

# Concordia Theological Quarterly



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## *Table of Contents*

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<b>Islam's Future in America</b> Adam S. Francisco .....	3
<b>How Do You Know Whether You Are a Man or a Woman?</b> Scott E. Stiegemeier .....	19
<b>God Our Mother?: Biblical and Philosophical Considerations in Feminist God Language</b> Mark P. Surburg .....	49
<b>Another Look at <i>Imago Dei</i>: Fulfilled in the Incarnate One</b> Burnell F. Eckardt Jr. ....	67
<b>The Divine Presence within the Cloud</b> Walter A. Maier III .....	79
<b>Not Just Proof-Texting: Friedrich Balduin's Orthodox Lutheran Use of Exegesis for Doctrine</b> Benjamin T. G. Mayes .....	103

<b>Confirmation, Catechesis, and Communion: A Historical Survey</b>	
Geoffrey R. Boyle .....	121
<b>Religious Freedom in America</b>	
R. Neely Owen .....	143
<b>Theological Observer</b> .....	161
The Sanctity of Marriage	
Rev. Dr. Ronald R. Feuerhahn Remembered	
<b>Book Reviews</b> .....	165
<b>Books Received</b> .....	190

## Theological Observer

### The Sanctity of Marriage

*The following discussion points concerning the sanctity of marriage and the U.S. Supreme Court's June 26, 2015, decision regarding same-sex marriage were prepared by Peter J. Scaer, Associate Professor of Exegetical Theology, Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.*

1. The Supreme Court decision changes nothing about our Christian faith. We believe that there is still a higher court and that Christ will be our final judge. As Christians, we obey the government (Romans 13), but we recognize that our greatest allegiance is to God and his word, and that in matters of conscience, "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

2. We therefore will continue to support one man one woman marriage, as it is taught in Genesis 1 and 2, and as it is taught by Christ himself (Matt 19:1-9 and Mark 10:1-12).

3. We will continue to preach marriage as a picture of Christ's sacrificial love for his bride the church (Ephesians 5), even as we celebrate the Lord's Supper, which is the beginning of the wedding feast that has no end (Matthew 22; Revelation 21).

4. The church will continue to be a place of healing and forgiveness, restoration and mercy. As our Lord has said, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance" (Luke 5:31-32).

5. We are all called to repentance. As a people, we have not treated marriage with the respect that it deserves. Divorce is far too common among us, and too often we condone and support even our fellow Christians as they live together outside of wedlock. Knowing that we cannot rely upon worldly wisdom, we are called to hear and reflect upon God's Word and once more come to him for forgiveness.

6. True love calls us to speak the truth so that all may know the forgiveness and love of Christ. We cannot celebrate that which God calls sin (Rom 1:18-32; 1 Cor 6:9). By doing so, we leave people in their sin and apart from Christ.

7. We will also continue to support traditional marriage as an earthly institution, knowing that it is a reflection of natural law and that any law that goes against the natural law will necessarily be harmful and unjust. Written into creation, marriage is good for men, women and children.

8. The Court has been wrong before. In the Dred Scott decision, African Americans were counted as less than human. In *Roe v. Wade*, the rights of the littlest children were ignored, leading to the deaths of 57 million children. The Supreme Court, like any human institution, is prone to error. As Christians, we recognize that there is a higher, heavenly court and that God's Word does not change. We also recognize that unjust decisions must be challenged for the good of our neighbor.

9. The debate over marriage has nothing to do with equality. The pertinent question is, "What is Marriage?" The traditional definition is not arbitrary, but is based upon the fact that every child has a biological mother and father and should have a reasonable expectation that he/she will be raised by those parents. Traditional marriage discriminates against no one. The real discrimination will come against those who hold fast to God's Word.

10. Same-sex marriage is not a civil rights issue. Whether you are black or white makes no difference, but men and women are different biologically, psychologically, and emotionally. From our differences, new life comes into the world, and with our complementary differences, we are best able to support and nurture the next generation.

11. Marriage is the only institution that binds a man to his wife and to any children that result from that union. Only the union of one man and one woman is able to produce a child, and for that reason there is marriage.

12. Mothers and fathers are not interchangeable. For good reason, we celebrate Mother's Day and Father's Day. It is a blessing to have both a mom and a dad, each of whom brings something special to the family. In a fallen world this is not always possible. God salvages difficult situations. Therefore, our congregations will continue to be true families in Christ, as we continue to call upon God as our Father.

