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### **Speech at Luther College (May 1, 1904)\***

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\* As Dr. Koren's introduction indicates, the speech (delivered in Norwegian) was given in response to an invitation extended to him by an association of young people attending the church's institution of higher learning. The stated purpose was to serve as an encouragement in the advancement of the goal set down by the society. Since Christian truth, Christian work, and Christian fellowship are worthy subjects for widespread meditation at any time, it may not seem amiss to make this speech of 1904 available to a larger circle of readers. That it may serve to the edification of many, this is the prayer of the translator. — C. M. Gullerud.

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*Dr. U. V. Koren*

My Dear Young Friends:

From the Executive Committee of "Luther College Sunday Association" I have received the request to give a speech on the society's goal which is "to advance members in knowledge of Christian truth, to encourage them in Christian work, and to promote Christian fellowship." I am informed that the society's motto is Philippians 4:8.

I could easily find many reasons to beg to be excused from this task, but I have promised to attempt it. The prospects for Luther College are so great, the founding of this society is so dear to me, and there is so little that I can do for you, that I did not dare to say, "no!"

What, then, shall be the trend of my speech? I have ruled out a sermon as not being appropriate. I must take it for granted that you are acquainted with the basic truths of Christianity: Christ's work for our salvation and the fact that he who believes in Him is a Christian. But here we are immediately confronted with the prevalent and mistaken conception of what Christianity is with regard to the essence of faith. All too often the Christian faith is conceived as being a theory, a doctrinal system which, if one accepts it as being correct, then he is a Christian, a believer. The true Christian faith is not just something that one memorizes. It is not a theory. It is the most practical thing in the world. It is in itself a practice and where it is present there it moves a person in a definite direction—namely, to God. It rules a person and, as the Word of God says, it is active in love. This belongs to its essence. This one can learn from Luther's introduction to the epistle to the Romans.

Now it is unfortunately true that counterfeit faith is very common, an external acceptance without the heart, so that it is something that is not really meant at all. Such a false faith accomplishes nothing. Rather, it is an offense and causes men to fall away. Two or three years ago I met a certain young man on the train. He was reading *The War Cry*, the Salvation Army's periodical. He gave me a sample copy, and with that I engaged him in conversation. He had been a member of a Presbyterian or Methodist church (I don't remember which), but he was not satisfied with it. "Why not?" I asked. "They don't do anything," he answered. He was eager to do something good, and he thought he had found what he wanted in the Salvation Army. I told him that there were many things that he could have done, provided that he would be satisfied with what was lying at his very feet and called good by the Word of God. It is the Word that we must cling to. Growth in the knowledge of the essence and fruit of the Christian faith can occur only through the use of the Word of God.

At this point I am thinking of the great neglect among our Norwegian people, namely, their infrequent use of the Word of God. I am not here speaking about those who never go to church, either despising this obligation or frivolously passing it by because they have neither the understanding nor the conscience to appreciate the blessing derived from hearing the Word of God. But I am thinking of those among our people who have but a scant knowledge of God's Word, even of the New Testament. Remarkable and disturbing it is to note how great a difference there is between our Norwegians and a large part of the English-speaking people in this matter. God's Word alone can teach us the difference between the true and the false confession of faith. As much as I would desire to deal with this difference more directly and in greater detail, I must in this hour restrict myself to the consideration of the essence of faith which the motto of your society sets before us; for St. Paul teaches us there not how to become Christians but how to show that we are Christians.

Let us hear it again: "Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things!"

"Whatever things are true." What is the meaning of these words? Not only the abstinence from apparent or veiled lies. It means more than that. It means integrity so that one is what he wants to be known as being, free from all hypocrisy, free from all humbug. There are those who are easily seen to be hypocritical and not honest. It is very easy to detect a common hypocrisy which puts on a Sunday face and prides itself with words of self-esteem. But the requirement for truth runs deeper. Of course, you must not say everything you think, but you also shouldn't lead people to believe that you think otherwise than you do. This is easily said but not easily done, for all men are by nature liars; but a Christian desires to be honest in his speech and in his behavior. Is this easily

learned? No, but the believers are continually learning to be such. Their tender consciences are teaching them this. It is their intention to learn to speak “as before God,” which includes the endeavor to remain silent when it would be unjust or unprofitable to speak. In addition they know that they speak not by words alone but by their deeds as well.

The next characteristic of the believer is expressed by the word “noble”—i.e., “worthy,” “seemly,” “that which is fitting for us.” The requirement that is contained in this word is such that it is often falsely imitated. It is, therefore, very important for us that complete honesty be the controlling factor. Many seek to fulfill the requirement with counterfeit coinage, with a dignity and nobility which is nothing but a gesturing. This shows itself when the requirement of nobility is forgotten and the opposite comes to the fore, such as wantonness, slovenliness and unseemly vagrancy.

The next exhortation follows: “Whatever things are just.” Another way of putting it: “No injustice in business or conduct.” I wonder if this thought has registered on such persons who, while they claim to be Christians or even occasionally parade as Sunday School teachers, nevertheless look first and foremost to their own advantage, indifferent to the effect on others, just so they themselves can come out ahead, whether by smart dealing, games of chance, or by incurring foolish debts, or the like. But the apostle wants the believer to occupy himself with that which is just. This the believer also desires.

Furthermore, the passage speaks of “whatever things are pure.” Luther translates “chaste.” And that this is the meaning of the word, to this we have the testimony of sainted authors and of literature in general. One of the most beautiful pictures that I know of is the scene of a young person who is free from the spiritual and physical infection which the violation of this purity brings.

But the dangers are many. If you wish to serve one another in the advancement of Christian fellowship, then you have here an ideal opportunity by conducting yourself with all chastity and by avoiding the opposite. You can consider yourself fortunate to be in a better situation than young people in the large cities or in the large universities. But the danger is everywhere, as you know, also in the privacy of your rooms. And I am sure that you are not a stranger to what the apostle calls obscene language. Do not tolerate it upon your own lips or in your ears. Show toward it the contempt it deserves. If you do this, then it will soon be muted in your presence.

You have enough to strive for, and now the next word in your motto refers to “whatever things are lovely.” Now what is meant by these words? I believe that they refer to inner and outward loveliness, but above all to the training of the heart and soul. It is encouraging to see a handsome and gallant youth with a healthy and well-endowed body, limber and flexible, and to see one who has developed his talents according to the opportunities given. Is such an one lovely? That all depends. If such an one exalts himself because of his advantages and belittles and wounds those with lesser gifts, then he lacks the loveliness whereof the apostle speaks. And he who is thus passed over and despised may have the very loveliness which is greater in the eyes of noble people. It makes him worthy of the name which most people desire but which the great majority does not deserve—“The grand old name of gentleman.” As some of you know, attempts have been made to define this description but to no avail. I have yet to find a satisfactory one either for myself or for the one who provided it. One of the basic features which belongs to it is what we call respect, willingness to help and bring joy to others, a readiness to oblige others with no demands for oneself—a sensitive and instinctive need to avoid hurting others. Nowhere will you find this as fully developed as in the upright, sound, and sincere Christian. One of the many

examples of this lovely mind-set is found in Admiral Philip's outcry to the jubilant crew when they had destroyed a Spanish ship in the battle of Santiago: "Don't cheer, boys, they are dying." Here also belongs consideration for the elderly, for women, for exhausted laborers, etc.

Another term in the motto is the following: "Whatever things are of good report." Here is included trustworthiness in matters both great and small. Among soldiers in wartime this is an absolute requirement. With a soldier of Jesus Christ it is found in connection with willingness and joy. Of course, keeping one's word is such a deed. As an example of such a promise is your willingness to follow the rules which you agreed to when you enrolled at Luther College. Further included is good companionship to be enjoyed with a good conscience, etc. That which is spoken well of! Is there any good report proceeding from self-love? from self-service? from unreliability? from idleness? from dishonesty? from pride? from arrogance? from scoffing and mocking others? from a foul mouth? Is there a good report proceeding from cheating in school? Is there a good report proceeding from fear of correcting a schoolmate when he errs, or from choosing instead to gossip about him? Is slovenliness, carelessness, rudeness, or unkempt appearance well spoken of? Now it will take us too long to enumerate all the things that can be well spoken of and all the things that are of a bad report, but it can be summed up in the words: "If there is any virtue, and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things."

But someone may think that these requirements are too great. Who can reach the goal? Now, my young friends, there is an old proverb which says: "*In magnis voluisse satis est*" ("In great things it is enough to have had a good will"). But you must remember that all these things are not accomplished as a requirement of the law. If you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are not under the law but under grace. If the law should come to you with its demands, there would be no salvation. It does not tolerate the least failure. You and all the rest would be condemned. But God be praised, believing on Christ, all your sins are forgiven. It is for that very reason that the apostle exhorts **by the mercy of God**, in order that it may be seen that your faith in Him has not been in vain.

