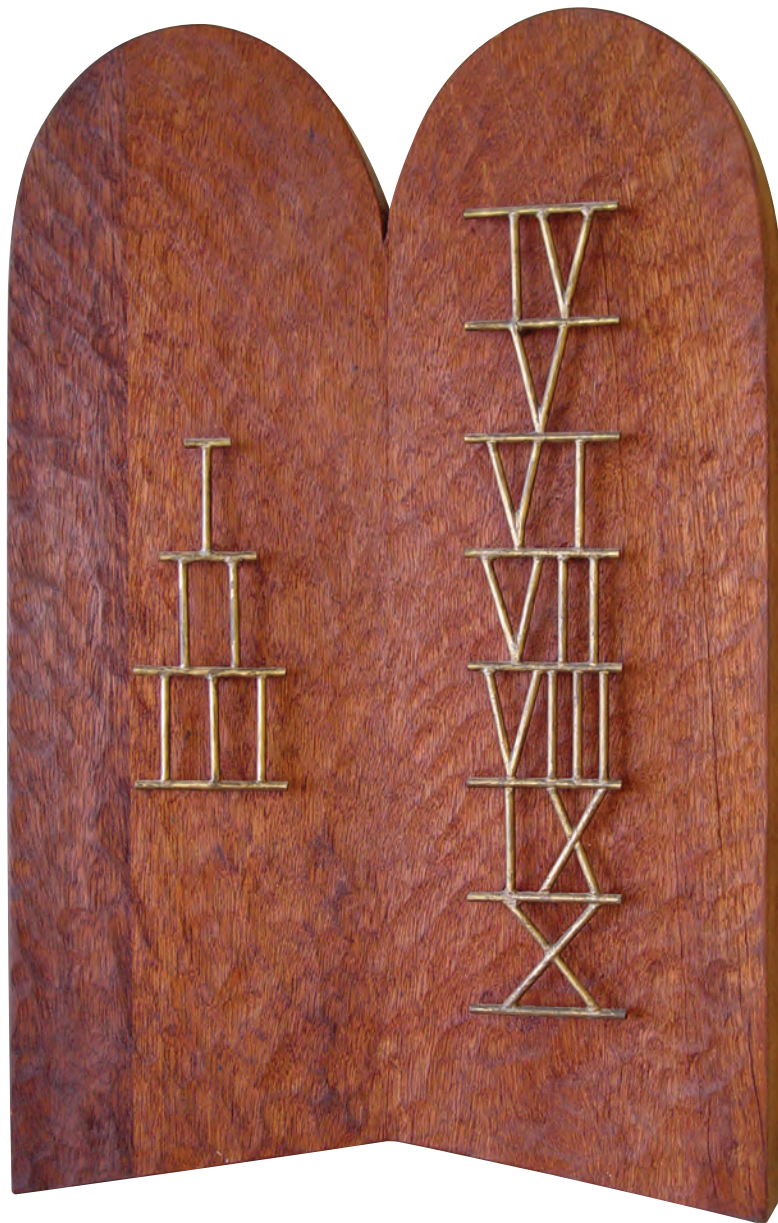


For the **Life of the World**

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

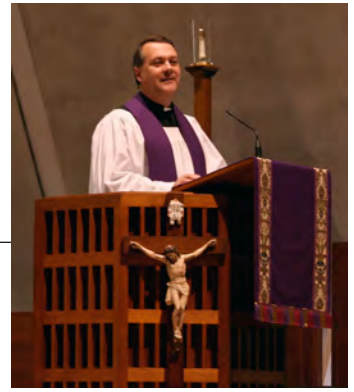
Faith, Public Life and the Role of the Christian Citizen in This New Century

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

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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

