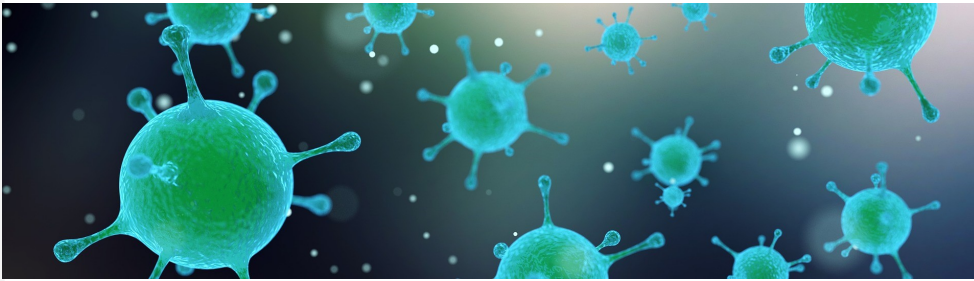


Lutheran Coalition for Renewal CORE Voice

A Voice and Network for Confessing Lutherans

Issue 3.2019
May



Postmodernism Gone Viral: What Is Disingenuous About the ELCA Social Statement

by Pr. [Brett Jenkins](#), Lutheran CORE Board Member

Editor's note: Originally called "Draft Social Statement on Women and Justice," the document which was developed by the ELCA Task Force on Women and Justice and which has been approved by both the ELCA Conference of Bishops and the ELCA Church Council for consideration by the 2019 ELCA Churchwide Assembly is called, "[Faith, Sexism, and Justice: A Lutheran Call to Action](#)." The [ELCA Churchwide Assembly](#) will take place in August 2019.

"Ah! Words! Just words!" the person shouted to the man at the lectern whose speech had just concluded. "Who told you culture is a search for coherence? Where do you get that idea from? This idea of coherence is a

Continued on [page 4](#)

Coaches for Congregations in Transition

by [Cathy Ammlung](#), secretary of the board, Lutheran CORE

In early April we had a training event in Arizona for the Congregations in Transition ministry initiative. We now have eight (mostly retired) Lutheran pastors who are ready to serve as coaches for congregations that are between pastors. Another option is for the coach to begin working with a congregation even before the pastor has retired or resigned to take another call. If you would like to know more about how one of these



The view from the front of the chapel in the Desert Retreat Center, where the coaches training event was held, looks out on the beauty of Arizona's Sonoran desert.

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Women and Justice is an example of post-modernism gone viral within the Body of Christ, seeking to destroy it, and if the ELCA hopes to remain Christian in a way that will permit them to be recognized as such by other Christians not held captive to the postmodern mindset, they must not only reject it, but the worldview that informs it.



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Rekindle Your First Love

by [Dennis Nelson](#), Executive Director, Lutheran CORE

In the March issue of our newsletter, CORE Voice, we included information about the ministries of two of the pastors who were going to be presenters at the [Rekindle Your First Love event](#).

Another one of the persons who was scheduled to be a presenter, NALC pastor Wendy Berthelsen, heads up a non-profit Christian teaching ministry called Call Inc., which mobilizes ordinary people "called" by Christ Jesus our Lord to "incorporate His call" into all of life, 24/7: home, family, church gathering and "glocal" (local to global). Wendy writes:

We offer seminars and resources that are available on our website: <http://www.callinc.org>. We take seriously that the Biblical Greek word for church (*ekklesia*) literally means "called out ones." We believe "called out ones" gives both the definition and purpose of church: "Ones" ... ordinary people "called" by Christ Jesus our Lord, to go "out," transforming the world in Jesus' name, with His Gospel and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, actively teaching about living God's call and helping people to recognize and discern the Holy Spirit's call and gifts is crucial to being the church.



Change in direction

The CORE Voice Newsletter Looks Different ... Very Different!

by [Kim Smith](#), President and Editor, Lutheran CORE

Lutheran CORE is trying a new format for its newsletter and moving away from its traditional glossy magazine-style newsletter to one that is easier to read on small devices like cell phones and tablets. There will *always* be a printable version, but CORE will also have versions of the newsletter on our [website](#) and on [Facebook](#) that will *make* it easier for our readers to decide which articles they want to read and which they prefer to skip. We will also send out a version via email. If you would like to be added to the email list, please contact lcorewebmail@gmail.com with your name and email address.

