

# Christian Culture

A MAGAZINE FOR LUTHERANS

Issue 5

Spring 2022

## FEATURING

**Eighty Easters Ago: The Mass  
Resignation of Lutheran Pastors from  
the Nazified Church of Norway**

*Ryan MacPherson*

**The Wittenberg Option  
in Casper, Wyoming**

*E. Christian Kopff*

**Excellent Films for the Family:  
The Island at the Top of the World**

*David Ramirez*



What people are saying about



LUTHER  
CLASSICAL COLLEGE

& *Christian Culture*

A MAGAZINE FOR LUTHERANS

Dear Cultivators, We are grateful to see the flourishing of such a magazine as *Christian Culture*, and especially that it is a printed magazine! We humbly request to be recipients of the excellent work that you all are doing. May our Lord God bless your labors, and make the journal you have produced be fertile soil for wisdom and encouragement for the faithful in these, uncultivated times! Yours in Christ, Christopher

I am the father of eight children; my oldest will be ready for college in five years. We are confessional Lutherans who homeschool and I am SO EXCITED to find this college.  
– Brian

Praying Our Lord and Savior bless your hard work and efforts to keep our future generations steadfast in the truth of His Holy WORD. The LORD be with you! – Sherry

Our family is so excited for this college. We will keep you in our prayers and maybe one day one of our children will be able to attend a solid Lutheran College. Thank you so much, God's Blessings!! – Ethan

This sounds like the college I wish I'd had the opportunity to attend when I was younger—and still would if there was an adult learner opportunity! I'm hungry for the solid theological foundation I've been lacking. – Pam

I read a copy of your magazine when I was visiting my son and I love how you bring a Christ centered message to today's issues. – Ron

Love the work, guys. – Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller

Greetings and thank you all for your very fine work. – Richard

Thank you for letting me know about this great initiative. God bless your plans and effort! May you be just the first in a series of colleges like this!! – Luiz

Really enjoyed the issue we received. We look forward to continuing to read and learn from it. Blessings on your endeavors. – Susan

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# Contents

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- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <p>2 Eighty Easters Ago: The Mass Resignation of Lutheran Pastors from the Nazified Church of Norway<br/><i>Dr. Ryan MacPherson</i></p> <p>5 The Wittenberg Option in Casper, Wyoming<br/><i>Dr. E. Christian Kopff</i></p> <p>8 Excellent Films for the Family: The Island at the Top of the World (1974)<br/><i>Rev. David Ramirez</i></p> <p>10 On Learning by Heart<br/><i>Rev. Ryan Loeslie</i></p> <p>12 How to Listen to a Sermon<br/><i>Rev. Rolf Preus</i></p> <p>13 Ascension Day (Poem)<br/><i>Anna Hahn</i></p> <p>14 A Plea for America<br/><i>Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz</i></p> | <p>18 On the Suffering of Christ<br/><i>John Arndt</i></p> <p>22 “Our Lord to Heaven Now Ascends” (Hymn)<br/><i>Rev. Mark Preus</i></p> <p>23 Getting to Know the Fathers: Ignatius of Antioch<br/><i>Rev. David Kind</i></p> <p>26 Review: Moby Dick<br/><i>Rev. John Henry</i></p> <p>27 Humility (Poem)<br/><i>Rev. Andrew Richard</i></p> <p>28 The Self-Evident Proposition, Part 3<br/><i>Rev. Dr. Gregory Schulz</i></p> <p>32 Things Can Get Lost in Translation — “Christ and the Adulteress” by Lucas Cranach the Elder (Painting)<br/><i>Edward Riojas</i></p> |
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# Eighty Easters Ago

## *The Mass Resignation of Lutheran Pastors from the Nazified Church of Norway*



Hitler's military was one of the strongest forces in world history. The National Socialists were one of the most well-organized political parties Europe had ever seen. But at the heart of Nazism was bad theology, and Norway's pastors knew it. Hitler's troops had taken over Norway with ease in 1940. Over the next two years, the Nazi puppet regime swallowed up all government departments—including the national church.

On Easter Sunday, 1942, the moment of truth arrived. Ninety-three percent of the clergy resigned from the Church of Norway in order to fulfill their oaths of ordination and serve the people whom God had entrusted to their care. In its outward appearance, the church looked dead; but, like Christ within the tomb, His bride, too, sprung back to life. Norway's underground church was born that Easter, and it left in its wake a testimony for Christians of all times.<sup>1</sup>

The ordination rite of the Lutheran Church of Norway had left no room for doubt. To be a pastor meant to swear in God's name an affirmative answer to this question:

Dost thou...promise me...that thou wilt apply the utmost diligence, to the end that the heavenly doctrine, embodied in the Prophetic and Apostolic Scriptures and the Confessions of our Lutheran Church, shall be taught thy hearers faithfully...that no frivolous or offensive departure from the usages of the church be permitted; that thou wilt not only shun and abhor doctrine which is contrary to the divine word, but that thou also, as much as lieth in thee, will contend against the same and rather shed thy blood than consent to false and fanatical teaching...so as never willfully to dishonor God or thy holy and exalted office...?<sup>2</sup>

Dietrich Bonhoeffer had already sounded the alarm in Germany: Hitler's expulsion of Jews from civil service—which led also to the removal of ethnically Jewish Christians from the clergy roster—violated the Sacrament of Holy Baptism, by which all people, whether Jew or Greek, become one in Christ (cf. Galatians 3:26-28). Moreover, in Norway the National Socialists were forcing a new Sunday school curriculum that featured the swastika in place of the cross. Public school teachers were required to teach a Nazified curriculum. Parents were given three weeks' notice to enroll their children in Norway's version of the Hitler Youth. Leading theologians in Germany said all was well, that Romans 13 requires every citizen to obey the state, yes, even Hitler's state. Few had the insight of Bonhoeffer, and even fewer had the courage.<sup>3</sup>

The Bishop of Oslo, Eivind Berggrav, was Norway's Bonhoeffer.<sup>4</sup> He fought off the Nazified church's theology with his "Luther arsenal," some seventy-five pages of quotations by Luther concerning the proper relationship between the church and civil government. Inspired by Berggrav's example, a group of Norwegian mothers drafted a model letter to send to the National Socialist regime, reducing the matter to one powerful sentence asserting the rights of conscience. Under Berggrav's counsel, five out of every six teachers refused in writing to implement the new curriculum, two-thirds of all parents signed a letter of conscientious objection, and hundreds of pastors read in unison these words from their pulpits on Easter Sunday 1942:

We declare, therefore, that it is our highest duty before God and before man—fully and fearlessly—to proclaim all God's Word...without hesitation for whom it might displease. Here we stand under God's command....

No earthly power or authority can impose unchurchly conditions upon the permission to

conduct Christian work or to serve as a preacher....

It is, therefore, intolerable for the church that someone in power—for political, worldly reasons—deprives an ordained man not only of his office, but also of his mission to minister with Word and Sacrament....<sup>5</sup>

Alluding to the Nazi youth movement, the pastors' confession, published under the title "The Foundation of the Church," continued:

The church would be remiss in her duty of Christian upbringing if she silently observed a worldly authority arrange the moral upbringing of children and people, independent of Christian views. Parents and teachers must not be sought out and driven, contrary to their conscience, to surrender their children to child educators who want to "revolutionize their minds" and induct them into a "new worldview" that feels foreign to Christianity.<sup>6</sup>

In the years that followed, many pastors were arrested, tortured, or even executed for their confession. Other men replaced them, subscribing both to the Augsburg Confession and to the Foundation of the Church, as they pledged ordination oaths during clandestine ceremonies in remote locales. Those who remained "above ground" boldly persisted in the old liturgy, which in the Prayer of the Church pleaded for God's blessing upon Norway's king—who, while exiled in England, never abdicated the throne; for refusing to substitute Führer Hitler for Haakon VII in that prayer, some lost their lives. The faithful recognized that everything hinged upon a single adjective in Article XVI of the Augsburg Confession: "lawful civil ordinances." Anything less was tyranny, and to pray for God to bless a tyrant's ambitions was unconscionable.

When it comes to the intersection of theology and poli-

tics, this was confessional Lutheranism's finest hour of the twentieth century, resonating powerfully with the Magdeburg Confession of 1550 and the writings of Luther that had preceded it: yes, civil government is God's good blessing; yes, citizens ought to honor the government; but, no, the government should not set itself above either the church or the family, and insofar as any government ever does so, no citizen is obligated to submit to it. Such a tyrant has removed himself from God's Fourth Commandment office as established in Romans 13; such a tyrant has instead commingled church and state into the twin beasts of Revelation 13. Clear as Easter's sunrise, fidelity to Christ necessitates resistance to the Antichrist.

