELCA Constitution 2.06.

<sup>22</sup> Here the ELCA Confession of Faith describes the Scriptures, Creeds, and Confessions as "as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world," while LCMC has the specific application to the "priesthood of all believers."

<sup>23</sup> <[http://www.exposingtheelca.com/uploads/2/4/2/8/2428588/comparison\\_elca\\_and\\_lcmc.pdf](http://www.exposingtheelca.com/uploads/2/4/2/8/2428588/comparison_elca_and_lcmc.pdf)>. For the ELCA statement of faith, see <[http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/CBCR\\_2013\\_November.pdf](http://download.elca.org/ELCA%20Resource%20Repository/CBCR_2013_November.pdf)>.



context and experience (e.g., Sexuality Social Statement).<sup>24</sup> While the Scriptures are described as “inspired,” nowhere in the official documents of LCMC is the “inerrancy” or “verbal inspiration” of Scripture affirmed. While LCMC describes the Ecumenical Creeds as “true declarations of the scriptural faith” and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession and Small Catechism as “true witnesses to the Word of God,” it follows ELCA in calling the rest of the Book of Concord “further valid expositions of the Holy Scriptures.” This description barely qualifies as a *quatenus* subscription, let alone a *quia*. LCMC makes known its emphasis on the universal priesthood of all believers by describing the Gospel “recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings” as “the power of God to create and sustain the priesthood of all believers for God’s mission in the world.”<sup>25</sup>

The ordination of women is strongly affirmed in the documents of LCMC. The Northwest District of LCMC declared, prior to the founding of the NALC, “ELCA and LCMC are the only Lutheran Church bodies in the United States that affirm the call of women to be pastors.”<sup>26</sup> The issue of women’s ordination is definitely a blind spot in LCMC. It stands in marked contrast to claims of taking the Scripture and Confessions seriously. LCMC’s position on women’s ordination shows a failure to realize that the same arguments used for women’s ordination are those used by the proponents of the ordination of active homosexuals, which LCMC opposes.

In reaction to the 2009 ELCA decision regarding homosexual clergy, LCMC released this “pastoral admonition”:

We affirm that God created us male and female, and that it is God’s will and intention that human sexual expression and fulfillment take place only within the boundaries of marriage between one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-6; and Mark 10:2-9). And, we confess as individuals and as congregations that we have not fulfilled God’s will in our decisions, modeling, and teaching.<sup>27</sup>

Regarding the ELCA’s statement on homosexuality, LCMC Pastor William Bakewicz writes, “Not only was this a departure from the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> <[http://www.exposingtheelca.com/uploads/2/4/2/8/2428588/comparison\\_elca\\_and\\_lcmc.pdf](http://www.exposingtheelca.com/uploads/2/4/2/8/2428588/comparison_elca_and_lcmc.pdf)>.

<sup>27</sup> <<http://www.lcmc.net/pastoral-admonition/425>>.

teaching of the Bible as understood by Christians for 2,000 years, but it [sic] an example of how a different Gospel is being preached and taught in the ELCA.”<sup>28</sup> He also states, “A new Gospel of Acceptance is afoot in the ELCA as opposed to the biblical gospel of Redemption.”<sup>29</sup> Bakewicz summarizes the teaching of the Gospel laid out in the Small Catechism and the Formula of Concord:

We are all sinners who are justified by grace through faith in Jesus Christ (this is the good news of the Gospel). At the same time we need to recognize that God justifies sinners rather than justifying sins. There is a difference between forgiveness and acceptance. God forgives sinners and accepts and loves them (and we should too), but God’s acceptance of sinners does not mean that God accepts sins. This is the proper distinction between Law and Gospel. The true Gospel is the Gospel of redemption. ... If we die in our sins, we perish. If God simply loves us and accepts us the way we are (behaviors included) then there was no need to send Jesus into the world to die for us on the cross. Jesus could have simply come announcing the message “God loves you and accepts you just the way you are,” but He didn’t do that. Jesus came to earth for the express purpose of dying for us, on our behalf, and in so doing He paid the penalty for our sins. The penalty for sin is death. He came to deliver us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. He came to redeem us—to purchase us—with his lifeblood as the price. That is the Gospel of Redemption—not that Jesus leaves us in our sin, but that He delivers us from it. Jesus Himself proclaimed, “unless you repent you will all likewise perish” (Luke 13:5), and “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins should be preached in his name to all nations” (Luke 24:46-47). God loves us so much that He does not leave us in our sin but delivers us from it.<sup>30</sup>

Bakewicz contrasts this with the false “gospel of acceptance” taught in the ELCA.

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<sup>28</sup> Bakewicz, 4.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 5.

The gospel (or good news) of Acceptance basically says that you are loved and accepted just the way you are: God loves you. Jesus died for you. You are His, you belong to Him, you are marked with the sign of the cross forever. These statements are all true, but it is only partial truth. What is lacking is the statement that God hates sin. To say that God loves the sinner does not mean that God condones all the different behaviors in that person's life. The statement is often made by gays and lesbians, "If you love me, then you have to accept me the way I am." God loves all of us the way we are, even in our sin, but He does not leave us there, or say that it is OK to stay there.<sup>31</sup>

Bakewicz also views the ELCA sexuality statement as confusion of law and gospel since it takes an issue of ethics and behavior and places it under the gospel instead of under the law. The ELCA statement, "Human Sexuality: Gift and Trust" states, "We ground our ethics in Scripture and the living voice of the Gospel," but then avoids most of the clear and consistent scriptural words about sexuality as stated in the law.<sup>32</sup> He observes, "God's law for all sexual relationships and behavior was apparently too restrictive for the authors of the social statement. ... Grounding ethics in the Gospel turns the Gospel into law."<sup>33</sup> In Bakewicz's opinion, "The preaching and teaching of this new gospel of Acceptance, perhaps more than anything else, has resulted in the rapid growth of LCMC as congregations, and many members of the ELCA, have come to the conclusion that they can no longer be part of a church body that has walked away from the Lutheran understanding of God's Word as both Law and Gospel."<sup>34</sup>

## The North American Lutheran Church (NALC)

### *The NALC History*

The NALC had its beginnings with a renewal movement within ELCA known as Lutheran CORE. CORE was started in 2005 as the Lutheran Coalition for Reform, a coalition of groups that had previously worked together to uphold traditional teaching on marriage and sexuality in the ELCA. Lutheran CORE defines itself as "a broad-based

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. See also "What About Homosexuality? What the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions Have to Say," William Bakewicz (Word Alone Network, 2009).

renewal movement of traditional and confessional Lutherans within and beyond the ELCA, working together with a number of partner organizations from across the country. We are interested in cooperative ministry with all who uphold the authority of God's Word over all matters of faith and life, and who seek to engage in the mission of Christ in the world."<sup>35</sup> Lutheran CORE focused on several areas where it opposed changes in the teachings of ELCA. These areas of concern are outlined in CORE's statement of faith called "The Common Confession."<sup>36</sup>

A 2009 gathering of Lutheran CORE directed its leadership to "develop new organizational alternatives for faithful Lutheran Christians in North America."<sup>37</sup> Having received numerous requests from congregations for the creation of a new Lutheran church body, Lutheran CORE's leadership developed "A Vision and Plan," published in 2010. On August 27, 2010, at a convocation organized by Lutheran CORE, the NALC was constituted. This constituting convention was attended by over 1,000 people, including members and visitors from North America. Letters of greeting were read from a number of other churches including the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus, Lutheran Congregations in Mission for Christ, and the Anglican Church in North America. At the closing worship service, Bishop Benson Bagonza of the Karagwe Diocese, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, was the preacher. Bishop Baganza and retired ELCA Bishop Ken Sauer installed Rev. Paull E. Spring as the first bishop of the NALC.

The NALC comprises congregations, laypeople, and clergy who have broken away from the ELCA and Evangelical Lutheran Church of Canada over issues of scriptural authority.<sup>38</sup> NALC Bishop Paull Spring explains, "The gay pastor issue was the tipping point for many Lutherans, but it followed serious concerns about the ELCA's movement away from holy scriptures as the final authority for church beliefs."<sup>39</sup> Another example given by Spring is ELCA's use of gender inclusive language that strips away male references to God, such as "Father" and

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<sup>35</sup> <<http://www.lutherancore.org/who-we-serve/lutheran-reform-renewal-groups/>>.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> <<http://thenalc.org/history/>>.

<sup>38</sup> <<http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2014/07/application-to-lwf-not-approved>>.

<sup>39</sup> <[http://www.winonadailynews.com/news/local/conservative-lutherans-form-new-church-in-split-with-elca-over/article\\_436be102-b22f-11df-b05a-001cc4c03286.html](http://www.winonadailynews.com/news/local/conservative-lutherans-form-new-church-in-split-with-elca-over/article_436be102-b22f-11df-b05a-001cc4c03286.html)>.

