



Lutheran Coalition for Renewal CORE Voice

A Voice and Network for Confessing Lutherans

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Now fast forward to the ELCA’s triennial church-wide assembly this past August in Milwaukee. No tornado struck the Wisconsin Center where the voting members gathered, leaving the question of whether God approved or disapproved in serious doubt for theological interpreters of the jet stream. In the end, though, no gust of wind was needed: the churchwide organization of the ELCA just may succeed in knocking over its own steeple.

CWA Reflections: God Has A Way of Sorting His Church

by [Rev. Dr. Steven K. Gjerde](#), Vice President of Lutheran CORE

Shortly after the ELCA’s vote to change the sexual standards for ordained ministers in 2009, a strong and unexpected wind knocked over the bell tower of Central Lutheran Church in Minneapolis, which was helping

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The Power of the Word

by [Mark Mattes](#)

Note from CORE Executive Director, Dennis D. Nelson: Congratulations to Mark Mattes, Professor of Theology and Philosophy at Grand View University in Des Moines, Iowa, for being chosen to give the commencement address at the recent graduation ceremonies for [Leadstar Theological College](#) in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Our prayers are with the faculty, staff, and students of that school, as well as with all of the graduates, as they serve God in a part of the world where the Holy Spirit is moving in a most powerful way. We are very grateful to Dr. Mattes for reminding us that we need to read, heed, believe, and obey the entire Word of God for it is there that we find assurance of His love, His will for our lives, and the

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Postmodernism Gone Viral, Part 3: Responding to My Critics

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

The board of Lutheran CORE would like to thank Brett Jenkins for the time he has served on the board. Brett is an ardent defender of the historic, orthodox Christian faith. He has added greatly to the ministry of Lutheran CORE through the contributions he has made to the discussions at our meetings as well as the articles he has written. Notable among these articles are the ones he has written about the post-modern worldview which is reflected in the ELCA social statement on "[Faith, Sexism, and Justice](#)." We wish Brett God's richest blessings in his continued ministry and are very happy that he is willing to continue writing for Lutheran CORE.



I was pleased that my *Postmodernism Gone Viral* article garnered a decent amount of response both positive and negative from those who read it. Though I have no doubt that my rhetorical hacking did not quite reach the “roots of evil” present in the document, that it instigated such responses may indicate that I was at least striking heartwood rather than mere leaves. In this article I will respond to the criticisms I received as a result of publishing the initial article. Because these criticisms were received as private correspondence rather than “letters to the editor,” I do not feel I can publish the full texts of them. I will therefore try to faithfully capture the gist of the criticisms, though I will not reproduce the verbal abuse.

To be sure, the ELCA’s proposed social statement *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* is not a battleground I would

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What Will It Be Next? Part 2

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

Unfortunately, this has become a regular part of our monthly communications – our asking the question, “What Will It Be Next?,” as we find the ELCA slipping further and further away from the historic, orthodox Christian faith, a traditional view of the mission of the church, and Biblical morals and moral values.

Relentless LGBTQIA+ Agenda

In the July issue of our newsletter, CORE Voice, I asked the question, “What Will It Be Next?,” in response to the fact that the ELCA Church Council declined to act upon the document, “Trustworthy Servants of the People of God,” even though it had been recommended to them by the ELCA Conference of Bishops. Instead they sent it back to the Domestic Mission Unit for revision. You can be sure that the process for writing and rewriting and revising this statement of what the ELCA expects of its rostered ministers will continue until it fully conforms with everything desired and demanded by the relentless LGBTQIA+ agenda.



Polyamory

In the August letter from the director I wrote of a video in which Bishop Elect Leila Ortiz of the ELCA’s Metro Washington D. C. Synod speaks favorably of polyamory (a relationship in which there are three or more partners). A link to that video can be found [here](#).

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Annual Chicago Encuentro Set for Holy Cross Day, Sept. 14

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

"...Build yourselves up in your most holy faith..." Jude 20

"...Mantenganse en el amor de Dios, edificandose sobre la base de su santisima fe..." Judas 20

Walking wet, signed with the cross of Jesus at Holy Baptism, Christians are called, gathered and sent to give bold witness by the power of the Holy Spirit. With the Church of Christ in every age, they give bold witness to their Lord Jesus, the One who has triumphed over sin, death and the power of the devil.