Where there is a desire to learn, there the lesson will be learned, and this will be going on throughout life. I am an old man, but I am still learning. There is nothing that encourages me more than to meet a host of willing, cheerful young people, full of eagerness for that which is true, noble, good, and who, in the fear of God, are willing to sit at the apostle's feet to learn how we in all our conduct are to thank our Savior, follow His Word, and cause it definitely to show in our lives. This shall be the goal of your Sunday Association. In no better way can you bring joy to us and bestow honor upon our Luther College and serve as an encouragement for us who for so many years have loved it and worked for its objectives. Unto this goal may God help and strengthen you!

# Theological Implications of the Living Will

*Vance Fossum*

## I. WHAT IS A LIVING WILL?

A. Generally speaking, a Living Will is a written statement indicating the kind of medical treatment a person wants or does not want, in the event that a terminal illness or injury leaves him unable to make health care decisions for himself. Living Wills have been made available to the public for many years in several states. It has been estimated that in these states less than 10% of the adult population have made use of the Living Will to declare their thoughts on terminal illness. There is some reason to believe, however, that this percentage will increase as the public becomes better informed, medical costs continue to climb, and Living Will forms are simplified.

B. Minnesota acted on March 3, 1989, to become the thirty-ninth state to adopt a Living Will when the governor signed the "Adult Health Care Decision Act" into law (effective, August 1, 1989). This act provides a legal document called the "Health Care Declaration" (Living Will).

A previous Minnesota law gave individuals the right to participate in medical care decisions, to receive complete information about their medical condition, and to refuse treatment. The new law extends this right to the time when a patient may not be able to make his own health care decisions.

C. Last Will/Living Will ... According to Ann Russell, J.D., associate attorney for the University of Minnesota Hospital and Clinic, "all Living Will statutes lay out basic requirements similar to those necessary to make a last will and testament." These requirements are designed to ensure that the document "truly expresses the wishes of the declarant and has not been fraudulently produced."

The will must be signed and witnessed by two persons or notarized. A statement is also required which ensures that the will should take effect only in the event of terminal or irreversible illness in which the declarant is unable to make decisions regarding treatment.

D. The Role of Proxy and Physician ... The Minnesota statute recognizes a patient's right to designate a "proxy" to ensure that the patient's wishes are carried out. However, "treatment decisions must always be in accord with reasonable medical practice" (Russell). The physician is therefore not bound by poorly written wills. If a physician is unwilling to carry out the directives of his patient's living will, the Minnesota statute requires that "the physician make reasonable efforts to transfer the care of the patient" (Russell).

E. "Terminal Condition"... is a key expression used five times in this two page document. This expression is nowhere defined in the Health Care Declaration. But in an explanatory booklet produced by "Living Will Coalition," which contains the legal document, we find the following definition:

An incurable or irreversible condition for which the administration of medical treatment will only prolong the dying process. **This is a broad definition and would apply to many types of incapacitating conditions, such as permanently unconscious, and those that are more commonly thought of as terminal conditions.** (emphasis added)

F. “Artificial Nutrition and Hydration” is a matter of particular importance in the Minnesota Living Will document. The law requires that the will “specifically address the patient’s wishes with regard to artificial nutrition and hydration.” Whereas the declarant is provided opportunity to list any treatments he “does” or “does not” want in parts 2-5 of the Health Care Declaration, part 6 includes what might be termed “a caution”:

I recognize that if I reject artificially administered sustenance, then **I may die of dehydration or malnutrition rather than from my illness or injury.** The following are my feelings and wishes regarding artificially administered sustenance should I have a terminal condition (you may indicate whether you wish to receive food and fluids given to you in some other way than by mouth if you have a terminal condition). (emphasis added)

G. Legislative compromise brought about the requirement that the Minnesota Living Will specifically address the matter of artificial nutrition and hydration. In fact, versions of the recent law have been on the Minnesota legislative agenda for six years. The debate has been waged by senior citizens’ groups who argued for the right to die “with dignity.” “Special interest groups” also argued against the fear that nursing home patients would be starved to death as another step was taken toward “active euthanasia.” Ann Russell comments: “The result of this legislative compromise is a piece of legislation that is so technically complex that it will discourage many physicians and their patients from taking the time to understand its nuances.”

## II. WHAT ARE THE PROBABLE REASONS BEHIND THE LIVING WILL CONCEPT?

A. Advances in medical technology over the past twenty-five years have, in a sense, made dying more difficult. Whereas it used to be heard that a person died of “complications” after a prolonged illness, today “complications” may actually put off death, or seem to do so. Generally, the cessation of heart and lung activity determined the point of death until the late 1960s. But for many years now respirators have been used to keep the lung functioning, which in turn sustains the heart’s pumping activity in mechanical fashion, even when the patient’s brain is dead.

In addition, “permanently” unconscious patients, who are not dying, but cannot receive food and water by mouth, may be kept alive in their “sleep-like” or “vegetative” states by intravenous and tube feeding techniques.

In the context of such advanced medical treatments, the question has and will inevitably arise: “Should the patient be kept alive, or allowed to die?”

B. Steadily increasing medical costs certainly move people to consider a Living Will. Individuals without health insurance may especially be led to consider a Living Will as a means to protect their families from astronomic medical bills.

Probably both government and industry have considered the potential for tremendous savings in health care costs made possible by means of the Living Will. One physician stated that 85% of medicare costs come in the last two years of life, 60% of that amount in the last one year of life. At least some of the twenty-one members of the “Living Will Coalition” in Minnesota may have found financial reasons to promote the Living Will (e.g., the Minnesota AFL-CIO and the Minnesota Alliance for Health Care Consumers).

What about the effect of continued increases in government taxes at all levels combined with growing materialism and hedonism among the American people? The Living Will may be promoted by some as a means

of ridding society of individuals who are no longer “productive” and have become a financial burden to the tax-paying public.

C. Decision making assistance for family and physician is provided by a person’s Health Care Declaration. To the question “Why should I write a Health Care Declaration?” the Living Will Coalition booklet answers:

It helps your family and your doctor. It lets them know the kind of medical treatment that you want or don’t want if you can’t speak for yourself. A written declaration is legally enforceable. It helps to avoid family disagreements, guilt feelings, and doubts about how to treat you when you are in a terminal condition.

The Minnesota Medical, Nurses, and Hospital Associations are members of the Living Will Coalition. No doubt such organizations support the Living Will concept, in large measure, to avoid the burden of life/death decisions as much as possible.

D. A Desire to Let the Dying “Die With Dignity”... There has been widespread concern for some time over the “heroic” and “extraordinary” measures used by doctors and health care institutions to keep “hopelessly” dying patients alive. Increasingly, individuals and organizations have been asserting “a right to die,” and the right to die “with dignity.”

Twenty years ago these assertions were being made out of a concern that clearly dying patients were being **over**-treated and used as guinea pigs for medical research. Now the same assertions are being made regarding **non**-treatment of people who are **not** clearly dying, e.g., patients in a coma or a “persistent vegetative state” (as in the case of Karen Ann Quinlan, and currently, the Nancy Cruzan case in Missouri). One doctor has suggested that “we” might want such patients to “go away” not only for financial reasons, but because we are uncomfortable in their company.

Non-treatment of those who are **not** clearly dying is also being set forth on the grounds that “theirs is not the sort of life one would wish to live.” A growing number of people in what someone has called our “suicide culture” prefer death to an “irreversible condition” that might involve great suffering and pain, or otherwise prevent a “meaningful” or “quality” life. They prefer dying “with their boots on”—a death with “dignity.”

E. A long-range goal of legalizing euthanasia, we may safely assume, is the reason that some may promote the Living Will concept. The concerns of many that Living Wills would tend to promote euthanasia and mercy killing is carefully addressed in the Minnesota legislation as follows: “Nothing in this chapter may be construed to condone, authorize, or approve mercy killing, euthanasia, or suicide.” However, I remember the disclaimer that followed the first state lottery advertisements in Missouri: “This announcement has been provided for public information and is not intended to promote the sale or purchase of lottery tickets.” Any announcement presented as an “opportunity” is clearly a promotion, even though it be denied as such. Disclaimers may have the intention or the effect of quieting well founded fears until the public is so hooked on “opportunity” that all caution is thrown to the winds!