“Son” and replaces them with words like “Creator” and “Savior.” While the presenting problem was the sexuality issue, behind it lay the broader question, “Which is the authoritative voice of the church today? Is it holy scripture, which Lutherans have always confessed, scripture alone, or is [sic] supposed to be some combination, that as well as some mood of the times?”<sup>40</sup>

The ELCA’s 2009 decision to bless same-sex relationships and allow non-celibate homosexuals to be ordained has had a significant impact on the membership of the ELCA. The ELCA lost nearly half a million members in 2010 and 2011 alone. In 2012, the ELCA lost another 105 congregations and membership fell by 2.6% from the previous year, bringing ELCA membership to under 4 million members. The ELCA had 5.2 million members at the time of its formation in 1988. From 2010-2012, the ELCA lost 13.2% of its total membership compared to 2009.<sup>41</sup> At the time of the NALC’s constituting convention in 2010, seventeen congregations had voted to join the NALC. By 2013, that number had grown to 370 congregations in the United States and Canada, with more than 140,000 members. Of those congregations, around 60 are home mission congregations, showing the NALC’s emphasis on missions and evangelism.<sup>42</sup>

From its inception, one of the greatest challenges faced by the NALC is the education and training of pastors. In 2013, the NALC Convocation approved the formation of the North American Lutheran Seminary (NALS).<sup>43</sup> NALS will consist of a Seminary Center and Houses of Studies located at existing seminaries and theological schools. The Seminary Center will be located at Trinity School for Ministry in Ambridge, Pennsylvania. The first House of Studies has been created on-site at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina. Other houses of study will be established as needed throughout North America, in the west, or Canada. NALS seminarians will be offered residence or commuter options and have opportunities for distance or online learning, with some required residency of two to four weeks per year. There will also be opportunities for seminarians at non-NALS schools to take classes at NALS sites.

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> <[http://www.nola.com/religion/index.ssf/2009/11/gay\\_pastor\\_vote\\_leads\\_conservatives\\_to\\_create\\_new\\_lutheran\\_body.html](http://www.nola.com/religion/index.ssf/2009/11/gay_pastor_vote_leads_conservatives_to_create_new_lutheran_body.html)>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid. See also <<http://thenalc.org/history/>>.

<sup>43</sup> <[thenalc.org/nals/](http://thenalc.org/nals/)>.

### *The NALC Character*

The NALC is set up much more like a traditional denomination than LCMC. As opposed to LCMC which calls itself “this association of congregations,” the NALC calls itself “the church.” While congregations are members of LCMC, congregations and ordained ministers are members of the NALC. Like LCMC, the NALC allows congregations affiliated with other Lutheran church bodies to affiliate with their church body, but unlike LCMC, the other membership must be in a *Lutheran* body. As mentioned in the history section, the NALC has a bishop. Between convocations, the elected board of the NALC has the authority to act on behalf of the NALC.<sup>44</sup>

The NALC describes its distinctiveness under the following headings known as “core values”:

**Christ-Centered:** We confess the apostolic faith in Jesus Christ according to the Holy Scriptures. We affirm the authority of the Scriptures as the authoritative source and norm, “according to which all doctrines should and must be judged” (Formula of Concord). We accept the ecumenical creeds and the Lutheran Confessions as true witnesses to the Word of God.<sup>45</sup>

**Mission-Driven:** We believe that the mission of the Church is to preach the Gospel and to make disciples for Christ. We believe that making disciples—in our congregations, in our communities and nations, and around the world—must be a priority of the Church in the present age.

**Traditionally-Grounded:** We affirm the ecumenical creeds and the faithful witness of the Church across time and space. We endorse the form and practices of the universal Church that are consistent with Scripture, particularly the office of the ministry and the tradition of worship under Word and Sacrament. We seek dialogue and fellowship with other Lutheran churches and with faithful Christians of other confessions.<sup>46</sup>

**Congregationally-Focused:** We strive to be a church that is organized to facilitate the ministries of local congregations in a

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<sup>44</sup> This information is drawn from “What are the differences between the NALC proposal and LCMC?” which quotes from “A Vision and Plan for the North American Lutheran Church.” <[crossalone.us/2006/comparisonlcmc.pdf](http://crossalone.us/2006/comparisonlcmc.pdf)>.

<sup>45</sup> The CORE values are stronger in their statement on the Lutheran Confessions than the statement of faith in the NALC constitution below.

<sup>46</sup> Here we see a contrast between the NALC’s emphasis on the office of the ministry and LCMC’s emphasis on the priesthood of all believers.

posture of servanthood and a spirit of partnership, through the provision of resources, connections and information.”<sup>47</sup>

### *The NALC Doctrinal Position*

The NALC confesses:

The Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the Gospel as the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.

Jesus Christ is the Word of God incarnate, through whom everything was made and through whose life, death, and resurrection God fashions a new creation.

The proclamation of God’s message to us as both Law and Gospel is the Word of God, revealing judgment and mercy through word and deed, beginning with the Word in creation, continuing in the history of Israel, and centering in all its fullness in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God. Inspired by the Holy Spirit speaking through their authors, they record and announce God’s revelation centering in Jesus Christ. Through them the Holy Spirit speaks to us to create and sustain Christian faith and fellowship for service in the world.<sup>48</sup>

The canonical Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the inspired Word of God and the authoritative source and norm of its proclamation, faith and life, “according to which all doctrines should and must be judged” (Formula of Concord, Epitome, Part I).<sup>49</sup>

The Apostles’, Nicene, and Athanasian Creeds as true declarations of the faith of the Church.<sup>50</sup>

<sup>47</sup> This is not nearly as congregational as LCMC, which defines the church according to the Augsburg Confession as “the congregation of saints, in which the Gospel is rightly taught and the Sacraments are rightly administered.” The NALC affirms that “The Church is expressed primarily in the congregation but is also manifested in wider structures.” *Vision and Plan*, page 4 quoted in “What are the differences between the NALC proposal and LCMC?”

<sup>48</sup> The preceding paragraph is nearly identical to that of the ELCA’s Confession of Faith.

<sup>49</sup> Here the NALC adds the quotation from the Formula of Concord, which does not appear in the ELCA Constitution.

<sup>50</sup> Here the NALC has “faith of the Church,” while the ELCA has “faith of this church.” Perhaps the ELCA does not want to bind any other part of Christianity to the

The Unaltered Augsburg Confession as a true witness to the Gospel, acknowledging as one with it in faith and doctrine all churches that likewise accept the teachings of the Unaltered Augsburg Confession.

The other confessional writings in the Book of Concord, namely, the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, and the Formula of Concord, as further valid interpretations of the faith of the Church.

The Gospel, recorded in the Holy Scriptures and confessed in the ecumenical creeds and Lutheran confessional writings, as the power of God to create and sustain the Church for God's mission in the world."<sup>51</sup>

While this statement of the doctrinal standard of the NALC is nearly identical to the ELCA's, the NALC has also adopted the somewhat stronger "Common Confession" of Lutheran CORE. This confession clearly states the sinful nature of human beings, redemption by Jesus Christ, and the central article of justification by faith. This statement makes a stronger commitment to the Lutheran Confessions and calls the Bible "the final authority for us in all matters of faith and life."<sup>52</sup> However, it does not use the terms "verbal inspiration," "inerrant," or "infallible" to describe the Bible. Like LCMC's statement of faith, the "Common Confession" emphasizes the universal priesthood of all believers.<sup>53</sup> It also upholds the biblical teaching on marriage between one man and one woman and sexual activity belonging only within marriage between a man and a woman.<sup>54</sup>

**The Common Confession** (The faith statement of Lutheran CORE—Coalition for Renewal. Adopted: November 2005)<sup>55</sup>

**CC1) The Lord Jesus Christ:** We are people who believe and confess our faith in the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We trust and believe in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

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ecumenical creeds.

<sup>51</sup> The last three paragraphs are identical to those in the ELCA Confession of Faith.

<sup>52</sup> <<http://thenalc.org/confession-of-faith/>>. CC 3.

<sup>53</sup> CC 5.

<sup>54</sup> CC 6.

<sup>55</sup> <<http://thenalc.org/confession-of-faith/>>.



**CC2) The Gospel of Salvation:** We believe and confess that all human beings are sinners, and that sinners are redeemed by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. God alone justifies human beings by faith in Christ—a faith that God creates through the message of the Gospel. As ambassadors for Christ, God uses us to speak his Word and build his kingdom.

**CC3) The Authority of Scripture:** We believe and confess that the Bible is God’s revealed Word to us, spoken in Law and Gospel. The Bible is the final authority for us in all matters of our faith and life.