This year's autumn *Encuentro Luterano* (Lutheran Encounter) will fortify the people of God in their Baptismal identity, beginning with the opening talk by The Rev. Dr. Maxwell Johnson, an ELCA pastor and faculty member at the University of Notre Dame, South Bend, IN. Dr. Johnson will present "Baptism: Walking Wet in the *Via Crucis*" at the inter-Lutheran gathering, to be held on Holy Cross Day / *Dia de la Santa Cruz*, Saturday, Sept. 14th at St. Timothy Lutheran Church, 2101 N. Kildare Ave. (corner of W. Dickens), in Chicago's Hermosa neighborhood.

Coffee & registration begin the day at 9:00am. (For a full *Encuentro* schedule, please visit the [St. Timothy Lutheran Church Facebook page](#).) A postcard for this event can be viewed [here](#).

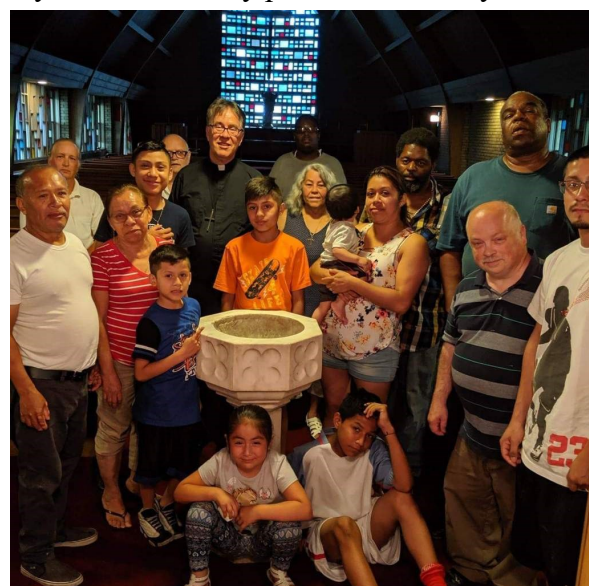
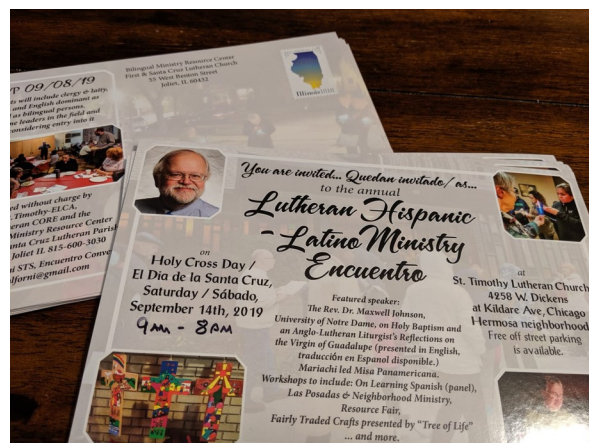
Following the morning session, the *Misa Panamericana*, Spanish language liturgy of Holy Communion will be celebrated with *Mariachi Juvenil Tamazula de Joliet*. Affirmation of Baptism will take place in the service, with the rededication of a restored font, originally utilized by the St. Timothy parish in the early 20th century, but stored away and out of use for decades.

In his second talk, Dr. Johnson will draw from his book "The Virgin of Guadalupe: Theological Reflection of an Anglo-Lutheran Liturgist," (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002) the Biblical witness of Mary's Magnificat in positing "Marian Acclamations: Not Just for Roman Catholics Anymore."

Worship will be led by Pastor Myrta Robles, CORE Board members Pastor Keith Forni and Joel Awes, with area mission partners and members of St. Timothy. Pastor Dennis Nelson, of Scottsdale, AZ, Lutheran CORE Executive Director, will provide an overview and update of the renewal organization's work in providing voice and network for confessing Lutherans. Afternoon workshops will accent Resources for Learning Spanish, Neighborhood Ministry and the Advent Tradition of *Las Posadas*, and the Development of Hispanic-Latino Lutheran Ministries with an overview of the life and outreach of St. Andrew / *San Andres* Lutheran Church, West Chicago, IL, by Pastor Josh Ebner.