A “Living Will” which was in its thirty-fifth printing by May 1978 was prepared by a group calling itself “Concern for Dying.” Prominently displayed beneath the logo of this group are the words “an educational council.” Given the current high regard for getting an “education,” one wonders whether those who read this particular document on dying will question its “wisdom.” After all, anything put out by “an educational council” must be good! Right? Not necessarily. All education has an ultimate goal. In this day and age we need to be

highly suspect of the goals of individuals or “councils” which presume to “educate” the public. Some, “professing themselves to be wise,” may be leading us one step at a time in the direction that Satan led Eve in opposition to God.

### III. THE LORD’S WILL

Many reasons have been advanced in support of the Living Will concept—the foregoing list may be incomplete. The Christian may find some reasons that make sense to him. He may be pleased to be able to spare his loved ones undue emotional and financial costs by means of a Health Care Declaration. But while thinking of his relatives, the Christian will want to be careful of thinking “relatively” when determining whether it is right or wrong for him to make out a Living Will.

The society with which we have to do makes its determination of right and wrong chiefly on the basis of what would feel best, make the most money, or please the most people. Right and wrong are determined “relatively”—that is, relative to the particular situation. There is nothing absolutely right or wrong; it all depends. Thus, society in general finds no fault in a situation where a couple live together before marriage, as long as they “love” one another. Whether or not a mother is wrong to take the life of her child is relative to her situation: if she kills her two-year-old baby in anger it may be called “murder”; but if she kills her unborn baby because it conflicts with her career or lifestyle, it is called her “choice.”

Christians know that there are absolute moral laws. They are “absolutes” because they have been revealed by the God of heaven, Who is absolutely holy and the absolute Ruler of mankind. Christians want to obey these laws because of God’s love for us in Christ, and because we trust the wisdom of God—that His will and word are perfectly intended and designed for the well-being of men and nations.

We take both warning and comfort from the Lord’s word to His people in Isaiah 55:8ff.: “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways . . . For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts . . .” This is a humbling word. When it is kept in mind, we will be careful not to assume that our thoughts and ways are always right. Neither will we fear that He cannot deliver us when the “how” is beyond us.

The voices of our society always seem to be saying, “I want!” But the heart of the Christian will also ask, “What does the Lord, my Savior, want?” and with the help of God he will make his decisions accordingly. When the imprisoned apostle wrote to the Philippians of his desire “to depart” this life “and be with Christ, which is far better” (Phil. 1:21ff.), he was confessing his readiness to die and receive life eternal. He was **not** speaking of a life or death choice that was his to make according to his own desires, and apart from the will of His Savior God.

So also every Christian will want what the Lord wants, recognizing Him as the Savior of soul and body each day and forever. The divinely inspired words of Solomon ring true for every believer: “Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths” (Prov. 3:5-6).

To “acknowledge” the Lord and His will in all things is the way of the Christian life. It is the life of “faith” in Christ which the world does not understand or appreciate. “For if we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord. Therefore, whether we live or die, we are the Lord’s. For to this end Christ died and rose



and lived again, that He might be Lord of both the dead and the living” (Rom. 14:8).

In our whole life and even in our death we look to the Lord. The world looks to itself—its own will, ways, and wherefores. But the Christian lives by faith in Christ, his Lord in life and death. “Behold the proud [inflated], his soul is not upright in him; but the just [righteous] shall live by his faith” (Hab. 2:4). The unbelieving pride themselves in taking all matters into their own hands, because they do not recognize their own sin and weakness, neither the power or the merciful love of God in Christ. The Christian is of a different spirit. The Christian’s Spirit-worked faith brings him Christ’s righteousness and, therefore, also forgiveness of sins, life and salvation with God.

The Christian sees the living of his whole life in the context of this faith in Jesus Christ. For as Paul says, “the life which I now live in the flesh I live by FAITH in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me” (Gal. 3:20). It is no longer the thinking of the worldling, who strives by all means to hold the pleasures and joys of this life, which directs the Christian. Now he thinks, judges, and acts as faith moves him.

Here is the great watershed of life, and all of us are one side of it or the other. Whatever my political or philosophical views may be, they must have this common denominator; either my life is based on faith or it is not. If it is not, it does not much matter what my views may be, or whether I am controlled by political, social, economic, or any other considerations. (*From Fear to Faith*, studies in the book of Habakkuk, Martyn Lloyd-Jones, p. 48)

The controlling principle in our lives as Christians is and must be that faith in Christ which seeks the will and way of the Lord in all matters of life and death.

#### A. The Lord’s will and “the right” to life.

It may be argued that by adding the words “neither shall you **touch** it” to God’s command not to “eat” of the forbidden fruit (Gen. 3:3), Eve actually took something away from God’s word and truth. By inserting the extra prohibition, Eve not only made the commandment sound more severe, she also made it “less” God’s and more “her own.” The devil’s work is made easy when a truth from God is obscured by the unauthorized additions of men who say, “This, too, is a word from God.”

It could also be argued that our nation’s Founding Fathers diminished the truth in a similar manner. In **addition** to the “right of life,” the U. S. Constitution also lists “liberty,” “the pursuit of happiness,” and others, as “rights” given by the Creator to “all men.” We can indeed show from God’s Word that He has given the “right” to life to all who live. But we have no word from Him that sets forth “liberty” or “the pursuit of happiness” as “rights” given equally by God to “all men” since the Fall.

By presuming to add self-proclaimed human “rights” to the divinely commanded “right to life,” our forefathers made the Constitution “less” of a pronouncement of truth from God, and more of a human declaration of “rights.” We should not then be surprised that, with the growing influence of Atheistic Humanism in our day, man’s self-proclaimed “right” to liberty and the pursuit of happiness are upheld, while the God-given “right to life” is being vehemently opposed. Indeed, the “Prince of this World” is now even able to set man’s added “rights”—privacy, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness—**against** the right to life, leading many to commit murder in America!

(The Prince of Darkness is even getting assistance in this matter from influential church bodies. For example, *Time* magazine reports that the ELCA makes the following statement in a brief referring to Missouri's ruling against the Cruzans: "The Missouri Decision severs family ties by substituting the moral and religious judgment of the state for that of the person." *Time* recognizes the irony here: "The Evangelical Lutherans argue for a family's right to privacy, while the state of Missouri promotes the 'sanctity of life'" [*Time* March 19, 1990, p. 68].)

But the right to life transcends every word of man to the contrary. From the beginnings ("Genesis") God is the Giver of life to all. He alone is also the Taker of life by His own appointed means. All taking of life by man is not a sin. God Himself has given man "dominion" over creation (Gen. 2:28), and He has declared "every moving thing that lives" to "food" for man (Gen. 9:3). For this reason the commandment "You shall not kill" does not forbid the killing of animals, but the murder of man.

**"In the image of God He made man."** Therefore, even 1600 years after man lost the divine image in the Fall, and after man's wickedness brought the Flood upon the earth, God told Noah: "Whoever sheds man's blood, by man his blood shall be shed" (Gen. 9:6). How zealous the Lord is to preserve and protect human life! He not only gives the commandment, "You shall not kill," but he prescribes His penalty for murder—"a life for a life"—as the strongest deterrent. Even the taking of a murderer's life by the vengeful individual or committee without trial is forbidden by the Lord: He provided the "Cities of refuge" in Israel (Num. 35:6ff.), and He empowers the governments to "bear the sword" (Rom. 13:1ff.). Even after Cain had been severely and justly punished by God for taking the life of Abel, God "set a mark on Cain" lest anyone should take his life (Gen. 4:13ff.).

Truly God is the Giver and Taker of life by His own appointed means. But why is God so zealous to protect the lives of sinful people? Answer: A man's life is **his time of grace**.

Since Adam and Eve fell into sin, their lives and the lives of their descendants became mortal, subject to death. Why then did they live so long after their fall? Their lives and our lives as well are times of grace. God keeps us alive so that we may have opportunity to repent of our sins, hear His promise of salvation and believe it, and use the time yet allotted to us in order to glorify our Savior and share His saving Word with others. **"God gives to all life, and breath, and all things . . . that they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after Him, and find Him"** (Acts 17:25-27). Taking a man's life therefore is equivalent to ending his time of grace. That is what makes it so wrong. (David Lau, *Journal of Theology*, Sept. 1984, pp. 21-22)

This is what makes suicide—the taking of one's own life—such a great sin. We will again take up the matter of suicide in our treatment of "the right to die with dignity." At this point we only wish to stress that suicide shortens "the time of grace" which God has given to every living person. There are no human motives that mitigate the wrath of God against the victim of suicide who, being "in his right mind," chooses to end his life. From despair and unbelief he has taken the life God gave him into his own hands in order to end it. For him there is no chance of repentance and forgiveness in Christ, no chance of rising from his death to live again with God!