**CC4) A Common Confession of Faith:** We accept and uphold that the Lutheran Confessions reliably guide us as faithful interpretations of Scripture, and that we share a unity and fellowship in faith with others among whom the Gospel of Jesus Christ is preached and the sacraments are administered in accordance with the Gospel.

**CC5) The Priesthood of All Believers:** We believe and confess that the Holy Spirit makes all who believe in Jesus Christ to be priests for service to others in Jesus’ name, and that God desires to make use of the spiritual gifts he has given through the priesthood of all believers.

**CC6) Marriage and Family:** We believe and confess that the marriage of male and female is an institution created and blessed by God. From marriage, God forms families to serve as the building blocks of all human civilization and community. We teach and practice that sexual activity belongs exclusively within the biblical boundaries of a faithful marriage between one man and one woman.

**CC7) The Mission and Ministry of the Congregation:** We believe and confess that the church is the assembly of believers called and gathered by God around Word and Sacrament, and that the mission and ministry of the church is carried out within the context of individual congregations, which are able to work together locally and globally.

The NALC and Lutheran CORE, through their Joint Commission on Theology and Doctrine, approved an official pro-life stance on abortion in the document “The Lord Is with You—A Word of Counsel to the Church—The Sanctity of Nascent Life,” on December 14, 2012. “The Lord Is with You” draws its title from the Annunciation of the

angel Gabriel to Mary and deals with the issue of abortion biblically, historically, and pastorally. “The Lord Is with You” strongly affirms that life begins at conception.

The beginning of human existence, i.e., nascent life, carries in it the fullness of the genetic code, the complete chromosomal material of an individual. The strengths and characteristics given to us by God have not yet blossomed for all the world to see, yet they are fully present in the beauty of His love. “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations” (Jeremiah 1:5). Luther’s Small Catechism proclaims, “I believe that God has created me and all that exists,” so in faith we continue to proclaim that our life, and every life, comes from God and belongs to God. In our earthly dependency upon the womb of our mothers for protection, nourishment, and love from the first moments of our lives, we see in the creation of each life the shape of faith. We will always be fully dependent upon God for life, for shelter, and for mercy—the God who uses men and women to bring forth every generation of His creation.<sup>56</sup>

“The Lord is with You” clearly demonstrates that legalized abortion is contrary to Scripture and at odds with the teaching of the Christian church throughout history, including the Creeds, the Church Fathers, the Lutheran Confessions, and other Reformers.

Legalization of abortion puts the state at odds with the historic witness of the church, and so we are called to listen again to the Word of God as proclaimed in the Holy Scriptures, the wisdom of the Church Fathers, and the insight of the Reformers as we seek to follow Christ faithfully in our day. The *Didache* clearly speaks the law as stated in the fifth commandment to the issues of abortion and infanticide in the ancient world, “Thou shalt not murder a child by abortion, nor again shall thou kill it when it is born.” *The Epistle of Barnabas* speaks of those who seek to end the life of one *in utero* as “killers of the child, who abort the mold of God.” The Nicene Creed professes that Jesus is fully human and fully divine from the moment of His conception

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<sup>56</sup> <<http://thenalc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Word-of-Counsel-on-Sanctity-of-Nascent-Life.pdf>>.

and in doing so declares that human life begins at conception. Again and again the Psalter sings that fearfully and wonderfully made, we are the work of God's hands (Ps 139:14). John Calvin, in concert with the early Fathers, regards an unborn child as "already a human being." Martin Luther regards procreation as "the work of God" and speaks of those who kill the growing fetus as an example of the wickedness of human nature. The witness of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church is clear: There is no life that is beyond God's care, beginning at the moment of conception. The child *in utero* is not simply the possession of the father or the mother, for each nascent life is the handiwork of God. "For it was you who formed my inward parts; you knit me together in my mother's womb" (Ps 139:15).

The law is applied to those who have engaged in sexual activity outside of marriage and those who have sought abortions after recreational sex.

Apart from victims of sexual violence, the NALC and Lutheran CORE should call to repentance all men and women who have engaged in sexual behaviors outside of marriage. Men and women who are not married to each another and who have used their procreative abilities irresponsibly and then have chosen to abort a child, as well as husbands and wives who have aborted children whom they do not want, are called to confession, contrition, and amendment of life. God wants us to know His joy, and until we acknowledge our sin and throw ourselves upon His mercy, we can never live rightly. The wanton destruction of a human life for matters of one's own convenience is sin. The casual use of abortion as a final solution for a conception born of recreational sex is sin. The intimidation and emotional blackmail to undergo an abortion that women have received from the men who have impregnated them is sin.<sup>57</sup>

Pastoral care and God's comfort are applied to those who are dealing with pain of past abortions.

The church also has great concern for those among us, who under the advice, counsel, or persuasion of family and/or

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<sup>57</sup> <<http://thenalc.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/02/Word-of-Counsel-on-Sanctity-of-Nascent-Life.pdf>>.

medical personnel, have aborted a life *in utero* as a result of rape, incest, severe abnormalities of fetus, or endangerment to the life of the mother. In these cases, we as a church seek to be a vessel of compassion and consolation. Even in the most difficult situation, the termination of the pregnancy will not necessarily bring an end to the intensity of the current pain. The end of any of new life, even when it comes to be the only apparent solution that one believes can be endured, will still carry layers of sorrow. Again, we urge the NALC to commit itself as a church body, along with its partners in Lutheran CORE, to provide pastoral care to all parties who are involved, for there are no decisions in such times that will be without familial grief. We seek not to condemn but to console. As anger, abandonment, regret, and the depths of despair each come in their turn, so the mercy of our ever-present God will need to be spoken. The Lord is with you. The Lord is still with you.<sup>58</sup>

### *The NALC and Fellowship*

Like the ELCA, the NALC teaches and practices open communion. The NALC's statement on "Ecumenical and Other Relationships" states,

The North American Lutheran Church will urge our congregations to welcome participation in our celebrations of Holy Communion with all who are baptized in the name of the Trinity and who believe in the real presence of Christ in, with, and under the bread and wine.<sup>59</sup>

This stands in sharp contrast to seeking unity in all the teachings of Scripture before communing together and only communing those who demonstrate their doctrinal agreement by belonging to a church of the same orthodox Lutheran confession. As the Augsburg Confession puts it, "The custom has been retained among us of not administering the sacrament to those who have not previously been examined and absolved."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> "Ecumenical and Other Relationships: An Initial Statement on the Ecumenical and Inter-Lutheran Commitment of the North American Lutheran Church." <<http://thenalc.org/ecumenical-and-other-relationships/>>.

<sup>60</sup> AC XXV.

As a church body, “The NALC will explore ecumenical relationships with those churches and communities whose teachings are compatible with its confessional beliefs.”<sup>61</sup> This sounds good until examples are given as to how broadly the word “compatible” is defined. At its 2011 Convocation, the NALC voted unanimously to establish full communion fellowship with the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus.<sup>62</sup> In August 2013, a “Memorandum of Understanding” was approved by the NALC Convocation between the NALC and Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania, paving the way for full communion between the two church bodies.<sup>63</sup> Ecumenical dialogue has been established between the NALC and other Lutheran church bodies, including the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the Lutheran Church—Canada and LCMC. The NALC also gives “priority to relationships, including ecumenical dialogues, with churches such as the Anglican Church in North America, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Churches.”<sup>64</sup> The NALC passed a request to the Anglican Church in North America to share clergy where there were vacancies, which was accepted. The NALC held an ecumenical summit with representatives of the Anglican Church in North America, the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and the Lutheran Church—Canada, on May 3-5, 2013, at the Church of the Holy Communion in Dallas, Texas, on the theme of “Biblical Teaching on Marriage and Sexuality.” The summit issued the joint document “An Affirmation of Marriage,” signed by representatives of all the four church bodies, which defined the institution of marriage as the unity between a man and a woman.<sup>65</sup>

At its 2012 General Convention, the North American Lutheran Church approved, by the required majority of two-thirds of the voters, a resolution to seek membership in the Lutheran World Federation (LWF).<sup>66</sup> The application request was not approved by the LWF, but remains pending according to a letter issued May 2014, despite the

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<sup>61</sup> <<http://thenalc.org/ecumenical-and-other-relationships/>>.

<sup>62</sup> “Convocation approves full communion relationship with Ethiopian Lutherans,” NALC News, August 2011.

<sup>63</sup> “Memorandum of Understanding between The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Tanzania and The North American Lutheran Church,” NALC Official Website, 8 August 2013.

<sup>64</sup> <<http://thenalc.org/ecumenical-and-other-relationships/>>.

<sup>65</sup> “The NALC Releases Ecumenical Affirmation on Marriage,” North American Lutheran Church Official Website, 10 June 2013.