Pithy Responses To CORE's April Letter from The Director

by [Dennis D. Nelson](#), Executive Director of Lutheran CORE

I am continually blessed and encouraged by the very positive and uplifting responses which I receive to my letters from the director, articles in our newsletter, CORE Voice, and other written communications. It is *good* to know that people read our materials and appreciate, value, and support our work. The responses I received to my most recent (the April) letter from the director were no exception.

One NALC pastor wrote, "There have been times when I have wondered why CORE staff and adherents remain in ELCA, but after reading this letter, I am thankful that you are still there. If you were to leave, it would please them because they wouldn't have to deal with your wisdom any more. . . . I know your presence will probably not make a difference over the long run, you are fighting a strong and wily opponent, Old Scratch himself, but I admire your courage and your willingness to take on a formidable task. Blessings to you on your work, your passion, and your hope that

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The Uncle Charlie Program @ St. Timothy

by [Keith Forni](#), Member, Lutheran CORE

This program, for adults with special needs and sponsored by St. Timothy Lutheran Church, has been serving Chicago's Hermosa neighborhood for nearly 30 years. Meeting monthly since 1990, the Uncle Charlie program serves an average of 50 residents from eight group homes on the northwest side of Chicago. Participants gather for Bingo, arts and crafts, Bible lessons, worship and lunch.



Here Uncle Charlie Program members lead music during morning devotions. Pastor Keith Forni notes that "their joy is so powerfully expressed." Favorite choir songs are "This Little Light of Mine" and "Jesus Loves Me." St. Timothy is an ELCA congregation affiliated with Lutheran CORE.

Lutheran CORE wants to lift up the ministries of other orthodox ELCA congregations that are faithfully living out the Gospel and serving our Lord. Please contact us at lcrowebmail@gmail.com.

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Postmodernism

Continued from [page 1](#)

Western idea.”

Coherent or Incoherent?

I heard Ravi Zacharias tell this story. With a quickness of wit that I can only marvel at, he responded to the person (whom he later learned was transgendered) by saying, “Before I answer you, Madame, let me ask you this, then: would you prefer that my answer be coherent or incoherent?”¹

It is a dangerous proposition to write about someone else’s writing; history is full of literary, philosophical, and political critiques that were complete misfires (often cleverly worded) because the author misunderstood what he was reading. They did this because, not being part of what Charles Taylor would aptly deem the “web of interlocution” from which the original document arose, they misunderstood what was being proposed in the first place.

Having left the ELCA, grateful for the friendships and even some of the formation I enjoyed there but much more grateful to leave behind the posture of defensiveness that necessarily accompanied my ministry as a self-consciously orthodox Christian within it, I wondered actively about the idea of writing this article. I even resisted the pressure of colleagues to do so. I am a pastor of the North American Lutheran Church, and this newsletter has already featured one excellent [critique by another NALC pastor, Rev. Cathy Ammlung](#) as well as a [critique by ELCA pastor, Steven Gjerde](#). Both articles were detailed and incisive, so what can I add to them?

Analysis of the Introduction

Actually I can add one thing: an analysis of how the introduction of the ELCA’s proposed social statement *Women and Justice* represents the broader conflict of worldviews active within our culture, of which I am, indeed, still a part.

Rev. Ammlung noted in her critique numerous points on which the draft social statement was not only out of step with the Christian (and Jewish) traditions of 2000+ years, but even seemed *internally incoherent*, out of step with itself. Indeed, as Rev. Ammlung noted pithily, “It’s hard, though, to see in this draft how God’s revealed Word is greater than the sum of feminist, [intersectional](#), and ‘gender/sexual justice’ language.”

Impossible

It is not hard to see—it is *impossible* to see, for there is no evidence to the contrary in the document, *nor should we expect there to be*. The constellation of “feminist, intersectional, and ‘gender/sexual justice’ language” emerges from a larger worldview wholly at variance with the Scripture’s line of sight, that of postmodernism.

Gender Feminists

In 1994, doctoral candidate in Women’s Studies at Wellesley, Christina Hoff-Somers, recognized that a foreign ideology had hijacked the equity-seeking feminism of the movement’s progenitors, separating the movement into what she deemed “equity feminists” and “gender feminists,” the latter being the product of postmodern thinking married to the aims of feminism. The feminism with which most readers will be familiar from their time as an undergraduate, on a seminary campus, or from the shriller, attention-getting voices on the nightly news is of the gender feminist lineage, which frequently claims that those Hoff-Sommers characterizes as “equity feminists” are not feminists at all, for they do not share the postmodern presuppositions that undergird their narrative and analysis.