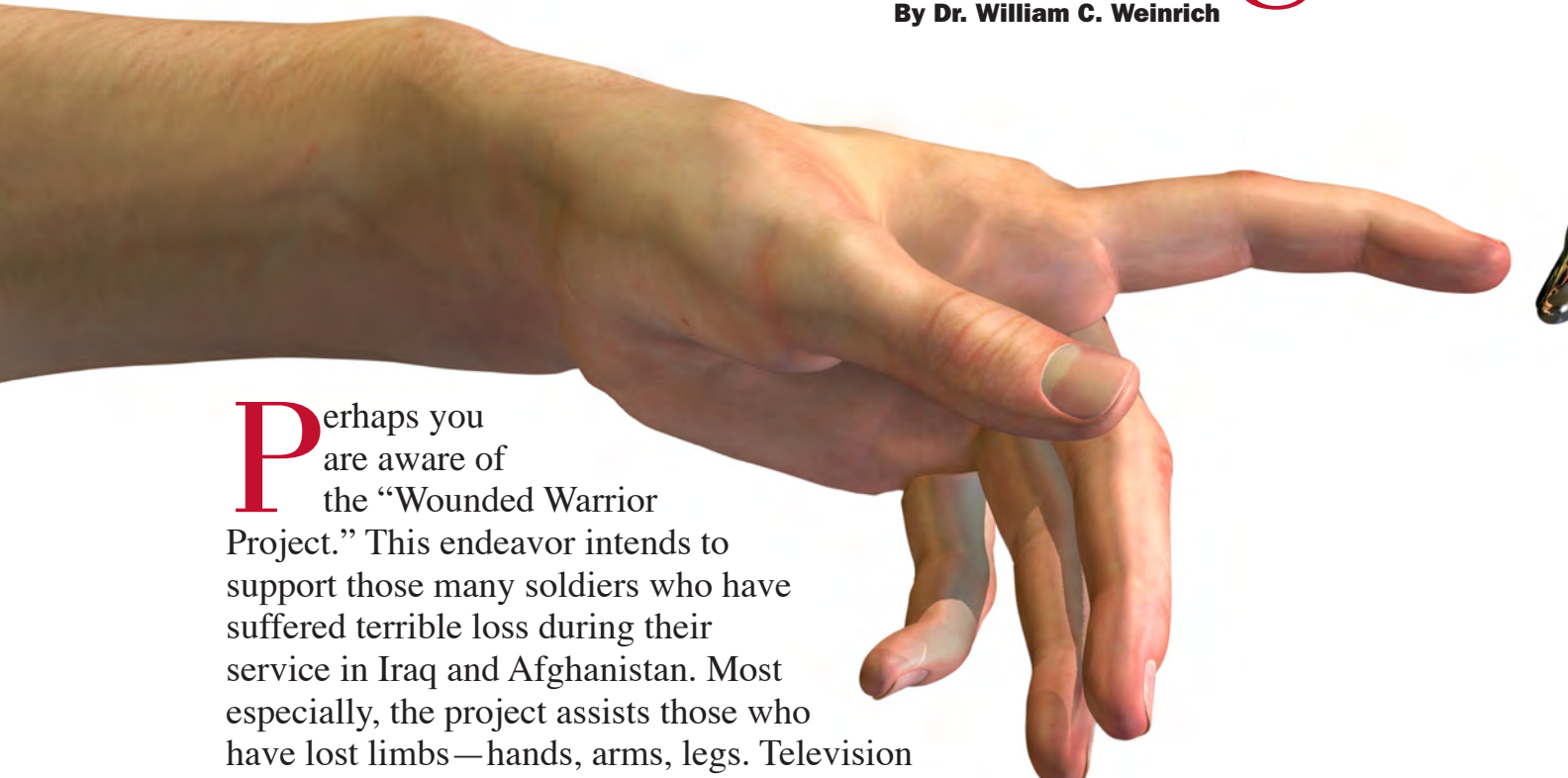
This movement goes by various names: *Humanity +*, *Posthumanism*, *Transhumanism*. The idea is that the body is a rather crude prosthesis of the mind, more of an accident of nature rather than something essential to human life and happiness. Moreover, the body is to a great extent a “weight” which limits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