<sup>66</sup> LWF Ratification Results, Letter by Bishop John Bradosky, 22 February 2013.

support of the Lutheran Churches of Ethiopia and Tanzania.<sup>67</sup> The letter by LWF General Secretary Martin Junge questioned the way the NALC describes the LWF to its members, subsequently calling into question the ratification process by which the church voted to join the LWF. General Secretary Junge further declared “a prevailing fundamental problem in the fact that while applying for membership into the LWF, the NALC is not prepared to be in communion with all member churches, particularly those of the North American region.”<sup>68</sup> This must be rectified, he writes, “as a necessary first step ... in view of the NALC’s desire to become a member of the LWF.”<sup>69</sup> Since the NALC is not in communion with the ELCA and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada because of the positions of those church bodies over scriptural authority and human sexuality, the LWF has relegated the NALC’s application to “pending” status.<sup>70</sup> Matthew Block of *First Things* notes that a double standard is being applied here since the Ethiopian Evangelical Church Mekane Yesus remained in fellowship with the LWF while ending fellowship with ELCA and the Church of Sweden.<sup>71</sup> Block also notes that one of the reasons for the NALC’s application for LWF membership was the request of the Lutherans in Tanzania and Ethiopia for the NALC to join in order to give them “an orthodox, confessional North American partner within LWF.”<sup>72</sup> This desire on the part of the NALC to join the LWF shows that their desire to partner with these groups outweighs their commitment to biblical and confessional teaching. Membership in such groups with whom there is not doctrinal agreement is unionism.

## Conclusion

What is the place of the NALC and LCMC among Lutherans in America? These two church bodies provide a “safe haven” for those pastors and congregations who feel that the ELCA they joined in 1987 has “left them.” The NALC and LCMC each have carved their niche within Lutheranism. The NALC is like the ELCA without homosexual

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<sup>67</sup> Lutherans left out in the cold / The North American Lutheran Church’s attempt to join the Lutheran World Federation receives a critical response / by Matthew Block, *First Things*. <<http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/firstthoughts/2014/07/application-to-lwf-not-approved>>.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> Ibid.

pastors. The LCMC is like the AFLC with female pastors. Doctrinally, the NALC and LCMC take their stand on the same foundations as the ELCA at its founding. While desiring to be “centrist” and “confessional,” both church bodies are actually still “liberal.” They have weak confessional subscriptions and while they affirm the “authority” of Scripture, they do not confess Scripture’s “infallibility” or “inerrancy.”

The NALC and LCMC should be encouraged and applauded for what they’ve done right. They left the ELCA, which is no small feat, given the difficult voting process that requires. They have left the largest church body in the history of American Lutheranism and are now trying figure out where to go from there. They have taken a stand on important issues such as the authority of Scripture, human sexuality, God’s institution of marriage between one man and one woman, and human life. They emphasize Law and Gospel and justification by God’s grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ.

What can we do with regard to the NALC and LCMC? Since we cannot practice church fellowship with them since we are not in doctrinal agreement, we can find ways to encourage and support them that do not involve joint prayer or joint worship. Free conferences are a way to discuss issues in light of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Current issues such as marriage and sexuality and the relationship between the church and state under the current health care legislation may be good topics for such conferences. Even better would be conferences that examine the authority and nature of the Holy Scriptures, providing an opportunity to show them that “inerrancy” is part of their Lutheran heritage. Another opportunity for informal discussion at the local level would be Book of Concord reading and study groups. In such study groups, the positions the confessors took with regard to the Scriptures could be shown. There they could be shown where they are still in error and maybe even be led to reconsider their position on issues such as women’s ordination. We can also pray for these church bodies and their members, that through their renewed emphasis on the authority of God’s Word, they would be led to study that Word and grow stronger in their faith and confession. LSQ

# Sermon on Luke 13:22–30: Lord, Will Only a Few People Be Saved?

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**Editor's Note:** *A video recording of this sermon by the writer is available at <<https://vimeo.com/album/2677325/video/73096688>>.*

**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, we have gathered through faith in your holy name to hear your holy Word. We pray that you would help us to throw off everything that hinders our faith today, everything that would prevent us from entering through the narrow door. We know that we continually wrestle and struggle with our sinful nature so we ask that you would strengthen us with your Spirit through the means of grace. We pray now, sanctify us through the truth, your Word is truth. Amen.

**Text:** *Then Jesus went through the towns and villages, teaching as he made his way to Jerusalem. Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at*



*the feast in the kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last.” (Luke 13:22–30; NIV)*

“**W**HAT ABOUT GANDHI? ARE YOU TELLING ME that a good person like Gandhi won’t be in heaven?” That was a snippet from a conversation I had with someone recently. I had to respond, “Unless Gandhi believed in Jesus, he won’t be in heaven.” That seemed crazy, too narrow, for the person to whom I was speaking. Their thought was surely, “Good people get to heaven.” That person was looking out over mankind and choosing who would be saved and who wouldn’t be. Good people get to heaven. And so, that person was really asking the question, “Lord, will only a few people be saved?”

I. We, too, can ponder that same question as we look around at our family and friends and wonder who will be in heaven and who won’t. So Jesus, in our text, answers that important question – will only a few be saved? He urges us to enter through the narrow door and tells us that people from all over the world will be saved. **Enter through the narrow door.**

Pretend that you are on a ship. You’ve been on this ship for quite some time now, maybe a week. You’re very comfortable with the surroundings. It’s the middle of the night and you’re sleeping in your bunk bed when suddenly there is a crash and a terrible shuddering of the ship, so much so that you are thrown out of your bunk onto the floor. Within seconds the alarms are going off on the ship. You rush to the cabin door and open it up and see water going down the hallway. Doing what you remember from the safety lesson you go back and get the life vest from your cabin and head out the door. You head down the hallway, following the safety signs. You turn a corner and see all of these people just standing there. They don’t seem to be moving, so you, wanting to find out what’s wrong, excuse yourself and get up to the head of the line. And that’s where you see the problem. See, that area was the point of impact for the ship. And the door there is now so buckled and bent that it can only be opened just a little bit. You step up closer, look through the gap and the captain is on the other side of the door and he says to you, “Take everything off and you’ll be able to fit through the door and then there’s a lifeboat here. I’ll get you safely to it.”

You take a step back and turn around and see the other people standing in the hallway. You notice that there is a group of people standing there arguing over how their particular life vest will be able to fit through that narrow gap. You notice a man and a woman, a husband

and a wife you assume, and the husband is reasoning with the wife that he is sure that he can get his Rolex watch through that gap. You start to notice the people farther from the door. There is a group of them that brought bottles of champagne from their room. They seem pretty set that the ship is going down so they might as well enjoy it, because who knows if they'll be rescued or not. You go back to the gap, and you see the water is still rushing down the hallway and you can still hear those sirens going off. You remember that the captain said the life vest won't fit, but you want to give it a shot anyway. You slide up to that crack, but that life vest just won't let you through the narrow gap. You look again at the water around your feet and peer through the gap, but you don't know what's on the other side. Maybe you'll need that vest. You just know that you can't get through the gap with it. So you unzip it. You reluctantly put it on the floor. You go back up to the crack. You get a little farther in this time but now it's your belt buckle holding up your jeans. It won't let you through. So you step back and you take off your belt. You're pretty sure now that you can work your way through it. You get in there and you get a little further through the gap but your clothes keep catching no matter how you squirm and turn. You step back and have another look, and then you look at the people there and think, "What am I going to do? Get naked?" Hoping to save some dignity you give it another shot. But all your squirming is to no avail. So you step back one more time and think about your predicament. The water is getting deeper, the alarms seem louder. What are you going to do? You're going to have to take off your clothes, just like the captain said. So, losing all dignity, you strip down to bare nakedness. And you make it through the door—almost. Just when you thought you were free, your watch impossibly catches on the door. Now that's a very special watch that you're wearing; you put a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into getting that watch. It means a lot to you. So you wiggle and you squirm and you turn, trying to get that silly watch through the gap. Finally in desperation you just give it a yank, and the band breaks and it falls on the other side of the door. But you're through! The captain wraps you in a white blanket and escorts you safely to the lifeboat.

Now let's look at what all the different parts of that story mean. Most of us understand that we are on a sinking ship and that we need saving. But unfortunately most of us have put on man-made life jackets. We want to hold on to those things and we will argue with one another about why our particular life jacket can get through the narrow door. Those life jackets are all the philosophies of man or the religions of man.

They chiefly can be summarized with one thought: “If I’m good enough, I’ll be able to get through the door. If I have enough good works to my credit, if I’ve strived hard enough, if I’m strong enough, then I’ll be able to do it.” That really is what all world religions are about: making sure that you’re wearing a good enough life vest so that you can save yourself. But Jesus describes salvation as a narrow door. And man-made life jackets can’t fit through it. And so He asks us to take them off. To take off our best human reason, and lay it on the floor. It can’t help you.

