

The **LUTHERAN** **CLARION**



Lutheran Concerns Association
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Lutherans Should Speak Out for Religious Liberty

The following article is a follow-up to Mr. Scott J. Meyer's July 2011, Clarion article "Walther on Church and State."

England's great statesman and profound conservative thinker, Edmund Burke (1729-97), made the famous and oft-quoted statement:

All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing.¹

Burke's caveat is still relevant since attacks on religious liberty in America are ceaseless and unending. This journal recently published an article on several on-going State encroachments upon the religious liberty of the church, which is protected under the First Amendment to the U. S. Constitution. The article also considered what Dr. C.F.W. Walther had to say on the general subject of "Church and State,"² These recent State encroachments were illustrated with three examples:

- the normalizing of homosexual behavior in the military;
- the order not to defend the constitutionality of the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA); and
- the legalization of so-called "same-sex marriages" or "civil unions."

Subsequently, another attempt at State encroachment upon the religious liberty of the church was evident by the Federal Government's position taken in a recent U.S. Supreme Court case. That case ruled on the issue of whether a parochial school teacher who also teaches a full secular curriculum can qualify as a "minister" and thus be entitled to the "ministerial exception" under the Americans with Disabilities Act ("ADA").³ Despite the long history of the "ministerial exception" in civil rights cases in the lower courts, Obama's Justice Department submitted a brief to the Court in which it argued for disavowal of the "ministerial exception" in its *entirety* or at least its narrowing so that it does not apply to parochial school teachers. Such results would constitute a deprivation of long-accepted religious liberty rights under the First Amendment.⁴ In a severe rebuke to the Obama administration, the Court handed down a unanimous decision, January 11, 2012, that overturned the Court of Appeals decision and gave a strongly worded opinion for religious freedom.

Chief Justice John Roberts, writing for a unanimous Court in the Hosanna-Tabor case, said that the government's claim was:

hard to square with the text of the First Amendment itself, which gives special solitude to the rights of religious organizations. We cannot accept the remarkable view that the Religion Clauses have nothing to say about a religious organization's freedom to select its own ministers.⁵

Encroachment on Religious Liberty by ObamaCare⁶

Despite that strongly worded rebuke from the U.S. Supreme Court, the Obama administration has continued its relentless disregard for the First Amendment clauses protecting religious liberty. Thus, the dust had barely settled on the Hosanna-Tabor case, when Health and Human Services (HHS) announced that religious institutions would not be exempt from ObamaCare's mandate that employer health-care plans cover all the costs of contraception, including abortion-producing drugs, and sterilization coverage for their employees. The rule would force Catholic institutions "either to violate the moral teachings of the Catholic church or abandon the health-care, education and social service they provide the needy."⁷ Opponents of the HHS rule said it is an "unprecedented incursion into freedom of conscience;"⁸ a "literally unconscionable" attack on religious freedom;⁹ and a "deep contempt for Christianity and democracy."¹⁰ Although the Federal Government then made an alleged "accommodation" to the previous mandate, the battle for religious liberty is far from over.¹¹

The HHS rule, though specially directed against Catholic schools, charities, and hospitals, is an affront to religious liberty that should be condemned by all religious denominations, including the LCMS. Lutherans should be proactive in opposing not only those State encroachments upon religious liberty that directly affect their

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denomination as in the Hosanna-Tabor case,¹² but also other instances of State encroachment upon religious liberty. As so aptly stated by Senator Roy Blunt: "This is not about one group, one health care requirement, or one set of beliefs. It's about protecting Americans' fundamental religious freedom."¹³ It is commendable that LCMS President, the Rev. Dr. Matthew Harrison issued a forthright statement against this recent HHS rule despite the fact that the Concordia Health Plan, which is the church workers' health plan of the LCMS, is "grandfathered" and thus not subject to the HHS rule. Lutherans should act on his plea: "I encourage the members of the LCMS to join with me in supporting efforts to preserve our essential right to exercise our religious beliefs."¹⁴ Even the so-called accommodation to the mandate was denounced.¹⁵ It still encroaches on freedom of religion.