Once again, the *Encuentro* will conclude with an outdoor Vigil and Witness for Peace on Chicago's Streets with Compline / bilingual Night Prayers and a closing dessert fellowship.

Fairly traded, handcrafted Central American art will be available for purchase, offered by Mr. Tom Hocker of Tree of Life Imports, Hammond, IN. Handcrafted baskets and other items will be available, in support of community initiatives in Ghana, West Africa, presented by Mr. David Jones, Joliet, IL. Materials for Lutheran, bilingual / Hispanic-Latino ministry will be available from the Bilingual Ministry Resource Center, Joliet / Chicago. There is no cost to attend the *Encuentro*, as Lutheran CORE and the host congregations are covering expenses. Continental breakfast, lunch and supper are provided. Participants are invited to register by calling or texting Pastor Forni at 815.600.3030 / keithlforni@gmail.com.



St. Timothy, Chicago, baptismal font

CWA Reflections: God Has a Way of Sorting His Church

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to host the churchwide assembly. Many conservatives interpreted this stormy event as an act of God, expressing His displeasure with the vote. Revisionists responded in kind, saying it was God unleashing divine joy at seeing an oppressive structure of yesteryear finally knocked over. The whole thing was a good lesson in why Lutherans generally avoid seeking the clear will of God in natural occurrences. The Word suffices.

2019 CWA

Now fast forward to the ELCA's triennial churchwide assembly this past August in Milwaukee. No tornado struck the Wisconsin Center where the voting members gathered, leaving the question of whether God approved or disapproved in serious doubt for theological interpreters of the jet stream. In the end, though, no gust of wind was needed: the churchwide organization of the ELCA just may succeed in knocking over its own steeple.

"We Are Church" was the assembly's theme, as though the ELCA were trying to assure itself. Probably, the theme developed under Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton's influence, part of her [Sisyphean](#) effort to remind the ELCA what sort of thing it actually is. She almost elicited a crowd gasp when she asserted, in her report, that social concerns were "peripheral" to the Gospel and the preaching of Christ crucified and risen. The assembly swallowed its gasp, though, having just overwhelmingly re-elected Eaton a bit earlier. Is she being kept as a token sort-of-traditionalist? If not, the rest of the assembly's decisions would suggest that its voting members did not especially share her Christ-and-Gospel-centered vision.

You can read a summary of those decisions [here](#). I'm not going to re-hash them, as I only attended the assembly for a few days as Lutheran CORE's observer, being pulled away for parish matters later in the week. Suffice it to say, the decisions generally represent a socially-conscious array of All the Right (Left?) Things, with condemnations of patriarchy and white supremacy leading the charge. A few celebrations were sprinkled here and there, a couple new and heresy-ish-sounding strategies, and one change in polity (the ordination of the diaconal office) that would have split the ELCA once upon a time but that barely received notice today. All those things have already received a host of criticism, online and around the church. But, in the end, they may not be a breeze that tips the [campanile](#).

Not Much from Churchwide to ELCA Congregations

Through it all, one set of questions kept emerging for me: *What is "churchwide ELCA" doing for the rest of the ELCA? How is it positively affecting congregations?* Don't read in those questions some sort of anti-institutional bent. I tend to think that conservatives can be hampered in mission by their anti-institutionalism. Institutions are dirt: good in some places, bad in others. Use as necessary. So of course a church should have some kind of office tending to lists and rosters and things. But looking over the resolutions and memorials, and listening to the Presiding Bishop's report, I was struck with how much of the direction was from the congregations to churchwide—*please memorialize this, please authorize that*--and so little flowed from churchwide back to the congregations.