Man as Cyborg: A New Challenge

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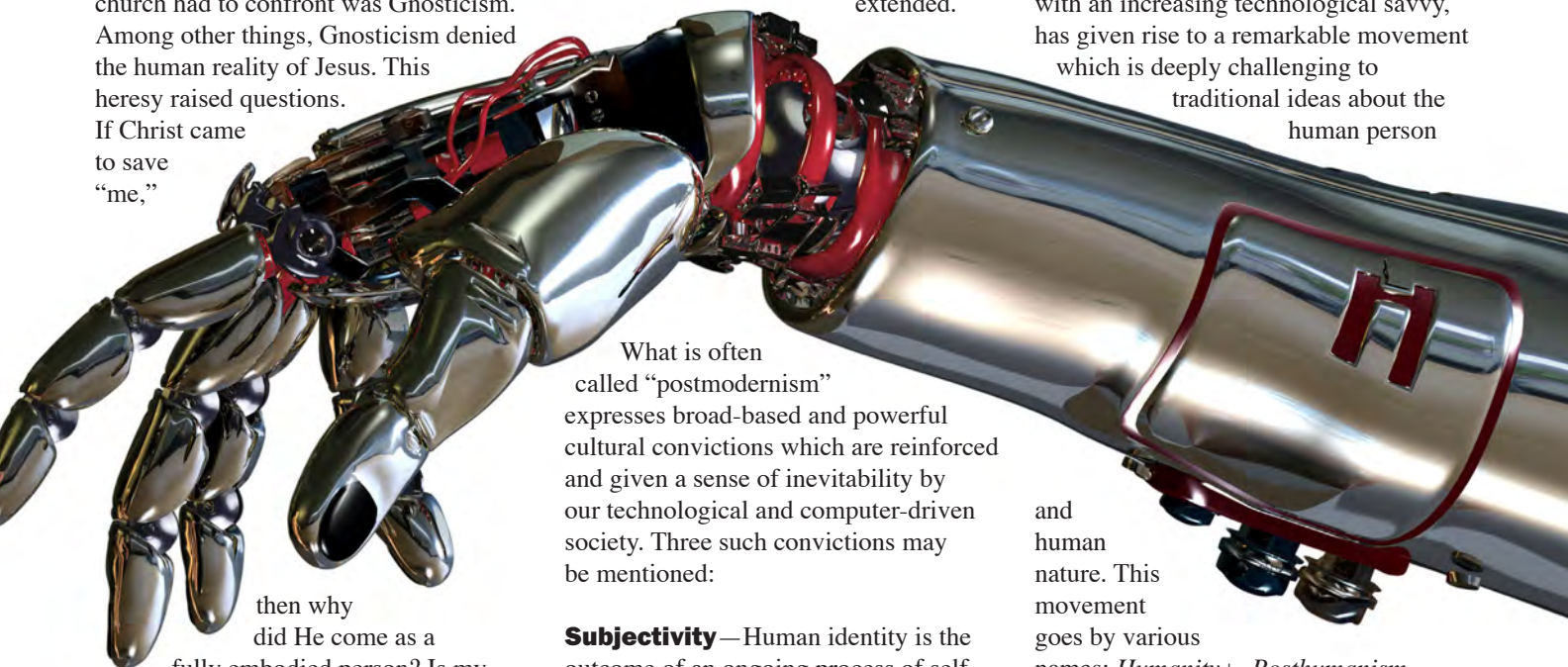


Perhaps you are aware of the “Wounded Warrior Project.” This endeavor intends to support those many soldiers who have suffered terrible loss during their service in Iraq and Afghanistan. Most especially, the project assists those who have lost limbs—hands, arms, legs. Television advertisements show those who have received “new limbs,” mechanical arms and legs that allow the wounded a remarkable capacity to do daily activities. What is remarkable is that such mechanical limbs often perform at a higher level than do our “natural” limbs. They may give the human person greater strength, greater endurance than ever before. A wonderful advance in medical treatment?

What we should be aware of, however, is that this mix of the human and of the mechanical has been the stuff of science fiction for years. My son loved to play with his Transformers when he was young. Our culture is filled with tales of creatures, good and bad, who are a hybrid mixture of the human and the mechanical. Who does not recall *Robo Cop*, or *The Terminator* or the *Six Million Dollar Man*? And what we should be aware of is that this “stuff of science fiction” has become to an incredible extent reality and is, as well, the material content of serious science.

One of the earliest heresies the church had to confront was Gnosticism. Among other things, Gnosticism denied the human reality of Jesus. This heresy raised questions.

If Christ came to save “me,”



then why did He come as a fully embodied person? Is my body of flesh and blood *essential* to what it means to be “me”? Am “I” distinct from the particularities of my body? The Creed asserts that for our salvation Christ was “incarnated and made fully human.” Such a claim seems to demand that to be “fully human” and to possess “flesh” are essential aspects to our “human being.” Yet, in many ways *that* understanding is under attack in our culture. The current debate concerning homosexuality certainly raises precisely *this* question: is our personal identity defined in any significant way by our physical body? It is commonly claimed that our gender identities are merely social or personal constructs. That is, we are not essentially male or female

persons. Rather we partake of masculine and feminine qualities which can be altered—enhanced or eliminated—by our choice *and* that choice can be effected by medical procedure. The point is this: 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. As those capacities are extended and made more sophisticated, however, what the human person can become is to the same extent extended.

