

THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

FOUR BRIEFINGS ON THE INSURGENCY OF DEATH ON DEMAND AND THE COUNTERINSURGENCY OF PASTORAL CARE

The Prayer of a Suffering Man
22 My God, my God,
You seem far from saving me,
far away from my groans,
My God, I call to you during the day,
but you do not answer.
I call at night,
I am not silent.
You sit as the Holy One,
The praises of Israel are your throne.
Our ancestors trusted in you;
they trusted, and you saved them.
They called to you for help
and were rescued.
They trusted you
and were not disappointed.
But I am like a worm instead of a man.
People make fun of me and hate me.

acks to the top of my mouth
the dust of death.
e surrounded me;
they have trapped me.
I have bitten my arms and legs.
I can count all my bones;
people look and stare at me.
They divided my clothes among them,
and they threw lots for my clothing.
But, LORD, don't be far away.
You are my strength; hurry to help me.
Save me from the sword;
save my life from the dogs.

GREGORY P. SCHULZ

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For Paula,
my helpmate in rejoicing and in mourning, today and always.

Dedicated to

the Pastors and Lay Leaders, the Fellows and Directors, and the Supporters
of
DOXOLOGY: The Lutheran Center for Spiritual Care and Counsel
and to
Roland “Cap” Ehlke, Angus Menuge, Steven Parrish, and Kevin Voss,
my friends and colleagues in Philosophy at Concordia University,
where we introduce our students to Christ the Wisdom of God

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But whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss because of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them *mere* rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from *the* Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which *comes* from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and **the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death; if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already grasped *it all* or have already become perfect, but I press on if I may also take hold of that for which I was even taken hold of by Christ Jesus (Philippians 3: 7- 12, NASB).

My life is outside myself, beyond my disposal. ... “I am the Life” (John 14:6) – this is the word, the revelation, the proclamation of Jesus Christ. The statement that our life is outside ourselves and in Jesus Christ is in no way the result of our own self-understanding. Instead, it is a claim that encounters us from outside, which we either believe or contradict” (Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, unfinished).

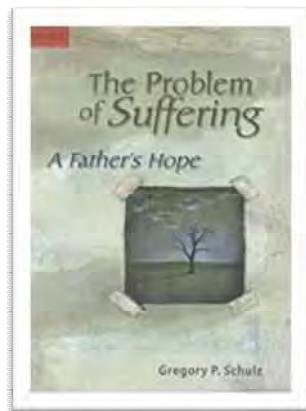
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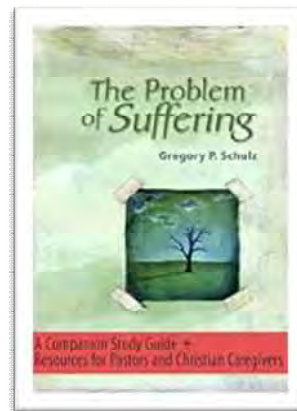
The **anticipated expanded print version** of this book, subtitled *Four Briefings on Bioethics, Suffering, And Lament for the Thoughtful Christian*, will feature learning, teaching, and curricular resources for addressing contemporary biomedical ethics and suffering for university and seminary students and their professors.

Please watch the author's website, www.lutheranphilosopher.com for updates and supplementary resources.

Currently in print, from CPH.com and at Amazon.com: Book (left) and CD Companion Study Guide:



AND



ORIENTATION

Pastoral Care in This Time of Suffering

Pastoral care is a matter of boots on the ground. “One foot in the Word of God, one foot in the world in which God’s people live,” as I learned from Donald Deffner, dissertation director for my first doctorate and mentor for years afterward. As a parish pastor during the last two decades of the twentieth century, I cultivated this motto for my pastoral ministry, especially for my preaching and teaching of God’s Word, day in and day out. But since those decades, I think you will agree that the ground underneath our “one foot in the world” has been shifting and grinding with enough moral force to register on the Richter scale.



The world underfoot has shifted dramatically – a tectonic, continental shift, with all the terror of a surging tsunami. Today, the cynical advice, “When the roots of the mountains shift, what after all can the godly person do?” tempts us pastors and Christian professors to duck and cover instead of baptizing all nations and teaching everything we’ve been commanded to teach. But, just as there is more Psalm 11 for us to pray beyond the cynicism of its first three verses, there is more to the faithful practice of pastoral care in these later days beyond musing nostalgically or idealistically about the ministry, as wave after wave of moral shocks strike.

Psalm 11

For the music director; by David.

In the Lord I have taken shelter.
 How can you say to me,
 “Flee to a mountain like a bird!
 For look, the wicked prepare their bows,
 they put their arrows on the strings,

to shoot in the darkness at the morally upright.
When the foundations are destroyed,
what can the godly accomplish?"

The Lord is in his holy temple;
the Lord's throne is in heaven.
His eyes watch;
his eyes examine all people.
The Lord approves of the godly,
but he hates the wicked and those who love to do violence.
May the Lord rain down burning coals and brimstone on the wicked!
A whirlwind is what they deserve!

Certainly the Lord is just;
he rewards godly deeds;
the upright will experience his favor (ESV).

There is work, urgent work, to be done because there are souls, everlasting persons of body and soul, to be cared for in these times of relentless moral upheaval. This moral upheaval is beyond modern precedent, erupting as it does in a socialized medicine and its accomplice ethics of death on demand: death of our unborn children, death by physician-enabled suicide, euthanasia practiced as healthcare. The "shock and awe" of the biomedical ethics behind this ethos of death on demand (DOD) amounts to an ethical blitzkrieg, an institutional disruption on a cultural scale. We are under fire from these unrelenting moral aftershocks of the endtimes. The relentlessness of it all seems to be outstripping the curricular momentum of our institutions of higher learning and the substance of our professional growth, formal and informal. The truth is that we are unprepared for the blitzkrieg of death on demand. Inexplicably, we have been depending on a Maginot line of ... well, of mission programs, of ministerial initiatives, of cultural momentum, and other tiresome distractions from distraction.

Mission Creep

You see, it is not only our one pastoral foot in the world that is slipping. I am here to tell you that our “one pastoral foot in the Word of God” has been off balance for quite some time as well.

This is a time of heaving foundations and moral tsunamis, but it is also a time of mission failure.

What are we to do in this time of moral upheaval? We are to carry out our God-given mission, of course! **But here is the real problem. We have lost sight of our pastoral and CHRISTian mission.**

The target of which we have lost sight is suffering and *what Christ Himself teaches us to teach suffering people about suffering.*

Ronald Rittgers has recently diagnosed our mission creep in the centuries since the Lutheran Reformation this way:

Perhaps the rejection of full-bodied biblical lament [has had the effect of] cutting off a crucial portion of the “relational flow” that should exist between God and his covenant people. Perhaps ... the insistence of the Western churches that human beings must face suffering without the possibility of lament has worked to undermine the plausibility of the Christian faith, especially among certain populations of the modern West. And perhaps it is in our own day, in the widespread opposition to the idea of divinely imposed suffering, that we are finally seeing the consequences of this age-old rejection.

Death on demand. Pastoral care mission creep. These are the consequences. A modest cloud of Lutheran witnesses have been sounding the claxon, trying urgently to scramble us pastors to launch a theology of lament (Bayer), to take up Luther’s theology of the cross (Ngien), to discover the psalms and Hebrew chapters and books of lament (Westermann).

The Mission is to Teach Biblical Lament

Primary Texts

The 50-plus Psalms of Lament

Jeremiah and Lamentations

Job

Note also the assumption of lamentation literacy in the NT: Jesus at His crucifixion, Romans 8, The Apocalypse, and so on

Lutheran Calls for Biblical Lament

Martin Luther's Seven Penitential Psalms – see his commentary on Psalm 6

Ronald Rittgers, *The Reformation of Suffering* (2012) – see his Conclusion

Oswald Bayer, Toward a Theology of Lament in David Whitford's *Caritas et Reformatio* (2002)

Dennis Ngien, *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther's Theologia Crucis* (1995)

Claus Westerman, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms* (1981) – see his Part 7, The Role of the Lament in the Theology of the Old Testament

Also, my own quieter contributions

Our Lamentable Lacuna: How Western Churches Have Undermined the Plausibility of the Christian Faith in LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology (Epiphany 2019)

Bayer's 21st-Century Disputation Concerning Lament, a chapter in Pless, Ziegler, and Miller's *Promising Faith in a Ruptured Age* (2019)

Pain, Suffering, Lament in LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology (Eastertide 2015)

The Problem of Suffering: A Father's Hope (2011)

The Problem of Suffering: A Companion Study Guide and Resources for Pastors and Christian Caregivers (2011)

But, by and large, we pastors have not been heeding the call. The Scriptures are crystal clear regarding our mission. We seem ill-equipped to do what we have been called to do.

“So then, take your stand! ... Put on your shoes so that you are ready to spread the Good News that gives peace...” (Ephesians 6:14-15, GW). In the pages of these four briefings, we shall tackle the problem. I must alert you, though. We are underprepared and we are under fire. **The reality of human suffering is the beachhead where today's pastor must enter the theater of war for the hearts and souls of human beings.** This is the fluid environment where the attentive healer of souls needs cultural reconnaissance and



current, targeted intel in order for him to “take advantage of every opportunity, because the days are evil” (Ephesians 5:15-17).

As an experienced Lutheran parish pastor who is also a seasoned university professor, I am speaking as a “pastoral intelligence analyst” who has organized the data of several reconns and is providing intel for our shared mission of teaching people to suffer in Christ, via biblical lament. In preparation for my four Mission Briefings, here is a flyover of the current moral terrain.

Recon and Targeting, Diagnosis and Prescription

This is the moral environment in which, only by shifting his weight onto the “foot in the Word of God,” today’s pastor will find wisdom and encouragement for the application of Christ in His own biblical words (the prescribed means and method for “doing ministry”) in order to seek and to save suffering people on the battlefield of the early 21st century. These suffering persons are those for whom we care as corpsmen of Christ the Life. Those who do not suffer need no physician, to paraphrase our Lord in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Notwithstanding, everyone suffers. Suffering is an inescapable feature of the human condition. As part of our professional caregiving, we have been commissioned to show sufferers their need for the Physician (Matthew 9:12, Mark 2:17, Luke 5:31) as well as to bring Christ the Good Physician to them in person. For the sake of the bipedal mission, therefore, today’s pastor needs real-time intelligence of the hostile world *and* expertise in the efficacious Word of God, both.

Our mission is *bipedal*. Think of this simultaneous need as a matter of walking the terrain (or flying a mission) while navigating (both, at the same time) in order to deliver the gospel of Christ the God who Suffers on target. For a number of years, I taught courses on the staff of a

Region Staff College at Offutt AFB in northeastern Nebraska, shoulder to shoulder with an

Army Ranger friend who fought in the first Gulf War. Rich told the story of how, when leading a nighttime attack in the first battle of that desert war (in which infantry, airpower, and armor needed to coordinate their every maneuver to the nth degree), their GPS connections failed completely. Only because my friend knew how to navigate by the stars was he able to lead his unit (and nearby units) to fulfil their mission. Of course, if he had never had his Ranger boots on the ground of that desert, Rich's old-school navigation skills would not have saved anyone on that battlefield. Real-time navigation *plus* experienced boots on the ground.

As I was saying, there is a mission-critical need for us pastors to hone our diagnostic skills while in the field. We cannot afford to demur or defer our divinely-given mission. Our twenty-first century is becoming the Century of Death on Demand in front of our eyes. In order to be **faithful and flexible**, today's pastor must be both tough-minded (philosophically) and great-hearted (pastorally). Let us think deeply, and with discipline and integrity. Then, let us act decisively and with the Word of Christ, biblical lament, nothing less.

Euthanasia (that is, the legalized, regularized, and prescribed delivery of **death on demand, or DOD**, in order to avoid suffering) is becoming the new way of life here and now, on the threshold of the third millennium since the first advent of God. The irony that our century's dominant philosophy of life is that we urge one another toward suicide, to kill ourselves at will with the assistance and encouragement of medical professionals (of all people!), normalized by national laws, is stultifying.

In a word, Western culture – having disconnected itself from the Bible, the Word of God, which is necessary to read the heavens (Psalm 19) – is utterly disoriented morally, just like my Ranger friend's unit without their GPS connectivity. As John Donne puts it, “everything has been flung to its atomies... Each one thinks he hath got to be a phoenix.” ***The West has lost its***

way because it has turned its back on the God of the Bible. In our day, the West is hellbent on bringing our millennia-long efforts to discover what we have been created and redeemed to be as human beings to a grinding halt. This is taking place under the camouflage of an alleged compassion for suffering people, aided and abetted by mainstream bioethics. In higher education, where I teach philosophy and ethics, semester in and semester out, this cultural disorientation is in full view. Moral disorientation (with very rare exceptions) has become the core curriculum of our schools and universities. Our cultural front lines have been overrun and the battle is upon us in the homeland!

Christian churches in the West and their pastors have stumbled in their mission response-ability because we have refused to teach biblical lament – to teach it to our parishioners, to teach it to suffering disbelievers, to learn it for ourselves by submitting to the psalms and biblical chapters and books of lament.

In the ethics that support and promote DOD, the God who tells us, “I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6) has been replaced with an “ethics” of radicalized autonomy made into a principle, by which we are subjected to the whims of powerful and willful doctors, judges, and professors who have their own projects of human and social engineering. Their social engineering appears to depend on the socialized suicide of suffering human beings. Never mind their ideals; the issue is their strategy, the means they insist upon for achieving whatever it is that they are after. Death on demand is their way of life – death as a final solution for the suffering, the vulnerable, the undesirable – for all those who, in their worldview, are unworthy of life. We have we seen this Final Solution Strategy and its biomedical ethics before?

DOD is a terrorizing IED tailor-made to blow up our very understanding of what it means to be human – to be human beings in fellowship with one another and in fellowship with God,

who became incarnate for us all, *the Life* that is the Light of humankind (see John 1-7, where the apostle's theme is Christ as the *zoë* of all us human beings). In Christ's eyes, we human beings are His beloved bride, whereas in the bioethics of death on demand we human beings are little more than biologicals (humans are reduced to mere *bios*, unremarkable elements of the *biosphere*) to be put out of our misery.

Suffering, the Core Mission of Pastoral Care and Christian Mission

Now, the ethics that supports death on demand is actively opposed to Christ. Therefore, it is hostile to pastoral care and the Christian mission. **The cult of death on demand has been engineered for the purpose separating suffering and dying souls from their Maker and Redeemer at the precise point when they are at their most vulnerable.** This means that death on demand is a frontal assault on the ministry of Christ and His church, a smart weapon targeting pastors and chaplains and their mission of pastoral care.

And so, in respect to our pastoral heart, there is more at stake than our mandate to practice Christian apologetics by speaking Christ to people. Or rather, given that our *apologia* was never envisioned as a calm, theoretical exercise in the first place, it follows that **confessing Christ is always done in the midst, or under the imminent threat, of suffering.**

Finally, all of you be harmonious, sympathetic, affectionate, compassionate, and humble. Do not return evil for evil or insult for insult, but instead bless others because you were called to inherit a blessing. For the one who wants to love life and see good days must keep his tongue from evil and his lips from uttering deceit. And he must turn away from evil and do good; he must seek peace and pursue it.

For the eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous and his ears are open to their prayer.

But the Lord's face is against those who do evil...

But do not be terrified of them or be shaken. But set Christ apart as Lord in your hearts and always be ready to give an answer to anyone who asks about the hope you possess. Yet do it with courtesy and respect, keeping a good conscience, so that those who slander your good conduct in Christ may be put to shame when they accuse you. For **it is better to suffer for doing good**, if God wills it, than for doing evil.

Because **Christ also suffered** once for sins,
 the just for the unjust,
 to bring you to God,
 by being put to death in the flesh
 but by being made alive in the spirit.

In it he went and preached to the spirits in prison, after they were disobedient long ago when God patiently waited in the days of Noah as an ark was being constructed. In the ark a few, that is eight souls, were delivered through water. And this prefigured baptism, which now saves you – not the washing off of physical dirt but the pledge of a good conscience to God – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who went into heaven and is at the right hand of God with angels and authorities and powers subject to him (1 Peter 3:15-22, NET).

Here we arrive at what I am identifying as *the target of pastoral care, the core element of our Christian mission – the phenomenon of human suffering*.

Herein lies a fundamental problem within our own ranks. In the middle of this educational and cultural assault that promotes death as the solution for suffering, we ought to confess that *Christian churches in modernity have largely failed in our duty to teach souls in the church and those outside the church how to suffer – that is, how to suffer as allies of Jesus of Nazareth, by means of His psalms and biblical chapters of lament*. This means that the crisis of death on demand is also a crisis that calls for repenting and rethinking on our part as called and ordained pastors. We as church members and we as church ministers have largely failed to articulate and to deliver a pastoral theology of lament, with catastrophic consequences for our churches and for our human communities. *Kyrie eleison!*

The Fellowship of His Sufferings is, you see, a response to this existential crisis on two fronts. First, on the Western Front it puts into your hands a response to the cultural normalization of death on demand, as in physician-assisted suicide, abortion on demand, and so on. Second, on the Easter (!) Front it diagnosis and prescribes for the pastoral care crisis in Christ's churches, where we have been failing for centuries to deploy the genuine and exclusively biblical focus on suffering, which I have identified as our failure to teach, preach, and practice biblical lament.

One foot in the Word of our God and Savior, made perfect by suffering, one foot in the world of suffering souls. And, note well: Although it is common to speak abstractly of “the two kingdoms,” meaning the kingdom of God on the one hand and the kingdom of this world on the other, in reality there is one human race ruled by one King.

As [King David] testified somewhere:

What is man that you think of him or the son of man that you care for him?
 You made him lower than the angels for a little while.
 You crowned him with glory and honor.
 You put all things under his control (Psalm 8:4-5).

For when he *put all things under his control*, he left nothing outside of his control. At present we do not yet see *all things under his control*, but **we see Jesus, who was made lower than the angels for a little while, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by God’s grace he would experience death on behalf of everyone.**

For it was fitting for him, for whom and through whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through sufferings...

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, he likewise shared in their humanity, so that through death he could destroy the one who holds the power of death (that is, the devil), and set free those who were held in slavery all their lives by their fear of death... Therefore, he had to be made like his brothers and sisters in every respect, so that he could become a merciful and faithful high priest in things relating to God, to make atonement for the sins of the people. For **since he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted** (Hebrews 2:6-18, NET).

To be clear as crystal, I have fashioned these briefings by weaving together the warp and woof of *philosophical mindfulness* (the pastor’s foot in the world) with *pastoral care* (the pastor’s foot in the Word), for bringing suffering people to Christ Himself, by means of His own words in the biblical text and the biblically instituted sacraments. Both clear-headed philosophy and the care provided by pastors who care for people with God’s Word and sacraments – both of these threads are required to address this existential crisis in the real lives of real people.

The threat to human existence posed by death on demand (DOD) is taking us “Farther from GOD and nearer the Dust,” as T.S. Eliot writes in *Choruses from “The Rock.”* The Lord Jesus, our GOD, our Rock and salvation, is the only one who can make us surefooted in this modern battlefield environment.

For the choir director; according to Jeduthun. A Psalm of David.

My soul *waits* in silence for God only;

From Him is my salvation.

He only is my rock and my salvation,

My stronghold; I shall not be greatly shaken.

How long will you assail a man,

That you may murder *him*, all of you,

Like a leaning wall, like a tottering fence?

They have counseled only to thrust him down from his high position;

They delight in falsehood;

They bless with their mouth,

But inwardly they curse.

Selah.

My soul, wait in silence for God only,

For my hope is from Him.

He only is my rock and my salvation,

My stronghold; I shall not be shaken (Psalm 62:1-6, NASB).

In the final analysis, the treatment for suffering is not cultural or medical. *It is pastoral.*

God did not dwell among us as a culture; He became incarnate as a human being, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Medical professionals address pain; but human suffering is beyond medical science and technology. **Suffering is the province of the Crucified One, who is also the Risen One (pray Psalm 22 in its entirety).** Bringing Christ to suffering persons is the mission under the purview of pastoral care. In a word, the treatment for suffering is *solus Christos*, Christ Himself, in His own words. Moving further from GOD and nearer the Dust is not an option.

“Do not let your hearts be distressed. You believe in God; believe also in me. There are many dwelling places in my Father’s house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too. And you know the way where I am going.”

Thomas said, “Lord, we don’t know where you are going. How can we know the way?” Jesus replied, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through me. If you have known me, you will know my Father too. And from now on you do know him and have seen him” (John 14:1-6, NET).

A Word about this Briefing Format

In a military field manual or mission briefings, we expect straightforward presentations and step-by-step plans. I have organized these four Briefings accordingly. At the same time, because these are actually written-out briefings for pastoral care and Christian mission, the straightforward message and step-by-step means for carrying out the mission are obviously the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, which are intrinsically authoritative (making them ethically *normative*) and practical. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful ...” (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Do not merely plan to scan these verbally inspired and inerrant how-to texts; be certain to read, mark and inwardly digest them.

The ways and means, the thinking and doing of pastoral care lies in the lived experience of Christ who speaks to us all *sola Scriptura*, exclusively in His Word. Flannery O’Connor’s authorial directions for the indispensability of reading the text applies to the Bible.

When you can state the theme of a story, when you can separate it from the story itself, then you can be sure the story is not a very good one. The meaning of a story has to be embodied in it, has to be made concrete in it. A story is a way to say something that can’t be said any other way, and it takes every word in the story to say what the meaning is. You tell a story because a statement would be inadequate. When anybody asks what a story is about, the only proper thing is to tell him to read the story. The meaning of fiction is not abstract meaning but experienced meaning, and the purpose of making statements about the meaning of a story is only to help you experience that meaning more fully (“Writing Short Stories” in *Mystery and Manners*).

I have taken the liberty of adding underlining and highlighting in order to make my text more accessible in the first place and, perhaps, more useful for the long haul in the field. The first three Briefings are intended primarily for pastors, although I have written with a mind

toward professors and motivated people of the faith who will be looking over our shoulders in these mission briefings for pastoral care. In the conclusion of Briefing #4 I apply the lessons of *The Fellowship of His Sufferings* to pastoral and church work more broadly, with the conviction that the pastoral care of souls, but if and only if it is formed by biblical lament, provides the remedy to the institutional malaise in Lutheran higher education, to the banality of too, too much preaching these days, and to the mission creep of the confessional corner of the confessional Lutheran churches in the West.

The fourth Briefing is meant for a wider audience of Christian caregivers, leaders of Lutheran institutions, and my fellow Lutheran professors in higher education. Warm greetings to the brethren in world missions, Bible translation, and church administration positions – all of you in my PhD courses today and over the years.

Good to go? Suit up and grab your gear! **Everything depends upon that “one foot in the Word,” that load-bearing boot on the ground that rests on biblical lament!**

Rev Gregory P Schulz, DMin, PhD

Professor of Philosophy, Concordia University Wisconsin
Lt Colonel, USAF / CAP (ret.)

The week of Veterans Day 2020, in the season of the Endtimes



MISSION BRIEFING #1 OF 4

The Fellowship of His Sufferings and the Insurgency of Death on Demand

The objective for this mission briefing is to identify and to analyze the insurgency of death on demand (DOD).

In order to achieve this objective, I shall provide you with a guided reconnaissance of the current moral environment ...

- ✓ Culturally, in terms of ethical and institutional upheaval since 1970
- ✓ Professionally, with one practicing doctor, “patient zero,” exhibiting **autonomy** in medical practice
- ✓ Philosophically, with Nietzsche, “philosopher zero” for the ethics behind **autonomy** as deployed in biomedical ethics

The lynchpin issue for today’s intel and analysis is **ethical normativity**, aka will.

- è This recon and intel analysis is for the purpose of acquiring and promoting the pastoral care stance of the apostle Paul, “... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10, NASB)



As you were! It is the worst of times. In a just two generations or so (that is, since the 1970s), we in the West have experienced first the normalization of the killing of embryonic human beings before their births, and then the normalization of a globalized medical practice in which physicians recommend, prescribe and deliver fatal medicines for their patients who suffer and those who anticipate suffering. **All of a sudden, we live in a world of death on demand (DOD).**

Recon of the Moral Terrain in the West

This normalization of death on demand is regularly promoted as scientific progress, the exercise of a blindly optimistic faith in an undefined future salvation of some sort or other by science. But what kind of savior is biomedical science revealing itself to be? The social engineering of ourselves and our institutions, according to many outspoken physicians, scientists, and professors, will increase the happiness of a growing number of people in the

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future. Yet, we sense at this point in modern history that what science is actually delivering is little more than “Endless invention, endless experiment,” as the twentieth-century poet of Western culture, T.S. Eliot, described the social and biomedical practices of his century.

Instead of salvation by science, we sense damnation. We see not merely a competing worldview, but a full-scale insurgency. As I said, it is the worst of times for human beings – the worst of times for us vulnerable, suffering human beings. It is the worst of times for carrying out our ethical duty of care toward vulnerable, suffering human beings.

The American Scriptures

First things first. The founding text of the United States announces the universally self-evident truth “that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” This text of the American Scriptures is under attack from enemies, both foreign and domestic. My analysis is that this attack is succeeding at present because of the cultural and professional denial of its first, self-evident premise: All human beings are endowed with human rights that cannot be either given or denied. This premise is self-evident because all human beings – regardless of age, ability, disability, sickness or health or any other term of discrimination – all possess the *natural* right to life (a right based on human nature), *having been endowed* with this right (among others) by God the Father Almighty, Creator of heaven and earth. This is a first principle, a “self-evident truth,” according to the text.

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The Biblical Scriptures

Founding principles next. What is the source, the *authority*, for the right to Life for all human beings? According to the text, all human beings “are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.” In other words, our inalienable rights as human beings depend upon the God of the Bible and the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures. The written text itself is decisive on this matter, apart from the imagined intent of Jefferson or anyone else.

Here is the point of the text and meaning of the Declaration: The right to life – self-evident, universal, unalienable – the Right to Life is *extra nos*, as Martin Luther said of the Word of God. Thus, it is “outside or beyond us.” We have the Right to Life completely apart from whether or not a government or interest group or individual grants it to us. We have the Right to Life apart from whatever “We the People” may agree or not agree with. It may be a discovery of democratic society, but it is not the product of any society or politics. It is not a matter of personal privilege. The Right to Life is a given – something unalterably given all of us without qualification by God Himself.

In addition, note well that the Declaration does not allow for any judgment of an ideal “quality of life” to nullify the universal right to life. Instead, it declares that the right to life is *unalienable*. That is, this right ought never to be denied to any human being, regardless of age, disability, or social standing.

Scriptural / Textual Authority

In a time of death on demand, it is the *authority* behind the Right to Life that is mission-
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critical. This was true during the Nazi horror, supported as it was by medical ethics based not on God but on Weimar science and Nazi postmodernism. It is true today in the biomedical ethics that are used in the practice and promotion of death on demand. In the American Scriptures, the founding texts, we see in some detail that Christ the Life is the divine authority behind the human right to life. Thus, the harm that human beings do to other human beings is the result of denying God's authority. God "their Creator" is the expressed authority behind the right to life elucidated in this foundational text of the United States. In philosophical terms, then, God is the *norm*, the ultimate or grounding standard.

In twenty-some years of teaching US Air Force core values, I regularly urged officers and NCOs to think of core values as "corps values," so that they would not fall into the mistake of thinking that their conduct in uniform and in life is depends on their own personal choices and values, but rather on the values of the *corps* as a whole – something bigger than anyone's individual values.

For this briefing, it is imperative that you have in heart and mind Christ *the* Life as the corps value, the ethical core value of the body or *corpus* of Christ Himself. That is, the meaning and worth of human life is beyond the purview of recent bioethics, as it is above and beyond even the best ethics discovered in the course of human thought. This is non-negotiable for pastoral care. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer puts it, "My life is outside myself, beyond my disposal. ... "I am the Life" – this is the word, the revelation, the proclamation of Jesus Christ. The statement that our life is outside ourselves and in Jesus Christ is in no way the result of our own self-understanding. Instead, it is a claim that

encounters us from outside, which we either believe or contradict" (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics, The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided only that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

Part One, 213).

Bonhoeffer's core value is precisely the foundation of the unalienable human right to life of the Declaration of Dependence, with the elaboration that the Creator of the Declaration is present in the incarnate Christ. Write this down! Commit John 14:6, with its exclusionary articles and its Greek term for *The Life*.

I shall briefly unpack this corps-value of Christ the Life as a reconnaissance

(1) of the current state of Western culture,

(2) of the medical practice of physician-assisted suicide, and

(3) of radicalized autonomy, the ethical principle of the

insurgency that supports and promotes death on demand. In all its forms,

including physician-assisted suicide, abortion, and euthanasia, death on demand is

a malicious contradiction of Christ the Life.

Endless Experimentation

How has this “endless [human] experimentation” (Eliot) in the last century, of which the poet writes, resulted in our century of death on demand? **Death on demand has come about as the result of the cultural insurgency against Christ the Life in modernity** (that is, since Renee Descartes' belief in salvation by science in the early 1600s). This is a catastrophic rejection that has led to today's world in which medical people, researchers, teachers, and professional people in our daily lives prescribe death as the practice and purpose of the science of medicine. The cultural decline of the last century has accelerated into our century. “The statement that our life is outside ourselves and in Jesus Christ ... is a claim that encounters us from outside, which we *The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided only that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

either believe or contradict.” Modernity is, in terms of ethics, best understood as the ongoing contradiction of Christ the Life: the ongoing contradiction of Christ and, predictably, the increasing contradiction of human life in word and deed.

