

# Trinity Te Deum

The official newsletter for Trinity Lutheran Church

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Sunday School and Bible Study 9:15 AM – Divine Service 10:30 AM

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## Should I Stay or Should I Go

That's the title of a 1982 song by an English punk rock band named The Clash. I hear those deadpanned lyrics in my sleep. Remember there are two parties who are members of Synod at Trinity. The church and I are each separately members of Synod. We each have to answer the Clash's 36-year-old question.

Here are my dilemmas:

1) Am I alone right? There are hundreds of Confessional Lutheran pastors in the LCMS who are not leaving. Many of them tell their congregation nothing or little of the open Communion, the unionism, syncretism, and abuses of and against the pastoral office. Many of them take the position of a pastor I met in Minnesota when I gave my paper in October. "I've decided to be such a pain in the \*\*\* that they have to throw me out." Read our letter of September 12, 2017 or many of my blogs. Tell me; is this not enough to get thrown out? I openly oppose official positions of Synod. I teach contrary to them. I have been told in writing I am free to leave and that I agree, if I stay, to teach according to the doctrinal statements and resolutions passed in convention, but no one has told me to leave. My circuit counselor told me in 2001 that since the Synod was moving to the left I would be more comfortable elsewhere. Yes, it's all about comfort not right and wrong, true or false.

2) The more I stay among congregations that practice open Communion the more I ask: *we are* straining gnats to swallow camels? Maybe the open Communion churches are right in saying Christian is Christian. The differences in doctrine should not divide the one body of Christ. Baptize babies or don't; pray to Mary or not; double predestination, no predestination, or the predestination of the saved, like Burger King use to say, have it your way. Pro-Life or Pro-Abortion commune with the ELCA as all the open Communion churches do and you're saying no biggie either way. You see it's like this: the different denominations come at the one Body of Christ from different angles, traditions, viewpoints. There is no wrong way. If that's the case, we have a

lot to repent of just in our Formula of Concord alone.

3) To stay is to fall away. If I don't act according to my present convictions, I will be swallowed by theirs so as to bridge this ever-growing divide between what I believe and the Synod I am in accepts, protects, and promotes by their lack of disciplining.

4) To go is to go into uncertainty. The reasons given at the last two Fireside Chats for staying are mostly practical. It is true; it is much easier practically to stay where we are. However, it has never been practical to speak the truth in a fallen world. No one has yet given me a Biblical or Confessional argument for staying. In the April – July 2018 *Te Deum* available here [www.trinityaustin.com/docs/newsletters/news201804.pdf](http://www.trinityaustin.com/docs/newsletters/news201804.pdf). I published the only written defense I know of for staying in the LCMS. I gave you my response to it. I am surprised no one is citing Pastor Rohde's reasons. The Elders have made available the 10-part Bible study that goes over the official LCMS response to our descent here [www.trinityaustin.com/special/](http://www.trinityaustin.com/special/) for your listening. Also, there are all the documents concerning our dissent for your reading. One person who had been in opposition to leaving after listening to the 10 hours of classes has changed her mind.

5) Here is where I ultimately come down: To Elijah (and Noah and Lot). If there were say 10 Elijah's against the 950 false prophets, I would say maybe I should wait for more to join me. If only 8 out of a world full of people believed the truth, how many should I expect from a 2 million person synod? If only 3 were faithful out of 5 cities, how many can I expect out of one small synod? Of course, the other side of Elijah is also instructive. He was wrong when he told the Lord, "I alone am left." Far from it, the Lord had 7,000 more that Elijah didn't know about. And so it is in the LCMS. There are more of me, many, many more. I don't know how many more. The only one that counts is Him and being on His side. Is His side that of open Communion, optional Order of Creation, okay to pray with pagans, worshiping any way that 'works', and a Synod that no longer decides things by the Word of God but by previous Synodical rulings?

All the above is my way of inviting you to come sing with me "Should I Stay or Should I Go" at

the Wine, Cheese, and Shoot the Breeze that is Fireside Chat #3. It will be after service on Sunday, December 9<sup>th</sup>. It is meant to get you to mingle with each other. It was mentioned at Fireside # 2 that the number of people attending is declining. I said that I thought that would happen as more people didn't see the need to attend because they were onboard. That's *not* how others see it. I said that at least 12 people have told me they weren't going to attend but they trusted me. I appreciate such votes of confidence, but do you see how my appeal to people who aren't there may echo emptily in the ears of people who are there? So whatever side of the song you are on I do ask you to make a special effort to attend this event.