President Harrison's plea was not idle talk, for he then set an example and testified vigorously against the HHS mandate before the House Oversight and Government Reform Committee. He told Congress that the Hosanna-Tabor case "gives us no comfort that this administration will be concerned to guard our free exercise rights." He was said to have expressed "genuine outrage" at the administration's "draconian violation of our First Amendment rights;"¹⁶ Harrison testified that "the conscience is a sacred thing," and emphasized that "this provision is draconian in that it involves the realm of our conscience."¹⁷ Harrison's plea encouraged other Missouri Synod Lutherans to take action in the public square. For example, a "Stand Together for Religious Liberty" event was organized by St. Paul's Lutheran Church, Fort Wayne, April 17, 2012. Some 250 Lutherans presented letters and words of support to the Roman Catholic Bishop Kevin C. Rhodes in his opposition to the HHS mandate.¹⁸

"The HHS rule... is an affront to religious liberty that should be condemned by all religious denominations, including the LCMS."

As of this writing (June 2012) the latest skirmish in the fight against the HHS mandate was the filing of twelve federal lawsuits by 43 Catholic plaintiffs on May 21, 2012. The plaintiffs included The University of Notre Dame, Catholic University in Washington, D.C. and the Archdioceses of Dallas, New York, Pittsburgh, St. Louis and Washington D.C.¹⁹ As stated by Harvard Law School Professor Mary Ann Glendon, the Bishops are suing the Federal Government because "The main goal of the contraceptive mandate is not to protect women's health. It is a move to conscript religious organizations into a political agenda."²⁰ The lawsuit by the nation's most prominent Catholic institutions is characterized as "historic."²¹ The constitutionality of the ObamaCare mandate currently is being considered by the U.S. Supreme Court in a separate case on grounds other than religious liberty, specifically under the Commerce Clause (Article I, Section 8).

That lawsuit was filed by 26 states and the National Federation of Independent Business. Oral arguments were heard March 26-28, 2012.²²

Lutheran Responses to Other Encroachments on Religious Liberty

It is thus seen that Christians are confronted with many public evils, which are deemed acceptable lifestyles by many segments of society, e.g., abortion, homosexuality, and same-sex unions. Rather than confronting these public evils, Christians often remain silent, with the result: "All that is necessary for evil to triumph is for good men to do nothing" (quoted above from Burke). As stated by Dr. Uwe Siemon-Netto: "They don't engage the world the way they should, they seem reticent to roll up their sleeves and unwilling to dirty their hands in areas where God has assigned Lutherans as well as other people...."²³ They accept the argument that since the law in the left-hand kingdom allows these things, the church cannot agitate against them. However, this is a "bogus argument" because "The law governing the left-hand kingdom is God's law—the Law He gave to Moses and the law He wrote upon the hearts of all human beings, non-Christians included."²⁴

It is not to be implied herein that Lutherans and other Christians do not openly and publicly engage evils in the left-hand kingdom. LCMS President Matthew Harrison's testimony against the HHS health-care mandate was cited above. Another example of the pro-active approach was his recent joining with 38 religious leaders in signing an open letter to all Americans supporting "the traditional definition of marriage and the right to uphold individual



Please Support Lutheran Concerns

There is much remaining work to be done to return our Synod to the Church of our Grandfathers and Reformation fathers! The Lutheran Concerns Association is dedicated to the effort to reclaim our full Lutheran heritage for The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, but we cannot achieve this long-range goal alone.

We need your continued help so that a truly Lutheran church body will be there for our grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In some small way we at the Lutheran Concerns Association desire to be helpful in preserving our faith, under the Lord's blessing, so that the treasure of pure doctrine and right practice will be known for generations yet to come.

Would you prayerfully consider assisting us in this on-going effort with your tax deductible donations? Please send checks to:

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religious beliefs without fear of sanctions from governmental authorization." 25 Although voters in 30 states have approved constitutional amendments defining marriage as between a man and a woman, Obama has publicly endorsed same-sex marriage. 26 A further example of the pro-active approach is the concerted effort of Lutherans for Life by their participation since 1999 in the annual

"State encroachment on religious liberty is clearly evident by attacks on free speech in which creationist writings are censored, ridiculed and even prohibited in institutions that receive hundreds of millions of dollars of federal tax money."

