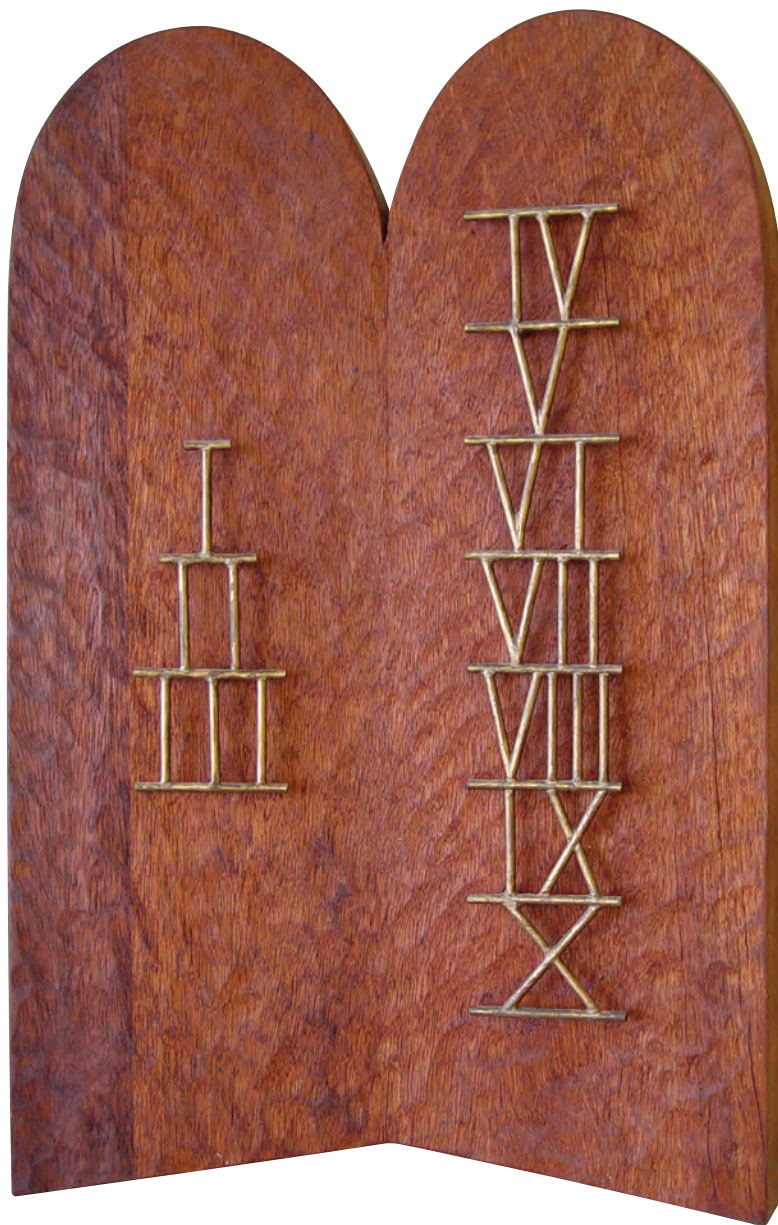


For the Life of the World

Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne

February 2012, Volume Sixteen, Number One



Old Testament Prophets Symbols
Moses

“When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the two tablets of the Testimony, the tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God.”
Exodus 31:18

Currently displayed at
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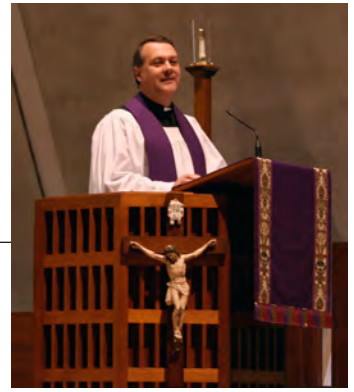


**One God, Two Kingdoms and the First Amendment:
A Trinity that Should Challenge Christians and the Church to Action**
By Mr. Kevin J. Leininger