In retrospect, modernity has been a slippery slope toward more and more death for Western culture. A brief recon of Western culture since the break with Greek and Medieval ethics in the 1600s shows that this slippery slope has been a maneuver away from God and the Bible, resulting in more and more death and moral disregard for human life and human rights. In reality, this slide constitutes what we in the Upper Midwest know by experience as “black ice,” a dangerous winter environment without traction. This black ice condition in Western culture has been brought about by the pre-censoring of God and the Bible from the ethics of modernity.

THE CENTURIES OF DEATH IN WESTERN CULTURE

The 18th century = The Century of the Death of the Bible¹

The 19th century = The Century of the Death of God²

The 20th century = The Century of the Death of Humanity^{3,4}

¹ For example, see Thomas Jefferson's heavily redacted version of the Four Gospels of the New Testament Scriptures in *The Jefferson Bible: The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth Extracted Textually from the Gospels in Greek, Latin, French and English* (The Smithsonian Institution, 2011). My facsimile copy features four columns on every two-page spread (Greek, Latin, French, English), but amounts to only 82 pages since Jefferson deleted so many chapters from "his" Bible. "By removing all references to superstition (sic) and the supernatural, Jefferson made clear his admiration of Jesus as a great moral teacher and moral philosopher, while, at the same time, reaffirming his belief in and commitment to the power of reason as the basis for understanding life and the natural world," 7.

² For example, see Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Madman* (*The Gay Science* [German, *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft* or *The Joyful Science*], 125), which I discuss later in our chapter.

³ Estimated Totals for the Entire 20th Century. "Lives deliberately extinguished by politically motivated carnage": 167,000,000 to 175,000,000 (Including: War Dead: 87,500,000; Military war dead: 33,500,000; Civilian war dead: 54,000,000; Not-war Dead: 80,000,000; Communist oppression: 60,000,000). See Quora at <https://www.quora.com/How-many-people-died-in-all-the-wars-in-the-20th-century>. Accessed 20 August 2019.

⁴ Adapted from John Warwick Montgomery, *The Law Above the Law* (Irvine, California: NRP Books, an Imprint of 1517. The Legacy Project, 2015), 54-57.

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The 21st century = The Century of Death on Demand: death on demand for human embryos, death on demand for those who are suffering, death on demand for those who anticipate suffering, death on demand for people whom others think would be better off dead.

Targeting Cultural and Moral Decline as Insurrection against Christ The Life

The modern rejection of Christ is manifest as an intellectual and human failure of epic proportions. This irrational rejection of our God and Savior embroils every aspect of our human form of life. The consequences of **this insurrection against Christ the Life** (as He reveals Himself in John 14:6) irrupts especially in late modern ethics (moral philosophy since the 1800s), the most recent portion of the ongoing conversation about how we should treat one another as human beings. The root of this insurrection is painfully obvious to anyone who has eyes to see and ears to hear (see Psalm 2, for example). So, the rejection of Christ the Life is a failure of *ethic* proportions.

Modernity, the social experiment of the European Enlightenment, and the widely successful secularization of Western civilization, amount to an epic philosophical failure, a retreat from reality as it is. This retreat from reality – the propaganda of an ahistorical narrative – is behind our cultural obsession with killing one another to get rid of suffering “for the greater good” in an imaginary future (see Utilitarianism, a topic of Briefing #3.)

Against this modern insurrection, as the Lutheran ethicist Gilbert Meilaender has been telling us for a generation now, **“Our task is not to judge the worth of this person’s life relative to other possible or actual lives. Our task is to care for the life he has as best we can.”**⁵ The

⁵ Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, 3rd Edition (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmann’s Publishing, 2013), *Who Decides?*
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slippery slide away from Christ the Life is so far gone that Meilaender's pastoral and ethical imperative strikes many of my incoming students as counter-cultural.

The slippery slope, or black ice conditioning of **modernity has taken us to a common worldview that is blind to the source and wellspring of human life. That is to say, Western culture has turned away from Christ the Life and become curved in on itself.** "The *core* turned in on itself" is Martin Luther's famous description of sin. This being-curved-in-on-itself of the West is what has yielded the "strange fruit" of death on demand – protected and nourished by a Christ-less biomedical ethics modelled after the biomedical ethics of the Nazis.

Think about the biomedical ethics of the Nazis. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a twentieth century Lutheran martyr, put it in the midst of the Nazi horror, "Jesus Christ said of Himself, "I am the Life... and this claim, and the reality that it contains cannot be disregarded by any Christian thinking, or indeed by any philosophical thinking at all" (*Ethics*, 214). **The ethos of death on demand is not only a repudiation of The Declaration of Independence, it is the ongoing contradiction of Christ the Life.** It is a bald-faced pretense of stubborn ignorance, because those who promote and practice death on demand exhibit very little understanding of human life, as is manifest in their case for suicide in the face of real or imagined suffering. (*Suffering* is the topic of Briefing #2. The reality of *human life* understood as persons is the topic of Briefing #3.)

As can be seen in tracking our cultural death spiral, Christ cannot be repudiated and contradicted with impunity. The loss of Christ the Life leads to loss of lives when suffering people are propagandized into exercising (of all things!) a right to die, when what they possess is the inalienable right to life with which they have been endowed by God.

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Think of it. It has been only three or four generations since the Holocaust, with its brave new biomedical ethics of “endless invention, endless experiment” on human beings, allegedly for the purpose of producing a better, happier *Reich* culture. What have we witnessed in Western moral policy-making and healthcare since? An elitist, emergent professional and academic movement commonly described as bioethics.⁶ (By *bioethics* I mean mainstream bioethics, bioethics as it is for the most part.) As the latest outshoot of its various projects to save humanity by means of scientific progress, we now witness the socialization of death on demand as the Final Solution to human suffering. It is *déjà vu*.

We have seen moral philosophy and ethics repackaged as *biomedical ethics* that is eerily familiar. Doctors and others in our day and time are treating the lives of suffering and disabled human beings as “life unworthy of life” (Karl Binding and Alfred Hoche, 1920, “On Permitting (or Authorizing) the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life, *Lebensunwerten-lebens*”). This emerging biomedical ethics contradicts Christ the Life. It contradicts the Creator of all human beings. It contradicts the Declaration’s declaration of our universal inalienable right to life.

As we contemplate a response to the insurgency against Western culture and against Christ the Life at the foundation of human rights, we should now strategize and then act in terms of counterinsurgency “in the cold,” as David Galula wrote in the Vietnam War era (I have the 2005 edition). However, I will be characterizing our thinking and speaking in the more familiar terminology of Christ’s church militant, and in terms of the means of grace by which Christ’s church fulfils its role toward and within human society.

⁶ I recommend that we resist referring to bioethics as a discipline, for the reasons that Diane Irving outlines in her 2002 analysis, *What Is Bioethics*, available at <http://www.catholicculture.org/culture/library/view.cfm?recnum=3320>, accessed January 2017. *The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided only that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

A Tale of *Two* Cities

It is the worst of times, but it is also a tale of *two* cities. Drawing from our Western heritage, we can identify one city as **The City of Man** and the other as **The City of God**. This analysis is from the Christian philosopher Augustine, writing in Book 19 of *The City of God* in response to the fall of the Rome in the fifth century A.D. I will be speaking about these two cities in Mission Briefing #4, “Christ the Life and Unit Integrity on the Urban Battlefield.” Think the City of God as Christ’s church militant in the world and the City of Man as the world in its insurgency against God and His expressed will.

Under times of enormous ethical (what I referred to in our Orientation as the almost geological ethical upheavals of modernity) stress, the church militant especially needs to preach and teach Christ the Life. This is how Dietrich Bonhoeffer responded during the first earthshaking rubles of worldwide death on demand. It was during the time of Nazi Germany that Bonhoeffer asserted “Jesus Christ said of Himself, ‘I am the Life’ (John 14:6 and 11:25), and this claim, and the reality that it contains cannot be disregarded by any Christian thinking, or indeed by any philosophical thinking at all.” After all, he was witnessing the consequences of a government that rejected the will of God (which characterizes the City of God) while imposing its own will on people (which characterizes the City of Man). This included its will for the elimination of entire religious ethnicities and various demographics of disabled or “impure and degenerate” human persons who did not suit its ideal of lives worth preserving. No Christ, no universal, objective, Creator-endowed human rights.

Before, but also in, with, and undergirding the inherent value and natural rights of *all* human beings, there is the Christ the Life. This Christ is God Himself, “the Word become flesh who *The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided only that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

tabernacled for a while among us” (John 1:14). **Because God took our human flesh and blood on Himself, every human being is endowed with infinite worth. Christ, who identifies Himself to us as “The Way, the Truth, and the Zoë” (John 14:6) is the Word of Life for our century of death on demand.**

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God. The Word was with God in the beginning. All things were created by him, and apart from him not one thing was created that has been created.

In him was life, and the life was the light of mankind. And the light shines on in the darkness, but the darkness has not mastered it...

He was in the world, and the world was created by him, but the world did not recognize him (*The City of Man*, GPS). He came to what was his own, but his own people did not receive him. But to all who have received him – those who believe in his name – he has given the right to become God’s children – children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God (*The City of God*).

Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory – the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father (John 1:1-14, NET).

So, targeting such biomedical ethics as we see in BEDOD, Bonhoeffer’s analysis is mission-critical: “My life is outside myself, beyond my disposal. ... ‘I am the Life’ – this is the word, the revelation, the proclamation of Jesus Christ. The statement that our life is outside ourselves and in Jesus Christ is in no way the result of our own self- understanding. Instead, it is a claim that encounters us from outside, which we either believe or contradict” (*Ethics*, Part One, 213).

Here, in brief, is what we human beings have as an unalienable possession, on the basis of the incarnation of God Himself in the person of Christ the Life. Take it along as a brief catechesis, if you will.

Q. Where is the Life we have lost in living? (T.S. Eliot)
A. “I Am the Life, the Zoë” (Jesus the Messiah in John 14:6)

“In Him [that is, in Jesus, even before His incarnation] was life (Greek, *zoë*), and the Life has become the light of all humankind” (John 1:4).

1. As the eternal Son of God and the Logos, Christ is the origin and source of life in Himself (1:4).
2. Believers in Christ already have life by faith in Him (3:25).
3. By depicting the Life as a present reality, John does not spiritualize life but returns it to its origin in Him (Colossians 1). Christ’s coming into our human flesh is the decisive event in world history and in the life of each human being.
4. Life thus stands under the command of love, for abiding in him is abiding in love (15:1ff., 9ff.). Our love is grounded in God’s love (13:34; 1 John 4:7ff.).
5. Love of the brethren shows that we have passed from death to life (1 Jn. 3:14–15).
6. Inwardly, life means an assurance or confidence that drives out fear (1 Jn. 4:18) and - a joy of asking (Jn. 16:20ff.) that overcomes sorrow.

These are part of the abundance (Jn. 10:10) that comes with the life that is knowledge of God in Christ.

About this reconciling Zoë: If this view seems to resemble the earlier Greek philosophers’ concept, it does so only in a complete recreating and restructuring (just as the New Testament restructures the concepts of truth and knowledge). For *zoë* points *away* from speculation and mysticism *to* the historical revelation of God in Christ.

The “**I Am**” (*egō eimi*) declarations of Jesus are decisive and normative for all human beings. If the *zōē* of creation is light, it is what it is even though the autonomous world resists it (Jn. 1:4–5). The question of *zōē* is an urgent one even in darkness, for all things owe their being to Christ the Logos. People may imagine they have found life elsewhere (5:39–40), but revelation leads from pseudo life to genuine life, “life to the full.” In relation to Christ the Life, common necessities and metaphors of life (water and bread) are adopted, and the fact that in themselves these do not satisfy the quest for authentic life turns them into a question that the incarnate Logos answers. This is because He the One in whom alone real, *zoë*-life is found.

Adapted from Kittel, G., Friedrich, G., & Bromiley, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: W.B. Eerdmans, 1985) 295-296.

So, in Christ, we have an abundance of *life*. Apart from Christ the Life, what we have is an ethos of death on demand, promoted and delivered by professional medical doctors such as Physician Zero, to whom we now turn for intel on the ground – on the ground with the medical profession and its insurgency against Christ the Life.

Intel on Physician Zero

Physician Zero

As far as I can tell, the term *patient zero* comes to us from popular media, which in turn learned it from the medical reporting about a relatively early HIV patient in the 1970s. The patient had been identified in scientific literature as the *index patient*, or the initial point of infection, for AIDS in the United States, although it became clear later that he was only one of many and not the sole originator of that epidemic. I am adapting the term in order to refer to one particular doctor in connection with the epidemic of physician-assisted suicide, although he is only one among many. “Physician-assisted suicide” (PAS) is an instance of Orwellian Newspeak (known as *Aesopian* language or *weasel wording* in military intelligence). In practice, PAS is actually “physician-enabled” or even “physician-imposed” euthanasia. What we will do is **keep a weather eye out for the ethical underpinnings for this practice of death on demand** in the following case of Physician Zero. In this way, we shall identify and target the Achilles’ heel of DOD. As I will explain, the biomedical ethics of death on demand is not reasonable; on the contrary, it is arbitrary and willful. In a word, biomedical ethics is not an ethics at all, but a pseudo-ethical justification for doing to the rest of us whatever doctors want to for their own purposes.

In order to do this, we will look to the Netherlands for a particular doctor’s rationale for promoting the deaths of his patients. Think of the Netherlands as a canary in the coalmine of the

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globalizing epidemic of death on demand. [See Christopher de Bellaigue’s article, Death on demand: has euthanasia gone too far? at <https://www.theguardian.com/news/2019/jan/18/death-on-demand-has-euthanasia-gone-too-far-netherlands-assisted-dying>.]

To understand the revolutionary nature of this doctor’s rationale for killing his patients, there is the following historical note. Prior to the advent of contemporary biomedical ethics leading up to WWII, physicians in the West followed the Hippocratic Oath; however, beginning with Nazi biomedical ethics (manifested in their human experimentation following from Weimar science) the Oath has been increasingly reputed.

Initially, Hippocrates’ oath was a clear example of Greek thinking, reminiscent of Socrates’ first principle, “Do no harm” (Hippocrates and Socrates were contemporaries). Eventually, with the development of Western culture as Greek forms of thinking combined with deep reflection on the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, the oath clearly came to reflect biblical morality. Thus, any physician who practices PAS (Physician Zero is one example) is part of Western culture’s Black Ice maneuver away from Christ the Life.

HIPPOCRATIC OATH: CLASSICAL VERSION

I swear by Apollo Physician and Asclepius and Hygieia and Panacea and all the gods and goddesses, making them my witnesses, that I will fulfill according to my ability and judgment **this oath and this covenant:**

To hold him who has taught me this art as equal to my parents and to live my life in partnership with him, and if he is in need of money to give him a share of mine, and to regard his offspring as equal to my brothers in male lineage and to teach them this art—if they desire to learn it—without fee and covenant; to give a share of precepts and oral instruction and all the other learning to my sons and to the sons of him who has instructed me and to pupils who have signed the covenant and have taken an oath according to the medical law, but no one else.

I will apply dietetic measures for the benefit of the sick according to my ability and judgment; **I will keep them from harm and injustice.**

I will neither give a deadly drug to anybody who asked for it, nor will I suggest to this effect. Similarly, I will not give to a woman an abortive remedy. In purity and holiness, I will guard my life and my art.

I will not use the knife, not even on sufferers from stone, but will withdraw in favor of such men as are engaged in this work.

Whatever houses I may visit, I will come for the benefit of the sick, remaining free of all intentional injustice, of all mischief and in particular of sexual relations with both female and male persons, be they free or slaves.

What I may see or hear in the course of the treatment or even outside of the treatment in regard to the life of men, which on no account one must spread abroad, I will keep to myself, holding such things shameful to be spoken about.

If I fulfill this oath and do not violate it, may it be granted to me to enjoy life and art, being honored with fame among all men for all time to come; if I transgress it and swear falsely, may the opposite of all this be my lot.

—Translation from the Greek by Ludwig Edelstein. From *The Hippocratic Oath: Text, Translation, and Interpretation*, by Ludwig Edelstein. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1943. See “The Oath: Meaningless Relic or Invaluable Moral Guide?” by Peter Tyson at NOVA Online, accessed 7 January 2013 at <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/nova/body/hippocratic-oath-today.html>.

The Hippocratic Oath is the traditional Western code of conduct for physicians, against which Physician Zero is in revolt. In his own words, he terminates his patients because of the way he himself feels about his own anticipated suffering. “It was something very selfish. If ever I was in his situation [that is, extremely fatigued and depressed, although not necessarily in pain], asking for death, I would want people to listen to me, and not say, “It cannot be done because of the law or the Bible.” Note well his insurgency against Western culture and against Christ and the Bible. This leads to a logical question. What is his core value, if any?

Targeting the ethics of autonomy with the Word of Christ the Life

Physician Zero (who also holds a PhD in philosophy) is justifying euthanasia and *The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

death on demand on the basis of the core value or principle of *radicalized autonomy*, as introduced by Kant in the late 18th century, but radicalized by Nietzsche, heading into the 20th this way: “The individual is something quite new which creates new things, something absolute; all his acts are entirely his own. Ultimately, the individual derives the values of his acts from himself ...” (*The Will to Power*, 767).

THE MODERN ETHICAL MINDSET OF RADICALIZED AUTONOMY

1. Begin with Luther’s 1520 *Freedom of the Christian*, which announces the believer’s simultaneous (a) *freedom from* slavery to his own fallen will, and (b) *freedom to* live according to the will of God to serve and love his neighbor. This two-part freedom is sometimes called *autonomy*.
 2. Take note of Machiavelli’s 1531 *Discourses*, in which he advocates two political powers of autonomy (utterly apart from God’s will in Christ): (a) freedom from dependence on anyone, and (b) the power to self-legislate.
 3. Kant identified all accounts of morality and autonomy, such as (1-2), as *heteronomous principles* while seeking to develop a moral philosophy based exclusively on an *autonomous principle* of self-legislation (see his 1785 *Groundwork of the Metaphysics of Morals*). Note: *Heteronomous* means that someone else’s will provides everyone with authoritative ethical laws, whereas *autonomy* means that each human being is his own lawgiver, presumably based on human reason.
 4. Nietzsche, critical of Kant’s categorical imperative (one form of which is, “Always act in such a way that the reason for your action can be expressed as a universal law”), radicalized autonomy by repudiating any notion of an authoritative universal-law requirement whatsoever. Instead he maintained, “The individual is something quite new which creates new things, something absolute; all his acts are entirely his own. Ultimately, the individual derives the values of his acts from himself ...” (*The Will to Power*, 767).
 5. In terms of the history of the concept, then, whereas Luther proclaimed the freedom of the Christian to follow God’s will, leading to the believer’s joyful obligation to love his neighbor as himself. However, Machiavelli politicized individual autonomous freedom, Kant located autonomous freedom entirely within the will of human nature as is, and finally Nietzsche utterly privatized autonomy for each willful individual.
 6. The biomedical ethics of physician-assisted suicide (PAS) depends exclusively on the autonomy of the individual – a freedom “from the law and the Bible,” according to Physician Zero – a concept of autonomy radicalized by Machiavelli, Kant, and especially Nietzsche.
- Points (1-3) adapted and elaborated from Howard Caygill, *A Kant Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1999), Autonomy.

This ethical axiom of radicalized *autonomy* means that the individual considers

himself to be the absolute norm for whatever he chooses to do or not to do. A

professional person living by radicalized autonomy (the premier ethical principle of

mainstream bioethics) sees himself as a law unto himself. In principle and in practice, he will not allow anyone else to tell him what to do or what not to do in matters of life and death. As you can see, this means that his core value is in fact his own will, *über alles*. In principle as in his practice, there is no room for rational discussion or for repentance.

Physician Zero is rejecting heteronomy, any sort of “law from another,” be that civil law from the government or Torah from God. Living autonomously (literally, being a law unto oneself) is the polar opposite of living *altruistically* (literally, caring for others more than oneself). First responders and military people who are willing to lay down their lives for others act are living altruistically. By contrast, doctors such as Physician Zero are willing to lay down the lives of others for their own “very selfish” purpose of seeing to it that no one will be able to tell them in the future what to do are living autonomously.

As an autonomous or self-legislating individual, this Dutch doctor accepts no opposition to the exercise of his own will – not now and not in the future: “I would want people to listen to me, and not say, ‘It cannot be done because of the law or the Bible.’” In his own words, he will accept no interference from the rule of law or from the Word of God, the Bible. **Autonomy functions, in medical practice, as a license to kill at will**, a biomedical double-O, James Bond exemption from the laws of God and men against killing others.

What, exactly, grounds the ethical license to kill for Physician Zero and the partisans of DOD? It is his authorization to kill, in contradiction to the Bible and the traditional ethical laws and professional oaths of Western culture is radicalized autonomy.

However, there is a widespread feature of Western culture in the twenty-first century that makes us vulnerable to the insurgencies of doctors such as Physician Zero and thus to the normalizing of death on demand. It is the presupposition of the so-called “death of God.” For

further intel on the concept of radicalized autonomy in medical practice and in public policy, the thoughtful pastor needs to be familiar with Fredrich Nietzsche's concepts of the death of God (DOG) and of the *Übermenschen* (Transhumans). In this arena, I shall offer actionable intelligence on Nietzsche (as *Philosopher Zero*) and his training methods, as adopted by those who teach and practice dead on demand as biomedical ethics.

Intel on Philosopher Zero

In order to present itself as an ethics, twenty-first century biomedical ethics depends upon (1) a presupposition regarding Christ and the Bible, and (2) camouflaging its foundational myth as scientific fact. This widely propagandized, but rarely analyzed, myth is Friedrich Nietzsche's 1882 story of The Madman.

Why do doctors in our day care for their patients by giving them fatal prescriptions upon request? Why do professors in our universities teach our sons and daughters to plan for their own suicides and thus encourage others to suicide in the face of suffering? What accounts for judges, legislators, and activists who are intent upon legalizing death on demand for unborn and newborn human embryos, death on demand for human beings who are suffering or who are afraid of facing suffering in the future? The answer is found in Nietzsche's signature myth of the Death of God, taken together with his prescription of the *Übermenschen* to take His place. The Death of God (DOG) is the presupposition of biomedical ethics from the Nazis until today. The acceptance of various *Übermenschen* among us (willful and powerful leaders in art and literature, science and politics) are the presumptive replacements for Christ after the Death of God.

NIETZSCHE'S THE MADMAN

[The setting is early morning in a village marketplace. Think of a shopping mall with clerestory windows just beneath its roof, full of people on a Saturday morning. There is bright sunlight, but someone has brought along his own high-powered flashlight, so to speak, and seems to be looking urgently for something or someone...]

Have you not heard of that madman who lit a lantern in the bright morning hours, ran to the town square, and shouted resolutely, "I'm looking for God! I'm looking for God!"

Because most of the other folks standing around were casual atheists, there was a lot of laughing. "Why, did he get lost?" "Lost child?" "Hide and seek?" "Did we scare him off?" "On vacation – emigrated, perhaps?" Oh, they yelled and they laughed.

Then the madman transfixed them with his laser like stares. "Where did He go? Alright, let me tell you! *We have killed him* – you and I. All of us are God's murderers. 'How have we done this,' you are beginning to wonder? How were we able to make the sea evaporate? Who came up with the means to obliterate the horizon of our planet? How did we manage to untether the earth from its sun? Where is it careening off to right now? Where are we headed? To a reality with no suns at all?

"Look! We are in perpetual freefall – backward, sideward, forward – a non-directional freefall! Absolutely no point of orientation! Do you seriously imagine that there is any up or down anymore? Still don't get it? We are adrift aimlessly through an infinite n o t h i n g. You do feel it, don't you – a frozen breath of empty space, the absolute coldness of maximum entropy? It is black, starless night. It is *night* with nothing but more lightless night to follow. We are at the point that lanterns have to be lit in the morning hours too.

"Listen! Don't you hear the rumblings and shovelings of the gravediggers who are burying God? Don't you smell the stench of God's decomposition? Gods too decompose. ***God is dead. God remains dead. Moreover, we have killed him.***

"Think it through! How shall we, the murderers of all murderers, comfort ourselves? What was holiest and most powerful of all that the world could ever know has bled to death under our knives. Who will wipe this blood off us? What baptism is there for us to wash ourselves clean? What holidays of atonement, what sacred games shall we have to invent? Are not the consequences of the deed too, too overwhelming for us? Must we not become gods ourselves simply to live up to it?"

At this point, the madman fell silent and glared at his listeners. They too fell silent and stared at him in slack-jawed astonishment. After a while, he slammed his lantern on the ground, and it broke, its light overcome by the darkness.

"I am a man before my time," he prophesied. "My time has not come, quite yet ..."

It is well known that, on that same day the madman ran into one church after another, singing his *Rest in Peace: Lamentation for the Eternal God*. When taken into custody and asked to explain himself, he was widely reported to have said again and again, "What are these churches, really? They're nothing but tombs and static monuments of God!" (*The Joyful Science*, Book 3, entry 125, my translation).

The acceptance of the Death of God (DOG) is the root of all kinds of ethical evil in contemporary ethics, especially in what bioethics presumes to tell us what to do regarding "beginning of life, end of life, and quality of life matters" (the description of bioethics that I

grew up with). As Nietzsche's madman says, "God is dead. God remains dead. Moreover, we

have killed him." The Madman is Nietzsche's diagnosis of Western culture, the culture that has *The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

decided (relatively recently) to contradict its God and to override its own ethical tradition.

When I say that Nietzsche is diagnosing Western culture heading into the twentieth century, I do not mean that he is thinking of culture the way a social scientist or professional anthropologist understands culture. That way of thinking is descriptive, as you can tell from the demographics, the metrics, and so on used by social scientists. On the contrary, **Nietzsche is diagnosing culture in a *normative* manner.** Instead of a social science understanding of culture, Nietzsche exhibits a philosophical or normative understanding. By a *normative* understanding of culture, I mean an understanding that does not merely catalogue and describe what certain peoples at certain times did (as in the contemporary discipline of anthropology), but an understanding that recognizes that there is a norm by which we can judge whether what people do in their concrete circumstances is good or evil.

The Normative Understanding of Culture and Ethics

Here, then, is the normative understanding of culture that I teach in my university courses on Christ and Culture, as I have adapted it from Roger Scruton's book, *Culture Counts: Faith and Feeling in a World Besieged*. First, we define *culture* as "shared moral judgments, handed down from one generation to the next." This means that there may be societies or conglomerations of people that are not cultures at all; just demographics. It follows as well that it is not, strictly speaking, styles of art or similar artefacts or dialects that make a culture a culture. What makes a culture a culture is its moral judgments as taught and handed down, cross-generationally. Western culture is a culture, according to this normative definition.

Next, Western culture is differentiated as *Western* culture by the form and content

of its moral judgments that are handed down from one generation to the next. *Western culture* is a cross-generational, two and one-half millennia culture, formed by (1) Greek ways of thinking, in conversation with (2) the content of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, the biblical text, as written.

Now, *normativity* is the *linchpin analysis* (MacEachin) for any philosophy of life and death that presents itself as an ethics. The presupposition – *presupposition* means a pivotal assumption that is so taken for granted that it is hardly ever discussed or even acknowledged – of bioethics is that God is dead. Therefore, there is no longer in the West any hope of a universal standard, since there can be no normativity. There is just individual, idiosyncratic, arbitrary autonomy. This presupposition of the death of God, Christ the Life, is very rarely allowed for debate. It is presupposed, allowing the biomedical ethics of DOD to advertise itself as if it was a matter of scientific and historical fact, rather than being a matter of cultural insurgency and a contradiction of Christ the Life.

To reiterate, *normativity* is the linchpin issue here. Let me offer an analogy between military authority and ethical normativity.

NORMATIVITY = LEGAL AUTHORITY + MORAL AUTHORITY

1. In military parlance, a superior officer has *legal authority* by virtue of his rank, but may or may not also have *moral authority*. His *legal authority* means that a subordinate must salute him and follow his legitimate orders, or face reprimand. By contrast, his *moral authority* is what inspires others to follow and obey him willingly even in the fog of war, by virtue of his proven trustworthiness and demonstrated character and wisdom.
2. Absent moral authority, an officer will be ineffective, authoritative, and is likely to become vindictive because of his total dependence on mere legal authority.
3. Now, ethics, traditionally identified as “the normative science” answering the continually recurring question, “How ought we live together as human beings?” has a similar makeup. Accordingly, ethics should exhibit both legal authority and moral authority.
4. In other words, ethics must exhibit *theoretical normativity* (being universal, objective, and intelligible, it must bring us to attention, so to speak), which is its legal or lawful aspect.
5. In addition, ethics should inspire *personal normativity* by virtue of the proven trustworthiness, character and wisdom of its source.
6. In ethics, theoretical normativity (4) convinces us intellectually.
7. In ethics, personal normativity (5) engages us, body, soul, and spirit (or, with our entire

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- consciousness: volitionally, emotionally, and cognitively).
8. In these terms, Jesus the Messiah, being fully human and fully God in His unique Person, has both legal and moral authority. That is, His Word to us all is normative in both senses: “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me...” (Matthew 28:18).
 9. This, however, is not the case with radicalized autonomy as an ethical principle. Autonomy, as radicalized by Nietzsche and practiced by Physician Zero regarding PAS, relocates normativity into the mind of assertive individuals, which is not an ethics at all according to (3-4) and (6).
 10. Thus, the bioethical principle of autonomy is not an ethics; but rather subverts ethics and replaces ethical normativity with willfulness, arbitrariness, and anarchy. In Nietzsche’s own words, autonomy sets the stage for the *Übermenschen* of the last century and our own.
 11. Per my analysis, Nietzsche’s radicalized autonomy succeeds in medical practice, and social engineering in politics and education wherever the Death of God is assumed. To paraphrase Dostoyevsky, “If there is no God, no divine Christ as theoretical and personal Norm, everything is permitted ethically.”