To be sure, there were likely many congregations, pastors, and lay members who rejoiced at the ELCA's decisions. But beyond their rejoicing, how were even the supporters of the assembly's "actions" seriously affected by them? Many of the resolutions or memorials seemed simply to affirm things that were already happening locally. Would any of them have stopped had the churchwide ELCA yawned at their affirmation? In his rather interesting report, Secretary Boerger noted that less than 6% of the ELCA's total offerings are headed towards the synods and churchwide offices. Why, particularly, should there be more? Does that dearth of offerings signal a sense in the ELCA generally that its synodical



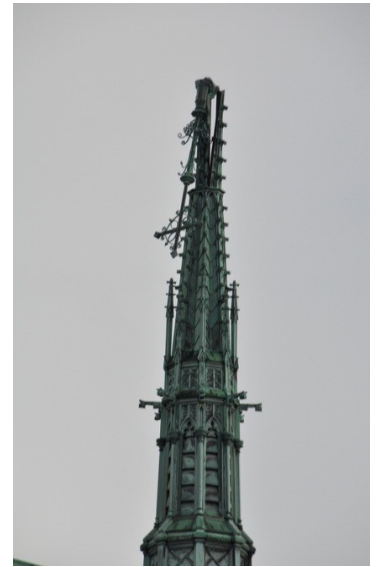
From 2019 CWA

...the churchwide organization of the ELCA just may succeed in knocking over its own steeple.

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CWA Reflections: God Has a Way of Sorting His Church

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Photos of
2009 CWA

and churchwide expressions are—what? Less than inspiring?

God Has A Way of Sorting His Church

My point is this: as bad as doctrinal revision may be, it may not be the only reason why a denominational superstructure ends up shuttering its doors (or even the most significant reason). Recent studies have suggested that conservative and liberal Lutherans in America are both shrinking despite their doctrinal differences. A different kind of decay, the natural mold of bureaucracy and vainglory, may prove equally if not more effective in toppling a tower once considered mighty by men. For God has a way of sorting His Church, does He not? He dispenses with what isn't helping, though He may keep it around longer than we would suppose, simply to heap up glory for Himself on the last day.

In the meantime, the ELCA's churchwide actions, as outrageous as some have been, sparked about as much reaction from me as hearing that my fourth child has just shoved a green bean up his nose. After a few rounds at that rodeo, every parent knows to pinch the opposite nostril and blow out the bean, the tiny action figure, the bead from a broken bracelet. It's a problem, but not one that will long endure. Keep preaching, resisting, and directing the sheep to green pastures; tend the table faithfully; and then pinch your nostrils, carry on, and remember that the Holy Spirit is a wind who blows where He pleases.

Photos of the 2009 CWA are courtesy of Pr. Steve Shipman. Pr. Steven Gjerde took the photo of the 2019 CWA.

The Power of the Word

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message of salvation.

Leadstar Graduation Address

In Jeremiah we read of one of the last kings of Judah, Jehoiakim, and his response to the word of God. After Jeremiah dictated to his scribe Baruch the words of prophecy given to him by God, Jeremiah instructed him to read this document in the temple. Jeremiah himself was restricted and forbidden to enter the temple. When the king's officials heard these words, Baruch's document was taken and he and Jeremiah were told to hide. The official Jehudi was told to bring the book before the king and read it to him. "It was the ninth month and the king was sitting in the winter apartment, with a fire burning in the firepot in front of him. Whenever Jehudi had read three or four columns of the scroll, the king cut them off with a scribe's knife and threw them into the firepot, until the entire scroll was burned in the fire. The king and all his attendants who heard all these words showed no fear, nor did they tear their clothes. . ." We learn that several leaders urged the king not to burn the scroll, but he would not listen to them. Instead, the king commanded the police "to arrest Baruch the scribe and Jeremiah the prophet. But the LORD had hidden them" (36:22-26)



Enlightenment Perspective

This is one response to God's word when it challenges us: whittle it down, reject it, even burn it. Especially if what it says accuses us, we want to get rid of it. Unfortunately, Europe and North America have a long history of copying King Jehoiakim's attempt to eliminate the word whether they admit it or not. One of America's greatest presidents, Thomas Jefferson, during his tenure in the White House, took scissors to the Gospels and cut out all those passages which he felt no rational person could believe. So, Jesus walked on water? Out that goes. Or, Jesus turned water into wine? Well, no scientific person can believe that. So, it goes away too. But the biblical injunction to love your neighbors as yourselves? That stays because any rational person can figure out that it is in their self-interest to be kind to others. After all, if you are charitable to them, then they will be nice to you. And, you never know when you might need a favor. Jefferson represented what is called the "Enlightenment" perspective.