Faith, Public Life and the Role of the Christian Citizen in This New Century
By Mr. Timothy S. Goeglein

Man as Cyborg: A New Challenge
By Dr. William C. Weinrich

FROM THE PRESIDENT



The Church's Place in a Changing Culture

The claim that American culture is experiencing massive changes surprises no one reading this magazine. One of the areas most affected by these changes is that of organized religion, and, of course, that means we Lutherans feel the effects as well. Several years ago the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life published its survey findings on the Religious Landscape of the United States (<http://religions.pewforum.org/reports>). While it found that more than nine out of ten Americans believe in “God,” it also showed that a majority of Americans believe that there are many paths to this “God.” Indeed, 57% of Evangelicals, which would include most Missouri Synod Lutherans, believed there are other ways to God the Father other than through Jesus Christ.

This is a significant theological shift in American thinking. But it is only one change among many, and such shifts are likely to continue. Dr. Daniel Aleshire, Executive Director of The Association of Theological Schools, recently wrote:

The culture-shaping power of religion has weakened and continues to dissipate—not because the seminaries are employing or educating less talented people, but because the broader culture has reassigned religion from a social role of culture shaper to one that is more personal and private. The culture will recognize religion as a valuable personal choice, perhaps even a noble one, but is less inclined to give it a seat at the table where the fundamental future of the culture is developed. This is not a choice that religion has made; it is a choice that the culture has made about religion. Seminary graduates will make a significant contribution to religious lives and visions of countless individuals and congregations. However, they will not have the culture-shaping influence wielded by [earlier seminary leaders]. The future of theological schools will be in shaping American religion in the context of this changed cultural reality.¹

It is to these continually shifting realities that this issue of *For the Life of the World* points. Dr. William Weinrich explores advances in technology that have impacted the way the human body functions. He notes that “our culture is filled with the conviction that there is no such reality as human nature. The human person is rather a construct of choices, the ever-flexible result of a personal will. And, the only limitations to what we can become lie in the present limitations of our technological capacities.” Such perspectives have enormous implications for the Christian faith, which confesses that Christ “was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the Virgin Mary, and was made man.”

What are we then to do? Even as Kevin Leininger recognizes that “as Lutherans, we know that state intrusions into the church seldom produce orthodoxy,” still he hopes for an active Lutheran population that will engage the present culture so that the distinctively Christian perspective might be heard more clearly. Indeed, as Timothy Goeglein notes, “Faith puts purpose, vision and meaning at the center of American life.” Living out that faith, we might find ourselves moving “Toward an American Renaissance.”

Lutherans distinguish between Law and Gospel and we are well aware of the ongoing effects of sin. We know that this world will never be perfect until the final restoration. Still, we wait in hope and we carry out our vocations to the fullest as God enables us and strengthens us (Romans 8:18-30).

May God bless you in this season and always!

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President, Concordia Theological Seminary

¹ Daniel Aleshire, “Some Observations about Theological Schools and the Future,” *ATS Presidents Intensive*, December 8, 2011, p. 3.

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Show me a country that has a healthy, flourishing culture, and I will show you a healthy, flourishing country. Show me a country that has an unhealthy, diseased culture, and I will show you an unhealthy, diseased country. Faith unifies and provides continuity, stability and ordered liberty. Faith puts purpose, vision and meaning at the center of American life.

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This movement goes by various names: *Humanity +*, *Posthumanism*, *Transhumanism*. The idea is that the body is a rather crude prosthesis of the mind, more of an accident of nature rather than something essential to human life and happiness. Moreover, the body is to a great extent a “weight” which limits through aging, sickness, weakness and the like.

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One God, Two Kingdoms and the First Amendment:

A Trinity that Should Challenge Christians and the Church to Action

By Mr. Kevin J. Leininger

When the Pharisees wanted to lure Christ into a controversy over taxation, He simply asked them whose face was on the coin. “Give to Caesar what is Caesar’s,” He said, “and to God what is God’s.” The book of Matthew tells us they went away, amazed by what they had heard.