Power

To wit, rooted in the work of theoreticians like Derrida and Foucault, postmodernism sees all social *interactions* (like the proposed social statement) as “word games,” and word games with only one goal: the exer-

There is *no* evidence to the contrary in the document, *nor should we expect there to be.*

Postmodern thinking married to the aims of feminism produced “Gender Feminists.”

cise of power.

Language of Justice, Science and Religious Truth

In such an account of the world, there is no way to discern good from evil, truth from falsehood, for all such language is merely a ruse, a “word game” to disguise the naked aggression of one person or group against another. In the view of postmodernism, we are all possessed of *worldviews* incommensurate with one another and irreconcilable, so our only alternative is civil war through our word games. The intersectional feminist gender-fluid activist *by their own reckoning* uses the language of justice, science, and religious truth but is merely a campaigner for their own peculiar position—just like everyone else.

Civil War Through Word Games

Postmodernism allows for temporary alliances but not ultimately the pursuit of jointly-held truth or justice. *Witness the growing voices within the gay community expressing relief in the fact that they came of age before the rise of transgenderism because they believe if they were coming of age now they would be forced into hormone therapy and miss out on the adult identity they now espouse.* Because postmodernism believes in no higher truth or objective reality to which language correlates but only the exercise of power, it can never be more than a sophisticated exercise in narcissism, an assertion of self over-and-against everything and everyone else.

Sophisticated Narcissism

“Everyone else” necessarily includes God, of course... at least if God is purported to do anything other than underwrite our own self-perceptions and exercise of power through our word games. The postmodernist can use the language of “the Word of God,” but they cannot mean by it what Christians have historically meant—a revelation of something we could not have known without the active initiative of God. Nor can they mean by it what Lutherans have meant by it when they distinguish within that Word Law and Gospel. For *both* Law and Gospel reveal to us a self so impoverished and depraved it is impossible to affirm, the Law by revealing our inability to be righteous and the Gospel by revealing that we can only be saved by Christ’s righteousness, one utterly alien to ourselves.

Incoherence of Postmodern Thought

There is a reason why the great theologian Augustine defined sin using the phrase *in curvatus in se*—“being turned in upon oneself.” When we turn within, seeking something *affirmable* by God, we cannot find our prelapsarian innocence, and what we produce is the incoherence that characterizes all postmodern thought, including the ELCA’s proposed social statement *Women and Justice*. The founders of postmodernism actively sought to reject the “Logo-centrism” of Western culture, that is, the *logic*—the coherence—born of a worldview flowing from a belief in the *Logos*, belief in an ordering principle within the world that does not take its cues from autonomous human actors.

God Brings Order and Love

Of course, in the case of Christians, that *Logos* “became flesh and dwelt among us.” (John 1:14) God’s first act in the Book of Genesis is to call order forth from the primordial chaos, and He uses His Word to do so. The God revealed by the Scriptures is the bringer of order, of coherence. The amazing news of the Gospel is that this bringer of order does not look upon our profound disorder — our sin — and simply destroy both it and us. In the words of one of my favorite LGBTQIA+ authors, “It is not the perfect but the imperfect who have need of love.” The Gospel is that God knew this long before Oscar Wilde and “so loved the world, that he gave his only Son” — the order-bringing *Logos* — “that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”

Order is Inherently Hierarchical

Unfortunately, the God who brings order and coherence to not just the created order but our own lives *in spite of us* is necessarily antithetical to the worldview underlying the ELCA’s proposed social statement, for

In postmodernism, all social interactions are word games.

All such language is merely a ruse, a “word game” to disguise the naked aggression of one person or group against another.

In postmodernism, the goal of word games is the exercise of power.

Both Law and Gospel reveal we can only be saved by Christ’s righteousness, one utterly alien to ourselves.

We are to find our true identity in Jesus Christ.

order is inherently hierarchical; it privileges truth over falsehood and so some narratives over others. This God also calls us away from the contemplation of ourselves—away from seeking affirmation of any sort, no matter what we find within *our* experience—and to the contemplation of Jesus Christ, in whom alone we are to find our un-hyphenated identity. Far from the postmodern delegitimization of distinctions inferred by postmodern exegetes, Galatians 3:27–28 (“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”) teaches us that only Christ is acceptable to God and so we are to find our true identity in Him, not in *any* other identity, real or imagined.