Unfortunately, Norway's pastors did not get everything right. The generation preceding World War II had been struggling against modernism and liberalism, somewhat parallel to what was happening in American church bodies at that time. Berggrav himself, though correctly perceiving the theological threat of Nazism, had ecumenical tendencies toward compromise in other matters, rather than a strong confessional commitment to orthodox Lutheranism. The postwar generation would witness a declining belief in miracles, a growing acceptance of women's ordination, doubts about the reality of hell, and—worst of all—a departure from

the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ. By the century's end, the Church of Norway would become more of a social institution where people enjoyed a sense of community and belonging, and less of a preaching station for Law and Gospel, for confession and absolution.

Prudent Christians make the most of history: celebrating Berggrav's stand against Hitler's heresies, while also discerning that no hero of the faith deserves to be emulated in every respect. In a parallel fashion, Lutherans do not copycat Martin Luther the man, but rather commit themselves to the doctrine that Luther and others confessed. Lutheranism is not a cult of personality, but a con-



fession of Christ. Like John the Baptist of old, the Augsburg Confession deserves our appreciation as a document that cries out “behold the Lamb of God” and points unwaveringly to Christ. In like fashion, the Foundation of the Church, that Easter 1942 confession boldly professed by the clergy of Norway, bears testimony to what the church of all times must believe and teach concerning the proper relationship between the ecclesiastical and civil realms as well as the primacy of the office of fatherhood in the upbringing of children.

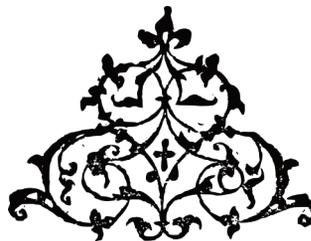
Norway’s pastors spoke in earnest, knowing that people’s lives—people’s spiritual lives—depended upon it. If their example cannot cure cowardice in our own day, then who can imagine what would? ❧

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## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Torleiv Austad, “Church Resistance against Nazism in Norway, 1940–1945,” *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* 28, no. 2 (2015): 278–93; Arne Hassing, *Church Resistance to Nazism in Norway, 1940–1945* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2014).
- <sup>2</sup> *The Liturgical Service of the Lutheran Church*, ed. John Dahle and M. Casper Johnshoy (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1922), 31–32 (English translation), 54 (Norwegian original).
- <sup>3</sup> Eric Metaxas, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2001); Lowell C. Green, *Lutherans Against Hitler: The Untold Story* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007); Michael P. DeJonge, *Bonhoeffer’s Reception of Luther* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017).
- <sup>4</sup> Edwin Robertson, *Bishop of the Resistance: The Life of Eivind Berggrav, Bishop of Oslo, Norway* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2000); for week-by-week details, see also Hassing, *Church Resistance*.
- <sup>5</sup> *Kirkens Grunn: En bekjennelse og en erklæring* (“The Foundation of the Church: A Confession and a Declaration”), Easter 1942, quoted and translated in Ryan C. MacPherson, “Political Resistance in Lutheran Theology: The Lawful Authority of Romans 13 versus the Two Beasts of Revelation 13,” in *My Savior’s Guest: A Festschrift in Honor of Erling Trygve Teigen*, ed. Thomas Rank (Lake Mills, Iowa: Thomas Rank, 2021), 127–47, at 140.
- <sup>6</sup> In MacPherson, “Political Resistance,” 140–41.



“*If anyone*—and this without ability for the court to be petitioned—is persecuted and tormented for the sake of his conviction, then the church is the guardian of the conscience and must stand together with the persecuted. We pray in our Prayer of the Church, ‘Be the strength of those who suffer affliction for righteousness’ sake.’ A truly evangelical church must, therefore, go against all violent suppression of conscience, and cannot let herself become apathetic when certain members and ministers are arbitrarily plucked out and made, one by one, to suffer for that which his colleagues stand in agreement with objective certainty. In such an instance, the body of Christ is wounded; therein, her sacred unity is violated.”

### *Kirkens Grunn*

“Foundation of the Church,” Easter 1941





## The Wittenberg Option in Casper, Wyoming



In *The Benedict Option* Rod Dreher calls on American Christians to develop a distinctive culture to survive today's culture wars. His model, drawn from a passage in Alasdair MacIntyre's *After Virtue*, is Benedict of Nursia's monastery, Monte Cassino, in sixth-century Italy, although Dreher insists that he does not mean this as a call for contemporary Christians to "flee to the hills!"

The obvious difference between our situation and that of sixth-century Italy is that Benedict founded Monte Cassino in 529 in a Europe where cities were shrinking or disappearing, international trade was growing smaller and the unity of much of Europe established by Roman arms and Roman law was imploding.

An age more like our own would be a world in which Europe is uniting from Spain to Germany in the face of a growing Islamic threat. Burgeoning international trade and finance capitalism influence business and politics. In this world a small group of committed Christians attempt to restore the Christian faith and a Christian society. That time, of course, was sixteenth-century Europe. The Holy Roman Empire seemed on the verge of uniting Europe. Banking houses, like the Fuggers in Germany and the Medici in Italy, influenced politics by lending money to businesses and states all over Europe. Wittenberg was a small city, far from the mainstream of European intellectual, religious and financial life. It was less like Rome and Paris in those days or New York and London today and more like contemporary Casper, WY or Hillsdale, MI.

What happened in small, isolated Wittenberg changed

the history of Germany, Europe, and the Christian Church. Frederick the Wise, head of Electoral Saxony, had enriched the city with what he could buy: a massive collection of religious relics and a new university. Philosophy was the prestigious subject. In the thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas had formulated a synthesis of medieval Christianity and ancient philosophy, especially Aristotle's. After his death, brilliant thinkers like Duns Scotus and William of Occam developed and undermined the Thomist synthesis. Universities taught Thomas and Scotus, the "old way" (*via antiqua*) or Occam and Gabriel Biel, the "new way" (*via moderna*).

When Luther began lecturing on the Bible in Wittenberg in 1513, the *via antiqua* was taught by eight scholastics, Thomists, and Scotists. Luther was a curricular reformer before he became a religious reformer. He moved Wittenberg towards classical Christian education, what they called *studia humanitatis* and we call Humanism. He converted the leading Thomist, Andreas von Carlstadt, to Humanism. He persuaded the Elector Fredrick to create a chair of Greek, which was filled by the most brilliant Humanist in Germany, young Philipp Melanchthon. Melanchthon's inaugural address in 1518 defended the necessity of mastering both Greek and Latin as the basis for a true liberal arts education in philosophy and history before going on to the professions of theology and law. "This caused the development of an entirely new school, in which the restoration of Latin, Greek and Hebrew and the teachings of the church Fathers were to be studied in the original languages in which they were written," noted Ernest G. Schwiebert.<sup>1</sup>

These curricular reforms turned Wittenberg into the Gold Standard for humanist, classical Christian education in Germany. People noticed. The student body grew in a few years from about 200 to almost 600. It was hard to find rooms large enough for Melanchthon's and Luther's lectures, with Luther's enrollments reaching 400 and Melanchthon's 500 to 600.

We live after Adam Smith and Karl Marx, and so we believe that enterprises need a solid financial basis. Wittenberg's university not only taught a curriculum distinctively different from what other German universities were offering, its faculty included the bestselling author in Europe. Until 1517 that author had been Erasmus, whose elegant and often ironic Latin works appealed to educated elites all over Europe.

That changed in 1518. In that year, and for the rest of the sixteenth century, Europe's bestselling author was Martin Luther. His German explanation of the 95 Theses, the Sermon on Indulgences and Grace, went into 26 editions from 1518-1520. Before 1517 Luther was a popular teacher who published little. In the five years that followed 1517, he published 160 works. A third were composed in Latin for

scholars and the cultured elite. Two thirds were in German, mostly short and pithy explanations of what Christians could learn from taking the Bible seriously. By the end of 1522, 828 editions of these German works had appeared. By 1530 there were 1,245 more. Scholars have estimated there were over 2 million individual copies of Luther's works in print.

The book trade was transformed. Before 1518 printed books tended to be expensive and in Latin, like the Gutenberg Bible. Most of Luther's writings were short pamphlets, eight or sixteen pages, published in the quarto format the size of our paperbacks. They were composed in clear and vigorous German. People who could not afford a Gutenberg Bible could afford these short pamphlets. Northern Europeans got used to reading short works on serious themes.

Luther's success created a problem. Wittenberg had one publisher with one press, who churned out texts for the university. Luther complained of his slowness and misprints. He could not handle the number and variety of Luther's writings. Publishers in Leipzig or Basel reprinted them in careful and attractive editions. Luther wanted his works published in Wittenberg in editions of high scholarly and artistic quality. He had an important ally, Lucas Cranach, who was equal parts fine artist and canny businessman. Cranach got the younger son of the major publishing house in Leipzig to start a printing house in Wittenberg. Cranach provided space for his press and even purchased a paper mill to guarantee inexpensive paper for both publishers. Another business partner oversaw the distribution of Luther's works. Soon another four printers transferred to Wittenberg. This was important because, after the Diet of Worms in 1521, Luther was declared an outlaw, who could not safely leave Electoral Saxony.

