

Trinity Te Deum

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Owls, Mail, and Mailboxes

If you know where this article is going based on the title, you're intuitive in the extreme or know me better than most. Let's start with the owls. I use the opening scene in *Harry Potter* as an illustration for Christ in His State of Humiliation. Harry is mailed an acceptance letter to Hogwarts school of wizardry. His evil aunt and uncle raising him throw out the owl-delivered letter. Another one arrives; they throw that one out. Soon more than one owl-bearing letter arrives. Then their house is besieged by owls all delivering the same mail.

Don't you think it funny or perhaps odd that our term for sending something whether by owl, post office, or electronically has the same name a 15th century piece of protective clothing as in "chain mail" or "coat of mail"? Turns out these are homonyms. They come into modern English through Old English *mal* or *mael* for agreement or speech or from Middle English from Anglo-French from Latin *macula*, spot or mesh.

Now back to our Savior's State of Humiliation. Had not our Savior willingly gave up the full use of His divine powers as a Man, He would never have been able to suffer in our place. When He hungered the birds would have descended on their Creator with bread and meat even as they were appointed to do for Elijah during the drought. Picture birds bearing all manner of food descending in the numbers the mail-carrying owls descended on Harry's house.

Each week you're not here a letter containing the complete text of my sermon is mailed to your mailbox. I wonder how many of you open it, read it, use it. I wonder how many of you ignore it, throw it away, never opening it. One person who eventually returned after being gone for two years said he didn't read the sermons but the letters were a constant reminder.

Suppose you lived in Rome, or Corinth, or Galatia, or one of the seven cities the letters in Revelation were mailed to. Would God hold you to account for ignoring a letter? Surely He would. Read the prophets in the Old Testament. They write to Moab, Tyre, Babylon, Edom and more. Do you think God had his prophets writing for nothing? Do you think just because a resident of that city ignored the letter he was given a pass? The kings of Tyre and Babylon surely

never heard of Isaiah or Jeremiah, but along with all the rest they are without excuse says Paul in Romans 1:20.

You wore mail to protect your person against arrows, swords, and knives. Though heavy, it did protect much better, of course, than leather and certainly fabric. The big danger with mail was falling into water. You didn't float; you sunk like a stone and didn't resurface.

I mail all those sermons to you to be mail that protects you from the swords, daggers, spears, and arrows that the Devil, the World, and your own Flesh daily assault you with. However, what is meant as protection will surely sink you. I mail a minimum of 52 letters a year at one ounce a piece. In a year I have mailed you 3 ¼ pounds of mail. In 3 years, that's almost 10 pounds. Go to Lake Travis. Jump in holding 10 pounds, see if you can tread water with it. If you can't, drop the 10 pounds; return to the surface and open your mail and may it be a coat of mail to you against the darts and arrows flying at you daily.

Batter Up!

Posted on [April 2, 2019](#) by [Rev. Paul R. Harris](#)

America's one-time favorite pastime started up again last week. They're talking about pending rule changes. Balls and strikes called by AI; hey, in a badly called game you wonder if there is any intelligence at all. They're talking about having a count on the pitch as you do on the shot in basketball. If you want to shorten the game, get rid of batting gloves. After each pitch, do you really think it's necessary for the batter to unstrap and re-strap them? But it's good to hear the nostalgic cry, "Batter up!"

When my sons were in Little League in the 90s, I attended a practice at the coach's house. He showed them videos of Major League players in their batting stance. Some were bizarre, some were funny, none of them looked like the textbook position of a batter ready for the pitch. You've seen how they get up on tiptoes, waggle their butts, wiggle the bat; it's truly bizarre. After showing all of these different stances, the coach moved the film forward frame by frame. Amazingly, each one of these players starting from such radically different positions ended up with the bat meeting the ball with the arms, hips, and legs in the same position. The

coach said that any Major League player gets to this position no matter how funkily he started out. So, what's batting got to do with theology?

There are three ways to approach a text, or teaching of Scripture: Catholic, Confessional Lutheran, and Reformed. No matter how much a Catholic may claim not to be a traditional Catholic or the parachurches claim to be original, the non-denominational claim to be not Baptist, or the Reformed to be like Lutherans, at the point where their theology reaches the text or the doctrine, it will be identifiable as one of those three. For example, the Catholic who thinks the Evangelical Counsels of poverty, chastity, and obedience are a higher form of Gospel will approach the gospel as a new law. The Reformed influenced by Calvin for whom the Third Use of the Law was the primary use (Horton, *Christian Faith*, 640), will be a "how to-er" in his approach. And the Confessional Lutheran who confesses the Smalcald Articles which says, "the chief function or power of the Law is to make original sin manifest" (III, II, 4) will not draw his life or comfort from the Law.