God is necessarily antithetical to the worldview underlying the ELCA’s proposed social statement.

ELCA Anti-logic

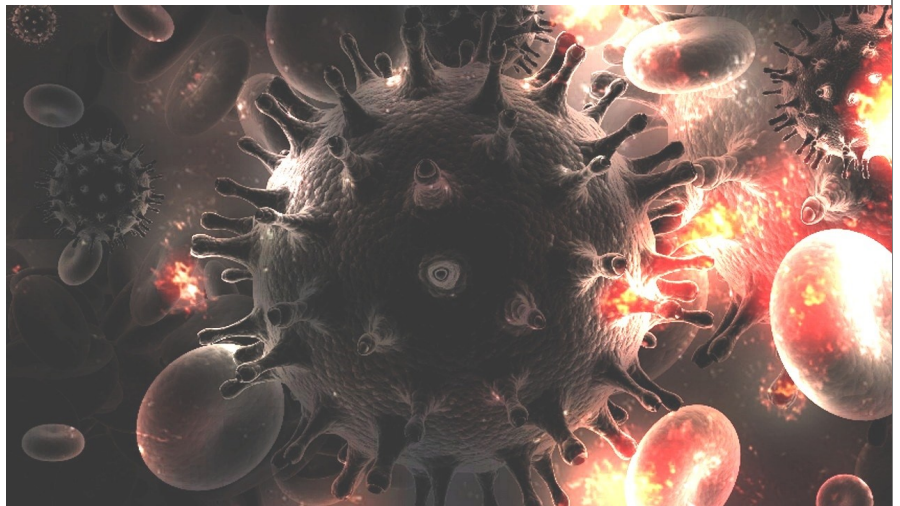
The unity gestured to by Paul as he ends this thought is not incidental. Just as the word adhere means “to stick together,” so the word cohere means “to form a whole.” The unity in justice that is to *characterize* the Body of Christ and claims to be sought by the ELCA’s latest social statement cannot be pursued using it as the

If the ELCA hopes to remain Christian in a way that will permit them to be recognized as such by other Christians not held captive to the postmodern mindset, they must not only reject it, but the worldview that informs it.

mechanism, for its own internal logic is anti-logic; it reviles any coherence that would not privilege every self-perception and self-identification.

Viral Attack

A virus uses the body’s own self-defense system to undo an organism. The ELCA’s proposed social statement *Women and Justice* is necessarily incoherent because, in ways I assume its authors may not even be aware of because they have probably not read the primary texts that gave birth to postmodernism (Foucault and Derrida are, after all, *inordinately* difficult authors to plow through), it appropriates the language of truth and justice, sin and righteousness, Law and Gospel, and uses them virus-like to hobble and, if possible, undo the order-bringing work of God’s Word, inverting its meaning as necessary in order to serve an agenda not born of the Word itself. *Women and Justice* is an example of postmodernism gone viral within the Body of Christ, seeking to destroy it, and if the ELCA hopes to remain Christian in a way that will permit them to be recognized as such by other Christians not held captive to the postmodern mindset, they must not only reject it, but the worldview that informs it.



Virus attacking the immune system

Moreover, all Christian communions functioning within the increasingly-postmodern West must be on guard against the same virus that has so deeply infected the ELCA and other mainline, revisionist Protestant bodies as well as (smaller) sections of the Roman Catholic and even Orthodox churches. It is in the water around us, and we must fortify our immune systems against it if we hope to not have our health compromised... or worse, to die as non-Christians mouthing Christian-sounding words.

We must fortify our immune systems against [postmodernism gone viral] if we hope to not have our health compromised... or worse, to die as non-Christians mouthing Christian-sounding words.

Justice can and *must* be pursued for not just women and minorities but *all* people without de-privileging the truth or re-writing the Word of God. The Logos—coherence Himself—demands it.

Coaches for Congregations

Continued from [page 1](#)

coaches could be of help to your congregation, please contact Don Brandt at pastordonbrandt@gmail.com or Dennis Nelson at dennisdnelsonaz@yahoo.com.