"March for Life" held in Washington, D.C. 27 on the anniversary of the landmark decision of the U.S. Supreme Court, *Roe v Wade*. 28 Also notable in the pro-life movement was the election in 2011 of Carol Tobias, a member of an LCMS congregation, to be president of the National Right to Life Committee (NRLC), a national federation with 50 state affiliates and more than 3,000 local chapters. The NRLC has

been termed the "flagship" of the pro-life movement "to educate the public and pass laws protecting mothers and their unborn children." 29

Another public evil that incessantly confronts Christians is the teaching of evolution, in opposition to the scriptural doctrine of creation, in the public schools, high schools, and universities, as well as in the media, as though evolution were **fact** rather than **theory**. As observed by the LCMS scientist, Dr. David N. Menton, even some Christians "claim God might have used evolution over billions of years to create everything we see today. But that notion just doesn't hold water." 30 State encroachment on religious liberty is clearly evident by attacks on free speech in which creationist writings are censored, ridiculed and even prohibited in institutions that receive hundreds of millions of dollars of federal tax money. 31 To help educate the public against the godless atheistic teachings of the evolutionists, several LCMS Lutheran professors, notably Dr. John W. Klotz (1918-96), Dr. Wilbert H. Rusch, Sr. (1913-94), and Dr. Paul A. Zimmerman (b. 1918), participated in founding and fostering the Creation Research Society. 32 This is a research and publication society "committed to full belief in the Biblical record of creation and early history, and thus to a concept of dynamic special creation (as opposed to evolution) both of the universe and the earth with the complexity of living forms." 33

The above examples illustrate how Lutherans can and should speak out today against State encroachment upon the First Amendment religious liberty rights of the church. We all need to heed and pursue the advice given by Ronald Reagan: "Freedom is never more than one generation away from extinction... We must struggle to preserve it every day" and "What we must learn is that you can't lose

freedom anyplace without losing freedom every place." 34

Scott J. Meyer, B.S., M.B.A., J.D., Retired
Patent Attorney, Monsanto Company
Board President, Concordia Historical Institute

- 1 Edmund Burke, January 9, 1795, in a letter to William Smith, quoted by John Bartlett, *Bartlett's Familiar Quotations* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1863, 1980) p. 374.
- 2 Scott J. Meyer, "Walther on Church and State," *The Lutheran Clarion*, Vol 3, Issue 6, July 2011, pp. 2-3.
- 3 *Hosanna-Tabor Evangelical Lutheran Church and School, Petitioner v. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, et al.*, filed October 26, 2010, on appeal from United States Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, 597 F.3d 769 (6th Cir. 2010), March 9, 2010.
- 4 See Michael W. McConnell, "Washington Wants a Say Over Your Minister," *The Wall Street Journal*, Oct. 5, 2011. Mr. McConnell is the director of the Constitutional Law Center at Stanford University, and wrote a friend-of-the-court brief in the Hosanna-Tabor case.
- 5 565 U.S.----- (2012), No. 10-553, Jan. 11, 2012. Quoted with commentary in "Hosannas for the Court," *The Wall Street Journal*, "Review and Outlook," January 12, 2012.
- 6 ObamaCare is a popular (trivial) name used for the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, which was rushed through Congress for passage in late 2010 at the insistence and pressure of President Obama.
- 7 Donald Wuerl, Charles Colson, and Meir Y. Soloveichik, "United We Stand for Religious Freedom," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 10, 2012. Cardinal Wuerl is the archbishop of Washington, D.C. Charles Colson (d. 2012) was the founder of Prison Fellowship and the Colson Center for Christian Worldview. Rabbi Soloveichik is director of the Straus Center for Torah and Western Thought at Yeshiva University.
- 8 Timothy M. Dolan, "ObamaCare and Religious Freedom," January 25, 2012. Timothy Dolan, archbishop of New York and president of the U.S. Catholic Bishops, was recently elevated to cardinal.
- 9 Quoted by Louise Radnovsky, "Catholic Leaders Blast Rule On Contraception Coverage," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, January 25, 2012.
- 10 Jeffrey T. Kuhner, "Obama takes aim at religious liberty with abortion stance," *The Washington Times*, February 6, 2012. Jeffrey T. Kuhner is president of the Edmund Burke Institute.
- 11 Janet Adamy, "Contraceptive Plan Still Draws Heat," *The Wall Street Journal*, February 13, 2012; Colleen Carroll Campbell, "Hollow compromise on contraceptive mandate," *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, February 16, 2012.
- 12 LCMS president, Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison said: "We are delighted with the opinion issued by the U. S. Supreme Court in the Hosanna-Tabor case today." Quoted by Paula Schleuter Ross. "Unanimous Supreme Court ruling supports Hosanna-Tabor," *Reporter*, February 2012, p. 2.
- 13 Roy Blunt, "Conscience protection," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 26, 2012. Roy Blunt, a Republican, is a U.S. Senator from Missouri.
- 14 "Missouri Synod President issues statement on recent HHS decision and religious freedom," *Christian News*, February 13, 2012, p. 11, www.lcms.org. February 3, 2012.
- 15 "Missouri Synod president says church remains 'deeply concerned' about health plan mandate despite White House statement," *Christian News*, February 20, 2012, p. 16. www.lcms.org. February 14, 2012.
- 16 Quoted by Tim Townsend, "Lutheran leader sides with Catholics on health ruling in fiery testimony," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, February 18, 2012, pp A1, A5. See also Adriane Dorr and Joel Gehrke, "Harrison defends religious freedom on Capital Hill," *Reporter*, March 2012, pp. 1 and 9.
- 17 Quoted by Adriane Door and Joel Gehrke, *Ibid*.
- 18 Paula Schleuter Ross, "Indiana Lutherans offer support for Catho-