Not only Jefferson, but the major universities in the West, for well over a century have supported a scholarly industry to foster a skeptical attitude toward the scriptures. It goes without saying just how off base this antagonism toward the word is. God's power shouldn't be pitted against our own, unless of course we want to sin. Instead, a faithful approach understands that God's power is the power upholding created powers within all things, allowing everything to be. Apart from God's power we wouldn't exist; nor would we be able to claim any freedom whatsoever. The heirs of the Enlightenment surely misunderstand the whole dynamic between God and people. On top of that, the Bible shouldn't be sliced and diced as so many critics do—as if the Bible were like a dead specimen dissected in a scientific lab. Instead, the Bible is God's word, God's inspired message to people, first to his old covenant people and then of course to us, his new covenant people, always coming to us with the divine promise in Christ. It is a living, powerful book; it provides meaning, purpose, and identity to those who find themselves described in its pages. It accuses sinners in their sin and gives mercy to all those who need it. It provides purpose and meaning to all who find their lives scripted in its pages. It empowers you in ministry.

Testimony

Nor are the Bible's miracles to be suspect. The truth of biblical events comes to us as testimony. Unless we have compelling evidence otherwise, we should take such testimony at face value. Miracles are no affront

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to science, since science acknowledges the fact that we can't assume that the past is like the present or that even other places conform exactly to how things happen here. It is entirely possible for a thoughtful person to believe in the Bible's miracles, and if Jesus is in fact risen from the dead (and he is), then we should believe the testimony that the prophets and apostles give us.

In a word, we should be like neither King Jehoiakim nor President Jefferson! In those countries where so many people have become beguiled by biblical skepticism, church attendance has gone dramatically down. That said, the true gospel of Jesus Christ is to forgive sins and grant life and salvation. All this empowers men and women in Jesus' name so that they can live full and free, abundant lives, experiencing the full gamut that life has to offer.

God Authors Life

Obviously the heirs of the Enlightenment have a hard time with authority. They see it as a threat to their own power. But they are off base. Look at the root word in "authority"; it is "author." What God is doing in scripture is exhaling an authoritative word that crafts our lives. God is working through scripture to bring you to Jesus, to empower you with the Holy Spirit, to lead you to acknowledge and praise the Father—and in fact the entire Holy Trinity. God authors your life in scripture by leading you to the manger where the infant Jesus lay and to the cross where he died for your sins and to the room at Pentecost when he poured out the Holy Spirit on the disciples. God gives you the promise in the scriptures that he is for you. And, as Paul puts it: if God is for us, who can be against us?

My teacher, a Frenchman, Paul Ricoeur, did not share in these views which disown the Bible. In contrast, he said in the Bible we are to look for matters that lie *behind* the text, *within* the text, and *in front of* the text. Yes, with respect to "behind" the text, he said, look for the history described by the Bible. He felt that that was important, but not nearly as important as "within" and "in front of" the Bible. By "within the text," he said look for the patterns repeated through the Bible across its many authors and pages so that, for example, we see Jesus as the Lamb of God not just in the Passover meal but also in the Gospel of John. Finally, by "in front of the text" he said, "Ask yourself just how different your life would be if you believed God's word and took it at face value? How would you change your life?"

God's Spirit is powerfully using Africa to make the fire of Christian faith burn bright throughout the world.

Dynamo of Salvation

The Bible, after all, is a powerful book. It conveys a mighty gospel—one which Paul calls the *dynamis* (dynamo) of salvation. The Bible gives us the truth both of who God is and who we are, and it empowers us to make a difference in this world. I love the description to the [Psalter](#) which the great Reformer Martin Luther gives:

Where does one find finer words of joy than in the psalms of praise and thanksgiving? There you look into the hearts of all the saints, as into fair and pleasant gardens, yes, as into heaven itself. There you see what fine and pleasant flowers of the heart spring up from all sort of fair and happy thoughts toward God, because of his blessings. On the other hand, where do you find deeper, and more sorrowful, and more pitiful words of sadness than in the psalms of lamentation? There again you look into the hearts of all the saints, as into death, yes, as into hell itself. How gloomy and dark it is there, with all kinds of troubled forebodings about the wrath of God! . . . when they speak of fear and hope, they use such words that no painter could so depict for you fear or hope, and no Cicero or other orator so portray them.