Wittenberg became Germany's leading publishing city. Luther continued to compose books in Latin, like *The Bondage of the Will*, but most of his works were short and affordable. They had a distinctive look, due to Cranach's artistic and business sense. Cranach used the new technique of wood cuttings to provide artistically attractive title pages for Luther's publications. For instance, his painting of "Law and Gospel" depicted significant scenes and figures from the Bible to illustrate this key Lutheran contrast. He then rethought and redesigned the painting to decorate the title page of Lutheran books.

In the middle of these woodcuts was a square or rectangular space for the title at the top and the year of publication at the bottom. Under the title Luther's name was prominently displayed and above the publication year the



place name, Wittenberg (Wuittembergae, zu Wittenberg). That gave the stamp of authenticity to the work. Publishers in other German cities caught on. Their customers were demanding authentic Lutheran writings from Wittenberg with their distinctive title pages. Reprints of Luther's books in other German cities started to feature wood cuttings on the title page, although without Cranach's artistic distinction. Publishers in other cities often put "Wittenberg" on the title pages of their reprints. As Luther's ideas and insights spread over Germany and Europe, Wittenberg's publishing industry created many jobs and a solid business basis for a new Christian society.

Rod Dreher urges Christians to build a distinctive Christian culture to survive the oppression and cultural isolation of the coming decades. The best model for doing this, however, is not building a monastery on Monte Cassino. It is the development of a distinctive Christian culture from classical education to business and art in sixteenth-century Wittenberg. That little city had an excellent university and a successful publishing industry that spread the Gospel and encouraged literacy with attractive

books. Luther, a Biblical exegete, wrote for other scholars in Latin and for a rising urban middle class who read German. Cranach was a painter and artisan, but also a shrewd entrepreneur. By living their Christian vocations, they became God's instruments in shaping a new, creative and economically sound Christian society in a hostile world. If today's Christians need encouragement in preserving and creating a healthy Christian culture in our increasingly secular society, they do not have to study in a large university in a big city. They can look at the story of tiny, isolated Wittenberg in the sixteenth century. The route to a creative, free, and Christian future will come from learning the story of our ancestors and remaining loyal to their legacy. Classical Christian education is a key part of that story. 📖

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ernest G. Schwiebert, *The Reformation, II: The Reformation as a University Movement* (Fortress: Minneapolis, 1996) 457



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# Excellent Films for the Family:

## *The Island at the Top of the World* (1974)

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When considering which films to make a part of your family culture, it is important to be critical of the people and organizations responsible for producing the content. The power to shape and mold is something of which our Enemy is profoundly aware. I can think of no other company that has used media so devastatingly as Disney. The scope of the destruction Disney has wrought upon the character and minds of children across the globe is truly incalculable. While some have pointed to the promotion of sexual immorality and occultism by Disney, another theme is the oft-repeated refrain to “follow your dreams” or “trust your heart” and numerous examples of encouragement for children to rebel against their parents or duties in order to pursue the idolatry of self-realization.

As a rule, I strongly encourage parents to keep their children far away from the mouse’s claw. However, Disney did produce some quality material in the past. *The Island at the Top of the World* is an unassuming gem that promotes familial love and loyalty. The film is based on the 1961 novel *The Lost Ones* written by Donald Gordon Payne under the pseudonym Ian Cameron. The score, which is surprisingly excellent for such a little-known film, was composed by Maurice Jarre, who produced the scores of such films as *The Longest Day* (1962), *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), *Doctor Zhivago* (1965), *The Man Who Would Be King* (1975), and *A Passage to India* (1984).

The story’s main character is Sir Anthony Ross. He is a rich English businessman who is overbearing, officious, and none too concerned about bending the rules and stepping on toes to get what he wants. We meet Sir Anthony preparing to embark on a search to find his son. Donald, whom Sir Anthony raised in his overly pushy manner to be his successor, is reported lost on an expedition to find the “graveyard of whales”—a legendary island in the Arctic. Being a resourceful and industrious man, Sir Anthony begins by recruiting the men he needs to help him accomplish his mission.

Sir Anthony gains his first companion, Professor Ivarsson, by somewhat tricky means—drawing the professor into the mystery and starting out on the journey before Ivarsson formally agrees to accompany him. However, Ivarsson’s curiosity is observably piqued and he eagerly joins Sir Anthony. After realizing that he is already along for the ride, Prof. Ivarsson observes, “Sir Anthony, you’re a devious man.” Sir Anthony replies, “Yes, I am, aren’t I?” with a mischievous grin. Professor Ivarsson, a reserved, analytical archeologist explorer, and Sir Anthony have an odd couple dynamic between them. The friendship that develops between these two very dissimilar men is the foundation upon which the film is built.

Next Sir Anthony must bully, cajole, and inspire Captain Brioux of the airship *Hyperion* to make the dangerous journey. The *Hyperion* is one of the most memorable features and images from the film. Captain Brioux is a capable man who knows every inch of the *Hyperion* and can fix and rebuild components in extreme conditions. Coupled with a turn of the century setting, the film has a wondrous spirit of adventure and discovery. The need to actually travel, using supplies and equipment with which one must be competent, reflects a great contrast to the all too frequent sedentary “discovery” that takes place today through glowing screens. There is a time and a place for inspiration through the appreciation of novels and screenplays—or else I wouldn’t be writing this review! However, setting off on an expedition with the accompanying exploration and risk is a needed vision—especially as the modern world has progressively enshrined the idol of “safety” in the hearts of millions.

Unfortunately, Sir Anthony not only bends rules, but also breaks them as he is at times reckless in the pursuit of finding his lost son. At their last stop before the discovery of the island, Sir Anthony is able to speak with Oomiak, the last man to see Donald alive. Though Oomiak had been a loyal companion to Donald, he refuses to accompany the party on their journey. Sir Anthony resorts to luring him aboard the *Hyperion* and kidnaps him. Though Sir An-





## On Learning by Heart



The old German Missouri Synod periodical *Der Lutheraner* regularly contained a section near the end of the magazine entitled “Aus Welt und Zeit” (From the World and Time). It spoke briefly of current events, contained snippets from other church periodicals, or included quotes from figures such as Luther or the Church Fathers. The following translation is from *Der Lutheraner*’s “Aus Welt und Zeit” from July 4, 1905. Originally entitled “Vom Auswendiglernen” (On Learning By Heart), it is essentially four quotes which speak to the topic of learning Bible verses and hymn verses by heart, which has been custom in our churches for a long time. We know that the current culture and public educational system generally does not value such learning, but we learn here how it has been under attack for longer than we know.

Learning by heart is a useful Christian discipline, not to be despised. The article below talks about how Bible verses and hymn verses are especially useful in times of tragedy. That really is only one application of many. King David wrote, “I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). The entire Christian life of sanctification makes use of those sacred words from Holy Scripture stored up in the heart. The human mind has essentially limitless capacity for storing up what it gathers by observation and experience, and God’s people should harness this capacity in a productive Christian way, one which serves God’s glory.

One quote mentions Luther’s Small Catechism, Bible verses, and hymn verses. These three elements fill the treasury of the uniquely Lutheran heart. The Bible has a privileged place here because only it is properly God’s Word, useful and inexhaustible in its application for Christian faith and life. Luther’s Small Catechism is a useful summary of Christian doctrine, stating concisely what the average

man needs to know for life in this world and eternal salvation. The Catechism leads us into the Scriptures, and it places the common man on equal footing with the Bible scholar. Hymn verses confess the truth while employing the services of music and poetry. Music is a powerful medium which can carry any type of content into the heart. Christians must use this medium wisely, and so they use it in service of Christian devotion and confession.

These are called “seeds” which are planted in the heart, to produce an abundant crop as they mature. If these are seeds, we could call the process of learning these things cultivation. Of course, cultivation is related to culture. A uniquely Christian culture is where these sacred words are planted in young hearts. Christians will do this against the tide of our current culture. We live in a culture of instant gratification, pornography, addiction, and fear, a culture where these seeds are planted into the hearts of the young. The evil one weakens us and steals hearts through these poisonous seeds. Christians push back, and they will reap an abundant harvest where they sow good seed in the hearts of their children. ☞

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*Rev. Ryan Loeslie is Pastor of Immanuel Lutheran Church in Dimock, SD.*



## *On Learning By Heart*

The famous national economist Dr. Roscher made this judgment concerning the learning by heart of Bible sayings and spiritual songs in school: “The school administrators, who so badly want to phase out the learning by heart of Bible sayings in the school, must not have experienced what inexpressible and inexhaustible refreshment such treasures in the memory are able to impart during mournful and sleepless nights.”

The great historian Heinrich von Treitschke says: “Since Diesterweg (a well-known but liberal seminar director) made it his method to let his students find the truth for themselves, he maintained that it was spiritless training when they were coerced, according to the old school custom, to learn by heart Bible verses and hymn verses which were only partly understood. Also the church-hostile press acts very clever when it constantly rails against ‘dull memorization.’ They believe wrongly. This worldly darkness of knowledge thoroughly forgets that even the mature man only partly understands religious truths. Only when he has first made a self-concerted effort to learn them himself can these religious truths be grasped firmly. Likewise, the sublime sayings of biblical wisdom survive in a receptive memory, even when they are not engaged. Then suddenly come temptations and tragedies of life, and they prove to be a comforting and edifying power.”

