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1 **In the Name of the Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

2
3 I'm glad God made you.

4
5 I once found that sentiment as an unexpected gift, waiting for me in a card from a friend, on my
6 birthday. I was turning a nice, big, fat round number. At times like that, one might feel
7 conflicted. The body keeps aging, and the mind grapples with the thought of fleeting youth. Faith
8 on the other hand finds reason for thanksgiving: Thank you, God, for my body and life, and for
9 all these years you have given me!

10
11 Still, as the dreadful day was approaching, I made sure to tell my wife to preempt her: I don't
12 want a party. I don't want anyone to make a fuss. She listened. She smiled. Then she waited.
13 Once a fair amount of time had passed, and hushed plans were already in the works, she said:
14 "Yes, but you don't *really -not-* want a party, do you?" No, of course I don't *-not-* want a party.
15 So, party we did—with balloons and streamers, and all the reckless abandon that frozen boxed
16 lasagnas, and cake and coffee in a borrowed fellowship hall at the church would allow.

17
18 People came! They brought cards and gifts, and gracious expressions of kind congratulation.
19 Among them, this thought lodged in my mind for me to keep close, to take to heart for myself,
20 and to express to my fellow Christians. I keep it too, for wanderers in the world with me, who do
21 not yet know their Maker and all the good that He intends for them. I couldn't think of a better
22 way to greet all of you today. Beloved in the Lord, *I'm glad God made you.*

23
24 What a lovely thing to hear, affirming God's work in creation—and not only His vast, glorious,
25 finished work of "the heavens and the earth... and all the host of them." (Genesis 2:1) Also, here
26 below, and after the fall, God's creating and sustaining hand extends even to this incomplete,
27 fallen, and flawed creature: one that Almighty God was pleased—so to speak—to dirty His
28 hands to make¹. And He was pleased to *wound* His hands, to *scar* them for it, to atone for us
29 bodily, as the objects of His love in redemption.

30
31 What a lovely way, too, to affirm the divine gift of unique abilities and distinct callings that God
32 gave, which always inhere in some person, in some *body*. God not only made heaven and earth
33 and all the things which they contain, but personally and with perfect attention to detail, with
34 loving care, He made *you*. He gave body and life and all, to you. He who made the world gave
35 the gift of a place in it, to you. And about that, I'm glad!

36
37 *My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in*
38 *the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were*
39 *written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there was none*
40 *of them. (Psalm 139:15-16)*

¹ God is not diminished in any way by the work He undertakes in creation. Rather, according to sin on our side, "Whoever teaches and lives other than God's Word teaches profanes the Name of God among us. From this, preserve us Heavenly Father!"—SC III.

41 We are naturally at a loss to express these things. “*Such knowledge is too wonderful for me,*”
42 Psalm 139:6. As little children learn, we begin to learn the language of confession and praise and
43 thanksgiving as God gifts us with the words. He places His words in our hearts and minds, and
44 on our tongues to use in conversation with each other, to confess them before the world, and to
45 speak back to Him. In this way, we begin to reflect His glory, as we were made to do.

46
47 It is precisely in connection with our creation that the Psalmist says: *I will praise you*, Ps 139:14.

48
49 So let this be a little day of celebration for your day of birth, and for the day of your *new* birth,
50 and for rejoicing in the hope that is in you for the life of the world to come. *It is truly good, right*
51 *and salutary that we should at all times and in all places give thanks to God,*² through Jesus
52 Christ our Lord, also for our body and life, for our times and seasons, and for the days and years
53 He gives us to mark³ and enjoy. He also blesses us to share that joy with one another.

54
55 Beloved in the Lord, (as you hear it from your pulpits) or perhaps: dear fellow Redeemed,
56 brothers and sisters in Christ: Grace, mercy and peace to you. God bless you! For it says in His
57 Word: *The LORD is good to all, and his mercy is over all that he has made.* (Psalm 145:9)

58
59 Through your ears and eyes, God bless you *bodily*, to see and hear and receive His Word from
60 heaven like a shower of rain and snow falling to you. It accomplishes its purpose to quicken you
61 and bless your faith. Then it returns to Him again, ascending in praise: hymn and chant and high
62 thanksgiving⁴ to the Lord our God.

63
64 *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*
65 *Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.* (Psalm 139:14 ESV)

66
67 What then are those things that my soul knows so well, and how do I know them? How shall we
68 consider them? John Kleinig uses a three-part Trinitarian outline for roughly half of his book on
69 the theology of the body. Several people I have consulted suggest the same. I also recall a
70 conversation from several years back, with former Seminary President Schmeling, on the
71 doctrine of the Holy Trinity. I can still hear him saying: “We’re losing it.” If in Western
72 Christendom we are losing connection to our Trinitarian confession, it is good for us to stress
73 that doctrine whenever we can: *I believe in God the Father Almighty... and in Jesus Christ, His*
74 *only Son, our Lord... I believe in the Holy Ghost.*

75
76 Finding Him, (or better, being found by Him) we see the world, ourselves, and our lives with
77 unexpected and increasing clarity. Each human being, made by the one true God, is a remarkable
78 creation. Each body exists as an entire set of interrelated systems, fully integrated and irreducibly

² The Preface to the Service of Holy Communion, ELH p. 51, 73, 99.

³ Cf. Genesis 1:14.

⁴ ELH Hymn #181, stanza 7.

79 complex⁵. That inspires me in some small way to layer this presentation, too. So, let's reckon the
80 body:

81

- 82 • In relation to the one true God;
- 83 • Built upon the Bones of the Biblical narrative, so to speak;
- 84 • Given Thought and Feeling by the Creed;
- 85 • Confronted by enemies as outlined in the Catechism,
- 86 • Inspired with the Gifts that the Holy Spirt gives.

87

88 Let's recover a sense of wonder at what God has made. Let's restore a positive, winsome picture
89 of the life of faith that communicates Law and Gospel, and answers sinners' need for identity,
90 meaning, and purpose. John Kleinig suggests a lovely little prayer to lead us into our topic:

91

92 "Almighty God, I thank you that you sustain me and all creatures by your life-giving
93 breath, and deliver me from death through Jesus, the Word of Life. Protect me from all
94 evil, so that I serve you in all that I do and please you in my daily life. Into your hands I
95 commit myself, my body and soul, and all that I possess, and all those who are dear to
96 me; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord. Amen."⁶

97

98 **Part One: God the Father Created This Body**

99

100 Late fall, and late afternoon. I pull my coat in tightly against the wind coursing through the old
101 cemetery in Augusta, Wisconsin. With the *Committal*, another Christian funeral service is now
102 concluded. I watch as the family visits the nearby headstones of loved ones, sharing memories,
103 words of comfort, and even laughter. I watch them slowly breaking away, alone or in families,
104 heading to their cars, driving off. Men with shovels hide in the distance, waiting to take up their
105 assigned task. I wait too, standing at graveside until the last of the family has gone.

106

107 I don't know where the custom comes from, or where I first heard of it. But this is one last,
108 wordless sermon I am privileged to preach for my friend who is buried today. I stand there and
109 keep watch, providing a bodily presence to teach a spiritual truth: *This body matters to God*. He
110 will not forget it. He will stand vigil over it. With His final, gracious intervention on *that Day*,
111 He will remember it, as He remembered Noah and his family in the ark, the holy box of wood
112 that carried them safely over the waters of the flood. He will remember this body, with great and
113 gracious works. He will vindicate it once and for all⁷. God knows this place, and He will watch
114 over and keep these remains: *God the Father, who created this body; God the Son who redeemed*
115 *this body; God the Holy Ghost who sanctified this body to be His Temple*.

116

⁵ Irreducible complexity is a technical term, identifying a system of integrated parts which have no reason to exist and serve no purpose apart from the whole.

⁶ Kleinig, XV

⁷ "The last enemy to be destroyed is death." (1 Corinthians 15:26 ESV)

117 **I Believe that God has Made Me and All Creatures**

118

119 Dr. Luther’s explanations of the articles of our creed, found in the Small Catechism, are deeply
120 devotional and profoundly personal. **I believe**⁸. That means that though I have not seen, I am
121 certain. Not that I have chosen it, but the truth has been impressed on me, preached to me, and
122 shown to me, and the truth has won me over: **that God has made me**. I am not a product of
123 random chance, or a happy accident. But when I was nothing, God designed and built and gave
124 life to me as the object of His love. The Psalmist proclaims it to the mind and the heart: *Know*
125 *that the LORD, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves; We are His people*
126 *and the sheep of His pasture.* (Psalm 100:3 NKJ, emphasis added.)

127

128 **I believe that God has made me and all creatures:** all the fish and birds, beasts and creeping
129 things, along with the habitats that sustain them, the herbs and plants and trees, and everyone I
130 meet who is like me. He has made *all things, visible and invisible*. All these owe their existence
131 to Him. When we were nothing, God designed and built and gave life to us, objects of His love.

132

133 Life is a gift! Thank God! The body is a gift. Yet, just like it is with every gift, according to sin,
134 it meets abuse. There are opposing extremes to this abuse. Sometimes we are careless in pursuit
135 of sinful pleasures. We treat the body like a garbage can, or a thrill ride. We sin against it with
136 gluttony, indulgence or neglect. Then we curse it when it breaks down or disappoints us. On the
137 other hand, sometimes, something goes wrong, and we lose our minds with fear. We perceive a
138 danger of some kind, and all courage fails us. We panic. Perhaps we hide. We’re suddenly
139 terrified of what might happen to this body. Wouldn’t it be something to find a middle path?

140

141 The adult human body has 206 bones in it. My Great-Uncle Andy, best guess, had 204. It’s not
142 that he started life that way. One day, out in the field on the family farm, he got his thumb caught
143 in a combine. He had to take it off with a pocketknife. Years afterward, I watched him. I can still
144 see him waving that thumbless, cigar-wielding hand around. Without meaning to, it made a big
145 impression on me. Wouldn’t it be something, to find grace and strength to do what you had to; to
146 do it with courage; to wear the scars that come from it, and still give thanks to God, and enjoy a
147 cigar, so to speak? Wouldn’t it be something—to handle the body with reverence rather than
148 self-indulgence or carelessness... and even though we get damaged, grow old and die, to handle
149 the body with hope and not despair? “No matter how damaged it may actually be, every human
150 body is designed for perfection in eternity.”⁹

151

152 **In the Beginning**

153

154 The Biblical account of creation begins as God makes space for us to live in, time through which
155 we move, and the material of which we are made and with which we interact. *In the Beginning,*
156 *God created the Heavens and the Earth.*¹⁰ The writer to the Hebrews comments on God’s act of

⁸ SC II.