The "right to life" is given by God, not men or national constitutions. But while giving a person the right to life, God retains for Himself the authority and the lordship over that life. And the Christian confesses comfortably with joy: "My times are in Your hand" (Ps. 31:15).

## B. The Lord's will and the sustaining of human life.

He Who gives life also gives food, clothing, and medical care. Evidently, the Lord wants to support and preserve a person's life until He Himself ends that life. How can we do any less than our Lord enables us to do in order to preserve our own "time of grace" or that of others? On the other hand, are there "terminal conditions" in which a Christian, speaking for himself or another, many refuse medical treatment with a clear conscience? We believe there are. But the believer will want to proceed with prayer and deliberate caution in determining the Lord's will under such circumstances.

The determination of death is not so simple as it once was. Thirty years ago a person who had ceased breathing and whose heart had stopped was pronounced "dead." Today, whether such a person is in fact dead may depend upon the proximity of someone who can administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation. We do not believe that CPR has ever brought anyone "back from the dead," as some have claimed. We know that "it is appointed unto men **once** to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). But the Lord surely has worked by such (extra)ordinary means to give individuals "a new lease on life" for the furtherance of His gracious will and blessings to many.

However, for more than two decades it has been possible to keep the lungs and heart of a patient functioning by means of a respirator or CPR device even after the brain is dead. Because of such advances in medical technology it became necessary to describe a new method for determining "whole brain death." These have become widely accepted: "(a) lack of responsiveness, (b) no breathing or movement, (c) no reflexes, and (d) a flat EEG" (Dr. Gilbert Meilaender, *Care for the Dying: Twenty Years of Progress, or a Very Slippery Slope?*). Tests like these have become law in most states. We see no reason for questioning this means of determining the point of death.

The determination of a "Terminal Condition" would seem to be much more difficult. Who will make such a determination, and on what basis will it be made? Of the three "Living Wills" I have on file, only one requires that two (2) physicians agree that an unresponsive patient's condition is terminal. The Minnesota Health Care Declaration addresses itself to "My family, doctors, and all those concerned with my care." One Christian physician, addressing our adult Bible class, strongly questioned the ability of health care professionals to determine when a patient is in an absolutely "terminal" condition.

The definition of a "terminal condition" given by the Minnesota Living Will Coalition is "an incurable or irreversible condition for which the administration of medical treatment will only prolong the dying process." The Coalition then adds that this is a "**broad definition**" applying to "**many types of incapacitating conditions**, such as **permanently unconscious**, and those that are more commonly thought of as terminal conditions." Although "incapacitating" is itself a broad term which means simply "making incapable of normal activity," it may be understood in this context as applying only to those in an "irreversible" **dying** condition. But even if we allow this interpretation of the definition of the terminal condition, there is a problem.

"**Permanently unconscious**" patients are not necessarily terminally ill. There are two classes of permanently unconscious that must be distinguished (all emphasis added):

(a) Patients in coma (eyes-closed unconsciousness) — These patients, in a sleeplike state, are neither aware nor awake. They are **not** brain dead, . . . The true coma patient is **probably** terminally ill—not likely to

be able to be kept alive more than a matter of months. . . .

(b) Patients in persistent vegetative state (eyes-open unconsciousness) — These patients, like Karen Quinlan . . . are awake but unaware. At times their eyes are open, and they seem to have periods of sleep and wakefulness. Their eyes may move around the room, though without following objects in a consistent fashion. Their pupils respond to light, and they can breathe without a respirator. Yet, **as far as we can tell**, they are completely unaware of themselves or their surroundings. They may live for years (as did Karen Quinlan). The person in a persistent vegetative state **cannot really be described as terminally ill**. Moreover, if we are correct in our understanding of the condition of such people, it seems unlikely that they experience suffering. They are not imminently dying, nor could they experience their life or their treatment as burden. (Meilaender, drawing from an article by R.E. Cranford, “The Persistent Vegetative State: The Medical Reality [Getting the Facts Straight]” *Hastings Center Report*, 18 February/March 1988, pp. 27-32)

How many other “incapacitating conditions” might be called “terminal” according to the Minnesota Coalition definition and yet **not** be terminal at all, only God knows. The Christian will not want to place himself in a position of “allowing” himself or another to die, as the declarant of a Living Will or a “proxy,” when death is **not** an imminent certainty.

Consider the case reported in *Modern Maturity* magazine (June/July 1988). The father of a New York health official suffered from a host of medical problems: amputation of a leg; a probable stroke that so diminished the oxygen supply to the body that communication was impossible; pneumonia; and bleeding from a surgical wound. The patient would die without the use of a respirator, and the son had no legal authority (“durable power of attorney”) to decide for his father.

The patient was hooked up to the respirator, and after four days he made a surprising recovery. *Modern Maturity* notes that the man lived for three more months “neither happy nor very comfortable.” But the article also reported that during this time he was able to handle “some emotional family situations, which heightened not only his own peace of mind but that of all concerned.” He was given time to set his house in order. Clearly, this man’s time of grace was not meant to end when all seemed quite hopeless to his son.

We are reminded of the case of good King Hezekiah. If ever one had certain testimony that his condition was “terminal,” that death was “imminent,” this king of Judah did! We read in Isaiah 38:1ff. that Hezekiah was “sick unto death.” Then, to confirm the doctor’s diagnosis, the prophet Isaiah came to him with this message: “Thus says the Lord, ‘Set your house in order: for you shall die, and not live.’” Could a whole team of twentieth-century physicians give a more certain prognosis? And yet, Hezekiah “turned his face toward the wall, and prayed unto the Lord.” The Lord heard Hezekiah’s prayer, saw his tears, and added to his life “fifteen years”!

We are given no reason to believe that the Lord would have us artificially or mechanically sustain heart and lung activity when the brain is dead. This is not sustaining life. But the Lord of life would have us sustain the life that He Himself is prolonging. For this He provides food, clothing, medical care, and **prayer**. Is there a point at which advanced medical care somehow surpasses the power of God to heal **the living** in answer to the fervent prayers of His children? Let us beware of the tendency to think and act as though God has no other means beyond modern medicine men and machines.

The definition of “Life-sustaining medical treatment” is of some importance in this discussion. According to a Congressional study—*Life-sustaining Technologies and the Elderly*—five techniques are now used by

doctors to sustain life:

**Cardiopulmonary resuscitation** restores heartbeat and maintains blood flow and breathing after cardiac or respiratory arrest.

**Mechanical ventilation** keeps the patient alive when the lungs have failed.

**Renal dialysis** cleanses the blood of impurities when the kidneys have failed.

**Artificial feeding** gives nourishment to the patient when food and water cannot be ingested normally.

**Antibiotics** cure or control a wide spectrum of infections.

With the exception of antibiotics, none of the above techniques is capable of curing the illness(es) suffered by the patient to which they may be applied. However, they may indeed be applied to sustain life, **if** that is the desire of the competent patient, or the declarant of a Living Will.

Currently at issue is the question of whether “artificial feeding” techniques can be considered properly as “medical treatment” (or “invasive and burdensome” treatment). Apparently, there are many who do not consider the administration of food and water by whatever means as a mere “technique” of modern medicine that may be rightly withheld or refused.

U. S. Solicitor General Kenneth Starr, speaking as an *amicus curiae* on behalf of the state of Missouri in the Nancy Cruzan case, said that 18 states having Living Wills—including Missouri—“draw a distinction” between food and fluids and other medical care residents can refuse (*American Medical News*, Dec. 15, 1989, p. 62).

Americans United for Life (Chicago) filed a brief in the Cruzan case on behalf of Focus on the Family and the Family Research Council. The A. U. L. says, in part: “There is no contemporary legal consensus that the right to refuse medical treatment encompasses the right of a guardian to withdraw life-sustaining food and fluids from an incompetent, vulnerable, non-terminally ill patient” (as quoted by Haven Bradford Gow, “Does Nancy Cruzan Have a ‘Right to Live?’” *Christian News*, Feb. 5, 1990).