Of course, it goes the other way to. The Lutheran trying to have evangelical form while retaining Lutheran substance will be exposed as being Reformed in his approach and thinking when the 'pitch' of this or that situation arrives. And the Reformed who claim to be liturgical and sacramental will be exposed he is still swinging at them as one who is uncomfortable with the infinite being found contained in the finite. Likewise, the Catholic who says he is all about grace will be shown at the plate as believing that grace is found poured into his heart not objectively in God's.

St. Kurt (Marquart) is the one who said that the 20,800 denominations worldwide could be distilled into five. Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Calvinist/Armenian, and Pentecostal, but upon further examination he said they can be reduced to three: Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed (*Church Growth*, 11). These divisions are there from the very beginning. You can find them already in Scripture, Gnosticism, and in the writings of the church councils. They were solidified in the 16th century, but they have existed ever since Cain and Able.

So that new approach, that new take, that emergent, trailblazing, bleeding-edge theology that looks as novel as that ballplayer on the balls of his feet or the one holding the bat far above his head, makes you stare and wonder. But that new thing you're so enamored with is one of the same old three. It's either Catholic, Lutheran, or Reformed, and depending on the which one is hitting

the theological ball to you that's what you will be too. Batter up!

Does God Speak in Your Heart?

Rev. Benjamin T. G. Mayes

Does God speak to us in our hearts when we pray or when we are making a tough decision? On the one hand, it is possible that God gives us various good desires. If you women felt that you wanted to become a commissioned church worker (such as a deaconess), that is a good desire, and God might have put that desire in your heart. If you men felt that you wanted to become a pastor or a commissioned church worker, that is a good desire, and God might have stirred that up. It is similar for other good works, such as if I desire to help the urban poor. But this desire should not be confused with God's command or God's call. The command or call comes later, through human beings, through the Church.

People often torment themselves trying to find out what God's will is for their life. Some people even think that if they try to listen to God speaking in their hearts, conclude that He wants them to do one thing, but then that thing does not succeed—in this case they think they have sinned and need to repent, since they did not obey God's will! To them I would respond with sola Scriptura (Scripture Alone). If God has not set it forth in His Word as applying to you in the moral Law or in your specific vocation, then it is not a sin.

Martin Luther encountered people who thought that God spoke to them in their hearts apart from the Bible, preaching, absolution, Baptism, and the Lord's Supper. In his 1537 Smalcald Articles, part of our Christian Book of Concord, he wrote: "God does not want to deal with us in any other way than through the spoken Word and the Sacraments. Whatever is praised as from the Spirit—without the Word and Sacraments—is the devil himself" (SA III VIII 10).¹ Yet elsewhere in the Book of Concord, Philipp Melancthon states that further prophecy after the apostolic era is possible (Ap XXIII 3; XXVII 1–4). That is, our Lutheran fathers in faith believed that God had given further information and revelations even after the apostolic era. Nevertheless, such revelations had to be evaluated and judged, not just accepted by faith, and they do not add to the Law or Gospel. "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, whether they are of God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1).² So, then, how should they be evaluated?

When Luther lectured on Genesis from 1535–45, he came to Genesis 28:16, Jacob's dream at Bethel, and spoke on revelations given in dreams (AE 5:236–41). He points out that:

1. Dreams, signs, and omens happen not just to believers but also to unbelievers, so they are not signs of being a true Christian.

2. Yet these are often sent by the true God.

3. These dreams must be distinguished between physical-political and spiritual-churchly. 4. The physical-political dreams must be evaluated based on whether they correspond to facts and whether you are in a governmental vocation.

5. The spiritual-churchly dreams must be evaluated based on whether they correspond to the Word of God.

This is an issue of *Sola Scriptura*. If we want to know God's will for our life, we look to the Bible as the only source for God's commands and saving revelation. We do not look for Him to speak elsewhere. He has given us His Word, which contains the Law and the Gospel. He wants to forgive us our sins for Christ's sake and give us the Holy Spirit (Gospel). He wants us to live lives of love according to the Ten Commandments within our roles in family, country, and church (Law). Beyond that He gives us freedom. He does not want us to feel guilty over things that He has not revealed in Holy Scripture. He does not want us to take comfort from things that He has not done for us in Christ. If we find other revelations nowadays, we must "test the spirits to see if they are from God." If God has not revealed His will in Scripture, then we should not feel guilty one way or the other in making a choice. But if God puts good desires in our hearts, leading us back to Himself in Holy Scripture and the Church— what a gift that is!

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Footnotes: 1. Paul Timothy McCain and Edward Engelbrecht, eds., *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions*, 2nd ed. (St. Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2005), 281. 2. *The New King James Version* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982).

Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence

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Alex Berenson Author, *Tell Your Children: The Truth About Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence*

Alex Berenson is a graduate of Yale University with degrees in history and economics. He began his career in journalism in 1994 as a business reporter for the *Denver Post*, joined the financial news website *TheStreet.com* in 1996, and worked as an investigative reporter for *The New York Times* from 1999 to 2010, during which time he also served two stints as an Iraq War correspondent. In 2006 he

published *The Faithful Spy*, which won the 2007 Edgar Award for best first novel from the Mystery Writers of America. He has published ten additional novels and two nonfiction books, *The Number: How the Drive for Quarterly Earnings Corrupted Wall Street and Corporate America* and *Tell Your Children: The Truth About Marijuana, Mental Illness, and Violence*.

The following is adapted from a speech delivered on January 15, 2019, at Hillsdale College's Allan P. Kirby, Jr. Center for Constitutional Studies and Citizenship in Washington, D.C.

Seventy miles northwest of New York City is a hospital that looks like a prison, its drab brick buildings wrapped in layers of fencing and barbed wire. This grim facility is called the Mid-Hudson Forensic Psychiatric Institute. It's one of three places the state of New York sends the criminally mentally ill—defendants judged not guilty by reason of insanity.

Until recently, my wife Jackie—Dr. Jacqueline Berenson—was a senior psychiatrist there. Many of Mid-Hudson's 300 patients are killers and arsonists. At least one is a cannibal. Most have been diagnosed with psychotic disorders like schizophrenia that provoked them to violence against family members or strangers.

A couple of years ago, Jackie was telling me about a patient. In passing, she said something like, Of course he'd been smoking pot his whole life.

Of course? I said.

Yes, they all smoke.

So marijuana causes schizophrenia?

I was surprised, to say the least. I tended to be a libertarian on drugs. Years before, I'd covered the pharmaceutical industry for *The New York Times*. I was aware of the claims about marijuana as medicine, and I'd watched the slow spread of legalized cannabis without much interest.

Jackie would have been within her rights to say, I know what I'm talking about, unlike you. Instead she offered something neutral like, I think that's what the big studies say. You should read them.

So I did. The big studies, the little ones, and all the rest. I read everything I could find. I talked to every psychiatrist and brain scientist who would talk to me. And I soon realized that in all my years as a journalist I had never seen a story where the gap between insider and outsider knowledge was so great, or the stakes so high.

I began to wonder why—with the stocks of cannabis companies soaring and politicians promoting legalization as a low-risk way to raise tax revenue and reduce crime—I had never heard the truth about marijuana, mental illness, and violence.

Over the last 30 years, psychiatrists and epidemiologists have turned speculation about marijuana’s dangers into science. Yet over the same period, a shrewd and expensive lobbying campaign has pushed public attitudes about marijuana the other way. And the effects are now becoming apparent.

Almost everything you think you know about the health effects of cannabis, almost everything advocates and the media have told you for a generation, is wrong.

They’ve told you marijuana has many different medical uses. In reality marijuana and THC, its active ingredient, have been shown to work only in a few narrow conditions. They are most commonly prescribed for pain relief. But they are rarely tested against other pain relief drugs like ibuprofen—and in July, a large four-year study of patients with chronic pain in Australia showed cannabis use was associated with greater pain over time.

They’ve told you cannabis can stem opioid use—“Two new studies show how marijuana can help fight the opioid epidemic,” according to Wonkblog, a Washington Post website, in April 2018— and that marijuana’s effects as a painkiller make it a potential substitute for opiates. In reality, like alcohol, marijuana is too weak as a painkiller to work for most people who truly need opiates, such as terminal cancer patients. Even cannabis advocates, like Rob Kampia, the co-founder of the Marijuana Policy Project, acknowledge that they have always viewed medical marijuana laws primarily as a way to protect recreational users.

As for the marijuana-reduces-opiate-use theory, it is based largely on a single paper comparing overdose deaths by state before 2010 to the spread of medical marijuana laws— and the paper’s finding is probably a result of simple geographic coincidence. The opiate epidemic began in Appalachia, while the first states to legalize medical marijuana were in the West. Since 2010, as both the epidemic and medical marijuana laws have spread nationally, the finding has vanished. And the United States, the Western country with the most cannabis use, also has by far the worst problem with opioids.

Research on individual users—a better way to trace cause and effect than looking at aggregate state-level data—consistently shows that marijuana use leads to other drug use. For example, a January 2018 paper in the American Journal of Psychiatry showed that people who used cannabis in 2001 were almost three times as likely to use

opiates three years later, even after adjusting for other potential risks.

Most of all, advocates have told you that marijuana is not just safe for people with psychiatric problems like depression, but that it is a potential treatment for those patients. On its website, the cannabis delivery service Eaze offers the “Best Marijuana Strains and Products for Treating Anxiety.” “How Does Cannabis Help Depression?” is the topic of an article on Leafly, the largest cannabis website. But a mountain of peer-reviewed research in top medical journals shows that marijuana can cause or worsen severe mental illness, especially psychosis, the medical term for a break from reality. Teenagers who smoke marijuana regularly are about three times as likely to develop schizophrenia, the most devastating psychotic disorder.