⁹ Kleinig, p.4.

¹⁰ Genesis 1:1, ESV. Cf. Kent Hovind. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w6AHcv19Nlc>

157 creation out of nothing: “By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of
158 God, so that what is seen was not made out of things that are visible.” (Hebrews 11:3 ESV)

159

160 In the modern age, and now in post-modernism, faith and science are often set in opposition to
161 each other. The perception is that science stands against those who profess a belief in special
162 creation. Nothing could be further from the truth. In a recent Sunday morning Bible study on
163 Creation¹¹, we had the occasion to review some basic Laws of Science:

164

- 165 • Energy can neither be created nor destroyed. (This is called the *Law of Conservation*.)
- 166 • The disorder of a closed system is always increasing. (This is the *Law of Entropy*.)
- 167 • Life always derives only from life. (This is the *Law of Biogenesis*.)

168

169 If energy can neither be created nor destroyed, then according to the *Law of Conservation*, the
170 Universe ought to be eternal and cannot have a beginning. Then again, if disorder within a closed
171 system is always increasing, then according to the *Law of Entropy*, the Universe must have a
172 beginning and cannot be eternal. Without an Intelligent Designer, a *Creator*, an ordered universe
173 is a contradiction. That these Laws even exist testify to the existence of a Lawgiver. Besides
174 which, even without the Laws of Conservation and Entropy, the greatest question of all remains:
175 *Whence Life?*

176

177 St. Paul writes to the Corinthians about the frustration of unbelief applied to the pursuit of
178 knowledge:

179

180 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has
181 not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since, in the wisdom of God, the
182 world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we
183 preach to save those who believe. For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, but
184 we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, but to those
185 who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.
186 (1 Corinthians 1:20-24 ESV)

187

188 Mark Mattes recalls Martin Luther’s ‘*Disputation Concerning Man*’: “It is through scriptural
189 revelation that we learn that ‘man is a creature of God consisting of body and a living soul, made
190 in the beginning after the image of God, without sin, so that he should procreate and rule over the
191 created things, and never die.’”¹² God’s Word provides a narrative accounting for life in the
192 body. God’s Word reveals the body’s fearful and wonderful creation. God’s Word accounts for
193 our present state of moral degeneracy and bodily bondage to decay. God’s Word declares the
194 reconciliation accomplished for us bodily, in Christ, by the cross, and promises true and lasting
195 restoration in the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

196

¹¹ Source Materials included materials produced by D. Moldstad and *Out of Nothing: The Word, Creation and Faith*
Bible study, LHM Men’s Network, available from CPH.

¹² Mattes, p.31.

197 As a Shepherd watchfully keeping His sheep, the Lord Jesus said: “*I have come into the world*
198 *that they may have life and have it to the full.*”¹³ In a voice we have come to know and recognize
199 and love, He speaks to us: “*I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he*
200 *die, yet shall he live,*²⁶ *and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.*” (John 11:25-
201 26 ESV) For Him, by Him, and through Him, the heavens and the earth were created.

202

203 **Darkness upon the Face of the Deep**

204

205 God could easily create a Heavens and Earth in perfect order at the outset. In His wisdom and
206 anticipatory grace, He chose not to do that. Instead, He created everything in a state of chaos,
207 and only then did He impose His gift of order on it: *the earth was without form and void, and*
208 *darkness was upon the face of the deep.*¹⁴ He made a world in darkness. Then He shed light on it.
209 He made it without form. Then He gave shape to it. He made a void. Then He filled it.

210

211 I doubt that I am alone in having conceived of the original formless void as *mud*. The text,
212 however, goes on: *Darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering*
213 *over the face of the waters.*¹⁵ St. Peter writes regarding the formless void: “*The heavens existed*
214 *long ago, and the earth was formed out of water and through water by the word of God.*”¹⁶
215 It seems God was pleased to create the world as *water*, and from the water to draw out dry land,
216 and from the dry land—from the *dust* of it—to draw out *a man*. Thank God for making us in just
217 this way! When I fall apart, when my life seems void and formless, water and God’s word still
218 remain, where God made a beginning for me and pledged Himself to me in *a washing of*
219 *regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit*, Titus 3. I’m a mess. But I am comforted.

220

221 As a dove may be described when descending to feed her young, *the Spirit of God was hovering*
222 *over the face of the waters.*¹⁷ Someone somewhere has observed that the Holy Spirit has given
223 Himself as witness to the events of creation. Not only that: the Holy Spirit shows Himself
224 concerned with and active in His creation in its material existence from the very beginning.

225

226 John Kleinig in his masterful work *Wonderfully Made* summarizes: “Most people see the
227 spiritual as the opposite of the physical and material... in contrast, the biblical view is that what
228 is spiritual has to do with the Holy Spirit.”¹⁸ So, it follows: “paradoxically, my spiritual life, the
229 life that is created and sustained by the Holy Spirit, is always lived in the body.”¹⁹

230

¹³ John 10:10, emphasis added. –to Bodily Life He adds new Spiritual Life and the Life everlasting.

¹⁴ Genesis 1:2a, NKJ

¹⁵ Genesis 1:2b, ESV, emphasis added.

¹⁶ 2 Peter 3:5, ESV, emphasis added.

¹⁷ And God spoke. The Biblical record begins with God and the Spirit of God and the Word of God, in one shared divine life. The Threeness of God with which the ancients were familiar from the beginning may well necessitate the stress on His Oneness that formed their daily creed: “Hear O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One.”

¹⁸ Kleinig, p.3-4.

¹⁹ Kleinig, p.3.

231 **God Thinks of Everything**

232

233 By the gift of God, I am alive. I live in the body. I live in this *biome*. Looking around, I am
234 perfectly suited to my surroundings. My surroundings are perfectly suited to me.

235

236 God said: "Let there be light." And I was made to see. I have six to seven million *cones* and one
237 hundred twenty million *rods* (more effective in low light) in my eye for seeing.²⁰ With two eyes,
238 I have depth perception. The eyes make up one percent of the weight of your head (give or take).
239 They capture images, invert them, project them, and convert them to electrical impulses to be
240 sent to the brain to decipher. Paul Brand reports: "Under optimal conditions, the human eye can
241 detect a candle at a distance of fifteen miles."²¹ God, when He made light, separated day from
242 night. And I was made for resting and waking.

243

244 God made an expanse to separate water from water. And I was made to breathe in its
245 atmosphere. Its oxygen sustains me. I will trade carbon dioxide for it in a wonderful exchange
246 with the trees! The air carries waves of sound. And I was made to hear. "The eardrum vibrates:
247 three miniature bones, informally known as the hammer, anvil, and stirrup, transfer that vibration
248 into the middle ear... Inside an inch-long chamber known as the organ of Corti, twenty-five
249 thousand sound-receptor cells line up to receive these vibrations, like strings of a piano waiting
250 to be struck... The brain receives messages from sound receptors in on-or-off blips, sorts them
251 out, and pieces together the meaningful result."²²

252

253 And God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit
254 in which is their seed, each according to its kind, on the earth." It was so. And I have been made
255 to eat: with teeth and tastebuds and a tongue for swallowing and a belly for filling. I was made to
256 take from off the trees, and harvest what comes up from the ground to live on it. Now, we even
257 butcher and live off death, and give thanks to God for it as a gift of providence.

258

259 My friend Pastor Tony Pittenger brought a poem to my attention, written by Robert Service. It
260 reads in part:

261

262 I wish that I could understand
263 The moving marvel of my Hand;
264 I watch my fingers turn and twist,
265 The supple bending of my wrist,
266 The dainty touch of finger-tip,
267 The steel intensity of grip;
268 A tool of exquisite design,
269 With pride I think: "It's mine! It's mine!"²³

²⁰ Sumobrain.com

²¹ Brand, p.33.

²² Brand, p.56-57.

²³ allpoetry.com/The-Wonderer

270 “In order to allow dexterity and slimness for actions like piano playing, the finger contains no
271 muscles; tendons transfer force from muscles in the forearm and palm. In all, seventy muscles
272 contribute to hand movements.”²⁴ I became aware of how wonderful my hand is when I cut the
273 two tendons to the little finger on my right hand. Surgical repair and weeks of physical therapy
274 could restore it, but not quite to its original condition. I was suddenly amazed to find I had nine
275 other fingers in perfect balance that worked flawlessly and effortlessly. “Compliant tissues
276 covering my bones assume the shape—awkward or smooth—of whatever I am grasping. I do not
277 demand that the object fit the shape of my hand; my hand adapts, distributing the pressure.”²⁵

278

279 “Then oh! but how can I explain
280 The wondrous wonder of my Brain?
281 That marvelous machine that brings
282 All consciousness of wonderings;
283 That lets me from myself leap out
284 And watch my body walk about;
285 It's hopeless — all my words are vain
286 To tell the wonder of my Brain.”²⁶

287

288 “In the human body, the sense of belonging extends two ways: a cell follows orders from the
289 brain, while also recognizing a bond with every other cell in the body.”²⁷ Brand builds up to that
290 thought with these observations:

291

292 “Medicine has coined a wonderful word to describe how the body unites its many cells to
293 serve the whole: homeostasis... All [its] operations—heart rate, fluid control,
294 perspiration—adapt second by second as the body seeks the very best state. Hormone-
295 like compounds, the prostaglandins, bathe the body’s cells: one lowers blood pressure,
296 and another raises it; one initiates inflammation, another inhibits it... Until recently,
297 anatomists believed that glands such as the adrenal and pituitary sent out their hormonal
298 instructions independently. New discoveries point to reliance on the brain at virtually
299 every point. Instructions on growth, on deployment of resources, and on how to meet a
300 crisis all originate in the head, which senses the needs of the entire body...”²⁸

301

302 Robert Service’s poem concludes:

303

304 If wonder is in great and small,
305 Then what of Him who made it all?
306 In eyes and brain and heart and limb
307 Let's see the wondrous work of Him.

²⁴ Brand, p. 159.

²⁵ Brand, p.72.

²⁶ Allpoetry.com/The-Wonderer

²⁷ Brand, p.51

²⁸ Brand, p.50-51.

308 In house and hill and sward and sea,
309 In bird and beast and flower and tree,
310 In everything from sun to sod,
311 The wonder and the awe of God.²⁹

312
313 All that God made unfolded in a series of evenings and mornings, that the Hebrew mind might
314 start its day not with a shrill alarm, but with the setting of the sun, to find rest before all else.
315 Then, being rested, you are given strength to face the morning. It somehow perfectly matches the
316 Biblical pattern of faith and its fruits. Somehow God thinks of everything.