13. Some ask, "How will same-sex marriage affect me?" Consider, for instance, the way that no-fault divorce laws have hurt our society and left so many of our children abandoned and unprotected. The values of permanence, exclusivity, and monogamy are inherently tied to the fact that only man and one woman can produce a child and have an obligation to care for that child.

14. So-called "gay marriage" is not the end of the debate but only the beginning. There is now no consistent logical argument against polygamy, group marriage or temporary marriage. Such arguments, once thought to be extreme, are now commonplace. In the midst of such confusion, the church must continue to speak the truth in love.

15. Marriage is about more than the relationship of two people. It is the institution that binds the generations together. At the birth of every child, the mother, by the very nature of things, is present. Marriage is the one institution that encourages, incentivizes, and obligates the father to be present as well. Marriage then creates a network of aunts and uncles, grandparents and cousins, helping to establish a child's sense of belonging.

16. As same-sex marriage becomes the law of the land, Christians will be increasingly persecuted for their belief. Already, florists and bakers have come under fire. Businessmen have lost their jobs and reputations. Christian adoption agencies have been forced to close. Pastors have had their sermons subpoenaed. Christian schools have already come under assault, having to fight for their accreditation. The free exercise of religion, a constitutionally protected right, is under great assault. We therefore must stand together with people of conscience. We must support those who speak God's truth in love and are persecuted for living according to their faith in Christ.

17. As Christians, we are called to be faithful to Christ our Bridegroom. The days ahead will be trying and our faith will be tested. The world will call us haters and we will be mocked and ridiculed (John 15:18-25). Yet, even in the midst of persecution, Jesus calls us to rejoice, saying, "Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matt 5:12). As Christians, we will listen to the Good Shepherd, knowing that his words are faithful and true. Though the world may hate us, we cling to Christ who says, "Be faithful unto death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10).

### **Rev. Dr. Ronald R. Feuerhahn Remembered**

His face beamed with delight when I entered his room in the rehabilitation wing of Laclede Groves Convalescent Home in St. Louis. Whatever the circumstances, Ron and Carol always welcomed visitors with warm smiles. Ronald's delight was heightened by the chocolate ice cream he was savoring, and its consumption would not be interrupted by a visit from an old friend, student, and former pastor. Our visits usually included updates on the whereabouts and accomplishments of his students. This always brought him joy. He loved his students and was proud of them. We in return loved and respected him.

It was the Lord's Day, March 8, 2015, and I didn't know it would be the last time I would see him on this side of eternity. The last memory engraved in my mind and heart might have been that of his smiling face taking delight in the bowl of ice cream, devouring it as if it was the best thing he had ever tasted in life. As it turned out, this would not be the last image of my former teacher and friend. I concluded the visit with prayer. Ron, Carol, and I then prayed the Lord's Prayer together, and finally, with his head tilted to the side, shoulders bent and arm twisted, he made the sign of the cross as he pronounced a final blessing. The last words I heard him speak were accompanied with the sign of the cross as he placed upon us the Lord's name. Where his name is, there is he, and with this his grace and peace were bestowed anew. Ronald R. Feuerhahn: doctor of the church, theologian, church historian, churchman—but most of all a pastor.

Ron and Carol were faithful members at Reformation Lutheran Church in St. Louis where I served as pastor for ten years. They were actively involved in the life of the church and were loved and respected by their fellow members. Their participation included regular attendance in Bible class, singing in the church choir under Kantor Henry Gerike, and Ron assisting with liturgy and preaching. One Sunday following the Divine Service, Dr. Feuerhahn and Dr. Horace Hummel approached me with a serious look on their faces. They asked to see me in my office. I wondered, "What did I do wrong now?" They entered my office with sheepish smiles on their faces and a box in hand. "We would like to donate this to the church," they said. The box contained a beautiful chalice. Since its founding, the congregation never had a common cup. Now we did.

It was a great honor to be Ron's pastor, graduate student, brother in the Office of the Holy Ministry, and colleague in international theological education. Dr. Feuerhahn's ministry took place at the seminary, congregational, synodical, and international levels. All who were privileged to work with him agreed that he was the epitome of what it means to be a churchman, teacher of the church, and a gentleman.

Stay with us, Lord, and keep us true;  
 Preserve our faith our whole life through—  
 Your Word alone our heart's defense,  
 The Church's glorious confidence. *LSB* 585:6

Timothy C. J. Quill