lic 'life' stance." *Reporter*, May 2012, pp. 1 and 4. The article also describes a "Rally for Religious Liberty" held at Jefferson City, Missouri, March 27, 2012.

- 19 Louis Radnofsky, "Catholics Sue Over Health Mandate," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 2012.
- 20 Mary Ann Glendon, "Why the Bishops are Suing the U.S. Government," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 22, 2012.
- 21 Anon., "Catholics in Court," *The Wall Street Journal*, "Review and Outlook," May 23, 2012.
- 22 Anon., "Liberty and ObamaCare," *The Wall Street Journal*, March 23, 2012; Michael Doyle and David Lightman, "Supreme Court to weigh reach of health law," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, March 25, 2012.
- 23 Uwe Siemon-Netto, "Center for Lutheran Theology and Public Life," *Focus* 25, No. 2 (Winter 2007), pp. 16-18.
- 24 Uwe Siemon-Netto, "Two Kingdoms vs. 'One Me'," *The Lutheran Witness*, 126, No. 1 (January 2007), pp. 18-19.
- 25 Anon., "Harrison signs marriage letter." *Reporter*, February 2012, p.2.
- 26 Carol E. Lee, "Obama Backs Gay Marriage," *The Wall Street Journal*, May 10, 2012.
- 27 For a report on the 2012 participation, see Sarah Schafer, "Lutherans join 39th 'March for Life' in Washington, D.C." *Reporter*, February 2012, p. 1.
- 28 *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).
- 29 Anon., "LCMS member elected as eighth NRLC president," *Reporter*, July 2011, p 6.
- 30 David N. Menton, "Is God an Evolutionist?" *The Lutheran Witness*, July 1998, pp. 6-15, at p.6.
- 31 As neatly expressed by then LCMS President Alvin L. Barry (d. 2001): "for generations, evolution, with all its weaknesses and unexplained gaps, has reigned unchallenged in American public education (to say nothing of our zoos, science centers, natural history museums and mass media)." *Reporter*, "Barry editorial defends 'Intelligent design' view," September 2000.
- 32 See review article by Scott J. Meyer, "Missouri Synod Lutherans Active in Founding the Creation Research Society," *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly* 81, No. 4 (Winter 2008), pp. 238-59; *ibid.*, 83, No. 1, "Correction," p.64.
- 33 Creation Research Society, Statement of Belief, *Creation Research Society Quarterly* 48, No. 3, Winter 2012, p. 270.
- 34 *The Uncommon Wisdom of Ronald Reagan: A Portrait of His Own Words*, edited by Bill Adler (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1996), pp. 145 and 147.