A normative understanding of culture (that is, the philosophical definition of Western culture as “Greek forms of thinking with biblical content”) inevitably involves belief in the reality of a universal standard. The articulation of that universal standard or criterion for judging which activities are good and which are evil is urgent and relevant, even if this universal norm, criterion, or moral standard has not yet been identified. After Christ’s death and resurrection for all people, there is no excuse for not believing in Christ the Life as the Norm (see Acts 17:22-31). This is why we ought to refer to the death of God presupposition and DOD as *insurgency* against Christ the Life.

In fact, as we can see foreshadowed in others of Nietzsche’s writings with titles such as *Beyond Good and Evil*, Nietzsche himself wants to kill off God as the ethical norm. Nietzsche wants to take our two-thousand-year-old Western discussion of ethics in an entirely different direction, with a very different view of life. He wants to replace the God of the Bible. In so many words, he aims to undercut the prayer God taught us to pray, “Thy will be done,” and replace His will with willful, determined, down-to-earth gods that he called *Übermenschen*.

NIETZSCHE'S PRESCRIPTION FOR WESTERN CULTURE AFTER THE DEATH OF GOD: ÜBERMENSCHEN

Übermensch = “the Overman, the Super-man, the Transhuman”

"I teach you the overman. Man is something that shall be overcome. What have you done to overcome him? [...] What is the ape to man? A laughingstock or a painful embarrassment. And man shall be just that for the overman: a laughingstock or a painful embarrassment... Behold, I teach you the overman. **The overman is the meaning of the earth.** Let your will say: the overman shall be the meaning of the earth! [...]

Once the sin against God was the greatest sin; but God died, and these sinners died with him. To sin against the earth is now the most dreadful thing, and to esteem the entrails of the unknowable higher than the meaning of the earth...

What is the greatest experience you can have? It is the hour of the great contempt. The hour when your happiness, too, arouses your disgust, and even your reason and your virtue.

The hour when you say, 'What matters my happiness? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment. But my happiness ought to justify existence itself.'

The hour when you say, 'What matters my reason? Does it crave knowledge as the lion his food? It is poverty and filth and wretched contentment.'

The hour when you say, 'What matters my virtue? As yet it has not made me rage. How weary I am of my good and my evil! All that is poverty and filth and wretched contentment.'

[***]

'Formerly, all the world was mad,' say the most refined, and they blink ...

One has one's little pleasure for the day and one's little pleasure for the night: but one has a regard for health.

'We have invented happiness,' say the last men, and they blink."

(Thus Spoke Zarathustra, Walter Kaufmann, translator)

This tactic of promoting transhumans as modern replacements for God is philosophical fiction, of course. It is a fiction further grounded on a mythical history reminiscent of Richard Wagner's operatic mythology. It is stubbornly, willfully ignorant of actual world history.

A Genealogy of Mainstream Bioethics

More than a century ago, late modern philosophers such as Friedrich Nietzsche established the plausibility of their own moral perspectives in the form of a *genealogy*. A genealogy is a conceptual history of morality, with the philosopher's own diagnosis as its

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hermeneutic and his own prescription for morality as its most recent chapter. It is, note well, a *mythological* and autonomous, law-unto-itself re-imagining of history.

Nietzsche re-narrated the history of morality this way: Chapter One. According to his re-configuration of things, the first chapter of ethics had written by heroic people like Homer's heroes who dominated less successful members of the herd. Nietzsche characterizes these lesser folks as the "bungled people" or the low-caste "Chandala" in his 1888 essay *The Antichrist*. Insofar as it has a constitution, the city of bioethics subscribes to *The Antichrist* and similar founding documents of the nineteenth century, over and against the great texts of the West such as Plato and Augustine.

Time marches on. Chapter Two. Nietzsche next provides his genealogical story of religious Jews and then Christians who, in their sniveling resentment, connived a way to overthrow those heroic figures of Chapter One in order to establish *their* moral superiority. These priests (the priests of Scripture) invented God, whom they claimed to be the mightiest of all heroes, and convinced everyone that God had revealed to them alone what morality was really meant to be all about. They would dispense this morality to other folks, religiously.

Chapter Three. Nietzsche diagnoses the death of God in modernity. Western culture had killed Him and thus moved beyond the biblical categories of *good* and *evil*. Enter Nietzsche with *his own* prescription for how we ought to live with one another.

The Nietzschean moral innovation is this. Now that contemporary Western culture has "disappeared" God, to all intents and purposes, it is high time to revert to Chapter One of his mythological genealogy. We lesser, bungled, Chandala types desperately need the purpose and meaning that only powerful artists, powerful writers

and powerful political leaders can bring into our otherwise meaningless lives. These powerful leaders Nietzsche called *Übermenschen* or Super-Folk. You know how well this worked out in the 20th Century.

Here is the takeaway. Nietzsche's genealogy replaces God with the pronouncements and programs of powerful individuals – *Übermenschen* such as the lobbyists and MDs, the judges, the professors, and the policymakers who impose their ideals of morality on the rest of us by legal fiat and media bombardment.

The first principle or imperative of human nature and practical reasoning had for all the previous history of the West had been “Do the good; avoid the evil!” but following Nietzsche's lead, that first principle has been replaced with the arbitrary legal rulings (not *moral* understandings garnered from prayer and study, let's notice) from a Supreme Court and other committees of *Übermenschen*. The very mention of this first principle to do the good and avoid the evil – and the great texts of the great conversation in the West, from Socrates and Hippocrates onward – have been largely pre-censored in schools and preempted from media-space.

In the domain of bioethics, this traditional first principle of Western ethics has been traded for the pottage of a stew of conflicting ethical viewpoints. This pottage is simmering away in a pungent pluralistic broth of Nietzschean autonomy – a radicalized autonomy from any and every ethical norm. In particular, autonomy from the normativity of the crucified and risen Jesus of Nazareth, who declares, “All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me” (Matthew 28:18) and who identifies Himself as The Life” (John 14:6).

At the same time, the genealogy of today's biomedical ethics is less creative than, and less reasoned than Nietzsche's philosophy. Also, it is less honest and transparent. Yet the basis

for mainstream bioethics is more Nietzschean than Nietzsche. This is because it does not bother to be philosophical or to seek thoughtful agreement; rather, it is sheer *will-to-power* (another of Nietzsche's own terms for radicalized autonomy in practice) all the way down. Willfulness exercised by powerful individuals is what Nietzsche advocated, remember. **Übermenschen do not need to be reasonable or right. They need only to be successful in imposing their will on everyone else – whatever that will is for.**

For example, the Nietzschean genealogy of bioethics, such as it is, explains the irrational but willful U.S. Supreme Court majority opinion in the 1973 case *Roe v. Wade* (as further enhanced in the 1992 case of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, and so on). Without historical precedent, without either a constitutional text or an ethical text well-reasoned and intelligibly defended in national debate (in fact, without a plaintiff or an unborn child in the balance), this case became the *de jure* axiom for the emergent, non-disciplinary industry of bioethics.

No matter that the Court's ruling, presumably a matter of the legal weighing of competing interests, has no *moral* weight or status. No matter that there's nothing ethical about the majority opinion. Its success as a powerful law is tailor-made for bioethics as thanatoethics. The beginning and the end of this abortive genealogy of bioethics is the legal *power* of *Roe v. Wade*. Neither Justice Harry Blackmun's reasoning nor subsequent analyses of the decision figure into bioethics; only the decision itself, the un-reasonable, will-to-power declaration making the terminating of human embryos legal. This *legal* decision is then imposed as a *moral axiom*. Thus, the beginning and the end of moral reasoning in biomedical ethics is beyond good and evil, beyond ethical criticism, beyond belief. Back to the presuppositions behind this willful authoritarianism. [See *When does*

human life begin? The final answer by the embryologist C. Ward Kischer at <http://www.all.org/abac/cwk004.htm>.]

Nietzsche's way of doing ethics is subversive of Western ethics and culture. It is also clearly mythological and not historical. It is the enemy of Christ the Life and His divine Word. In respect to the factual character of the Scriptures, here is the apostle Peter in his own first-century words: "We [apostles] *did not follow cleverly concocted fables* [Greek, *mythoi*]. When we made known to you the power and return of our Lord Jesus Christ; no, were eyewitnesses of his grandeur..." (2 Peter 1:16, NET, my brackets and italics added).

Near the middle of the last century, C. S. Lewis wrote three essays criticizing contemporary moral thinking and education, coming as he and the British people were out of World War II. In these essays, Lewis identifies Nietzsche as "the Innovator" of a new morality, which if adopted, would result in *The Abolition of Man* (the title of Lewis's book). It was just prior to Lewis's essay (and, of course, across the Channel, in Europe) that Bonhoeffer wrote, "Jesus Christ said of Himself, 'I am the Life' (John 14:6 and 11:25), and this claim, and the reality that it contains cannot be disregarded by any Christian thinking, or indeed by any philosophical thinking at all."

On the basis of Scripture (which is not a mythology, but apostolic eyewitness accounts of Christ's words and actions, 2 Peter 1:16ff), the Lutheran ethicist Gilbert Meilaender has been telling us for a generation now, "Our task is not to judge the worth of this person's life relative to other possible or actual lives. Our task is to care for the life he has as best we can."

On the basis of Nietzsche's philosophy of will, current mainstream bioethics has, since the 1970s, been teaching doctors such as Physician Zero to reject the Bible and the

laws of God and man for his own “very selfish” desire to be able to commit suicide rather than to suffer.

Nietzsche, although familiar with the Bible and its central message of Christ, God Himself in the flesh, who was crucified for all humanity and rose from death to guarantee “the resurrection of the body” as we confess in the creed, skates on the basis of a logical fallacy that I call *the straw-God fallacy*. The familiar *strawman fallacy* identifies the manhandling of language and logic used to make a conversation or a text turn out the way you want it to be by setting up your opponent’s stance in a way that is easy for you to knock over, like a straw scarecrow. In this case, however, it is not a human being’s position that is being set up as a scarecrow that is easy to knock down. In this instance, it is God Himself and His divine Word that are being set up as a straw target.

For example, here is how Nietzsche implements the straw-God fallacy in *The Anti-Christ*.

Here is the Christian concept of a God: God as the patron of the sick and vulnerable, God as a spinner of cobwebs, God as a spirit – ach, this is one of the most self-defeating concepts ever set up in the world... God as a degenerated contradiction of life itself... *God* becomes the basis for every slander upon the “here and now,” and for every lie about the “beyond”! In him meaninglessness is deified, and “Thy meaningless will be done” becomes a holy thing to say... (*The Anti-Christ: Curse on Christianity*, 18, my translation).

In collusion with Nietzsche, the biomedical ethics of death on demand asserts that it can manage human suffering in its own way, autonomously, as a law unto themselves. But *how? By terminating people who suffer or who anticipate suffering*. In the case of abortion on demand, by terminating human beings on demand to satisfy the will of their mothers who do not wish to suffer their little children to come unto them.

Linchpin analysis of <i>normativity</i> + the operational takeaway
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The linchpin issue for Western ethics is *normativity*. In asking the ethical question, “How should we live together as human beings?” there is always the implicit search for the standard, the norm by which to judge what is right or wrong, good or evil.

Interestingly, with its mindset of radicalized autonomy (“The individual is something quite new which creates new things, something absolute; all his acts are entirely his own. Ultimately, the individual derives the values of his acts from himself ...” from Nietzsche’s *The Will to Power*, 767) the linchpin issue for the ethics of death on demand comes clear as *will*. That is, the will of each individual, as a law unto himself. As in the case of Physician Zero.

As we will see in Briefing #3 of 4, the linchpin issue for ethics is *will* because the question of normativity can be boiled down to the question, “Whose will are we going to follow in order to live together as human beings?”

- ✓ In ethical terms, will is determined by *normativity* or what the Bible identifies as the ultimate authority to whom we human beings are beholden (see Matthew 28:18-20).
- ✓ Fundamentally, one’s will may either be directed outside oneself for this authority or ethical norm (heteronomy). Or it may be *curvatus se*, directed to oneself as the only norm or authority (autonomy).
- ✓ God Himself, who speaks in His own words in the text of the Bible, is the ultimate heteronomous Other; by contrast, each individual who considers himself to be a law unto himself is the farthest extreme from God. This is the radicalized autonomous self.
- ✓ Overwhelmingly and for the most part, contemporary biomedical ethics (mainstream bioethics) deploys radicalized autonomy as its first principle to defend and promote death on demand in medical practice and throughout Western society.
- ✓ In other words, the biomedical ethics of death on demand (DOD) is an insurgency against God and His moral and legal authority.

In this way, merely human willfulness sets itself up against God's will which is the will of the ultimate Norm to whom “all normativity in heaven and on earth has been given” (Matthew 28:18). This is the self-centered mindset of radicalized autonomy: the ethical core of the insurgency of death on demand and the bioethics that promotes and licenses it.

In terms of pastoral care, recognizing that *will* is the linchpin issue means that we will minister to the entire person (body and soul, engaged in reality cognitively, emotionally, and willfully). We minister to complete persons with the comprehensive Word of Christ, the Bible. Thus, the Word of God must not be delivered gnostically or as a mere metaphor, but full strength, as it presents itself (see Psalm 119) – particularly in regard to the meaning of life and suffering, the topic of Briefing #2.

On the one hand, this means that the thoughtful pastor will speak and preach prophetically and intelligently about the insurgency of biomedical ethics, with its central principle of autonomy – the “one ring that rules them all” among the indistinct principles of beneficence, non-maleficence, utility, and so on. We cannot do without substantial philosophical education in seminary and in our formal and informal continuing learning in the ministry. See for instance the apostolic example of Saint Paul in Acts 17 and in his epistles. Paul did not accidentally stumble upon the Achilles heel of Stoic and Epicurean ethics. It was not incidental or accidental that he admonished us not to be fools but to discern the times (Ephesians 5:16).

Lord of all knowledge in heaven and on earth, give me ... even the sternness needed for this day's tasks. As I study Your Word – not only this day, but each day this week guide my thoughts, strengthen my intellect. Teach me as You instructed the prophets and apostles and evangelists before me (George Kraus, *By Word and Prayer: A Pastor's Daily Prayer and Study Guide*, Tuesday).

The dialogical and rhetorical rigor of the Apostle to the Gentiles is evident in every chapter written by and about Paul in the Greek Testament. This same rigor must become part and parcel of the pastoral care of souls today. This philosophically mindful rigor is mission critical.

On the other hand, this means that the pastor aware of his mission will speak and preach, always mindful of the moral authority of God's very words – nothing less. The message of death on demand is brutal, inhuman, ungodly. Death on demand (DOD) is anarchy, irrationally opposed as it is even to a consideration of the ultimate ethical norm. The message or Gospel of Christ is winsome and persuasive; but the Gospel is not intuitive or natural, like natural law. It must be preached. It must be prayed. It must be the means of pastoral care.

Pastoral care is not a profession of arms, but rather **a profession of armor** to be used for protecting people under assault (see Ephesians 6). The linchpin issue of pastoral care – which, as we shall see in Briefing #2, is also the linchpin issue for socializing death on demand – is human suffering. The biomedical ethics of death on demand (which is willfully ignorant of the significance of suffering) seeks to avoid suffering by terminating us when we face suffering.

Next: Mission Briefing #2 of 4, The Fellowship of His Sufferings on the Front Lines.
In the fellowship of His sufferings – dismissed!

MISSION BRIEFING #2 OF 4

The Fellowship of His Sufferings on the Front Lines

The objective for this mission briefing is to apply the intel and analysis of Briefing #1 to pastoral care for suffering people against the insurgency of DOD an its culpable ignorance regarding human suffering.

In order to achieve today's objective, I shall provide

- √ recon of two competing Western worldviews on human suffering
 - √ intel on the logic of what is known as Problem of Evil (which I refer to instead as “The Problem of Suffering”) in order to equip you to evaluate how citizens holding the common 20th-century worldview fail comprehend the significance of human suffering
 - √ intel regarding the dominant bioethical response to human suffering (which is the common 20th-century worldview) from the past century, which has weaponized human suffering for its insurgency against Christ and Western culture
 - √ an analysis indicating how Western Christian churches in modernity have themselves largely failed to bring Christ the Life to suffering human beings by their neglect of teaching souls within the church and outside the church how to lament biblically



The lynchpin issue for today's intel and analysis is **suffering**.

- è This recon and intel analysis is for the purpose of acquiring and promoting the pastoral care stance of the apostle Paul, “... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10, NASB)

Specifically, the objective is (1) to identify the culpable ignorance regarding suffering on the part of the biomedical ethics of DOD, but also (2) to call pastors and Christ's modern churches to repent. We have too, too long failed to bring Christ Himself to suffering people via the practice of biblical lament.

As you were! Brothers, in our first briefing, I explained that an important source of intel for recognizing how the biomedical ethics of death on demand is unethical is Friedrich Nietzsche. In Briefing #1 I laid out the reasons for seeing Nietzsche as Philosopher Zero for the biomedical ethics of death on demand. Reason One: because of his *acceptance* of the Death of God. The acceptance of God's death informs the wholesale denial of ethical normativity (which I explained is the combination of legal authority and moral authority on which ethics depends) in our day.

Reason Two: Nietzsche's powerful delivery of radicalized autonomy authorizes people – notably the powerful and willful *Übermenschen* of our day (judges, physicians, authors,

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professors) to see themselves as a law unto themselves. They exercise this *will-to-power*, as Nietzsche described it, upon the rest of us. This fundamentally Nietzschean biomedical ethics promotes and defends physician-assisted suicide, abortion on demand, and socialized euthanasia of people who are suffering, or who fear suffering in the future.

This one-two combination is the moral equivalent of the ethics of the 12th SS Panzer Division in WW II, crewed and commanded as it was by *Hitlerjugend*, who inflicted atrocity after atrocity, believing themselves to be *Übermenschen*. In their project of social engineering, they saw everyone else as *Untermenschen* – a worldview that authorized them (in their minds) to torture human beings, to upend the (first versions of the) Geneva Conventions for their purposes, to terrorize civilians by misrepresenting themselves in Allied uniforms, by slaughtering people indiscriminately – all at their own will, as a law unto themselves.

In today's briefing, **Nietzsche is our bridge to a second aspect of the biomedical ethics of death on demand: its secularized view of human suffering.** I have said that Nietzsche is the patron saint of the bioethics of death on demand that we face today. His “innovative” ethics is of a piece with his rejection of God. The same can be said for his view of suffering because of his deliberate rejection of Christ the Crucified.

In *The Antichrist*, Nietzsche asserts, “God becomes the basis for every slander upon the here-and-now, and for every lie about the beyond [of everlasting life]! In him meaninglessness is deified, and “Thy meaningless will be done” becomes a holy thing to say...” In one of the more familiar passages from his *Genealogy*, which I analyzed in Briefing #1, he connects his radicalized ethics of autonomy with the matter of human suffering.

... What is man for, actually? It was a question without an answer; because [until my work] there was no *will* for man and earth ... he *suffered* from the problem of what he means... in the main he was a *sickly* animal...The meaninglessness of suffering, *not* the

suffering per se, was the curse that had for so long hoodwinked mankind (*Genealogy of Morality*, 28, my paraphrase).

Nietzsche the person, the suffering son of a Lutheran pastor who was isolated from the world, is not our enemy. However, in light of those who take up his philosophy of radicalized autonomy and then apply it willfully to suffering people – well, Nietzsche the writer is another matter entirely. “A writer who says that there are no truths, or that all truth is ‘merely relative’, is asking you not to believe him. So, don’t” (Roger Scruton). Nietzsche the writer should not be believed, much less emulated in biomedical ethics. Notwithstanding, the biomedical ethics that attacks suffering on the basis of the alleged death of God has an iron grip on the one hand, on Nietzsche’s notion of normativity (see Briefing #1) and, on the other, on his view of suffering. This biomedical ethics is a fanatical idolatry taught in classrooms and wielded in halls of state, with fatal consequences for vulnerable human beings in their time of suffering. More and more, it appears to have fatal consequences for people who are not yet suffering. Those who have weaponized suffering in order to legitimize the aborting and the euthanizing of human beings are harming human beings as a consequence of their rejection of Christ the Life. As goes Nietzsche the philosopher, so goes the bioethics of death on demand.

A suffering human being himself, in his writing Nietzsche is unflagging in his rejection of Christ – just read *The Antichrist* for yourself and you will see what I mean. To reject Christ, God in the flesh, is to reject the ultimate norm for our natural and inalienable right to life as human beings, as I have shown. This is the take-away from Briefing #1. Here comes the take-away from Briefing #2: To reject Christ the Life (and to replace Him and His authoritative words with radicalized autonomy) enables Übermenschen everywhere to get rid of suffering by getting rid of suffering people. These two rejections – this insurgency against God and the Bible – account for the biomedical ethics of Hitler’s doctors and scientists. They account for the

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biomedical ethics of death on demand today. Let me elaborate with today's recon and then present my intel regarding human suffering.

Recon of modern mindsets toward suffering

“Changes in attitudes toward suffering . . . are among the most important changes that take place in human society” (Ronald Rittgers). This realization seldom if ever occurs to those who write and teach about culture, but **a culture's mindset toward suffering is the barometer of its ethical character**. Follow the phenomenon of suffering. For example, there is a grievous philosophical and intellectual failure endemic in political and academic bioethics with which we should take issue. The vast majority of bioethicists, as well as bioethically minded persons of legal and legislative power, tell us that their goal is to eliminate suffering. They are utterly committed to their notion that this can be accomplished via **death on demand**, which is to say, they are committed to **the elimination of suffering by means of the elimination of those who suffer**. But what does their mindset toward suffering indicate about their ethical character?

The Theater of (the Mindset toward) Suffering Today

Here is my preliminary philosophical intel regarding changes in cultural attitudes toward suffering. Susan Neiman, Director of the Einstein Forum, Potsdam, explains our contemporary attitude toward suffering by way of a contrast between the Lisbon earthquake of 1 November 1755 (an earthquake and tsunami that struck Lisbon, Portugal, killing as many as 50,000 people, according to some estimates) and Auschwitz killing centers, Krakow, 1940-1945 (where over one million Jews and tens of thousands of other persons as well were tortured and murdered by the Nazis). She concludes this way.

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If there's a problem of evil engendered by Lisbon, it can occur only for the orthodox: how can God allow a natural order that causes innocent suffering? The problem of evil posed by Auschwitz looks like another entirely: how can human beings behave in ways that so thoroughly violate both reasonable and rational norms? It is just this sense that the problems are utterly different which marks modern consciousness.

Apparently, Neiman matter-of-factly accepts this societal change of attitude toward suffering as the way "modern consciousness" happens to be. But there is reason to "rage against the dying of the light" in regard to our contemporary societal attitude toward suffering, to enlist Dylan Thomas. The societal change in attitudes toward suffering that comes to light when we compare and contrast Lisbon and Auschwitz, or Lisbon and 9/11 in 2001 can be analyzed with more precision in at least three respects.

First, (1) Neiman's Lisbon-and comparisons are conflating two different types of suffering or evil. Traditionally, in philosophy we have spoken of moral evil, on the one hand, and natural evil, on the other. *Moral evil* is evil that people do to one another, whereas *natural evil* (a term that used to be used for insurance purposes, as in "an act of God") is evil that afflicts people but is not caused by other people. Natural evil, then, would be evil such as earthquakes or cancer. On the traditional understanding, the evil at Auschwitz and the evil of the terrorist murders on 11 September 2001 would be moral evil, whereas the evil of Lisbon would be natural evil.

Second, (2) there is reason to doubt that Neiman has accurately analyzed the consciousness of the modern person by suggesting that only "the orthodox" Christians and Jews are bothered by God's preservation of a natural order in which innocent people suffer. Neiman seems to be saying that, while those who believe in the God of the Bible may have reason to lament, people of "modern consciousness" who subscribe to Nietzsche's Death of God would not need to cry out to Him. This is a false assertion.

Leaving aside the felt human need to call out to the Almighty, there are two famous counterexamples to her interpretation of suffering. Two late nineteenth-century philosophers, Arthur Schopenhauer and Friedrich Nietzsche, who were both philosophical atheists (and whose philosophical attention to the so-called Problem of Evil Neiman addresses only briefly in her book), nonetheless write extensively about suffering and the problem of evil.

For example, Nietzsche (who was initially a fan of Schopenhauer) prescribes his doctrine of eternal recurrence (the individual's resolute will to live his life with all its agonies over and over again, a constant loop without the eternal rest of heaven) and this bit of bravado: "My suffering . . . what does that matter! Am I striving then for *happiness*? I am striving for my *work!*" Biblically literate readers of *Zarathustra* and *The Gay Science* (in which this bravado is articulated) will recognize Nietzsche's incarnate Opponent as Christ Himself. Nietzsche's autonomous "discipline of suffering" is his replacement for Christ the Crucified, much as the Übermensch is his replacement for Christ the Norm.

Atheist, nontheist, and agnostic persons too experience the brokenness of evil and recognize the fractured character of what Neiman calls "a natural order that causes innocent suffering;" it is just that they reject the Lord God who invites people to call upon me in every trouble" (Psalm 50).

Almost all of the people I know who self-identify as *atheist* sound like angry theists or deists who want to register their utter dissatisfaction with the way God runs things in a world where His creatures suffer. Charles Darwin, with his moral revulsion at the way God preserves the natural order, writes, "I cannot persuade myself that a beneficent and omnipotent God would have designedly created the *Ichneumonidae* with the express intention of their feeding within the

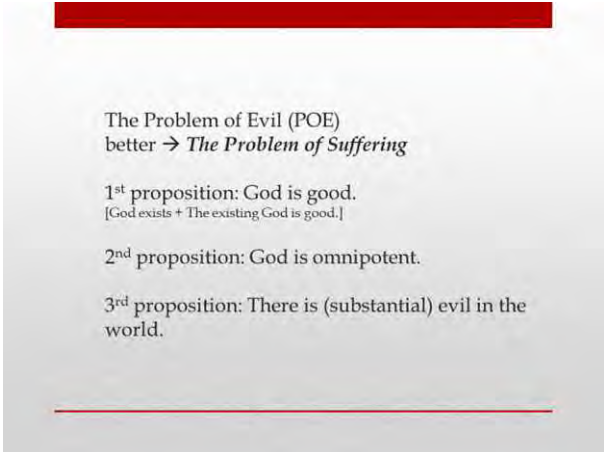
living bodies of caterpillars, or that a cat should play with mice” (from a letter to Asa Gray, dated 22 May 1860). He is angry that God does not put an end to suffering.

Third, (3) Nieman sidesteps the cause of suffering. Plausibly, this third mistake is the fault of us orthodox, Bible-believing believers. I am not being sarcastic. It has to do with our centuries-long rejection of lament in the Christian churches. That is, the problem is one we have created with our rejection – not of Christ, but of a mission-critical dimension of “everything He has commanded us” in the words of the Bible, that is – of lament in the churches.

This is the Grand Canyon of a lacuna brought to light in the vital pages of the conclusion to *The Reformation of Suffering*, which I will unpack shortly. Simply put, suffering is not the result of “the natural order.” It is something that God imposed on His own creation after the Fall (see Genesis 3 and Romans 8). Further, it is not biblical to state simply that God “allows a natural order that causes suffering.” The biblical text is clear that God himself is the cause of evil, not evil in the sense of moral evil, but evil in the sense of natural evil or human suffering overall. Let me make this clear by providing an X-ray of the logical skeleton of the Problem of Evil, which concerns natural evil.

The Problem of Evil Suffering – The Logical Skeleton

First, here is the intel regarding the problem, presented logically as three propositions. The critical term is, of course, the word “evil.” Since our concern is with lamenting to God, it would be a good idea to be sure that our understanding of evil and suffering is not



The Problem of Evil (POE)
better → *The Problem of Suffering*

1st proposition: God is good.
[God exists + The existing God is good.]

2nd proposition: God is omnipotent.

3rd proposition: There is (substantial) evil in the world.

determined by pop culture, or high culture, or by the attitude of our culture regarding human suffering, but by God’s transcultural, written revelation to us all.

This leads us to the Hebrew term that used to be translated “evil” in English translations. The original term is *ra'a'*. In Isaiah 45:7, the Hebrew word *ra'a'*, meaning evil, is used juxtaposed with *shalom*, meaning “whole or unbroken-ness,” suggesting that “evil” in essence is brokenness, or a gap between people, or between people and God – a gap that we human beings experience as suffering. This is why I recommend *suffering* as the better term for our pastoral care mission. Calling this phenomenon “The Problem of *Evil*” is likely to vector us off into a mostly theoretical discussion, instead of obliging us to do our duty and address suffering in the lives of real people as God has commanded us. Better to see the problem pastorally as “The Problem of *Suffering*.”

Looking at the logical skeleton of the Problem, we see this: Although each proposition (that is, each numbered statement of fact) is a statement that we must judge as being true, there is an unresolvable reality here, staring us in the face. The effort to hold the first two propositions true in light of the truth of the third proposition reveals an unbearable, agonizing situation. It leaves us mired in what used to be called an “analysis paralysis” – if, that is, we are left relying on logic and abstract analysis alone.

