

RESEARCH IN MINISTRY--SUBMISSION FORM

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Title: What Did Noah Do about Trash?
A Theology of Garbage

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Abstract (Please provide an abstract of about 100 words or less following the guidelines on back of this form):

What humans consider waste and how waste is disposed of will determine the course of future use of natural resources and the quality of the natural life-support systems.

The theological grounding for a change in attitude is how the Christian understands the "good" of creation, human responsibility as a species, the sin in technology, the "re-con-cycling" activity of God, and the green covenantal relationship between God, humans, and non-humans.

The behavioral grounding is in understanding the difference between "cycles" and "streams" in the management of waste.

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1. Write in complete sentences, preferably in third person and active voice.
2. Be brief. An abstract longer than 100 words cannot be printed.
3. State your thesis.
4. Describe the method of study or research.
5. State the result of the research or the conclusion reached in the study.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP AND COOPERATION!

E-539 JUST WAR THINKING AND PACIFISM IN THE CHRISTIAN TRADITION
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(These two books I can recommend for bible study groups and adult forums. They are easy reading and straightforward.)
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(These four texts are a *sine qua non* for an adequate understanding of the more particular Lutheran tradition and the claim of some that "Lutheran pacifism" is a contradiction in terms.)

Mahedy, William Out of the Night

III. LUTHERAN STUDY MATERIAL

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(As Lutheran pastors you should probably familiarize yourself with all of this material; at least get a hold of the Lutz, the Peace Petitions and the essays on Lutheran Pacifism.)

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Just War + Pacifism

We do not know how to think about war.

Matt 5. Peace makers ... persecute ...

Eye for eye

Rom 12 ~~13~~: 1-2

13

Chicago Conf Act XVI

Plater 2011-17

Acts 5:27 ff.

Police vs. Soldier function

Just war + ~~pacifist~~ pacifism are foggy.

Widerstand just war intended to sustain war
any time

Distinction between just war + Unarmed morality.

Summary

1. How can we believe the two texts - selective objective becomes a mandate.
2. Nuclear deterrents are immoral.
3. Dev. categorical teaching of just war theory.
4. Critical call - if war waged by just state ~~the~~ a country
of the same kind
5. Redemptive JWI as critique of self - national myths

6. JNT outgo "order" was number.
? JNT he called "position" of the
lowest 5 days of work.

LUTHERAN SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY AT CHICAGO

A TRAIL OF TWO CONVERSIONS

A THEOLOGICAL POSITION PAPER

DOCTOR OF MINISTRY PROGRAM

BY

JOHN E. SWANSON

OREGON, ILLINOIS

SEPTEMBER 1990

My story hinges on two experiences I have had with conversion. The first was when I was a high school student having attended a revival meeting. The second one was on a piece of native Illinois prairie.

I grew up in a Lutheran household. Each Sunday we went to "divine worship" and Sunday Church School. My father was the Sunday School superintendent as well as a member of the church council. My aunt, who lived with us, and my mother were active in the women's group and choir, and they taught in the Sunday School. The church was an important part of our lives, socially and spiritually.

I am told that I always wanted to be a parish pastor. I have no idea when I began to talk that way. But I do know that it was because of this choice I selected the high school I would attend, North Park Academy in Chicago, a school of the Swedish Covenant Church. I would also follow the same pattern and attend Augustana College, Rock Island, majoring in subjects that would be helpful to enter the seminary, namely language and philosophy.

North Park was a typical Chicago private school. The students were from upper class homes. Some were of the Covenant persuasion, but most of them were Lutherans, Swedish for the most part. We were required to take some religion courses, and chapel was at least three times each week. School parties were coed, but the girls asked the boys. Dancing was taboo. The theological posture of the school was of the fundamentalistic persuasion.

On one occasion I attended a revival meeting with some of my classmates. It was a frightening experience in some ways. I remember the preacher being very persuasive. He invited people to raise their hands if they were "saved." Then he asked for people to raise their hands who wished to be "saved."

I did not raise my hand the first time. I thought I understood the preacher's definition of being "saved," and I knew I had never had the type of personal experience he portrayed. I could not raise my hand. When he asked for those who wished to be "saved" to raise their hands I did not feel I understood the dimensions of that decision. So, I refused to respond. However, I recall the effectiveness of this preacher because I felt like he was trying to lift my arm over my head, and I had to use psychic energy to keep it down.

As we left the meeting I commented to my classmates that I really did not understand what was going on. Their response was to give me Bible passages to read. I read them and found myself still perplexed. The words were empty.