Rev. Dr. Paul A. Zimmerman Distinguished Alumnus

The Lutheran Clarion congratulates Rev. Dr. Paul A. Zimmerman for being honored by Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, Missouri, as "Distinguished Alumnus" on May 18. That had to be a glorious day as well for all Concordia Seminary graduates and alumni. Dr. Zimmerman's distinguished service to the Synod included serving as president of three Concordia Universities; however, his service on President J. A. O. Preus' "Fact Finding Committee" that produced the "Blue Book" marked a defining theological period in the Synod's history as well as that of Concordia Seminary.

His book, "A Seminary in Crisis," will be a standard theological and historical reference book for decades. Readers, consider buying it from Concordia Publishing House, read it and place it in your congregation's library. The issues noted in the book still thrive in today's society.

Youth Ministry and the Disappearing Demographic: What's Gone Wrong and How Can We Fix It?

or

Giving Attention to the Conscience of the Lord's Youth

Rev. Bryan Wolfmueller gave the following presentation at the January 2012 Lutheran Concerns Conference in Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Introduction

The past 50 years have been marked by incredible efforts to "minister" to the youth. No expense has been spared, but the results are horrible. Why has youth ministry been such a catastrophic failure, and what can we do to truly minister to the Lord's children? I am convinced that we have everything we need to beneficially consider these questions and form a few answers with the catechism.

Last year this assembly heard a marvelous analysis of the problems of "Youth Ministry" by Rev. Jonathan Fisk. He outlined the theology found among our youth, "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism." Rev. Fisk noted that when we serve our youth something that they can grow out of, we shouldn't be surprised when that actually happens.

I would like to humbly take up this topic where it was left off, and offer a few theological suggestions as a way forward as we, as the Lord's church, serve the youth under our care.

The Diagnosis of the Ten Commandments

In one way the diagnostic (and condemnation) of the law is universal: all are sinners. Grandparents, parents, youth and children all have the same problem, original sin. Youth are not worse sinners than their parents or their grandparents, or less sinners. All people stand equally condemned, and equally forgiven by our Jesus.

But original sin manifests itself in various ways. One person is tempted to unbelief, another to despair, another to other great shame and vice. While it is dangerous to bifurcate and categorize people (and so steal away the gift of their name), it is a necessary pastoral task to consider the different temptations that come with different stations in life, including the station of youth.

Martin Luther will get us headed in the right direction with his insightful diagnosis:

To feel temptation is therefore a far different thing from consenting or yielding to it. We must all feel it, although not all in the same manner, but some in a greater degree and more severely than others; as, the young suffer especially from the flesh, afterwards, they that attain to middle life and old age, from the world, but others who are occupied with spiritual matters, that is, strong Christians, from the devil. (Large Catechism, Lord's Prayer, 107, *Triglott*)

The world, the flesh and the devil mount a constant assault on all people. In our youth, though, we are especially hard pressed by the flesh, and for the Christian youth this is a spiritual battle against the devil. The devil and our flesh are united together against the Lord's children, and the Fourth, Fifth and Sixth Commandments are where the fighting is the fiercest. These Commandments are the institutions where the devil attacks, hoping to make a breach into the conscience and do his soul destroying damage there.

Giving Attention to the Conscience and How the Distinction Between Law and Gospel Demands a More Developed Practical Theology

Dr. Kleinig has taught us that the two theaters of spiritual warfare are the church and the conscience (*Grace Upon Grace, Spirituality for Today*, John Kleinig [CPH 2008], p. 230). The devil ceaselessly works to deliver us to a bad conscience. The more we consider the troubles and temptations of the Lord's youth, the more clearly the battle lines come into focus. There is a focused, deliberate attempt by the devil to overthrow the consciences of youth.

The Scriptures, on the other hand, are doing the opposite; delivering us to a good conscience (see 1 Timothy 1:5, 1:18-19). The Lutheran Confessions, in fact, are doing the same. The Lutheran Confessions and our Lutheran doctrine is held forth explicitly to "comfort terrified consciences." "This teaching really consoles consciences" (Apology XXIV.48) is an apt description of the entire body of Lutheran doctrine.