The famous scholar and professor Karl von Raumer says: “In recent times they have declared war on learning by heart from all sides. And as the history of pedagogy teaches, the memory is a lower mental faculty, while reason is the highest. They speak with highest contempt about ‘memory junk,’ and they make the claim: children should not learn anything by heart that they do not already fully understand. If this were true, certainly they should learn by heart neither Luther’s Small Catechism, nor Bible sayings, nor hymns. What we have here has mostly to do with the mysteries of the faith, which reason does not establish, even in the longest human life. It is like a tree, the roots of which reach into the greatest deep, the crown of which reaches to the peak of eternity. These mysteries are our comfort and hope in life and death. It is a valid and wise institution of our faithful God that he has given us a spiritual storehouse in the memory, in which we are able to store up seed for the future. The uninformed regard these seeds as dead; not so he who knows better. He knows that suddenly the seed’s vigorous power germinates at the proper time. The boy learns the saying, ‘Call upon me in the day of trouble, and I will deliver you, and you shall glo-

rify me’ [Ps. 50:15]. He knows in his childhood years of no trouble, and so he does not understand the saying. But when he reaches adulthood and experiences trouble of the daunting and unrelenting kind, then suddenly the saying touches his soul like an angel of peace and comfort. He finally understands. Children learn the hymn verse by heart: ‘My Savior, be Thou near me when death is at my door,’ [LSB 450:6] and they do not fully understand, because the thought of death is far from them. But the elderly have prayed the same verse in their hour of death, which they learned as children, and they understood better than before. In the seven fat years Joseph gathered for the seven meager years. When the time of trouble arrives, it is too late to gather. Bible verses and hymns—I call these seeds. Specifically, I mean the old hymns which have sprung by power of the Divine Word. Let them learn these specifically. Of course, in the newer hymnals they have notoriously snipped out the living bud from those old powerful hymns. One cannot enlighten the memory of children with such deaf and dead seeds.”

The Catholic Archduke Maximilian of Austria, who came to such a sad end as Emperor of Mexico, wrote in his journal: “Today a sailor died on board. He felt his death drawing near. He was full of anxiety, and he requested that someone pray with him. The doctor inquired with the officers and crew. Everyone declined. None of them were in the position to pray with a soul which was about to cross over into eternity! So I went to the dying man myself. But also I was not able to pray. I only brought forth convoluted words, for which I was ashamed of myself.” “If among that ship’s crew,” says a church newspaper, “only a Protestant had been there, who commanded ‘memory material,’ then it would have been spared that shameful embarrassment of not being able to comfort a dying man. There would have been sayings like these: ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden,’ [Mt. 10:28] ‘For God so loved the world, that he gave his only-begotten Son,’ [Jn. 3:16] or hymn verses like this: ‘My Savior, be Thou near me when death is at my door’ [LSB 450:6]. These would have refreshed not only the dying man, but the whole crew.”





# How to Listen to a Sermon

**L**istening to a sermon is a skill that every Christian should learn. As important as it is that our preachers purely preach the whole counsel of God, rightly distinguishing between law and gospel and faithfully setting forth the teaching of God's Word, so important it is that we hearers listen to sermons as sheep who hear the voice of their Good Shepherd, Jesus, who gave His life for them. How should we listen to a sermon? First, don't listen to false doctrine. Second, pay close attention to the text on which the preacher is preaching. Third, keep in mind that the preacher is preaching to you personally. Fourth, say Amen to the law and the gospel that you hear.

First, don't listen to false doctrine. If you want to learn how to paddle a canoe, the first thing you need to know is where not to paddle it. Don't paddle a canoe over a waterfall. Don't paddle your canoe in Lake Superior during a gale. If you want to know how to listen to a sermon, the first thing you need to know is where not to go. Don't go to a heterodox church. Don't listen to a heterodox preacher. Mark and avoid false teaching and false teachers. The most important measure of a sermon is not whether it is nicely delivered, makes you feel pious, entertains you, or even instructs you. It must be God's pure Word. God's Word is food for the soul.

We don't listen to false doctrine for the same reason we don't smoke pot or snort cocaine. It's bad for you. It's poison to the soul. God's Word is food and drink. Faith is eating and drinking. Faith is eating and drinking the flesh and blood of the Son of Man, as Jesus teaches us in John chapter 6. The sermon is not a smorgasbord of theological opinions from which we may take this and leave that. A sermon is a meal. Take it in as you would eat a tender steak covered with a light béarnaise sauce. Pay attention to every word. The purpose of the sermon is to justify you through faith. Eat! It's good for you!

Second, pay close attention to the text on which the preacher is preaching. You are not there to hear Pastor Jones. You are there to listen to Jesus. The incarnate Word is revealed in the written Word and proclaimed in the oral



Word preached by the preacher. Hold the written Word in your heart. Expect the preacher to preach the text. If he does not preach the text and teaches something else, something that appears to you not to jibe with what you have learned from the Catechism, talk to him about it. A faithful pastor who is confronted in a friendly manner by a parishioner (or a visitor, for that matter) about something he said in a sermon will welcome your questions. Don't be intimidated by a minister of Christ. He's your minister, too.

Third, take the sermon personally. There is nothing wrong with getting a copy of the sermon to share with someone else. It may be a good idea. But you are not sitting in the pew as a preacher to others. You are there, as a bap-

tized child of God, to hear what God has to say to you. The sermon proclaims the blood and righteousness of Jesus to you personally, and it is as personal as eating and drinking the body and blood of Jesus in the Sacrament. Sermon and sacraments go together. A sermon is not a lecture. It's personal.

Fourth, say Amen to the law and gospel that you hear. Listen to the sermon for instruction on how you are to live. The law that you hear may condemn you, instruct you, and rein you in all at the same time. Let it do its work on you and do not apply it to Bill or George. You are not there to judge them, instruct them, or to rein them in. The law you hear is meant for you. My dad used to joke about the misapplication of God's law by saying, "That's like preaching against birth control at an old folks home." But it is not only preachers who misapply God's law. Hearers do too. When you listen to a sermon, expect God to tell you what to do and expect to find yourself exposed as guilty before God and accountable to him.

Finally, say Amen to the gospel that you hear. Jesus said, "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

for they shall be filled" (Mt. 5:6). How? Through faith! That's what saying Amen means. It means you believe it. You trust the words your Savior speaks to you through His servant because you trust in Jesus. He who came to serve by giving His life as a ransom for you continues to serve you through the words the pastor preaches to you. Say Amen to those words. Take them to heart. Listening to a sermon is not just a momentary thing that ends when the pastor says Amen. You say Amen too. Your Amen is to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the Word you have heard. The duty of the preacher is to set Jesus Christ before you as your sin-bearer and Savior. The duty of the listener is to hold to the Christian sermon as precious words of life that give life and empower Christian living. Cherish in your heart the preached Word that bestows on you Christ and His righteousness. This Word is the instrument of the Holy Spirit to work faith in you, to justify you, and to enable you to live a Christian life.



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*Rev. Rolf Preus is a retired parish Pastor of 41 years.*

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## Ascension Day

*Anna Hahn*

Some forty eves ago I saw them bloom,  
The first of flow'ring branches, fresh and fair,  
Appearing sudden in my upper room.  
They breathed all heaven's sweetness to me there.  
And oft since then, while walking in the glade,  
I drank those same white blossoms full and deep,  
Joyed in their beauty, rested in their shade,  
And yearned somehow to pluck them, hold, and keep.  
But gazing up today, I saw them gone,  
And summer's greening leaf was on the bough;  
Now noonday's gleam o'ertook the purple dawn,  
And men around me toiled with spade and plow.  
"Rejoice," said one, "that blossom's time has ceased,  
For only then the fruit, and harvest-feast."





## A Plea for America



lithe acceptance of godlessness, once creeping in our land, now sweeping like a flood in our land, has been ours. Ours is the sitting on our hands, ours the bemoaning of other people's heedlessness of the gospel, ours the placing of blame on this or that ecclesiastical circumstance. Our acceptance of the growth of ungodliness was perhaps because we "didn't want to talk about political things from the pulpit" or perhaps because we didn't want to "end on the Law" or perhaps because of some other shibboleth with the patina of orthodoxy slapped on it. The result has been that in the past half-century, the number of our churches and the number of our Christians have both decreased, even as the number of Americans has increased.