Fear of Pastoral Vacancies

For most of my 29 years as an ordained pastor, I served small congregations and/or congregations that had a pastoral vacancy. Even in healthy parishes with little conflict, they consistently had two *major* concerns. One was the fear that there might be a protracted (and possibly unsuccessful) search for a new pastor. The second was that, rather like a tire with a slow leak, the life of the congregation was going to “go flat.” Energy, commitment, contributions, and attendance would diminish. Especially in small, isolated parishes that could not obtain a full (or significantly part-time) interim pastor, maintaining the worship life,

Rather than feeling helplessly adrift, the laity are empowered to be the Church.

Consider what pastoral gifts would grow your congregation's faith in God?

fellowship, pastoral care, and outreach of the congregation seemed like a nearly insurmountable task for the lay leadership.

Team Your Congregation with a Coach

The Congregations in Transition initiative, developed by Pastor Don Brandt and Lutheran CORE, addresses these concerns by teaming an experienced, usually retired pastoral “coach” with such a congregation. The coach helps the laity (through a Leadership Team) to confidently and competently navigate the challenges of a pastoral vacancy, to maintain the critical tasks of ministry and mission, and to thereby pave the way for a call committee to focus on its unique tasks with less distraction and stress.

Tap into God-given Gifts

The workshop I attended as a “coach in training” was challenging, packed with useful insights and information, and very helpful. I like the way it calls for coaches to develop personal relationships with a small “Leadership Team” in order to tap into their God-given gifts for leadership, decision *making*, spiritual growth, and Christian care for their congregation and its members. Rather than feeling helplessly adrift, the laity are empowered to *be* the Church, the Body of Christ, beloved of Christ and lavishly endowed by the Holy Spirit with every good gift needed to care for one another and to weather what often seems like a “time in the wilderness.”

One Small Discipleship Step

One thing I've learned over the years is that congregations can sometimes feel so desperate to call a pastor, any pastor, that they rush through the call process and sometimes make a bad decision. And if the process drags out, they become so discouraged that they simply drift – and some members just leave, *often* permanently. An experienced coach helps them understand that they really *can* see – and take – one small, necessary “discipleship step” after another; and each small step can strengthen their faith, prayer life, discipleship, fellowship, stewardship, and outreach. They can discern what they need to do to care for one another, proclaim the Word of God, and reach out with Jesus' love to their neighbor. And they can redeem that in-between, interim time, to prayerfully consider what gifts a new pastor would best have to continue their growth in faith toward God, fervent love toward one another, and loving witness and outreach to their neighbors.

I hope that many Lutheran congregations will benefit from such coaching relationships and experience interims as precious seasons of growth in faithfulness, trust, and obedience to their Savior and Good Shepherd!



Fountain



First cohort of coaches.

Pithy Responses

Continued from [page 3](#)

there may be a ray of sanity somewhere in this mess.”

And then, to clearly show what we are up against and how we got into the mess we are in, a former ELCA synod *mission* director wrote the following [emphasis added] –

“Shortly after being called to that position I attended staff orientation at the ELCA headquarters with other new Mission Directors. We were told unequivocally that we were to start new congregations for gay and lesbian groups but to refrain from traditional church starts as there would be little if any financial support for traditional church groups. I was told directly by the then ELCA mission director it was the unspoken policy of the ELCA to NOT start traditional New churches or to provide any support for Rural Congregations because the money was to be directed to gay and lesbian church starts. . . .”

“During one of my visits to the ELCA headquarters, the national mission director took me into a closet that held the congregations responses to the first sexuality study of the ELCA. She said, and I quote, ‘we are going to ram this s ___ down their (congregations) throat.’ . . .”

“I and many faithful pastors suffered mightily at the hands of the ELCA. In fact nearly every faithful pastor I knew as Assistant to the Bishop suffers or has suffered as a result of ELCA pressure on their ministry to conform. In the ELCA almost anything is tolerated except not accepting their lgbt policy.”

Thank you to both of these pastors for letting me quote them in this article. We give thanks for the support of all of our *friends*, and we pray for and want to encourage and help all who are enduring pressure to accept and conform to non-Biblical positions, practices, and priorities.



“In the ELCA almost anything is tolerated except not accepting their lgbt policy.”

“During one of my visits to the ELCA headquarters, the national mission director took me into a closet that held the congregations responses to the first sexuality study of the ELCA. She said, and I quote, ‘we are going to ram this s ___ down their (congregations) throat.’ . . .”

