

Nbr. 16 – March, 2020

From an article by Martin Franzmann:

“ . . . we offer this salvation to all mankind, to everyone that believeth, to all the world; that is to say, to all the guilty, for God’s grace extends as far as His judgment . . .

“We lay down no conditions. We ask none to take any man’s word as authority over him or any man’s power to dominate him. It is God’s Word that we ask men to accept and God’s power that we ask men to succumb to. There are no conditions; only believe.

“We demand no performance. We ask no one to climb laborious ladders to a probable heaven. We ask men to believe and to let God work.

“The Lutheran Church is not a German church, an English church, or a Chinese church; it is neither a white man’s church nor a black man’s church; neither a rich man’s church nor a poor man’s church.”

See? WOW! “The gospel that we preach is a universal Gospel and the grace it offers is universal grace” (*The Lutheran Witness*, April 22, 1947).

Summer Concordia Pulpit Resources (CPR)

The next issue of CPR, available soon, includes a series of 10 sermons on apologetics that I wrote after taking a summer D.Min. course in 2018. A fellow student in this apologetics class said, “This is great material, but for it to reach the most people, it has to come from the pulpit.”

So I wrote the series. These sermons provide pastors with apologetic teaching resources in sermon form. They can also inform Bible class teaching, youth group discussions, etc.

Springfield Circuits Convocation

Speaking of apologetics, the Springfield East and West Circuits have asked me to be the presenter for their 2020 Convocation at Immanuel, Springfield on April 4, the Saturday before Palm Sunday. Registration is at 8:30; presentation starts at 9:00 and ends at noon. All are welcome!

The topic will be *Meeting 21st Century Religious Challenges*. It will include such things as Atheism and the New Atheism, Islam, and Postmodernism.

I have been encouraging Circuits to feature evangelism and mission in their Convocation plans for 2020. A listing of presentations I can offer is at <http://www.cidlcms.org/missionpresentations.html>

The Most Important Communication

A congregation’s most important communication does not come through its Sunday bulletin, newsletter, website, or social media. It is what a church’s members say about it to others, and even to each other.

How often do we think of this as a topic for parish teaching, though – teaching people what to say about church? We can say things like these:

- “The service yesterday was great. I had my sins forgiven.”
- “I received the Lord’s body and blood.”
- “My family and I were there when a new life in Christ began through Baptism.”

We believe these things. So why not speak?

Youth Version of *Every One His Witness*

It is called “Motivated by Love.” Find it and download its videos and other materials at: <http://www.youthsource.com/2019/12/12/motivated-by-love/>



Worth considering:

Summary of some contents of There is a God: How the World's Most Notorious Atheist Changed his Mind by Antony Flew (HarperOne, 2007)

(CONTINUED):

In chapter seven Flew accounted for the second major consideration that turned him to theism, namely, the origin of life. He mentions three issues.

- *Life as having purpose:* Flew quotes David Conway, that "living matter possesses a teleological organization that is wholly absent from everything that preceded it" (125).
- *Reproduction:* There can be no evolution via mutation if organisms cannot reproduce. Whence came the reproductive capacity, though? Not through such an evolutionary process (125-26)!
- *The DNA code:* Flew quotes Paul Davies that "life is more than just complex chemical reactions. The cell is also an information storing, processing, and replicating system" (128), and it turns out that the genetic instructions stored in DNA have specific meanings (129). Information can be reduced neither to matter nor energy, and its presence in DNA points to a superintending Intelligence.

Toward the end of the chapter, Flew quoted Nobel Prize winner George Wald: "that life arose spontaneously by chance" is "impossible," even though people choose so to believe (131).

In chapter eight Flew turned to his third major reason for theism, the fact that the universe exists. It may come as no surprise that by its end this cosmological chapter turns more

philosophically abstruse than any other in the book. A simple turning point for Flew came with scientific talk of a big bang. Like many, he had previously thought that the universe and its basic laws were ultimate. But if scientific evidence emerged that the universe began at some point, then what made it begin? Resulting speculations about a multiverse or a "self-contained" universe (Hawking) show amply that this is a philosophical matter, not a scientific one. Flew reported his own critique, and still more David Conway's and Richard Swinburne's, of David Hume's attacks on the cosmological argument for the existence of God (139-141). He made two important points late in the chapter. 1.) "If you had an equation detailing the probability of something emerging from a vacuum, you would still have to ask why that equation applies" (143). Nothing comes from nothing! 2.) Flew favorably quoted Richard Swinburne's summary on the cosmological argument: "It is very unlikely that a universe would exist uncaused, but rather more likely that God would exist uncaused" (144-145).

At the beginning of the concluding chapter ten, Flew briefly mentioned the existence of evil. In effect he considered it a category mistake to think that because of evil, God cannot exist. "Nature may have its imperfections," Flew wrote, "but this says nothing as to whether it had an ultimate Source" (156).

Flew did not claim to have made contact with this Source. But he did indicate his openness to learning more. He even went so far as to write concerning Christianity, which has "the combination of a charismatic figure like Jesus and a first-class intellectual like St. Paul" the following: "If you're wanting omnipotence to set up a religion, it seems to me that this is the one to beat!" (157).

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