A headlong rush into every kind of self-destruction, every sort of suicide-on-a-time-delay, has been our countrymen's fate. "Deaths of despair" have risen, the dollar buys less than it has in most of our lifetimes, and a cynicism about our government, our schools, our church body, and our own families has become predictable in ourselves and in our neighbors. Despair and cynicism can watch from a comfortable distance while people devote themselves to demons and to the teachings of demons: to the mutilation of their bodies in the pursuit of their true selves, to the destruction of children either in the womb or in the gender-therapy clinic, to the terror of encountering another human being who may be carrying a disease, to every specter and every demand of Molech. Devotion to self-destruction and to the destruction of others in the name of Diversity-Inclusion-Equity, in the name of Protecting Ourselves and Protecting Others, in the name of My Body, My Choice—this has been ours and our families', our neighbors', our

friends'. We have overdosed yet again on what will kill us, the body of America laid out, gasping, and unresponsive, and once that body has been narcanned one more time, we will still love what will destroy us.

What will be done in the Name of Jesus? Is that Name mightier than all other names? Can that Name overcome all these foes and resurrect that self-destructive corpse of a nation? As our nation rages and the princes of media, finance, politics, and every other power-group scheme against the Lord and against His Christ, the Lord holds those princes, those powers, those forces of darkness in derision. He is not terrified by their financial holdings, by their campaign donations, or by their capacity to inflict harm on His people. He is not cowed by their mandates, directives, and encouragements to violence. He is not afraid when they hire mobs to burn down cities or allow the price of everything to skyrocket. He reigns over all things. He remains King whoever the president is. He is seated high on His eternal throne with the seraphim hovering in wonder and in fear around Him.

Who will go for Him? Who will speak His Name? Questions so urgent are what is behind Luther Classical College and every new endeavor of hope now beginning in Christ's Church. We are not huddling around the ashes left behind from our fathers' fires. We are keepers of holy flame, and now the fire of God's Name must spread. It is not enough that some few of us should know Christ's truth while our own families, our own towns, and our own country are overwhelmed by lies and subject to the devil, a liar from the beginning. It is not enough that we should be warmed by the fire of God's Word while our children's souls freeze to death for lack of the knowledge of the only true God. It is not enough that we should live lives of peace and joy in

believing while the people right next to us have no peace, no joy, and no hope because Christ is a stranger to them.

He did not have His hands imprinted with mark of the nails nor did He show the scars to His disciples so that He could remain far off. It is not His desire that our children should be fed the scraps of communism, self-hatred, and Covid panic in their schools instead of His nourishing Word. It is not His will that people should be ignorant of the doctrine that makes us wise for salvation. It is not His intention that any man should die apart from Him, but that the sinner—blighted, addicted, depressed, anxious, looking at his phone all the time and never to Jesus—should turn from those ways of death and live. He is nearer to us than our own hearts, and He would have the heart and the mind and the soul and the strength into the bargain. He would have all of us that He may raise up all of us at the last.

We have lived in indifference long enough. The time is long past for internecine squabbling, for the frantic quashing of new endeavors, for the criticizing and the harping and the bickering that sufficed for times of prosperity and ease, for the carping tone and the hurried walk past the prone body of the man fallen among thieves, bleeding out his life's blood as we walk right past in discomfort and with a twinge of guilt. Our indifference has taken our children's souls and turned their hearts far from us, so that we barely know our own. Our indifference has allowed our neighbors to go on with their lives unbothered by us, so that they divorce one another and get one another addicted to every kind of evil without our lifting a finger to help where we could have. Our indifference is killing us, and we have mistaken this quiet slip into death for peace.

Now is the time for love. What won't you do, what wouldn't you give to see your children in heaven, to see



your neighbors living life in the Way of peace, to see your country turned to the fear of the Lord? The robbers have overtaken us and our children and our country, and we lie unresponsive by the road on the way to Jericho, a city that never should have been built, rebuilt at the cost of a child's life (Josh. 6:26, 1 Kgs. 14:34). Here comes the priest who passes us by because he has better things to do than that; his vestments remain unsoiled by our filth. Here comes the Levite who is very involved in church life and is too busy to help the helpless; his conscience will find some excuse for his rush. Here comes Christ, the good Samaritan, cast out, despised, not much to look at. He sees us, He sees our children starving for His Word, He sees our country distraught, depressed, demon-afflicted, bleeding to death. He knows our need, He hears our cry, and now He reaches down to heal. ❧

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Prospectus for

# LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE

**Location:** Eleven acres on the campus of Mount Hope Lutheran Church and School, Casper, WY. With a population of c. 60,000, Casper has two conservative, liturgical LCMS congregations of about three hundred members each.

**Setting:** The college will begin with a campus center, our “Old Main,” which will house classrooms, library, auditorium, offices, and a common area for students to gather. Houses for student living will also be built on campus as the student population grows. The Wyoming District Office is just south of Mount Hope Lutheran Church and has the beginnings of a theological library.

**Prospective Opening:** Fall, 2025

**Purpose:** The college will provide a conservative, classical Lutheran education to Lutheran students. Paramount will be the promotion of Christian culture, a stress on the priority of Christian marriage, family, and piety, and a cultivation of confessional Lutheran theology, liturgy, hymnody, and identity. With courses using the “great books” of the past for the core curriculum, the college will offer Latin, history, theology, literature, logic, rhetoric, music, geometry, biology, and mathematics, all within a purposefully Christian and Lutheran framework.

**Need:** The college years are typically the most formative years in a young adult’s life. These are the years when they most often find their spouses, decide on a career, and make decisions that last a lifetime. There is desperate need for a college where conservative Lutheran young men and women can learn the truth of the Christian faith, be encouraged in genuine Lutheran culture, and meet pious, Lutheran husbands and wives. The return to a classical model, which hands down both traditional morality and clear thinking through study of logic, rhetoric, and the best of ancient literature and wisdom, will prepare students for life in church, home, and community.

**Size:** Because of its purpose to promote Christian culture in the Lutheran tradition, the college will be open only to Lutherans and remain small, never exceeding three hundred undergraduates.

**Degrees and Opportunities:** The college will offer an A.A. and a B.A. in Classical Liberal Arts. Generally, all students will take the same courses. The course work and culture of the college will help prepare students for life as Christians in their church, community, and family. Opportunities to student teach at a classical Lutheran school will be offered to those interested in becoming teachers. Men wishing to continue on to seminary will have an excellent foundation in knowledge of the Bible, Lutheran theology, Church history, apologetics, Latin, Hebrew, and Greek, as well as the piety and humility needed for the pastoral office. For those who wish to pursue a trade (e.g. electrical, plumbing, architectural), the college is working on a partnership with Casper Community College to offer an A.A. in a trade and learn the necessary skills for gainful employment. We are working to establish apprenticeships with businesses throughout the country for those who graduate from our trade program. The college is in the process of seeking accreditation with a nationally recognized accrediting organization.

**Cost of Attendance:** Because large loads of debt encourage students to put off marriage and family in favor of making money, Luther Classical College will remain affordable. Tuition will be set at \$8,500 a year, with scholarship opportunities to help with payment. The Board of Regents will work to decrease, not increase, the cost of tuition as the college grows. In order to secure the independence and guard the doctrinal integrity of the institution, the college will not take any federal funds (including federally subsidized student loans).



# LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE

## Individual Support

### *Ways to Support LCC*

First and foremost, we ask for your prayers as we undertake this project. We can be bold to ask our Heavenly Father for all good things, knowing that He promises to hear us.

Secondly, we ask for your financial support for this mission. There are **two ways** to donate:

**Patron Program:** Join our Patron Program and pledge monthly gifts of **\$50, \$100, or \$250**.

Patron members help us to cover start-up and building costs in these years leading up to our opening. As a special thank you for pledging recurring support, we like to send Patron Program members LCC merchandise gifts from our online store.

**Special Gift:** We gladly accept donations of any size or frequency!

You can also ask your church to become a Supporting Congregation. With **39 supporting congregations as of May**, our goal is to have **100 by the end of the year!**

### *How to Give*

**1. Online:** scan the QR code to be directed right to our website or go online to [www.lutherclassical.org/support](http://www.lutherclassical.org/support).



**2. Mail:** use the prepaid envelope included in this magazine to send a check or fill out your payment information and mail right back to us.

As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, all donations to Luther Classical College are tax exempt.

*For questions about LCC and ways to support, feel free to contact our Head of Development, Samuel Preus, at [s.preus@lutherclassical.org](mailto:s.preus@lutherclassical.org) or the Board of Regents directly at [regents@lutherclassical.org](mailto:regents@lutherclassical.org).*



# On the Suffering of Christ

John Arndt (1555-1621) was a Lutheran pastor and the author of the most popular devotional book in Europe since *Imitation of Christ* by Thomas a Kempis (1380-1471). *True Christianity*, which eventually grew to six books, is Arndt's Lutheran reworking of the fairly popular *Theologia Germanica* (*German Theology*), an anonymous writing following the German mystic John Tauler (1300-1361). Luther had recommended *German Theology* early in the Reformation, publishing it in 1516 and 1518. Luther introduced the 1518 edition with these words, "For this noble book, though it be poor and rude in words, is so much the richer and more precious in knowledge and divine wisdom. And I will say, though it be boasting of myself and 'I speak as a fool,' that next to the Bible and St. Augustine, no book has ever come into my hands where I have learnt, or would wish to learn more of what God, and Christ, and man, and all things are..."<sup>1</sup>

Like *German Theology*, Arndt's *True Christianity* focuses on the inward life of a Christian, on repentance, denying yourself, and recognizing the perfect and complete love only in Christ and God. It exhorts the Christian to humble himself and take up Christ's example of self-denial and humility by teaching the whole counsel of God. Much of Luther is seen in both books, including his treatment of the old and new man, the uses of the law, the freedom of the Christian, and many other themes. While Arndt was criticized for his book (Polycarp Leyser saying, "The book is good only when the reader is good"),<sup>2</sup> yet John Gerhard, who had been his parishioner for two years, generally defended his former pastor, despite his penchant for mystical literature.