317
318 Carried along by the Holy Spirit to give us the inspired account of creation, Moses somehow
319 thinks of everything, too. Moses anticipates challenges to our faith like Darwinism, even writing
320 as he does, some 1400 years before Christ. Darwinism has a certain appeal because *survival of*
321 *the fittest* can be used to justify nearly anything. Secular humanism appeals because in place of a
322 transcendent God, such a view places at the top of the heap—me! A creature untold millions of
323 years in the making, presumably answerable to no one. A secular worldview appeals because it
324 places all things beneath the judgment of my proud human reason.

325
326 Moses, though, teaches as a law of nature that all living things reproduce “*according to their*
327 *kinds.*”³⁰ Scripture matches what our eyes tell us, which matches what sound judgment suggests,
328 which matches the evidence in the fossil record: “Not all flesh is the same, but there is one kind
329 for humans, another for animals, another for birds, another for fish.”—I Corinthians 15.39.

330 331 **The Image of God in God’s Creation**

332
333 The sacred text marks off something utterly unique, profoundly set apart from all other created
334 things, when God takes counsel within Himself: *Let us make man in our image, in our likeness,*
335 *and let him have dominion.* Who knows what all is comprehended in it, to be made in God’s
336 Image? Immortality was certainly included. Dominion was gifted with it. Likewise, wisdom and
337 mental acuity. Man experienced a state of being so attuned to God’s mind that with one look at
338 each of God’s creatures, man could know it, and whatever he called it, that was its name.
339 Bernard Lohse finds stress in Luther’s writings on cooperation with God, and the gift of reason.³¹

340
341 At the heart of the image of God is righteousness and holiness, gifted to man from his creation.³²
342 St. John wrote, I Ep. 4.16: “*God is love.*” Not the malleable, selfish love that seeks to *possess*
343 and *use* its object, but rather love characterized by self-giving and service. Bryan Wolfmüller
344 has said: “The Lord has ordered this world according to the ten commandments.”³³ That gives
345 shape to the words: “*be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and subdue it.*”

²⁹ allpoetry.com/The-Wonderer

³⁰ Genesis 1:11, 1:12, 1:21, 1:24, 1:25; also 7:14.

³¹ Lohse, p. 243 ff.

³² Compare Ephesians 4.24, Colossians 3.10.

³³ Wolfmüller.co/creation-conference-2022-media/

346
347 Dietrich Bonhoeffer describes the Image of God this way: “The likeness, the analogy of man to
348 God, is not [analogy of being] but [analogy of relation.] This means that even the relation
349 between man and God is not a part of man; it is not a capacity, a possibility, or a structure of his
350 being but a given, set relationship: *Justitia (sic) passiva* (Passive Righteousness).”³⁴

351
352 Consistent with this, Mark Mattes paraphrases the Catechism to show that:

353
354 “Latent within the word ‘give’... is forensic justification. When Luther explains the First
355 Article of the creed in the Small Catechism, he associates God’s creative work with
356 giving. ‘I believe that God has *created* me together with all that exists. God has *given* me
357 and still preserves.’ And this work of creation is tied to that of redemption: ‘All this is
358 done out of pure, fatherly divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of
359 mine at all!’ That is, our creation (out of nothing) is not based on our ability to achieve
360 merit through good works; instead, it comes entirely as a gift. Nor is it based on our
361 worthiness.”³⁵

362
363 *So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he*
364 *created them.* The text repeats three times over: *He created.* The image in which He made man is
365 His own. The divine image was instantiated in both *male* and *female.* *And God blessed them.*
366 “The first humans are portrayed as priests presiding over the cosmic Temple and reflecting
367 divine goodness and glory back to God; this constitutes the embodied divine image.”³⁶

368 369 **Of Dust from the Ground**

370
371 It is a characteristic Hebraism (and not a late editorial blending of independent, unrelated
372 traditions as some critics would have us believe) that emerges in the text at Genesis 2:4. The first
373 chapter and opening verses of chapter two tell you *what* ultimately happened: *God created man.*
374 What follows expands upon this with greater specificity and shows you *how.*

375
376 *The LORD God formed the man of dust from the ground.*

377
378 Nothing of all that God did up to this point compares with this loving condescension. *God takes*
379 *up* and *shapes* with singleness of purpose. “This expresses two things. First, the bodily nearness
380 of the Creator to the creature, that it is really he who makes me... secondly there is his authority,
381 the absolute superiority in which he shapes and creates me, in which I am his creature.”³⁷ God
382 poured His heart into the work of His hands, with great care and delight in what He was making,
383 when He made man. He is not ashamed to have us know it: *But now, O LORD, you are our*
384 *Father; we are the clay, and you are our potter; we are all the work of your hand.* (Is 64:8 ESV)

³⁴ Bonhoeffer, p.41.

³⁵ Mattes, p. 130.

³⁶ Kilcrease, p. 318.

³⁷ Bonhoeffer, p. 50.

385
386 Like the original garden home in paradise, the house that my father built for our family to live in
387 also progressed in stages. Unlike the Garden God provided, our house wasn't entirely finished
388 yet when we moved in. Up on the second floor, where a redwood deck was planned, there was a
389 sliding glass door that opened to nowhere. My kid brother and I took the occasion to bundle up
390 the youngest and throw him from the second story of the house into a snowbank. I did not see a
391 problem with this. (To be fair, the little guy didn't either.) I had witnessed firsthand how he
392 could tumble down a flight of stairs end-over-end in what must have been a slow-motion
393 parental nightmare. Only a big brother at the time, the lesson I learned was... how durable!
394

395 Much more than that: What balance. What symmetry. What complexity. What profound
396 attention to detail is reflected in each human body! Even now we only scratch the surface. The
397 human body consists of some six trillion cells, making up some thirteen distinct interrelated
398 systems: the central nervous system, the skeletal system, the cardiovascular system, the muscular
399 system, the respiratory system, the endocrine system, the reproductive system, the circulatory
400 system, the excretory system, the urinary system, the lymphatic system, the integumentary
401 system... These are just ones we know about.
402

403 Each Human's DNA is an unthinkable small, unimaginably complex, self-replicating structure
404 that bears *information*.³⁸ Bio-resonance, some of us believe, gives shape and good health to
405 organs and tissues. Meanwhile, if I come across so much as a crude arrowhead somewhere in the
406 hills, I will conclude two things without any doubt in my mind: *someone has been here*, and
407 *someone had a purpose for this*.
408

409 "The body matters much more than we usually imagine that it does. It matters because it
410 locates me in time and space here on earth. It matters because we live in it and with it. It
411 matters because through it we interact with the world around us, the people who coexist
412 with us, and the living God who keeps us physically alive in it. It matters even though we
413 rebel against our Creator and abuse our fellow creatures here on earth. It matters even
414 though it is finite and doomed to die. Most of all, it matters to us because it matters so
415 much to God. He is the supreme philanthropist, the lover of humanity (Titus 3:4).³⁹"
416

417 **The Breath of Life**

418

419 Recall that according to the *Law of Biogenesis*, Life does not just happen. Life does not give rise
420 to itself. Life derives from life, and only from life. Everything that lives, lives because God gives
421 life to it. The distinctive, eternal, God-given spiritual and bodily life in our humanity begins—as
422 the Image of God in His creation begins—with the words: "[The LORD God] *breathed into his*
423 *nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living creature.*" (Genesis 2:7 ESV)
424

³⁸ Information necessarily presupposes Intelligence.

³⁹ Kleinig, p.13.

425 I'm not only flesh but soul also, made to be eternal. I'm not only soul, but also flesh, made to
426 *subsist*; made to see and hear, taste, touch, and smell; created to take it all in when God's
427 bounties are set before me. Even in the original, innocent creation, we find a blessed
428 dependency, in the life of the body, primed to live by receiving everything from God, as gift. For
429 us, in the beginning, God made day and night, breathable air, dry land and seas, vegetation and
430 trees to bear fruit, and great lights to mark seasons and days and years and give light on the earth.
431 God made sea creatures and birds, and land animals, all with our human life in mind.

432
433 After announcing all this goodness, God determined: *It is not good for man to be alone*. The
434 marriage of Adam and Eve is the beginning of all marriage and family and of all human
435 connection. Home and governmental authority derive from it, and the church is found there.⁴⁰

436 437 **There was a Serpent in the Garden**

438
439 Long ago, there was a neighborhood barbecue. Two little girls were there—one with a helium
440 balloon tied to her wrist. For her, the other little girl seemed like someone she might like to play
441 with. But the other little girl was fixated only on her balloon. Somehow, she finally managed to
442 get her hands on that balloon. When she did, of course, she popped it—because if she couldn't
443 have it, no one was going to have it. If you can understand that simple motivation, you have an
444 insight into the spite of the serpent in Genesis chapter three.

445
446 Compounding matters is *the Image of God* in man. God, after all, repeatedly dubbed "*The*
447 *Enemy*" in C.S. Lewis' diabolical masterpiece *the Screwtape Letters*, is untouchable. He dwells
448 in unapproachable light. The creature that bears His Image, though, is physical, approachable,
449 and vulnerable. As if with a knife against a canvass, spray paint against a costly mural, or ropes
450 in the attempt to pull a statue down and smash it against the concrete below, the dragon is bent
451 on vandalism. Driven by nothing but spite and hatred for the Creator, he schemes to torch the
452 Divine Image in effigy where he finds it, in man, with a rare madness that corresponds to a
453 sentence of condemnation. Michael Caine once described such a mindset on film: "Some men
454 just want to watch the world burn."⁴¹

455
456 The Lord Jesus characterized the devil: *He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not*
457 *stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks out of his own*
458 *character, for he is a liar and the father of lies.* (John 8:44 ESV)

⁴⁰ "For Luther... three 'estates' or 'hierarchies' have greatest weight: the priestly office, the estate of marriage, and the temporal authority, and not necessarily in that order. It is significant that among these three hierarchies or estates none is ranked above or over the others. Luther broke with the medieval idea that the spiritual estate is above the temporal, that the latter must serve the former. To the contrary, all three estates are equally foundational, though in the given instance each has a different task in the preservation of life. And, respecting their honor, they are equal. To oppose them means to open the door to unrighteousness. Even after the fall these estates, hierarchies, or orders of creation are altogether in force. Naturally, they too are affected by sin, so that there is continual danger of perversion."⁴⁰ —Lohse, p. 246.