I am going to see if I can get my crack SETi team on this. No, not Search for Extraterrestrial Intelligence team but Special Event Technological Imps. The only extraterrestrial life I know of is the Holy Trinity, angels, archangels, and all the company of heaven. These SETi will never find while my SETi team promotes them. This time they will be playing "Should I Stay or Should I Go" on a loop till we all agree to leave the room.

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**He Promises, We Believe**  
**(A Nine-Part Sermon Series on the 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup>**  
**Chief Parts of Luther's Small Catechism)**  
**Advent 2018 – Lent 2019**

I was going to go with the title "I Promise" from a life insurance commercial depicting a father saying, "I promise" to his daughter throughout her life. It shows them aging as he says it. Of course, his final one is as a gray-haired man. He can keep his promise by having life insurance. I thought the ad poignant. The words, "I promise" call forth the response, "I believe it. I trust you." But I thought the "I" looms too large in the theme. Even though it refers to God's promising, we think of me, myself, and I. So I was going to go with "Promises, Promises." But all I heard in my head was Dionne Warwick singing the song by that name from 1968. Promises aren't worth much in that song. So I landed on "He Promises, We Believe."

Promise is a consistent thought across the last three Chief Parts. In fact, when the Means of Grace are considered as a promise of forgiveness Absolution is counted as a third Sacrament. Baptism, Confession, and the Sacrament of the Altar were the parts specifically added by Luther. The Medieval catechism has the first 3 but not in the order Luther has put them. He added the last three.

The Sacraments are God's promise to you, today! The more you use them, study them, remember them, the more faith, trust, and certainty grow in you. As

much as pastors, myself included, have ragged on "Just as I Am", there is powerful, good theology in the line "Because Thy promise, I believe."

Finally a word of thanks to all of you who particularly last year came to the midweek services. Years ago, not at this church, I predicted the end of first Advent and then eventually the much older Lent. Now I don't think so. Now that the world – to use a Stephen King phrase – has moved on from having any roots in Christianity, divine revelation, or in anything outside our fallen little hearts, my sense is that people can't find anything remotely like the divine, or truth, or certainty. And they value those places that still have them. All Service times are at 7:30.

**Wednesday November 28**  
 "Baptism is not Simple Water Only"

**Wednesday December 05**  
 "Baptism Benefits You Three Ways"

**Wednesday December 12**  
 "Baptism is Indicative of More Than You Think"

**Ash Wed March 03**  
 "You Should Confess"

**Wednesday March 13**  
 "God has a Franchise on Earth"

**Wednesday March 20**  
 "Communion is For You"

**Wednesday March 27**  
 "More Than Forgiveness is Being Communicated"

**Wednesday April 03**  
 "There Are No Benefits Apart from Faith"

**Wednesday April 10**  
 "You Can Be Worthy and Well Prepared"

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**Advent Vespers Begin Wednesday,**  
**November 28, 7:30 PM**

Advent as a season of preparation for the Nativity originated in France. Its observance was general by the time of the second Council of Tours, 567. In some places six or seven Sundays were included. When Rome adopted Advent, she limited the period to four Sundays as we now have. It was probably not until the 13th century that Advent was universally recognized as the beginning of the Church

Year which up until that time had begun with the Festival of the Annunciation, March 25, or in some places at Christmas. While Advent never attained the extreme penitential character of Lent, it has always been regarded as a season of repentance and of solemn anticipation and preparation for the coming of Christ. [Adapted from Reed, *The Lutheran Liturgy*, 465-466.] Three comings of Christ are remembered in Advent: the first coming, the incarnation of the Second Person of the Trinity in the womb of the Virgin Mary; the Second Coming of Jesus at the end of the world to judge it; and His continual coming among us in Baptism, the Word, and Holy Communion. The Advent wreath is of relatively recent origin, the 19th century. Only two candles have historically represented something specific, the pink one and the white one. Lit on the Third Sunday the pink one stands for joy. On this Sunday, the penitential theme is supposed to be lighter. Tinged with the white of the Christ candle, the purple of penitence shades to the pink of a joyous rose.

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## Before the board

*A plea to those who are culpable in abortion,  
while there is time*

By Andrée Seu Peterson

The only board I normally stand before is the cutting board. But Jill asked if I would say a few words before the august conclave of our large regional hospital on the fourth Tuesday in January. It was once again that time of year when the meeting is, by law, open to the public. And once again the community pro-life contingency would shuffle in and disgorge their five-minute index cards pleading for the unborn, and poker-faced powers-that-be would be glad when it's over. This has been the drill for decades.