This is why the proper distinction between the Law and the Gospel occupies such a central place in our teaching. We teach that properly distinguishing Law and Gospel is the highest of arts. ("Place any person who is well versed in this skill of distinguishing Law and Gospel at the top and call him a doctor of Holy Scripture," Martin Luther, quoted in *Law and Gospel, How to Read and Apply the Bible, A Reader's Edition*, C. F. W. Walther, [CPH, 2010], p. 54.) We act, though, as if this distinction were easy. It is not. The conscience is built for more than truth, it is built for comfort, but to get there is different for each person.

Two Ways to Break a Conscience

There are two ways to break a conscience. A conscience functioning properly will feel guilt over sin. A broken conscience will, first, feel no guilt over sin, or, second, feel guilt over no sin. This type of broken conscience is very common, not just in our youth, and each needs careful pastoral attention.

No guilt over sin is what the Bible calls a hardened heart or a seared conscience (see 1 Timothy 4:2). This is often the result of habitual sin or addiction. Substance abuse, alcohol and drugs, are the tool to deaden the conscience. What you know to be wrong when you are sober becomes acceptable when you are not. With addictions our conscience is numbed, and our threshold to endure more and more destructive sins rises.

The corrective for a broken conscience that feels no guilt over sin is the Law, the Ten Commandments. You might

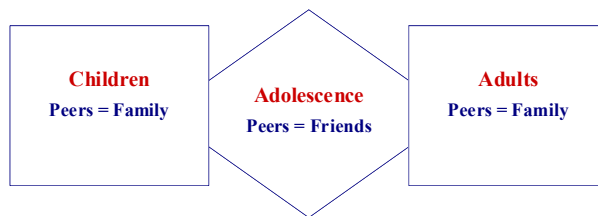
not feel guilt for skipping church on Sunday, but the Lord's Law still says to you, "Remember the Sabbath Day by keeping it holy." You may not feel guilty for uncovering your girlfriend, but the Lord's Law still says, "You shall not commit adultery."

The second type of broken conscience is a conscience that feels guilt over no sin. This is what we commonly call "shame," my neighbor has sinned against me, and my conscience is processing that sin as my guilt. A person is abused, violated, slandered, publicly sinned against, when their name and reputation are assaulted, etc., all resulting in shame. Anger, then, enters in and now I am justified for my lack of love for my neighbor. Real guilt is piled on false guilt.

This is a difficult spiritual situation, and requires a great deal of sensitivity. The medicine is the Gospel, the comforting truth that not only are our sins forgiven, but also forgiven are the sins committed against us. But when anger is lodged in a person's conscience there is very little room for the Gospel; I don't want Jesus to forgive that person.

The Influence of Peers on the Conscience

All of the things mentioned above are true for all people, but there is a uniqueness to youth, and the youth consciences that are being formed. In almost everyone's life there are various "peer shifts." When we are children our peers (that is, those whom we live with who affect our thinking and our actions) are our family. As we get older our peers expand to include friends and others. At some point there is a tipping point reached where our friends are more influential than our family; our friends are our peers. When young men and women are married and begin to have families the peer group is then shifted back to the family.



It is no coincidence that this middle place, adolescence: High School and College, is the time where youth are lost to the church, and often lost to the Gospel. Some return to the church when it is time to baptize and enroll their children in Sunday School, some, but not all, not most. Why? There is an explanation.

There are three influences on our behavior, three manifestations of the curb of the law: the legal code, our culture and peers, and our conscience. As our culture continues its general demise and our legal code follows suit, the conscience is the last wall to be breached. Our conscience, though, is directly bound up to our peers. Paul indicates this link with his warning, "Bad company ruins good morals," (1 Corinthians 15:33). We are not

ignorant of the devil's devices. The family is a good place for a conscience. The Lord's youth live in a much more dangerous culture, a toxic culture, and this makes the battle for a good conscience even more difficult.