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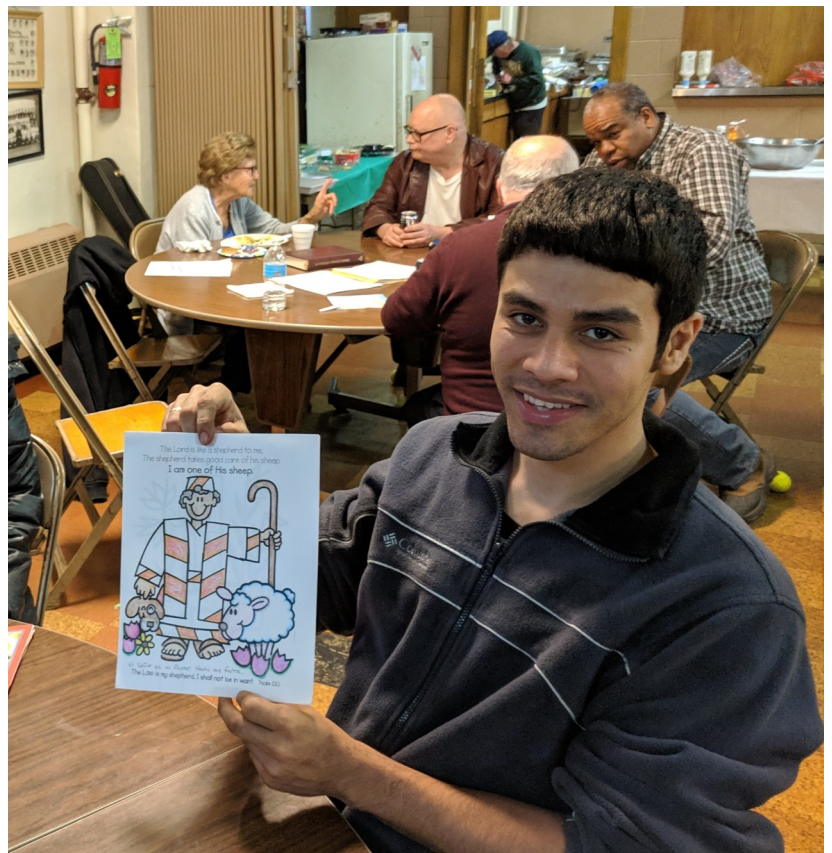
The Uncle Charlie Program

Continued from [page 3](#)



Uncle Charlie Program participants await lunch at St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Chicago, during a recent Saturday monthly gathering.

Paul Diaz, a mission partner volunteer from First and Santa Cruz Lutheran Church-ELCA, Joliet IL, displays the May 2019 theme at the Uncle Charlie Program, St. Timothy Lutheran Church, Chicago.



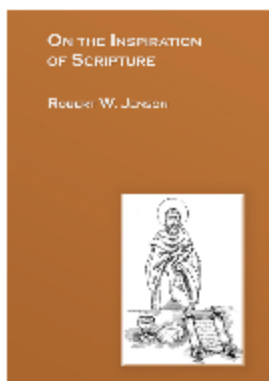
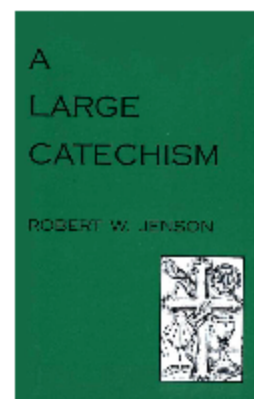
Want Both Unique and Profound? See ALPB's Robert W. Jenson Books

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***A Large Catechism* with an introduction by Gregory P. Fryer**

From the Introduction: When I first read Jenson's *A Large Catechism*, back in 1991, it functioned in my life as a dazzling exhortation: Do not be the blockhead of whom Luther complained! Do not be a "lazy-belly and presumptuous saint" who imagines that he or she can absorb and master the Catechism at one reading, and who, therefore, tosses the book into a corner as if they are ashamed to read it again. Jenson's *A Large Catechism* reminded me and demonstrated for me that the Catechism is very rich, that we cannot plumb its depths, and that, as Luther said, "I must still read and study the Catechism daily, yet I cannot master it as I wish, but must remain a child and pupil of the Catechism, and I do it gladly."