This paralysis remains, as long as our handling of the intel remains theoretical and less-than-biblical. To relieve the agony of this paralysis, philosophers have devised the strategy of *theodicy*, the effort to “justify the ways of God to man” (John Milton) by attenuating, or watering down one or more of the propositions. For example, by asserting, “God always wants what’s best for His children, but He can’t always arrange it” (Herold Kushner). Or by declaring, “If God is unable to prevent evil, then he is not all-powerful. If God is not willing to prevent evil, then he is

not all-good” (David Hume, following Epicurus). Nietzsche’s contribution to theodicy is the strong-willed, mythological Übermensch, of course. But either way, theodicy is basically wishful, fictionalized guesswork, an attempt to reconfigure reality in an effort to make the calculation about suffering come out differently. Or, to be more honest and direct, we should say that theodicy is theoretical busywork that keeps suffering people and their pastors from crying out to the God of the Bible. It is also a cynical means of maintaining radical autonomy to the bitter end and beyond.

God is Not Good – If He is Treated Apart from Christ the *Verbum*

In reality, the Scriptures reveal that God is not good because of a calculation that, on balance, there is more good than evil or suffering in life, this side of Heaven. **In biblical fact, God is good because He has given His only-begotten Son for all humanity,** in order to reconcile us fallen human creatures to our Creator, entirely on His own initiative (Colossians 1). His goodness is not a matter of calculation or guesswork as to how suffering now may lead to more good things in some imagined future. See, for example, Saint Paul’s Epistle to the Romans.

What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? Indeed, **he who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all – how will he not also, along with him, freely give us all things?** Who will bring any charge against God’s elect? It is God who justifies. Who is the one who will condemn? Christ is the one who died (and more than that, he was raised), who is at the right hand of God, and who also is interceding for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will trouble, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, **“For your sake we encounter death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered.”** No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor heavenly rulers, nor things that are present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in creation will be able to separate us from the love of God **in Christ Jesus our Lord** (Romans 8:31-39 NET).

Christ the Crucified is God's response to the Problem of Suffering. What we Lutherans call "the preached Christ," Jesus of Nazareth, fully God and fully human in one Person – He himself, in His own words and in His own actions, is the only authentic and pastoral response to suffering. In fact, Jesus Christ in His own Person who speaks to us in His own words in Scripture – Christ Himself, in His own words, is the only place to understand the meaning of suffering. Apart from Christ, suffering is not interpretable. Apart from Christ, we human beings suffer, but we do not know why.

This is Nietzsche's fatal and *willful* error. By turning his back on Christ and His words, but still experiencing physical and mental anguish, he concluded that suffering was meaningless. The best he could do was to portray himself to himself as a tragic Greek hero who would resolutely live life his way, even unto death. Credit him for being honest about his rejection of Christ in the midst of his suffering. And, of course, his tragic Greek hero worship did not ever lead him, in the midst of all his suffering, to deliver death to one of his patients in to safeguard his own "very selfish" worries for his own autonomy in an imaginary future. Nor was there, I am genuinely sad to report, any friend or pastor in his life to pray with Friedrich the Psalms of Lament in Christ...

Philosophizing about the problem of evil has become commonplace. Theories, theodicies and defenses abound, all seeking either to render intelligible, or to justify, God's ways to human beings. Such writing should be done in fear: fear that in our philosophizings we will betray the evils people have suffered, and, in that way, sin against them. Betrayal occurs every time explanations and justifications of evils are offered which are simplistic, insensitive, incredible or obscene.

– D.Z. Phillips, *The Problem of Evil and The Problem of God* (2004)

The presupposition of POE: God is part of our moral community.
Lutheran reply: We cannot have anything to do with God apart from Christ and His cross (see Luther's *Bondage of the Will*, sec. 64). This principle is from Article 4 of the Augsburg Confession: "But God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended nisi per Verbum, except through the Word." This is normative for us.

Presupposition of philosophers and theologians: We can provide an *apologia* for POE.
Lutheran reply: Philosophically speaking, theodicies end in betrayals and sin against those who suffer, rather than promoting theodicies, we preach Christ crucified, not suffering justified (see Romans 8, Augsburg Confession, Article 5 in its context).

Suffering is meant to lead us to Christ and the Bible. But this is not something we can arrive at by our own cognizance or by an act of will. God is very, very committed to bringing us *The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

closer to Him in our suffering, but as we Lutherans have confessed for over half a millennium now, “But **God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended *nisi per Verbum*, except through the Word**” (Article 4 of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, the article on Justification).

I am about to explain that it is mission-critical for us to teach suffering people to lament biblically, in Christ’s own inspired, textual words. Here is a warm-up to Christ’s response to the Problem. Passages such as Isaiah 45:7, Jeremiah 11:16, and Job 34:24 are fundamental for overcoming our neglect of lament, a necessary first step in our repentance for that longtime rejection. While we are used to thinking of evil specifically in the sense of moral evil (the fracturing, sinful evils people do to one another), it is vital to recognize that in his Word, God tells us that He Himself is the cause of natural evil (suffering that has no human or other creature as an agent, leaving God as the responsible one, or as the "moral agent"). When we lament as the Bible teaches us to do, when we call upon God in the day of trouble, we are praying to the Lord God who is the Giver of Suffering as surely as he is the Suffering Servant.

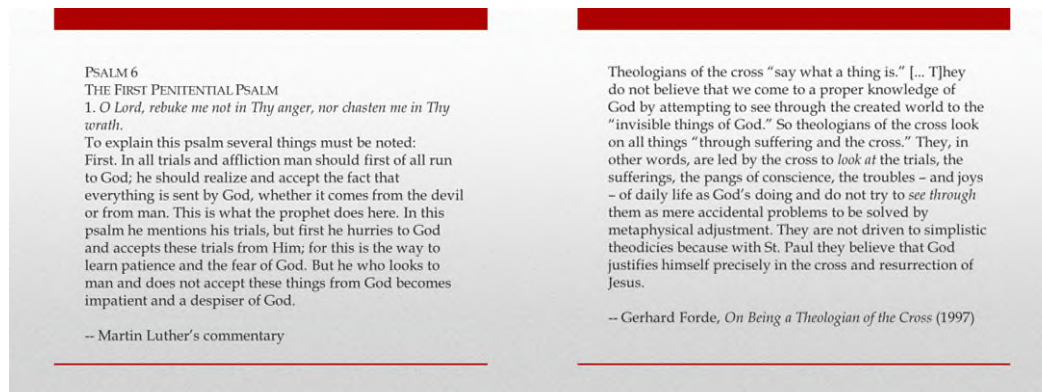
Then all his brothers, and all his sisters, and all who had known him before, came to him, and they ate bread with him in his house; and they consoled him and comforted him **for all the evil that the LORD had brought on him**. And each one gave him one piece of money, and each a ring of gold (Job 42:11, NASB).

Most contemporary translations veer toward theodicy by opting for less jarring translations, but the Hebrew word in the biblical text is *ra'a'*, “evil,” or “suffering.” In this respect, those translations hamper pastoral care.

The denominative verb *ra'a'*, occurring seventy-five times with meanings ranging from "displeasing, injurious," to be bad or evil . . . inherits from its noun a dual meaning of being wrong in regard to God's original and ongoing intention and detrimental in terms of its effects on man. In some instances, it may refer only to its injurious effects on man, either as physical or emotional harm to the person or as painfully unpleasant experiences. There are practically no philosophical or metaphysical connotations that bear upon

theodicy or cosmology. The verbal forms of the root are basically descriptive of the interrelations between God and man and between man and man.

Ra'a' designates experiences which entail physical pain (Num 16:15; 1 Chr 16:22; Ps 105:15), or emotional pain (Gen 43:6; Num na0-11), in the case of Naomi the loss of family (Ruth 1:21; cf 1 Kgs 17:20) (G. H. Livingston in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*).



The Problem of Evil Suffering – The Existential Reality

The logical skeleton of the problem is useful for diagnosing how we are doing pastoral care. That is, it enables us to diagnose when we are failing to bring Christ to suffering people by relying on our own misbegotten theodicies. In theodicy, we imagine (and invite others to imagine) that we can manage suffering on our own. But there is an existential reality behind the problem. By *existential* I mean that there is a concrete, real-life dimension to suffering. Therefore, there must be a concrete, real-life administration of Christ to suffering people. I have done my best to reflect this in both editions of my book, *The Problem of Suffering*. This rest of this section on the existential reality of human suffering is from that book.

Let us sit upon the ground and tell sad tales of suffering: my daughter's, my son's, yours. What exactly is suffering? As Nicholas Wolterstorff lamented the sudden death of his son, Eric, in a mountain climbing accident, he described suffering as a shout of No! He explained that suffering is the shout of No "by nerves and gut and gland and heart to pain, to death," and to *The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

injustice and abandonment. Suffering is not simply being in pain or being sympathetic to those who are in pain. It is a complaint, a lament about the wrongness of the pain. Suffering is indeed the shout of No! But it isn't a cry into the void. For us Christians, it is a shout and cry to God. He is God. He is almighty. And yet, look at these great evils in our lives. No, Lord, it isn't right!

Suffering Takes the Shape of Our Children

(...) God did not give our younger daughter suffering in brief summary. Kyleigh suffered episodes of apnea, when she stopped breathing. She could not suck or swallow and had to have a gastrostomy so that we could feed her directly into the stomach. Her diaphragm had to be surgically augmented. Her eyes, at first sensitive to all light, eventually clouded over with a milky film. At times, a mild sound or a soft touch would send her into a back-arching seizure. There were rashes and fevers and infections. Surgeons installed a central intravenous line into her chest. Most days, a bath would make her miserable. Though she liked to be held, there were times when even the stimulation of touching her skin made her cry with pain. We never saw Kyleigh smile.

Her Lord expected us to abide by the prayer, "My times are in Your hands, O Lord." Meanwhile, Kyleigh (poor little Kyleigh!) and all of us who loved her and cared for her suffered. We suffered in the final days of Kyleigh's suffering.

Another Monday in the cruelest month. It is early afternoon. Twenty minutes ago I left her hospital room to fetch Kyleigh's brothers and sister. Now that I have pulled Kara, Daniel, and Stephan out of class, I am driving back to the hospital as quickly as possible.

The kids know, but they don't know. Here is a father-to-children speech anyone would dread. I tell them as we pause at a stoplight. "We have to go see Kyleigh right away. She has some very bad infections ... and the doctors ... don't think she will live ... more than a day or two, at most." In the backseat, Kara cries. So do I. Daniel becomes very quiet. Next to me in the front seat, Stephan shouts. "No, Dad! Make them do something! Tell the doctors they have to do something!"

Stephan knew what he was shouting about. Since birth he had suffered. Open-heart surgery, intestinal scoping, endless biopsies. A Broviac line surgically installed in his heart. A coma. Month-long stays in hospitals. Medicines and restricted diets. The prospect of a liver transplant. Kyleigh's brothers and sister were right to shout and cry. **They were right to scream "No" to God. It wasn't simply that they were hurting, and God, like any other compassionate person, would forgive their outburst.** They were right to shout and cry "No" because they knew then in their nerves and in their guts, in their glands and in their hearts, that their little sister's suffering and dying were not right. Our surviving son and daughter know it today, these years after Kyleigh's and Stephan's deaths. They know that this is not the way life should be. God knows it too.

A Believer's Question

What we cry out in the midst of all this suffering is a good question, a believer's question: "Why, my God, why?" There must be a purpose to what has happened, to what is happening to my children. What father can believe that his infant daughter has died for nothing? What parent could accept the thought that his son bravely has to face surgeries and agonies for no reason whatsoever? What can justify such suffering? Plainly, I have to cry out to my God. Where else can I go?

Intel re the Scientific "Final Solution" to Suffering

Suffering is part of the human condition. It is not a theoretical problem but an unavoidable human phenomenon. Further, its purpose and meaning cannot be known apart from Christ and His own words and actions regarding suffering. What, then, happens when people

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look elsewhere for the meaning and purpose of suffering, while refusing Christ and His Word? As we saw in Briefing #1, the acceptance of what Nietzsche identified as the Death of God is at the root of the ethical failure that we see in the biomedical ethics of death on demand (DOD) today. At this point in our interpretation of the intel, we shall consider how biomedical ethics, which claims to be *scientific* – often invoking science as its foundation as in bioethics harkening to biology – comes to its conclusions about the human being and suffering.

Science versus Christ the Crucified

[This section on *scientism*, or salvation by means of science (instead of by means of Christ alone), is from Leon Kass, *A More Perfect Human: The Promise and Peril of Modern Science*, a March 17, 2005 lecture series, included here with Prof Kass’s kind personal permission.]

[T]he question before us is not the goodness of science and medicine, but the goodness of looking to science and medicine as the solution for the human condition, for the relief and salvation of man's estate. Having offered in advance this sincere refutation of possible charges that what follows next is “anti-science,” I now proceed forthwith to articulating the perils of such an orientation.

The first two images from the exhibit pose the problem and set the stage for all my reflections: the glass man and the photographs of the survivors of the First World War.



The exhibit opens with the stunning glass man, first displayed at the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden in 1930. Though many of us have become familiar with transparent models of the human body—they are today widely marketed as science toys for school children—it is difficult to exaggerate the excitement that those original models created. For the first time, the common man could glimpse a life-like model of his insides, organ by organ, artery by artery, nerve by nerve, seeing with illuminated brilliance all the parts that made him run. Far from looking ashamed or diminished by this anatomizing invasion of his inner being, the glass man stands fitly and proudly, arms uplifted in a gesture of triumphant appeal for heavenly applause, a model of human perfection not to say apotheosis. Moreover, this perfect man clearly came not from the hand of God but from an even more perfect man, the scientific and medical visionary who would someday soon help humankind collectively achieve the healthful perfection here modeled in glass.

Make no mistake, this is serious business. For the glass man was willy-nilly the emblem of a new religion: In place of the God who became man, we have here the man become as god. In place of the suffering Christ, arms stretched in crucifixion, we have the impervious glass man, arms elevated in self-exaltation. And creatively behind the scene, in place of a God who it is said sent his son who would, through his own suffering, take away the sins of the world, we have the scientific savior who would take away the sin of suffering altogether. The glass man, *in loco crucifixis*, is the perfect icon for salvific science.

The dream of perfect health and fitness, itself quite ancient, had acquired a new prominence owing to the Great War, only recently ended. Images from the aftermath of that war,

the second display of the exhibit, provide the counterpart to the glass man and in part explain his great social appeal. Human deformity, from loss of limbs to loss of mind, came home from the war to Germany (and to all of Europe) by the tens and hundreds of thousands. The maimed and the enfeebled had rarely if ever been seen in such numbers, and the response of the German mind, humiliated in the War, did not take the most compassionate turn. On the contrary, fear and loathing of the deformed and the defective found their expression, as hatred of imperfection grew up with and encouraged the desire to imitate the perfection of the glass man. In 1920, well before the Nazi period, a distinguished jurist, Karl Binding, and a distinguished physician, Dr. Alfred Hoche, published a chilling booklet entitled “On Permitting (or Authorizing) the Destruction of Life Unworthy of Life (*Lebensunwerten lebens*).” **Beginning innocently enough with a defense of the moral acceptability of suicide and assisted suicide, Binding and Hoche moved cunningly to a defense of killing those whose miserable condition of body or mind calls for the “healing remedy” of premature death from the hand of medical science.** Contemplating the battlefield strewn with thousands of dead youths and comparing this with the mental hospitals dedicated to the long-term care of the demented and the mentally ill, Binding comments:

One will be deeply shaken by the strident clash between the sacrifice of the finest flower of humanity in its full measure on the one side, and by the meticulous care shown to existences which are not just absolutely worthless but even of negative value, on the other.

And Dr. Hoche ends his part of the booklet with a paean to the dawning of a new age:

There was a time, now considered barbaric, in which eliminating those who were born unfit for life, or who later became so, was taken for granted. Then came the phase, continuing into the present, in which . . . preserving every existence, no matter how worthless, stood as the highest moral value. A new age will arrive—operating with a higher morality and with great sacrifice—which will actually give up the requirements of an exaggerated humanism and overvaluation of mere existence.

A vigorous society, comprising only healthy and fit members, is more than justified in doing

battle with the evils of deformity and disability by cleansing society of the disabled and the deformed themselves. [This is the conclusion of this excerpt from Kass's watershed lecture.]

Intel re the Suffering God

The Suffering God prayed the words of a psalm of lament to establish the fellowship of His suffering for humanity. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “*Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?*” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46 ESV).

Psalm 22

A Psalm of Lament

To the choirmaster: according to The Doe of the Dawn. A Psalm of David.

Lamenting, Step 1. Addressing God

My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?

Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning.

²O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer,
and by night, but I find no rest.

Lamenting Step 2. Complaining to God, Based on God's Past Trustworthiness

³Yet you are holy,
enthroned on the praises of Israel.

⁴In you our fathers trusted;
they trusted, and you delivered them.

⁵To you they cried and were rescued;
in you they trusted and were not put to shame.

⁶But I am a worm and not a man,
scorned by mankind and despised by the people.

⁷All who see me mock me;
they make mouths at me; they wag their heads;

⁸“He trusts in the LORD; let him deliver him;
let him rescue him, for he delights in him!”

Lamenting, Step 3. Reciting God's Past Trustworthiness

⁹Yet you are he who took me from the womb;
you made me trust you at my mother's breasts.

¹⁰On you was I cast from my birth,
and from my mother's womb you have been my God.

Lamenting, Step 4. Entreaty for God to Deliver from Acute Evil or Suffering

- ¹¹ Be not far from me,
for trouble is near,
and there is none to help.
- ¹² Many bulls encompass me;
strong bulls of Bashan surround me;
¹³ they open wide their mouths at me,
like a ravening and roaring lion.
- ¹⁴ I am poured out like water,
and all my bones are out of joint;
my heart is like wax;
it is melted within my breast;
¹⁵ my strength is dried up like a potsherd,
and my tongue sticks to my jaws;
you lay me in the dust of death.
- ¹⁶ For dogs encompass me;
a company of evildoers encircles me;
they have pierced my hands and feet—
¹⁷ I can count all my bones—
they stare and gloat over me;
¹⁸ they divide my garments among them,
and for my clothing they cast lots.
- ¹⁹ But you, O LORD, do not be far off!
O you my help, come quickly to my aid!
²⁰ Deliver my soul from the sword,
my precious life from the power of the dog!
²¹ Save me from the mouth of the lion!

Lamenting, Step 5. Experiencing God's Response

You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!

- ²² I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will praise you:
²³ You who fear the LORD, praise him!
All you offspring of Jacob, glorify him,
and stand in awe of him, all you offspring of Israel!
²⁴ For he has not despised or abhorred
the affliction of the afflicted,
and he has not hidden his face from him,
but has heard, when he cried to him.

Lamenting, Step 6. Vowing to Praise God for His Deliverance

- ²⁵ From you comes my praise in the great congregation;
my vows I will perform before those who fear him.
²⁶ The afflicted shall eat and be satisfied;
those who seek him shall praise the LORD!
May your hearts live forever!

- ²⁷ All the ends of the earth shall remember
and turn to the LORD,

and all the families of the nations
shall worship before you.

²⁸ For kingship belongs to the LORD,
and he rules over the nations.

²⁹ All the prosperous of the earth eat and worship;
before him shall bow all who go down to the dust,
even the one who could not keep himself alive.

³⁰ Posterity shall serve him;
it shall be told of the Lord to the coming generation;

³¹ they shall come and proclaim his righteousness to a people yet unborn,
that he has done it (ESV, inserted structural headings adapted from Claus Westerman):

The Psalms of Lament

Psalm 22, originally authored by King David about 1000 B.C. and breathed out by the suffering God on His cross in the fulness of time – also breathed in and breathed out by suffering believers for three millennia – is the quintessential psalm of lament. This is a good juncture to commend to you the psalm classifications of Claus Westermann. He identifies about six psalms with congregational lament motifs, and also Lamentations 5, and Psalms 44, 74, 79, 80, 83, 89, and 93 as *The Communal Psalms of Lament*; about fifty psalms, including Psalms 13, 6, 22, 51, 77, 102, and 130 as *The Individual Psalms of Lament*. Through our praying of these chapters of God's verbal and verbatim means of grace he *uptakes* us into his love and thus reorders our lament loves, polarizing our love so that we feel and exhibit the everlasting love with which he loved us, with which we love him and with which we love our neighbors as ourselves. As Brian Brock induces from Augustine's sermons on these psalms of lament, "For Augustine, *lament is the Christian form that shapes the affective eruption engendered by suffering.*" From this realization that God shapes us via the psalms of lament – in other words, that the psalms simultaneously display God's love for us and reshape our loves – we are ready to consider how and why suffering and teaching biblical lament via the biblical texts is mission-critical.

In pain and suffering we are passive. See the Greek text of my Bible passage title for these briefings, “that I may know ... **the fellowship of His sufferings**, being conformed to His death...” (Philippians 3:10). “Being conformed,” *symmorphidzomenos* in Paul’s Greek, is a present passive participle.

In lament – and I mean "lament as God himself tutors us to lament in the psalms of lament," chiefly Psalm 22 – we are in the middle voice (as in the Greek language), passive in a *sola gratia* and in Christ alone sense, but involved with Him and His words as the person we actually are. And so, "Faith must undergo the pedagogy of lament." As Luther puts it in commenting on Psalm 6 (a psalm of individual lament, according to Westermann),

These words refer to a soul that is poor in spirit and has nothing left but crying, imploring, and praying in firm faith, strong hope, and steadfast love. The life and behavior of every Christian should be so constituted that he does not know or have anything but God, and in no other way than in faith (*LW* 14:145-46).

The biomedical ethics of death on demand (DOD) does not understand suffering at all. And yet, in practices such as physician-assisted suicide it aims to normalize death on demand as an ethical response to suffering. This is a stubborn, culpable ignorance because it consciously ignores the meaning and comfort in the midst of suffering provided by Christ in His own words, the Bible. As I have been saying, the acceptance of the Death of God is the root of all sorts of evil in contemporary ethics.

There is another kind of problem within the modern Christian churches. Indeed, I think it is plausible that the problem in the Christian churches has contributed to the suicidal despair and vulnerability that have recently been providing fertile soil in Western culture for death on demand.

Intel re the failure of modern Christian Churches in the West
to teach us how to suffer in Christ

From the biomedical ethics of DOD and its culpable ignorance regarding human suffering, let me elaborate from a point that I made in our Orientation that **there is overwhelming intel regarding a failure in modern churches to teach the world how to suffer biblically**. I have in mind the six and one-half pages that comprise the conclusion of Professor Ronald Rittgers's magisterial book, *The Reformation of Suffering*, a recent volume in the Oxford Studies in Historical Theology series. Rittgers is Professor of History and of Theology at Valparaiso University. His conclusion merits at least a full church year of dedicated thinking—of meditative, repentant thinking for us together on what I take to be the central issue for our pastoral care mission, the pastoral care of souls in the midst of their suffering.

If Rittgers is right (and his theological and historical horse-power is evident in every section of this Oxford volume), then we in the Lutheran church, for example, need to reach deep into the back of our closets for the sackcloth and immediately stock up on ashes. Why? We urgently need to rethink and repent regarding our centuries-long *rejection of lament*. Why? Because in this crucial area of our responsibilities to Christ and to the people he redeemed with his holy, innocent sufferings and death, we have been making of the Lutheran Reformation a *deformation* of sorts. As I will explain, this longstanding rejection of lament means that we actually cultivate a lacuna, a Grand Canyon of a hole, in our Lutheran theology of the cross.

This lacuna, as Ronald Rittgers puts it in his conclusion, can be brought to light via a brief Q & A.

Q. “What effect has this centuries-long rejection of lament had on the plight of Christianity in the modern Western world?”

A. “Perhaps in the (very) long run, the insistence of the Western churches that human beings must face suffering without the possibility of lament has worked to undermine the plausibility of Christian faith.”

Let’s together participate in Professor Rittgers’ Q & A. Let me begin by speaking in imitation of the apostle Peter, who writes so much in his brief epistles about suffering.

God’s divine power has given us everything we need for life and for godliness. This power was given to us through knowledge of the one who called us by his own glory and integrity. Through his glory and integrity, he has given us his promises that are of the highest value. Through these promises you will share in the divine nature because you have escaped the corruption that sinful desires cause in the world. Because of this, make every effort to add integrity to your faith; and to integrity add knowledge; to knowledge add self-control; to self-control add endurance; to endurance add godliness; to godliness add Christian affection; and to Christian affection add love. (2 Pet 1:5–7, GW)

My paraphrase of this passage?

God’s divine power, working on us through the word, not excluding the psalms, chapters, and biblical books of lament, has given us his promises and establishes his integrity with us in our lives of suffering, for example, via Psalm 22. Because of his gracious initiative, let us make every effort to keep on cultivating his integrity with us as the Suffering Servant by lamenting as he teaches us to do in praying as he himself has taught us to pray.

But do we have the ears to hear what isn’t there (and, by and large, hasn’t been present for centuries) in our preaching and liturgy, in our teaching, and caregiving? We shall see.

Let me amplify the undeniable significance of Rittgers’s recognition that “Suffering was viewed as the most important litmus test of confessional loyalty, for it was in suffering, as nowhere else, that people’s deepest religious convictions were revealed.” After providing hundreds of pages of documentary data regarding our rejection

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of lament, our author asks that logical (if uncomfortable) question at this point: “What effect has this centuries-long rejection of lament had on the plight of Christianity in the modern Western world?”

There is an intellectual effect (think of this as a systematic theology effect of our lamentable lacuna) and there is an existential effect (we feel this in the actual living out of our theology in our daily vocation of being human). These two dimensions of our modern rejection of lament come to a focus in what I will call the *pastoral care effect*. And so, this is a lynchpin issue for pastoral care and the office of the ministry.

Following Rittgers’s scholarly question for us all, let me pose a missional, pastor-to-pastor question: *How many suffering souls, how many suffering souls in our congregations over the years of our pastoral ministry, and how many suffering and dying souls outside the church whom we have had opportunity to visit in hospital and in hospice — how many have we not helped to lament to their God as their God taught them to lament when he himself was suffering for them on his cross?*

Here is an example of the pastoral care effect of our long rejection of lament in our churches in modernity. A few years ago, my university provided a sabbatical so that I could teach and preach overseas. One of the two places I lectured, taught, and preached was at the Lutheran Seminary at Tshwane in Pretoria, South Africa. Thanks to Seminary President Wilhelm Weber, I was invited to present a paper to the theological faculty of the nearby University of Pretoria. Therein hangs a tale of lament. The paper I presented was printed in *LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology* under the title, “Pain, Suffering, Lament.”

Using Psalm 22 as the “sermon text” for my argument that faithful pastoral care for human beings who are suffering must include the psalms of lament, I insisted that pastoral care requires biblical lamenting.

∨ In large part, this is because, as I explained, the psalms are the place where God via his means of grace takes us up into his own suffering and thereby cruciforms our entire human being (not just our intellect) cognitively, emotionally, and willfully. I explained this in detail in the text of Psalm 22:

∨ How God expired his words through King David *for* David and the people after him to learn by heart as they lamented.

∨ How Jesus had inhaled these words of the psalm during his state of humiliation as he grew in grace and in favor.

∨ How Jesus then breathed out Psalm 22 on the cross as he suffered our damnation in our place.

∨ How, ever since, we are all invited to inhale Jesus’ divine words as we grow in grace.

∨ How we then breathe them out in prayer to God when we are suffering.

In the Q and A after my presentation, one theology professor began by announcing, “Well, let me say that I am very worried about you. I won’t say anything about whether David wrote Psalm 22 or whether Jesus spoke the psalm on the cross (although I really don’t think so).” Then he explained that he was worried about my insistence that pastoral care required the use of this psalm, the other psalms of lament, and other particular chapters of the Bible. “I am in charge of the pastoral care training for all of the seminary students and young pastors in my denomination,” he told me, “and I tell them that you can’t just parachute into a hospital room and parrot someone else’s words, because only by speaking in your own words can you provide *authentic* comfort.”

After he had mentioned a few (partial) quotations from Luther in support of his concern that pastoral care had to be spontaneous in order to be *authentic*, I replied, “Thanks. I should mention that I am very worried about you and those pastors you train.

Our call as pastors is to bring Christ himself to souls who are suffering and that means using his Word verbatim. Let me respectfully but urgently recommend that you get back to Luther and see what he is actually saying about this, for example, in his commentaries on the seven penitential psalms. What you're also missing is this: When we use the psalms of lament, such as Psalm 22 in our pastoral care with those who suffer, God's words become our words and, in this way, *sola scriptura*, our comfort will be authentic and genuinely comforting."

Let me reply with a few comments on the centrality of such hard-hitting questions as Rittgers has given us for the mission, for our *missio dei*. Just as we often provoke confession and absolution and repentance with questioning, these six pages concluding *The Reformation of Suffering* are necessary provocations. The night of Nietzsche's Madman is already upon us, culturally. The night of Nietzsche's Madman is coming upon us in the West, ecclesiologically. Just look at our failure to fulfill our mission to teach people (both in Christ's churches and in His wider world) how to suffer. Rittgers's catechism regarding lament are especially significant *as questions* for each of us as pastors and for all of us as members of Christ in his churches. Here is one way of looking at this.

