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Our Lutheran understanding of good works and morality frees us to love the neighbor in ways that most of Christendom lacks. To that end, to help form pastors and deaconesses who are doers and not hearers only, the Life Team at Concordia Theological Seminary (CTSFW), Fort Wayne, was formed.

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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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Christian in Public Ethical Issues

By Peter J. Scaer

You can't legislate morality. That's what they say. Should there be laws governing strip clubs and gambling? How about abortion and marriage? Or should we simply live and let live? Some would say that the Church should stay away from social issues. After all, we do not want to become known as that fussy aunt, or the proverbial church lady who offers a voice of disapproval and a tsk-tsk every time someone is having fun.

When we promote marriage in society, we are promoting the common good. As such, Christians would say that society does not create or define marriage, but is called upon to recognize it as a natural good. Natural marriage promotes the welfare of children, the safety of mothers and the betterment of men. Natural marriage promotes the rights of children to have a mom and dad. All of this we can say apart from the Scriptures.

On the other hand, if we as Christians do not step into the public life, laws will be made by others, many of whom have no regard for truth or goodness. As such, Christian citizens are called to participate in public debates. We might have a nuanced opinion on something like gambling. Perhaps, we may outlaw certain forms or regulate it. Perhaps a law is not necessary. The options are many. On the other hand, we cannot help but notice all the difficulties, hardships and heartaches that come with it. As Christians, we would do well to caution our people about how addictive it can be and how many families it destroys, however we might deal with it in the law.

Some might argue that we cannot impose our beliefs on others. But this is foolishness. Almost every law has something to do with morality. Driving fast may not be immoral in and of itself, but driving recklessly puts the lives of others in danger. No one would question that there should be a law against armed robbery. While we may have different views when it comes to gambling, the

abortion matter is crystal clear. This is hardly a matter where Christians can agree to disagree. Science confirms what the Bible teaches. Life begins at conception and we are called to defend it.

This is not simply a matter of abstract ethics. There are spiritual consequences. To turn our backs on the unborn is to turn our backs on Christ Himself, who defines our humanity and died to redeem us all. We can no more be silent about the fate of the unborn than we can walk past a man who lies half dead alongside the road. The unborn child needs an advocate and a Good Samaritan. As surely as Joseph was called upon to protect the lives of Mary and the Christ Child, so also are we called upon to protect the lives of the little, innocent ones. By shirking this duty, we deny the Lord who came to save us.

What then shall we say, if anything, about marriage? Some would argue that the state may do what the state wants. After all, some say, marriage belongs to the Church. Such thinking is short-sighted. Marriage laws are put in place

Involvement



CTSEW students, faculty and staff participate in the annual March for Life in Fort Wayne.

precisely to protect the innocent and vulnerable. Every child, Christian or not, deserves a mom and dad. Easy divorce laws are not simply immoral, but they put children at risk. So-called same-sex marriage is predicated upon the false notion that mothers and fathers are interchangeable. Such laws purposefully deprive a child of a mom or dad. As such, marriage laws are now unjust. What is the leading indicator of a child's success? It is the presence of a father at home. When we promote marriage in society, we are promoting the common good. As such, Christians would say that society does not create or define marriage, but is called upon to recognize it as a natural good. Natural marriage promotes the welfare of children, the safety of mothers and the betterment of men. Natural marriage promotes the rights of children to have a mom and dad. All of this we can say apart from the Scriptures. This issue, too, has spiritual consequences. By advocating for natural marriage, we honor the God who created us and Christ the Bridegroom who sacrificed Himself for the Church. When we are silent, we are denying the truth of nature, the God who created us and the Lord who offered Himself as a sacrifice.

As we speak in this way, we are not saying that the civil law must perfectly duplicate the moral law as found in the Scriptures. As a prophet, Moses told us that marriage was between a man

and a woman, meant for life. As the leader of the nation of Israel, Moses made concessions for the people's hard-heartedness and allowed for divorce in certain matters. We recognize that we live in a fallen world. Accordingly, we make laws against perjury in court, but not against lying. We recognize that it is wrong for a child to insult his parents, but we do not make it illegal. Some matters are better handled at the most local of levels. We have no desire to turn the world into a Church. We recognize that laws can only do so much. On the other hand, we do well to promote a world in which children honor their parents and can leave their bikes outside of their house without having to lock them up. When it comes to the biggest issues, matters of life and death and gross injustice, we must stand with our fellow citizens and fight for just laws that protect the innocent and defenseless.

While we may have temporarily lost the fight for marriage, we must continue to make the case for the truth. Even now, Christians are suffering, losing their businesses, being subjected to fines and firing, simply for conducting their lives in accordance with the truth that every child deserves a mom and dad. While society moves towards injustice, we must speak for those who would rather not participate in that injustice. The same kind of thinking that forces a florist to design flowers for a so-called same-sex wedding will one day compel doctors to perform abortions. This same intolerance




CTSFW students attend a Lutherans for Life Conference held on the Seminary campus on September 16, 2017.

has led Christian adoption agencies to close, which is a gross injustice to the children. Add to the mix children who are subject to mutilating surgery, victims of the pervasive gender ideology. Consider also speech codes that prohibit citizens from recognizing male and female. More than ever, then, we must enter into the public square and speak out for our fellow Christians who wish to live out their lives in accordance with the truth of nature and in adherence to God's will. As we do, we will stand for the truth and in service to our neighbor.

As we look back at our history, we do well to remember that Christians led the fight against slavery. Martin Luther King Jr., a Christian minister, drew upon natural law to promote civil rights. So also, as Christians we are called to

be defenders of the defenseless and to speak for those little ones who have no voice. Otherwise, we too will be held accountable on the Day of Judgment.

This is what it means to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth. Show me your faith, James says, and I will show you my works. Faith in the heart suffocates if not given a voice. So, enter into the public arena as is your right and duty. Speak and defend your neighbors, and in doing so, proclaim Christ who was conceived for our salvation. 

The Rev. Dr. Peter J. Scaer (Peter.Scaer@ctsfw.edu) serves as associate professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne.



Fort Wayne community gathers for prayer at the Life March.