It gave me a chance to dust off my stack of yellow legal pads from an old WORLD assignment. Here was my five minutes' worth, though not equal to what the Christian doctor and Nigerian and American pastors shared:

Thank you for the opportunity to address the board of this hospital. Five years ago my magazine assigned me to the Kermit Gosnell trial in Philadelphia, from which I sent back daily dispatches. I sat directly behind Dr. Gosnell the first few weeks, which was easy to do because practically no one was there except a couple of lonely reporters from the *Daily News* and *Philadelphia Magazine*.

Later the world showed up. Everybody wanted Gosnell found guilty. The pro-lifers wanted him put

away because he killed babies for a living. The pro-abortion crowd wanted him put away because they understood that a lot would come out about abortion, and it would look uncomfortably similar to what had occurred at 3801 Lancaster Avenue.

The prosecution's first witness was an obstetrician from this hospital who does abortions. She was supposed to make Gosnell look bad. She was supposed to show the way a proper abortion is done. We learned many interesting things from her—such as the right way to measure a baby's head before aborting so that we don't violate the 24-week Pennsylvania law; such as the importance of having a good autoclave for sterilizing scissors used to cut up the baby's hands and feet in order to get them out of the mother.

The D.A. had a tough row to hoe. He had to portray Gosnell as a "monster" without making all abortionists look like monsters. He did that by emphasizing the safety of hospital abortions for the mother. He did it by emphasizing the cleanliness of this hospital's surgery units versus what he repeatedly called Gosnell's "house of horrors" clinic. He did it by arguing that Gosnell aborted babies at 25 weeks, even though his obstetrician witness was fine with abortions at 23.5 weeks, and even though the defense showed us a photo of a "preemie" who survived a 23-week delivery. He did it by contending that it was cruel to snip the aborted baby's spinal cord to hasten death (Gosnell's method) but that it was compassionate to place the still-breathing baby under a blanket till it expires (this hospital's method).

He had to make those differences seem like very big differences.

But arguing about details like that seems to me like arguing about the silverware on the *Titanic*. In the end they all come out dead. In the Old Testament a city in Israel is under siege and people are starving, and the king comes upon two women arguing and asks what they are arguing about. What they are arguing about is whose turn it is to cook and eat their babies. The king tears his robes and dons sackcloth and ashes.

Or, as Mercutio said just before dying, to the warring Montagues and Capulets, "A pox on both your houses!"

This is a familiar dance we're doing tonight—this charade where pro-lifers come here once a year and plead, and where you grin and bear it. But this won't go on forever. There are a finite number of these get-togethers, and every time you hear the facts it increases your culpability. Then the Judge will

come, and where will you be then, having forged your chain link by link, like Ebenezer's partner Marley?

Today, while you have today, be courageous. Whatever you fear to lose from changing your policy—money, prestige—is rubbish. Take the adventure. As Jesus said, "The truth will set you free."

*World Magazine*, March 17, 2018

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## **Forbes Magazine Pro-Life On the Issue of Assisted Suicide**

Sep 11, 2018, 08:21am

This story appeared in the September 30, 2018 issue of *Forbes*

### **Time To Terminate "Assisted Dying"** Steve Forbes

In 2002 Belgium legalized the murderously chilling act of euthanasia, whereby doctors and nurses kill patients with their supposed consent. Holland had formally done the same the year before. This practice, all too reminiscent of what Nazi Germany did before WWII to the mentally handicapped and to people with very serious disabilities, is justified these days not by Hitlerian theories of "purifying the race," of course, but as a "humane" way to deal with those who are suffering mortal illnesses and in extreme pain.

Elderly resident in a home for those with Alzheimer's disease.

Many thousands of patients have been disposed of since Holland and Belgium enacted these morally repugnant laws. Belgium now allows euthanasia to be applied even to children, acknowledging recently that between Jan. 1, 2016, and Dec. 31, 2017, two children, ages 9 and 11, who were afflicted with a brain tumor and cystic fibrosis, respectively, and a 17-year-old, who had Duchenne muscular dystrophy, had been put to death. Apologists say these kids gave their consent, as did their parents. Good God! Are we to believe that youngsters should be making such decisions?

Holland has been hit with scandals in which patients were administered lethal injections without their consent, in order to free up "needed" hospital beds. After all, the reasoning went, these people were going to die soon, anyway. In Belgium, according to a news report, a member of the Federal Commission for Euthanasia Control & Evaluation resigned last year "in protest at the unchecked killings of dementia patients."