There is also strong disagreement between the American Medical Association (AMA) and the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons (AAPS) on this matter. Dr. Jane Orient, executive director of the AAPS says:

At present no one can know with certainty what (Nancy Cruzan’s) own wishes might be. AAPS argues that the state must make a presumption in favor of life . . . Furthermore, even if a patient clearly intended to refuse advanced life support, that would not necessarily signal a wish to die of thirst or starvation. AAPS **disagrees with the AMA’s contention that gastrostomy feedings constitute invasive or burdensome “medical treatment”** (emphasis added). Many patients or their families perform for themselves the simple medical procedure of pouring blenderized food through a gastrostomy tube. Withdrawing nourishment and hydration from patients is “morally indistinguishable from ending their lives by lethal injection,” according to the AAPS brief (filed in the Cruzan case). Giving a “deadly potion” to anyone is expressly forbidden by the **Oath of Hippocrates**, even if requested by the patient himself.

Nancy Cruzan’s family and their attorney, William Colby, argued before the U. S. Supreme Court that her right to be free from unwanted medical treatment was “as strong as her right to life,” adding that “if Nancy Cruzan were lucid, she’d ask for liberty” (as quoted in *American Medical News*, Dec. 15, 1989, p. 62). The Supreme Court justices did not press a distinction between “medical treatment” and providing nutrition. Their

chief concern was whether or not Nancy Cruzan would have refused life support by artificial feeding.

It certainly appears that if Nancy Cruzan had signed a Living Will, declaring her refusal of all life-sustaining techniques, the Supreme Court would have reached a decision in favor of the family. As it later happened, the Cruzan family won their case in a lower court on the strength of additional witnesses who insisted that Nancy had expressed to them her rejection of artificial life support. This decision was really nothing new; several state courts had already based their decisions regarding the use or non-use of artificial feeding on whether or not clear and convincing evidence of the patient's wishes was presented to the court.

Living Wills are being promoted for this very reason—that **all** life-sustaining techniques may be legally avoided by the declarant's choice prior to his incompetency. One such Will states: "I specifically direct that my life not be prolonged by giving me food or liquids by mouth, intravenously, or through a tube into my stomach." The Minnesota Living Will also singles out "artificially administered sustenance" for careful consideration by the declarant, as already noted (p. 3-F). The Minnesota Living Will Coalition gives the following answer to the question, "Do I have to fill out the entire form?":

No. But the law says that if you don't state whether or not you want artificially administered sustenance (tube feeding) or that you want your proxy to make decisions about administering, withholding, or withdrawing artificial sustenance, such decisions will be made according to **reasonable medical practice** (emphasis added).

What does "reasonable medical practice" include? The Coalition answers: "The law requires administration of food and water by mouth to a patient who accepts it. It also requires care to provide comfort and control pain" (*Questions and Answers*, p.4). In other words, "reasonable medical practice," by law, does **not** include the administration of artificial sustenance. Neither is the administration of food and water by mouth considered by law to be reasonable medical practice, if the patient will not accept it! The obvious implication is that, unless it is so stipulated in a Minnesota Living Will that a patient desires to receive nourishment, medical care professionals are not required to give it.

We agree with those in the medical profession who hold that the administration of life-sustaining food and fluids, by whatever means, is not essentially "medical treatment," and certainly may not be rightly called extraordinary medical care. Food and water are the Lord's daily prescription for sustaining all human life. Why should they be withheld from any living person just because medical science has developed means to provide nutrition in ways other than by mouth? Should we not rather assume that this, too, is the Lord's doing?

### C. The Lord's will and the "right to die with dignity."

We have seen from the Scriptures that the "right to life" is given by the God who gives to each person a "time of grace" on earth. But a so-called "right to die" or "right to death with dignity" is nowhere set forth in the Word of God. For although man is "appointed to die" (Gen. 3:19; Heb. 9:27), and "the living know that they shall die" (Eccles. 9:5), such statements can in no way be construed as divine "right" or even "permission" to die. Death comes to human beings not as a divine "right," but as a divine judgment of sin: ". . . death spread to all men, because all have sinned" (Rom. 5:12). The Lord's will knows nothing of a "right" to die.

What, then, may be said about death "with dignity"? Those who use this terminology apparently believe

that it is not dignified—worthy, honorable, prestigious, proper, or graceful—to die while connected to feeding tubes, respirators, and other mechanical devices. To suffer great pain, or to be unconscious, uncommunicative, and unaware while dying, is considered by many to be death without “dignity” that ought to be avoided. This way of thinking was suggested many years ago when the medical profession began to speak of human beings existing in a “vegetative state” and the public began to describe such people, saying: “He’s a vegetable.” The concern, then, becomes to spare oneself or another somehow from dying or lingering on as nothing more than a “vegetable.”

We ought to see the satanic set-up here! The Prince of Darkness wants to focus our attention on dying and death as a purely physical/material event, a mere “escape” from physical affliction in this life. Our all-too-willing society has already accepted the evolutionistic/materialistic view of life. Why should it not view death in the same manner? But Death came upon all men as a **spiritual** event in Eden. The dying, death, and decay of the human body are merely the physical consequences of that spiritual event. When we receive physical life at conception, we are **spiritually** “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1). We do not really die because our bodies fail to function physically, but because God finally takes our “spirit”—our life’s breath—from our bodies. Whether our soul rejoins our bodies in a resurrection unto eternal life or eternal death, depends entirely upon our **spiritual** relationship to God when we breathe our last earthly breath.

As obvious as all this may be to the Christian, it bears repeating in the context of “death with dignity.” This phrase has a heroic sound to it—calling to mind those who have died on the battlefield while defending a just cause, or sacrificed their lives for the sake of others. But there is something twisted in the way this phrase is commonly used today. Those who are “incapacitated” and unable to “choose” whether or how they wish to die, are being **assigned** “death with dignity” by those who seek to justify “mercy” killing. Both those who are dying, as well as the declarants of a Living Will, who are able to make their own “life support” decisions, often choose “death with dignity” as an escape from what is viewed as an undesirable and miserable life! The idea of Death as “deliverance” is spreading rapidly—the “Death with dignity” cry makes mercy-killing and suicide seem honorable, and the Living Will has the effect of making both legal.

The Christian who remembers that his physical death is a spiritual event will not be deceived. He knows that a truly “dignified” death has nothing whatever to do with the physical posture, shape or appearance of his dying body. He is convinced that a death full of honor, grace, and prestige for the Christian is not concerned with his dying in bed physically, but his living with Christ spiritually.

There was nothing dignified about the death of Judas Iscariot—he took his own life in the torment of despair, because he had no spiritual life with Christ. Death by stoning is not a dignified way for a man to die in the eyes of the world, but Stephen died with the greatest dignity before God. Beholding his Savior with the spiritual eye of faith, Stephen commended his life to Jesus, saying: “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59). Stephen did not choose a physical death “with dignity,” but he did die a dignified death because of his spiritual life with Christ. Stephen died a violent and painful death at the hands of his enemies. Still, he did not complain in bitterness against them or God. With his last breath Stephen asked forgiveness for his murderers and commended his life into the hands of his Savior. Death with dignity comes to the Christian, who, like Stephen the “martyr” (witness), gives testimony of his spiritual life with Christ even as he is dying.

A dignified death comes to him who stands “**faith** to face” with Death as its conqueror in Christ! The

Christian believes the promise of his Savior: “Whoever **lives** and believes in Me **shall never die**” (John 11:26). His life in Christ by faith enables him to confess that “it is **not** death to die”! (*The Lutheran Hymnal*, 602). “The sting of death is sin,” but “thanks be to God”—Christ has gained the victory for us by suffering the penalty of eternal death for our sin! (1 Cor. 15:56ff.). The physical death of the Christian is transformed from a frightful usher to hell into a friendly usher to heaven! He is not dead; he has only fallen asleep in Jesus for the briefest moment until the resurrection!

Faithful Job looked a mess! Covered with painful boils from head to foot, his bones were cleaving to his skin. His life had been reduced to sitting in the ashes while he scraped himself with a piece of broken pottery. His wife could not stand his foul-smelling breath! (Job 19:17). Job was apparently dying a slow and painful death; he was certainly given no reason to hope for recovery. Job’s wife wanted him to “pull the plug,” so to speak; “Curse God and die!” she said (2:9). This is not much different from saying, “End your troubles by ending your life! Die while you still have some dignity remaining!”

But Job held on to his “integrity”—his faith in God. He replied: “. . . Shall we indeed accept good from God, and shall we not accept adversity?” (2:10). Later on, Job again gives public testimony of this spirit of faith in the face of death: “—or I know that my Redeemer lives, and he shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another” (19:25ff.).

Only he dies with dignity who is ready to die **in** Christ so that he may live **with** Christ in glory, and who wills to die not in despair of this life, but in hope of the life to come! “Be **faithful** unto death, and I will give you the crown of life!” (Rev. 2:10).

