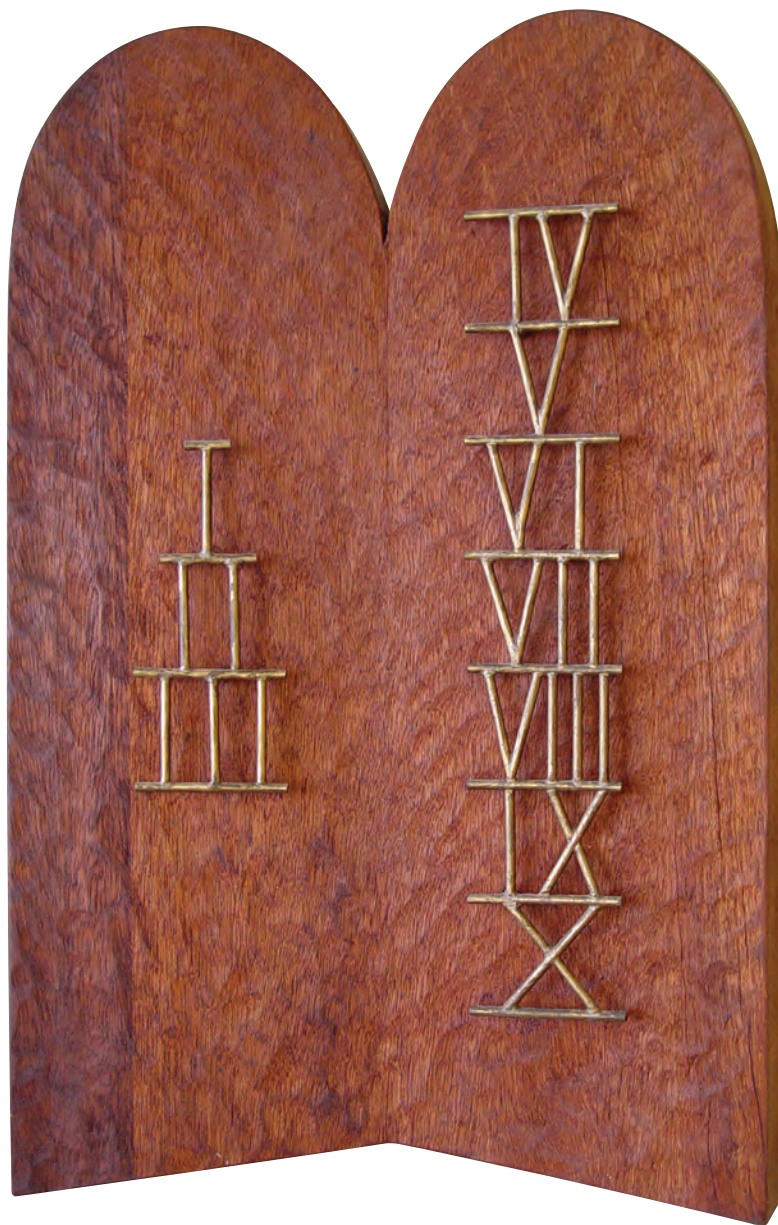


For the **Life of the World**

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
Concordia Theological Seminary,
Fort Wayne, Indiana, in Wyneken Hall.



**One God, Two Kingdoms and the First Amendment:
A Trinity that Should Challenge Christians and the Church to Action**

By Mr. Kevin J. Leininger

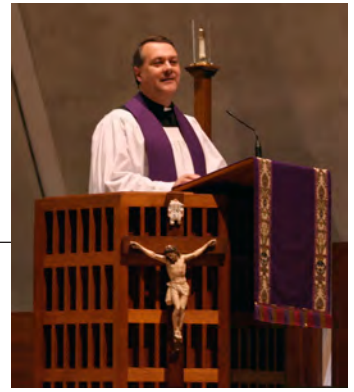
Faith, Public Life and the Role of the Christian Citizen in This New Century

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.