In his writing "The Question Concerning Technology," or *Die Frage nach der Technik*, initially presented in 1949 as part of a philosophy lecture series, Martin Heidegger remarks that "questioning is the piety of thought." In part, he is saying that *piety* means *paying attention* (we Lutherans would say "*using* our reason ministerially") in order to remain engaged with the critical issues that profoundly affect us as human beings. Rittgers' questions as such bring us face-to-face with the issue of suffering and

lament, arguably the central issue for us as individuals and for the entire human race, as I have been saying. Certainly, this is **the lynchpin issue for our pastoral care mission.**

These questions highlight a gaping hole (or lacuna) in our Lutheran theology of the cross, for example. As Rittgers puts the matter in the introduction to his exhaustive study of pastoral and devotional books, subtitled *Pastoral Theology and Lay Piety in Late Medieval and Early Modern Germany*,

In many ways, suffering was the battlefield on which the early modern Christian confessions — or at least their leaders — fought for the souls of the European population, each seeking to persuade (and require) the masses to suffer as it thought best. **Suffering was viewed as the most important litmus test of confessional loyalty, for it was in suffering, as nowhere else, that people’s deepest religious convictions were revealed.**

As is clear from his introduction, the lack of scholarly attention to the Protestant “reformation of suffering” from the Reformation onward is remarkable, as is the lacuna of lament in pastoral practice. And today? The lack of pastoral, theological, and liturgical attention to suffering and lament in our day, five hundred years after the Reformation, is lamentable. That is, our lack of attention to suffering and lament would be a cause of lament churchwide *if* we heirs of the Lutheran Reformation were paying attention and *if* we as churches and pastors knew how to lament and how to teach lamentation!

From Luther’s Germany, Oswald Bayer has been arguing that we Lutherans need a theology of lamentation. The need is ecumenical. From the United Kingdom, Brian Brock has been urging the church in this technological age to evoke lament. In addition, there is this piety of thinking that Rittgers evokes in all of us with his questions. Is it possible that we, who have had the thesis that our lives are to be lives of repentance hammered onto our churches – that we have neglected to repent of a manifest failure to

teach everything the Lord has commanded us in the psalms and other Scriptures of lament? Don't we need to repent of our culpable ignorance of suffering and lamenting?

There are pious questions that oblige us to confront the European Enlightenment, Western modernity, and the corrosive notion of moral relativism that we know as postmodernism in regard to the biomedical ethics of DOD and its understanding of suffering human beings. At this point, we see that there are also questions that oblige us to pay attention to what is happening, especially to matters that are crucial to biblical lament. In this particular matter of lament – and I have identified suffering as the lynchpin issue for our pastoral mission – we Christian pastors as a whole have been weighed and found wanting. So, we need to repent – urgently and publicly in how we carry out our mission.

The pious questions that Rittgers poses in order to make us think and to keep on thinking and discussing and repenting – these well-taken questions have to do with suffering, pastoral care, missiology. They identify a lacuna, a light-swallowing ecclesial black hole of our own making. His questions are posed to us in something of an A-B-B-A form: a scholarly observation, then a question, a second question, then another scholarly observation.

Viewed as a whole, the premodern Christian consolation literature consistently directs believers to accept their suffering patiently and to make no protest against the workings of divine providence.

Why this exclusion of lament?

What effect has this centuries-long rejection of lament had on the plight of Christianity in the modern Western world?

Perhaps in the (very) long run, the insistence of the Western churches that human beings must face suffering without the possibility of lament has worked to undermine the plausibility of Christian faith (Ronald Rittgers).

The framing scholarly observations are sobering, whereas the embedded questions are deeply, deeply upsetting and provocative. As well they should be, since they shine the light of day on a problem in the very way we “do church” and thus the way we understand and practice pastoral care. This is a problem that further exposes our professional negligence in regard to Jesus’ clear command to make disciples of all nations by teaching them everything he has commanded us. *Everything he has commanded us* includes the psalms and other Scriptures of lament.

Linchpin Analysis of Suffering + the operational takeaway

As we saw in Briefing #1, the linchpin issue for the biomedical ethics of death on demand and its insurgency against Christ and against Western culture is *willfulness*. In this briefing we have seen how the sheer Nietzschean willfulness of biomedical ethics comes to a focus on the phenomenon of human suffering.

The bioethics at issue, according to the intel that I have provided and interpreted here in Briefing #2, is also Nietzschean in this sense: The biomedical ethics of death on demand focuses on human suffering in a thoroughly autonomous way. That is, suffering is handled on the basis of presuming the Death of God. That is, Christ’s words and example of suffering on the cross are utterly rejected. In its wake, this rejection of Christ the Crucified in effect gives autonomous Übermensch license to do to suffering human beings whatever they (the powerful transhumans) want to do. This includes interpreting the meaning or meaninglessness of human suffering in any way they decide upon.

Here is how this has worked out, creating our Century of Death on Demand. What I identified as *radicalized autonomy* in our first briefing, shows up as *will-to-power* – or a resolute

determination to name-and-claim it – toward the (allegedly) meaningless human experience of suffering. That is, there is a powerful will at work (other than God’s gracious will, that is) to manage suffering as if it were everyone’s own autonomous project – in other words, to manhandle suffering by oneself as if one were a Greek tragic hero, heroically releasing others from suffering by encouraging and assisting them to suicide when facing suffering. I am reserving the fuller recon and deep intel re *will* for Briefing #4.

So, in this briefing, we have been focusing on the *object* – also known as the *intentionality* or *aboutness* of autonomous will-to-power. The object of autonomous, everyone-is-a-law-to-himself biomedical ethics is human suffering. On this issue, we will not be deterred.

Suffering is the purview of pastoral care.

1. In regard to the insurgency of DOD and its willful, Nietzschean ignorance regarding human suffering, let us be crystal clear about suffering and the human condition – as we must be for the sake of our pastoral care mission.
2. Suffering is not the same thing as physical pain. That is, suffering is not within the purview of science or medical science as such.
3. Suffering is not self-interpreting (see Job, Psalms, Lamentations, and Ecclesiastes).
4. Nor is suffering avoidable.
5. Actually, suffering is part of the human condition. That is, it is a spiritual matter (a matter of the entire, body-and-soul human being), which puts suffering in the domain of pastoral care.
6. The biomedical ethics of DOD aims to eliminate suffering by terminating those who suffer, but this is based on science’s ignorance of the human being and of suffering (1-4).
7. There is also a major gap in theology and practice regarding modern Christian churches and suffering:
8. Modern Western churches have neglected to teach people (inside and outside Christ’s church) how to suffer by failing to preach and teach us how to lament biblically, that is, to pray – and thus to be cruciformed by – the psalms of lament and other biblical books and chapters of lament.
9. Notwithstanding, suffering remains the essential responsibility of pastoral (and Christian) care for suffering human beings inside and outside their churches.
10. Therefore, pastors of modern Christian churches in the West must repent of our professional negligence in this regard and urgently undertake a theology and *missio Dei* of lament.

This is not simply a matter of the concrete application of law and gospel. Rather, it is a matter of pastoral wisdom regarding suffering. Pastoral wisdom begins with knowledge of the LORD on this matter of suffering (Proverbs 1:7). It springs from the fear of the Lord in regard to the Problem of Evil (Proverbs 9:10). What one bioethical author says in regard to artificial procreation fits the concern of this briefing, human suffering and our pastoral mission. “We have put ourselves in a masterful position vis-à-vis the natural processes: [But] the first step for any man to take in the understanding of divine providence, is to comprehend that **God has evils at his disposal which he does not put at ours**” (Oliver O’Donovan).

In philosophical terms, God is not part of our moral community. To act as if He either doesn’t count, or that He is essentially like us human beings, is to commit a category mistake. God is Other. Suffering cannot be understood, much less can it be handled autonomously, everyone for himself.

What God has put into the hands and brains and mouths of pastors is not a freedom to indulge in theodicy or to speculate about His hidden will. What He has put into our hands and hearts is the very words of Christ the Crucified. These words are for lament, comfort, and salvation. Thus, these words of Christ, especially His words of lament, are mission critical.

Next: Mission Briefing #3, The Fellowship of His Sufferings and Ethical Counter-Insurgency in the 21st Century. In the fellowship of His sufferings – dismissed!

MISSION BRIEFING #3 OF 4

The Fellowship of His Sufferings and Ethical Counter-Insurgency in the 21st Century

The objective for this next-to-last mission briefing is to equip you for *thinking ethically* with (1) Christ Himself as the norm, while (2) ministering to suffering persons by bringing them Christ Himself in His own words.

I shall frame this as a “cold” or non-violent (rather than as a “hot”) counterinsurgency against mainstream bioethics in our century of death on demand (DOD).

In order to achieve this objective of equipping you to do ethics in our present environment as *a cold counter-insurgency*, I will provide you with a guided reconnaissance of the current moral environment ...

- ✓ By bringing together Christ as the Norm of ethical thinking (Briefing #1) and focusing on the reality of human suffering in the biblical words of Christ’s sufferings (Briefing #2), with *the means of grace* (God’s Word and Sacraments) as the means of a cold counter-insurgency in pastoral care
- ✓ By organizing intel on Utilitarianism, the ethics of choice for the insurgency against Christ and Western culture deployed by mainstream bioethics
- ✓ By organizing intel, together with an existential analysis, of duty-driven ethics, an ethics originally based on living according to God’s will
- ✓ Thus equipping you to deliver Christ in His own words to persons who are suffering (Briefing #3) – a counter-insurgency against physician-assisted suicide and other forms of death on demand



The lynchpin issue for today’s intel and analysis is the trinitarian discovery of **person**.

- è This recon and intel analysis is for the purpose of acquiring and promoting the pastoral care stance of the apostle Paul, “... that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death” (Philippians 3:10, NASB)

Specifically, the objective is (1) to identify the fallacy of ignorance in DOD in regard to the subject of ethics, the human being, and then (2) to resurrect the concept of person in light of its trinitarian roots. It turns out that the understanding of human beings as persons is not the purview of science, but the domain of pastoral care.

As you were! We have completed the longer two of our four mission briefings. Briefing #1 delivered my analysis of the intellectual failures of contemporary ethics. Its lynchpin issue was *normativity*, or moral authority. Briefing #2 brought to light the moral failure of death on demand (DOD) toward *suffering*, its lynchpin issue. Now, it is time to respond to Nietzsche and twenty-first century bioethics, which are largely and for the most part Nietzschean in character.

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This response is, in strategic terms, **a cold counterinsurgency of preaching and teaching Christ in His own words.**

Nietzsche promoted radicalized autonomy, a license for every physician and other transhumanist *Übermenschen* to act each as a law unto himself. In opposition to his mantra that every individual is the ultimate ethical norm, we preach the apostolic message of Christ crucified: Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God, to whom all authority in Heaven and on earth belongs (Matthew 28:18-20). Nietzsche announced the so-called Death of God and the subsequent meaninglessness of human suffering, asserting that strong-minded individuals would need to decide for themselves (and then for the rest of us feeble-minded *Untermenschen*) how to *manage* suffering. In opposition to his bromide that we must now, following the Death of God, bring our own meaning to suffering – any sort of meaning we felt a need to bring to deal with suffering ourselves – we reintroduce the words and actions of God in the Person of Jesus of Nazareth, who prayed on the cross, “My God, my God, Why have you forsaken me!” thus informing and re-forming our hearts and minds with His own words in the psalms of lament so that our we and our listeners can “have the same mindset as His” (Philippians 2:5).

Nietzsche inaugurated an insurgency against God and against Western culture that has erupted in these latter days in the cultural and global phenomenon of death on demand (DOD).

As we learned in our first two briefings, I am not being metaphorical in identifying this phenomenon of DOD as an insurgency against Western ethics. How shall we respond to this insurgency? First, identify the insurgency as an insurgency. According to David Galula’s *Counterinsurgency Warfare: Theory and Practice*, “‘Insurgency is the pursuit of the policy of a party, inside a country, by every means.’ ... an insurgency is a protracted struggle conducted methodically, step by step, in order to attain specific immediate objectives leading finally to the

overthrow of the existing order” (3-4). The biomedical ethics, or (very precisely) mainstream bioethics that supports death on demand by abortion, physician-assisted suicide, and all forms of euthanasia is a cultural insurgency. Further, it is an insurgency against Christ who alone makes suffering meaningful.

The way to oppose an insurgency is by means of a counter-insurgency. For conducting an effective counterinsurgency, we of course first need a clear analysis of the insurgency. This is what I have provided in our first two briefings.

In today’s briefing, I am articulating the how-to aspect of conducting what I call “a cold counter-insurgency,” taking my cue from *Counterinsurgency Warfare*, Chapter 4.

Counterinsurgency in the Cold Revolutionary War (63-69), and Chapter 5. Counterinsurgency in the Hot Revolutionary War (70-86). For example, Galula explains that in the “cold phase” of a revolution, the insurgent operates pretty much within the law, so his subversion of the normal order is not likely to be recognized by most people in the country’s population. Accordingly, “the essential problem for the counterinsurgent stems from the fact that the actual danger will always appear to the nation as out of proportion to the demands made by an adequate response. The potential danger is enormous, but how to prove it on the basis of available, objective facts” (64). In passing, I will also say that the insurgency against Christ and Western ethics has been in its “hot phase” at least since the legalization of the abortion of human embryos begun in 1973, but actually since the biomedical ethics of Weimar science, for which the icon was the idealized Glass Man, as we learned from Leon Kass in our first briefing. Notwithstanding, our pastoral counterinsurgency must, in keeping with the means by which we carry out our pastoral care mission, necessarily be a passionate cold counterinsurgency.

What is a counterinsurgent who intends to save his country and his fellow countrymen from death on demand to do? He may act directly on insurgent leaders.

COUNTERINSURGENCY

These general courses of action are open to the counterinsurgent under these circumstances, and they are not mutually exclusive:

1. He may act indirectly on the conditions that are propitious to an insurgency.
2. He may infiltrate the insurgent movement and try to make it ineffective.
3. He may build up or reinforce his political machine (64-65).

The pastoral counterinsurgency that I am presenting is necessarily a cold (that is, a nonviolent) counterinsurgency because the authorized means by which faithful pastors carry on authentic pastoral care is by Word and Sacrament, the only means that God has authorized for the work of the ministry. While we learn in God's Word – that is, the biblical text with its vocabulary, syntax, and historical reality – that the tool or means by which the government and its military carries out its God-given mission is the sword (Romans 13), the tools or means of our pastoral care mission is God's Word (His *verbum* in Latin).

This biblical Word is operative in the sacraments of Baptism, the Lord's Supper, and Absolution. In other words, our authority lies not in our superior rank, but in our God-in-Christ given office: namely, in the participial, ongoing counterinsurgency of baptizing and teaching as the way of making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). (See Briefing #4, The City and the City.)

Recon of Ethical Force in the Early 21st-Century

Let me call your attention to the lynchpin concept for this briefing, a pivotal matter that links the intel re the insurgent force behind bioethics in the early century with the force of Christ

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the Life as a counterinsurgency. It is the lynchpin concept of *person*. What does it mean to be a person? Who counts as a person? Who decides who counts as a person? In his *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Philosophy*, Roger Scruton says, “The most important task for philosophy in the modern world is to resurrect the human person, to rescue it from trivializing science, and to replace the sarcasm which knows that we are merely animals, with the irony which sees that we are not” (97).

In the final Steps of today's briefing, I shall articulate the counterinsurgency of Christ the Life for resurrection of the human person. First, though, here in Step #1 I will map out for you the lynchpin concept of person in contemporary biomedical ethics. It is the mapping of an intoxicated dessert landscape reminiscent of Frank Herbert's fictional planet of Dune, arid and dominated by a misguided hope of salvation by science.

Insurgency by Any Means Necessary: P-Property Listing

The biomedical ethics upon which DOD depends requires in turn a commitment to a particular, culturally insurgent way of thinking. To understand what exactly is going on here, consider the philosophical practice of using *thought experiments*, narratives that are essentially pared down to spotlight one particular point at issue, so that we can have a focused and coherent roundtable discussion, even a public debate, on that single point at issue. In philosophy, we do sometimes help the cause of clear, honest reasoning together by means of thought experiments such as Ibn Sina's Flying Man, Hillary Putnam's Brain in a Vat or John Searle's Chinese Room. As a thought experiment that brings to light the willful and wholly arbitrary reasoning advanced for practicing abortion, consider “The Pre-Persons,” a 1974 short story by Philip K. Dick. The story works quite well all on its own, but for the sake of logical clarity, let's put it this way:

- (1) Abortion, if and when it is defended, is defended on wholly arbitrary grounds.
- (2) The arbitrary logic of abortion is exhibited in Philip K. Dick's 1974 short story, "The Pre-Persons."

Here is a digest of the story. The protagonist, Walter, is a twelve-year-old who is deathly afraid of a certain government truck that often rumbles into his neighborhood. It has just driven through again, leaving Walter dreadfully distressed. He has made his way home to his mother, Cynthia Best.

His mom interrogates young Walter and learns that he was terrified that the abortion truck had come into his neighborhood in order to pick him up, figuring that his mom and dad had decided they didn't want him. Cynthia first asks him about this, holding his hand, but then becomes increasingly exasperated with what she regards as her son's obvious foolishness. Telling him to listen carefully, his mother explains that she and his dad would never send him to the County Facility to be aborted. "Anyhow," she explains, more or less impatiently, "You're too old. They only take children up to twelve."

But Walter is still afraid that he could be sent to the facility to have the air sucked out of his lungs because that very thing had happened to his friend, Jeff Vogel. So, his mother reasons with him. Her reasoning? The courts have decided that children twelve and older cannot be aborted because they have souls. The decision that they have souls is that at age 12 children can do calculus, therefore they have souls. It also turns out that the age at which the government has determined that children have souls and therefore cannot be aborted has been recently altered. When Walter responds that he doesn't feel like he has a soul, his mother replies in a perfunctory manner, "It's a legal matter, strictly according to age. And you're past the age."

By the way, while our attention as readers of "Pre-Persons" falls on **the government that invented the category of "pre-persons"** which is used to abort children eleven years old and

younger, Walter's mother, with her utter lack of moral empathy, is the ethical villain in the story. In fact, her lack of empathy makes her a kind of modern anti-Christ since she refuses to love her son as God so loved the world in the person and work of Christ.

“The Pre-Persons” brings into the light of day what I call the *P-Property Listing (P-PL) approach of bioethics.* In P-PL, a powerful someone (or a cabal of powerful Übermenschen) creates a list enumerating what they want the required characteristics to be for determining who will count as a *person*, that is, who will be granted human rights. [For an example of P-PL presented as a matter of so-called "Preference Utilitarianism," see Peter Singer, *Rethinking Life and Death* at <http://homepages.umflint.edu/~simoncu/115/115fall02/singer.htm>. Singer includes in his P-Property List "Capacity for physical, social and mental interaction with other beings; having conscious preferences for continued life; and having enjoyable experiences."]

**SAMPLE PROPERTIES THAT IDENTIFY AN INDIVIDUAL AS A PERSON ,
BUT ONLY ARBITRARILY**

(as in the Nazi death camps and in contemporary bioethics, such as Preference Utilitarianism)⁷

For the arbitrary political sorting of human beings into the PERSON line or the NOT-A-PERSON line

- a. Consciousness
- b. Capacity for physical, social and mental interaction with other beings
- c. Having conscious preferences for continued life
- d. Having enjoyable experiences

The list is applied to one individual after another, sorting the individual into one of two categories: PERSON or NON-PERSON. The individuals placed in the PERSON line receive moral or human rights; the individuals put into the NON-PERSON category do not.

In still other words, P-Property Listing or P-PL is the way of thinking practiced by the Nazis at Dachau and the other death camps in the middle of the last century. These days, Nazi thinking shows up as Utilitarianism, with its claim that the right thing to do is whatever leads to

the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people in the future. More recently promoted as Preference Utilitarianism, it's the way of thinking most prominent in mainstream arguments for death on demand (DOD). Clearly, "Utilitarianism is the ethic of Auschwitz." [See Alistair McIntyre, *After Virtue*, 232.]

A similar way of thinking is evident in online authorities such as the physicians' resource UpToDate regarding treatment for placenta previa, a condition during pregnancy in which the placental tissue extends over the interior of the mother's cervix. This physician's resource provides two clinical treatment options, depending on the *preference* of the mother either to continue her pregnancy or to abort her child, willy-nilly. [See Charles J Lockwood, MD, MHCM, Karen Russo-Stieglitz, MD. Placenta previa: Management. At <https://www.uptodate.com/contents/placenta-previa-management>.]

What then shall we say in response to this? Start with the moral revulsion you are feeling right now. Be distressed. Then consider the reason for your distress. Clearly, we are morally implicated if we remain indifferent to such P-PL reasoning from professors and politicians, just as the world was morally implicated at the time of the Holocaust by remaining indifferent to the P-PL reasoning of the Nazis. What are we to do? Arthur Caplan, a noted medical ethicist stated at a biomedical ethic conference, "The whole discipline of biomedical ethics rises from the ashes of the Holocaust." [Arthur Caplan in Robert Leiter, *Tainted Science*, Jewish World, July 14-20, 1989.]

TWO PASTORAL CARE TASKS, ACCORDING TO BONHOEFFER

“The knowledge of good and evil seems to be the aim of all ethical reflection. The first task of Christian ethics is to invalidate this knowledge” (*Ethics*, Part One, 21).

Task #1 – To end suffering by ending human lives appears to be the aim of nearly all bioethical or *bio-political* reflections. The first task of philosophy grounded in Christ Himself is to invalidate this calculus.

Task #2 – The second task of ethics done on the basis of Christ Himself is to bring the ultimate reality, Christ Himself, to people in His own words.

The Holocaust continues. This is because of Western culture's replacement of Christ the Life with a radically different savior – a discarnate savior of humankind's own creation. The replacement savior is science, a newer edition of Weimar science, in fact, with a superficial makeover that we today seem to be perfectly comfortable with. But the Bible explains quite explicitly that rejecting the Messiah (Hebrew), the Christ (Greek) is in reality idolatry, idolatry with sadly laughable consequences (see Psalm 2, for example).

The poet T.S. Eliot puts it in these haunting words.

The endless cycle of idea and action,
Endless invention, endless experiment,
Brings knowledge of motion, but not of stillness;
Knowledge of speech, but not of silence;
Knowledge of words, and ignorance of The Word.
All our knowledge brings us nearer to our ignorance,
All our ignorance brings us nearer to death ... (Eliot, *Choruses*, 6-12)

All our knowledge, including scientific knowledge that rejects Christ the Life, Christ the God Who Suffers, is what Jeremiah prophecies against, demanding that his listeners chose between the way of life and the way of death (Jeremiah 21:8). Christ Himself is the Way of Life (John 14:60). Knowledge without Christ is ignorance. Christ-less ignorance is the blacktop that paves the way of death. Thus our "Endless invention, endless experiment" only "brings us nearer

to death." The whirlwind of death on demand in our century is the predictable outcome of the sowing of secularism (the rejection of Christ and His Word) in earlier generations in the West. The substitution of information for Christ the Life has profound cultural consequences, such as Bonhoeffer reminds us from the early decade of the Holocaust. "What the West is doing is to refuse to accept its historical inheritance for what it is. The West is becoming hostile to Christ. This is the peculiar situation of our time and it is genuine decay" (*Ethics*).

Insurgency by Any Means Necessary: Amoral Science

NOTE: At this point, you may prefer to go directly to Step #2: Intel re Deontology and save my upcoming, gray font) Objection and Reply discussion of salvation by science for later. The briefer briefing resumes with my three paragraphs leading into [Intel re Deontology](#) below.

OBJECTION: "ETHICS SHOULD BE DONE *SCIENTIFICALLY*."

Kass's prophetic voice notwithstanding, there is a persistent objection to what I have begun to argue so far, in my analysis of the varieties of bioethics that seek to end all suffering by ending all suffering human beings. It is the objection that bioethics should be done scientifically, or not at all. In his Glass Man lectures, Kass identifies this objection as *scientism*, the modern penchant for relying on science for salvation that resulted in the Nazi's so-called *Final Solution* of death for millions in the name of science. This penchant has become a cultural dogma in our generation.

The modern propensity to look to science and only to science for all knowledge and thus for whatever salvation is ever to be had, is a fundamental of the bioethics of death on demand. Bioethics of most sorts depend upon our acquiescence to *scientific fundamentalism*. For example, Beuchanp and Childress, the dons of bioethics in the United States, mention in regard to their theses of a common morality which they tell us is "the set of norms shared by all persons committed to morality," that "... we need to consider how good the [anthropological] evidence is both for and against the existence of a

universal common morality. This is a nuanced problem. In principle, scientific research could either confirm or falsify the hypothesis of a universal morality."⁸

Based in part on their incoherent notion of normativity ("The appeals that we make to the common morality might be understood as normative, nonnormative, or both"), and in part on their reiteration of the Vienna Circle motto, "A statement is meaningful if and only if it is *at least in principle, empirically verifiable*,"⁹ it seems to be the case that they remain committed to a certain kind of scientific empiricism, namely, natural science empiricism or Logical Positivism. As I elucidate just below, Vienna Circle or Logical Positivism empiricism is wholly inadequate for ethics because, as Ludwig Wittgenstein explains in epistemological (theory of knowledge) detail, ethics lies beyond what the natural sciences can speak about.

Hume's Is / Ought Conundrum

[I]n every system of morality, which I have hitherto met with, I have always remarked, that the author proceeds for some time in the ordinary way of reasoning, and establishes the being of a God, or makes observations concerning human affairs; when of a sudden I am surprised to find, that instead of the usual copulations of propositions, is, and is not, I meet with no proposition that is not connected with an ought, or an ought not. This change is imperceptible; but is, however, of the last consequence. For as this ought, or ought not, expresses some new relation or affirmation, 'tis necessary that . . . a reason should be given, for what seems altogether inconceivable, how this new relation can be a deduction from the others, which are entirely different from it.¹⁰

⁸Beuchamp and Childress, *Principles of Biomedical Ethics*, 4. See also their brief mention of Common Morality Theory, 387-388. "Our common-morality theory does not hold that *customary* moralities qualify as part of the common morality." This is an example of *ad populum* fallacy with a twist of chronological snobbery.

⁹ The Logical Positivist A. J. Ayer argued scientifically that our ethical judgments are nothing but emotional and arbitrary reactions. "If I say to someone, 'You acted wrongly in stealing that money' . . . [then] I am simply evincing my moral disapproval of it. It is as if I had said, "You stole that money," in a peculiar tone of horror'. Alfred J. Ayer, *Language, Truth and Logic* (Dover Publications, second edition, 2002), 142.

¹⁰ David Hume, *Treatise of Human Nature* (Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1992), 469. For a fine treatment of Hume's influential formulation, see Shalina Stilley, *Natural Law Theory and the "Is"--"Ought" Problem:*

A Critique of Four Solutions at

https://epublications.marquette.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1059&context=dissertations_mu.

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In the 18th century, aspiring to become "the Isaac Newton of philosophy," David Hume articulated what he construed as the unbridged canyon between scientific facts (what "is" or "is not" the case) and ethical normativity ("ought" or "ought not."). Usually taken as a fundamental criticism of the validity of ethics over and against science, Hume's Is / Ought commentary reveals not that ethics is made up, but rather that the natural sciences are not competent to address the reality of the human dimension of ethical normativity. In his 20th-century *Tractatus Logico Philosophicus*, Ludwig Wittgenstein explains that what we cannot speak about scientifically, we should be quiet scientifically.

In light of bioethics' fundamentalist commitment to natural science, is it even plausible for anyone to argue that ethics must not be outsourced to the sciences, including medical science, as I am arguing? Well, the issue is not the plausibility of a change in the commitments of mainstream bioethics; actually, the issue is whether natural science is competent in the first place to provide knowledge of realities such as knowledge of who and what our human being type of being *is* in reality. After all, the human being is the subject of ethics.

The scientism or fundamentalism I am challenging is the presupposition of bioethics that knowledge, real knowledge, and facts, real facts, fall within the ambit and exclusive authority of scientists. A classical and commonsense response is what Aristotle says in the beginning of his *Nicomachean Ethics*: "Our discussion [of ethics] will be apropos if it has such clarity as is fitting its distinctive subject matter, for identical metrics are not to be sought alike in all discussions [of all disciplines]" (1094b). There is also the matter of how far scientific knowledge can get us, inasmuch as there is "no moral truth outside of persons and their relations."¹¹ Call this the issue of *epistemological boundaries*.

REPLY:

ETHICS AND GOD ARE BEYOND THE EPISTEMOLOGICAL BOUNDARY OF SCIENCE

¹¹ Engelhardt, *The Foundations of Christian Bioethics*, 285.

Philosophically speaking, this question about whether ethics is a matter for science is a metaphysical question. *Metaphysics* entails two disciplines in concert, epistemology and ontology. In other words, it calls for a disciplined epistemological and ontological consideration of who we are and how we know this. *Ontology* is the philosophical discipline in which we study kinds of beings. In the case of ethics this is our human type of being. Ontology is the topic of study for our second chapter. *Epistemology* is the philosophical discipline in which we think about knowledge itself, seeking robust and true answers to the questions What can we know? How can we know it? Can we be sure? To consider the epistemological failings of scientism or what I referred to as "bioethics' fundamentalism," let's consider Wittgenstein's 1921 *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*.

Tractatus is a "philosophical poem" (as it was called in Wittgenstein's 1951 obituary) arranged in a logical pattern of seven statements or propositions and meticulously designated subpoints. Wittgenstein referred to its presentation as "heavily syncopated" philosophy. The first proposition leads resolutely toward the seventh, which signals a sort of musical *DC al capo*, urging us to repeat the propositional riffs of *Tractatus* over and over again. The instrumental purpose of this repetition, as seen in the penultimate three propositions (6.522, 6.53 and 6.54) is for us to mature in distinguishing between what can be said and thought clearly, leading us to be silent about what falls outside the reach of our thinking. Here are the first and last propositions.