What is often called “postmodernism” expresses broad-based and powerful cultural convictions which are reinforced and given a sense of inevitability by our technological and computer-driven society. Three such convictions may be mentioned:

Subjectivity—Human identity is the outcome of an ongoing process of self-creation and expressive acts. Central to human personhood is freedom and autonomy, the sheer non-constraint to overcome and transcend any arbitrary limitations. Among such limitations may be size, gender, strength, infertility. Technology can be the instrument for the enhancement of the body toward whatever end is willed or desired. The claim that there is an *integrity* to the body which must be respected is largely ignored or denied outright.

Malleability—In the postmodern world, all materiality is plastic. There is no “nature” which possesses its own form. Although, perhaps somewhat resistant to the reception of new forms,

that which is material can be enhanced or complemented or replaced by new forms generated by the limited patterns of generated information (virtual realities). What is truly real is the mind. The body is a rather crude addition to the mind and “awaits” its transformation to something better and higher.

Mastery—The truly free person has an unfettered freedom of the will. Mastery, then, suggests the goal and the vision of controlling one’s destiny through a refusal to accept traditional or “natural” limitations.

Such postmodern convictions, along with an increasing technological savvy, has given rise to a remarkable movement which is deeply challenging to traditional ideas about the human person

and human nature. This movement goes by various names: *Humanity+*, *Posthumanism*, *Transhumanism*. The idea is that the

Transhumanism foresees a time when technology is not merely an instrument for the alleviation of human suffering and limitation through the mechanical exchange of natural body parts for manufactured body parts (like Wounded Warriors). Rather, technology should be used to enhance the body in such a way so that the body is itself transcended and ceases to be a limiting factor to human freedom, choice and creativity.

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. Transhumanism foresees a time when technology is not merely an instrument for the alleviation of human suffering and limitation through the mechanical exchange of natural body parts for manufactured body parts (like Wounded Warriors). Rather, technology should be used to enhance the body in such a way so that the body is itself transcended and ceases to be a limiting factor to human freedom, choice and creativity.

The giant strides in computer technology are giving this vision its potential and its confidence. Says one website: “The problem to overcome is that information is always embedded in a medium and must be extracted. To become posthuman requires the ability to remove the information constituting a personality from the body and to place it in a superior substratum.” Or this: “A new and radically different chapter of evolution is about to begin.” This will be a “burst of self-directed hyper-evolution” in which “we must leave the flesh and most of its evolved habits behind.” This will occur through “enlightened self-fabrication” in which we become “one with our technologies, guided by our rational desire to become like our finest imaginary gods: omniscient, eternal, omnipotent.”

While the vision of posthumanism may seem strange, even wild, we should at least take note of the rapidly evolving world of iPads, iPods, information structures and the increasing


use of technology in cloning and genetic engineering. Nor are the leaders of this movement insignificant and powerless. As one informed observer wrote to me, “We are not talking about a handful of science fiction geeks. These are major intellectual powerhouses with world class platforms with world class budgets.”

For example: a recent conference at Yale was entitled, “The Adaptable Human Body: Transhumanism and Bioethics in the 21st Century.” The conference was co-sponsored by the Yale Interdisciplinary Bioethics Program’s Working Group on Artificial Intelligence, Nanotechnology and Transhumanism. Speakers came from major universities throughout the world. A quick “Google” search of “transhumanism” or “posthumanism” will inform that this movement has already pervaded academia as well as the cultural imagination of science fiction and the cinema.

In one sense this article is not for information. It is a plea that the church recognize the deeply challenging developments of science in our day and spare no expense to enlist the brightest minds to think Christian thoughts on these things. We must be aware of the implications of technology in our societies. Indeed, the

Traditional Gnosticism called the body into question. The contemporary rejection of the body is wholly different. The body is not regarded as an entity; it is regarded as pure form, capable of other forms. So the modern Gnostic question is, “Why these bodies?” What is the value to human happiness and to human virtue of the experiences that these bodies impose upon us? To answer such questions as these, I submit, are foremost among the challenges and problems facing the church in the coming decades.

majority of our citizens have already accepted the proposition that technology exists to make life easier and happier and that it might properly be used to reduce or eliminate suffering and extend life.

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