All experiences are contextual. In this case this was not my first exposure to the revival methodology, the idea of conversion for the sake of salvation, and the need to make a public profession of faith. This episode merely focused my thinking.

I went to my pastor, the man who had been my catechetical instructor. I shared my story with him, and then I asked, "Am I saved?"

He answered, "Yes, you are." "When?" I asked. "When you were baptized."

It was this encounter that was a conversion for me. As we talked my eyes were opened and things began to come together for me. Baptism as a means of grace is not an act which is human in origin. It celebrates and announces that God acts in spite of us and beyond our subjective experiences and is the initiator.

As the years elapsed I began to realize the meaning of prevenient grace. I wrote a Christmas carol in one of my first years in the parish

to put this concept to music:

The angels sang a song, that blessed holy night.
Their lyrics praised our God, exalted in the height.
They sang with great assurance, what God has done for men.
That God has sent his peace, that He is pleased with them.

How can our God be pleased with men who 'gainst Him sin.
How can our God so love us, rebels rejecting him.
'Tis not that man's won favor to stand before God's face.
'Tis God's own loving nature. His favor is His grace.

To save a raging nation, to make them His own race.
This is the nature of our God, the purpose of His grace.
Glory to God in heaven, who sent His son, our Lord.
That we by faith in Him, might to Him be restored.

I realize that the gender of some of the lyrics raises the ire of some. However, this carol is dated, and it is shared here to indicate the impact of the insight I had as the result of my first experience with conversion.

The idea of conversion for me became an occurrence of learning the meaning of salvation in my life rather than the eye-opening experience being the moment of my personal salvation. I am saved. Christ died for me. I entered into this new life event in my baptism. As a growing Christian I would discover that salvation had an impact upon all events of life. There is a trail, and along that trail salvation gives us understanding and insight into the encounters of life.

The conversation with my confirmation pastor opened the pathway for me that would lead to other discoveries as I shall point out.

The fundamentalist traditions to which I was exposed had a component that I felt was missing in the Lutheran tradition: excitement, enthusiasm. I do not believe the Church is an entertainment center nor that enthusiasm can be equated with faith. The Church is that community of the faithful who worship, learn, and act. Sometimes that action brings us to our knees and causes us to bleed.

Yet, the faith that we hold can be expressed in ways that excite, inspire, give insight, and make day to day sense.

I often say that my involvement with fundamentalism in high school made me a good Lutheran, an excited Lutheran.

A good example of how this shaped my theology is evidenced in my understanding of the "Word of God." During my days in seminary this developed for me.

1. The Word is the means God used to create and redeem the world.
2. The Word of God is specifically Jesus Christ.
3. The Word of God is that which is proclaimed. It is an oral tradition before a written tradition. The implications are far reaching for the preacher and the teacher of Scripture. Where the Word is proclaimed there is the living Christ.
4. The Bible is the Word of God. As Luther said, "It is the cradle where the infant Jesus can be found." The Bible is the record of the proclamation through the years by faithful people. It is the norm and rule of faith and life. It is to be read with gusto and studied with abandonment. In the ambiguity of the words and concepts God is revealed.

I believe the above order is the way in which we should understand the meaning of the Word of God.

Having wanted to be a parish pastor since a child I followed the traditional route from college to seminary to internship to seminary and then to ordination in the Augustana Lutheran Church. Between college and seminary I married Janet Gunnerson.

My first call after seminary was the assignment to start a new mission in a new community in a western suburb of Chicago. It was a challenge because there were 300 homes at the time of my arrival and the

population was 96% Roman Catholic. We had the edge over other denominations because I was the first ordained pastor in the community. Can you imagine being a founding father at the age of 26?

One event that stands out in my mind shortly after I became a parish pastor was attending a pastors' breakfast sponsored by the Billy Graham organization. I had no interest in Graham. I did not like his subjective theology and his literal method of interpreting Scripture. Nonetheless, I attended.

I remember Graham encouraging the listeners to "preach for conversion" and to have altar calls each Sunday. As we left the breakfast I announced to my friends, "Next Sunday I am going to have an altar call." When I mentioned that this was a regular practice in my Church and we called it Holy Communion, I was rebuffed. For them these were two separate items. But for me that was not true.

Holy Communion is a personal encounter with the risen Lord. We indicate our allegiance in a symbolic way by standing up and moving forward to show our response. My gut feeling is that most parishoners do not have this sense. They come forward because it is the thing to do, and they are there to receive forgiveness. Yet, our act is an affirmation of our faith in Jesus as the living Lord.