What's happening here is an ugly, slippery slope. Instead of working to alleviate the tribulations of the afflicted and innovating ever better ways to do this, we simply "put them out of their misery," the way we do with household pets.

It's not only in Belgium and the Netherlands that we're seeing this awful phenomenon. A chronically ill man in Canada is suing the government because medical personnel allegedly and illegally tried to coerce him into going the assisted-suicide route to save money. "Why force me to end my life?" the plaintiff asked.

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## **Frame by frame, Gosnell tears apart everything America has told itself about abortion**

*Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer*  
reviewed

By John Waters, October 2, 2018

**Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer**  
dir: Nick Searcy, 2018

The legal limit for abortion in Pennsylvania is 23 weeks and six days. Theoretically, a termination one minute beyond that could become the basis of a homicide rap. Yet, there is no visible or measurable difference between a fetus of 23 weeks and one of 24 weeks. The self-evident arbitrariness of such a law announces itself as quite devoid of reason and morality, and thus offers a provocation to the consciences of those whose reasoning mechanisms derive their logic from a perhaps unfocussed belief that man might become his own God.

Such a man was Kermit Gosnell, the Philadelphian abortionist who in 2013 was put away for the rest of his natural for the unnatural crimes that to him seemed to represent naturalistically good deeds. The soon-to-be-released movie *Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer* is a taut encapsulation of the horror that ensued from Gosnell's assumption of crypto-divinity. Most true stories do not become dramatic ones without some kind of creative manipulation, but this is one of those rare quasi-Biblical tales that occasionally emerge fully formed from the acts of men, as though by some divine orchestration of character and plot.

Abortion is thoroughly of the modern world in that it is a purely ideological invention. Even the word for it is made-up: there is no objective reason why it ought not be called infanticide and seen, as in ancient

Carthage, for what it was. Its latter-day transference to the medical context creates ambiguities on which a global industry has been constructed, now accounting for some 56 million deaths per year. This objectively astonishing situation has been enabled by the cultural shifting of the line dividing evil from good, and the avoidance of the image of the act itself, which thus remain unique in Western culture as a kind of subterranean ‘cleansing’ of the innocents.

Kermit Gosnell — named for the youngest son of Teddy Roosevelt, of whom his grandfather was an admirer — was a creature of the netherworld that has evolved on and around this thin moral borderline. Gosnell, you might say, was a man in whom the pathology of the collective lies about abortion became so concentrated that it became inevitable that even a deeply reluctant state would one day be forced to collar him.

He snipped the spines of babies using a scissors applied to the neck. He stored the severed feet of babies in a jar as trophies of his conquests. He played duck and drakes with ultrasound scanners to manipulate the recorded gestation times. He reused single-use equipment and kept live turtles in his clinic — as well as cats to keep vermin under control. Cat feces littered everywhere, including his operating theater.

Gosnell employed as assistant abortionists uneducated, illiterate women who did his bidding without question. Over the course of 30 years of unchallenged operation at his hours of horrors, the Philadelphia Women’s Medical Society at 3801 Lancaster Avenue, Philadelphia, he and his band of helpers snuffed out the lives of countless children and caused the deaths of several women. He knew the state law said 24 weeks but recorded numerous abortions in which he put the gestation period down as 24.5 weeks; when asked, he explained that he was ‘rounding down’. Money — greed — is believed to have been Gosnell’s sole or prime motivation in committing his now notorious crimes.

Most abortionists walk around as respectable members of society. Gosnell is now in jail not because the cries of his victims were heard by the Pennsylvania authorities crying out to heaven for vengeance, but thanks to a drug bust on the trail of a fake prescription racket. The cops — all pro-choicers, including some Catholics — just couldn’t believe what they found. For years, despite numerous complaints, the authorities had turned blind eyes to Gosnell. This approach was to survive through much of the process that followed, with both the District Attorney and the judge chairing the grand jury

insisting that nothing in the case should seek to question ‘abortion rights’.

That mentality extended also to the media, who for nearly a month declined to cover the Gosnell trial until shamed into it by a blogger who illicitly tweeted photos of the courtroom’s empty press benches. Even then, the coverage was studded with equivocation, euphemism and prevarication. And the equivocation goes on. National Public Radio last month refused to broadcast an ad for the movie using terms like ‘abortionist’ or ‘abortion doctor’, even though NPR’s own reporting of the case had described Gosnell in precisely those terms.