In other words, the scriptures give voice to our affections, our greatest joys and our deepest depressions; our feelings are comprehended and given meaning in light of the Psalter. It is the foundation and basis of your ministry. It is truth. Through the Bible our lives make sense even in confusing times and under heavy burdens, and when the power of the word is challenged even by well-meaning thinkers who peddle an alternate and weak approach.

Africa's Moment

This is Africa's moment. God's Spirit is powerfully using Africa to make the fire of Christian faith burn

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The Power of the Word

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bright throughout the world. African Christians have a voice to speak to what ails many in the West. As the Psalmist says, God's word is lamp to our feet and our light to our path. As the world moves forward into the future it is from Africa, from you, that the torch of faith and truth shines through your fervent speaking the good news. God's word is living and powerful. From the word you will comfort the dying with Jesus' promise "I am the resurrection and the life." For those confessing their sins you will guide them with the promise "create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me." For those grateful you will share "Oh give thanks to the Lord for he is good and his mercy endures forever." It is God's creative and empowering word which has brought you to this moment — your graduation — and it will empower you as you move forward into your new steps in life. Continue to let God's word shine in all you say and do.

God's word is lamp to our feet and our light to our path.

What Will It Be Next, Part 2

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Songs for the Holy Other?

This month's "What Will It Be Next?" is my response to an August 20 communication from ELCA Worship. This email included in its list of resources a new hymnal entitled, *Songs for the Holy Other: Hymns Affirming the LGBTQIA2S+ Community*. This hymn collection was introduced at the recent annual conference of the Hymn Society of the United States and Canada. According to the society's website, TheHymnSociety.org, the volume is intended to be "a toolbox of hymns by and for those who identify as members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, pansexual, transgender, nonbinary, queer, questioning, intersex, asexual, aromantic, two-spirit, and other sexual/gender minority (LGBTQIA2S+) community and their allies." As explanation for their choosing the name, *Songs for the Holy Other*, they write, "We continue to be othered for our identities, relationship-styles, dis/abilities, race, economic status, and more." So the title is "a self-conscious claiming of otherness as holy and beloved of God. We who have been labeled as 'wholly other' are claiming our holiness, and reclaiming our otherness as a prophetic witness to the church."

What will the ELCA add to LGBTQIA2S+ next ?

The first thing I noticed is that here once again the ELCA is promoting letters far beyond what was actually approved by the 2009 Churchwide Assembly. That gathering only addressed the issue of publicly accountable, lifelong, and monogamous same gender relationships (L and G relationships held to a very high standard). It said nothing about the issue of B, T, Q, I, A, and + relationships. And yet here we are — only ten years later — and the ELCA feels free to promote a wide variety of sexual identities and expressions far beyond what actually was addressed and approved. "What will it be next?"

New Symbols

The second thing I noticed is that there was a number and a letter which I had never seen before in the series of letters — 2S. Doing some research, I found that 2S stands for "Two Spirit," which I discovered is "a term used by some indigenous North Americans to describe certain people in their communities who fulfill a traditional third-gender (or other gender-variant) ceremonial role in their cultures." Realizing that the ELCA is now promoting a new hymnal affirming the LGBTQIA2S+ community, all I could think of was to again ask the question, "What Will It Be Next?" What letter/letters will be added next?

The ELCA document, "[Trustworthy Servants of the People of God](#)," says, "Those who serve as pastors and deacons reflect a variety of sexual orientations and diverse gender identities." (page 11, lines 233-234) If a document which has been rejected because it is too conservative makes a statement like that, what will be said in the document which finally is accepted because it finally is acceptable to the LGBTQIA+ community? And if, for the ELCA, the clear teachings of the Bible are not the basis for understanding human sexuality, how is the ELCA going to decide whether to endorse and promote all of the letters and numbers which are going to be continually added to the sequence, LGBTQIA2S+? The plus sign allows for any and all possibilities. "What will it be next?"