After an exhaustive review, the National Academy of Medicine found in 2017 that “cannabis use is likely to increase the risk of developing schizophrenia and other psychoses; the higher the use, the greater the risk.” Also that “regular cannabis use is likely to increase the risk for developing social anxiety disorder.”

Over the past decade, as legalization has spread, patterns of marijuana use—and the drug itself—have changed in dangerous ways.

Legalization has not led to a huge increase in people using the drug casually. About 15 percent of Americans used cannabis at least once in 2017, up from ten percent in 2006, according to a large federal study called the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. (By contrast, about 65 percent of Americans had a drink in the last year.) But the number of Americans who use cannabis heavily is soaring. In 2006, about three million Americans reported using cannabis at least 300 times a year, the standard for daily use. By 2017, that number had nearly tripled, to eight million, approaching the twelve million Americans who drank alcohol every day. Put another way, one in 15 drinkers consumed alcohol daily; about one in five marijuana users used cannabis that often.

Cannabis users today are also consuming a drug that is far more potent than ever before, as measured by the amount of THC—delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol, the chemical in cannabis responsible for its psychoactive effects—it contains. In the 1970s, the last time this many Americans used cannabis, most marijuana contained less than two percent THC. Today, marijuana routinely contains 20 to 25 percent THC, thanks to sophisticated farming and cloning techniques—as well as to a demand by users for cannabis that produces a stronger high more quickly. In states where cannabis is legal, many users prefer extracts that are nearly pure THC. Think of the difference between near-beer and a martini, or even grain alcohol, to understand the difference.

These new patterns of use have caused problems with the drug to soar. In 2014, people who had diagnosable cannabis use disorder, the medical term for marijuana abuse or addiction, made up about 1.5 percent of Americans. But they accounted for eleven percent of all the psychosis cases in emergency rooms—90,000 cases, 250 a day, triple the number in 2006. In states like Colorado, emergency room physicians have become experts on dealing with cannabis-induced psychosis.

Cannabis advocates often argue that the drug can't be as neurotoxic as studies suggest, because otherwise Western countries would have seen population-wide increases in psychosis alongside rising use. In reality, accurately tracking psychosis cases is impossible in the United States. The government carefully tracks diseases like cancer with central registries, but no such registry exists for schizophrenia or other severe mental illnesses.

On the other hand, research from Finland and Denmark, two countries that track mental illness more comprehensively, shows a significant increase in psychosis since 2000, following an increase in cannabis use. And in September of last year, a large federal survey found a rise in serious mental illness in the United States as well, especially among young adults, the heaviest users of cannabis.

According to this latter study, 7.5 percent of adults age 18-25 met the criteria for serious mental illness in 2017, double the rate in 2008. What's especially striking is that adolescents age 12-17 don't show these increases in cannabis use and severe mental illness.

A caveat: this federal survey doesn't count individual cases, and it lumps psychosis with other severe mental illness. So it isn't as accurate as the Finnish or Danish studies. Nor do any of these studies prove that rising cannabis use has caused population-wide increases in psychosis or other mental illness. The most that can be said is that they offer intriguing evidence of a link.

Advocates for people with mental illness do not like discussing the link between schizophrenia and crime. They fear it will stigmatize people with the disease. "Most people with mental illness are not violent," the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI) explains on its website. But wishing away the link can't make it disappear. In truth, psychosis is a shockingly high risk factor for violence. The best analysis came in a 2009 paper in *PLOS Medicine* by Dr. Seena Fazel, an Oxford University psychiatrist and epidemiologist. Drawing on earlier studies, the paper found that people with schizophrenia are five times as likely to commit violent crimes as healthy people, and almost 20 times as likely to commit homicide.

NAMI's statement that most people with mental illness are not violent is of course accurate, given that "most" simply means "more than half"; but it is deeply misleading. Schizophrenia is rare. But people with the disorder commit an appreciable fraction of all murders, in the range of six to nine percent.

"The best way to deal with the stigma is to reduce the violence," says Dr. Sheilagh Hodgins, a professor at the University of Montreal who has studied mental illness and violence for more than 30 years.

The marijuana-psychosis-violence connection is even stronger than those figures suggest. People with schizophrenia are only moderately more likely to become violent than healthy people when they are taking antipsychotic medicine and avoiding recreational drugs. But when they use drugs, their risk of violence skyrockets. "You don't just have an increased risk of one thing—these things occur in clusters," Dr. Fazel told me.

Along with alcohol, the drug that psychotic patients use more than any other is cannabis: a 2010 review of earlier studies in *Schizophrenia Bulletin* found that 27 percent of people with schizophrenia had been diagnosed with cannabis use disorder in their lives. And unfortunately—despite its reputation for making users relaxed and calm—cannabis appears to provoke many of them to violence.