But then there’s our clothes. We use them to hide our shame. Surely God doesn’t want us to expose ourselves to the world so that everyone can see us for who we truly are? Yes, that’s what He wants. See, we can’t hide anything from God. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before Him. So we’re only fooling ourselves when we think we can put on holy airs and a holy façade—we’re not fooling God. We may fool those around us but that’s the limit of it. And you know, this is really Jesus’ chief point. He was trying to show the Pharisees, and obviously some of His disciples, that you have to lose all dignity before God. You have to stand before Him in all your naked sinfulness to be able to enter through that door. Any attempt on your part to make yourself seem better than others, or better than what you really are, prevents you from passing through the narrow door. That’s what the Pharisees thought. That is what a lot of people in Jesus’ day thought. If they obeyed all the commandments then they would be better than everyone else. They would be a big enough person to get through the door of heaven. But Jesus wants to strip all that away. He wants us to acknowledge our fallen state and our sinfulness—that we’re not big; we’re tiny, we are nothing. We are wretched sinners in God’s eyes. There is no hope for us to save ourselves.

Some people think about this and despair. They’re like that group that brought the champagne bottles from their rooms. “The ship is going down, we might as well enjoy it while we can,” they say. I worked with many men in underground mines (Western Australia) that truly believed that they would be in hell. And they were open about it: “I’ll be in hell, so I might as well try and enjoy this life to the best of my ability.” They didn’t think that God could forgive them. They thought that they were going down with the ship.

**II. Though that door is narrow, it is designed for everyone to be able to pass through.** We can’t hold on to anything. No earthly watch, no earthly possession. Nothing. We must simply be naked before the

God who created us. And yet, just think about that watch. Into what do we pour most of our energy and time? It's into earthly possessions. We pour out our blood, sweat, and tears to get them. And yet we can't take them through the narrow door. Nothing can be taken with us. Naked we came into the world, and naked we will go out of it. So Jesus urges us to enter through the narrow door.

He even says, "Struggle, make every effort." Now why is it a struggle, why would Jesus have to put it that way? It's because, even as Christians, we have a struggle going on within us. We want to justify ourselves before God by what we do. "Well, I go to church every Sunday," or "I read the Bible, I pray." That's picking up that life vest of good works. And that's what we, by nature, want to do. So it's a struggle not to dip down and pick it up but to leave it on the floor. But let's face it, there's also the temptation to go join the people with the bottle of champagne. "The ship isn't sunk yet, let's have some fun. I can be a Christian and still enjoy it." So this is a struggle. But Jesus wants us to make every effort to keep our focus on getting through the narrow door. And yes, even a sinner like you, and like me, can get through that door.

We might look at this and wonder, well then, who on earth is going to be saved? If we've got to be stripped of everything, who possibly will get to heaven? But notice what Jesus says. He says "People will come from the east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the kingdom of God." See, even though that door is narrow, it's designed for everyone to be able to get through. Jesus came and opened up that door for us, through his life, death, and resurrection. He lived a perfect life for us. He died an innocent death in our place. And He rose again triumphant to guarantee us that we, too, can fit through that door. He brings this treasure to us personally through His life-giving Word and the Holy Sacraments. Everything is dependent upon Him. So only those who trust in Jesus, and Jesus alone, can make it through that door. Only those who trust in Jesus, and Jesus alone, have their sins forgiven. But you should have no doubt that Jesus made that door so that you can pass through it. And that's really the question that Jesus wants you to be asking yourself. Not "How many will be saved?" or "Who will be saved?" but "Will I be saved?" In response to that question notice the very pointed way that Jesus answered. You will be outside, you will be begging and pleading, you will see Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and all the prophets taking their places at the kingdom of God. And you, yourselves thrown out. See, that person that may have asked that question may have been looking at the world and saying, "Well, Lord, is

it only us few? Are all those other people going to be damned?" Instead, Jesus made the question very personal, "What about you? Are you going to be saved? Are you going to enter through the narrow door?"

Now the only way that you can be certain that you fit through that door is if Jesus designed it for everyone. Sometimes we think that if God spoke in a more personal way we would be more sure that He means me. But God speaks in the most general terms possible so that you can know that you are included; that your sins are forgiven. In 2 Corinthians Paul says, "God was reconciling the world to Himself in Christ Jesus, not counting men's sins against them" (5:19). If you are part of the world, then that means God reconciled you. To Timothy, Paul wrote, "There is one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all men" (1 Timothy 2:5). If you are part of mankind then that means Jesus gave His life as a ransom for you. Then we have those beautiful words in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." So don't look at that narrow door and say that it's too hard to fit through. Jesus has designed it so all people can fit through it, by faith in Jesus.

So throw off your life vests, whatever thoughts you have in mind of how you are going to save yourself. Don't join the partiers and the revelers who are trying to get the most out of this life. Don't hold onto earthly possessions that would prevent you from passing through the door. Cling to Jesus, hold onto Him and know that your sins are forgiven. He is waiting on the other side of that door to wrap you in a white robe. How many people are going to be on the other side of that door? We don't know. In one sense, it's true that it will only be a few, when you consider the population of the world, the population of everyone who has ever lived. The road to eternal life is narrow and few find it. But the book of Revelation also speaks of a great multitude that no one can number (7:9). You, by faith, are already part of that group. You have the white robe of righteousness, of Jesus' perfect life. You have washed it in the blood of the Lamb and it is been made white. And one day you will join that throng before the throne. So many, of all different nationalities, are going to be before the throne of God. But the important question is, "Will you be one of them? Will you be one of the few?" Enter the narrow gate. Throw off everything that hinders you. Save your life in Jesus and join the great throng who have gone before you and praise the God who loves you and has forgiven you. To Him be glory, both now and forever. [LSQ](#)

# Advent Sermon on Genesis 14:18–24: Melchizedek, a Type of Christ

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**Prayer:** O Jesus, Lord of Righteousness, Prince of Peace, we thank You that You became poor and lowly in the incarnation to raise us to Your glory, eternal life in heaven, and that You have given us all Your treasures in Word and Sacraments. Prepare us this Advent season so that we do not take You for granted but receive You into our hearts as Priest and King. Amen.

**Text:** *Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, Who has delivered your enemies into your hand." And he gave him a tithe of all. Now the king of Sodom said to Abram, "Give me the persons, and take the goods for yourself." But Abram said to the king of Sodom, "I have raised my hand to the LORD, God Most High, the Possessor of heaven and earth, that I will take nothing, from a thread to a sandal strap, and that I will not take anything that is yours, lest you should say, 'I have made Abram rich'— except only what the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men who went with me: Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre; let them take their portion." (Genesis 14:18–24; NKJV)*

**M**ELCHIZEDEK, KING OF SALEM IN THE OLD Testament, is a man of awe and wonder. His origins are shrouded in mystery. He has roused curiosity of Bible scholars in every age. Who is he? From where did he come? Luther

thought he might be Shem,<sup>1</sup> or one of the ancient patriarchs. Some have even thought he was the pre-incarnate Christ Himself. The writer to the Hebrews summarizes, “[He is] without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God” (Hebrews 7:3). He tells us that Melchizedek was like the Son of God, or a picture of Christ for the Old Testament believers. We then consider: **Melchizedek, a type of Christ.**

**I. Seeing first that he pictures Christ’s kingship.** When the news came that Lot was captured by the kings of the East, Abram immediately set out with his trained servants, pursuing the victorious army. He overtook the enemy far to the north in Dan, defeated them and rescued his nephew. On the return trip, as he passed through Shaveh, the Valley of the Kings, he was met by the remarkable Melchizedek who brought bread and wine to nourish Abram and his men.

The name Melchizedek means “King of Righteousness” and our text says that he was King of Salem, which is a Hebrew word for “peace,” related to the Hebrew greeting *Shalom*. Salem was a shortened form of the name Jerusalem. Melchizedek then was the king of the city-state of Jerusalem about a thousand years before it was captured by David and made the capital of the Hebrew state. Melchizedek interestingly enough knew the one true God, for he blesses Abram with the name of God Most High. But how is this possible when the entire Canaanite culture was imbued with the sinful immoral worship of Baal and Astarte? It seems that Melchizedek was one of the last surviving believers in a time when the nations had turned to idols and God’s church centered mainly in Abram and his descendants, as was the case throughout the rest of the Old Testament.

Now Melchizedek is the King of Righteousness and the King of Peace. In this way he is a type of Christ, the true King of Righteousness and Prince of Peace. We speak of Jesus’ threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. As our King He has the position of power and authority at the right hand where He controls everything in the universe for the ultimate good of believers. Yet there is no comfort in His power and majesty if He had not also become the King of the Cross, our human brother in the incarnation. Without the Bethlehem manger no one can stand before the blazing holiness of Christ, for we by nature are sinful stubble which is doomed to the everlasting oven.