#### IV. THE LORD’S WILL AND THE LIVING WILL

Christian pastors are busy men who sometimes long for simple answers when they cannot be found and should not be sought. We may wish that we could say regarding the Living Will that it is either in accord with the Lord’s or it is not. Indeed, our people may even wish for a simple answer! Yet in spite of the concerns already stated, I cannot make the judgment from Holy Scripture that a “Living Will” as such is contrary to the Lord’s will.

On the other hand, I do not feel that the Living Will is a subject that should be avoided by the Christian pastor as he ministers to souls. Certainly this is a private matter between an individual and his family. But this study was initiated in response to a member’s concern that her own Living Will not be in conflict with the Lord’s Will. And, as we have seen, there are a number of spiritual and moral issues involved here. A complex mixture of feelings and desires, ranging from fears and doubts to Christian confidence and love, may confuse the person who is offered the “opportunity” to make out a Living Will. What might be an “opportunity” could result in a “trap,” even a deathtrap! The concerned pastor will want to give guidance, warning, and encouragement to those who may be considering a Living Will.

In a sense, death is truly a “private” matter as the Living Will advocates often point out; each person at the moment of his death dies his own death. But few people die in complete isolation. Most of those who are hooked up to life support systems because they are not dead, but dying, have a whole “community” of health care



professionals and families looking in on them. Advances in communications and medical technology have made death and dying a very public matter in our day! Who would even consider a Living Will if he could not expect that someone or many would be witnesses to his dying?

But if my dying is a “public” matter, then as a Christian I may have a special opportunity to glorify my Savior as my Lord not only in life, but in death! Since a Living Will allows a person, while he is still able, to declare his wishes regarding the use or non-use of life support systems, why should not the Christian declare also his faith in Christ Who sustains our life through all eternity? Indeed, the Minnesota Living Will even provides a space for such remarks! Line 7 reads:

Thoughts I feel are relevant to my instructions. (You may, but need not, give your **religious beliefs**, philosophy, or other personal values that you feel are important. You may also state preferences concerning the location of your care.)

Of course, one would not want to make a lengthy confession of his Christian confidence at this point; but neither is length necessary. For example, think of the Spirit-power packed in these words of Jesus: “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26). The Christian might want to add something like this:

I **do** believe this promise of Jesus Christ. Therefore, however I may die, I die with the dignity my Savior has already given me as a conqueror of death through faith. If I must suffer while living or dying, so be it; I do not want to end my suffering by ending my life. My gracious Savior knows all; He knows what is best for me. On the other hand, if it becomes clear to the physicians attending me that there is no hope for my recovery and death is imminent, I do not wish to be unnecessarily “detained” on earth by useless treatments or technology. I long to be in heaven with Jesus.

Who knows what strength such a confession might give to the Christian family or “proxy” standing by the side of a dying loved one? Who can tell what the Spirit of God might work in the hearts of the medical staff, or others who may read or hear a “death-bed” confession like this? The Living Will may offer a unique opportunity for Christian witnessing.

One might also mention the opportunity a Living Will may offer in preventing euthanasia. Most authorities agree that our nation is gradually moving toward a general acceptance of euthanasia (both voluntary and involuntary). A future benefit of having a Living Will may be legally to prevent one’s own “premature” death!

A definite negative against filling out a Minnesota Health Care Declaration (perhaps others) is that the whole procedure is so complex, requiring a good understanding of available life support systems, medical terminology, and the English language. So much depends upon the precise wording of a Living Will, according to legal experts. Those same experts will acknowledge, however, that there are no absolute guarantees when it comes to carrying out a Living Will. Given the probability that, as one observer put it, “lawyers are going to have a field day” with Living Wills, we might ask: “Is all this really necessary for me or my family?”

We have already suggested that a Living Will makes suicidal decisions easier and more acceptable in our “suicide culture.” We have warned against the use of a Living Will to take one’s life into his own hands in order to escape a potentially miserable life. Perhaps more should be said at this point about the Lord’s will and the

suffering of the dying Christian or/and his family.

The Christian may indeed pray for his Savior God to spare him further suffering by graciously taking him out of this vale of tears to heaven. But in making such a petition the Christian adds: “Nevertheless, not my will, but Thine be done.” In the third petition to the Lord’s Prayer we ask that our heavenly Father’s good and gracious will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Included in this good and gracious will is “everything God wants us to suffer patiently according to His good pleasure” (*Small Catechism* explanation, LC-MS ed., p. 157).

It is not difficult to envision how a Living Will, giving directions regarding the non-use of life support may “prevent” the Lord’s Will that a Christian suffer. But what Living Will declarant can determine precisely what his family’s situation will be at the time of his incapacitating and “terminal illness”? What if the dying declarant had recently fallen into unrepented sin and unbelief? Who can tell whether the Lord may work repentance and renewed faith in such a case through this suffering and the application of the gospel of forgiveness? And what if the financial and emotional cost to a family in continuing life support for the dying/living is great? Could this be turned by the Lord into surpassing spiritual blessings for those who have cared so greatly? We have seen it happen!

In short—if I may dare to summarize so complicated a matter: Pastors ought to warn their people concerning the real and potential dangers involved in this matter of the Living Will, admonishing and encouraging them to declare nothing that might work against the Lord’s good and gracious will for them in Christ Jesus. We should hold before our brethren the way of **faith**, reminding them that the “suffering of this present time is not worthy to be compared to the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Rom. 8:18). “**Whatever is not of faith is sin**” (Rom. 14:23). Therefore, the Christian should also be exhorted to take care that, also in regard to a Living Will, his desires and decisions be made only in accordance with His precious faith and hope in Jesus Christ.

Teach me to live that I may dread  
The grave as little as my bed.  
Teach me to die that so I may  
Rise glorious at the awe-full Day! (TLH, 558:3)

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## PAIDEIA

### How Can We Affect Attitudes of Children in Dealing with Peer Pressure and with the Affluence of the World?\*

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*Keith Olmanson*

Tammy was insecure in school. She desperately wanted to belong and be accepted by her fifth grade class. At the time, a purse was a status symbol among her peers. Her mother just had to get her a purse. And she did. But even that did not make her feel more secure. She broke out in a rash from time to time. The doctor could find no physical reason for it. He determined that it must be caused by emotional stress.

Tammy's parents decided that they would send her to the near-by Lutheran school in the hopes that it would be less stressful. Some time later her mother told her pastor that the rash had disappeared and that Tammy had lost all interest in taking her purse to school. Clearly, Tammy's attitude in dealing with peer pressure and the affluence of the world had been drastically affected.

What had happened? What had caused her attitude to change? Let us delve into the matter and see what we can uncover.

The basic needs of a three-month old infant are quite simple. If he has a dry bottom and a full tummy, he is comfortable. But he really needs more. Even at that young age he needs attention. He appreciates and responds to handling and being spoken to. The need seems to increase as he grows older. The need to be loved and accepted is very strong in the life of most people. Certainly that need is present in the children with whom teachers are in contact.

This need for love and acceptance is a strong element in shaping the attitudes of children. Their attitudes are tailored by what they find effective in gaining the favorable attention of others. If having a purse will elevate them in the eyes of others, a purse is given a high value. If getting a good grade gains that favor, there will be strong effort to get a good grade. Or it can be the opposite. If the child feels that getting a good grade will be resented by his peers, he may deliberately choose to get a poor grade.

And if children can't get the attention they need by doing those things which are socially acceptable, they may try that which is socially unacceptable. Although the attention may well bring unpleasant results, at least they will have some kind of recognition. Challenging the teacher's authority is a common example.

Attitudes of children, and anyone else as well, are really the reflections of a sense of values. They have a positive attitude toward what is important and desirable to them. Obviously the Christian teacher will encourage the children to value highly those things which are pleasing to God.

We have to realize that in the case of a sense of value among children, we are dealing with short term returns. The younger the children, the less able they are to value something that will not bring immediate satisfaction. A pleasing result six months in the future will mean very little to the child in first grade. The promise of a new bike next May will not be very exciting to him.

Since attitudes are a reflection of a sense of values, it would be well to consider the source of the sense of values. There are two basic sources. One is the Word of God, the other is the person's old Adam. As we learn through our catechism, the old Adam is our corrupt human nature. The apostle Paul complains of its influence on his life. "For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice" (Rom. 7:18-19).

In the letter to Titus (3:3), Paul describes the condition of those living totally under the control of their old Adam. "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures,

living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another.” This description reveals that the prime characteristic of the old Adam is selfishness. It wants whatever will serve its supposed needs. It will stop at nothing to get what it wants. The feelings, needs and rights of other people are not a concern to it. Only when the person sees that certain actions will bring harmful consequences to himself will he refrain from them.