A Swiss study of 265 psychotic patients published in *Frontiers of Forensic Psychiatry* last June found that over a three-year period, young men with psychosis who used cannabis had a 50 percent chance of becoming violent. That risk was four times higher than for those with psychosis who didn't use, even after adjusting for factors such as alcohol use. Other researchers have produced similar findings. A 2013 paper in an Italian psychiatric journal examined almost 1,600 psychiatric patients in southern Italy and found that cannabis use was associated with a ten-fold increase in violence.

The most obvious way that cannabis fuels violence in psychotic people is through its tendency to cause paranoia—something even cannabis advocates acknowledge the drug can cause. The risk is so obvious that users joke about it and dispensaries advertise certain strains as less likely to induce paranoia. And for people with psychotic disorders, paranoia can fuel extreme violence. A 2007 paper in the *Medical Journal of Australia* on 88 defendants who had committed homicide during psychotic episodes found that most believed they were in danger from the victim, and almost two-thirds reported misusing cannabis—more than alcohol and amphetamines combined.

Yet the link between marijuana and violence doesn't appear limited to people with preexisting psychosis. Researchers have studied alcohol and violence for generations, proving

that alcohol is a risk factor for domestic abuse, assault, and even murder. Far less work has been done on marijuana, in part because advocates have stigmatized anyone who raises the issue. But studies showing that marijuana use is a significant risk factor for violence have quietly piled up. Many of them weren't even designed to catch the link, but they did. Dozens of such studies exist, covering everything from bullying by high school students to fighting among vacationers in Spain.

In most cases, studies find that the risk is at least as significant as with alcohol. A 2012 paper in the *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* examined a federal survey of more than 9,000 adolescents and found that marijuana use was associated with a doubling of domestic violence; a 2017 paper in *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology* examined drivers of violence among 6,000 British and Chinese men and found that drug use—the drug nearly always being cannabis—translated into a five-fold increase in violence.

Today that risk is translating into real-world impacts. Before states legalized recreational cannabis, advocates said that legalization would let police focus on hardened criminals rather than marijuana smokers and thus reduce violent crime. Some advocates go so far as to claim that legalization has reduced violent crime. In a 2017 speech calling for federal legalization, U.S. Senator Cory Booker said that “states [that have legalized marijuana] are seeing decreases in violent crime.” He was wrong.

The first four states to legalize marijuana for recreational use were Colorado and Washington in 2014 and Alaska and Oregon in 2015. Combined, those four states had about 450 murders and 30,300 aggravated assaults in 2013. Last year, they had almost 620 murders and 38,000 aggravated assaults—an increase of 37 percent for murders and 25 percent for aggravated assaults, far greater than the national increase, even after accounting for differences in population growth.

Knowing exactly how much of the increase is related to cannabis is impossible without researching every crime. But police reports, news stories, and arrest warrants suggest a close link in many cases. For example, last September, police in Longmont, Colorado, arrested Daniel Lopez for stabbing his brother Thomas to death as a neighbor watched. Daniel Lopez had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and was “self-medicating” with marijuana, according to an arrest affidavit.

In every state, not just those where marijuana is legal, cases like Lopez's are far more common than either cannabis or mental illness advocates acknowledge. Cannabis is also associated with a disturbing number of child deaths from abuse and neglect—many more than alcohol, and more than cocaine, methamphetamines, and opioids combined—

according to reports from Texas, one of the few states to provide detailed information on drug use by perpetrators.

These crimes rarely receive more than local attention. Psychosis-induced violence takes particularly ugly forms and is frequently directed at helpless family members. The elite national media prefers to ignore the crimes as tabloid fodder. Even police departments, which see this violence up close, have been slow to recognize the trend, in part because the epidemic of opioid overdose deaths has overwhelmed them.

So the black tide of psychosis and the red tide of violence are rising steadily, almost unnoticed, on a slow green wave.

For centuries, people worldwide have understood that cannabis causes mental illness and violence—just as they've known that opiates cause addiction and overdose. Hard data on the relationship between marijuana and madness dates back 150 years, to British asylum registers in India. Yet 20 years ago, the United States moved to encourage wider use of cannabis and opiates.

In both cases, we decided we could outsmart these drugs—that we could have their benefits without their costs. And in both cases we were wrong. Opiates are riskier, and the overdose deaths they cause a more imminent crisis, so we have focused on those. But soon enough the mental illness and violence that follow cannabis use will also be too widespread to ignore.

Whether to use cannabis, or any drug, is a personal decision. Whether cannabis should be legal is a political issue. But its precise legal status is far less important than making sure that anyone who uses it is aware of its risks. Most cigarette smokers don't die of lung cancer. But we have made it widely known that cigarettes cause cancer, full stop. Most people who drink and drive don't have fatal accidents. But we have highlighted the cases of those who do.