⁴¹ The Dark Knight.

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The Sound of the LORD God

Evangelical Lutheran Hymnary, #302, stanza 2:

The stillness of that sacred grove Was broken as the serpent strove,
With tempting voice to Eve beguile, And Adam too by sin defile.
O day of sadness when the breath Of fear and darkness, sin and death,
Its awful poison first displayed, Within the world so newly made.

They had come to know God in His gracious appearance to them, walking with them, in His Son. Now, they look down and see that the *Glory of the Lord* is lost to them. Shame compels a flimsy covering of leaves, to hide us from ourselves and from each other. Now at the sound of His coming, what sad cover we found for ourselves: wonderful for their green leaves and flowering beauty and for the fruits and berries and nuts, the bushes and trees of Eden were a poor place to conceal ourselves when everything was lost.

Then comes the Sound of His voice: **Where are you?**⁴² Those words echo down through history for our ears. **Where are you?**— When we wander where we ought not go; eyes gazing on things we ought not see; When we wander from safety; from the preaching and teaching of God’s truth, When we meander away from the path of a good conscience marked out by God’s words. Whenever we think to cover ourselves with boasting and proud works, or hide behind the sins, faults, and failings of others-- **you**, He asks for. **Where are you?**

Recognize those words when you hear them. For by His words God is at work to seek and to save what was lost, even if His gracious purpose wasn’t clear yet to the man and his wife. *I heard you and I was afraid because I was naked so I hid myself.*

Isn’t it just like that, when we can’t look a parent or a spouse in the eye, yet they haven’t changed. Or when we’re called upon to answer for the way we spend our time and effort at work, or when we busy ourselves so we don’t think about what we’ve been doing, or when we hide from the services of God’s house because something in our lives leaves us feeling unworthy to come. But to tell the truth would kill me. So caught, trembling in the bushes, hiding amongst the leaves, *This woman, (whom I didn’t ask for but) you put here with me, she gave me and I ate.* The woman in turn said: *The serpent deceived me, and I ate.*

Ever since, we decline accountability. We find someone else to blame, and finding no one, we lay it all at God’s feet. The wonder of grace is that God does not refuse it. He knows how great the guilt and blame are. God knows the sin for what it is and still takes it up Himself. Before we asked for His help, or we had ever said we were sorry.

⁴² This is a form of sound words.

500 *The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, cursed are you above all*
501 *livestock and above all beasts of the field; on your belly you shall go, and dust you shall eat all*
502 *the days of your life. "I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring*
503 *and her [Seed]; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

504
505 Standing in Adam's shoes, called to account by our Creator, seeing the consequences that are
506 falling to us and the judgment announced over the serpent, I cannot help but trace a connection
507 between Genesis 2:7, 3:14, and 3:19.

508
509 Luther's translation at 2:7 renders man's creation *aus einem Erdenkloß*, from a clump of earth.
510 At 3:14, after "crawl on your belly," for "you will eat dust," Luther has: *und Erde essen*, you will
511 eat earth. This agrees with the Greek rendering, *καὶ γῆν φάγη πάσας τὰς ἡμέρας τῆς ζωῆς σου* (Gen
512 3:14 BGT), you will eat earth all the days of your life.

513
514 Some speculate that prior to this event, snakes had legs. Some take the eating of earth as a
515 metaphor for defeat. What seems to be missing is a subtle juxtaposition of literal and figurative
516 language in Genesis 3:14, of the sort that we use daily without giving it much thought. God
517 addresses the serpent, that He might address the *tempter* in the serpent (or in the serpent's
518 form.)⁴³

519
520 When did the Tempter *crawl*, and for what purpose? What was his intention in doing so, and
521 what does it mean that God gives him up to this crawling and devouring all the days of his life?
522 This paper takes the position that God gave the devil over to his sin in Genesis 3:14 with the
523 words *you will crawl on your belly* and *you will eat dust*. His crawling is a metaphor for his
524 compulsive tempting and accusing. The dust he eats is people bound for death. The Hebrew text
525 at Genesis 2:7, 3:14, and 3:19 takes up the same word:

526
527 The Lord God formed the man of עֶפְרָא —*dust*, from the earth.

528 You will crawl on your belly, וְעָפְרָא —and *dust* you will eat all the days of your life.

529 To the man: כִּי-עָפְרָא אַתָּה וְאֶל-עָפְרָא תָשׁוּב "Dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

530
531 We are given over to the Devil's tempting and accusing and given into his jaws. This is dreadful
532 to hear until it finds resolution in the Seed of the Woman and in the bruising of His heel. It is for
533 His sake that the promises come amid the consequences of sin: By the sweat of your brow, **You**
534 **will eat**. With pain, **You will bring forth children**.

535
536 As for the serpent, he is given a glimpse of a tasty morsel, a would-be Victim he won't be able to
537 resist: a delicious *Erdenkloß*, *born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law*. He

⁴³ Luther: "When two diverse beings become one being, grammar embraces these two things in a single expression, and as it views the union of the two beings, it refers to the two in one term." —Confession Concerning Christ's Supper, LW 37:30. Referenced in Mattes, p. 38.

538 *is* the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. (Colossians 1:15 ESV) He is the
539 radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by
540 the word of his power. (Hebrews 1:3 ESV) But now, so physical, approachable, and vulnerable.

541
542 The serpent will be driven, compelled to tempt Him in His hunger, suffering and weakness. That
543 heel, so soft and fleshy, would be such a feast when He is despised and rejected. But we
544 considered Him stricken by God, smitten and afflicted: He takes for us the whole curse.

545
546 To see Him suffer, this woman's seed, to see Him die, to taste that heel, the serpent works. His
547 offspring in their unbelief cooperate. A close friend agrees to help. They drive Him to the top of
548 the hill where finally the serpent bites and all his venom would go pumping into the heel of the
549 only blameless One, ever. On that day, the serpent's skull will break, *for you. For the world.*
550 Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been His counsellor?

551
552 Reason may run in any different direction. Reason may argue for or against the existence of God.
553 Taking up philosophy, it may argue: eat and drink for tomorrow we die... or it may argue that
554 bad company corrupts good character. Reason may argue for the eternity of the soul, or that
555 animal life is all that there is. Reason informed by faith does better. Then it does not disregard
556 natural law. It does not stifle conscience. It doesn't miss the forest for the trees. It does not
557 disregard valuable testimony or set aside many convincing proofs. In short, it believes better
558 things.

559
560 By faith, David praised God in the Psalms: *You formed my inward parts; you knitted me together*
561 *in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are*
562 *your works; my soul knows it very well.* (Psalm 139:12-14 ESV) The real you according to the
563 Bible is both body and spirit, dust of the earth and breath of life, joined together in one living
564 being, given by God. In the secret place God knit you together and gave you tissues and organs
565 and muscles and nerves and veins and vessels, all coming together to make you: a beautiful,
566 purposeful creature. And about that, I am glad! This body is a creation of God the righteous,
567 gracious Father.

568 569 **Part Two: God the Son Redeemed This Body**

570
571 A prayer from the LSB Altar Book:

572
573 *Merciful and everlasting God, You did not spare your only Son, but delivered Him up for us all*
574 *to bear our sins on the cross. Grant that our hearts may be so fixed with steadfast faith in Him*
575 *that we fear not the power of sin, death, and the devil; through the same, Jesus Christ our Lord,*
576 *who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.*⁴⁴

577
578 In six *natural* days, the LORD God made the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all that is in them.
579 On the Seventh day, He rested from all His work. The original Sabbath was not an expectation of

⁴⁴ Quoted from the *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, p. 151.

580 holy obedience imposed upon humanity. It was the *Rest of God*, which mankind was invited to
581 join. God blessed the day and made it holy. God saw all that He had made. He viewed and
582 considered it altogether, all at once—from the biggest big thing to the smallest small thing and
583 everything in between. It was *very good*. Even now, after the Fall, and after the Flood, looking at
584 a world which is a shadow of a shadow of what God first made it to be, you can still see His
585 wisdom, *eternal power and divine nature* reflected in what He has made, Romans 1. “*For every*
586 *house is built by someone, but the builder of all things is God.*” (Hebrews 3:4 ESV)

587

588 **Revisiting the Copernican Revolution**

589

590 In 1616, The Roman Catholic Church placed on its list of banned books a certain work by
591 Nicholas Copernicus entitled *De Revolutionibus*. It was regarded as a threat to the faith because
592 it proposed a heliocentric model of the universe. The Sun, not the earth, was the center of the
593 cosmos. This seemed to depose humanity from its favored position in Catholic Christian dogma.

594

595 Most of us are used to it by now. The earth orbits the sun, not the other way round. We have
596 learned more about the order of things. As it turns out, we are situated in the *habitable zone* of
597 the solar system: if we were much closer to the sun, life would not be possible because of the
598 heat. If we were much farther away, life would not be possible because of the cold. This is the
599 sweet spot. Not only that, but also the star that we orbit is of such a size, character, and
600 composition as to be ideal for the support of life. We are also located on an arm of our spiral
601 Milky Way, ideally situated to observe the skies, and at the same time kept safe from dangerous
602 cosmic radiation emanating from the galactic core.

603

604 We can stand on the earth and look up and observe, because our atmospheric circumstances are
605 of such an astonishing composition that what gets through narrowly and precisely frames the
606 spectrum of visible light!⁴⁵ We can look up in the sky and observe, in a wonder of mathematical
607 precision, that the moon can eclipse the sun because they are of identical size when viewed from
608 the perspective of the surface of the earth.⁴⁶

609

610 On February 14, 1990, a famous photograph was taken by the Voyager 1 spacecraft, with the
611 camera turned aft. The picture was taken from an unprecedented 6 billion kilometers. It shows
612 the earth, from that distance a tiny blue speck in the sky, showcased in a beam of light. “The Pale
613 Blue Dot,” as that picture has come to be called, has reinforced the opinion of some that the earth
614 is utterly insignificant in the cosmos. Others view the same image with wonder, seeing in it how
615 utterly unique, rare, and precious is the world that God made for us creatures of His to live on.
616 Based upon what we know about the earth and its place in the solar system, and in the galaxy,
617 and considering what little we know about all that exists, our *pale blue dot* seems to be situated
618 at the sweet spot... of the sweet spot... of the sweet spot.

619

⁴⁵ Per Energy.gov, approximately .0035% of the total Electromagnetic Spectrum.