My understanding of Holy Communion is that it differs from the preaching of the Word only in style. Through preaching the Word is spread to the congregation at one time. This is an encounter with the living Lord. In Holy Communion the Word is delivered one on one. The Word is declared to each individual.

I think we need to emphasize this encounter within the Church. We are not simply expressing value in worship. We are going to meet our Lord

in Word and Sacraments.

With regard to "preaching for conversion," I retained this notion. Conversion is discovering the depth and the dimensions of salvation in our lives. We might look at these experiences and become so excited about them they may be life altering.

I have carried this message with me, but I have also extended it. Not only are we to preach for conversion, we are to teach for it, too.

My second parish was an established congregation in a suburb in the outer belt of Chicago. This presented a new kind of challenge. We were involved in a coffee house ministry that became controversial in the community. The local newspaper was produced three times a week, and it was not unlikely to find stories about this conflict in at least two issues each week. These were not announcements on the Church page.

This parish was also a teaching congregation for seminarians. Each semester there would be students working in a specific area: pastoral care, educational ministry, preaching, etc. This is before the days of the "Teaching Parish." In fact, another pastor and I suggested to the seminary this type of program because we felt a lack of continuity between students and parishoners when they would be in the parish for only a semester.

It was during these two pastorates I spent at least two weeks at the church camp during the summer. It was a special opportunity for my family. It cost nothing. I had to work, but the routine was different than the parish. I was able to develop educational processes and design Bible studies and learning experiences for various programs and age groups.

While in my second parish I became excited about experiential learning. With members of the congregation and seminary students a new

style of Sunday education was established, "The Community of Christian Living." The content of the learning grew out of our experience as a parish and our reflection on the Biblical tradition. The method engaged group dynamics. There was coordination between the worship life and what was being learned.

Little did I realize I was on the trail of my second experience with conversion. While I was in my second parish the position of camp director opened, and I thought I would apply for it. Someone else was hired. Knowing what I know today, I am glad it worked out that way. However, a few years later the Synod president called and asked if I would be interested in being the Program Director. I jumped at the chance. Here was an arena in which I could pursue practicing and experimenting with experiential learning in a safe climate.

In this new job I was caught up in the selling of two camps and the purchasing of a new one. The new site was 730 acres, the site for my second major experience with conversion.

I had heard there was native Illinois prairie on the site, and it should be preserved. But I had no idea what it was.

One would think my involvement in camping would have interested me in what was in the out-of-doors. Up to that time I had discovered there were plants that were different than the grass and the elm trees I knew in the city of Chicago where I grew up. But I could care less about their identity and how they fit into the ecosystem. I pursued a learning methodology that I call "kissy/huggy in the woods." One was to use the senses, taste, feel, smell, sound and sight, to develop an appreciation of the natural world. The process is called "acclimitization."

At that time in my career the other emphasis of camping was the

enhancement of physical skills, canoeing and backpacking.

At this new 730 acre site outdoor ministries would take on an entirely new framework for me. I put out the word that I wanted to learn about this prairie, and one day it happened. A man and his wife who were prairie enthusiasts and specialists took me for a walk. He was a teacher of outdoor education at the local state university. His wife was really the more knowledgeable biologist. Together they grew prairie plants for sale. This would be a day that would change my life.

It was humorous. I carried a pencil and paper to take notes. I jotted down a few words, but the man just laughed at me. At first I could not understand why. But eventually it became obvious. One does not write this information. One listens, learns, memorizes, and repeats. It is by repeating that one remembers. (How is that for one reason for telling the story of one's faith. We call this evangelism.)

What a day! I cannot remember the date, but I will never forget the moment. From that day on I would run to the prairie with books under my arm trying to identify everything I saw. I would listen and read so I had more than names. Stories began to develop that would depict the plants and set them in a specific context. There are the tales of the Freedom Tree, Lutheran Coffee, White Man's Foot, Pussy Toes, Queen Anne's Lace, etc.

I would take guests on hikes, the trail of my second conversion. I would share my knowledge. There were always a few fascinating responses that would come out of these excursions.

This event affected my vision. My eyes were opened to see plants and evidence of animal life I had never seen before. It was as if these plants never existed prior to this time, and now they had come into existence for the first time. (I know that is not true. But this is

often how eye-opening moments work.)