We need equally unambiguous and well-funded advertising campaigns on the risks of cannabis. Instead, we are now in the worst of all worlds. Marijuana is legal in some states, illegal in others, dangerously potent, and sold without warnings everywhere.

But before we can do anything, we—especially cannabis advocates and those in the elite media who have for too long credulously accepted their claims—need to come to terms with the truth about the science on marijuana. That adjustment may be painful. But the alternative is far worse, as the patients at Mid-Hudson Forensic Psychiatric Institute—and their victims—know.

Slaying the Dragon Slayer?

The title of the December 18, 2017 *New York Times* book review of Eric Metaxas' biography of Martin Luther is "Slaying the Dragon of the Dark Ages". The review of his book here may be more aptly styled as slaying the dragon slayer. The *New York Times*' book review did its own bit of dragon slaying in that it considered Metaxas to have written from the point of view of a "homer". It specifically says despite the footnotes this is not a scholarly work but a popular one. This is important to remember and dovetails into my next point.

I found the book pretentious. I listened to the audio version which Metaxas read himself and if Charlie Krauthammer is right, Metaxas is pretentious in the extreme. In his book, *Things that Matter*, Krauthammer discusses the advisability of pronouncing a foreign language word in English. "How do you pronounce a foreign-language word when speaking English? My answer: "When in Rome, speak Roman; when in America (what some people call the United States), speak English. Drop the umlauts, the aigues and graves, and give foreign words their most mundane English rendering" (47). Speaking from experience he says to do otherwise is to linguistically patronize (48). If you listen to Metaxas read his book you will feel bludgeoned by a German club. John Hus is "hoos" but the Hussites are not Hoosites. This is probably the mouse, moose, mice thing. And I've never heard anyone pronounce Matins, Mateens, but he does. That's not patronizing; that's just wrong. Finally, he has a penchant for using 5.00 words when a .50 cent one is available. Why do that in a popular biography?

I have read what are considered the magisterial biographies on Luther. To be fair, I would think this would only qualify me as some sort of expert had I read the German biographers in their language. I have not. But I've read Brecht (all 3 volumes), Oberman, and Bornkamm in English as well as a half-dozen English ones. I particularly commend to you the five volume *History of the Reformation of the Sixteenth Century* by D'Aubigne. This is a 19th century French perspective and is worth reading. It is not listed in Metaxas' bibliography. Several things Metaxas said didn't ring true to what I have read, and some things he related I had not heard at all.

Speaking of giving an impression of being scholarly but really being popular, I found Metaxas giving the same take on the Borgia's as you find elsewhere. The same accusations of deviancy, profligacy, degeneracy, etc.

The 2013 book *The Borgias* by G. J. Meyers is a corrective to this showing how in 1924 a five volume work by Peter De Roo refuted these accusations. But the Meyer's book admits despite that book being published every decade or so the salacious rumors about the Borgias bubble to the surface again.

I also had problems with his methodology. He begins by telling you basically everything you've ever been told about Martin Luther is wrong, and he is going to set you straight. First, I know of no reputable Luther scholar passing on the legends Metaxas claims everyone believes. They like him cite them as stories. Second, Metaxas wants to refute the legend and use the legend. He refutes that Luther ever nailed anything to the castle church door, and then in the closing chapters dwells whimsically on the fact that a cast was made of Luther's dead hands and how you can look at the very hands that 500 years ago wielded the hammer. Third, he rightly rejects Erick Erickson's psychobabbling *Young Man Luther*, but no professor, biographer, or Confessional Lutheran pastor every gave that 1958 work the time of day. Finally, Metaxas makes much out of a 2008 archeological excavation of the Luther residence's trash pile. I agree it can tell you something about the diet and dress and habits of someone who lived there maybe even at exactly Luther's time frame, but to say know we know what Luther ate seems a leap.

The author presents fairly Luther's early criticism of how poorly the Jews were treated by Christians and it was no wonder they wanted no part of Christianity, and just as fairly, he deals with Luther's severe, dead-wrong comments about the Jews late in life. He says that no one has explained Luther's early view of the Jews with his later. I've been told for the last 40 years (at least since the 500th anniversary of his birth in 1983) that Luther thought that once the true Gospel was proclaimed to the Jews and the attacks against them lessened, they would convert in droves. When that didn't happen, the old man Luther became bitter and vile towards them. I was never told Luther was right; only that this could explain the disparity between young and old Luther.