⁴⁶ Answersingenesis.org/astronomy/moon/ The Moon. is 1) on a plane with the earth and sun, 2) optically 400 times smaller than the sun, and 3) exactly 400 times closer.

620 Minimally, then, you are a purposeful creation, lovingly woven by God, carefully knit together
621 *system-upon-system* more than a dozen complex systems deep, situated within a system (which is
622 the human family) within a system (which is the ecosystem) within a system (which is the geo-
623 thermal system) surrounded at every level by phenomena that give every indication of having
624 been designed expressly to be discovered, explored, and appreciated by you. And this whole
625 arrangement is located at the sweet spot... of the sweet spot... of the sweet spot.

626

627 The mystery of this creation—that we are created, that we are preserved, and that the world
628 continues to be blessed, even at the edge of the unthinkable void—C.F.W. Walther once
629 addressed in a sermon for Christmas.

630

631 “The chief cause why human reason cannot explain the mystery of our existence is... that
632 it cannot answer the question: Why did God create man, when for eternity He knew that
633 man would fall into sin and through sin fall into misery and death, and that he would
634 make himself miserable? ...[T]he mind... cannot find a satisfying answer... it will
635 inevitably violate the glory of the great God. For then man’s reason must either deny
636 God’s existence; or His wisdom, might and love; or His holiness and righteousness. But
637 the fact that God became man to redeem man sheds great light on this otherwise
638 impenetrable darkness. As soon as this heavenly Morning Star dawns... then the night
639 that had brooded over the entire creation with its sin, its misery, and its death, quickly
640 gives way. There God appears again in the bright glory of His majesty. Then all creatures
641 can and must chant again the “Glory to God in the Highest” of the heavenly host.”⁴⁷

642

643 In Him, through Him, by Him, and for Him, then, (see Colossians 1:6-7) **I believe that God has**
644 **made me... that He has given me my body and soul, eyes, ears and all my members, my**
645 **reason and all my senses and still preserves them.** This body and soul are given by God.
646 Specifically, “I am created not only together *with* the other creatures but in fact I come *through*
647 them—most especially: through my parents. The fellow creatures are the medium. God works
648 through them; they are the ‘means, through which God gives everything.’”⁴⁸

649

650 Though corrupted by sin—accidentally⁴⁹, yet completely—still God acknowledges me as His
651 creation. Though the eyes look with envy, greed and lust, and the ears strain to hear gossip and
652 rumor, and all my members offend and rush into evil, yet God adds daily to all that He has done
653 for me: He has not treated me as my sins deserve.

654

655 He preserves me: sustaining my being, and opening His hand to satisfy my every need. **He richly**
656 **and daily provides me with food and clothing, home and family, property and goods, And**

⁴⁷ Walther, p. 198-199.

⁴⁸ Bayer, p. 167, emphasis original. “Not only my parents have given me my DNA but also under the motto of “it takes a village to raise a child,” it is also true that a number of circles of others have shaped me and continue to shape me. They are, or at least many are, good gifts of God.” –Robert Kolb, in private correspondence.

⁴⁹ Sin is complete corruption, but not essential to humanity. God is not the author of sin. So also, Christ was made man, like us in all things, sin excepted. *Human* and *sinful* are not synonymous terms.

657 **all that I need to support this body and life. He protects me from all danger, guards and**
658 **keeps me from all evil**—from fire and flood; from famine and disease; from violence; from theft
659 and abuse of all kinds, and from the evil designs of the evil one. We pray in the Great Litany:
660 *From all sin, from all error, from all evil: Good Lord deliver us.*⁵⁰ Oswald Bayer parses Luther’s
661 explanation of the Creed in the Small Catechism:

662
663 “The fact that God guarantees existence makes him good; the fact that he protects from
664 nothingness makes him merciful. These are thus for Luther the two focal points for his
665 understanding of the faith in God as Creator: his gift-giving ‘goodness’ and his ‘mercy’
666 that protects from evil, even to the point that he rescues from the power of death; not just
667 redemption, but creation itself is a work of mercy by the triune God.”⁵¹

668
669 **From Eden to Elm Street**

670
671 Winter, around 1995. I was at our seminary when an ice storm hit Mankato. The 1979 Chevy
672 Caprice Classic I obtained from my Uncle Jay was no match for the weather. I tried to take a left
673 turn out of the driveway of the old seminary building, and I found myself stuck in a rut, right at
674 the end of the drive. I had places to be, though—so I rocked it from the steering column,
675 alternating forcefully between drive and reverse, until finally I felt myself break free. That’s
676 when I realized, to my distress, that now I was sliding. Down Elm Street. Backwards. *My reason*
677 *and all my senses* promptly informed me that this was *not good*. I find some commonality with
678 Dr. Paul Brand in a harrowing experience of his own that he related from behind the wheel.

679
680 “Few parts of my body went untouched by the momentary crisis. My brain relied on a
681 reflex response to direct my foot onto the brake pedal. At the same time, my
682 hypothalamus ordered up chemicals, that, with lightning speed, equipped me to cope.

683 Vision intensified as my pupils dilated and my eyes widened to admit more light and
684 a larger visual field. My heart beat faster and contracted more forcefully, even as vascular
685 muscles relaxed in order to allow blood vessels to widen for increased blood flow. My
686 muscles went on alert. The makeup of my blood changed: more blood sugars surged in to
687 provide emergency reserves for those muscles, and clotting materials multiplied in
688 preparation for wound repair. Bronchial tubes in my lungs flared open to allow a faster
689 oxygen transfer.

690 On the skin, blood vessels contracted, bringing on a pale complexion (‘white as a
691 ghost’); the reduced blood flow lowered the danger of surface bleeding in case of injury
692 and freed up more blood for the muscles. The electrical resistance of skin changed as a
693 protective response against potential bacterial invaders. Sweat glands activated to
694 increase the traction of my palms on the steering wheel.

695 Meanwhile, nonessential functions slowed down. Digestion nearly came to a halt—
696 blood assigned to that and to kidney filtration was redeployed for more urgent
697 needs...And what skilled executive coordinated the different responses of trillions of

⁵⁰ ELH p.137, TLH #601.

⁵¹ Bayer, p. 172.

698 cells? A single chemical messenger called adrenaline... just one of many hormones at
699 work in my body coaxing a cooperative response from diverse cells.”⁵²

700

701 I am fearfully and wonderfully made—even now, far from Eden, late in time, and in my fallen
702 state. But it *is* a fallen state: from original grace, from the gift of original righteousness, from the
703 perfect garden home of Eden. In terms of directionality, and as to its character, a *fall* is always
704 *down*, and a fall is always *bad*.

705

706 This bears repeating, because—even when we know better! —we are always looking for
707 something *redeeming* about us, compulsively scouring our choices, actions, or experiences for
708 moral value. We evaluate our own sins and sins of others based upon whether we find them to be
709 a *good* kind of naughty, or a *bad* kind. We assign merit to our sufferings. We compare ourselves
710 favorably with others, and with our former selves. In short, sin accounts not only for our basest
711 animal instincts. Sin is also the defining characteristic in our spiritual aspirations. *The man has*
712 *now become like one of Us*. Luther calls these words a kind of Divine sarcasm.⁵³ Bonhoeffer
713 comments on these words in association with the expulsion from paradise:

714

715 “Wherein does man’s being like God consist? It is in his attempt to want to be ‘for God’
716 himself, to ordain a new way of ‘being for God,’ in a special way of being religious. And
717 this religiousness consists in man’s going behind the given Word of God and procuring
718 his own knowledge of God. This possibility of knowing about God beyond His given
719 Word is man’s being like God; for whence is man to take this knowledge if not from the
720 springs of his own life and being? This means that for his knowledge of God man
721 renounces the Word of God which constantly descends upon Him out of the unenterable
722 middle and limit of life. Man renounces life from this word and snatches it for himself.
723 He is himself the middle. Therefore man’s being like God is disobedience in the form of
724 obedience, it is will to power in the form of service, it is desire to be a creator in the form
725 of creatureliness, it is being dead in the form of life.”⁵⁴

726

727 Mark Mattes, exploring Luther’s theology, comments: “[N]ature as created good needs not
728 perfection as a human endeavor but liberation—from sin, death and the accusations of the law.”⁵⁵
729 Meanwhile, the fall into sin bears fruit when I do not like what I see in a mirror. *In relation to the*
730 *world*,⁵⁶ I am envious of those who look better than me, or seem stronger, prettier, shapelier, or
731 in any way more able. If I feel judged because of how I look, I wonder why the world is so
732 shallow. At the same time, I gravitate toward mere external beauty. And if I find a look I think I
733 can pull off, I will get as much mileage out of it as I can. If I can’t pull it off—I’ll photoshop it.

734

⁵² Brand, p.49-50.

⁵³ LW 1: 222.

⁵⁴ Bonhoeffer, p. 81.

⁵⁵ Mattes, p.25.

⁵⁶ “[Luther discovered] based on his study of Paul... that there are two kinds of righteousness, active and passive. Before God (*coram deo*) we are rendered passive. We suffer the death of the old being, so that God might be allowed to be our God and to redeem us in Christ. Before the world (*coram mundo*) faith lends itself to good works, to actively help our neighbors and the world [like] good fruit flourishes on a good tree.” —Mattes, p. 53

735 *In relation to God*, I am frustrated with *God* that He didn't make me differently. If I can, I shall
736 have to fix it for Him. Yet, to my own eye, this body is never beautiful enough, strong enough,
737 tall enough, slim enough, clear-skinned, thick-haired, or accomplished enough—unless perhaps
738 for a fleeting moment it seems like it is. Then proud self-satisfaction takes over. Otherwise:

739
740 “We are ashamed of our bodies and cover them up because we have an uneasy, guilty
741 conscience... [We] cover up our bodies in order to hide our guilt and inner ugliness...
742 Consequently we are not just alienated from God and each other, but also from our own
743 bodies.”⁵⁷

744
745 Sometimes you will feel driven to appease your sinful appetites. Sometimes you will feel like
746 you want to punish yourself. Sometimes, you will feel inclined to recklessness. Sometimes, you
747 want to pack yourself in bubble wrap, to insulate yourself from uncleanness, danger, sickness,
748 and disease. You may get the sense that your *physical* condition is somehow *sliding downward*.
749 Maybe you don't know if you have what it takes to fully embrace it. So, you order a powerful
750 adaptogenic mushroom coffee substitute for energy and weight loss. It tastes like foot.