Authorized Rebellion, the Invention of the Teenager and the Un-Coolness of the Fourth Commandment

The term "teenager" is modern. Dr. Michael Platt observed that before World War II "the word 'teenager' did not exist. Compare the entries in Webster's Second (1934) and Third (1961) editions; only after the war does the adjective 'teen-age' become the noun, 'teenager'." (*The Myth of the Teenager*, <http://www.home-school.com/Articles/myth-of-the-teenager.html>.) Today the word "teenager" is like a hall pass for disobedience and rebellion, it is a stage in life marked by the breaking of the Fourth Commandment.

The devil delights to tear down the Lord's institutions (Psalm 2:1-3), and this begins at the primal institution, the family. The devil loves violence, and loves to put violence between parents and their children (compare with the Lord's work, Malachi 4:6, which should be the theme verse for "youth ministry").

There are two disastrous reactions of this tearing down of the Fourth Commandment. The first is by youth ministries who attempt to benefit from this rebellion, who join in the rebellion. Youth Ministers present themselves to the youth as those who really understand their problems, who know what its like when mom and dad don't understand. Youth Events are carefully crafted to be different, even distasteful to the parents. "This isn't your grandparents church. We are relevant. We are cool. We are with you." This so-called "relational ministry" is making things worse. There is a Fourth Commandment problem here, the hearts of the youth are being violently ripped away from their parents by the devil, and we are acting as if that is okay, even using this sin to our advantage.

The second disastrous reaction to this breaking of the Fourth Commandment is seen in the parents who bring coercive power to maintain control. We are training our children to be free people, free in the Gospel. Their name is a gift, and parents and pastors operate with a respect towards youth as Christians. Parents are given authority, not power, and it is unwise to despise the gift of friends that the Lord gives to the youth. In fact, it is good to teach and train the youth what it means to be a good friend, that is, how it is that they would love their neighbors.

Violence and Lust, the Fifth and Sixth Commandments

As the devil tears at the Fourth Commandment, he also tears at the Fifth and Sixth. In 2001 PBS Frontline aired a program titled "The Merchant's of Cool" (<http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool>), which outlined the marketing strategy towards our youth. The show put forth two caricatures used in marketing to teenage boys and girls: the "mook" and the "midriff." The urban dictionary gives the following definitions:

Mooks are archetypal young males (teens-early 20s) who act like moronic boneheads. They are self cen-

tered simpletons who live a drunken frat-boy lifestyle. *Midriffs* are young girls and women (teens-early 20s) who's behavior is a curious mixture of "innocent" and "slutty." Midriff culture is fairly standardized and quite conformist. Their behaviour seems centered around sexuality, narcissism, and a complete lack of brains.

"...the consciences of our youth are under assault, and many are broken."

These "glorified archetypes" are offered constantly to the Lord's youth, and it affects the conscience. The young men are pushed toward violence and lust, and the young women toward lust. There are causalities of a culture filled with rebellion, murder and adultery. The conscience falls when the Lord's institution falls.

Don't Panic! The Lord of Hosts is with Us

So, the problem: the consciences of our youth are under assault, and many are broken. Having that clear should help. The devil strikes at the Lord's institution, just as he strikes at Christ and His Christians. But there is no need for panic. The Lord Jesus is still at the right hand of the Father. He still knows how to forgive sin and comfort consciences. His church still stands against the gates of hell in the confidence that she will not be overcome. He is still putting the devil under our feet (see Romans 16:20, Apology 5.71, Triglot). We are not commanded to match the devil's fervor with a fervor of our own. Rather, we are to rest in the Lord's forgiveness and find comfort in His institutions. "The nations rage, the kingdoms totter; he utters his voice, the earth melts. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress" (Psalm 46:6,7).

Here are a few suggestions for a ministry to the Lord's youth that gives attention to the conscience:

- Pray. Jesus loves the youth more than we ever will, and there is great comfort here for pastors and parents.
- The Language of the Conscience. Give the youth of the church the language to talk about what's going on. Words like "conscience," "devil," "repentance," "vocation," "shame," and so forth give the youth the language to understand and talk about these important things.
- Conscience Training. Luther sends us to work and to bed "singing a hymn like that of the Ten Commandments." This is training our consciences. Being aware that our conscience needs training and that it can be wrong is very helpful, and knowing that the Ten Commandments are always right gives the comfort of certainty in the midst of as foggy morality.
- Spiritual Warfare. The Bible talks about the devil. Our theology talks about the devil. We should talk about the devil, about his strategy, and about His defeat on the cross.
- More than a Mirror. Let's let the Ten Commandments do more than show us our sin. Look at the Large Catechism and see how Luther unfolds the Ten Commandments as the words of institution for all the various

callings and institutions in the world. This is an important part of learning the Commandments, often neglected.