Paper, 72 pp., \$8.00 + postage / 5 or more copies: \$7.00 each + postage



On the Inspiration of Scripture

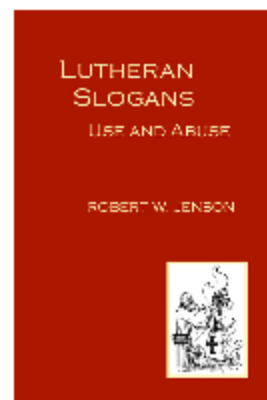
What does it mean that the Bible is inspired? For many Lutherans, the inspiration of Scripture is mostly about why the Bible is rightly the source and norm for the church's teaching. Robert W. Jenson believes that this approach to the subject of the inspiration of the Scriptures obscures more than it illuminates. In this small book he first examines where this traditional approach falls short and then begins the process of constructing something more helpful to our understanding.

Paper, 80 pp., \$8.00 each + postage

Lutheran Slogans: Use and Abuse

No discourse that goes on for any length of time, particularly if it becomes an argument, can do without slogans—those shorthand phrases that are placeholders for a whole complex of concepts to which they point. They make it possible for a speaker or writer with just a few words to call to the minds of the participants in a discussion a great deal that has been said before in considerable detail, rather than going over it all again. Lutherans use many slogans like "Justification by Faith Apart from Works" and "Sola Scriptura," most of which arose in the context of the 16th Century Protestant Reformation. In this small book, Jenson takes up 10 of these slogans and examines what they originally called to mind and how they are used and abused today.

Paper, 80 pp., \$8.00 each + postage



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Who Gets to Eat? Issues of Admission to the Lord's Supper Edited by Lawrence R. Recla

From a review by Frank C. Senn: In 1978 the American Lutheran Church and the Lutheran Church in America adopted a Joint Statement on Communion Practices that "precluded" the communion of baptized infants. This statement shut the door on a practice that the Western Church had observed for a thousand years and had not previously categorically precluded, that the Episcopal Church was reconsidering, and that the Eastern Churches still practiced. Eric Gritsch saw the ecumenical, biblical, and theological inappropriateness of this statement and was one of a handful of Lutheran theologians who spoke up for a reconsideration of the practice. This publication is now timely when churches are considering the inclusion even of the unbaptized in Holy Communion — a line Dr. Gritsch would not have crossed in his thesis that the Lord's Supper is the meal of the baptized, but all the baptized.

Paper, 75 pp., \$8.00 + postage

WHO GETS TO EAT?

ISSUES OF
ADMISSION TO
THE LORD'S SUPPER

A LUTHERAN VIEW

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Sponsoring an Event?

We Would Love to Help You Get the Word Out

If you are planning an event that you believe Lutheran CORE members would want to know about and that is consistent with the [Common Confession](#), please let us know. **Brief articles and pictures are always welcome.** We also can share them via our website, Facebook and Twitter feeds. Contact CORE's editor, Kim Smith at kss01ohio@gmail.com.

Coming Events

Pro Ecclesia Conference 2019	Loyola University, Baltimore	June 3-5, 2019	“What’s the Good of Humanity?”	Click here Register
NEXUS—for high school students	Grand View University, Des Moines, IA	June 23—28 & July 7-12, 2019	“Where God’s call meets your life”	Click here
ELCA Churchwide Assembly	Milwaukee, WI	August 5-10, 2019	“We are Church”	Click here
NALC Lutheran Week	Indianapolis, IN	August 5-9, 2019	“Walking by the Spirit with the Fruit of the Spirit”	Click here
2019 Encuentro (Encounter)	Chicago, IL	September 14, 2019	Save the date!	Click here
LCMC Annual Gathering	Omaha, NE	Sept. 29 - Oct. 2, 2019	TBD	Click here.
2019 Lutherans for Life Regional Conferences	Events held in Texas, Michigan, Colorado, Minnesota, Maryland and California.	Final conference is Nov. 16th	“Did God Really Say ...?”	Click here

Website Features

- * Check out our [Worship](#) page to see all the worship resources Pastor Cathy Ammlung has posted including [Prayers of the Church](#).
- * CORE's [Transitions page](#) is for churches in transition. Learn how a trained coach can help your congregation!
- * CORE connects confessing congregations and pastors on its [Clergy Connect](#) page. We have created several new posts for churches seeking pastors since the last newsletter was published.
- * CORE posts a [daily devotion](#).
- * CORE's [Communications](#) page includes newsletters, Letters from the Director and many Other letters of interest.
- * CORE posts a short list of blog friends under [Friends of Lutheran CORE](#).



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