He correctly cites Luther's 1522 desire that his followers not use his name to identify themselves. His opponents coined the term Lutheran, and Luther pointed out he wasn't crucified for anyone. However, he doesn't include the fact that later in life because "Lutheran" was the name used to identify the true preaching of the Gospel, it could be used. I searched in vain for a quote that I thought said this specifically. The closest I found was this. "What has Luther himself said about the use of his name? He writes: 'There are some who want to avoid

danger by saying: I am not a follower of Luther or of anyone else; I am a follower of the Gospel. Truly this type of a confession does not help them, and it is the same as denying Christ. It is true that when speaking about your soul's salvation, you should not say: I am a Lutheran or I am a Papist, for neither one has died for you or is your master. Christ alone has died for you and is your Master. You must confess that you are a Christian. Now if you believe Luther's doctrine to be evangelical and the doctrine of the Pope to be unevangelical, you cannot reject Luther just like that. If you do, you reject his doctrine along with him, although you know that it is the doctrine of Christ. This is what you must say: Luther may be a fool or a saint; this does not resolve the matter, but his doctrine is not his own, but Christ's. For you can see that those in control do not want to destroy only Luther, but they want to destroy his doctrine. It is because of this doctrine that they harass you and ask, are you a Lutheran?." This is from the Confessional Lutheran Church of Finland (<http://www.luterilainen.com/en/read/word-is-the-fountain-of-life/24-why-the-name-qlutheranq>). However, it gives no attribution.

Two of the more egregious things Metaxas does is resurrect the mythology that Luther's references to different spirits and demons show he's a child of his time. German scholar Oswald Bayer has the more accurate view: "Once again, as said by Meyer's Huttern: 'His spirit is the field of battle between two aeons/ it surprises me not that he sees demons'" (*Martin Luther's Theology*, Bayer, 2)! It surprises me that Metaxas didn't surmise as much.

The second more egregious thing, and much more damaging, for Confessional Lutherans is that he bluntly states that for Luther faith effects the Real Presence of Christ's body and blood in Holy Communion. This is not what Luther taught. Christ's Words of Institution effect the Real Presence; faith receives their benefits. Because in our postmodern world, he who tells the best narrative wins, and make no mistakes Metaxas is a genius at this, his views of Luther are going to be the one's popularly passed down. Hence, more than I would slay the dragon slayer of the Dark Ages, Metaxas, I would slay the view that his is a definitive biography of Martin Luther.

We Have Only Just Begun to Redact

Posted on [December 17, 2018](#) by [Rev. Paul R. Harris](#)

I don't know how you feel about the removal of Confederate personalities from the pages of history and town squares of southern cities and commons of southern colleges, but it is proceeding apace. I am conflicted. Historically these things happened. These

men did not begin fighting in defense of slavery but in defense of home and hearth, but once the Emancipation Proclamation was issued, the *casus belli* became slavery. Also, true Jesus's words: "Woe to you! For you build the tombs of the prophets, and it was your fathers who killed them. Consequently, you are witnesses and approve the deeds of your fathers; because it was they who killed them, and you build their tombs" ([Lk. 11: 47-48](#)).

Recently two others have provided more grist for my mill, small though the mill be. Michael Medved is an Orthodox Jew who is an author, radio host, political pundit, and shrewd commentator on pop culture. I commend to you his 1992 book *Hollywood vs. America*. Interviewed in 2017 on NPR he pointed out two things: 1) Historically, the losers of a conflict don't put up statues commemorating the event only the winners do. 2) The statues and other commemorative art were not put up by the generation who fought in the conflict, but by the generation representing Jim Crow South, and they were in celebration if not furtherance of that racism.

Take the monument at Stone Mountain, Georgia. It is a 3-acre depiction of Confederate Generals Lee and Jackson and Confederate President Davis on horseback cut into the face of the mountain. Stone Mountain since 1915 has been a site of KKK activity. Initiations into the Klan for hundreds was held at the foot of this mountain in the 1920s. The United Daughters of the Confederacy was part of the group that oversaw the carving getting done. It wasn't completed till 1972. I can see why blacks would take issue with things like this. But Andrew Young, one-time marcher with Martin Luther King with him when he was assassinated, has a take on these matters that blew me away. He doesn't think they should be removed. It's too costly and too great a price has already been paid in trying to bring people together. When he was asked specifically about Black Live's Matter, he said, "'I'm saying these are kids who grew up free, and they don't know what still enslaves them – and it's not those monuments'" (Dean, Jamie, *Monuments Men*, *WORLD Magazine*, September 16, 2017, p.42).

However, the removal of statues, changing of street and school names, the barring of the Stars and Bars is nothing compared to what we will have to do to history to redact the negative view of LGBTQism.

Look up the original lyrics to Dire Straits 1985 song "Money for Nothing." It was played on the radio this way. It isn't today. Or read William L. Shirer's 1960 magisterial work *Rise and Fall of the Third Reich: A History of a Nazi Germany*. Who but a certifiable homophobe would write the following?