The *Wall Street Journal* columnist James Taranto described non-coverage of the trial as ‘the banality of bias’: *‘Laziness, prejudice and pride are ordinary human failings. As we’ve seen from the press’s coverage of the Gosnell story, they can lead those whose calling it is to bear witness to avert their eyes from radical evil.’*

This is perhaps the most important thing to be said. The *Gosnell* movie provides us with a test-tube case that demonstrates with utter clarity the process by which little horrors grow into big ones, while ostensibly good men and women stand by and do nothing. Frame by frame, *Gosnell* tears apart everything America has told itself and the world about abortion.

In making his points, director Nick Searcy eschews manipulative techniques, and relies on the factual story. It is, if anything, understated. If you stood outside a TV store window watching without benefit of sound, you might for a time think you were watching an old episode of *Law & Order* or *NYPD Blue*. With the volume up, *Gosnell* almost immediately takes on a different hue, breaking all the rules laid down by such idioms, and venturing immediately across the lines that society puts down to protect its evasions and hypocrisies from public scrutiny.

Starring Dean Cain, *Gosnell* dramatizes Irish husband-and-wife team Ann McElhinney and Phelim McAleer’s tremendous investigative book, *Gosnell* (2017). The screenplay was written by *Daily Wire* podcast host Andrew Klavan. McElhinney and McAleer also produced *Gosnell* and became convinced pro-lifers as a result of making it, just like many of the investigators, officials and jurors involved in bringing Gosnell’s trail of murder to an end. The movie amounts to a slow subversion of the cultural norms that have delivered us the killing chambers of abortion.

Watching *Gosnell*, you can see why the Philadelphia authorities were so nervous about putting Gosnell on trial. The specific nature of his crimes refused to be ring-fenced behind a line of pseudo-legality. He was too blatant for that, too convinced in his own self-righteousness. The trial process teased out not just the technical illegality that was Gosnell's stock-in-trade, but also the underlying incoherence of the pseudo-morality that sustained his abominable practice.

Unlike the heavily-ideologised public square in which the nature of abortion has become buried under layers of euphemism and lies, the Pennsylvania courtroom enabled a searchlight to seek out the dark corners of the matter. Witnesses were obliged to tell the truth under oath and the scrutiny of reason, so that even those who had under different headings been activists, lobbyists, pundits and ideologues were obliged to answer direct questions.

Appropriately for such a moral quagmire, by the movie's telling it was Gosnell's lawyer Jack McMahon, who did the most effective job in teasing out the cultural hypocrisies. One tableau depicts McMahon's cross-examination of an expert witness — herself an abortionist who has conducted some 30,000 abortions — at first smugly outlining the distinctions between 'safe' abortion and what Gosnell was doing. She had never had a live birth, she says, because 'we listen to the sonogram to ensure that the fetal heart has stopped'.

What if she made a mistake?

'We don't.'

McMahon insisted, penetrating like an antibiotic to the heart of the infection: 'What would you do if the baby was out and it was breathing?'

Then, she replied, they would extend 'comfort care', in other words keep the baby warm.

'It will eventually pass,' she added with confidence.

'Eventually, it would pass,' McMahon repeated, as though trying to translate the phrase for himself.

'So basically,' he mused, 'you'd let it die.'

Gosnell: The Trial of America's Biggest Serial Killer premieres in Los Angeles on October 9 and opens in 750 theatres around America the following Friday.

*John Waters is a writer and commentator based in Ireland and the author of ten books. His latest, Give Us Back the Bad Roads, will be published in mid-October.*  
<https://spectator.us/2018/10/gosnell-abortion/>

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## Death wishes -

Severely ill patients are more than collections of usable organs

by Charles Horton Post Date: August 16, 2018 - Issue Date: September 01, 2018

Alfie Evans died on April 28 at 23 months old, and the British boy's case has reopened old questions: Who has the right to veto further care? What happens where conflicts of interest arise, as when Terri Schiavo's husband fought to withhold water and nutrition while living with another woman and standing to inherit over \$700,000 from his wife's medical trust fund? And most fundamentally: What is life, or quality of life?

"Life" is easy to define intuitively, but more challenging to define for patients whose ailments primarily affect the brain. If life depends on self-awareness, are people with Alzheimer's, or who are mentally ill and suffer from delusions, dead? If it depends on the ability to perform given "activities of daily living"—or any activities of daily living at all—are those with disabilities dead?