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<sup>1</sup> LW 2:381.

A Christmas card entitled “If Christ had not come” tells of a clergyman falling asleep in his study early on Christmas morning and dreaming of a world to which the Savior never came. In his dream he found himself looking through his home but there was no crèche, no tree, no presents. Out in the street there was no church with spires pointing heavenward. Back in his library, every book about Christ had disappeared from the shelves. A knock at the door brought a request to come to a dying mother. At her bedside he said, “I have words of comfort for you.” But when he opened his Bible he found a sorry state indeed. There were no promises. There was no promise of the Savior fulfilled, no hope in the face of death. He bowed his head and wept in hopeless desperation. Two days later he stood at the grave site to conduct the woman’s funeral. But he had no words of comfort concerning the glorious resurrection—only ashes to ashes, dust to dust, the terrible end of everything.

Suddenly, nearby music woke him with a start. Realizing what he was hearing filled him with joy. The church choir next door was singing “O Come, All Ye Faithful. Come, and behold Him, born the King of Angels.” Yes, Jesus indeed was born poor and lowly in a manger, born of our flesh so that through unity with His divinity He might conquer sin, death, and all our foes in that flesh and raise us to His divine glory, eternal life in heaven. He took our sin, death, and hell upon Himself so that He could give us, in exchange, His forgiveness, life, and heaven. Now because He partook of our flesh there indeed is comfort in His kingship. It is our human brother, who loved us so much that He died for us, who is ruling all things. Therefore regardless of what happens, no matter how difficult the way may seem, we have the certainty that our brother who has already given us the greatest gift, eternal life in heaven, is also controlling all for our good (Romans 8:28). He is the King of Righteousness, who gives us His righteousness by faith. He is the Prince of Peace who brings peace to our hearts and has prepared a heavenly Salem for us.

**II. Melchizedek is also a picture of Christ’s priesthood.** The text states that He was a priest of God Most High. Psalm 110 connects the Messiah’s priesthood with that of Melchizedek where it states that He is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (110:4). Jesus was a priest like Melchizedek only greater. Melchizedek offered up only earthly sacrifices but Jesus offered up the one true sacrifice. He allowed Himself to be slaughtered on the cross as the one sufficient payment for



sin. There all offerings and sacrifice were accomplished, once and for all. No further sacrifice for sin is required. Then the manger of Bethlehem is only meaningful in the light of the cross.

Now remember when Abram and his weary men returned from battle in the north, what did Melchizedek the Priest of Salem do? He came out to meet Abram bringing bread and wine to nourish his men. Dear Christians, we are all such tired soldiers. We must daily do battle with the old evil foe, the old lion that would devour us. Sometimes we overcome and sometimes we fail and we give in to temptation. In either case we need new power and strengthening so that we can continue and fight another day, for Satan will never give up.

Therefore the King of heavenly Salem, the true Melchizedek, the Priest of Righteousness, with healing in His wings came to meet us (Malachi 4:2). He brings not only bread and wine, but bread and wine united with His flesh and blood.<sup>2</sup> Here is the true nourishment for all the struggles and conflicts of life. Here is the healing for all our woes. Here there is help for the helpless and hope for the hopeless. Here is refreshment for soldiers of the cross. Again this Advent and Christmas season He places His manger before us on the altar and in His Word, for He is here for you just as certainly as the Virgin held Him in her arms and the shepherds adored Him. Take Him into your arms through true repentance and faith so that He may make a bed, soft, undefiled, within our hearts a quiet chamber kept for Him.

In this season Christmas carols repeatedly blare out, "Christ the Savior is born," but many merely mouth the words, void of personal commitment to the incarnate Son of God. Familiarity is not enough. The unrepentant thief was so near the Savior. Had his hands been free he could have reached out and touched the Lord. So near and yet so

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<sup>2</sup> Melchizedek giving bread and wine to Abraham, the father of the faithful, has often been used as a type of Christ giving the faithful His body and blood under the form of bread and wine in the Supper (Genesis 14:18). The influence of this type of Christ on theology in general and the Sacrament in specific was immense in Africa, especially in Cyprian and Augustine. Because the Old Testament Scriptures were viewed as a prophetic whole, it was desirable to find in them a figure who would foreshadow the coming of Christ and anticipate the end of the animal sacrifices and their replacement through the all-sufficient sacrifice of the cross, the blessings of which are received through the Sacrament instituted by Christ. Melchizedek, who was without beginning and end (Hebrews 7:3), prefiguring Christ, confirms the truth that Christ's priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:17) and the New Testament Sacraments are superior to and the fulfillment of the whole Old Testament ritual and priesthood (Augustine, *City of God* 16, 22, p. 680; See also Augustine, *Sermon Denis* 3, trans. D. Sheerin, *The Eucharist* [Wilmington: Michael Glazier, 1986], 102–103).

far way, because the thief failed to appreciate Him. We too are going to have the usual parties. But are we going to take Him into our arms as the Virgin did? Don't take for granted what we ought to take with gratitude.

May this never be. Rather may we repent of our neglect of the Christ Child and trust alone in His manger and cross. He has already taken upon Himself all our neglect, failure, and sin and gives us His forgiveness, life, and salvation. This Advent and Christmas season, come to His manger in the means of grace where He comes, bestowing upon us all His blessings. Here is found the only help for the helpless and hope for the hopeless. Receive Him, the true Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness with healing in His wings. Amen. LSQ



# Book Reviews

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## Book Review: A Theology of Matthew

Charles L. Quarles. *A Theology of Matthew: Jesus Revealed as Deliverer, King, and Incarnate Creator*. Phillipsburg: P&R Publishing, 2013. 220 pages. \$17.99

Charles L. Quarles is professor of New Testament and Biblical Studies at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina. As part of the series *Explorations in Biblical Theology*, he has written an interesting study of the theology of Matthew's Gospel.

According to Quarles, Matthew uses four major themes from the Old Testament, which are Christological and typological in nature, and Matthew shows how they are fulfilled in Jesus Christ. These Old Testament themes and pictures find their ultimate reality in Christ. There is an intimate connection between the

Old Testament shadow and New Testament fulfillment. Everything in Scripture climaxes in the Savior.

In the first part of his book, "Foundations for a Theology of Matthew," Quarles gives a brief overview of the Gospel of Matthew (covering authorship, date, audience, structure, and purpose), along with a survey of major theological themes. Here he leaves open the possibility that the Ancient Church may have been correct when it taught that Matthew originally wrote his Gospel in Hebrew or Aramaic (7–8). As part of his overview of Matthew, the author summarizes all the Old Testament prophecies fulfilled in this Gospel (28–29), which is a useful list for the study of Matthew.

In the second part of the book, "The New Moses: Jesus, Our Savior," the author portrays Jesus as the new Moses, who rescues His people from sin. As Moses delivered Israel—enslaved by the cruel pharaoh—in

the first Exodus, so the new Moses, Jesus Christ, delivered all people from the slavery of sin and the cruel satanic pharaoh in the new Exodus. Based on Deuteronomy 18:15–19, rabbinic tradition and the Ancient Church assumed that Jesus would be a prophet like Moses only greater (34–35). According to Quarles, Matthew teaches that Jesus is like Moses in His infancy (35–37). Jesus is like Moses in His teaching ministry (37–39), and He is like Moses in His fasting (39). The Savior is like Moses in the miracles that are associated with His ministry (39–42) and is like Moses in His transfiguration (42–45). The author sees that an important extension of Matthew’s portrayal of Jesus as the new Moses is his presentation of Jesus as the suffering servant of Isaiah. Ancient Jewish interpretation preserved in the Targums identifies the suffering servant as the Messiah (60–66).

Quarles summarizes the new Moses theme in Matthew as follows:

Matthew shows that Jesus is the new Moses, our Savior, Redeemer, and Deliverer. He has led a new spiritual exodus and initiated the new covenant. He is the servant of the Lord who suffered the wrath of God against sin so that believers can be forgiven. We should respond to the new Moses by repenting of our sins and trusting him to deliver us from the punishment that our sins deserve and redeem us from the spiritual slavery that these sins imposed. (192)

Quarles indicates that Jesus is the David Redivivus in the third section of his book, “The New David: Jesus, Our King.” Here Matthew explains that Jesus is a king like David. He is the king of God’s eternal kingdom. Throughout the Old Testament, the Messiah is pictured as the Savior King, the true Son of David. In Ezekiel the promised Messiah is even spoken of as David, “I will establish one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them—My servant David. He shall feed them and be their shepherd. And I, the Lord, will be their God, and My servant David a prince among them; I, the Lord, have spoken” (34:23–24 NKJV). In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus is associated with David in His genealogy.