These are the two stories of my experience with conversion, one that gave me insight into the God who initiates in love and grace in spite of us and one that gave me insight into a world which is more than human history. These events have led me down some interesting theological trails. Here are some sign posts along the path.

1. The non-human world is the environment of God's activity in the same way as God is active in human history. One can call all of history natural history.

The temptation in religious education and sermon illustrations is to use the events of the non-human world as parables of the God-human relationship.

It is my conviction that what we see in the non-human world is the evidence of God's work. Today, scientists help us see the world. We are always learning about new species and how interaction takes place. As we discover this we realize more and more what God does.

2. Christians look at the natural world, and the First Article of the Apostles' Creed comes to mind. Many will say that they believe in the Trinity, but the natural world applies only to the First Article. However, restoration and redemption are not isolated to the human world. The God revealed in Jesus Christ is also the God of the natural world. Ironically, in spite of human abuse, the world is not falling apart. Renewal is inherent in the system. Note Psalm 104, the classic environmentalist's Psalm.

Many deny that God created the world to operate on its own. Yet what many Christians say about creation belie that. The world for many is left to its own devices.

It is my conviction that God is near and God is at work in the whole natural system. The name for this activity of God is "Spirit." One can say "Spirit" is the ecological word for God (ecology, the study of relationships).

3. There is the tendency in the minds of some folks to use the natural world as evidence of God's beauty, love, and power. When one researches the natural world one discovers that within the system there is destruction and consumption. Paul refers to the world groaning in travail awaiting the new day.

For the Christian the non-human world does not reveal God. God is made manifest in Jesus Christ, in God's works of redemption. It is from this perspective that we look at the non-human world and understand the nature of God.

If one notices the entrance sign to the Lutheran Outdoor Ministries Center one can conceptualize what is being said. The sign is a piece of art designed by an atheist. The cross is vacant space in the butcherblock. The interpretation of the artists is that we look at the world through the cross.

4. I have come to the position that my understanding of the creation of the world is instructed by the New Testament rather than the Old Testament. It is John who parallels Genesis. Jesus is referred to as the Word. It is Paul who rewrites Proverbs in Colossians and substitutes Jesus for Sophia, the one who is created first and through whom all is created.

Our faith is not contingent upon a linear view of history. Creation is understood within the context of redemption.

5. One of the phenomenon in the non-human world is what scientists call adaptation. This is the process species use to survive and

procreate. The species develop and acquire certain characteristics and behaviors that can guarantee their future.

In the human world there is a process that God has given the human species to survive. We call this capacity forgiveness.

6. Galatians 5 has taken on new meaning for me. Paul speaks of the fruit of the Spirit as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, self-control.

In order for a fruit to develop a flower must be pollinated. There are two basic agents of pollination: wind and animals (which includes insects). The word "Spirit" in Hebrew and Greek is also used for breath and wind. What I hear Paul saying in this passage is that it is by the pollinating aspect of the Spirit that love, joy, peace, etc. occur.

I realize that Paul was not trying to set up such an illustration. Nonetheless, as I play with this idea I cannot help think that wherever and whenever we experience acts of love, joy, peace, etc. we are experiencing the work of the Spirit of God. It is at this point my two experiences of conversion converge, and I begin to ask other questions and extend my thinking in my understanding of God. God is the initiator. God is involved in all history (human and non-human).

7. One of the exciting discoveries and insights as the Word of God and the world of God crossfertilize for me is the subject of sacrifice.

Within the natural world there is the process of the food chain. Organisms fall into an order in which the survival of one depends upon the demise of another.

Among teachers of natural history this process is called predator/prey. This is conceptualized with a pyramid where the population of organisms decends as one moves to the top.

The system can be perceived from a commercial perspective. The top of the food pyramid seems to dominate the process. In fact, species whose extinction gets the attention of many people are usually at the top of the food pyramid.

I have a hard time reconciling this consumer interpretation of natural history with a loving God. God does not shift into neutral so the natural world "can do its thing."

When I read the Biblical tradition I notice that the gift of Christ is His giving of Himself for others. The cross is the highest form of this gift. (In Matthew 16 Jesus announces that He must go to Jerusalem to suffer many things.) In fact, it is recommended that we should live our lives sacrificially (note Romans 12). This is the meaning of the Theology of the Cross over against the Theology of Glory.

Sacrifice is not unnatural. It is the process of life itself. It is the system. The predator does not willy, nilly take the prey with no sense of integrity. Rather it is the prey who gives of itself to the predator.