751
752 Sometimes you may feel envious because the world at least can be *real*. In his book
753 *(Dis)ordered*, Chris Esget identifies *authenticity* as a new kind of righteousness.⁵⁸ He writes:

754
755 “God made man for a specific purpose: to reflect His image and likeness, to be an
756 embodiment of God's goodness, and ultimately to enjoy communion with Him. True
757 authenticity is embracing our own givenness, including the time and location where God
758 has placed us and the gifts and limitations He has bestowed... We don't need to create (or
759 re-create) ourselves to find our authenticity. It is found in the One who is our Author.”⁵⁹

760
761 On the other hand, this is what the devil wants to accomplish in you: to make you ashamed of
762 God's work, and shameless when it comes to sin. His intent is that you be sorry over what God
763 made when He made you, yet not sorry over a rebellious heart. Grieve over what embarrasses
764 you before the world, not your real need before God. “For godly grief produces a repentance that
765 leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.” (2 Cor. 7:10)

766 767 **Flesh and Spirit, in Body and Soul**

768
769 A tempting counterfeit gospel would segregate and minimize sin. It would isolate the body with
770 all that is done in it and to it. It would insulate against death. It would be tempting to believe that
771 all that physical weakness, sin and death is not really *me*. Importing Eastern mysticism into
772 Western pop culture in the 1980s, Frank Oz would say it this way: “Luminous beings are we, not

⁵⁷ Kleinig, p.62.

⁵⁸ “On the search for authenticity, I become my own author when trying to determine what is authenticity or integrity for me, and thus this is the ultimate playing of God's role. I may not worship myself, but I exercise the power to determine in what I put that Large-Catechism-First-Commandment ultimate trust.” —Robert Kolb, in private correspondence.

⁵⁹ Esget p. 26

773 this crude matter.”⁶⁰ That brief sentiment preaches quite a bit: that this matter (the body) is
774 *crude*, and that what we really are is a transcendent creature which is a creature of inherent *light*.

775
776 Christians think like this when we imagine that the sinful and dying body isn’t really us, or that
777 what we do in it and with it does not really matter. We absorb the error when we imagine that the
778 sins we commit in and with our bodies do not involve our souls or touch our faith.

779 The opinion persists: when I sin, I sin—but only with my body. When I abuse and neglect or
780 overindulge myself, it’s only the body. When I die, it will not really be me that dies, but only the
781 body. Yet—and here’s the rub—when you abuse or insult or slap my face, you didn’t insult or
782 hit this inconsequential mortal coil in which I temporarily reside. You hit *me*.

783
784 Gustav Wingren writes in *Creation and Law*:

785
786 “It is nowhere suggested in the [Scriptures] that there is a contrast between body and
787 soul, as if these were two constituent parts possessed by men, but ultimately two opposed
788 parts. Whenever the Bible speaks of a contrast between body and soul (or body and
789 Spirit), it is man or the creature that is being contrasted with God, who is the giver of
790 life... Man, who receives his life from God, cannot set himself up against God in
791 defiance without dying.”⁶¹

792
793 In the Bible’s terms, what *Flesh and Spirit* are to each other is not the same as *Body* relates to
794 *Soul*. Flesh is—not always, but perhaps most often—used as a name for sinfulness, in both soul
795 and body. Spirit, when contrasted with flesh, also comprehends both soul and body, since the
796 sanctifying Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, animates both body and soul with His Word and
797 through faith. As Pastor Bryan Wolfmüller expresses it, “The distinction between spirit and
798 flesh cuts across the distinction between soul and body.”⁶²

799
800 Sin and death involve both soul and body. So do help and blessing. If I was hungry, you gave
801 food to *me*. If I was thirsty, you gave drink to *me*. If I was a wandering stranger, you bodily
802 welcomed *me*. When I was naked, you clothed *me*. I was sick and in prison. You came to *me*.
803 (Cf. Matthew 25.35-36) Above all: when I find myself unable to escape my sin, anxious because
804 of what I did, or failed to do, and my eyes could only look down and turn red from sleeplessness
805 and tears, and my body bends under the weight of some shame or sadness; when appetites fail
806 me... with soothing words of comfort, forgiveness, and peace coming to my heart through these
807 ears, you brought help to *me*.

808
809 **Sin and Grace and the Seminary President’s Discretionary Student Support Fund**

810
811 Sliding down Elm Street backwards on glare ice in a Chevrolet, my best option seemed to be the
812 only one. I ditched in a snowbank. There was a rope in the back. I used it to lash the car to a tree.

⁶⁰ Star Wars, Episode V.

⁶¹ Wingren, pp. 19-20.

⁶² Wolfmuller.co/creation-conference-2022-media/

813 Then I called the police. A nice lady working dispatch explained to me: “You can’t leave it
814 there.” I said, “I know, ma’am, that’s why I’m calling the police.” She said she would send an
815 officer. I waited by the roadside. After several hours, Heather encouraged me to get out of the
816 cold for a while, and find some dry clothing and hot soup. It was in that short time that one of the
817 locals phoned in a complaint to the police. That’s when my vehicle was winched... and towed,
818 and impounded. In this case the law—so to speak—was under no obligation to help me.
819 Somehow, I ended up on the wrong side of it.

820

821 It took an act of mercy. It was my sainted friend President Wilhelm Petersen who saw what
822 happened. He was angry. He stepped in for me. With his own supply of funds, he redeemed my
823 Caprice Classic from the impound. He gave it back to me. All I could do was thank him.

824

825 Gratitude was the entire life of Eden before the fall of man. Nothing was done to try and earn
826 anything, or escape anything, merit anything, or pay for anything. Everything we did was a
827 sacrifice of thanksgiving, an expression of gratitude to God who gave us everything. We never
828 get back to that except through faith in Jesus.

829

830 With a definition for *Life* that fits the definition of *death* as we learned it in Eden, the Lord Christ
831 speaks from the Burning Bush: “I Am the God of your father, (Not the God of the dead, but of
832 the living), the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” Then He gives us the
833 terms by which He wants us to know Him, recognize Him, believe in Him, and rejoice in Him
834 forever: *I have seen. I have heard. I have come down.*

835

836 From the earliest chapters of Scripture,⁶³ we find *Christology*: that Jesus is the Hero. Inseparably
837 related to Christology is the paradigm of *Law and Gospel*—from the Fall and Promise to the
838 flood (when we chose external over internal beauty, 1 Peter 3.4, and external over internal
839 strength), to the Exodus, to Babylon⁶⁴. For ““Thus it is written, [says the Lord Jesus], that the
840 *Christ* should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that *repentance and*
841 *forgiveness of sins* should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.
842 (Luke 24:46-47 ESV) That leads directly to a third related theme: It is *Christ* and His Word of
843 *Law and Gospel* over which the world truly divides, after the pattern of Cain and Abel (which is
844 *works-righteousness and righteousness of faith*), Ishmael and Isaac (*natural birth and birth of*
845 *promise*), Esau and Jacob (*pretense and blessedness*).⁶⁵

846

847 John Bombaro summarizes for us: “The events of Biblical history are not a bunch of
848 random happenings, nor are they universal (occurring to all people equally.) If that were
849 the case, it would be difficult if not impossible to distinguish any meaningful action or
850 characteristic of God. Instead, the events are particularized, consciously bound to one

⁶³ Professor Deutschlander’s lectures stress four themes: *Original sin, Justification, Means of Grace, and the Cross.*

⁶⁴ This paper takes the position that the essential, defining error of post-Exilic Judaism was an error of Law and Gospel.

⁶⁵ This paper proposes that the patriarchal blessing pronounced over Esau is fulfilled in Herod, as the promise to Jacob is fulfilled in Christ.

851 another, as an organic whole, and articulated within the pages of the Bible as of a piece
852 comprising a single grand narrative.”⁶⁶

853

854 At the heart of it is Jesus—crucified, dead and buried. The Third Day He rose again. He is Risen!
855 Each year the celebration of that event fills His believers with joy. Somewhere along the road I
856 stumbled upon the idea of celebrating Easter with Lazarus.

857

858 **Holy Easter with Lazarus**

859

860 Lazarus lived at Bethany close to Jerusalem. He and his two sisters Mary and Martha were
861 friends of Jesus. Lazarus had gotten sick. They sent for Jesus, but He did not come right away.
862 Lazarus’ condition grew worse, and finally he died. Four days later Jesus finally arrived.

863

864 The sisters met him with tears: “Lord if you had been here, my brother would not have died.”
865 Jesus said: Your brother will rise again. Martha said to Him: I know, at the last day. That’s when
866 Jesus said: *I Am the Resurrection and the Life*. For such claims as this the Chief priests and
867 elders opposed Him in jealous rage. There were others who couldn’t hear it—they wanted
868 something else from Him. But Jesus said to Martha: *Do you believe this?* She said: Yes Lord, I
869 believe. Jesus said: Roll the stone away from the entrance to his tomb.

870

871 Lord, by now *he stinketh*. Think then of every embarrassment, every shortcoming, every fault
872 and failure that inheres in these bodies of ours, even your worst day. This is where it all ends up.
873 Jesus said: Roll the stone away anyhow.

874

875 Jesus called out in a loud voice: Lazarus, Come out. Then the air was fresh and clean. And
876 Lazarus still wrapped in a shroud came out into the light. The Lord said: Loose him and let him
877 go. It was done in the open, out in public, and everyone was amazed. These are the events that
878 led up to Palm Sunday and drew such a crowd. There was even a conspiracy to kill Lazarus since
879 people were believing in Jesus because of him. The Elders saw this and said: Now the whole
880 world is going to go after Him. It will look like a rebellion. The Romans will destroy everything.
881 That’s when Caiaphas said: “It’s better that one man die for the people, than the nation perish.”

882

883 Lazarus, who was dead, lived to see the day when Jesus was bound and taken away. He lived to
884 see it, Jesus suffering at the hands of His enemies. Jesus, the Innocent one, bruised and bleeding.
885 In the body, “Sixty thousand miles of blood vessels link every living cell.” Dr. Brand goes on:
886 “A renewable supply of oxygen, amino acids, salts and minerals, sugars, lipids, cholesterol, and
887 hormones surges past our cells, carried on rafts of blood cells. In addition, that same pipeline
888 ferries away refuse, exhaust gasses, and worn-out chemicals.”⁶⁷

889

890 In the body, blood brings oxygen from your lungs to all the parts of you, and then it carries away
891 all waste and impurity. Somehow the Sacred writers knew: *life is in the blood*. Usually you want

⁶⁶ Maas and Francisco, p. 123.

⁶⁷ Brand, p. 127.