But from Martin Luther to Thomas Jefferson to today's Supreme Court, the relationship between church and state has been anything but simple—reflecting an increasingly complex and fluid relationship between the two God-ordained institutions.

So how should that tension be resolved? Under what circumstances—if ever—should religion enter or even dominate the public sphere? Should Christians applaud Congress' November reaffirmation of the nation's "In God We Trust" motto, wring their hands over the secularization of Christmas or allow candidates' faith or lack of it to influence their votes?

The Lutheran Confessions and even Scripture itself cannot fully answer such questions because we live under a Constitution and man-made laws Christians are bound to obey (according to Acts) so long as they do not conflict with God's laws.

In Europe on the eve of the Reformation, there was no such distinction. The pope controlled both church and state, with the power to criminalize even theological disputes. As a result, the Augsburg Confession contended that the church had "confused the power of bishops with the temporal sword. Out of this careless confusion many serious wars, tumults and uprisings have resulted because the bishops, under pretext of the power given them by Christ . . . have presumed to set up and depose kings and emperors. (We) assert that . . . power of bishops is a power and command of God to preach the Gospel."

This familiar "two kingdoms" doctrine was scripturally sound but also politically advantageous. The Augsburg Confession, it should be remembered, was addressed to German Emperor Charles V and other government leaders, many of whom ultimately provided Luther and other reformers much-needed protection and support. But in his 1530 treatise on Psalm 82, Luther also suggested that rulers should "advance God's word" and "put down opposing doctrines" that might breed civil unrest. And by the time the Augsburg Confession was revised around 1540, Philip Melancthon wrote that "the proper gift that kings are to bestow upon

the church is to search out true doctrine and to see that good teachers be set over the churches."

It is important, therefore, not to confuse contemporary American church-state arguments with what happened in Europe nearly 500 years ago. As Dr. Cameron A. MacKenzie, Chairman of the CTS Historical Theology Department, wrote in the January 2007 edition of the *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, "For Luther, temporal rulers who promoted true religion even to the point of punishing heretics were not mixing the two kingdoms, but those who took measures that inhibited the Gospel were."

Unlike the Lutheran Confessions, the U.S. Constitution has relatively little to say on the subject, most of it in the first 16 words of the First Amendment: the so-called establishment clause ("Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion") and the free exercise clause ("or prohibiting the free exercise thereof"). "What does that mean?" We've been debating that ever since.

According to legal historian J. M. O'Neil, the framers intended only to prohibit a "formal, legal union of a church or religion with the central government, giving one church or religion an exclusive position of power." Many early Americans were only too familiar with the Church of England and did not want a national church here—even though six of the original colonies were supporting specific churches when the Bill of Rights was adopted, and some states prohibited non-Protestants from holding public office into the mid-1800s.

Echoing Luther and Melancthon, Supreme Court Chief Justice Joseph Story (1812-1845) wrote that "at the time of the adoption of the Constitution, the general if not universal sentiment was that Christianity ought to receive encouragement from the state, so far as it was not incompatible with the private rights of conscience and the freedom of religious worship."

But that began to change in 1925—in a case having absolutely nothing to do with religion. Until then, the Supreme Court had applied the Bill of Rights only to the federal government. But in a case

involving Benjamin Gitlow, who had been prosecuted after the newspaper for which he worked advocated a communist revolution in America, the court said it "assumed" the states were also bound by the due-process clause contained in the 14th Amendment—and by all the other amendments, as well.