1. The world is everything that is the case. (*Die Welt ist alles, was der Fall ist*, German.)

[***]

7. Whereof one cannot speak, thereof one must be silent. (*Wovon man nicht sprechen kann, darüber muss man schweigen*, German.)¹²

¹² See the "Triglotta" *Tractatus* at <https://people.umass.edu/klement/tlp/> for the complete text from which I am providing select quotes.

Wittgenstein's working understanding of "the world," however, is not "the universe" or "reality as a whole." Rather, and for the sake of his project in *Tractatus*, it is "the world as understood by the natural sciences."¹³ As he states in the book's Introduction,

The whole sense of the book might be summed up the following words: what can be said at all can be said clearly, and what we cannot talk about we must pass over in silence. Thus the aim of the book is to draw a limit to thought, or rather--not to thought, but to the expression of thoughts: for in order to be able to draw a limit to thought, we should have to find both sides of the limit thinkable (i.e. we should have to be able to think what cannot be thought). It will therefore only be in language that the limit can be drawn, and what lies on the other side of the limit will simply be nonsense.

The way he approaches his study of knowledge in language in this early work is to assume for the sake of hypothesis that scientific thought as articulated in language will be the thinking to which the limit can be drawn. This means that the framing propositions can be understood this way.

1. "The world [as we know it scientifically] is all that is the case."

[***]

7. "Whereof one cannot speak [of scientifically], thereof one must be silent [scientifically]."

My paraphrases of propositions 1 and 7 as *scientific* thinking and *scientific* speaking are warranted by this elaboration within the body of *Tractatus*.

4.1 Propositions represent the existence and non-existence of states of affairs.

4.11 The totality of true propositions is the whole of natural science

4.111 Philosophy is not one of the natural sciences.

4.112 Philosophy aims at the logical clarification of thoughts. Philosophy is not a body of doctrine but an activity. A philosophical work consists essentially of elucidations. Without philosophy thoughts are, as it were, cloudy and indistinct: its task is to make them clear and to give them sharp boundaries.

4.1122 Darwin's theory has no more to do with philosophy than any other hypothesis in natural science.

4.113 Philosophy sets limits to the much-disputed sphere of natural science.

4.121 Propositions cannot represent logical form: it is mirrored in them.

4.1212 What can be shown, cannot be said.

4.2 The sense of a proposition is its agreement and disagreement with possibilities of existence

¹³ "[Wittgenstein's] view is that only the propositions of the natural sciences can be said. ... Let us call this his scientism." Avrum Stroll, *Wittgenstein* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2002), 57.

and non-existence of states of affairs.

4.21 The simplest kind of proposition, an elementary proposition, asserts the existence of a state of affairs.

4.211 It is a sign of a proposition's being elementary that there can be no elementary proposition contradicting it.

In the logical space of propositions 2-6 Wittgenstein introduces and elaborates a philosophy of speaking scientifically about the world in terms of "atomic facts" articulated in logically by "elementary sentences," the totality of which would form our scientific knowledge of the world. So, in *Tractatus* "words" mean "scientifically intelligible words", "propositions" means "scientifically informed propositions", "what makes sense" means "what makes sense scientifically", "what can be said" means "what can be said scientifically", and so on; whereas references to "what is shown, or manifested" are references to aspects of reality that fall beyond the purview of contemporary science because they remain beyond scientific methodology and terminology.

Yet even as he is obsessively plotting the limits to scientific thinking from within that particular kind of thinking, Wittgenstein takes note of realities that cannot be thought scientifically and which therefore cannot be spoken of scientifically. Unlike the Logical Positivists of his day who insisted that whatever doesn't fit into scientific thinking and saying is nonsense, Wittgenstein (who demurred to ally himself with the Positivists) acknowledged realities that could not be said scientifically. For example, as paraphrased according to my reading that *Tractatus* is about the limits to *scientific* thinking, here are select propositions from proposition 6, part of which we know that Wittgenstein wrote while facing death in the trench warfare of WW I.

6.4 All [scientific] propositions are of equal value.

6.41 The sense of the [scientifically-knowable] world must lie outside the world [understood scientifically]. In the world [known scientifically] everything is as it is, and everything happens as it does happen: in it no value exists--and if it did exist, it would have no value. If there is any value that does have value, it must lie outside the whole sphere of what happens and is the case [scientifically speaking]. For all that happens and is the case is accidental. What makes it non-

accidental cannot lie within the [scientific] world, since if it did it would itself be accidental. It must lie outside the world [as known by science].

6.42 So too it is impossible for there to be [scientific] propositions of ethics. [Scientific] propositions can express nothing that is higher.

6.421 It is clear that ethics cannot be put into [scientific] words. Ethics is transcendental [or beyond the ambit of scientific knowledge]. (Ethics and aesthetics are one and the same.)

(...)

6.431 So too at death the [scientific] world does not alter, but comes to an end.

6.4311 Death is not an event in life: we do not live to experience death. If we take eternity [scientifically] to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present. Our life has no end in just the way in which our visual field has no limits.

(...)

6.4312 (...) The solution of the riddle of life in space and time lies outside space and time. (It is certainly not the solution of any problems of natural science that is required.)

6.432 How things are in the [scientific] world is a matter of complete indifference for what is higher. God does not reveal himself in the [scientific] world.

6.4321 The [scientific] facts all contribute only to setting the problem, not to its solution.

6.44 It is not how things are in the [scientific] world that is mystical [being beyond scientific knowing], but that it exists.

6.45 To view the world *sub specie aeterni* is to view it as a whole--a limited whole. Feeling the world as a limited whole--it is this that is mystical [being beyond scientific knowing].

6.5 When the answer cannot be put into words, neither can the question be put into words. The riddle does not exist [for scientific thinking]. If a {scientific} question can be framed at all, it is also possible to answer it [scientifically].

6.51 Scepticism is not irrefutable, but obviously nonsensical, when it tries to raise doubts where no questions can be asked. For doubt can exist only where a question exists, a question only where an answer exists, and an answer only where something can be said [scientifically].

6.52 We feel that even when all possible scientific questions have been answered, the problems of life remain completely untouched. Of course there are then no questions left, and this itself is the answer.

(...)

6.522 There are, indeed, things that cannot be put into [scientific] words. They make themselves manifest. They are what is mystical [being beyond scientific knowing].

6.53 The correct method in philosophy would really be the following: to say nothing except what can be said, i.e. propositions of natural science--i.e. something that has nothing to do with philosophy -- and then, whenever someone else wanted to say something metaphysical [being beyond scientific knowing], to demonstrate to him that he had failed to give a [scientific] meaning to certain signs in his propositions. Although it would not be satisfying to the other person--he would not have the feeling that we were teaching him philosophy--this method would be the only strictly correct one.

In an important sense, then, *Tractatus* is all about ethics and normative reasoning. The important sense is this: Ethical thinking lies beyond scientific abductive and inductive reasoning and it lies beyond the scientific solving of (merely) scientific problems.

In reality, it isn't strange to you, for **the point of the book is ethical**. I once wanted to give a few words in the foreword which now actually are not in it, which, however, I'll write to you now because they might be a key to you: I wanted to write that **my work consists of two parts: of the one which is here, and of everything which I have *not* written. And precisely this second part is the important one.** For the Ethical is delimited from within, as it were, by my book; and I'm convinced that, *strictly* speaking, it can **ONLY** be delimited in this way. In brief, I think: All of that which *many* are *babbling* today, I have defined in my book by remaining silent about it.¹⁴

Here is what Wittgenstein is helping us to see for ourselves: How it is that, when language is confined to speaking logically according to what a scientist or mathematician would take to be logically complete, there remain features of reality that stubbornly keep showing up in our human form of life? In other words, some aspects of life as it is can be said, and said clearly, according to what we could identify as "natural science logic;" notwithstanding, other aspects of life cannot be said in this scientific mode. These items that cannot be said scientifically but nonetheless continue to show up in our human *Lebensform* or form of life are ethics, aesthetics, and God.

In light of this epistemological tutoring from Wittgenstein's *Tractatus*, we learn first that the dogma that science is the only source of real knowledge depends on the fallacy of begging the question. By "begging the question" I mean that modern science assumes a world view (naturalism) without either

¹⁴ Cited in Ray Monk, *Ludwig Wittgenstein: The Duty of Genius* (New York: The Free Press, A Division of Macmillan, Inc., 1990), 178. Bold print added.

identifying this as an assumption or defending its worth philosophically. Secondly, we see that the epistemological fundamentalism on which much of bioethics, including its generation of "bioethical dilemmas," depends is, at bottom, the scientism which Kass warns us against, and not circumspect scientific reasoning at all. In fact, scientific reasoning is only one way of reasoning (that is, reasoning inductively and abductively), but not a way of reasoning (namely, reasoning normatively) that is competent for the task of moral reasoning in the first place because it is not normative thinking.

Let me apply this epistemological recognition to a concrete example of an argument for physician-assisted suicide. The argument is a case of thanatoethics from a doctor of medicine. (Please insert your favorite emotive icon for *irony* here.)

In the penultimate paragraph of her article, "May Doctors Help You to Die?"¹⁵ Marcia Angell, Senior Lecturer at Harvard Medical School and former Editor in Chief of *The New England Journal of Medicine*, asserts that "not all suffering can be adequately relieved ..." and concludes "Why should anyone -- the state, the medical profession, or anyone else -- presume to tell someone else how much suffering they must endure as their life is ending?" This is an egregious instance of question-begging (in the sense of imposing one's worldview on the rest of us without warrant or explanation) when clarity of world view is precisely what is at issue for us. Angell presumes a particular anthropology (a version of materialism in which the termination of life is taken to be the end of the person and his experiences) and assumes a particular ethic (a radicalized autonomy in which the patient has an unalienable right to death). On the basis of her presuppositions she recommends that the state and the medical profession ought to help us and our loved ones die whenever we are suffering in ways that medical science cannot alleviate. So, ought doctors to help us die whenever medical science cannot remedy our suffering?

¹⁵ Marcia Angell, *New York Review of Books*, 11 October 2012.

In fact, since at least the time of Plato Western thought has been characterized by an open-mindedness toward our human intuition of personal immortality, with Stoic and epicurean anomalies to be sure (see Acts 17). The major current of Judean-Christian thought that has formed Western culture entails the conviction that God has made us in His image and has personally redeemed us immortals. Creedal Christians today – not only official political voices in “the Catholic Church” as Angell has it – continue to confess the longstanding conviction in the resurrection of the body in church, in their apologetics and at graveside. It is within the framework of human-as-immortal – and not on a loosely Darwinian presumption of human-as-temporary-organism – that we recognize suffering as something other than merely the pain of an animal. To treat bioethics as veterinary ethics is a category mistake of momentous consequence to all of us as doctors and nurses, as patients and as sufferers. I mean to say “to us as compassionate human beings caring for our fellow human beings ethically.”

Those of us who care for our suffering and dying loved ones at home, in hospital and in hospice and who care about our fellow human beings, not willing that anyone should be misled about their suffering particularly *in the midst of their suffering*, ought to insist on a prerequisite for Marcia Angell and all who presume to lead in this conversation. Those of us who write and who teach bioethics ought first and always, on pain of transgressing against human beings in extremis and against their caregivers in their vocations of caregiving, to provide a coherent and full philosophical anthropology, as Leon Kass has been urging for a generation now. Suffering human beings deserve to see for themselves, for example, whether professors and policy advocates such as Angell have a human understanding of who we are as human beings who suffer before we will entertain their arguments that doctors (of all professionals!) ought to “help us die,” in keeping with their arbitrary principles and their bioethics of death on demand.

Could it be that this article's argument is actually reducible to the claim that, in order to alleviate the *Angst* and suffering of medical practitioners and other members of our society over the suffering that they are impotent to alleviate in others, doctors should help people die? The problem lies in its unexamined presuppositions. As it stands, Angell's argument is a hubristic and brutal argument for the clinical termination of suffering persons on the assumption that medical practitioners ought to end the life of a human being who is suffering, *notwithstanding that medical science does not know whether the human being may be genuinely immortal nor can it conceive that human suffering is not merely animal pain.*

(1) First problem: It's not that we have two competing philosophical anthropologies here; actually, Angell provides no anthropology whatever. She merely promotes a (presupposed) biologically reductive notion of human being while overwriting ethical dilemmas with political and legal referenda. The author of the NYR article is being dogmatic, not reasonable, with her supposition that, since her science has no room for considering human personal immortality, therefore the human being is not immortal and can be terminated at will with no further consequences to consider. This physician's position is opinionated dogmatism. It is a refusal to engage in ethical reflection. It is also unscientific in that it presumes to know what science as such cannot know, one way or the other. Think of Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* and its Proposition 7. Whereof one cannot speak scientifically, thereof one ought to remain silent scientifically.

(2) Second problem: To anticipate the objection that I am looking for a medical doctor to take into consideration the scriptural elucidations of human suffering and human immortality is not a religious demand on my part. It is a reasonable expectation to consider the biblical text inasmuch as it has been formative and even normative for Western ethics until very recently. Furthermore, despite the common myth that religion is a private matter, there is nothing private about the Christian faith, nor is

there a lack of historical evidence regarding resurrection and personal immortality. The claims of creedal Christianity are well documented, apologetically articulated and, by the way, empirically verifiable if, that is, you're willing to accept historical verifications of past events and to make your wager against Paschal that you will not exist to experience for yourself the God of the Bible empirically after your biology comes to a stop.

To urge and to lobby for physician-assisted suicide, given the question-begging character and the failure to engage the Western ethical tradition (including Hippocratic medical ethics) of this physician's writing strikes me as a pernicious form of *argumentum ad ignorantium*. The case for physician-assisted suicide on the basis of Angell's medical science expertise, upon further review, does not exhibit normative thinking. Therefore, her assertion in favor of physician-assisted suicide is not ethical. Her case for suicide-by-physicians may, of course, still turn out to be powerful and persuasive in the sense of Nietzsche's will to power. That is, it may be successful as a project of medical and political *Übermensch*; notwithstanding, it is not ethical.

Let me conclude this critical analysis of bioethical reasoning as it is with one more epistemological recognition, courtesy of the author of *Tractatus*. Wittgenstein provides us with the metaphor of Mapping the Ocean by Walking the Island."

My work consists of two parts: the one presented here plus all that I have not written. And it is precisely this second part that is the important one" (Wittgenstein, Letter to Ludwig Ficker of circa September-October 1919).

When he nevertheless takes immense pains to delimit the unimportant [i.e. to mark "the limits of language", which is the first part, (logic and "what can be put into words")], it is not the coastline of that island [i.e. the first part] which he is bent on surveying with such meticulous accuracy, but [instead] the boundary of the ocean [the second part: the mystical].

(Engelmann, Memoir, tr. Furtmüller, McGuinness)¹⁶

¹⁶ Robert Wesley Angelo, at <http://www.roangelo.net/logwitt/logwit10.html>, accessed September 2017.

Here is my guiding question for Christ the Life – which I call *Zoë-ethics*, following Aristotle’s and the Greek New testament’s term for human life – as an antidote to the death on demand ethos of bioethics: *But what if the Ocean has come onto the Island?* In a series of BBC radio talks made between 1941 and 1944, which we know as the book *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis spoke of God's incarnation as "the great invasion." My argument is that the incarnation of God in the person of Jesus the Messiah is "the great tsunami," epistemologically speaking. That is to say, there is a case to be made as to why we ought to think and act *tamquam a Deo data est*, or “as if the God of the Bible is a given.”

If the historical datum of the incarnation is not amenable to scientific thinking, so much the worse for scientific thinking. There are more things in heaven and earth than are thought and said scientifically (see *Tractatus*, as well as the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures). If meaning, value, ethics and God are beyond the limits of scientific reasoning, then clearly we need to go above and beyond the natural sciences in our efforts to reason ethically, to do the normative thinking that any undertaking which presents itself as an "ethics" must engage in, on pain of equivocation or worse.



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It is often asserted that philosophy is the discipline of thinking rationally but without recourse to biblical revelation. But this is a modern, unwarranted restriction.¹⁷ Philosophy, as we know from the Greek and the Mediaeval philosophers, originally aspired to the love of wisdom in an open-minded manner, seeking to be reasonable about all claims to true knowledge. This from the philosophically-educated apostle, Saint Paul. These first two chapters of 1 Corinthians are the basis for what we Lutheran pastors know as the theology of the cross.

I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ...

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written,

“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,
what God has prepared for those who love him”—

these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God (1 Corinthians 2:2 and 6-11).

Consider that the Ocean has come onto the Island of human thinking and perceiving. What wisdom may we acquire about the life and death topics that mainstream bioethics has assimilated under its globe-spanning tent? What wisdom may we acquire of our type of being, the *human* being, for our normative thinking, for our ethics, for our life together?

NOTE: Here is where the briefer form of today's briefing, Briefing #3, continues.

A much briefer way to recognize the unsuitability for science (physics, biology, and so on) for ethical decision making of any kind, is to consider the following quote from Kurt Marquart. Marquart is

¹⁷ See my Session One, Philosophy's Aboutness," accessible at <http://onlineinfo.cuw.edu/go/philosophy-mooc>. *The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

writing about the unsuitability of science for biblical hermeneutics (that is, biblical interpretation), but it applies as well to the bioethics that promulgate death on demand (DOD).

Science has neither use nor room for privileged authorities or sacrosanct texts. It recognizes only observations, experiments, logical inferences based on them, and, reluctantly, whatever axioms or assumptions are necessary to sustain these operations (*Anatomy of an Explosion*, 120).

In other words, science insofar as it is scientific, has no room for the scriptures – whether these are the American Scriptures such as the Declaration and the Constitution; or the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, the Bible. It has no room for the biblical Scriptures because it rejects any ultimate authority or norm other than its own methodology and scientifically reduced worldview. The biblical authority that science as science rejects is Christ Himself, who states categorically, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth!” For my ethics classes, I paraphrase His declaration as “All *normativity* has been given to me in heaven and on earth” (Matthew 28:18). This explains why scientists are reluctant to speak scientifically about ethics. Science is non-moral because it is non-normative. [My analysis is a hard-headed philosophical analysis. For a conversational consideration of Reasons Scientists Avoid Thinking about Ethics see Paul Root Wolpe’s article at [https://www.cell.com/fulltext/S0092-8674\(06\)00676-3](https://www.cell.com/fulltext/S0092-8674(06)00676-3).]

Notwithstanding the nonmoral character of the sciences, **for some unreasonable reason bioethicists for the most part insist upon making scientific pronouncements about ethics on scientific grounds.** Strictly speaking, scientific pronouncements about ethics of any kind are what readers of Wittgenstein will recognize as nonsensical. Scientism, the faith that the sciences will save us, either now or in the future is idolatry and insurgency against Christ, to whom all normative authority has been given – philosophically speaking, it doesn’t pass the smell test.

Intel re Deontology (duty-driven ethics)

As I have been arguing while presenting intel on bioethics and death on demand (DOD) in our 21st century, mainstream bioethics is an insurgency. That is, it's an insurgency against Christ the Life and His Word. Recall Nietzsche's parable of The Madman and his diagnosis of the death of God in Western culture. But the biomedical ethics, or **the bioethics of DOD is also an insurgency against Western culture**. Recognizing bioethics as a cultural insurgency is important for us pastors and professors who are obliged by Christ's authority to be baptizing and teaching His commands to all nations (Matthew 28). In my regular ethics courses at my university, I can demonstrate the cultural insurgency of the ethics behind DOD as we study the entire history of Western ethics, from the inquiry into the universal ethical norm in Plato's Euthyphro in the fourth century B.C. down to our twenty-first century A.D. But for the purposes of this briefing, it will work to consider just the eighteenth-century ethics of Immanuel Kant, known as *deontological ethics*. **Deontological ethics is a powerful counter-ethics to Utilitarianism and radicalized autonomy.**

Kant's (Derivative) Deontology, Or Duty-Driven Ethics

Deontological is derived from the Greek New Testament term *déō* for "to bind" or "bind together" ... It is also used figuratively for the marriage bond (Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:26, 39). God's word is *not* bound (2 Timothy 2:9), according to the Little Kittel. In its original concept, then, a deontological ethics is about doing our duty to one another as human beings. Of course, the question of the ethical norm remains crucial: Are we bound together in our ethical duty by local customs? Or, is it something in our shared human being? Are we bound by the tie that binds us, meaning the love with which God first loved us (1 John 4:19)?

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While teaching bioethics over the years, I have come to realize that, as a general rule, untried innovations in medical technology and procedures on humans are passionately promoted on the basis of how happy this (allegedly) will make many more people in the future. This is Utilitarianism. Only later, in the light of reality, questions are raised about whether we are fulfilling our duty to our fellow human beings if they are being used as a means to an imaginary future goal. This is deontological, or duty-driven ethics.

Immanuel Kant's deontological ethics come to a focus in his categorical imperative, a single reasonable approach to how we identify our duty to one another as fellow human beings. The tie that binds for Kant is our shared human rationality. His singular categorical imperative can be expressed in three, mutually reinforcing ways.

Deontology: Kant's Categorical Imperative, Put Three Different Ways
from his 1785 *Foundations of the Metaphysics of Morals*

"Act only according to that maxim whereby you can at the same time will that it should become a universal law."

Schulz's paraphrase: *Instead of sitting back and letting your pastor tell you what to do and not do, imagine yourself in God's position. Be sure to act always in line with a moral law that you know to be objective, universal, and intelligible.*

"Act in such a way that you treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of another, always at the same time as an end and never simply as a means."

Schulz's paraphrase: *As a rational human being yourself, never degrade other human beings or yourself by treating any human being as merely a means to an end.*

"A rational being belongs to the kingdom of ends as a member when he legislates it in universal laws while also being himself subject to these laws. He belongs to it as sovereign, when as legislator he is himself subject to the will of no other."

Schulz's paraphrase: *We exhibit our ethics in our actual moral practices. Are you taking your autonomous being seriously? That is to say, are you both a dutiful law-maker and a dutiful law-follower?*

Also, see Master Metaphors for Philosophy, Metaphor 7 at www.whatdoesthismean.org

Here, in these Four Briefings under our title, *The Fellowship of His Sufferings*, do you hear a familiar voice in this categorical deontological imperative? Kant's imperative is a knock-off of the Lord Jesus' words in both the Hebrew and Greek Testaments (see Leviticus 19:18 and Matthew 7:12). But it is a knock-off that deletes Jesus and everything He is and says. In Kant's ethics, the norm is relocated from Christ the Life to human rationality. We in the West have not recovered from this body blow. Notwithstanding, Kant's ethics is better than the alternatives – and richer intellectually and ethically – because of its original source, the Bible. Heaven and earth will pass away, but the Word of Christ, even at one remove, exhibits its authority or normativity.

Kierkegaard's Originalist Deontology

I refer to Kant as the Professor Emeritus of the European Enlightenment. The Enlightenment Project's Motto amounts to this: *Etsi Deus Non Daretur*, or [Things will be better if we act] As if God Is Not a Given.

However, Kant's Enlightenment deontology is derived from a biblical, 3rd Petition understanding of ethics. Kant's categorical imperative is derivative. Call the original from which it is derived **biblical deontology**. The original, biblical deontology is featured at the conclusion of Solomon's notably philosophical book, Ecclesiastes. Here is the conclusion of the book from the end of chapter 12.

The words of the wise are like goads, and like nails firmly fixed are the collected sayings; they are given by one Shepherd. My son, beware of anything beyond these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is a weariness of the flesh.

The end of the matter; all has been heard. Fear God and keep his commandments, for this is the whole duty of man. For God will bring every deed into judgment, with every secret thing, whether good or evil.

Now, there is not a discreet word in Solomon's Hebrew text for *duty*, as in “the whole duty of man.” The Hebrew Tanakh translation renders this passage as “Revere God and observe His commandments! For this applies to all mankind.” The tie that binds us all is not latent in human rationality, as Kant

hypothesized. Rather, we are bound to one another metaphysically in the LORD incarnate, Christ Himself. “Blest be the tie that binds our hearts,” as we sing. That tie is not an abstraction, a thing-in-itself within the core of humanity – far less is it something that we in humanity, or in philosophy, or in the church generate. As we shall see in our fourth briefing, it originates in, and is sustained unendingly by God’s heart’s desire. Our duty toward God has its origin in the Triune God Himself. No Christ, no tie that binds. No Christ, no recognition and doing of our God-given duty toward one another as human beings. This is the Life we have lost in living in the two centuries since the Enlightenment.

In the generation after Kant, the Lutheran author Søren Kierkegaard reconnected Kant’s deontology with biblical deontology by equating deontology with a much more familiar term.

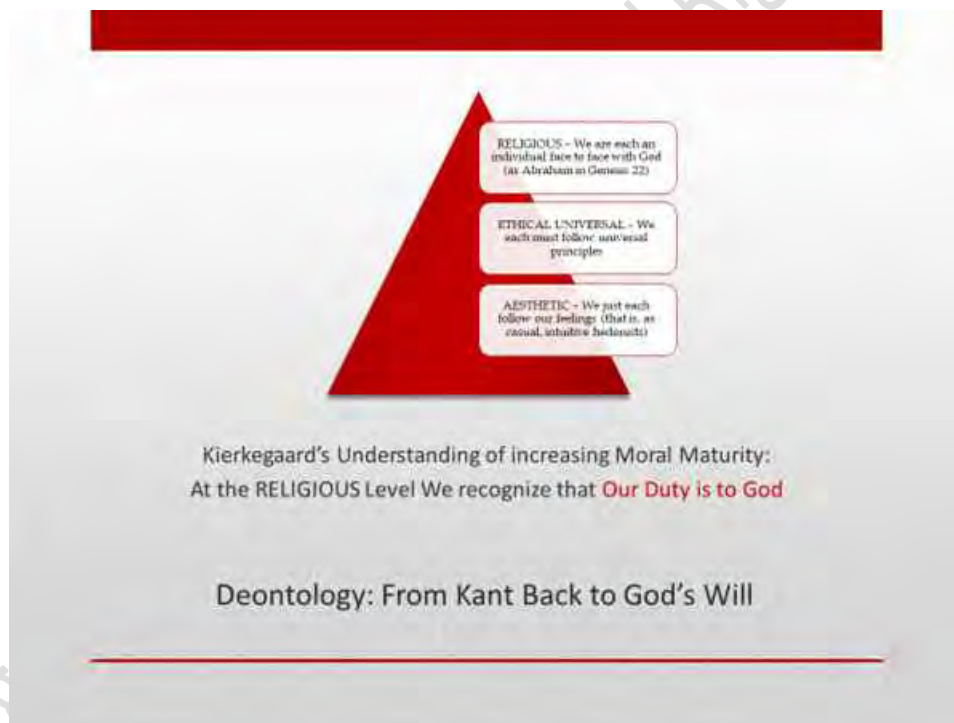
[Taking to heart Genesis 22 and Abraham’s test.] A Temptation; but what does that mean? That which ordinarily tempts a human, to be sure, is whatever would keep him from doing his duty, but here the temptation is the ethical itself, which would keep him from doing God’s will. But what then is the duty? **Well, the duty is precisely the expression for God’s will.** Here the necessity of a new category for understanding Abraham becomes apparent (Søren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling*).

Kierkegaard’s point, in large part, is that ethics apart from the expressed will of the living God is wholly inadequate for human beings, for the entire human race. Such a fundamental criticism of ethics, although it is reasonable, is not a gnostic or purely intellectual undertaking; on the contrary, it leads us to an anxious, existential resurrecting to a new life *KATA CHRISTON*, in Christ Himself. Or, to put it another way, Kierkegaard has taken the claim of the Enlightenment that we will have a better, more ethical, flourishing life if only we can stop treating Christ and the Bible as the given Norm – and he has reduced it to absurdity.

Further, Kierkegaard does not leave it at that. He offers everyone of his readers the opportunity to re-think, to repent, and to experience life to the fullest by trusting themselves utterly – not to human moral conventions and truncated ethics, but – to the very words of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

Kierkegaard provides the antidote to Kant’s prototype autonomy (the same impulse that we identified in

our first briefing as the radicalized autonomy that licenses doctors to kill their patients for their own “entirely selfish” goals). But the antidote is not another ethics from another moral innovator! No, it is a return to Christ and the Bible that he provides in *Fear and Trembling*. The book is an extended, full-out Lutheran return to the verbatim text of Genesis 22 in an existential mode. By *existential*, I mean returning to human life and existence as it really is, in direct opposition to Kant’s optimistic scientism and theoretical grounding of morality in fallen mankind. By *existential* I also mean returning to Christ the Life as He really is, in His own Person and His own words. In fact, as we shall see in Briefing #4, Kierkegaard reintroduces Christ the Life into the Western study of ethics, as the ground, the standard, the norm, the necessary condition for living life.



At this juncture, I will simply say that, much as Goedel demonstrated as a mathematician that math requires a wider reality beyond math to uphold its mathematical theorems, Kierkegaard with his Lutheran sensibilities and his reading of the Scriptures – in short, as the Lutheran existentialist that he is

– demonstrates the necessity of the God of Abraham above and beyond ethics, for the practice of ethics in our lives today.