892 to wash blood out, along with grass stains and chocolate and spaghetti sauce. In this instance, it
893 is *the blood of Jesus [God's] Son [that] cleanses us from all sin.* (1 John 1:7 ESV)

894

895 Lazarus lived to see it, as Jesus shed His blood and poured out His life. Lazarus saw Jesus
896 crucified, dead and buried.⁶⁸ Lazarus rests at home on the Sabbath, while Christ takes his place
897 in death and the grave. Though the Scriptures say nothing about it, if I put myself in his shoes,
898 there is one thought I cannot escape. "*Is this all because of me?*"

899

900 Imagine: to live through that Sabbath; to sit at rest wondering what it means; that Jesus saved my
901 life; more than that, that He gave life back to me—all so that because of jealousy they crucify
902 Him? Wouldn't it have been better for everyone, to just leave me there? How can I even thank
903 Him? How can I say how sorry I am for all that it cost Him?

904

905 "And all the prophets saw this, that Christ was to become the greatest thief, murderer,
906 adulterer, robber, desecrator, blasphemer, etc., there has ever been anywhere in the world.
907 He is not acting in His own Person now. Now He is not the Son of God, born of the
908 Virgin. But He is a sinner, who has and bears the sin of Paul, the former blasphemer,
909 persecutor, and assaulter; of Peter, who denied Christ; of David, who was an adulterer
910 and a murderer, and who caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of the Lord (Rom.
911 2:24). In short, He has and bears all the sins of all men in His body—not in the sense that
912 He has committed them but in the sense that He took these sins, committed by us, upon
913 His own body, in order to make satisfaction for them with His own blood."⁶⁹

914

915 All of us together take up Lazarus' question: *Is this all because of me?* At Easter, we find the
916 righteousness hidden in His condemnation, and the beauty of grace hidden in the ugliness of the
917 Cross. *Surely, He has born our griefs and carried our sorrows.* It is after all, all on account of
918 you, all because of you, all for you, and all for your sake!

919

920 "And it is the sweetest comfort that sin, which made its habitation in human flesh, was
921 condemned in the same human flesh, in the person of Christ. Our body is the body of
922 death, but in the same body of ours which the Son of God assumed for us, death was
923 again destroyed. Although our sins have separated us very far from God (Is. 59:2), so that
924 we have been alienated from the grace, righteousness and life of God (Eph.2:12), yet the
925 Son of God has brought very close to us those heavenly blessings which had been
926 removed far from us (Eph.2:13-19), laying them before us through His incarnation in the
927 flesh which is of the same substance with our own, so that of His fullness we have
928 received grace for grace (John 1.:16). This is the most comforting and salutary exchange,
929 that the Son of God has received from us a human nature and sanctified and blessed and
930 exalted and glorified it in His own person."⁷⁰

⁶⁸ For further insight into the physical aspects of Christ's passion, read [The Day Christ Died](#) by Jim Bishop, especially p.207 ff.; also *On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ*, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association March 21, 1986, Volume 256.

⁶⁹ LW 26, p. 277.

⁷⁰ Martin Chemnitz, quoted in the *Treasury of Daily Prayer*, p.162.

931
932 He carried your sins in His own body on the tree. He died for you and in your place, the bodily
933 death of the cross, because He loved you. He took your place in death and judgment, so you are
934 forgiven in Him! Just as He promised: Whoever believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall
935 he live! And, whosoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.

936
937 As the object of your faith: *Jesus was declared with power to be the Son of God by resurrection*
938 *from the dead.* For your Ransom: *He was delivered up for our offenses & raised again for our*
939 *justification.* For your future: *Christ is risen from the dead, the first fruits of them that sleep.*

940
941 “Through baptism, Jesus unites us physically with Himself, like a husband with his wife
942 in marriage (Eph 5:25). By his bodily union with us, we not only become one flesh with
943 him (Eph 5:31-32) but also one spirit with him (I Cor 6:17).”⁷¹ “Jesus...interacts with me
944 physically with his spoken word that I hear with my physical ears, his audible word that
945 animates me with his Holy Spirit... Jesus also gives Himself to me physically in his Holy
946 Supper. There I receive his life-giving body and blood with my mouth and in my whole
947 body.”⁷²

948
949 This body, in which I live, in which all my sins are committed, is still God’s good creation.
950 However despoiled by sin, it is (or better, *we are*) purchased and won at the cost of the Savior’s
951 suffering and death. Christ has redeemed this body, and made it a member of His glorious body,
952 the Church. However broken, it is (or, *we are*) nevertheless still—*once again*—set apart for
953 God’s good purposes and bound for the joys of everlasting life with Him in heaven.

954
955 **Part Three: God the Holy Spirit Sanctified This Body to Be His Temple**

956
957 At some point in my preparations for this paper, my son asked me: “Dad, if it says we are
958 fearfully and wonderfully made, why *fearfully*? What does that mean?” What a good question. It
959 also suggests more questions, such as: How do *fearfully* and *wonderfully* relate to each other?

960
961 *For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb.*
962 *I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.*

963
964 *Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.*
965 *My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret,*
966 *intricately woven in the depths of the earth.*

967 –Psalm 139:13-15 ESV

968
969 *Histology* is the study of microscopic structures in the body—*woven* human tissues, organs and
970 ligaments knit together and carefully suspended on the human skeletal frame. My wife works in
971 a newborn intensive care unit. Legal issues prohibit discussing her work with me with any degree
972 of specificity. Suffice it to say she understands far better than I do the awe and urgency involved

⁷¹ Kleinig, p.79.

⁷² Ibid, p.3.

973 in caring for human beings whose weight is measured in grams. Caregivers huddle together to
974 ascertain whether their proposed ministrations can do more help than harm.

975
976 Each human *baby* has priceless hidden value and great purpose in the heart and mind of God.
977 Each is precious and worthy of prayer, protection, and acceptance as a gift from God. Each needs
978 grace. And where these little ones have been sinned against by us—to whatever degree—
979 *Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity and in sin did my mother conceive me. Behold, you*
980 *delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart... Cleanse me!*
981

982 Scripture calls the *fear of the Lord* “the beginning of wisdom.” It says in that connection that “to
983 shun evil is understanding.” *Fear* is the first word that Dr. Luther uses to describe the disposition
984 of a heart rightly directed toward God—when it is combined with *love* and *trust*. This is the
985 spiritual meaning of the First Commandment. All the commandments derive from this first one
986 and return to it again, for “God threatens to punish all who transgress [His] commandments,
987 therefore we should *fear His wrath* and not do contrary to them. But He promises grace and
988 every blessing to all who keep these commandments. Therefore, we should also *love* and *trust in*
989 *Him* and willingly do according to these commandments.”

990
991 When the *fear* of God is separated from *love* and *trust* in Him, it will easily descend into terrors:
992 “There they were overwhelmed with dread, when there was nothing to dread.” Then again, it
993 may become brazenly fearless: “There is no fear of God before their eyes.” In either case, it is
994 simply the *image of Adam* at work. God has chosen to deal with us patiently, “not wanting
995 anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

996
997 “He said, ‘Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; in
998 burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to
999 do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’” (Hebrews 10:5-7 ESV)

1000
1001 *Wonderful* in Psalm 139, (as in *Wonderfully Made*) reaches back to Judges chapter thirteen and
1002 reaches forward for connection to Isaiah chapter nine. In each case the root word is the same. In
1003 Judges, the Angel (or Messenger) of the Lord—who is Himself *God*—replies to Manoah and his
1004 wife: “Why do you ask my name, seeing it is *Wonderful*?” In Isaiah, the people walking in
1005 darkness have seen a great light... for unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given. And His
1006 name shall be called *Wonderful*.

1007
1008 *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made* means I am *given* an ordered life, by Him and in His Name,
1009 who has Redeemed me, who gently brings me (who brings us) back on His shoulder into the
1010 perfect, unbroken unity of His fear and love and trust in His dear Father in heaven.

1011 1012 **A Gospel Tryptic**

1013
1014 My friend, Pastor Jerry Gernander, once proposed to me a Bible study on comparative Christian
1015 religions. He suggested that rather than comment on my own impressions of the various
1016 denominations, I should interview local clergy and let them speak for themselves. I prepared a
1017 slate of questions and started scheduling appointments.

1018

1019 I remember one of these visits quite vividly. I arrived at the church and parked beneath a huge
1020 cross in the parking lot. As it turned out, that was the only cross I was able find in, on, or around
1021 the entire building. The worship space might have been a comedy club or a venue for live music.
1022 The pastor’s pores oozed with the gospel of *Cool*. His demeanor didn’t bother me, though. What
1023 nagged me was the absence of the *Cross*. And there were no pictures of Jesus. Anywhere. They
1024 did have a *life-sized* depiction of the Beatles’ *Abbey Road* album cover painted on the wall just
1025 adjacent to the in-house coffee shop which they called *Hallebrewjah*.

1026

1027 I returned home inspired—to go a completely different way. It was as if I had heard the people in
1028 the Gospel with my own ears: *Sir, we wish to see Jesus*. I was proud and delighted to see the
1029 members of our congregation responding to the idea to put up pictures, prints and paintings of
1030 the stories and truths of our Lord. Among other things, we put together a little tryptic showing
1031 the Lord Jesus in His tender care for three women: the woman with the costly perfume (Luke
1032 7.36-50), Jairus’ daughter (Mark 5.35-43), and the Samaritan woman at the well (John 4.1-26), to
1033 depict the Gospel as you have come to know and confess it. As Jesus dealt with the women, so
1034 He deals with us. As we hear about His dealing with them, He is Himself present and at work in
1035 dealing with us. Jesus draws near to us, so that He might draw us near to Him.

1036

1037 *Location* is one of the blessings and benefits of this bodily life. Locations take on the
1038 significance of events that transpire there. With location come the gifts of *orientation* and
1039 *directionality*. This helps us. We can conceptualize heaven above us, and hell below. We
1040 understand impenitence and unbelief as *turning away* from the living God. Reverence and faith
1041 also find bodily expression: *O Come, let us worship and bow down; Let us kneel before the Lord,*
1042 *our Maker*. Repentance and welcome into His kingdom are described in terms of locality: “Come
1043 unto me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest;” and reversal of the
1044 Expulsion from Paradise: “Whosoever comes to me I will never cast out.” We ourselves become
1045 the dwelling place of God: “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word. My Father will love him,
1046 and we will come to him and make our home with him.”