That included the First, of course, meaning that the court had just authorized itself to decide when, where or whether church and state should mingle. And so, in a 1947 case challenging New Jersey subsidies for parochial-school busing, Justice Hugo Black wrote that the "clause against the establishment of religion by laws was intended to erect a wall of separation between church and state,"—a phrase borrowed from an 1802 letter from

Christians may lament the secularization of American culture or even sympathize with Luther's desire that government promote "proper" religion. But as Lutherans, we know that state intrusions into the church seldom produce orthodoxy—as seen in the forced union of Germany's Lutheran and Reformed churches in the early 1800s and the politically correct but theologically suspect state Lutheran churches of today.

Thomas Jefferson to the Danbury Baptist Association but found nowhere in the Constitution.

That "Everson" case was the cornerstone upon which the court's subsequent church-state rulings rested, including the Abington Township vs. Schempp case that in 1963 disallowed reciting the Lord's Prayer and limited reading the Bible in public schools, and the 1971 Lemon vs. Kurtzman decision that produced the "three-pronged" test holding that a government's actions are constitutional if they do not have a religious purpose, do not have the primary effect of advancing or inhibiting religion, and do not result in an "excessive" entanglement of church and state.

The resulting decisions have produced a confusing mishmash of guidelines. In 2005, for example, the Supreme Court forbade the posting of the Ten Commandments in two Kentucky courthouses but approved the placement of a six-foot granite monument bearing the Commandments on the grounds of the Texas State Capital. The six-year-old Kentucky Commandments, the court reasoned, were intended to promote monotheism, while the Texas version, erected in 1961, was both historic and part of an educational group of similar markers. The twin 5-4 votes were decided in a Supreme Court building that contains its own references to Moses and the Commandments.

The nation's second president, John Adams, warned that the then-new Constitution was "made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other." He, too, was echoing Luther, who in 1523 wrote that secular government, unlike the church, "restrains the unchristian and the wicked so that they are obliged to keep the peace outwardly." Should Americans therefore be concerned with their government's often incoherent intrusions into religious issues and the secularization of society many believe it has produced?

But has America ever been a Christian nation as some insist? The "creator" and "nature's god" Jefferson invokes in the Declaration of Independence are not explicitly Christian. The Pledge of Allegiance places America "under God," but never mentions Christ. We sing "God bless America" and spend money stamped "In God We Trust." But what was that deity's name again? The nation's so-called "civic religion" doesn't say. Specificity is considered impolite and, depending upon the time and place, maybe even illegal.


Americans do not give up their right to influence the culture, vote or run for office simply because they are also Christians. The Augsburg Confession states that Christians "may without sin occupy civil offices." But the Constitution also prohibits a religious test for holding federal office.

Christians may lament the secularization of American culture or even sympathize with Luther's desire that government promote "proper" religion. But as Lutherans, we know that state intrusions into the church seldom produce orthodoxy—as seen in the forced union of Germany's Lutheran and Reformed churches in the early 1800s and the politically correct but theologically suspect state Lutheran churches of today.

As America becomes more religiously diverse—including some that recognize no separation at all between church and state—it will become even more important that government remain religiously neutral, providing the domestic tranquility and liberty that allows Christians and others to worship as they please.

If America is indeed becoming less Christian, after all, it is not because of the ACLU, the Supreme Court or because President Obama failed to mention God in his Thanksgiving proclamation. It is not because Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney is a Mormon or because a sign at the mall tried to avoid offending shoppers by urging them to "believe" (in what?) during the recent "holiday" (guess which) season.

This country's history was shaped by its Christian heritage, and that heritage is no less important to its future. But as Lutherans confess, faith cannot be imposed by the state. America will be a Christian nation only so long as its people are Christian—people in whom faith, repentance and love of God and neighbor have been planted by the Holy Spirit and nurtured by the church.

The government should stay out of the way, yes. But if the church isn't moving, it doesn't really matter—does it? 

Mr. Kevin J. Leininger is a columnist and reporter for the Fort Wayne News-Sentinel and a member of Zion Lutheran Church in Fort Wayne, Indiana. He can be contacted at kleininger@news-sentinel.com.



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