Linchpin analysis of Ethical Force Today + the operational takeaway

I began this briefing by mentioning that its linchpin concept is *person*. It is the linchpin concept of *person*. What does it mean to be a person? Who counts as a person? Who decides who counts as a person? In his *An Intelligent Person's Guide to Philosophy*, Roger Scruton says, “The most important task for philosophy in the modern world is to resurrect the human person, to rescue it from trivializing science, and to replace the sarcasm which knows that we are merely animals, with the irony which sees that we are not” (97). I promised that I would articulate the counterinsurgency of Christ the Life for resurrection of the human person. Don’t you agree that Scruton’s call for a resurrection of *person* is a call for a counterinsurgency against ethics as taught in the West in the twenty-first century?

Who Counts as Persons

Person is a theological concept. Its meaning is known only as the result of the biblical teaching of the Holy Trinity, the biblical teaching of the two natures in Christ, and our agonizing in the church through the centuries over how best to preach, teach, and confess these revealed realities. A couple of decades back, I bulked up for teaching medieval philosophy by reading Étienne Gilson’s books. There I first learned that the Western concept of person comes from the Trinitarian controversies that produced the universal Christian creeds. Since then, I have found a more complete and inspiring account of *person* in a chapter from Joseph Ratzinger’s *Dogma and Preaching: Applying Christian Doctrine to Daily Life*, Chapter 4. On the Understanding of “Person” in Theology (181-196).

With trinitarian exuberance, Ratzinger elaborates in biblical and historical detail how we may understand the image of God with which the human race was stamped in Eden is Person-al (as in three persons, yet one God).

Two conclusions. First, **the term “person” developed out of acquaintance with Scripture**, as a requirement for interpreting it. It is a product of familiarity with the Bible... And, second ... the Bible with its phenomenon of the speaking God, with its phenomenon of the God who is *in* dialogue, called forth the concept of person... [The term “person”] expresses the idea of dialogue and of God as the dialogical Being... Based on this knowledge of God, man’s own nature has become clear to him in a new way (185-186).

Next, with a Christ-centered resolve reminiscent of the Lutheran theology of the cross, Ratzinger applies biblical and theological Christology to the meaning of the human person.

In considering the question about the essence of life... **[the scientific concept of man has to face the paradigm-altering evidence of Christ Himself, God in human flesh**, my paraphrase, GPS]. In Christ is manifested for the first time the truth about what is meant by the riddle named “man.” Scripture expresses this by calling Christ the last Adam or “the second man”. Thus it characterizes him as the genuine fulfillment of the idea “man”, in which the orientation of the creature “man” first becomes fully evident... In fact, this concept of person (or, more exactly, the new dimension that has become evident here) has served again and again as fuel in intellectual history and has moved development forward even long after it had come to a halt in theology (192).

How energizing this is! As Jesus says, “I have come that you may have *zoë*-life and have it superabundantly” (John 10:10). Jesus Himself in His own words – this is the means of our cold counterinsurgency against the bioethics of death on demand. Christ the Life is being pre-censored, the Gospel of Christ is being suppressed. We have a counter-message in the Word of Christ. If we can only live up to our mission of pastoral care.

Next: Mission Briefing #4, The Fellowship of His Sufferings and the Language of Lament on Today’s Urban Battlefield. In the fellowship of His sufferings – dismissed!

MISSION BRIEFING #4 OF 4

The Fellowship of His Sufferings and the Language of Lament on Today's Urban Battlefield

The objective for this final mission briefing is to equip you for *thinking and acting pastorally* in regard to suffering persons with (1) a working recognition of God's will in relation to suffering persons in the City of Autonomy and suffering persons who are citizens of the City of God, by (2) ministering to suffering souls in both cities by delivering Christ Himself in His own words.

I shall be framing this as pastoral care in relation to the pivotal role of God's revealed will for every human being, both for the citizens who assert their own autonomy (the City of Autonomy) and those who pray that God's will be done (the City of God). Once again, Bonhoeffer provides our objective as a succinct pastoral care core value:

The world is not divided between Christ and the devil, but, whether it recognizes it or not, is solely and entirely the world of Christ... Any static marking-out of a region which belongs to the devil and another region which belongs to Christ is a denial of the reality of God's having reconciled the whole world with Himself in Christ (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Part One, 201-202).

In order to achieve this objective of equipping you to do pastoral care as a *cold counter-insurgency* in our century of death on demand (DOD), I shall provide you with ...

- ✓ A modern adaptation of Augustine's classical way of navigating the terrain in which we carry out Search and Rescue (SAR) of souls. This is the terrain of the City of God and the City of Man.
- ✓ A crystal-clear vision of the rock-solid foundation on which our pastoral care mission rests. This is what we call in philosophy *epistemology*, our response to the questions of what we know, how we know it and can we be sure – as we bring Christ via Word and Sacrament to suffering persons in both cities.
- ✓ A suffering-centered reconsideration of pastoral care and mission.

The lynchpin issue for today's intel and analysis is **language, the language of biblical lament.**

- è This recon is for the pastoral purpose of comforting suffering people with the right means, the only effective means for pastoral care of the suffering and the dying. Christ the Life, Christ the God who tabernacled among us in human flesh – the incarnation of God is the shock and awe Gospel that is our duty to deliver to suffering persons in both cities. **The means of grace are the means of ministry and pastoral care created by God especially for reaching suffering people.** We must make this crystal-clear as we carry out our divine mission.

As you were! "Integrity First" is a core value of military service. It is also the core value of pastoral ministry. But, as always, everything hinges on being sure that we understand the meaning of the words used. In business and leadership seminars, as in the US Force's so-called Little Blue Book of core values, *integrity* is taught as if it is an individual's character trait, as in "He's an officer with strong personal principles, an officer of integrity." But that understanding is not accurate. Nor is it helpful for



developing military core values. The question to ask is, “What are you integrous *with*?” After all, “integrity” and “integer” are from the same source. They both mean “whole” or “of one piece.” So, the question is, “What is a person of a piece *with*, what is he integrous *with*?”

For example, in his book from the Hebrew Scriptures, we learn that Job was a “person of integrity” (Hebrew, *tamim*) whose integrity was unsurpassed in the world of his day. From the first verses of Job 1 to the conclusion of Job 42, we learn that Job was of a piece with – that he was integrous with – the LORD God, even while under unrelenting friendly fire in barrage after barrage from his friends, Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar (never mind Elihu). In other words, Job’s thinking, speaking, acting were one with God’s will.

Integrity first. In military parlance, this is (or should be) a powerful way of cultivating unit cohesion around a common core or singular heart. For our pastoral care mission, we can appropriate the terminology of unit cohesion, but the more familiar, biblical term for our unit cohesion as members of Christ and ministers of the Gospel is actually *will*, God’s will. And therein hangs a tale of twos.

It is a tale of two definitions of *freewill*. In the history Western thought, there are two definitions of freewill: **Modern Definition of Freewill**: Our twenty-first century default definition of "freewill" is one of personal autonomy, what I called in Briefing #1 and our discussion of Physician Zero "radicalized autonomy." But this autonomous concept of freewill is a relatively new-fangled Enlightenment replacement for the traditional and biblical concept of freewill first taught by Augustine and long taken for granted in Western thought – until modernity, that is.

Traditional Western Definition of Freewill: In my teaching, I explain Augustine's understanding of *freewill* as the person’s will being in harmony with God's will – this versus the current, pre-supposed notion of *freewill as autonomy* introduced by Immanuel Kant in the eighteenth century. On the basis of Augustine's 5th-century Story of the Pears (*Confessions*, Book 2) and then by this Augustinian concept

as exemplified in J. R. R. Tolkien's twentieth-century *Silmarillion*, for example, we come to see that the traditional definition of freewill is a necessary condition for Christian ethics in our day.

One more thing on freewill. Whereas the modern definition of freewill leads to radicalized autonomy, the traditional definition makes the case for radicalized harmony. Radicalized autonomy is accomplished via the Death of God. It results in death on demand. By contrast, radicalized harmony is accomplished by Christ the Life via the words He has taught us to pray. Think of the Third Petition, “Thy will be done ...” Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God. Praying the Word Christ has given us to pray harmonizes our entire person with God’s will. This is because the Lord’s Prayer is means of grace. It’s verbatim Scripture. The Lord’s Prayer and verbatim Scripture, being Christ’s own words cruciforms our entire being.

[We apostles] preach about a crucified Christ, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles. But to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

Think about the circumstances of your call, brothers and sisters. Not many were wise by human standards, not many were powerful, not many were born to a privileged position. But God chose what the world thinks foolish to shame the wise, and God chose what the world thinks weak to shame the strong. God chose what is low and despised in the world, what is regarded as nothing, to set aside what is regarded as something, so that no one can boast in his presence. He is the reason you have a relationship with Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, as it is written, “*Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord*” (1 Corinthians 1:23-31, NET).

This is, of course, what we know as “the theology of the cross.” If you want to know who God is, how He feels about humankind, what His divine will for us is – then you must listen to Christ. Through His Word, He works an ontic makeover, a redoing of our human being, accomplished by God. Just like the praying of the psalms of lament, such as Psalm 22.

It is a tale of two synonyms for will in the Greek Scriptures. Essentially, God’s will has little to do with common philosophical discussions about determinism, fatalism, and so forth. We are doing a violence to Christ’s Word if we read onto the biblical terms for will the notion of autonomy or the

notion of fate. More than that, we miss the heart of the matter if we do not listen to the biblical vocabulary and usage of *will*. The integrity that God establishes with us is a matter of His will – not His determination or His imposition, but the outpouring of his heart’s desire that all should be saved and come to a knowledge (another much bigger word in Scripture than in contemporary thought) of the incarnate Truth, Christ the Life (see John 14:6).

WILL

Greek expression: *boulē, thelēma*

KEY VERSES: Ephesians 1:1, 5, 9, 11

When speaking of God’s “will,” the New Testament writers used two words, which are nearly synonymous: *boulē* and *thelēma*. In Ephesians 1, Paul explains the “will” of God from all eternity. The primary Greek word he used was *thelēma* which conveys the idea of “desire,” even heart’s desire (Eph. 1:5, 9, 11). *Thelēma* is usually directly translated as “will” – “the will of God” – but the English word “will” sublimates the primary meaning. ***Thelēma is primarily an emotional word and secondarily volitional. “God’s will” is not so much “God’s intention” as it is “God’s heart’s desire.”*** God does have an intention, a purpose, and a plan, “In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will” (Eph. 1:11). Plan is called *prothesis* in Greek and it literally means “a laying out beforehand” like a blueprint. This plan was created by God’s “counsel,” which is called *boulē* in Greek (Eph. 1:11). But **behind the “plan” and the “counsel” was not just a mastermind but a heart of love and of good pleasure.** Therefore, Paul talked about “the good pleasure of God’s heart” (Eph. 1:5). Paul also said, “He made known to us the mystery of his heart’s desire [will], according to his good pleasure which he purposed in him” (Eph. 1:9). Indeed, God operated all things according to the “counsel” of His heart’s desire or “will” (Eph. 1:11)...

Outside of Him (the Son), no one could be a son or daughter of God and no one could be pleasing to the Father.

The many sons and daughters owe all their divine privileges to the Beloved...

-- Carpenter and Comfort, *Holman Treasury of Key Bible Words*

Remembering that “core” as in “core value” is from the Latin word for heart, *coram*, we should say that God’s will for us is the heart of our dear Father who tenderly invites us to pray to Him as dear children to their dear Father. God’s will is Gospel. It is not tyrannical; it is fatherly. The traditional definition of freewill is aspirational, winsome, and inspirational. Not so the modern pipedream of

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autonomy. To Lutheran ears, autonomy resonates with Luther's definition of sin and rebellion, the *coram incurvatus se*, the individual's heart curved in on itself.

Imagine what to means to refuse to pray, "Thy will be done" but instead to insist, "My will be done." Among other things, this willfulness – which is the Nietzschean will-to-power of our first briefing – becomes the mortal engine of death on demand. The full consequences of this autonomous willfulness become evident afterward, in what comes when we have shuffled off this mortal coil. But there are consequences here and now, during this time of grace, as well.

It is a tale of two cities. At this point, we move to a recon of the two cities I mentioned in our first briefing together. The Bible passage for the title of these briefings, *The Fellowship of His Sufferings*, is from Philippians 3.

Whatever things were gain to me, these things I have counted as loss because of Christ. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them mere rubbish, so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Not that I have already grasped it all or have already become perfect, but I press on if I may also take hold of that for which I was even taken hold of by Christ Jesus. Brothers, I do not regard myself as having taken hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore, all who are mature, let's have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that to you as well; however, let's keep living by that same standard (or norm, GPS) to which we have attained (Philippians 3:7-16, NASB)

Recall that the first-century recipients of this epistle from the apostle Paul lived in a city founded on citizenship, on dual citizenship. This city named for Alexander the Great's father was populated by

veteran Roman soldiers who became Roman citizens in exchange for their service. They actually carried on their military mission as soldier-citizens manning this Roman outpost known as Philippi.

Recon of the Two Cities

One millennium before Martin Luther (an Augustinian monk, remember) initiated the German Reformation, Augustine of Hippo had identified two cities that make up the entire human race. He identifies these two cities in his *City of God* as The City of Man and The City of God. Augustine's two cities are identifiable based on what it is that the citizens of each city *wills*. This, in current philosophical terminology, is a matter of the *intentionality* of our human wills. We never just think or just feel or just will; actually, we always think *about something*, we feel emotional *about something*, we will *something*. This "aboutness" is what I mean by "intentionality."

The City and The City¹⁸

Volitional intentionality, or what our willing is *about* – this is the aspect of Augustine's two cities that is relevant, for example, for Bonhoeffer's argument for the universality of Christ the Life. This is something that Pastor Bonhoeffer developed under the first regime, the first *Reich* of death on demand (DOD), during the twentieth-century horror of death on demand under Nazi science and Nazi biomedical ethics. It is the two and only two possibilities for the intentionality of people's wills – namely, either wanting God's will to be done, or wanting our own wills to be done on earth – that I am using in this briefing, sidestepping the other ins and outs of Augustine's characterizations of the two cities.

¹⁸ I have gratefully borrowed this heading and have repurposed the idea of "seeing and un-seeing" below from China Miéville, *The City & The City* (New York: Random House Publishing Company, 2009).
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Here is a critical recognition for our pastoral care mission: between the two cities there is no unbridgeable dualism because they both exist in the one world or one creation, indivisible, governed by the same King. The one King is Christ the Life (see Psalm 100). “There is no part of the world, no matter how lost, no matter how godless, that has not been accepted by God in Jesus Christ and reconciled to God” (Bonhoeffer). Christ the Life also governs cities in one and the same way, that is, by His words, by His revealed biblical Word.

The world is not divided between Christ and the devil, but, whether it recognizes it or not, is solely and entirely the world of Christ... Any static marking-out of a region which belongs to the devil and another region which belongs to Christ is a denial of the reality of God’s having reconciled the whole world with Himself in Christ (Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Part One, 201-202).

The City of God According to Augustine, the first city is populated by the human beings (and the angels, by the way) who are in fellowship with God and with each other because they are praying for and seeking harmony with God. The citizens of the City of God “love God with all their heart, soul and mind and their neighbors as themselves” (see Mark 12:29-31). Concisely, they labor to live out the words of the Bible, while constantly praying to God, “Thy will be done!” In the City of God there is Life and life to the full, as its divine Architect puts it (John 10:10). In this city or kingdom, the people strive to live out the traditional Augustinian idea of free will as the will that is in harmony with God’s will. See Psalm 119 for their Declaration of Dependence on God’s revealed will.

This traditional Western definition of free will that informs The City of God is both Augustinian and biblical. In Augustine, it shows up memorably in his teaching of the ordering of loves (*ordo amoris*).¹⁹ In the Bible, the recognition that free will is essentially harmony with God’s will shows up in

¹⁹ See Augustine’s book that I have been referencing, *City of God*, Book 15, Section 23. His clearest explanation of the right way of ordering whom or what we love (an indication of the *intentionality* or aboutness in our emotions or affects, as well as in our thinking and our willing) is in his doctrinal treatment of the Holy Trinity:

But living a just and holy life requires one to be capable of an objective and impartial evaluation of things: to love things, that is to say, in the right order, so that you do not love what is not to be loved, or fail to love what is to be loved, or have a greater love for what should be loved less, or an equal love for things that should be loved less or more, or a lesser or greater love for things that should be loved equally. (*On Christian Doctrine*, I.27-28)

many places. For example, Jesus says, “If the Son sets you free, you shall be free indeed” (John 8:36). In a passage that reminds us readers of Augustine of the way he writes that, since our human will is inherently servile, the fundamental question is, “Will our wills be enslaved to ourselves, or to our Lord and Master?” – we deduce this (traditional, biblical, Augustinian) concept of free will from the words of the apostle Paul.

What then? Are we to sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means! Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness? But thanks be to God, that you who were once slaves of sin have become obedient from the heart to the standard of teaching to which you were committed, and, having been set free from sin, have become slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms, because of your natural limitations. For just as you once presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification.

For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 6:15-23).

Now, our wills are always enslaved to someone – either to God, to someone else, or to ourselves.

Walking in Augustine’s footsteps, Luther in his catechisms and the Lutheran Reformers in their confessional and other writings speak much the same way about will, as is clear in their teaching, preaching and writings on the Third Petition of our Lord’s Prayer. In the way they teach, pray, and confess, “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,” we see that these folks are expressing their citizenship in The City of God. Its sister city is the biblical Jerusalem.

The dominating question in this city always and everywhere is, “What is God’s will?” This is not an abstract, theoretical question; it is a concrete, real-life, a daily question.

In the world God wills work, marriage, government, and church, and God wills all these, each in its own way, through Christ, toward Christ, and in Christ. God has placed human beings under all these mandates, not only each individual under one or the other, but all people under all four.

There can be no retreat, therefore, from a “worldly” into a “spiritual” “realm.” (...) The reason

for the divine character of work cannot be seen in its general usefulness, its value, but can only be found when looking to the origin, the existence, and the goal of work given in Jesus Christ. So it is also with the other mandates.²⁰

We teach, we baptize, we commune. We do not as a rule terrorize or threaten to have things our way with military and police actions, or with mob violence. Given our Apostles', Nicaean and Athanasian creeds, we are stalwart partners in the great conversation, as you can tell from our time-honored willingness to say and to publish exactly what we believe, teach and confess regarding the Triune God, the Incarnation, the Bible, Holy Baptism for the forgiveness of sins, the Communion of the Saints, the resurrection of the body, and more, such as marriage. What we seek to practice, we preach and publish for everyone to hear.

Our creedal starting point, "We believe," verifies that we Christians as such are not here to force obedience to an institution but to preach repentance to the people. I am urging a *cold* counterinsurgency, remember – not a hot, violent response to death on demand and its accomplice bioethics. Although admittedly various members and institutions branding themselves as the Christian church have had grave historical failures in this regard, our commitment in the City of God is to *faith*, faith in Christ and His written Word worked by God personally through His Word and Sacraments. Faith too has its intentionality. All this is included in my recommendation for a cold counterinsurgency against the bioethics of death on demand. This pastoral care counterinsurgency is a counterinsurgency of words; not a counterinsurgency of terrorism and physical violence.

We practice Aristotle's definition of truth religiously: "To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is to speak a lie (*pseudos*); while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is to speak the truth (*aletheia*)" (*Metaphysics*, 1011b25), because we know the revelatory meaning

²⁰ Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* by Fortress Press, 69.

of *aletheia* as from the mouth of Christ Himself (see, for example, John 14:6). Our argument, our proclamation to everyone, is that the God of the Bible is the Maker of everything "visible and invisible" and that this one true God became flesh and tabernacled for a while among us (see John 1:1-14), with all that this entails for all of humanity and thus for our lives together even now. Do not confuse our counterinsurgency with the insurgency that we are countering. We are not followers of Marx; on the contrary, we are followers of the Messiah (see Isaiah 53:9).

That said, as the Christian writer Flannery O'Connor wrote, "The Violent Bear It Away." There is a power, a force, an absolute authority at work in our pastoral care mission. My point is that the exercise of ultimate authority, the judging of the living and the dead on the day of universal judgment, the assignment of Heaven or Hell for life eternal at biological death even now, is not our pastoral activity. We are His messengers, not the Judge Himself.

We are also trained in Search and Rescue (SAR). Lest we become complacent about our SAR mission, though, before the conclusion of this briefing, I am going to be explaining that we are far from proficient in carrying out our mission to suffering persons. So, my next point is that we have a mission to carry out in what Augustine called The City of Man. This is the portion of the human population that I refer to as citizens of The City of Autonomy.

The City of Autonomy In opposition to the City of God, there is the City of Man. Citizens who devote themselves to themselves by shunning God's will populate and promulgate the City of Man. This is a worldly city in the sense that it is home to those who see the world as autonomous from God, so I will rename this "The City of Autonomy." I invite you to undertake a careful search of the Greek Testament term usually translated "the world." The Greek term is *kosmos*. Most often you will find that it means – not "the global population, but – "the autonomous world in rebellion against God's will."

The City of Autonomy is a shantytown of vagrant human beings and angels who live autonomously, *curvatus in se* in Luther's terminology, cultivating and furthering each his own stubborn, autonomous will.

Citizens of Autonomy are at heart pro-choice in all moral matters. To be pro-choice is to be an autonomous resident of the City of Autonomy. Autonomy, as it turns out, is never just a (free-floating) choice. It is, by definition, a choice *against* any law or imperative from another, that is, autonomy is opposition against God's will. This is the insurgency we are called to counter. Remember the line of thought expressed by Physician Zero in our first briefing. In this city, the population live out a radicalized Kantian, or Enlightenment ethic. They live as if God is not a given. They assume that God is dead. That is, they tend to think of themselves as being each a law unto himself. Their way of life is opposed to what Immanuel Kant (emeritus professor of the Enlightenment) called *heteronomy*, the law of Another. This Other is, of course, the Lord God. The Word and will of God *ad extra*, or external to our own wills, as we say in the Lutheran idiom.

While they do have perpetual social construction projects underway in their city, citizens of The City of Autonomy tend, either by choice or by default, to rely on Nietzschean individualism or autonomy for their notions of freedom and human rights. Thus, they tend to be anarchic. Remember Nietzsche's wholesale relocation of ethical normativity from God and onto each individual. This enables physicians such as Physician Zero (see Briefing #1) to commit deliver suicide to his patients for "purely selfish reasons." Nietzsche: "The individual is something quite new which creates new things, something absolute; all his acts are entirely his own. Ultimately, the individual derives the values of his acts from himself ..." (*The Will to Power*, 767). The Zeitgeist of The City of Autonomy is wholesale insurgency: insurgency against Western culture, against the traditional ethics of the Hippocratic Oath,

against Christ and the Bible, against the text of the Declaration of Independence, against texts, against humanity, against all reason.

Intel re Language and the Language of Biblical Lament

Look closer. The City of Autonomy is also filled with souls for whom Christ Himself suffered and died, persons who have been justified, persons who are suffering right now.

Two Cities, One Kingdom By way of comparing and contrasting the two cities: The City of God is built on the Rock (see 7:24-27, Daniel 2, 1 Corinthians 10:4, and so on), whereas The City of Autonomy is an empire built on sand. A shifting pseudo foundation on which the City of Autonomy is founded, a life of autonomy in opposition to God’s law and will, is an instance of question begging. The fallacy of begging the question is not simply a matter of arguing in a circle, assuming a conclusion instead of reasoning toward it. The fallacy of begging the question occurs when a teaching (such as autonomy) is promoted without its promoters identifying the worldview on which it depends and thus without being willing to defend the view of reality as it is and of the human being as the kind of being we are.

Autonomy as an ethical principle is question-begging in the sense that it assumes a God-is-dead worldview (see Nietzsche’s Story of the Madman), a naturalistic or materialistic scientific worldview, which has great difficulty in seeing human beings in any terms other than those familiar to the natural or social sciences. The City of Autonomy is, as the British say it, “twinned” to the city of Babylon, the city whose mission statement was to build the tower as a means of defying God’s expressed will (Genesis 11).

The different intentionalities (the *what-it-is-that-they-will* differences) of these two cities are what I imagine C.S. Lewis had in the back of his mind when he wrote in *The Great Divorce*, “There are

only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, ‘Thy will be done,’ and those to whom God says, in the end, ‘Thy will be done.’” But we need to be scrupulous at this point – scrupulous with Lewis’s text and scrupulous regarding the different ways that the biblical portrayal of two kingdoms (as it is often expressed) and the Augustine analogy of the two cities have been misrepresented.

Notwithstanding the way Lewis frames his “imaginative supposal” (which is how he characterizes his fictional book *The Great Divorce*) – and noting that he is writing from the perspective of the end, that is, from the perspective of the universal Judgment Day, to be sure – there are three crucial observations that we must make and maintain regarding the two kingdoms, because the two kingdoms are what we sometimes refer to as “the religious sphere” (The City of God) and “the secular sphere” (The City of Autonomy). The language of two kingdoms is confusing and may undermine our pastoral care mission. Here’s why. **It is wrong to speak of two kingdoms, as if there were two rulers or two norms, when in reality there is one King over both cities.**

1. The two cities are not Heaven and Hell; that is, they are not metaphors for Heaven and Hell. They are in reality two present-day domains distinguished by the criterion of what their human subjects will. The criterion is this: Whether the subjects of the kingdoms or the citizens of the cities seek to live in harmony with God’s will, or whether they live in autonomous rejection of God’s will.

The two cities are not abstractions; they are expressions of the human condition, here and now in the present day, perceptible by anyone endowed with the eyes to see and the ears to hear:

Yahwe, may my cry approach your presence;

Let your word endow me with perception! (Psalm 119:169, *New Jerusalem Bible*).

2. Remember, the two cities (or “two kingdoms”) do not have two different kings; rather, there is one King, Jesus Messiah, God in human flesh (John 1:14). Christ the Life is Lord of all.

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. He created all things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible. Whether they are kings or lords, rulers or powers – *everything has been created through him and for him. He existed before everything and holds everything together.* He is also the head of the church, which is his body. He is the beginning, the first to come back to life so

that he would have first place in everything. God was pleased to have all of himself live in Christ. God was also pleased to bring everything on earth and in heaven back to himself through Christ. He did this by making peace through Christ's blood sacrificed on the cross. (Colossians 1:15-20, *God's Word*, my italics)

In this same Christ, God extends His reign over the religious and the secular world alike. This is an existential reality, not a theoretical abstraction. The lynchpin issue is the means by which He does His work.

3. The citizens of the two cities can emigrate and immigrate at will (!) from one to the other. Indeed, it is *what they will* that situates or resituates them. Praying “Thy will be done, on earth as it is in Heaven!” is proof of citizenship in The City of God; by contrast, maintaining autonomously, “My will be done!” is proof of citizenship in The City of Man.

Ways of Un-Seeing the Two Cities Here is another piece of intel for our mission to provide pastoral care for suffering souls. While we are speaking of the two cities, it is important to acknowledge that there is a practice of *unseeing* that characterizes the City of Autonomy throughout the two millennia since the resurrection of Jesus Messiah from the dead (see Acts 17:30, “the time of agnosticism has passed”).

Here is where the phenomenon of human suffering comes to the fore. This is why I refer to suffering as the core mission of pastoral care. It is our responsibility to “look at things as they are” (see the sixteenth-century Heidelberg Disputation). **Our pastoral mission is to light up both of the cities.** We should be lighting up both cities with Christ the Life by teaching people how to suffer. Suffering – an existential and universal experience of our human condition – must become *the* target of our pastoral care. Nothing less will do. Both cities are under siege by the bioethics and the socialization of death on demand. Therefore, we ought to be bringing the comfort of Christ in His own words to citizen and citizen alike **in the midst of their suffering.**

I used China Miéville’s book title for my heading, *The City and The City*. In a 2018 British television serial based on this book, two cities exist side by side. The citizens of each city are

neurologically conditioned in such a way that they actually cannot see the citizens of the other city, even though both cities occupy the same space and time. In the television series, what we viewers see is one side or the other of the picture as completely out of focus, a way of imaging this programmed “unseeing”.

There is a similar indoctrination – I think of it as a *doctrine of unseeing* – that characterizes the citizens of the City of Autonomy today. They do not want to see Christ or listen to the Word of God. So, there is a duality. There are indeed *two* cities comprising the whole of humanity – one where the people are living in worship and obedience to Christ; one where the citizens are living in rebellion against Him. By contrast (and no credit to us; it is all by God’s grace), our eyes have been opened, so we see. But there is not an unbridgeable dualism. Our Lord is Lord of everyone, whether they believe or not. So, there is one King. There is the reality of universal justification (see Romans 3) and of the Lord’s universal commission to us (see Matthew 28). Therefore, we have a responsibility toward the citizens of the City of Autonomy, to bring them the Word at every opportunity. And the prime opportunity for bringing Christ in His word is when people are suffering.

Lest we un-see our Lord and His verbal commission, we dare not lapse into kingdom dualism.

The problem for our mission is that un-seeing works the other way around as well.

Here again is Bonhoeffer.

[Scripture says that] in the body of Christ all humanity is accepted, included, and borne, and that the church-community of believers is to make this known to the world by word and life... This leads to the question of how to think about this difference without falling back into spatial images. Here we must ask the Bible itself for advice, and it has its answer ready. Like all of creation, the world has been created through Christ and toward Christ and has its existence only in Christ (John 1:10; Col. 1:16). To speak of the world without speaking of Christ is pure abstraction. The world stands in relationship to Christ whether the world knows it or not.²¹

²¹ Bonhoeffer’s *Ethics* by Fortress Press, 67-68.