In 1968, bioethicist Henry Beecher's committee published its proposed answers to those questions in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, focusing on "irreversible destruction of the brain" as equivalent to death. The committee gave two reasons for its answer: first, to relieve the financial and social burden of care it viewed as futile, and second, to address controversies about obtaining organs for transplant. A *New Yorker* article states that an earlier draft spoke more bluntly: "There is great need for the tissues and organs of the hopelessly comatose in order to restore to health those who are still salvageable."

Such attitudes have long made the organ-procurement world both hero and villain to some, and the same article quoted Peter Singer—the Princeton bioethics professor who has attempted to justify infanticide—as stating that brain death is "a concept so desirable in its consequences that it is unthinkable to give up, and so shaky on its foundations that it can scarcely be supported. ... [It is] an ethical choice masquerading as a medical fact." A recent movement has questioned the idea of brain death, and a New Jersey law allows families with religious objections to insist that doctors not declare a patient dead until the

patient's heart stops. The family of Jahi McMath, a teenager originally declared brain-dead in California, used such an exception to continue her care in New Jersey—for over four years.

Dr. Christine Toeves, a trauma surgeon and ICU specialist, points to current ideas in transplantation as the fruits of Singer's utilitarian idea. One trend seeks to optimize organ health through medications and procedures before a donor's death, even if the intended benefit is for the organs and not for the patient to whom they still belong. Toeves asks where that slippery slope ends, but it's a rhetorical question: A 2016 proposal by the United Network for Organ Sharing explores what it delicately terms "imminent death donation."

Imminent death donation does not automatically mean surgical euthanasia, but that's one idea envisioned even by its advocates: If our culture will now countenance euthanasia, why not voluntarily recycle oneself? Opponents fear that what's currently imagined as a final act of self-sacrifice will become an expected norm, with patients who refuse being seen as selfish—or with administrators simply overriding their wishes.

We've seen administrators calling life-and-death shots in England. As Toeves points out, seeing people as commodities—as walking collections of usable organs—would ensure that it also happens here. As we consider how to allocate limited resources, let's keep that old dictum in mind: First, do no harm.

[https://world.wng.org/2018/08/death\\_wishes](https://world.wng.org/2018/08/death_wishes)

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## Does Conscience Exist?

By David Carlin

Friday, June 15, 2018

<https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2018/06/15/does-conscience-exist/>

A few days ago the U.S. Supreme Court made a ruling in the case of a Colorado baker who had refused, for reasons of religious conscience, to bake a wedding cake for the same-sex wedding of two men. Unfortunately, the Court ruling did not address the question of whether the baker, or anybody else similarly situated, has a First Amendment right to follow his conscience in cases like this.

The Court limited itself to ruling that the Colorado civil rights tribunal that decided to punish the baker exhibited undue anti-religious bias in arriving at that decision. So we may expect that this question will present itself again to the Court in the

not-too-distant future, namely, does the "free exercise" clause of the First Amendment protect merchants who refuse to provide goods or services because they are honestly convinced that it would be sinful or immoral to do so?

In the Anglo-American world, the issue of the rights of religious conscience goes back many centuries, perhaps as far back as the time of the Lollards (followers of that rebellious priest John Wycliffe) in the 14<sup>th</sup> century. It was first clearly formulated in the 17<sup>th</sup> century when, among others, Roger Williams and his friend John Milton argued that individuals, provided they are otherwise law-abiding, have a right to obey their conscience even if that conscience happens to be in error. In the generation after Independence, that view had become almost universal in the newly founded United States.

In America, there is a long tradition of allowing persons who belong to a pacifist religion (Quakers, for instance) to obey a conscience that tells them to avoid military service. During the Viet Nam War, conscientious objector (CO) status was often extended to persons who did not belong to a pacifist religion – for example, Catholics and thoroughgoing secularists – provided they made a convincing case that they had an honest conviction that it would be immoral for them to participate in this particular war.

So much have we believed in the importance of conscience, even an erroneous conscience, that we have been willing to tolerate COs even when the fate of the nation was at stake.

But that attitude of tolerance seems to have changed. Many Americans today believe that the law should compel people like the Colorado baker to violate their consciences. And not because the fate of the nation is at stake. And not even because the gay couple would have to do without a wedding cake. (They could easily have got the cake they wanted at another bakery, and they could have got a non-customized cake even at the bakery in question.)