CONTENTS

Volume Sixteen, Number One



For the Life of the World

PUBLISHER
Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.
President

MANAGING EDITOR
Jayne E. Sheaffer

PRODUCTION COORDINATOR
Colleen M. Bartzsch

COPY EDITOR
Trudy E. Behning

ART DIRECTOR
Steve J. Blakey

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FEATURES

4 One God, Two Kingdoms and the First Amendment: A Trinity that Should Challenge Christians and the Church to Action

By Mr. Kevin J. Leininger

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.

7 Faith, Public Life and the Role of the Christian Citizen in This New Century

By Mr. Timothy S. Goeglein

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.

10 Man as Cyborg: A New Challenge

By Dr. William C. Weinrich

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.

Also in this issue:

What Does This Mean?	p. 13
Called to Serve	p. 14
In the Field	p. 16
Christ Academy: A Blessed Investment towards the Church's Future	p. 18
CTS Marks Library Expansion Milestone with Occupancy Celebration	p. 20
Lutheranism in the 21st Century	p. 22
Military Project: Bringing the Peace of Christ to Those Who Serve	p. 26

What Does This MEAN?

Two Kingdoms—One Lord

By Prof. John T. Pless

In one of his last sermons, a sermon on Psalm 8 preached in 1545, Luther observed that the kingdom of Christ is one of hearing while the kingdom of the world is one of seeing. Discussions concerning the place of the church in the public square inevitably lead us to reflect on how the Triune God is active in His creation. Luther's teaching on the two kingdoms does not segregate God's activity into the holy sphere of church leaving the world to its autonomous devices.

God is at work in the world in two different ways, with different means and with different ends. Hence, Luther can use the imagery of the ear to indicate God's right hand governance whereby He causes His Gospel to be preached to bring sinners to faith in Christ and through faith inherit eternal life. On the other hand, the left-handed work of God is identified with the eye, with seeing. In this kingdom, God uses law to measure and curb human behavior so that His creation is not plunged into total chaos and this world subjected to futility is preserved until the Last Day. Authorities in the kingdom of God's left hand evaluate on the basis of evidence that is observable. Here distributive justice is the order of the day. But in the kingdom of His right hand, God's verdict is the absolution, the proclamation of a forgiveness of sins not achieved by merit or worth. When the two kingdoms are mixed or muddled, Law and Gospel are confused.

Lutherans are rightly concerned with keeping the teaching of the two kingdoms straight and clear for the sake of the Gospel, which alone gives forgiveness of sins and eternal salvation. Luther fumed that the devil is incessantly seeking to "brew and cook" the two kingdoms together. Satan would like nothing better than duping folks into believing that salvation comes through secular government or, conversely, that the church is the institution to establish civil righteousness in the world. Either confusion displaces Christ and leaves sinners in despair. In a fine treatment of the two kingdoms, Gerhard Ebeling observed, "The gospel is deficient, if the two kingdoms is deficient" (G. Ebeling, "The Kingdom of Christ and the Kingdom of the World" in *Luther: An Introduction to His Thought*, [Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1970] p.189).

The teaching of the two kingdoms is necessary for the sake of the Gospel. This teaching guards us

from turning the Gospel into a political ideology. The Gospel works eschatologically, not politically, as it bestows pardon to sinners and establishes peace with God. It is a faith creating word of promise heard with the ear, trusted in the heart and confessed with the tongue. Christians, who live by faith in this promise, also live in this world where we use our eyes to see, to discern, to evaluate.

The realm of the political is not to be dismissed as ungodly or unworthy of the Christian's involvement. God is at work here, too. But He is at work here to protect and preserve His creation, making it a dominion where life can flourish. God's left-handed work is not to be confused with salvation, but it



is a good gift of daily bread to be received with thanksgiving by those who know the truth. Lutherans do not put their trust in political processes nor do they eschew political involvement. The teaching of the two kingdoms is an indispensable gift in an age beset by temptations both to secularism and sectarianism.

With a national election on the horizon, these next months would be good time to reflect on how the two kingdoms teaching might actually guide our thinking about faith and citizenship. Robert Benne's little book, *Good and Bad Ways to Think About Politics* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), would be an excellent text for personal reading or group discussion. 📖

Prof. John T. Pless serves as Assistant Professor of Pastoral Ministry and Missions and Director of Field Education at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. You can contact him at John.Pless@ctsfw.edu or 260-452-2271.