1047

1048 **Knowing God, in His Son, by His Spirit**

1049

1050 I was made to see. Before my eyes, God portrays His Christ as crucified. I was made to hear.
1051 God causes His word of grace to sound in my ears. I was made out of water and through water,
1052 and now through water—not simple water only but water comprehended in God’s command and
1053 connected with His Word—I am born again. I was made for resting and for work—God’s gospel
1054 sanctifies for me a Sabbath rest from sin and its condemnation, and from the unbearable burden
1055 of laws and works. I was made touchable and to respond to touch—and with the touch of a hand
1056 that matches the voice in my ear, God assures me of His pardon and peace. I was made to
1057 breathe. He breathes into me the word of grace and truth, that I might breathe out to him the
1058 prayers that are signs of life. I was made to subsist. Now at His gracious invitation I come to His
1059 table and take and eat—Him who comes off the tree of life for me, and I drink the blood He shed
1060 for me. I live on Him who came up from the ground for me that I might live and not die.

1061

1062 We *locate* the Holy Spirit always in connection with the Lord Jesus, and in His physical, audible,
1063 and tangible dealings with us. We come into the Presence of God, sinful and unclean, defiled by
1064 our sins and by sins committed against us.

1065
1066 “‘But I am baptized! And if I am baptized, I have the promise that I shall be saved and
1067 have eternal life, both in soul and body.’ This is the reason why these two things are done
1068 in Baptism: the body has water poured over it, though it cannot receive anything but
1069 water, and meanwhile the Word is spoken so that the soul may grasp it. Since the water
1070 and the Word together constitute one Baptism, body and soul shall be saved and live
1071 forever.”⁷³

1072
1073 “God [also] gives us an *edible* word. In the sacrament of the altar, God joins his word to
1074 the elements of earthly bread and wine so that the sacred cup is a participation in the
1075 blood of Christ once shed for the forgiveness of sins, and the bread of the Lord’s Supper
1076 is a participation in the very body once laid low in death to forever remove the sins of all
1077 the world.”⁷⁴

1078
1079 As Jesus deals with us like this in terms of forgiveness, life, and salvation, we learn from Him to
1080 treat the body with love and respect, because Jesus handled it that way—even in its weaknesses
1081 and mortality, defilement and failings and shortcomings. He honored the body. He gave it a
1082 dignity borrowed from Himself. *The body is not for immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for*
1083 *the body.* And: *You are not your own, you were bought with a price. Therefore, honor God with*
1084 *your body.* After all, it’s *the temple of the Holy Spirit*; the dwelling of the Triune God.

1085
1086 This is *sanctification* of our bodies, not in terms of holy deeds done by us, but in terms of
1087 holiness given to us through gracious contact with God, by His Spirit, in His Son—the *Vine* to
1088 our *branches*, and thus, the fount and source of all good works.

1089
1090 “It is the Christian ‘created... by [God’s] Word’ who lives freely to God’s glory and
1091 constantly praises God. A new creation is a work of the Holy Spirit, who implants a new
1092 intellect and will and confers the power to curb the flesh and to flee the righteousness and
1093 wisdom of the world. This is not a sham or merely a new outward appearance, but
1094 something really happens. A new attitude and a new judgment, namely a spiritual one
1095 actually come into being.”⁷⁵

1096
1097 The new creation doesn’t worry. Not because it is intrinsically brave, but because the Lord Jesus
1098 says: do not be afraid. He joined together for us the petitions: “Forgive us our trespasses,” with
1099 “Give us this day our daily bread.” By this we know again: His heart’s desire is to forgive. Daily
1100 bread comes from Him. We should seek it from Him and thank Him for it.

1101

⁷³ LC IV 44-46. Tappert p. 442.

⁷⁴ Senkbeil, p.14. Emphasis added.

⁷⁵ LW 27:140, quoted here from Mattes, p.131.

1102 He knows we need it. He delights to provide it, and delights in our thanksgiving over it. If not for
1103 this word, I would think of it like Jimmy Stewart in the great film *Shenandoah*: “Lord, we
1104 cleared this land, we plowed it, sowed it, and harvested. We cooked the harvest. It wouldn’t be
1105 here, we wouldn’t be eating it if we hadn’t done it all ourselves. We work dog-bone hard for
1106 every crumb and morsel but we thank you just the same anyway Lord for this this food we are
1107 about to eat. Amen.” It really was a miracle. Along with that, God has given me a neighbor
1108 whose needs shape my vocation and give direction and meaning for my daily life, all of which
1109 runs in the way of gift.⁷⁶ God help us to see it that way!

1110
1111 “Presently, we are confronted with so much physical, social, moral, and spiritual ugliness
1112 that it is easy for us to be enraged and deranged by it. As we consider how badly the body
1113 is used and abused, we can all too easily side with the cynics rather than the angels. But if
1114 we listen to what God has to say about it, we can see it as he sees it, both in its potential,
1115 eternal glory and in its actual, present misery...”

1116
1117 John Kleinig would persuade us:

1118
1119 Christian faith and Christian moral teaching are best communicated positively, by
1120 providing an attractive vision of what is right and good and true, a theological vision of
1121 the beauty of physical human life and of the world as God’s creation, an appealing vision
1122 of the beauty of marriage and sexual intercourse between husband and wife, a persuasive
1123 vision of the beauty of sexual chastity and marital faithfulness—and all of that personally
1124 by example, rather than by argument!”⁷⁷

1125
1126 God save us from an ecclesiology that has mere defensiveness and self-preservation at heart. It is
1127 the Lord who says: *Do not be afraid for I am with you, be not dismayed for I am your God. I will*
1128 *build my Church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.* God save us from pining away
1129 after lost cultural ground, to love lost souls instead. *In this world you will have trouble. But take*
1130 *heart: I have overcome the world. And surely, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.*

1131
1132 **In His Hand are the Deep Places of the Earth**

1133
1134 *O Come, let us worship the Lord! For He is our Maker.*
1135 *O Come, Let us sing unto the Lord. Let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our*
1136 *salvation. Let us come before His presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise*
1137 *unto Him with Psalms. For the Lord is a great God, and a great King above all gods.*
1138 *In His hands are the deep places of the earth.*

1139

⁷⁶ This turn of phrase comes courtesy of Norman Nagel.

⁷⁷ Kleinig, p.16-17. Jordan Peterson is on record with a similar sentiment: “You tell people that you love how to avoid the road to hell. You don’t do that because you’re shaking your finger at them or because you’re a moral authority. You do it because you don’t want them to burn. And I think there’s too much of the moral authority still in the church, and not enough of the love that helps people avoid the fire.” [youtube.com/shorts/a2lBjqmqU8M](https://www.youtube.com/shorts/a2lBjqmqU8M)

1140 The Psalmist beautifully connects the original creation with the womb of my mother, and in turn
1141 with the narrow chamber where I will rest in the hope of the resurrection of all flesh. For *My*
1142 *frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths*
1143 *of the earth*.—Psalm 139. Again, *You who have made me see many troubles and calamities will*
1144 *revive me again; from the depths of the earth you will bring me up again.* —Psalm 71:20.

1145
1146 These *locations*, the ground of the original creation, which was cursed because of us, the womb,
1147 and the grave, are blest and sanctified because the Lord Christ pressed His blessed face to them.
1148 He wept and poured out His bloody sweat over them. He opened His heart, just like He said He
1149 would, pouring out blood and water. "On that day"—the Good Friday that Christ Died for us—
1150 "there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to
1151 cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." (Zechariah 13:1 ESV)

1152
1153 “[T]hrough God’s Son, who took on a human body to reclaim us bodily for fellowship
1154 with God the Father, our bodies once again become what they were meant to be. By our
1155 faith in Jesus and in union with Him, our bodies share in his holiness by being filled with
1156 the Holy Spirit. They become temples of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 6:19). As shrines where
1157 God resides, they share in his hidden glory and display it by word and deed to the
1158 world.”⁷⁸

1159
1160 In Him, *you belong*. You belong—here in the family of believers on earth, and there in the
1161 company of the saints and angels in heaven. That belonging is not based on what you offer, bring
1162 or do to impress or entertain the group. It took the coming of the Son of God to turn such an
1163 arrangement upside down.

1164
1165 Christ imparts everlasting priceless value to you—not just vague, idealized impersonal humanity,
1166 but *you*. Christ *is* your belonging and He is why you belong. You are one whom He has
1167 redeemed—not with gold or silver, but with His Holy precious blood and with His innocent
1168 suffering and death, that you should be His own. I’m glad! It wouldn’t be the same without *you*.

1169
1170 Lententide, 2006. It was a Tuesday. The following Sunday we were set to hear the miraculous
1171 bodily feeding of 5000. It was shaping up to be a very important week for us, after which,
1172 nothing would ever be the same. I carefully washed my hands and put on a robe—this time, the
1173 less familiar garb of hospital wear. I walked into the Newborn Intensive Care Unit at the
1174 University of Utah Hospital in Salt Lake and stepped up to the light streaming down onto a tiny
1175 bed, which held an even tinier baby. At 3lbs 15oz., in NICU terms, he was huge. I could still
1176 hold him in one hand. He was scarcely three hours old. The nurse brought me water. Standing at
1177 his bedside, I said a prayer that somehow, I still remember. It distills my thoughts on Holy
1178 Baptism, and our great need for it.

1179

⁷⁸ Kleinig, p.15.

1180 *Lord Jesus, because you have said: “Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and*
1181 *forbid them not,” I bring You my son. The life I have passed on to him is fallen and short*
1182 *and running out. Bless him to share in Your Life.*

1183
1184 In all God’s precious thoughts (how vast are the sum of them!), He thought of you. His thoughts
1185 toward you are *good*, and more than the sand. *Peace* extends to you, body and soul and all. Peace
1186 attends you as you go your way.

1187
1188 It was one of Luther’s contributions to our liturgics when he said: you could use a Psalm or a
1189 prayer or some other dismissal or benediction at the end of the Divine Service. But in Numbers,
1190 there’s a blessing, where it says: *So shall they put my name upon the people of Israel, and I will*
1191 *bless them*, Numbers 6:27. Why not use that? So, our worship, which began *in the Name of the*
1192 *Father and of the + Son and of the Holy Spirit*, concludes in His Name, Who has Come, for you,
1193 even for *thee* (which is *you* in the singular), that *thou mightest* belong.

1194
1195 *The Lord Bless thee and keep thee;*
1196 *The Lord make His face shine upon thee & be gracious unto thee;*
1197 *The Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, & give thee peace. –Amen.*

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St. Mark the Evangelist, 2023.

+ *Soli Deo Gloria* +

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