Lesser known are Arndt's sermons, which cover not only the Gospels for the Sundays and Feasts of the Church Year, but also include many sermons on the Passion of Christ. Nearly every sermon Arndt writes introduces the Gospel lesson with shadows, portrayals, and prophecies of the Old

Testament. Arndt's use of allegory is exemplary as he finds types and shadows in nearly every word of the Old Testament. John Gerhard's postils show that he likely borrowed a lot from his onetime mentor.

While Arndt's regular Sunday sermons focus especially on repentance and applying the promises of the Gospel to the Christian life, his Passion Sermons spend a beautiful amount of time savoring the grace of God in every detail of the history of Christ's suffering and death in the four Gospels. In over forty sermons, of which thirty-eight were reprinted in 1860, Arndt shows the Old Testament revealed Christ's Passion. Hidden from English for too long, we are pleased to present this translation of one sermon by Seminarian Peter Preus. – M. Preus

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Theologia Germanica*, trans. Susanna Winkworth (Scriptoria Books: 2014), pp.xix-xx.

<sup>2</sup> "Das Buch ist gut, wenn nur der Leser gut ist." Cf. *Johann Arndt: A Prophet of Lutheran Pietism*, Daniel van Voorhis (1517 Publishing: 2018), p. 9. This book is an excellent recent biography of Arndt.



## THE SORROW OF THE LORD IN GETHSEMANE, HIS PRAYER, AND HIS DISCIPLES. THE KINDNESS OF CHRIST TOWARDS HIS ENEMIES, AND HIS OMNIPOTENCE.



Our dear God commanded Moses to build three different altars upon which he was to sacrifice. The first altar which God commanded to be built was an altar of earth (Exodus 20). The second was an altar of stone (Exodus 20). The third was an altar of wood overlaid with fine gold on all sides, upon which the High Priest was to offer the incense offering. These three distinct altars provide for us a beautiful example of the holy offering of Christ. First, He would be a sacrifice on the altar which was made of earth, namely, in the Garden on the Mount of Olives. Thereafter on the altar of stone, which was the High Priest's palace and Pilate's court house. And finally on the altar of wood overlaid with gold, namely, the cross sprinkled with Christ's own blood, as with the most precious of gold. Upon this last altar the true incense offering was offered, where Christ allowed Himself to be sacrificed as a sweet aroma ascending up to God for the reconciliation of the human race. God considers the aroma sweet, because this offering brings about reconciliation.

Now since we began these Passion sermons with the verse, "Come and see the works of God; He is awesome in His doing upon the earth" [cf. Ps. 66:5-6], we shall now take a closer look at the altar of earth that is the Garden, and what transpired there.

- I. The location, the sorrow, the prayer, and the Lord's disciples.
- II. How the way in which Christ was caught demonstrates both His omnipotence and His kindness to both friend and foe; how He does not want to be vindicated by the sword; how the disciples abandon Him.

### I. The Place of the Garden

The reason why Christ wanted to begin His suffering in the Garden is deduced from the comparison of the battles of the first Adam, who was driven from the Garden, and Christ, who came to the Garden to do His work. The first Adam sinned in the Garden; the second Adam atoned for sin in the Garden. The first Adam became disobedient towards God in the Garden; the second Adam, with His obe-

dience towards God, fulfilled the law and made atonement for every disobedient sinner. The first Adam lost his freedom in the Garden and became a slave to sin and Satan; the second Adam allowed Himself to be bound and seized, that by His bondage we may be made free. In the Garden, the first Adam incurred the verdict of damnation, where he heard and felt the curse; in the Garden, the second Adam took onto Himself both the verdict of damnation and the curse. In the Garden, the promise of the One who would crush the serpent's head was given to the first Adam. Now behold, this One who crushes the serpent's head has come into the Garden.

### 2. The Sadness of the Lord

Let us take a look at the great sadness of the Lord, which He first reveals with these words, "My soul is sorrowed unto death" (Mt. 26:38). Here, the Lord bewails the sorrow of His soul, because every sorrow on earth had fallen onto Him. Thus, He said, "unto death." Alas, if only this deathly sorrow and fear lasted only but a little while! But this sorrow weighed down on Him more than anything anyone can imagine or express. The wrath of God against the sin of the world was placed upon His neck, terrifying His soul. Thereafter followed the curse, the verdict of God's justice, the various disgraces, and the shameful death on the cross. He also revealed His sorrow to others by His behavior. For He began not only to sorrow, but also "to be troubled and deeply distressed" (Mk. 14:33).

These are some memorable words in the Greek text. The first, namely "sorrow," would have caused such terror in His body that His every limb would have frozen, thoroughly penetrated to the bone with terror, with every hair standing straight up. The second word, meaning "to be troubled," happens when one knows neither counsel, help, nor comfort. Such a man is unable to rest anywhere. The third word means "deeply distressed," that is, to feel and suffer fear and anguish. Thus the Psalms explain this anguish of the soul. Psalm 18 says, "The pangs of death surrounded me, and the floods of ungodliness made me afraid. The sorrows of hell surrounded me; the snares of death confronted me." The wrath of God is also described in Psalm 38. Again, in Psalm 88, "For my soul is full of troubles, and my life draws near to the grave. I am counted with those who go down to the pit; I am like a man who has no strength, ... Your wrath lies heavy upon me, and You have afflicted me with all Your waves." And again, in Psalm 116, "The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of hell laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow." Also Psalm 55, "My heart is severely pained within me, and the terrors



of death have fallen upon me. Fearfulness and trembling have come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me.”

You should learn to recognize three things from this. First, the magnitude and weight of your sin, how serious a matter it was for your Savior to pay for sin. Do not make light of sin. For here you see that it is no light matter.

Secondly, learn to recognize the comfort you have in times of great affliction. When your soul feels the terrors of God’s wrath, do not despair. For Christ suffered this same wrath, but to the greatest possible degree for you. This He did lest you despair over your sin and fall to ruin. He overcame the terrors and the anguish of His soul. Therefore find comfort in this: Christ suffered such anguish for all of your sins. Yes, His soul was sorrowed for you. He was troubled for you. He was deeply distressed for you, so that you do not need to sorrow forever, nor be troubled, nor be deeply distressed.

Thirdly, also learn to recognize the comfort you have here concerning temporal death. For the real death is great terror and anguish of the soul. And this Christ suffered, so that you do not need to suffer these terrors when you die. Christ made these same terrors powerless, lest they overpower you in death. You shall not taste death forever.

### 3. The Prayer of the Lord

Let us take a look at the prayer of the Lord: 1. He “fell to the ground.” 2. He says, “Abba, Father.” 3. “All things are possible with You. Take this cup away from Me.” 4. “Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will” (Mk. 14:35-36).

Firstly, He fell to the ground with the greatest humility and sacrificed Himself upon His heavenly Father’s altar of earth. He prostrated Himself most humbly before His heavenly Father. He fell on His face (Mt. 26:39). Because of His fear and terror, He cannot even look up to His heavenly Father. He feels the great heartache of despair. The load of sin was so heavy that it pressed this strong Hero down to the earth, who otherwise would have carried both heaven and earth.

Secondly, He says, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You.” Behold the firm faith, the burning love, the continual hope. He calls God His Father amidst His greatest cross and extreme terrors, even as He feels God’s wrath against the sin of the world. He says, “My Father” (Mt. 26:39, 42). Such is the love, the purest of love, with which He loved God in His time of greatest need.

Thirdly, He says, “All things are possible for You.” This is

hope. All things are possible for You, so it is also possible for You to take this cup from Me. You have laid this cross on Me, how easy it would be to take it away. Alas, God must be the One to ease and take away the cross, for He is the One who gives it. It is up to Him. To Him we too must pray.

Fourthly, “Nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.” Here, we see His obedience, His denial of His own will, and His denial of Himself.

Thus, we too should pray in faith, love, hope, obedience, humility, and in accordance with the will of God. Indeed, this is the greatest possible medicine for every cross: that one turns to Him who sent the cross and believes that God Himself is in the cross. Yes, our Father is in the middle of death, and everything is possible with Him. Entrust and yield yourself to His will, and you will endure through the cross.