I am even further astonished that these people don't see that conscience is a great social good. The rest of us are better off when our friends and neighbors and fellow citizens pay attention to the voice of their conscience. There is, of course, such a thing as a too-strict conscience, and we don't want to encourage that. But the social harm done by too-strict consciences is as nothing compared to the harm done by consciences that are too lax. It is madness for a society to discourage conscientiousness. But tens of millions of Americans are willing to do this in order to make the world safe for customized same-sex wedding cakes. I am astonished at this lack of

appreciation for the importance of conscience. Don't these people realize that the right to obey one's conscience is a fundamental human right, perhaps the most fundamental of all? These are the same people who think that abortion is a fundamental human right. And they think that sodomy is a fundamental human right. But they don't think there is a fundamental human right to obey one's honest conscience? Astounding. What kind of world are we living in?

Why would anybody fail to appreciate the value of conscience?

Well, what is conscience? In the traditional meaning of the word (a tradition that goes back at least a few hundred years in English), it is thought of as a faculty of moral knowledge. We are unable to know rightness and wrongness the way we know things in the material world, that is, by means of our sense powers (sight, hearing, touch, etc.). But don't worry. In addition to these sensory faculties, we have a faculty of moral knowledge. We usually call it conscience (though it has sometimes been called the moral sense).

Now many people who are secular humanists (or post-Christians, as they may also be called) don't believe that there is a non-sensory faculty that provides us with moral knowledge. All knowledge, they hold, comes from the senses. Convictions that don't come from the senses are not knowledge but are based on feelings or prejudices or whims. When people say, "My conscience tells me to do this or not to do that," what they really mean (in this perspective) is, "My feelings or prejudices or whims tell me to do this or not to do that."

If that's all there is to conscience, there is no great reason to revere it. If some social good can be better accomplished by compelling people to disregard their consciences, why not compel?

Those who most passionately believe in same-sex marriage are likely to be secular humanists or post-Christians, who in turn are likely to believe that there is no such thing as a special faculty of moral knowledge – that is, no such thing as conscience that needs to be respected and legally protected. Who can be surprised, then, that champions of same-sex marriage are untroubled by the idea of visiting legal punishments on bakers who, for reasons of conscience, refuse to make customized same-sex wedding cakes?

Theirs is a common view, but a common view that directly threatens the moral core of every one of us.

David Carlin is professor of sociology and philosophy at the Community College of Rhode Island, and the author of *The Decline and Fall of the Catholic Church in America*.

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## History Reconsidered by a Woman from a Non-Feminist Standpoint

I didn't go searching for this article but researching the quote being referred to. I found this historian's perspective refreshing and faithful to Spartan history as I have read it rather than as it is rewritten by feminists male and female (PH).

### Sparta Reconsidered

Historian Helena P. Schrader discusses ancient Spartan society and culture, seeking to rectify a number of common misconceptions. She also provides excerpts from her biographical novels about Leonidas and reviews of books on ancient Sparta. For more, visit her website at:

<http://spartareconsidered.com>  
Saturday, December 8, 2012

### "... only Spartan women give birth to men."

Queen Gorgo of Sparta's most famous quote was an answer to an Athenian woman, who asked why "only Spartan women rule their men." The answer, that only Spartan women gave birth to men, was far more than a witty retort, it was a profound commentary on the differences between the societies. The most important point, of course, is that Gorgo did not claim Spartan women were superior at all, but rather that Spartan men were superior to their contemporaries.

Readers need to keep in mind that at no time in Spartan history was Sparta "ruled" by women. Spartan women were hardly Amazons, who scorned men and took to the battlefield themselves. Spartan women could not vote in the Spartan Assembly, and they could not be elected to office, neither the Gerousia nor the ephorate, nor lesser positions such as magistrates. Every contemporary of Gorgo knew this, so the question was never meant to suggest Spartan women had political power, but rather that they had influence over their menfolk to an exceptional, indeed "unnatural," degree.

As Gorgo's answer likewise illuminates, Spartan women did not live separate, lesbian lives, disconnected and divorced from their male relations and focused on themselves. The image of Spartan women living apart and satisfying their sexuality among themselves is a modern myth, based on the

patently false misconception that Spartan males were “far away” “most” of the time. In fact, ancient wars were short affairs and only conducted during the campaign season, so that Spartan husbands were never gone more than half a year and that very rarely. (Not until the Peloponnesian war did Sparta campaign year after year; throughout the archaic period Sparta was at war only sporadically with years of peace in between.) Furthermore, the barracks and messes at which Spartan men ate were much closer to the temples, markets and public buildings at which the women congregated than the work-places of most modern (commuting) husbands.