In Hebrew gematria,<sup>1</sup> the name *David* consists of three letters and has the numeric value of fourteen (*dalet* [4] + *waw* [6] + *dalet* [4]). This fits well with the pattern of three sets of fourteen generations in Matthew’s version of Jesus’ genealogy. Furthermore, the name *David* appears as the fourteenth name in the genealogy. The number fourteen most naturally points to King David. Thus, the repetition of the number fourteen in the summary of Jesus’ genealogy reinforces the emphatic

<sup>1</sup> “Gematria is a form of biblical interpretation using numerical values of letters of the Hebrew alphabet to decipher words. In gematria, the first letter of the alphabet equals the number one; the second, the number two; and so forth” (74).

description of Jesus as “son of David” in the introduction to this genealogy. These features combine to show that the primary purpose of the genealogy is to show that Jesus belongs to David’s legal line. (74)

Jesus is associated with David by the circumstances of His birth (79–81). He is associated with David through His fulfillment of prophecy (81–82). Jesus, the new David, fulfills the Davidic covenant (83–85) and as the new David will reign over the kingdom of heaven (85–89). Matthew connects the new David theme with the Son of Man in Daniel (7:9–14) showing that Jesus is the only begotten of the Father from all eternity (89–94).

Jesus the Messiah is indeed great David’s greater Son our Savior.

Jesus is the new David, our King. He is the fulfillment of God’s covenant with David. He will rule over a kingdom composed of people from every nation, tribe, and tongue forever and ever. We must kneel before his throne as humble subjects, recognizing that he bears all authority and that he deserves and demands our fullest submission. (192–193)

The author refers to Jesus as the new Abraham in the fourth section of his book, “The New Abraham: Jesus, Our Founder.” Quarles explains that Matthew portrays Jesus as the founder of the new chosen people.

After God’s Old Testament people continually turned their backs on Him and rejected Him, God finally rejected the national Israel as His people (Matthew 21:33–46; 23:37–45). In the New Testament, Jesus, the new Abraham, serves as the founder of new Israel and establishes the new chosen people of God. He chose twelve disciples as the beginning of the new twelve tribes of spiritual Israel (107–109). Now the church is the new Israel of God (109–111).

Matthew’s Gospel proclaims that the true Israel is not the state of Israel or all Jewish people, but it is the church, God’s new chosen people composed of those Jews and Gentiles who trust in Christ Jesus as their only Savior from sin.

Jesus is the new Abraham, our Founder. He fulfills God’s covenant with Abraham by creating a new chosen people composed of both Jews and Gentiles who will be holy as God is holy and who will serve as a light to the nations. The new Israel must proclaim the gospel boldly and compassionately to others. (193)

In the fifth part of the book, “The New Creator: Jesus, Our God,” Quarles points out that Jesus makes His people new. When God completed the work of creation on the sixth day, He said concerning everything that it was very good (Genesis 1:31). In the fall into sin, the creation was ruined and tainted by sin. Therefore there was a need for the new creation. Jesus is God with us acting to make His people anew.

As God spoke and the Holy Spirit moved on the face of the waters at the creation, so at Jesus' Baptism the Holy Spirit descended in the form of a dove and the Father spoke, "This is My Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17), indicating that Jesus is the new creation.

According to Quarles, the Gospel of Matthew is pictured as a new book of Genesis (177–180). Jesus bears the power of the new creation (180–182). Jesus promises to bring the new creation (183–185). He the one who creates anew make us His new creation.

Jesus is the new Creator, Immanuel, Yahweh in human flesh. He performs the miracle of new creation, transforming his people from the inside out, so that they become the people he desires. Those who experience the new creation never cease to be awed by his glory and greatness and offer him their sincerest adoration, worship, and praise. (193)

My major criticism of this otherwise excellent book is Quarles' lack of the use of Baptism in his new creator or new creation theme. This probably has to do with his theological background. He speaks of Jesus making us His new creation, but he does not tie this to Baptism in Matthew 28 as is seen above. He should have included the truth that Jesus is the one who creates anew, making us a new creation in the baptismal waters where the Spirit descends and God speaks His creative Word through His

called servant. Baptism is the sacrament of recreation where we are made anew, for here trust in the Savior is worked in the heart (Titus 3:5). The connection to Baptism would add to the book. Quarles also could have made use of the Lord's Supper when he refers to the new covenant.

I question if "new Creator" is the best designation for this theme. It may be confusing, for Christ was present in the beginning at the first creation as the creative Word. It might be better to refer to this theme as the "Recreator" theme.

Based on a variant reading of the Septuagint, Quarles is inclined to view the "Ancient of Days" and the "Son of Man" in Daniel 7:9–14 as being the same individual (136–137). I definitely differ with this reading of the text. It is usually maintained that the Ancient of Days refers to God the Father and the Son of Man to the preincarnate Jesus.

Another reviewer of this book has noted that the four themes which Quarles discusses can even be seen in Matthew's climactic Great Commission (Matthew 28:18–20). The Great Commission really summarizes his main points.

v. 18, "all authority" → new David

v. 19, "of all nations" → new Abraham

v. 20, "to observe all things that I have commanded you" → new Moses

v. 20, “I am with you always” → new Creator<sup>2</sup>

With these criticisms aside, I believe that this is an excellent book. It emphasizes major Christological and typological themes of the Old Testament. The use of these themes connects the Old Testament and the New Testament, emphasizing the unity of Scripture. There is a prevailing view that sees a disconnect between the Testaments. Many do not find Christ in the Old Testament. Showing that the Old Testament themes are fulfilled in the New Testament confirms the unity of Scripture. The Old Testament is the book of Christ.

These themes have an apologetic value. In Deuteronomy 18:15–19 we are told that the Messiah would be a prophet like Moses only greater. Hundreds of years later this truth was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. This indicates the divine authorship of Scripture. A proof for the reliability of Scripture is the fulfillment of prophecy. The Christian can be certain that Scripture is inerrant because its prophecies are fulfilled.

The use of such themes are a beneficial homiletical and teaching tool. Seeing the themes of a particular text gives new insights to the preacher and invigorates his presentation of the text. It adds color and richness to his preaching. Here one finds illustrative material that comes directly from the text. Scripture is used to illustrate Scripture.

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<sup>2</sup> Douglas Sean O’Donnell, book review, *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 58, no. 1 (2015): 178–180.

These themes assist readers and congregants in better comprehending the text and widen their knowledge of Scripture. Seeing the connection between the Old Testament and the New increases their appreciation for both Testaments. In a time when there is an anemia of biblical knowledge, these themes add to one’s familiarity with Scripture. The use of major motifs and pictures helps one memorize the divine truth and benefits in meditating on the Word and taking it to heart.

This book is written in a very readable form. This study of major themes would be valuable for congregational Bible study and personal study. It will significantly widen one’s understanding of Scripture. I believe this would be a valuable book in the hands of both pastor and layman alike.

– Gaylin R. Schmeling

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## Book Review: Cherished Gifts—Devotions for Moms by a Mom

Martin, Katie. *Cherished Gifts: Devotions for Moms By A Mom*. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 2015. 156 pages. \$12.99.

Theology is practical. That means that it applies to people at the stage of life they are in right now. And for those whose vocation is *mother*, the stage of life they are in right now has a unique set of difficulties to contend with. That’s why there is a need for devotional books specifically for this group of women who can feel



so alone, even when surrounded by several other human beings every day.

*Cherished Gifts* is a book published by Northwestern Publishing House, written by Katie Martin, a mother whose heart went out to her fellow mothers struggling with the difficulties of motherhood. This was the motivation for her writing of the book and it shows. The mission of applying sin and grace to motherhood is laid out in the first chapter, a personal letter to her readers, saying,

Through sleep-deprived eyes, we see that our children are exactly like us—sinners in need of a Savior.... Our charge as Christian mothers is to tell these little ones about the great love of Jesus and that he died on a cross to earn heaven for them. And this task has an impending deadline. These children are not ours to keep but, rather, are on loan from God to train and prepare to go back to him. (2)

This is *not* a book of devotions for one's deathbed. This is *not* a book of devotions for the rugged outdoorsman. This is a book of devotions for the woman whose children aren't listening to her. This is a book of devotions for the woman who is constantly exhausted from chasing children twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week. This is a book of devotions for mom.