The other Evangelists add to the prayer of the Lord that as He was in deep prayer, wrestling with death, His sweat fell to the earth like drops of blood. Who can imagine or express the Lord’s suffering in body and soul? Indeed, here both body and soul suffer the greatest terror and agony. The Lord’s soul greatly struggled in prayer against the fear of death, dread, and terror. However, the Lord’s holy body also wrestled with the pains of death. The power of death so utterly consumed Him, including His holy limbs, and caused Him inexpressible pain. But His soul could not yet be separated and torn from His body, because He needed to die on the cross. There, on the cross, His holy body suffered the anguishing fear of death so severely, with His holy blood flowing forth from His veins and His whole body, just as if it had gone through a presser and was drained. His face and His entire body were dripping drops of blood. (This happens in the sweat of death, that a dying man will sweat both from his face and in his heart.) And this holy blood, which the fear of death presses from the Lord (from which blood His heart was of course already gripped by great terror), this blood thickens through the chill of death and the clotted drops of blood fall upon the earth. For so they are called in the Greek text, “clotted drops of blood,” and this comes from the terrifying, horrible, cold fear of death.

Behold then, in the Garden the fear of death raged in the members of Christ the Lord with unspeakable pain. And since fear could not here take His soul, it took His blood.

Behold, Adam, what red apples this tree bears! Here is the Tree of Life who, because of the lovely apples from which you ate death, bears now blood-red apples. Yours was the fruit of transgression. His is the fruit of payment.

The Lord needed to suffer in this way to fulfill Scripture, as recorded in Isaiah 63, “Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah...Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like one who treads in the winepress? I have trodden the winepress alone, and from the peoples no one was with Me...Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes.” He suffered thusly so that the power and fear of death would be made powerless in His holy body, so that when we die we need not truly taste death.

#### 4. The Disciples

Let us also take a look at the disciples. What do they do? They abandon and leave the Lord alone in His unwavering prayer to fight death and to sweat drops of blood.

Firstly, this is because the Lord was to receive no comfort from man; His comfort was to come from heaven alone. That is why an angel from heaven appeared to Him and strengthened Him, that is, comforted Him. In times of great distress, comfort must come to faithful Christians from heaven. In this world they will find no comfort.

Secondly, the Lord serves as an example that we ought not be alone when distressed. Rather, we should have a devout friend near us, who helps by praying for us and with us. Nevertheless, for Christ it cannot be so.

Thirdly, the disciples are a picture of fleshly and secure people. Such people do not themselves care when Christ and the Church are persecuted, when they sweat blood, or when they are choked and scattered. Thus, the children of this world choose the good days. They do not help to toil or to pray. They let Christ and His Word stand only when they are living in good days, when they can rest and sleep.



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# Our Lord to Heaven Now Ascends

8.7.8.7.8.8.7.8.8.7

Der Tag, der ist so freudenreich

Setting: J.S. Bach, alt.

Mark Preus, 2009

1. Our Lord to Heav - en now as - cends, Cap - tiv - it - y is cap - tured!  
 2. All things that hurt your heart and mind, Your sins, the world, the dev - il;  
 3. A - rise and hear the Con - qu' - rer's word, "I rule be - cause I love - you,  
 4. "What Sa - tan builds, I'll tear it down, What I build stands un - sha - ken;

From Heav - en's gates to all earth's ends Be - liev - ers' hearts are rap - tured  
 See Je - sus now in shack - les bind; He - casts down all that's e - vil.  
 I am your Broth - er and your Lord, Nor am I far a - bove - you,  
 The pride that un - be - liev - ers own Will soon all be for - sa - ken.

For hope has seized them from de - spair As Christ their Lord rules ev' - ry - where  
 Be - neath His feet our foes now fall, But we who here have heard His call,  
 But where you are but two or three, With My own flesh and blood I'll be,  
 For ev' - ry knee to Me shall bow, No oth - er god will I al - low,

And Hell and Sa - tan cow - er. Then who would not be glad to - day,  
 Are bow - ing in con - tri - tion And ask in hum - ble con - fid - ence  
 And feed you with My mer - it; Re - ceive these gifts from Me, your Lord,  
 Than Me, the on - ly Sa - vior; Come un - to Me, you poor and meek,

When Christ, who washed our sins a - way, Claims all His roy - al pow - er?  
 That He would plead our souls' de - fense And save us from per - di - tion.  
 The sac - ra - ments and liv - ing Word, And thus your home in - her - it.  
 Here in my wounds for - give - ness seek And live with Me for - ev - er."

Free recording available at [cc.lutherclassical.org/ascension-hymn](http://cc.lutherclassical.org/ascension-hymn)



## Getting to Know the Fathers: Ignatius of Antioch

“uffer me to be eaten by the wild beasts, through whom I can attain to God. I am God’s wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ...Let there come on me fire and cross, and struggles with wild beasts, cutting and tearing asunder, rackings of bones, mangling of limbs, crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil, may I but attain to Jesus Christ!”<sup>1</sup>

The year was about 108 AD, and the old man who penned these words was being hauled to Rome for execution. He had committed no wrong. He had done no violence. His only crime was to have been a prominent Christian and bishop of the church in the great Syrian city of Antioch, the same city from which Paul and Barnabas began their first missionary journey.<sup>2</sup> He was, assuming tradition is correct, a disciple of St. John and was consecrated as the third bishop of Antioch in the year 69AD, following St. Peter and his successor, Evodius, in that office. According to the fifth century theologians Theodoret of Cyrus and St. John Chrysostom, it was St. Peter himself, as well as the apostles who consecrated him to the office, who recommended Ignatius be named

bishop.<sup>3</sup> Regardless of whether all these traditions concerning Ignatius are accurate, it is extremely probable that he would have come into contact with several of the apostles during his lifetime.

According to the historian Eusebius, writing over two hundred years later, Ignatius “was brought from Syria to Rome and became food for the wild animals because of his witness to Christ. He was brought through Asia under the strictest guard, strengthening the Christian community by speech and encouragement in every city where he stayed.”<sup>4</sup> Not only did he strengthen those he met on his journey to martyrdom, but he also wrote several letters, seven in total, to various congregations along his route. Apart from the Biblical Epistles, these letters are among the earliest and most important documents bearing witness to the faith of the Church during and immediately following the apostolic era.

The early date of these letters makes Ignatius and the substance of what he wrote extremely relevant to our times. Those hailed as academics and experts often make false statements about early Christianity: Jesus wasn’t considered divine by Christians until well after the apostolic era, or the books of the New Testament really weren’t considered Scripture until the fourth

century Council of Nicaea, or there were many equally valid variants of Christianity in the second century, or early Christians had not yet developed a clear ecclesiology. Ignatius not only disproves such spurious notions, but proves that the Church in the time of the apostles and the generation following already had a clear understanding of New Testament Scriptures and a solid confession regarding Christ and the Christian faith, a confession that remains the Church’s confession today.

In his seven letters, Ignatius quotes from, alludes to, or borrows specific phrases from nearly every book in the New Testament, demonstrating that already in his day the Church read these books as authoritative Scripture. Concerning the faith itself, Ignatius demonstrates a fully formed Christology and soteriology. In his letter to the Smyrnaeans, for example, he writes with creed-like clarity: “I give glory to Jesus Christ, the Son of God who has thus given you wisdom; for I have observed that you are established in immovable faith, as if nailed to the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ, both in flesh and spirit, and confirmed in love by the blood of the Lord, that He is in truth of the family of David according to the flesh, God’s Son by the will and power of God, truly born of a Virgin, baptized by

John that, 'all righteousness may be fulfilled by Him,' truly nailed to a tree in the flesh for our sakes under Pontius Pilate and Herod the Tetrarch... that 'He might set up an ensign' for all ages through His resurrection, for His saints and believers, whether among the Jews or among the heathen, in one body of His Church."<sup>5</sup> Here we may clearly see the vibrant faith of the earliest Christians in the full Divinity of Jesus, in the two natures of Jesus, in the Virgin birth, baptism, death, and resurrection of Jesus, and in the unity of the holy Church gathered to Jesus by His Gospel and blood.

daizers and of the gnostic docetists.