Postmodernism Gone Viral, Part 3: Responding to My Critics

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have chosen or even expected to engage. My mother was an original 1970's feminist and although as an adult I hardly walk in lock-step with her views any more than your typical grown child, she raised all three of her boys to see the world in fundamentally the same way. I am in deep sympathy with the impetus behind the social statement, which makes the timbre of the accusations leveled at me in the negative correspondence more difficult to bear. Those accusations included being motivated by "hate" (this, at least, was expected), not understanding postmodernism, not having actually *read* the proposed social statement (this was incredible), appointing myself the gatekeeper of what it means to be Lutheran, and acting like an "angry, resentful spouse after a bad breakup."

Undermining the Faith Once Delivered

Although, along with the charges of sexism and a fear of white male heterosexuals losing their cultural hegemony, the accusation of hate was anticipated, it does not make it less painful or untrue; my article was clear as to my motivations. *Love*, whether *agape*, *storge*, or *philia*, does not affirm or neglect when it finds the beloved to be in serious — let alone, grave — error. The desire to pursue justice is noble, but the adoption of postmodern categories of meaning in the pursuit of justice (including those advanced by gender as opposed to equity feminism, a distinction I recognize) rather than the use of those categories revealed to us in Holy Scripture is, in my estimation, dangerous, undermining "the faith delivered once for all to the saints."

It is fascinating for me to speculate on how someone could infer that I have not read the proposed social statement; how could I level the critique I do without reading the document in question? I must say that it is the emotional timbre of some of my hate mail letters that strikes me as reactionary, imputing to me a lack of knowledge and poor motivation where none is in evidence in the actual text of what I wrote. While my acquaintance with the reality of postmodernism dates from my undergraduate days in the arts, my acquaintance with its theoretical underpinnings goes back to the required reading assigned to my wife during her doctoral work in the mid-90's. I do not claim to be an expert in postmodernism (who can be with its deliberately amorphous categories of meaning?), but I *am* well acquainted with it. We can disagree with one another without impugning each other's character, knowledge, or motivations.

... we here in the West are jumping off a theological cliff.

Gatekeeper? Yes!

Who made me "a gate keeper of what it means to be Lutheran?" Since the Lutheran reformers rejected the authority of the Roman Magisterium, that is a responsibility that falls to *all* who call themselves Lutheran. It is our dialogue, what philosopher Charles Taylor refers to as our "web of interlocution," utilizing common theological reference points that defines the "Lutheran family." The great majority of the Lutherans of the Two-Thirds World have been warning us for a long time that we here in the West are jumping off a theological cliff, departing from the theological fold, using sophisticated language (that is, *sophistry*) to disguise even from ourselves that we are becoming apostates. I suggest that it is high time we drop our neo-colonial sense of intellectual and moral superiority and heed their voices.

Range of Emotions

As for acting like an "angry resentful spouse after a bad breakup," while the metaphor is faulty (I initiated the separation, so the breakup wasn't "bad" for me), I will own what I imagine are the emotions of someone in that situation in the following manner:

I am *angry* that what I describe as a "viral" ideology, foreign to the mind of the church catholic and the Lutheran tradition, largely eclipsed solid confessional theology within my own seminary and professional experience within the ELCA; had I not had theological colleagues and conversation partners with broader experience and advanced degrees, I might have entirely missed the great voice of Christian orthodoxy speaking its Gospel wisdom down the ages. (I wrote about this in a [Forum Letter](#) article in 2010.) It upsets me that many bearing the name of Lutheran do not (or cannot) distinguish Law from Gospel in a way that

... it is high time we drop our neo-colonial sense of intellectual and moral superiority and heed their [Two Thirds World] voices.

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Postmodernism Gone Viral, Part 3: Responding to My Critics

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engenders sorrow, contrition — and yes, terror — for sin in the hearts of people, that they have no idea that Two Kingdoms theology is inseparable from the broader tapestry of Luther's thought, and that they do not understand why Luther so stridently rejected all "theologies of glory." I confess that I view all forms of "liberation theology" as theologies of glory because they seem to believe that humanity, whose *best* possible ontological condition is *simul iustus et peccator*, possesses the insight, wisdom, and character to forge a just system in anything more than the most provisional of ways. This includes a functional theology that treats our necessary pursuit of justice as a form of realized [eschatology](#). "God's Work: Our Hands" is the last motto any church bearing the name Lutheran should ever have considered, let alone adopted.