As a book of devotions for mom, I appreciate several aspects of the book's format. First of all, each devotion begins with a portion of God's Word upon which the thoughts for

that devotion are based. While other devotional books only give a reference for you to look up in a companion Bible, here the text is printed out. This is practical. And, along with the book's easy-to-handle size (5" x 7"), this makes the book relatively easy to hold and read in an environment which won't always be conducive to Bible reading. The devotions are also an appropriate length, about 3–4 pages for each devotion. I'm guessing they're under 500 words on average, and they are filled with stories from the author's life which should easily resonate with other mothers reading the book. More than once in reading the book I was reminded of my own wife and children who have had similar experiences.

As is typical in this type of devotional, each chapter ends with a prayer. An interesting extra feature of each devotion is the inclusion of a "Strength From God's Word" section. This section gives the reader an extra opportunity to study God's Word. Overlapping with the devotion's theme, the "Strength From God's Word" section offers a related Bible reference for the mother to read independently with several study questions to consider, or other activities related to the extra reading to encourage contemplating God's Word.

The best feature of the book is, far and away, the clear presentation of Law and Gospel. This kind of subject matter can lend itself to schmaltzy, self-focused devotions on the shelf of your local evangelical book store. However, Martin never says, "Chin up! You can do it! After all, look at

Jesus—He had it worse than you! What’s your problem?” Instead Martin says,

In [God’s] Word alone, we find true peace and comfort as the story of our Savior unfolds before us. It began after Adam and Eve first sinned in the Garden of Eden and were promised a solution to sin. It was fulfilled when Jesus lived, died, and rose to earn the salvation that we could not. God’s Word offers the only cure for empty lives. When sin and trouble empty us, God is there to fill us with his undeserved love and the peace it brings. (63)

This kind of Law/Gospel division runs rampant through the book. As Martin laments how she is turning into her mother (which turns out to be good, as her mother taught her the Gospel—pp. 46–49), or how her blood pressure surges as her toddler squeezes all the toothpaste onto the counter just before bedtime (or how moments later, her parental amnesia kicks in during bedtime prayers and hymns, just as God has righteous “amnesia” toward us for Jesus’ sake—pp. 93–96), Martin always connects the message to Christ.

Most of my issues with the book are probably persnickety. As a parish pastor with regular preaching responsibilities, I love devotional books

like this because they can provide an excellent source of sermon illustrations if they have a good index. In my mind, a Scripture index is the minimum a book like this should have. Unfortunately, this book is missing an index altogether, making its utility for finding illustrations quite limited.

There are thirty-nine devotions here. This means the book will last just over a month if one devotion is read every day. Or, if read once a week, it could last a good portion of a year. However, if those were the suggested reading plans, I’d prefer to find either thirty-one devotions or fifty-two.

Also, regarding the “Strength From God’s Word” sections at the end of every chapter, the reading suggested is a reference only, without the text being printed. I understand why this is. It is an *extra* Bible reading. However, the practicality of motherhood might have made it wiser to print the text in full, and format the questions to allow for easy reading and contemplation.

I will say again: my criticisms are largely superficial. The reality is that this book clearly presents biblical comfort to a demographic which is probably under served in our circles. This makes it a worthwhile book on its own merit, and a must-have for the mothers among us—whether in our congregations or in our own homes.

– Daniel J. Hartwig

## Book Review: Where Christ Is Present

Montgomery, John Warwick, and Gene Edward Veith, eds. *Where Christ Is Present: A Theology for All Seasons on the 500th Anniversary of the Reformation*. Irvine, CA: NRP Books, 2015. 256 pages. \$19.95.

As befits a book written from the Lutheran perspective on the eve of the Reformation's 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary, *Where Christ Is Present* emphasizes that the legacy of the Reformation and Luther's theology is not fragmenting Christianity but recovering its wholeness in Scripture. The authors primarily compare Lutheran theology with competing viewpoints of the Reformation Era that are still prevalent today in a variety of Christian denominations. A product of eleven Lutheran scholars, the text is a compilation of essays, each addressing a different defining facet of Lutheran theology and practice.

Gene Edward Veith's essay outlines Lutheranism's place within the larger context of modern Christianity. He first addresses two broad, modern tendencies in churches: secularization and the so-called "church growth" movement. Justifying his positions with statistical analysis, he asserts a correlation between the theology of secularized, liberal denominations and numerical decline. Likewise, he posits that churches of the church growth movement do not actually achieve numerical gain through the conversion of non-Christians or the unchurched but merely by absorbing members of other congregations.

Veith then argues that the modern church must focus on the essence of Christianity: the Gospel of Jesus' work for us. In addition, the church must represent catholicity by "preserving and building upon the riches of the historical Church in all its diversity" (33). He considers Lutheranism the embodiment of these ideals.

Cameron MacKenzie's history of the Reformation Era gives a useful outline of the doctrinal controversies that surrounded the Reformation and how they have shaped the beliefs of various church bodies still today. He highlights not only Luther's disagreements with Rome concerning what constituted the Gospel and the righteousness of God, but also the divergences among other Protestant groups. For example, Luther approached change with slow patience and with the attitude of retaining traditions if they did not conflict with Scripture, whereas reformers like Karlstadt made sweeping changes and tossed out a variety of traditions haphazardly. Likewise, Luther retained a traditional understanding of Communion (as the body and blood of Jesus) and infant baptism on the basis of plain Scripture regardless of whether it fit with human reason such as Zwingli emphasized.

Adam Francisco's excellent essay argues for the necessity of maintaining theological tradition in the interpretation of Scripture. No new doctrine should be discovered over the course of time. Thus there was a hermeneutical difference even among groups of the Reformation that maintained their beliefs were based on Scripture alone. Lutherans claimed

their interpretations were held to some extent throughout church history, whereas the Anabaptists among others elevated private judgment in interpretation, resulting in “hermeneutical novelty” (71). Francisco does, however, point out that tradition in exegesis does not mean “naïvely accepting” every interpretation throughout church history (76). Christians can be critical of tradition, while at the same time recognizing that the correct interpretation of Scripture should be found also among theologians of early Christianity to some extent. In that way, the Lutheran theological tradition does not view itself as an innovation but merely a continuation.

Rod Rosenblatt’s essay gives a good outline of the main Christian theological traditions and what each believes is the way of salvation. Each view is critiqued from the Lutheran tradition. At times, however, he may overextend his criticism. For example, he states, “Wesley said that ‘justification’ meant simply that his or her sin was forgiven” (100). Such is also the traditional Lutheran understanding: “Forgiveness of sins is the same as justification” (Ap. 4:76, Tappert translation). Nevertheless, for the novice reader this essay will be the most useful one for understanding the fundamental differences in defining the Gospel and obtaining salvation among modern Christian denominations.

There is no shortage of debate on Christian freedom and its relationship to the arts, especially with regard to music used for the divine service. Thus Craig Parton argues for a proper

balance and attitude in church music to “avoid the two-headed Cyclops of legalism and license” (166). The essay is written primarily with the backdrop of J. S. Bach as the paradigm of Lutheran music, worship, and vocation, although Parton does deal in passing with Lutheran visual artists too. He is, however, at times a bit overreaching with some statements concerning the extent to which Bach was a theologian. Although his sacred music has theologically significant text, Bach relied upon librettists, which limits the importance of his musical works in proving him a theologian “first and foremost” (171). Also, when he asserts, “Lutheranism has historically operated, at least artistically, most comfortably and naturally in the realm of high culture,” he is overlooking the low-culture roots of some early Reformation music, including many foundational chorale tunes (176). To be sure, his lively article is thought provoking but nevertheless a little overstated.

Other contributors to this anthology are Harold Senkbeil on the means of grace, Todd Wilken on the two kingdoms, Uwe Siemon-Netto on vocation, Steven Hein on the theology of the cross, and Angus Menuge on culture, art, and science. Their treatments of each subject matter are straightforward and adequate for the stated purpose of this book.

John Warwick Montgomery contributes an introduction and conclusion. They encapsulate the purpose of *Where Christ Is Present*, which is to persuade the reader toward the Lutheran faith. They are

not without quirks, however. He grants that there is some sort of an “age of accountability” without much more explanation (12). When recommending Lutheran churches, he gives examples of some problems that may still be in a particular Lutheran congregation when looking for one, like “refusal to engage in any cooperative evangelistic outreach with biblically conservative but non-Lutheran churches or with evangelists such as Billy Graham who are not Lutherans themselves” (236). It is a strange criticism after warning about other congregations for possibly following after “church growth’ gimmicks” a sentence earlier. It seems unreasonable to criticize following evangelical

church growth gimmicks while also criticizing a lack of cooperation with evangelicals.

Nevertheless, *Where Christ Is Present* is a useful outline of the Lutheran faith and how it compares to other Christian faiths in general. It also adequately explains how the controversies of the Reformation have had their impact still to this day. The arguments and explanations can be a good resource for Lutheran pastors as well as laypersons who regularly have theological discussions with people of different faiths, and the book should prove a welcome addition to their libraries.

– Nicholas D. Proksch

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