Since the old Adam influences all people, we can be sure that it is also involved in their reactions to peer pressure and the affluence of the world. The word “peer” comes from the Latin *par*, which means “equal.” One definition is: “Any person, usually of the same age, who is considered to be equal in status.” The child’s peers are those who have a number of things in common with him. These could include such things as age, family, school or class in school, home neighborhood, sports team, physical ability, intellectual ability, and, at some ages, sex.

For practical purposes we will consider the peer group as those children with whom the child has regular and close contact. Normally, these would be the children in the same classroom and those who live in the same neighborhood and are of approximately the same age.

Peer pressure is the influence the peer group has upon the individual. This can be good, bad or neutral depending upon the area of influence and the quality of the peer group. Scripture gives examples of peer influence. One is a case where the peer influence was bad and later became good.

A young man in Corinth had married his mother, apparently his step-mother. We read in 1 Cor. 5:1, “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles—that a man has his father’s wife!” This situation was being tolerated. There was no pressure for a change by this man’s peers, the fellow members of the congregation. For some reason they accepted the situation—embarrassment, indifference, approval? We don’t know.

Paul called for action. “But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner—not even to eat with such a person . . . Therefore put away from yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor. 5:11-13). By excluding that man from the congregation they would put pressure on him to focus on the seriousness of his sin and to repent of it.

And that is what happened. The congregation became a pressure group for good. Paul wrote in his second epistle to that congregation, “This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow” (2 Cor. 2:6-7). Since the man had repented and made the appropriate changes in his life, he was to be received back into the congregation.

The peer pressure exerted by the student body in a Christian school should be of this type. When one of the students strays from a God-pleasing course, the attitude of the others should be such that it clearly reflects disapproval and encourages a return to acceptable behavior. And isn’t that a sought-for result of instruction in our Lutheran school—that those students will continue to be an influence for good throughout their life? That is what the Lord had in mind when He told His disciples, “You are the salt of the earth” (Matt. 5:13). We are to exert whatever influence we have to lead others to do that which is pleasing to the Lord.

The source of such a peer attitude is faith. Faith in Christ as our Savior is basic to sanctification. The stronger the faith, the greater the sense of gratitude toward a loving and merciful God, and the greater the desire to glorify Him with a life lived in accord with His will. The need, then, to produce and sustain a Christian peer

attitude is the application of God's Word.

That Word is the source of faith. The apostle Paul explained to the Roman Christians, "Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). In his second letter to Timothy he referred to "the Holy Scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 3:15).

It is through the use of this Word that the attitudes of Christian peer groups are to be formed and guided. The psalmist declares, "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps. 119:105). Where there is a close acquaintance with that Word and a willingness to heed it, there it brightly lights the way through this world. There Christian peer groups will be found and their influence be felt.

But it isn't that simple, is it? We can't just steep the students in Scripture at our schools, and expect the results to be perfect. The problem is that Christians have enemies. These enemies seek to neutralize the influence of God's Word and to substitute other guidance. Those enemies are the devil, the sinful world, and each person's sinful flesh—the old Adam which was mentioned earlier.

The devil, of course, is an enemy of God and an enemy of every one of God's children. He finds delight in hindering the children of God from living a godly life. He brings upon them all kinds of temptations—pleasures, trials, sorrows, pain, doubts, and disappointments. He would like very much to convince them that a godly life is not worth the trouble.

The sinful world is disturbed by a godly life. Such a life is a living testimony to its sinfulness. So the world seeks to make godliness go away by causing God's children to join it in sin. By sinful example, by clever coaxing, by subtle reproach, by ridicule, by threat, by force, it attempts to side-track the Christian from his godly course.

To make matters worse, these enemies from outside are aided and abetted by a traitor within. That is the old Adam. Paul referred to his former life of unbelief under the complete control of the old Adam with these words, "For we ourselves were also once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving various lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another" (Tit. 3:3). The person who is guided only by his old Adam is not a pleasant person.

The old Adam has a powerful influence upon every person, also upon the Christian. But the Christian also possesses the new man, the new spiritual person which was created within him when he received the gift of faith from the Holy Spirit. The new man is under the influence of the Holy Spirit. The goals which the new man seeks are listed by Paul, "The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control" (Gal. 5:22).

Since the old Adam and the new man have completely different goals, it is no wonder that they are in constant conflict. This conflict has its effect upon the quality of the influence exerted by peer groups. If the influence proceeds from the new man, all is well and good. If the old Adam is in control, then that peer pressure must be resisted. The child must be prepared to distinguish between the good and the bad influences and, then, to respond appropriately.

The requirement for doing so is a sound, scripture-based sense of values. That can only come through regular use of God's Word. As that Word is used, the Holy Spirit has the opportunity to cause the person's faith to grow and his understanding to increase. He learns that the things which have to do with eternal life are the most important. The things of this life must remain only secondary. This understanding builds into him resistance

against overvaluing that which is temporal and physical. This is why the Word is given the important place it has in our Lutheran schools.

That Word teaches the child that he is a very special person. God sent His own Son, Jesus Christ, to win forgiveness for all of his sins. Jesus kept God's law perfectly. He did this for every person. In addition, he suffered and died on the cross to pay the penalty for the sins of every person. Unfortunately, most people do not benefit from Jesus' efforts for their salvation.

But as a child of God, one who has been baptized, one who has been brought to believe that Jesus did this for him, the Christian has the benefit of the forgiveness of sins that Jesus has provided. No matter what happens to him in this world, no matter what other people think of him, no one can rob him of his faith and tumble him from the ranks of God's children. Jesus promises concerning His sheep, "I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand. My Father, who has given them to Me, is greater than all; and no one is able to snatch them out of My Father's hand" (John 10:28-29).

The importance of the Word and faith in Jesus in the struggle against evil influences upon our youth was underscored by Pastor Michael Sydow in a pamphlet entitled, *The Dividing Dilemma Facing the Young Christian*. He wrote:

When considering the impact of modern society on today's Christian youth, the situation is far from hopeless. Children of God are not in this world at some tremendous disadvantage without power to withstand wickedness. Nor does a Christian's age render him any more or less vulnerable. The spiritual needs of youthful believers are similar to those of their elders. The solution is the same: faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sin.

What is there that can cause a person with a proper sense of values to set aside those values and give in to the wrong peer pressure? There is a basic need for people to be loved—to be accepted. This seems to be especially strong within the peer group of the adolescent. Why? We quote again from Pastor Sydow's pamphlet:

Adolescence is a time of crisis. Budding self-awareness comes with rapid physical change. Erratic emotions threaten havoc to stability, self-control, and problem solving. Youthful men and women wrestle with age-old identity questions: "Who am I?" "Why am I here?" "Where did I come from and where am I going?"

Jesus provides the solid foundation for crisis solution. He gives identity: "Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). "Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price . . ." (1 Cor. 6:19-20).

The child of God is different. He is a new, re-created person. He has been bought with a price—Jesus' life. He is precious in the sight of God. God watches over him. He has no need of fearing anyone or anything. What others may think of him is of little importance. It is what God thinks of him that counts. So Paul writes, Romans 14:10, "Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls." Christians are accountable to God, not to the unbelieving world.

Peers are able to exert pressure because the individual fears a negative judgment. Such a judgment could lead to some degree of rejection. This may involve only a few unkind words being spoken, or it could be as serious as being shut out by the peer group. The judging of actions, as well as words, is covered by this passage found in James 4:11-12: "Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges

his brother, speaks evil of the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?" Unless the judgment is in accord with God's Word, it is not to be taken seriously.

The child of God is to know that the judgment of the peer group is far less important than that of God. When peer pressure seeks to cause a person to sin, it is to be rejected. Before peer pressure begins to be of much influence, the child should have learned that passage which is connected with the fourth commandment, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29).

The matter of language is an example of the problem of peer pressure. While the type of English we speak is also influenced by the people around us, we are referring specifically to the control of the use of bad language—cursing, as well as crude and indecent language. The passages connected with the second commandment may be used to show the evil involved in cursing.

When it comes to crude and indecent language, Scripture speaks very plainly. Consider Ephesians 4:29: "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification that it may impart grace to the hearers." In the next chapter of Ephesians we find these words: ". . . let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks" (5:3-4). Impressing the children that they are saints, and as such are special to God, is very important. And in Colossians we find these words: "But now you must also put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth" (3:8).

It should be mentioned that while bad peer examples often are the cause of bad language, that may not be true in every case. Sometimes the home is at fault. The parents, or other members of the household, may have developed bad habits of cursing or using other unsuitable language. They will have to be helped also.