On the contrary, Spartan women viewed their role as completely integral and indeed traditional. As Gorgo’s reply underscores, a Spartan woman’s principal contribution to society – like that of her Athenian counterpart – was to produce the next generation of (male) citizens. There was nothing odd, offensive or sinister about respectable women in the ancient world identifying with the role of mother. The idea that women might have other societal functions other than wives and mothers is a relatively new historical phenomenon and far from accepted in many parts of the world from Afghanistan to Africa.

As Gorgo so brilliantly summarizes the situation, the difference between Spartan women and the women in the rest of the ancient world was not one of a fundamentally different role, but rather a difference in the way men viewed that role. Athens was a virulently misogynous society. Its greatest philosophers viewed women as “permanent children” and the doctors attributed everything from stomach illness to asthma in women to a “wandering womb,” for which the best cure was sex (with the woman’s owner/husband of course.) Women could not inherit property, nor indeed control more money than was needed to purchase a bushel of grain. They were largely uneducated and almost all were illiterate, so it is hardly surprising that their educated, usually significantly older husbands considered them congenitally stupid. The discrepancy between the education and maturity of husbands and wives was aggravated by the fact that female children were fed less nutritious food in smaller quantities than their brothers, and were denied fresh air and any kind of exercise. The result was females stunted both physically and mentally, married as soon as they became sexually mature, and usually dead by the age

of 30 or 35. In short, Athens' laws and customs condemned women to ignorance, stunted grown and an early grave – assuming they were allowed to live at all.

There is little doubt that in Athens far more female infants were exposed than males. As it was aptly put in an Athenian law case, even a poor man would raise a son, while even a rich man would expose a daughter. The archaeological evidence supports the historical record; Athens suffered from a severe demographic imbalance in favor of males, something that is most similar to sex ratios in China and India where the systematic murder of female infants (either as embryos through abortion or after birth through exposure or neglect) is still widespread.

Sparta did not suffer either from the misogyny that created the imbalance in the population or from the consequences. In fact, by the late 5th Century BC, Spartan women appear to have significantly outnumbered men. This imbalance may have been the real reason for the Spartan custom of “wife sharing.”

Returning to Gorgo's most famous quote, I would like to show how I put it in context in Book III of the Leonidas Trilogy, *Leonidas of Sparta: A Heroic King*:

Eukoline shoved her veil off her head and turned on Gorgo to ask in a tone that mixed disapproval with amazement, “Why are you Spartan women the only ones who rule your men?” She did not mean it as a compliment.

“Because we are the only women who give birth to men!” Gorgo snapped back.

“As if I hadn’t given birth to two sons?” Eukoline retorted indignantly. “Athens has five times the number of citizens Sparta has!” she added proudly.

“Athens has 40,000 males who think that making clever speeches is the pinnacle of manliness.” All Gorgo’s pent-up anger at what she had seen since her arrival [in Athens] boiled over. “That’s why they are afraid to educate their daughters and keep their women in the dark — physically and mentally!” Gorgo could not resist adding, “Sparta’s men prove their manhood with their spears and need not dismiss good advice just because it comes from the mouths of women!”

<http://spartareconsidered.blogspot.com/2012/12/only-spartan-women-give-birth-to-men.html>

Trinity Lutheran Church

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### December 2018

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
	5 PM Jr. Confirmation		Advent Vespers 7:30 PM			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Fireside Chat # 3 Wine, Cheese, Breeze Noon	5 PM Jr. Confirmation		Advent Vespers 7:30 PM			
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
1 PM Bus Caroling & Chili Dinner	5 PM Jr. Confirmation					
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
6 PM Children's X- Mas Pageant & Soup Pot Luck	7:30 PM X-Mas Eve Candlelight & Carols	10 AM Christmas Festival Service	<b>PASTOR</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>VACATION</b>	
30	31					
→						

### January 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
		1	2	3	4	5
		<b>PASTOR</b>	<b>ON</b>	<b>VACATION</b>		
←						
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
12:15 PM Adult Confirmation 5 PM Epiphany Dinner	5 PM Jr. Confirmation	Voters Meeting 7PM	6:15 PM Choir 7:15 Romans			
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
12:15 PM Adult Confirmation	5 PM Jr. Confirmation	Elders Meeting 6:30 PM	6:15 PM Choir 7:15 Romans			
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
12:15 PM Adult Confirmation	5 PM Jr. Confirmation		6:15 PM Choir 7:15 Romans			
27	28	29	30	31		
12:15 PM Adult Confirmation	5 PM Jr. Confirmation		6:15 PM Choir 7:15 Romans			

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