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4 The Future of Bioethics

By Dr. Gifford A. Grobien

Christians believe and confess that our bodies will not be free of infirmity in this natural life, this side of the resurrection. If bioethics is viewed only as a discipline for making good decisions about health, we will eventually find ourselves in despair at our inability to overcome sickness, debilitation, and death. Along the way, we will find ourselves tempted to take actions regarding human health and life far beyond the faithful and good stewardship delegated to us by God.

7 The Future of Higher Education

By Dr. Russel P. Dawn

By recognizing Truth, recovering it in our institutions, and maintaining it by intergenerational resolve, higher education can be harnessed for cultural renewal. Through all the changes in higher education that occupy our daily concerns—demographic shifts, online modality, demand for new programs—it’s the transcendent Truth that must define our future.

10 The Future of Parish Ministry

By Rev. Sean R. Kilgo

Many pastors in the last two years have found themselves doing things they never thought they’d have to do. But is this possibly all a distraction from what the future of parish ministry actually has in store for us? Perhaps, in order to get a picture of what the future of parish ministry will look like, we need to first turn our gaze backward to the Scriptures, and see what our Lord has instituted for the work of the ministry.

For the Life of the World

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WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

What Is a Human Being?

Scott E. Stiegemeier

What is a human being? This might be the defining theological question of our times. It literally stares us in the mirror. Our culture is riddled with an inadequate anthropology. We don't know what we are, and the evidence is everywhere. Confusion about what it means to be human is the root of many troubles.

The meaning of the body is of particular concern. We objectify our bodies, treating them like malleable containers for the soul, "the real you." It is as if the body is a means to an end instead of being an integrated part of your identity. This disordered view of the body degrades marriage, sex, and family. It results in medical atrocities which become ordinary and unremarkable. It becomes part of a utilitarian calculus that disposes of the lives of people on the margins. Only God's Word is the corrective lens through which we may see the reality.

In the beginning of Scripture, we read that God created humanity in His image and likeness, male and female. Every human being is honorable because we are the subject of God's creative intentions and the object of God's love in the garden and from the cross. When Jesus rose from the dead, He was found in a garden, bringing us back around to our original blessedness. Our glory does not originate within us, of course. We are simply the moon reflecting the sun and God is our Light.

Not everyone sees it that way, however. Not everyone thinks that human beings are the pinnacle of creation. The modern secular materialist says that a man is nothing more than a featherless biped who can do math. Thank you, Charles Darwin. We are just specialized combinations of atoms. If that is true, then a human being has no inherent worth. One will then only be honored and respected for traits such as rationality, volition, and productivity.

In the 19th century, Friedrich Nietzsche said that human beings possess no natural dignity, no glory on the basis of being human, and that Christianity has harmed the world for elevating the worthless masses. Nietzsche famously proclaimed that God is dead. If there is no God, then no one bears His image and respect for human life becomes a fantasy. Nietzsche is an apostle of this godless age.



Photo: Erik M. Lunsford/The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Holy Scripture shows that human beings are the height of God's creation, but Princeton philosopher Peter Singer calls this "speciesism." To him, privileging human life over the lives of animals is a form of bigotry akin to racism or sexism. There is nothing inherently dignified or special about merely being human, he tells us. Singer too is an apostle of this age.


Who is endangered by a distorted anthropology? The vulnerable and the marginalized most of all. The disabled. The poor. The immigrant. The racial

and ethnic minority. The kid with Down Syndrome. The grandmother with dementia. The other. Actually, it endangers you and everyone you know.

In the face of such threats, divine love means we will serve our neighbor and defend his life. To paraphrase Martin Niemöller speaking of the Nazis:

When they came for the Gypsies, I said nothing because I am not a Gypsy. When they came for the Jews, I said nothing, because I am not a Jew. When they came for the disabled newborns, I said nothing because I am not a disabled newborn. Then when they came for me, there was no one left to speak.

It is not about culture wars; it's spiritual warfare for which we are well-armed.

Only the Church can bring sanity to the world's madness with our message that human beings are God's offspring imbued with glory by the incarnation and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Awakening to this reality will change your self-perception and how you behave toward others. When you see your neighbor in God's light, it will be unthinkable to abuse or exploit him. Our theological anthropology is illuminated by our Christology. The Incarnate Lord alone can show us what it means to be human. We see the face of God in Christ Jesus, but He is also the definitive revelation of humanity, the Second Adam, and perfect image of God. The eternal Son of God became a man and remains a man. In Him, we can see what we are and what we will be. Let's preach Jesus and thereby save man. 

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