So, on the one hand, the King of everything and everyone (in both of the cities) established peace through His holy life, with His precious blood on the cross, in what we confessional Lutherans recognize from the biblical text as universal justification. How does this once-and-for-all, by-*grace*-alone declaration and fact of forgiveness and righteousness reach people and affect people? By means of Word and sacrament, which we identify as Christ's *means of grace*. Therefore, **in respect to the two cities we have been talking about; we have to keep our focus on the means of ministry as we minister to suffering souls in these cities!**

God's twofold way (note the singular) is His Word, the biblical text. To think about the two kingdoms or two cities in a Lutheran way means to think about them confessionally, or in sync with unaltered texts of the Lutheran Confessions. Article 4 of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession, On Justification, provides us the confessional understanding of the twofold way **"But God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended *nisi per Verbum*, except through the Word."**

While the City of God is not without its upheavals and suffering, whose citizens are inhabitants of the one sinful world with their fallen human nature, to be sure – it is, notwithstanding, a city founded on bedrock, on the Rock (Matthew 7:24-25). By contrast, the City of Autonomy, whose citizens likewise suffer as inhabitants of our singular fallen world and who suffer with their fallen human nature – is a city founded on the shifting sand of their individualized micro-narratives (Matthew 7:26-27). This is germane to our field of vision for SAR.

As we engage in commerce and communication between the City of God and the City of Autonomy, **the issue is the means of communication.** In other words, the traffic between our city (the church of Christ, whose city motto is "Thy will be done") and the other city (whose motto is "My will be done") is essentially means of grace traffic.

What we ought to recognize in what I call our *after-Word world*²² is that God's written texts that we know as the Bible are indispensable. The Bible is indispensable for the foundation and for the continuing identity of the City of God. The biblical text is also indispensable for the City of God's communication and relationships with the City of Autonomy. As Bonhoeffer puts it,

My life is outside myself, beyond my disposal. ... "I am the Life" – this is the word, the revelation, the proclamation of Jesus Christ. The statement that our life is outside ourselves and in Jesus Christ is in no way the result of our own self-understanding. Instead, it is a claim that encounters us from outside, which we either believe or contradict.²³

Christ's church on earth is under the orders of its King to teach His words – not to settle for summations or for readily accessible sociological, ethical, philosophical, scientific, political encapsulations of His words.²⁴

Perhaps we could talk about enclaves or suburbs of the City of God that seem intent on annexing themselves to the City of Autonomy, or individuals who are contemplating emigration from Christ's church, but that is a topic for another day. What I shall conclude with is the reminder that every Lutheran worthy of the name knows that **the church is nothing less than the place of Christ's means of grace activity**. "There is a river whose streams refresh the City of God" (Psalm 46:4). This refreshing, living water is meant for The City and it is intended as well for The (other) City dwellers.

One Lord, one Christ who is over all. Two cities. A time of unfettered chaos. An ushering toward redemption. And in this upheaving terrain of the twenty-first century, pastoral care, our SAR mission to suffering persons everywhere – it all has to do with Christ and the means of grace by which He works all in all.

²² Please see George Steiner, *Real Presences* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), II. The Broken Contract, 51-134. Steiner uses "epilogue" and "afterword" to refer to our world as being a post-language world. I believe that my use of *After-Word* fortifies Steiner's usage by emphasizing the means of grace character of God's Word and language – a dimension that I do not see in his writing, but which belongs nonetheless.

²³ Dietrich Bonhoeffer (Neville Horton, translator), *Ethics* (New York: Touchstone, 1955), 215.

²⁴ For an example of confining biblical teaching to its sociological and ethical aspect, see *Bonhoeffer's Reception of Luther*, "Caricatures of the Two Kingdoms", Troeltsch and the Niebuhrs, 99-101.
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Because of the nature of the means for our pastoral care SAR mission (Word and Sacrament, that is, the text of the Bible and the Biblically-instituted Sacraments), it is imperative that we not succumb to the enemy's prevalent propaganda regarding language.

Intel re Language as the Means of Ministry to Suffering Persons

In our second briefing I explained in some detail why medical science, and the sciences overall, are not up to the task of ethics. That is to say, science is not competent to teach us how we ought to live. This is, in part, due to the fact that science, as seen clearly in the natural sciences of physics and biology, reduces the human being to fit within their narrow, reduced glimpse of only the aspects of human beings that they can see scientifically – for example, the matter and energy of our bodies or our biological systems. In classical terms, science acts like a Procrustean Bed, a violent slicing and dicing and torturing of the human being to fit its arbitrary and narrow worldview. Science cannot advise in regard to life, the real, full life of being human. Just as important, science cannot advise us in regard to death. In other words, science cannot help us either in regard to life or death. Most importantly, science and medical science in particular, simply does not have the wherewithal to advise us regarding the meaning of suffering.

The Medium is the Message

In contemporary terms, remember Kass's caution against *scientism*, having faith in science to save us.

Is there perhaps something wrong—even deadly wrong—in seeing science as our salvation? [The Weimar science exhibit of the Glass Man] clearly came not from the hand of God but from an even more perfect man, the scientific and medical visionary who would someday soon help humankind collectively achieve the healthful perfection here modeled in glass.

Make no mistake, this is serious business. For the glass man was willy-nilly the emblem of a new religion: In place of the God who became man, we have here the man become as god. In place of the suffering Christ, arms stretched in crucifixion, we have the impervious glass man, arms elevated in self-exaltation. And creatively behind the scene, in place of a God who it is said sent his son who would, through his own suffering, take away the sins of the world, we have the scientific savior who would take away the sin of suffering altogether. The glass man, *in loco crucifixis*, is the perfect icon for salvific science.

Science's incompetence for advising us on life and death issues such as we face with death on demand is also due to science's rejection of normativity, particularly its systemic un-seeing of Christ and the Scriptures. Therefore, science as such, as I have explained, is non-moral. Science, strictly speaking, is irrelevant for ethics. When science is relied upon for ethics and for ethics in regard to suffering, it becomes immoral and unethical. The same thing can be said in regard to science and our suffering. As I have explained, science as such may tell us something about physical pain; but it is essentially blind to suffering (which is our human reaction to pain and other injustices), as I explained in our second briefing.

Here, then, is where it is vital to recognize that the medium is the message, as Marshall McLuhan argued in another connection in the 1960s. In so many words, the sciences and those such as bioethicists who rely on the sciences insist on a pre-censored version of language, a version with a vocabulary limited to words that are scientifically approved. Recall Ma Boyong's short story *The Silent City*. Think of how and why the social media and national media pre-censored news and human communication prior to and even during the 2020 election in order to socially engineer life and death in the United States.

Our cold counterinsurgency depends upon free speech and free language – by which I mean that our pastoral care of suffering people begins with a recognition first of the power and efficacy of the very words of the Bible and secondly of the power and reliability of language is God has given it to us. This

is crucial inasmuch as the enemy's propaganda about language has to do with the very means of our ministry to people who are suffering.

To combat the propaganda about language itself, let me share some thoughts on language and on language as *the* means by which we deliver Christ in pastoral care. These pages are from my essay, "The Medium is the Message: A Lutheran Epistemology of Con-fessing" (forthcoming in LOGIA, Epiphany 2022).

For our pastoral task of comforting suffering persons, we will need to have in hand and in mind an authentic and robust concept of language. According to D.Z. Phillips, philosophy is inquiry into *the reality of our concepts*. But is language a concept that can be grounded in reality? In fact, I argue on the basis of both Scripture and my years of teaching philosophy of language, it is rather the case that language is the reality within which we must test our concepts. In reality, then, it is in atmosphere of language that we live and move and have our human being. Indeed, by confessing Melancthon's Nisi Per Verbum (discussed earlier) we are con-fessing two truths, along with Hans-Georg Gadamer. First, that language is the medium for understanding. Secondly, that there is nothing behind language to go by. In the language of the Greek philosophers and then of the apostles and evangelists through whom God expired the New Testament, there is nothing beyond the *logos* or the Logos of John 1.

In other words, one should not imagine that interpretive concepts enter into one's understanding subsequently, as if one drew them out of a linguistic storeroom, so to speak, and applied them as needed to the "thing to be understood." Such a conception is completely wrong ... No, understanding does not reach out and take hold of language; it is carried out within language (GIC, 37).

As someone somewhere has written, "You cannot use language to get between language and the world."

We never can step outside language. There is no objective scientific viewpoint from which we can know anything. Our concepts of the world are not stand-alone things that exist somehow on their own, somewhere outside the atmosphere of language. Language is the *sine qua non* of human

knowledge. Asphyxiation is not a viable way for human beings to gain understanding or knowledge – knowledge of what it means to be human, knowledge of how we ought to live our lives, knowledge of anything. [Just as ethics is beyond the purview of the sciences as such, so to language is beyond the

purview of evolutionary science. See Hauser, Yang, Chomsky and all, *The Mystery of Language Evolution* at [www.frontiersin.org > articles > fpsyg.2014.00401](http://www.frontiersin.org/articles/2014/00401).]

I teach philosophy of language. Here is an indication of how a thick, robust, and existential philosophy of language takes its lead from the language of Scripture, which I identify as *language being everything that God created it to be*. The included reference to the twentieth-century philosopher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, that my undergraduate university students and PhD seminary students appreciate immensely. You may wish to hold onto the upcoming pages in gray for later and proceed to my paragraph leading into the section headed “The As-if of Language.” **Ruminating in, with, and under Language**

For this rediscovery of language as a given, to breach the Berlin Wall of mistaken and misleading philosophies of language, I propose that we ruminate on language for at least a few minutes. By ruminating, I mean doing what my brother and sister-in-law’s Peppercorn cattle are doing right now on their Missouri ranch. Ruminating is what grazing cattle do by bringing up food from their stomachs to chew it over again for thorough digestion. We in the City of God pray for the habit of ruminating on words in the collect for the Second Sunday in Advent. I take it that ruminating is what Psalms 1 and 2, two chapters of God’s *Verbum*, urge us to do by using the Hebrew term *hagah*, which I take it has to do with an animal chewing, chewing noisily, chewing with your mouth open.²⁵

For your rumination, then, here is an anthology, a pasture of quotes from “Language as Horizon of a Hermeneutic Ontology,” Part (A) Language as Experience of the World, and (B) Language as medium and Its Speculative Structure, from Gadamer’s *Truth and Method* (TM).

1. *Verbal form and traditional content cannot be separated in the hermeneutic experience.* If every language is a view of the world, it is not so primarily because it is a particular type of language (in the way that linguists view language) but because of what is said or handed down in this language (TM, 441)
2. Language is not just one of man’s possessions in the world; rather, on it depends the fact that man has a *world* at all. ... man’s being-in-the-world is primordially linguistic (TM, 443).
3. Language has its true being only in dialogue, in *coming to an understanding*. ... Coming to an understanding as such ... does not need any tools, in the proper sense of the word. It

- is a life process in which a community of life is lived out (TM, 446).
-
4. Human language must be thought of as a special and unique life process since, in linguistic communication, "world" is disclosed (TM, 446).
 5. Invented systems of artificial communication are never languages. For artificial languages, such as secret languages or systems of mathematical symbols have no basis in a community of language or life; they are introduced and applied only as means and tools of communication. For this reason they presuppose a prior agreement, which is that of language. It is well known that the consensus by which an artificial language is introduced necessarily belongs to another language. In a real community of language, on the other hand, we do not first decide to agree but are always already in agreement, as Aristotle showed (TM, 446).
 6. Our verbal experience of the world has the capacity to embrace the most varied relationships of life (TM 448).
 7. Thus the sun has not ceased to set for us, even though the Copernican explanation of the universe has become part of our knowledge (TM, 449).
 8. In language the reality beyond every individual consciousness becomes visible (TM, 449).
 9. Obviously, language can do all this because it is not the creation of reflective thought, but itself helps to fashion the world orientation in which we live (TM, 450).
 10. That human experience of the world is verbal does not imply that a world-in-itself is being objectified (TM, 450).
 11. Each science, as a science, has in advance projected a field of objects such that to know them is to govern them (TM, 452).
 12. We cannot see a linguistic world from above [as if language were merely an environment in which we inhabit, GPS], for there is no point of view outside the experience of the world in language from which language can become an object (TM 452).
 13. Our starting point is that verbally constructed experience of the world expresses not what is present-at-hand [that is, what is handy for our own utilitarian purposes, GPS], that which is calculated and measured, but what exists, what man recognizes as existent and significant (TM 456).
 14. This answer is theological (TM, 456).
 15. It is the medium of language alone that, related to the totality of things, mediates the finite, historical nature of man to himself and to the world (TM, 457).
 16. Every word causes the whole of language to which it belongs to resonate and the whole world-view that underlies it to appear (TM, 458).
 17. [The Greeks] did not try to base the objectivity of knowledge on subjectivity [that is, on relativistic or non-linguistic theories of Platonic Ideas, the mind thinking about thinking wordlessly, and so on, GPS]. Rather, their thinking always regarded itself as an element of being itself (TM, 460).
 18. But the actual occurrence [of understanding] is made possible only because the word that has come down to us as tradition and to which we are to listen really encounters us and does so as if it addressed us and is concerned with us (TM, 461).
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The Fountainhead of Language

Where does this primordial or fundamental recognition of language as it is in real life come from? In the section of *Truth and Method* leading up to Language as Horizon of a Hermeneutical Ontology where we have just been grazing, Gadamer says this in The Development of the Concept of Language. Professor Gadamer has just been summarizing the manner in which Greek philosophy was in *The Fellowship of His Sufferings: Four Briefings*, copyright by Gregory P. Schulz, 2020. All rights reserved. This book may be shared and copied without charge provided that this copyright notice is included in all copies and excerpts.

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process turning nascent Western culture from language and toward pure, idealized, abstracted thought. Although, as the points out, “the ideality of **the meaning lies in the word itself. It is meaningful already.**” (TM 417), Plato and Aristotle confused the issue by seeking to certify language with ideas. (See Plato’s use of *eidos*, as in The Idea of the Good, which is “beyond all being” and Aristotle’s substance and categories as the preferred way to know the being of things according to how their being shows up in language.)

There is ... an idea that is not Greek which does more justice to the being of language, and so prevented the forgetfulness of language in Western thought from being complete. This is the Christian idea of *incarnation*. Incarnation is obviously not embodiment. ... [In the incarnation] God does not become man, but rather shows himself to men in human form while wholly retaining his superhuman divinity. ... But this is a relationship that is strangely different from embodiment and is expressed theologically in the doctrine of the Trinity.

This cornerstone of Christian thought is all the more important for us because for Christian thought too the incarnation is closely connected with the problem of the word. ... [which] brings the phenomenon out of its immersion in the ideality of meaning, and offers it to philosophical reflection. For, in contrast to the Greek [philosophers’ penchant for idealizing and abstracting] *logos*, the word is pure event (*verbum proprie dicitur personaliter tantum*).

Of course, human language thereby only indirectly becomes an object of reflection. The human word is used only as a counterpart to the theological problem of the Word, the *verbum dei* – that is, the unity of the Father and the Son. But the important thing for us is that the mystery of this unity is reflected in the phenomenon of language (TM, 418-419).

We are back to the incarnate Verbum of the Lutheran Confessions, Apology 4. Gadamer’s Continental or external means of grace understanding of language flows from his recognition of the incarnation and the historical application of the incarnation and Christology to the Western understanding of language. This is the concept of language which scientific knowledge, with its commitment to an analytic view of language rejects “root and branch.” This is why salvation by science or ethics by science or life and death decision making by science is a pipedream. When language is restricted to scientific language, there is no room either for human life to the full nor for Christ the Life who as come “that you may have life and have it to the full” today, during your time of suffering, and in the life to come (John 10:10).

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The As-if of Language

What is “the word that comes down to us as to tradition and to which we listen” in (18) above? It is the “with” of speaking-*with* which I have identified as the concept of confessional thinking or confessing. It is conceivable that someone may object to the way I am speaking about everyday language (the logos of Greek philosophy) as if everyday language were somehow related to Christ the Logos. In fact, I am saying that everyday language is contiguous with the language of Holy Scripture, but I am not suggesting that the reliability, the verbal inerrancy of the Holy Scriptures is a feature of everyday language. Notwithstanding, confessional thinking, tutored and habituated as it is to confessing with God’s verbatim Verbum in the case of the inerrant *verba* of the biblical text, leads us to recognize in everyday (fallen) language what I have already identified as its means-of-grace character.

Let me apply Joseph Koterski’s wonderful analogy from his Great Courses lecture series Natural Law and Human Nature. To explain the wisdom of the legal maxim, “Bad cases make for bad law,” Professor Koterski shares the story of how his brother, a veterinarian, studied the anatomy of dogs in school. His teachers always had him study the anatomy of purebred dogs, never mutts. This was because in purebreds the inner parts of their anatomy was always in the right place, whereas the organs of mutts could be all over the place. So too in our philosophy of language. We study the language of the Bible first and foremost because in these words of Christ the Logos we see language as it is meant to be. In everyday language, we generally see language being used in a mongrel manner. Still, in both cases, it is language.

What James tells us in the purebred language of his epistle, for example, holds true for our everyday language fellowship: “For we all fail in various ways; if someone does not fail in his words (*logoi*), though, he is a man of missional integrity, capable of bridling his entire body (...) But no human being can control the tongue. ... With it we bless the Lord and Father and with it we curse human beings

begotten in God's likeness. From the same mouth originates eulogy and curse. These schizo-glossolalias should never happen, my brothers" (James 3:1-10, my translation). Both logoi are language.

There are the words of James, slaved to our Lord Jesus Christ (1:1) and thus the Verbum or Word of Christ. There are also the words that flow from the tongues of his readers. Both Scripture and everyday language are language. Language is a continuum with the inspired words of the Bible on one end and everyday words at the other.

So, if you start within language at the lower end of the continuum of language, with our everyday words, there is an "as-if-ness" to our thinking and speaking within language. It is, as Gadamer writes, "as if [the logos or verbum of tradition] is addressed us and is concerned with us." But if you start within language, but at the uppermost end, in the language of the Word of Christ, which is biblical revelation, therein it is revealed that the as-if is not an insight, but the capital-T Truth of the matter.

Within the Scriptures, and only within the Scriptures, we apprehend that the logos or verbum of language is, at its source and in its none other than the capital-lambda Logos or capital Verbum, the incarnate Logos of John 1 at work – it is Christ Himself who makes language language. We experience this reality in the very activity of con-fessing the Word. What Western texts outside of Scripture witness to, as Steiner demonstrates, is the truth of what only the Word of God explicitly and authoritatively reveals – in the distinctively God-breathed language which we Lutherans love referring to as "the means of grace." The medium is the message.

Thus, in the narrow sense of con-fessing, that is, in speaking-with Scripture, we are experiencing language as it is meant to be, just as in communion with the person of Jesus Messiah we are experiencing life in abundance as it is meant to be. Everything has been created by and for Christ (Colossians 1). But there is also the wider sense of con-fessing that I have been elucidating. What Gadamer finds in language itself, this "as-if" quality, is what we experience in the wider sense of con-

fessing, that is, being-in-the-world (Heidegger) or being-human-beings-in-the-world (Gadamer). Having heard Gadamer tell us, “Do not imitate Heidegger; let yourself be inspired by him” (GIC 111), you will understand why I will now say that confessing as the way of understanding can be expressed as *being-in-language*.

The Presence of God in Language in the After-Word World

This as-if recognition that comes about by virtue of Gadamer’s phenomenology of language in *Truth and Method* shows up in the texts of Western art, literature, and music as well, according to George Steiner literary tour de force in *Real Presences*. Steiner begins with an objection to the thesis he is about to unveil. The objection is of a piece with the assumption about language as promoted by epistemology’s commitment to a nothing-but science abstraction of language and knowledge.

God persists in so many unconsidered turns of phrase and allusion. No plausible reflection underwrites His presence. No does any intelligible evidence. Where God clings to our culture, to our routines of discourse, He is a phantom of grammar, a fossil embedded in the childhood of rational speech. (So Nietzsche and many after him [teach]).

Then comes Steiner’s thesis, a response to Nietzsche’s devaluation of language, which not incidentally Nietzsche speaks of in his German as *Wissenschaften*. (Nietzsche’s Story of the Madman, about how-to move on after the death of God in Western culture, is part of a book called *The Gay Science*, which in German is *Die fröhliche Wissenschaft*.)

This essay argues the reverse [of Nietzsche and his many followers]. It proposes that any coherent understanding of what language is and how language performs, that any coherent account of the capacity of human speech to communicate meaning and feeling is, in the final analysis, underwritten by God’s presence (*Real Presences*, 3).

Steiner is saying that there is a sustained, unavoidable proof or trace of the presence of the God of the Bible within natural language and the stuff of the *Geisteswissenschaften*. This is the interesting, significant, and highly desirable knowledge latent in the medium that we use for thinking. The medium

is the message. Thomas Aquinas says, “... the slenderest knowledge that may be obtained of the highest things is more desirable than the most certain knowledge obtained of the lowest things as Aristotle said in *De Animalibus*, 11” (*Summa Theologiae*, Whether sacred doctrine is nobler than other sciences?). By contrast to natural language, the nothing-but-science language of epistemology, although it may address knowledge obtained by the lowest things, is barren in respect to the more desirable knowledge of the highest things, as we learn, for example, from a close reading of Wittgenstein’s *Tractatus*.

Language, as we discover from Gadamer’s phenomenology of language, and as we see in Steiner’s magisterial cataloguing of Western art, music and literature, is fecund with the presence of the God of the Scriptures, the Verbum incarnate. As we practice confessing as the way of knowing, what we are understanding and what we are responding to is that God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended, *nisi per Verbum*, except through the Word. In the first place, then, the very language of the Scriptures is the means whereby we in fact bring Christ in His own words to suffering persons. In a related sense, it is through the means of language rather than through the application of science that we save people from despair and suicide in the midst of their suffering.

Linchpin analysis of the language of lament + the operational takeaway

The Means of Fellowship with Christ in His Sufferings

Saint Luke chronicled the fellowship among believers in the first-century church by deploying the Greek term *koinonia*. Before church fellowship in Christ, though, there is language fellowship. About four centuries before the Acts of the Apostles, Aristotle logged his discovery that the human race is the language species. Along with this, he observed that **language is *koinonia***, our form of fellowship in the *polis* or city of human society (*Politics*, Book 1).

Fellowship is archaic, in the original sense of the word. It is origin-al. In the beginning was the Word. Certainly, John is announcing the presence of God the Son already in the beginning, before everything was created by God's Word. But the apostle's use of *arche* tells us in addition that Jesus the Logos is archaic, that is, He Himself is the Messiah of the Means. Without Him nothing was made that has been made. This includes language, the basis of human fellowship. It is language that He uses – in the case of Scripture, quintessentially inerrant language – to save, to comfort, to bring people into fellowship with Him.

In these latter days, these days of death on demand, the force-multiplier for the Death of God insurgency against Western ethics which I have identified in mainstream bioethics, is the deep-seated postmodern denial of the meaningfulness and inherent power of language. After all (and during all) it is language within which we conduct ethics, language in which we argue against autonomist physicians administering death to their patients, language via which we bring God's very words to persons who are suffering and dying, language within which God laments suffering and in which we lament with God in the middle of suffering. [I have written about this threat of postmodernism to all language in my essay, *NISI PER VERBUM: A Disputation Concerning Postmodernism and the Pastoral Ministry (LOGIA, Reformation 2018).*]

The Fellowship of Suffering

There is a Fellowship of Suffering. As I have been saying, suffering is part of our human condition. In regard to suffering, we are completely passive, as Paul writes in Philippians 3, “that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; if somehow I may attain to the resurrection from the dead” (3:10-11). We do not choose to

join the fellowship; rather, we are being conformed to Christ's death by God Himself. Suffering is, in fact, part of our human condition that God has imposed on us all.

The Breaking of the Fellowship

You may have noted in our Orientation that Professor Rittgers speaks of “the widespread opposition to the idea of divinely imposed suffering” while observing “that we are finally seeing the consequences of this age-old rejection” in our century of death on demand. Take to heart the book of Job, including the Prologue and 42:11 (in a formally equivalent translation). Mark and inwardly digest Romans 8. Lament the psalms and chapters of lament. Vow to **end your reading of Christ and His Word through Stoic lenses and *listen, really listen to the words of the Suffering God.***

Nietzsche and his acolytes in the twentieth century utterly rejected the Suffering God. Their insurgency is to invent meanings for suffering while rejecting the Suffering Shepherd Himself. The consequences of this rejection show up in our century of death on demand. Is there anyone of us who has not been besieged with demands for death for lives – the lives of family members, the lives of our parishioners, the lives of our neighbors – that are unworthy of life because of the suffering they are facing or may face in the future? You know that Nietzsche was a Lutheran, right? So was Immanuel Kant. To evoke the prophetic voice of Amos, to bring our attention closer and closer to ourselves, are we carrying on our mission of pastoral care in The Fellowship if His Sufferings? In other words, is there mission creep – that is, is there Messiah creep, is there Christ creep, in our own practices of pastoral care?

The Return of the King

“The hands of the king are the hands of a healer, and so shall the rightful king be known” (J.R.R. Tolkien). “The world stands in relationship to Christ whether the world knows it or not” (Bonhoeffer).

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You will also notice that the Philippian passage from which I have taken the title for our briefings on the insurgency of death on demand and the counterinsurgency of pastoral care – teaching people to suffer via the means of biblical lament – highlights the thesis article of our Lutheran confessions, the central and centering doctrine of universal justification. Paul says in so many words that the fellowship of His (Christ’s and therefore God’s) suffering is “through faith in Christ.” This is the center of gravity of the *solas* system of doctrine and practice of the Lutheran Reformation: “Christ alone.” Furthermore, the fellowship of His suffering intimately concerns “the righteousness that [is] from God on the basis of faith” That is, “faith *alone*,” as Luther and we Lutherans preach, teach and confess. The fellowship of His sufferings is as Lutheran as all get-out. Perhaps, I am thinking, what we need is not a new theology but a re-forming up of our Lutheran theology.

Lutheran theology needs to be *rifled* through the barrel of the fellowship of His sufferings (Philippians 3:10) in order to be robust Lutheran theology. And pastoral care is the theater in which we practice our *theologia crucis*, our theology of the cross. Without the fellowship of His sufferings as its focus, our Lutheran theology is anemic, frail and not all that it is meant to be. Without the fellowship of His sufferings as the centerpiece of the theology of the cross (to use the same term twice) our preaching will be blasé and our mission work undistinguished. Without suffering and the theology of the cross, perhaps there is can be no authentic Lutheran theology, no genuine pastoral care. Absent our full attention to the fellowship of His sufferings our apprehension of the Bible itself will be off kilter. [See Dennis Ngien’s *The Suffering of God According to Martin Luther’s ‘Theologia Crucis.’*]

In other words, Lutheran theology, preaching, teaching, and pastoral care (!) require us to employ the language of lament. There are no two ways about it.

THE LUTHERAN CASE FOR A RE-FORMATION OF OUR READING OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST IN LIGHT OF *THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS*

It is not to be denied that Jesus of Nazareth understood what he was doing for those of his time as something he was doing for those who suffered. It is not to be denied that he heard and accepted their lament. There is no passage IN THE Gospels which suggests that Jesus saw his task to be one of convincing the sufferer that one must bear suffering patiently. There are narratives in which Jesus combines the forgiveness of sins with healing, but there are no narratives in which Jesus puts the forgiveness of sins in place of healing.

There is a second factor to be considered. If the gospel story of the passion is presented in the words of Psalm 22 [the quintessential Psalm of Lament, GPS], the authors quite obviously wanted to say that Christ had taken up the lament of people who suffer, that he too had entered into suffering. Hence, his history is part of the history of those who have suffered, who have found their language in the Psalms of lament.

With his suffering and dying, therefore, Jesus could not have had only the sinner in mind; he must also have been thinking of those who suffer. If, as in the New Testament, the work of Christ is described as salvation from sin and death, then (following the Old Testament understanding) by “death” we mean not only the cessation of [biological] life but the power of death at work within life which people experience in all types of suffering.

On the basis of these observations we would have to decide anew whether the one-sidedness of relating the work of Christ to sin alone, to the exclusion of any relation to human suffering, actually represents the New Testament as a whole and, if so, whether that understanding would not have to be corrected by the Old Testament. A correction of this sort would have far-reaching consequences. One of these would be that the lament, as the language of suffering, would receive a legitimate place in Christian worship, as it had in the worship of the Old Testament.

Claus Westerman, *Praise and Lament in the Psalms*, Part Seven, The Role of Lament, 274-275

Put in one way, the question is whether our Lutheran pastoral care here and now is Philippian.

Put in more familiar terms, let us repent! Let us commit ourselves to daily repentance (a first Thesis issue, after all) in regard to our pastoral care. We have within our grasp the Lord’s own response to mission creep in pastoral care, to institutional malaise in Lutheran higher education, to pastoral burnout, and to the prodigality of our confessional Lutheran inheritance. I do not think that I am calling for another Reformation but for a re-formation of the very church that houses Luther’s commentaries on the Penitential Psalms and his theology of the cross.

“The fellowship of His sufferings,” the apostolic text, is a Philippian call for a return to Reformation theology under the impetus of pastoral care. The ethos and ethics of death on demand is an insurgency against the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, against the Messiah and Christ of the Scriptures. It is also an insurgency against suffering humanity.

So, let’s Gear Up. Put on the full armor of God. Check the ground beneath you boots. Take another look at that sword in your hand. You do know that the sword of the Spirit is singing in the language of biblical lament, don’t you?

In the Fellowship of His Sufferings – dismissed!