After considerable difficulties the S. A. [the Brownshirts; stormtroopers] was reorganized in an armed band of several hundred thousand men to protect Nazi meetings, to break up the meetings of others and to generally terrorize those who opposed Hitler. Some of its leaders also hoped to see the S.A. supplant the Regular army when

Hitler came to power. To prepare for this a special office under General Franz Ritter von Epp was set up, called the *Wehrpolitische Amt*. Its five divisions concerned themselves with such problems as external and internal defense policy, defense forces, popular defense potential and so on. But the brown-shirted S.A. never became much more than a motley mob of brawlers. Many of its top leaders, beginning with its chief, Roehm, were *notorious homosexual perverts*. Lieutenant Edmund Heines, who led the Munich S.A., was not only a homosexual but a convicted murderer. These two and dozens others quarreled and feuded *as only men of unnatural sexual inclinations, with their peculiar jealousies, can* (page 120, emphasis added).

A few things. Shirer was a first-person witness to the Third Reich. He is not writing about persons and events only from secondary sources. He was there to witness the rise of Hitler. Second, would any public school high school or college allow the above quote without censure? Wouldn't the author of a paper, presentation, thesis containing this quote be required to get counseling?

The 21st Century under the "leadership" of "men" like Obama. "women" like Hilary Clinton, and "churchmen" like Bell, Spong, and Robinson have forged a brave new world that is beyond the pedestrian confines of sexuality determined by anatomy or heterosexual sex. And in that world the above paragraph is wrong on so many levels. At first you think the phrase "notorious homosexual perverts" implies there is a homosexuality that is not perverse, but then he mentions "unnatural sexual inclinations." But what will ultimately get this book banned and/or burned are the words: "quarreled and feuded" linked to "unnatural sexual inclinations" and finished by referencing "their peculiar jealousies."

Shirer is referring to what at one time would have been styled "typical gay behavior"; what virtually everyone still means when they say, "that's gay." But you are a homophobe if you say such things today. You will certainly lose your job if you're in the public sector, and quite possibly be sued if you're in the private. But what to do with the volumes and volumes of books from ancient times to the 20th century that express such thoughts (Read Thomas Hubbard's *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome*). Ban them, burn them, redact them, but they must be

silenced. Those who bemoan the fact that they had to live life in closets are intent on pushing heterosexuals into them.

Why VCS and not VBS?

I don't consider myself a gimmicky guy. Although, when I recently had a picture of me and the missus taken for the webpage, leaving out our kids this time, I thought I could have a picture of one of the younger Harris couples taken and simply have the caption 'The Harrises.' Youth is good for "business." So, am I showing my infrequent 'gimmicky' side by having Vacation Catechetical School rather than Vacation Bible School? No, I'm being pedagogic and protective.

The problem with VBS is that virtually all denominations have them. I noticed years ago that my kids – church kids not my own – went to other denominations VBS and their friends in turn came to mine. This is teaching your kids that denominations are interchangeable or the very least that church is church is church. I think it very, very unwise for a Confessional Lutheran parent to send their child to another denomination for instruction for that *is* what VBS is. I would even go so far as to say it is unwise to send your child to an un-confessional Lutheran church where they will learn to sing ditties and that church is to be fun, entertaining, and exciting.

That's the protective function of saying we have VCS; the pedagogical function is that Luther's Small Catechism has for centuries been called 'the layman's Bible.' There is simply no way you, your kids, or me can have a working, useable, knowledge of the doctrines of the Bible apart from a systematic structuring of those doctrines. Right at your "mind-tips" you have the answer to "What is the Sacrament of the Altar?" "How can water do such great things?" And what does the First through Tenth Commandments mean and much, much more.

Churches that don't center on and emphasize doctrine and therefore catechetical instruction quickly devolve into emphasizing feelings, deeds over creeds, and into civil religion. The pull towards this in America is epic, emphatic, and unrelenting. VCS protects against this too.

This year we're focusing on the 10 Commandments under the theme "Fences." I'm told one word names are almost as relevant, authentic, and revered as names using numbers for some letters. I got it! "F3nc3s" is our theme. Want more info? Ask the Harrises. That young couple whose picture is on the web site.

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All articles must be approved by Rev. Paul R. Harris. Articles with no author are written by him.

JUNE 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
12:15 PM Adult Class Ascension HH 3 pm & Dinner 5 pm		10 am-12 pm VCS Training Meeting	7:15 PM Romans			
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
12:15 PM Adult Class			7:15 PM Romans			
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
12:15 PM Adult Class	7 PM Voters Meeting	PASTOR ON VACATION June 18 th – July 4 th				
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
NO Adult Class	PASTOR ON VACATION June 18 th – July 4 th					
30						
NO Adult Class						

JULY 2019

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
	PASTOR ON VACATION June 18 th – July 4 th					
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
12:15 PM Adult Class			7:15 PM Romans			
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
12:15 pm Adult Class		6:30 PM Elders Meeting	7:15 PM Romans			
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
12:15 pm Adult Class	VACATION CATECHETICAL SCHOOL 22 ND -25 TH 10:00 AM – 1:00 PM					
28	29	30	31			
12:15 PM Adult Class 12:30 pm Youth group TRI TIP dinner			7:15 PM Romans			