- Exercise in Repentance, Devotions and Prayer. We are both teaching and training the youth of the church. Our pedagogy would greatly benefit from a consideration of exercises in devotion. Dr. Luther included the morning, evening and table prayers for good cause.
- Repent. We sin against our children, our youth at home and in the church. We repent of our sins and ask for forgiveness.
- The Comfort of Vocation. This beautiful teaching of the Scriptures keeps God with us in the mundane, puts things in order, and puts the Lord's generosity in everyday life.
- The Comfort of Institutions. Everyone hates institutions these days. Everywhere you turn people are busy trying to convince us that the church is not an institution. Is the church not instituted? Is the family not instituted? Is the state not instituted? This despising of the Lord's instituting, this addiction to movements, is abysmal. We understand Luther when we see him as a theologian always in search of the words of institutions, not just of the Sacraments, but of all the estates among man.
- Sing. The liturgy and the hymns of the church are a treasure that we should pass on to our youth. To lose the liturgy for a generation would be an incredible tragedy. Almost all praise music is mysticism, and the last thing we need is a bunch more enthusiasts running around. Excitement is not a good goal or objective, and chasing excitement makes things worse. Our native theology is enthusiasm which should be repented of, not encouraged.
- Expanded Desires. Our problem is not our desires, but our desire for the wrong thing. Christian ethics are often understood as restrictive. The Lord Jesus teaches us in the Ten Commandments, and especially in the Lord's Prayer, to expand our desires, to want more. ("For we all have enough that we lack, but the great want is that we do not feel nor see it. Therefore God also requires that you lament and plead such necessities and wants, not because He does not know them, but that you may kindle your heart to stronger and greater desires, and make wide and open your cloak to receive much." *Large Catechism, Lord's Prayer 23, Martin Luther*).
- Honor Parents. It's a command.
- Honor Friends. Extol the vocation of friend, it is an honorable estate that the Lord gives. In fact, Jesus so honors the estate of friend that He calls us His friends. It is good that the Lord's youth want to be good friends, and we can help them in this godly endeavor.
- Christian Peer Groups. If peers have such a large influence on the conscience, it is good to support Christian peer groups for our youth and especially on college campuses. If congregations are too small to

establish a youth group, neighboring congregations should consider working together.

- Do what you're doing. Teach if you're teaching. Play if you're playing. Worship if you're worshipping. This is simple; integrity is simple. And speaking of integrity, let's take it easy with youth ministry buzz words. As soon as you say "authenticity," you've lost it.
- Repentance is the Christian Life. A good conscience is only found in the forgiveness of sins, and this is what Jesus has for the lambs of His church.

Got it? We'll let Luther round things off:

Let this, then, be said for exhortation, not only for those of us who are old and grown, but also for the young people, who ought to be brought up in the Christian doctrine and understanding. For thereby the Ten Commandments, the Creed, and the Lord's Prayer might be the more easily inculcated to our youth, so that they would receive them with pleasure and earnestness, and thus would practice them from their youth and accustom themselves to them. For the old are now well-nigh done for, so that these and other things cannot be attained, unless we train the people who are to come after us and succeed us in our office and work, in order that they also may bring up their children successfully, that the Word of God and the Christian Church may be preserved. Therefore let every father of a family know that it is his duty, by the injunction and command of God, to teach these things to his children, or have them learn what they ought to know. For since they are baptized and received into the Christian Church, they should also enjoy this communion of the Sacrament, in order that they may serve us and be useful to us; for they must all indeed help us to believe, love, pray, and fight against the devil. (*The Large Catechism, Martin Luther V.85-87*)

May God grant it to us for the name of Jesus. Amen.

Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller

Hope Lutheran Church, Aurora, Colorado

The Name of Jesus, January 1, 2012

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509 Las Gaviotas Blvd, Chesapeake, VA 23322
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