In my view such people—many of whom I love deeply at a personal level—are Lutheran by connection to historically Lutheran institutions rather *than* historically-conditioned theological conviction. It is why they work so hard to redefine or "re-imagine" Christianity as a thing no Christian prior to their own historical moment would recognize as bearing any resemblance to their own.

I *resent* what the ELCA is increasingly becoming because in my estimation it besmirches a solid theological tradition. I love many, many people who gather at its Communion rails and I am afraid for them... afraid that they are being convinced that an alien cultural ideology can be "baptized" and made authentically Christian. And because this ideology often takes the place of authentic proclamation of the Gospel "whereby sinners may repent and have life," I am afraid that the salvation of such people may even be imperiled, for faith means nothing without its object. As Pr. Tim Keller (a Reformed theologian) puts it succinctly, "Strong faith in a weak branch is infinitely inferior to weak faith in a strong branch."

God's Work: Our Hands" is the last motto any church bearing the name Lutheran should ever have ... adopted.

Theologians Call Out Theological Errors

The first great theologian of the Church after Paul was [Irenaeus](#), and his seminal treatise was entitled *Against Heresies*. Augustine fought against the error of [Pelagius](#), and Luther disputed both the Roman Curia and the [Anabaptists](#). It is part of the catholic tradition of the church to call out theological error when one sees it with a force in accord with the depth of the error perceived. Because the categories endemic to postmodernism undermine and *effectively preclude* the Church's traditional theological discourse as a thing engaged with *categories* of Truth rather than mere political power, it is quite possible that my article may actually have been too tempered and moderate in its timbre. Theology is not mere "word games" nor is it predominantly "metaphorical" as Sally McFague would have it; it is the use of words with real referents to describe (or attempt to describe) genuine *realities*. Theology is properly understood as "the queen of the sciences," not some sort of "me too" liberal art that can hope to do no more than follow gratefully where her social and intellectual betters, philosophy, anthropology, and psychology, lead the way.

Theology is properly understood as "the queen of the sciences."

Fatal Flaws

One piece of negative mail I received ended by asking me "in the Love of all that is Holy, [to] read the document (*FSJ*) with an open mind." It seemed to assume that the only reason an open-minded, Gospel-motivated individual would fail to embrace *Faith, Sexism, and Justice* was a predisposition against it. I remember David Mills once writing something *to* the effect that, "A person properly opens their mind for the same reason they open their mouths; to bite down upon something." I bit down upon *FSJ* and found it wanting in both substance and taste; I have explained my reasons — I hope persuasively — so that some with open minds will be persuaded to vote against it or at least amend it to correct the worst of what I view as its fatal flaws.

So, I end this series of articles by paraphrasing my critic and begging people, for the love of Jesus, who with the Father and the Spirit *alone* is Holy, to read again my critiques with an open mind... and read the work of the French Structuralists I referenced to see whether I have misrepresented the implications of their work. [1] If I understand them right, postmodernism is acid to the foundations of Christian theology and faith... and is to be utterly rejected in all its forms.

[1] As an introduction to the topic of postmodernism, I suggest the book by Frederic Jameson of the same name with the subtitle *The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*; it is an oldie but goody.

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Coming Events

2019 Encuentro (Encounter)	Chicago, IL	September 14, 2019	Holy Cross Day!	Click here
LCMC Annual Gathering	Omaha, NE	Sept. 29 - Oct. 2, 2019	"Listen Up!"	Click here.
2019 Lutherans for Life Regional Conferences	Events are coming up in Colorado, Minnesota, Maryland and California.	Next conference is Sep. 14. Final conference is Nov. 16th	"Did God Really Say ...?"	Click here
2020 NALC Life Conference	Trinity Lutheran Church, Joppa, MD	January 23, 2020	TBD	Click here
March for Life 2020	Washington, D.C.	January 24, 2020	TBD	Click here

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