It is by equipping the young people with passages such as have been given as examples that they are to be "pressure-proofed" against negative peer pressure. God's Word shows what is essential, what is important, what is not important, and what must be rejected. If this knowledge can be impressed upon the child, we have gone a long way in affecting his attitude to deal with peer pressure properly.

The undue influence of affluence bears the same kind of treatment. Designer clothes were specifically mentioned in the program. For fifth-grader Tammy it was a purse. A letter jacket may seem to be absolutely essential for the survival of a high-school upper classman, although it may hang in the closet neglected forever after graduation.

Fads come and fads go. They can be a great financial burden to the parents who, by desire or coercion, try to keep their children current. Some schools, particularly Catholic elementary schools, require their students to wear uniforms. Often this involves only the girls since that appears to be where the greatest problems occur. The idea is to remove the competition and prevent the hard feelings which may result from a clothes war. But uniforms are only a temporary solution. The contest may rage fiercely outside of school and the chance to teach lessons for life are lost.

However, designer clothes are only one item made possible by affluence. We are, hopefully, drawing to the end of a fad where the worn-out, should-have-been-thrown-away look, was the "in" thing. (How expensive clothes can be when they have to be pre-destroyed before being sold!) But anything that a child uses, in school or out, may be used in a race to "keep ahead of the Joneses."

Often such a race is the fault of the parents. Perhaps they feel that love demands that their children have the best. Perhaps they just want to show off through their children. And at other times it is because of the insistence of the children that the desired items are provided. Each of these situations reflect an incorrect attitude toward the things of this world.

John gives us the correct view: “Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

Paul writes to Timothy: “Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows” (1 Tim. 6:6-10).

Jesus, Himself, puts the issue clearly before us: “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you” (Matt. 6:33). We have to teach not only the dangers that lie in the pursuit of earthly goods and riches, but also the proper priorities. And so we get back to teaching a Christian sense of values.

The catechism is an effective tool. Especially the First, Ninth, and Tenth Commandments, the First Article, and the Fourth Petition lend themselves to teaching such a sense of values. In Bible History such examples as the Rich Young Ruler, the Foolish Rich Man, the Prodigal Son, the Rich Man and Poor Lazarus, and Zacchaeus may prove very helpful.

Clearly, God’s Word is to be our chief tool in influencing our children to develop a proper attitude toward the world. But there are other things that enter in. By their example, the teachers are to be a positive influence. The children watch them closely and are guided by what they see and hear.

The home has a tremendous influence upon the children. If there is negative teaching being done in the home by bad example, it will have to receive attention. In such a case the teacher and the pastor will have to work together.

Class instruction may not be enough in some cases. The problem child may need individual instruction to help him apply to himself the lessons taught in class. He may need help to understand just what God is expecting of him and why.

And it would be hoped that the peer pressure exerted by the students in our schools would be a positive influence which encourages the individual students, in an evangelical manner, to do that which is pleasing in God’s sight. Such positive peer pressure would be the result of the cumulative effort of the teacher, pastor, and parents in applying the Word of God.

May the Lord grant that in all of our schools the attitudes of the children be affected so that they may be continually aware of the fact that, though they are in the world, they are not of the world; that they are only sojourners who are passing through this world to their eternal home in heaven.

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## From a Pastor's and Professor's Notebook

*Roland A. Gurgel*

XII

### Isaiah

#### Perfect Peace in an Imperfect World!

We have been considering the imperfections as revealed in nations and their dealings with each other and particularly those nations that posed a threat to Judah. Since the Lord was their defender, they had no reason to fear the military strengths of foreign peoples. The Lord, through the pen of Isaiah, reaffirms that truth already made known hundreds of years before by the pen of Moses: “And five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight: and your enemies shall fall before you by the sword. For **I** will have respect unto you . . .” (Lev. 26:8-9).

However, it was not only foreign powers that revealed imperfections and attempted to destroy the peace of heart for God's people. There was a much closer enemy and a much closer revelation of the fact that God's people were living in an imperfect world. That enemy and that evidence was found in their own sinful flesh—in their own sinful flesh that by itself and together with the onslaughts of the devil and the world constantly tried to turn their eyes away from their Savior God, “the everlasting strength,” and thereby rob them of the perfect peace that was theirs in Jehovah.

Isaiah takes a thorough and penetrating look at the sinful heart of himself and his people. He in no way covers up the fact that he and mankind in general are conceived and born in sin and daily sin much in thought, word and deed. But he also, with marvelous clarity, sets forth by inspiration that in the midst of this terrible imperfection there remains a perfect peace for those “whose mind is stayed on thee.”

Turn to chapter 6, the chapter that reveals the circumstances surrounding Isaiah's call to be a prophet of God. You will recall that, as the vision of the almighty and the holy God is set forth before the eyes of Isaiah, his reaction was fear and terror of heart, for he says, “Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of **unclean lips**, and I dwell in the midst of a people of **unclean lips**: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (6:5).

Unclean lips—Isaiah's way of confessing that which the Lord declares when He says, “But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man . . .” (Matt. 15:18-20). Unclean lips—Isaiah's way of confessing that the words of St. Paul speak of Isaiah also, “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness . . . that **every mouth** may be stopped and all the

**world may become guilty before God”** (Rom. 3:13-19).

“Woe is me!” says Isaiah, as he sees himself in the light of God’s law—“woe is me!” as he stands a sinner in the presence of the holy, holy, holy Lord God. There does not seem to be a chance for peace in such a situation. And yet the book of Isaiah **does not end with the words, “Woe is me!”**

Again you will recall from Isaiah 6 the sequel of the words, “Woe is me!”: “Then flew one of the seraphims unto me, having a live coal in his hand, which he had taken with the tongs from off the altar: and he laid it upon my mouth, and said, Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.” Purged, forgiven through a sacrifice—the sacrifice so well described in Isaiah 53: “He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows . . . he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities . . . and with his stripes we are healed.” Now at peace with his God, Isaiah says, “Here am I; send me, send me.”

Isaiah does not only look at himself, but he gives us a well-drawn picture of the imperfections, the sins, of his countrymen. “**All** we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way” (53:6). How much that was the situation with the people of Judah is detailed in the opening chapters. Read chapters 1-5. We will make a few selections to highlight the sin that did abound. “I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me . . . Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evildoers . . . How is the faithful city become a harlot . . .” (ch. 1). “For Jerusalem is ruined, and Judah is fallen: because their tongue and their doings are against the Lord, to provoke the eyes of his glory . . . woe unto the wicked . . . Because the daughters of Zion are haughty . . .” (ch. 3). “I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips,” says Isaiah. How right he was! What a picture of people “going their own way.” Any hope for peace of heart here?

Into this section of Isaiah, where the sin, the backsliding, the rebellion, the blasphemy of the people of Judah is so thoroughly portrayed, into this section come some well-known words of peace—words which we have learned in our instruction class, words which we have heard often quoted in sermons, words which frequently show up in devotional literature, but words which often are separated from the context in which they appear. We refer, of course, to the words of Isaiah 1:18: “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.”

Isaiah, or rather the Lord God through Isaiah, would bid the people of his day realize how imperfect they were in thought, word, and deed; realize the depth of their sinfulness and the danger it posed for them. The Lord would have them confess with Isaiah in the presence of the holy, holy, holy Lord God, “We are a people of unclean lips and we dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips . . .”; and, having confessed that, to hear the Lord say, “Though your sins be as scarlet [and they were], they shall be white as snow . . .” Here is the flavor of Isaiah’s Gospel! Here is the message of the Savior, “Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound” (Rom. 5:20).

Don’t you hear Jesus saying, “Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee” (Matt. 9:2)? Don’t you hear the Christmas angels proclaim, “And on earth peace, good will toward men” (Luke 2:14)? Don’t you hear the Lord announcing, “Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” (Luke 7:50)? Don’t you hear Jesus declaring, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give . . .” (John 14:27)?

In the midst of an imperfect world—imperfect because of our sins—comes the glorious proclamation of the Lord through the pen of Isaiah: “Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee.” How

well the Apostle Paul understood these words, for he confesses, “This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief” (1 Tim. 1:15).

We do well to pick up those words of Paul and join the hymn writer in proclaiming:

Chief of sinners though I be,  
Jesus shed His blood for me . . .

Jesus only can impart  
Balm to heal the smitten heart;  
Peace that flows from sin forgiv’n,  
Joy that lifts the soul to heav’n;  
Faith and hope to walk with God  
In the way that Enoch trod.

**PERFECT PEACE IN AN IMPERFECT WORLD!**

THAT IS THE MESSAGE OF ISAIAH!

(To be continued)