One of the insights from environmental studies is that the prey determines the destiny of the predator, not vice versa. Using this metaphor the victim is the factor in the outcome. How do we know Jesus Christ?

I realize that sacrifice in the natural world is not a self-conscious effort on the part of an organism. The truth of the matter is that the prey adapt to avoid being the meal for a predator. However, the predator also adapts. Sacrifice cannot be seen as an individual act. It is systemic. Sacrifice is an alternative way to interpret the food chain.

When God becomes involved in history extraordinary means are not used. God enters through birth. God saves the world through sacrifice.

Both are natural.

What is extraordinary is what follows the death of Jesus, the resurrection. This is the greatest of all gifts both for the future as well as the here and now.

Richard Cartwright Austin writes about the thinking of John Muir, a pioneer in the environmental movement, who speaks to this subject of sacrifice.

Muir saw that part of the religious problem was integrating death into life. Life in this world is food chains, each drawing life from consuming other lives. We may improve our own religious understanding if, as we eat, we reflect on how the deaths of some contribute to the lives of others. Though abuse can make it so, this need not be a hostile process. Beneath its tensions an ecology nurtures life for all. Jesus' death, morally distinctive in its religious impact, participates in this life-giving ecology. 1

8. This leads me to another issue. Christians involved in the study of nature look at the life-death-life cycle as evidence of the resurrection.

It is my understanding that resurrection is the rejuvenation of life, the gift of life to the very being that has died. It is unclear what resurrection means physically, except that the person is present and recognizable. When an organism dies it gives life to other organisms in a variety of ways. For me this is a description of sacrifice, not resurrection.

9. When dealing with the place of the human in the world a very helpful ecological concept is "niche." Though this word has spatial meaning it is also used for an organism's profession, business. Every organism has a niche. Some we know, and some we do not know.

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Richard Cartwright Austin, Baptized into Wilderness, a Christian Perspective on John Muir (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1987) 57.

Where does the human fit into this? Some readers of Scripture would say that Psalm 8 clearly states that the human being is to dominate the created order. Another way to approach this is that Psalm 8 points at humanity's niche, profession, but not at the exclusion of the niches of other organisms.

Each creature has a place. Humanity is not at the top of the pyramid. We are a part of the vast circle.

10. The realm of God (once referred to as "kingdom") gathers together my two experiences with conversion.

I have appreciated what Thomas Gromme says on this issue. The realm of God ". . . is a symbol which refers to the concrete activity of God in history establishing God's sovereignty."²

For the Israelites the (Realm) of God is already a reality in that it is Yahweh who rules all things and people. And yet the final completion of the (Realm) is still to come. It is promised and God is active on its behalf. Therefore it is already being realized and will be realized completely. But it is not an authoritarian rule by a capricious God. It is instead a caring and trustworthy God intervening in history to transform the present order and bring creation to fullness and completion. In the triumph of God's vision for creation, 'Nature is wholly and wondrously transformed, the serenity of Paradise is renewed.'"³

The realm of God takes various forms.

First, it is the whole creation over which God has authority.

Second, the realm of God is the expected new day, the new heavens, and the new earth.

Third, the Church is not the Realm of God, but it proclaims and introduces it.

There are two more perspectives which have emerged for me.

² Thomas H. Groome, Christian Religious Education (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1980), 36

³ Ibid., 37.

Fourth, the Realm of God is where people experience freedom and justice. There are many moments in history where people have known new beginnings. The igniting of the movement and the possibility of the moment is within God's initiative and by God's authority. The realm is where people experience freedom either on a personal or community scale, a physical and a non-physical way.

The movement toward freedom is a taste. It is not the full meal.

Fifth, the Realm of God is where Christ is proclaimed. Jesus enters history and makes a difference. Mark reminds us that Christ Himself proclaims the Realm of God. In my humble view there is a connection between the realm/rule of God and Christ and Christ's proclamation.

I understand God's action as involving all creation. The Word of God and the world of God converge.

Finally, one of the trails my two conversions has led me on has to do with language. Though I understand the need to restructure our language with regard to its sexist and racist orientations I believe we have a language that is also very anthropocentric. This language impacts our theology which, from an environmentalist's point of view, is very humancentered. The world does not exist solely for human beings and God's saving power is not for the human species alone.

This is not the end of the trail. Maybe it is only the beginning. I would hope to take others with me to further explore a world in which the initiator is God and the whole ecosystem is God's sphere of redemptive action. As we travel we are also exploring the faith and especially the faith as it is expressed in our Biblical tradition.

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