In his letter to the Magnesians, Ignatius exhorts the congregation: "If we are living now according to Judaism, we confess that we have not received grace,"<sup>7</sup> and, "it is monstrous to talk of Jesus Christ and to practice Judaism. For Christianity did not base its faith on Judaism, but Judaism on Christianity."<sup>8</sup> And to the church in Philadelphia he writes: "But if anyone interprets Judaism to you, do not listen to him; for it is better to hear Christianity from the circumcised than Judaism from the uncircumcised. But both of them, unless they speak of

the same manner His Father shall raise up in Christ Jesus us who believe in Him, without whom we have no true life. But if, as some affirm who are without God—that is, who are unbelievers—His suffering was only a semblance, (but it is they who are merely a semblance), why am I a prisoner, and why do I even long to fight with beasts?"<sup>10</sup>

St. Ignatius waxes most eloquent, however, when speaking about the unity of the Christian Church as the congregation is gathered around her pastors (bishop and presbyters) and to her Lord in the Eucharist, which

*"Suffer me to be eaten by the wild beasts, through whom I can attain to God. I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread of Christ...Let there come on me fire and cross, and struggles with wild beasts, cutting and tearing asunder, rackings of bones, mangling of limbs, crushing of my whole body, cruel tortures of the devil, may I but attain to Jesus Christ!"*

Ignatius also bears witness that the church of his day, though assaulted by heretics and their heresies, was to have no tolerance for false teaching or false teachers. He writes in general: "I beseech you, therefore, yet not I but the love of Jesus Christ, live only on Christian fare [i.e. doctrine], and abstain from strange food, which is heresy. For these men mingle Jesus Christ with themselves in specious honesty, mixing, as it were, a deadly poison with honeyed wine, which the ignorant takes gladly in his baneful pleasure, which is death."<sup>6</sup> But Ignatius also addresses very specific heresies that afflicted the early Christians, namely, the heresies of the Ju-

Jesus Christ, are to me tombstones and sepulchers of the dead..."<sup>9</sup>

Concerning the gnostics and docetists, who taught that Jesus only appeared to have real flesh (for matter, they taught, was contrary to the divine and spiritual) and therefore didn't really suffer and die on the cross, he writes: "Be deaf, therefore, when anyone speaks to you apart from Christ, who was of the family of David, and of Mary, who was truly born, both ate and drank, was truly persecuted under Pontius Pilate, was truly crucified and died in the sight of those in heaven and on earth; who also was truly raised from the dead, when His Father raised Him up, as in

unity he likens to a symphonic chorus: "It is fitting that you should live in harmony with the will of the bishop, as indeed you do. For your justly famous presbytery, worthy of God, is attuned to the bishop as the strings to a harp. Therefore by your concord and harmonious love Jesus Christ is being sung. Now do each of you join in this choir, that being harmoniously in concord you may receive the key of God in unison, and sing with one voice through Jesus Christ to God the Father..."<sup>11</sup>

Here the martyred bishop has much to teach the church of our day. Ignatius presents what many would argue is an exceedingly high view of the

office of the ministry (not to mention a fully formed tripartite office of bishop, presbytery and deacons). But that view is anchored in his understanding that the pastors are Christ's servants to teach His Church and to deliver to His Church the life-giving Communion of His body and blood. For Ignatius, then, opposition to the bishop (assuming the bishop is faithful and is no heretic) is opposition to Christ. And to reject the assembly of the Church around the bishop and the rest of the clergy is to step outside of Christ and outside of God. "Let no one be deceived, unless a man be

within the sanctuary he lacks the bread of God...So then he who does not join in the common assembly, is already haughty and has separated himself...[L]et us then be careful not to oppose the bishop, that we may be subject to God."<sup>12</sup> And again, "As many as belong to God and Jesus Christ,—these are with the bishop. And as many as repent and come to the unity of the Church,—these also shall be of God...Be careful therefore to use one Eucharist (for there is one flesh of our Lord Jesus Christ, and one cup for union with His blood, one altar, as there is one bishop with the

presbytery and the deacons my fellow servants), in order that whatever you do you may do it according to God."<sup>13</sup>

Ignatius is important to the Church today because he addresses so many theological points and gives such clear witness to the faith at such an early point in the Church's history. But behind all of Ignatius' words and teaching is the heart of a true pastor and follower of Jesus. His concern, like that of St. Paul, was always the welfare and faithfulness of the individual Christians who made up the congregations to which he wrote, and the welfare of those congregations corporately. Like all true martyrs, his desire for himself was to be united with Christ Jesus, and like all true pastors his desire for others was that they too be united with their Savior now in the Church and forever in eternity through faith. May the Lord grant that we all, whether torn by wild beasts or not, "attain to Jesus Christ."



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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, "Epistle to the Romans," in Kirsopp Lake, *The Apostolic Fathers*, Vol. 1 (London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1912). p.233.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 13:1-3

<sup>3</sup> O'Connor, John Bonaventure. "St. Ignatius of Antioch." *The Catholic Encyclopedia*. Vol. 7. John Bonaventure O'Connor, "Ignatius of Antioch," *Catholic Encyclopedia* (Catholic Online, 1910), <https://www.catholic.org/encyclopedia/view.php?id=6035>.

<sup>4</sup> Eusebius and Paul L. Maier, *Eusebius—the Church History: A New Translation with Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 1999). p.123.

<sup>5</sup> Ignatius, "Letter to the Smyrnaeans," p.253.

<sup>6</sup> Ignatius, "Letter to the Trallians," p.217-219.

<sup>7</sup> Ignatius, "Letter to the Magnesians," p.205.

<sup>8</sup> Ignatius, "Letter to the Magnesians," p.207.

<sup>9</sup> Ignatius, "Letter to the Philadelphians," p.245.

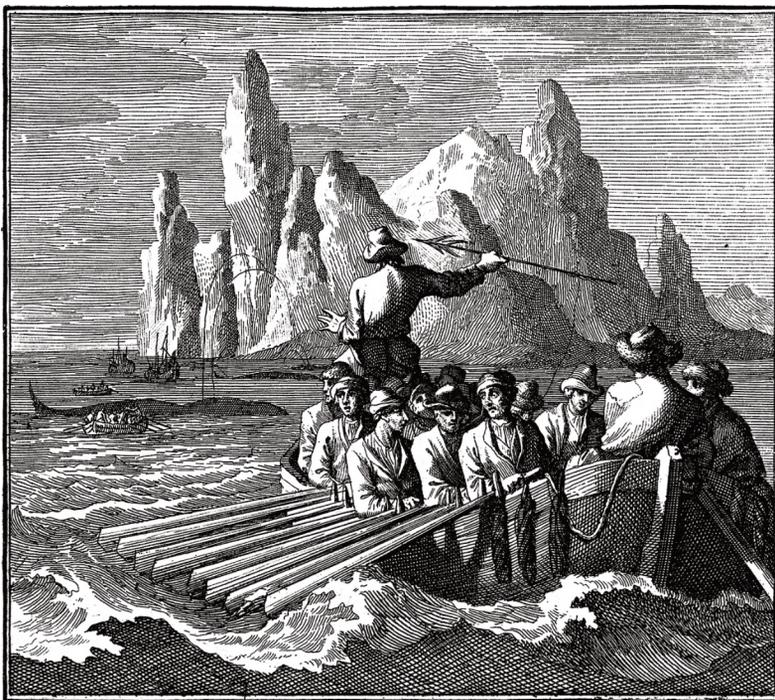
<sup>10</sup> Ignatius, "Letter to the Trallians," p.221.

<sup>11</sup> Ignatius, "Letter to the Ephesians," p.177.

<sup>12</sup> Ignatius, "Letter to the Ephesians," p.179.

<sup>13</sup> Ignatius, "Letter to the Philadelphians," p.241-243.





## Review: *Moby Dick*



erman Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) is an American novel about a hunt for a deadly whale. Like other epics, the story is built around real historical events and circumstances. New Englanders really did chase whales in wooden boats with spears, and Melville had experience with this. On at least one famous occasion, which inspired the climax of the tale, a whale really did repeatedly attack and sink a whaling vessel, to great loss of life.

The narrative is simple. After setting out on a whaling expedition, it is revealed to the crew of the *Pequod* that their quest has a more personal purpose. Captain Ahab is hunting the white whale that took off his leg from the knee. After hunting and harvesting other whales, after many adventures at sea, after warnings, signs, and portents, Ahab finally grapples with his nemesis. Ahab provoked the white whale to wrath more than any of the other whalers before him (1 Kings 16:33). In the end, the whale destroys the sailors, the ship, captain Ahab, and only the narrator—"Call me Ishmael"—is left to tell the tale.

Ishmael weaves this tale from a dizzying variety of sources, including sermons and soliloquies, dreams and documentary, mythological cetology, scientific cetology, popular cetology, technical treatise and theatrical declamation, comedy and tragedy. Matching Ishmael's malleable and exploratory perspective is Melville's flexible, inventive use of the English language, which may exasperate the linguistic orthodoxist. Like Shakespeare, Melville remixes our

mother-tongue, as though his (for example) "leviathanic" thoughts must burst the shores of standard usage.

Ishmael and Ahab are the twin sources of movement in the story. Ahab's obsession drives the story forward. Ishmael's digression and documentation amplify it. Ahab's soul is single-minded action; Ishmael's is multifaceted contemplation. Both pursue the whale.

But what, exactly, is a whale?

For Ahab, the whale is the embodiment of all that is unconquered by man, and whose existence cannot be justified or permitted:

"All that most maddens and torments; all that stirs up the lees of things; all truth with malice in it; all that cracks the sinews and cakes the brain; all the subtle demonisms of life and thought; all evil, to crazy Ahab, were visibly personified, and made practically assailable in *Moby Dick*. He piled upon the whale's white hump the sum of all the general rage and hate felt by his whole race from Adam down; and then, as if his chest had been a mortar, he burst his hot heart's shell upon it" (*Moby Dick*, ch. 41).

For Ishmael, the novel is the account of the failure to answer this question, what is the whale?

As a narrator, Ishmael offers knowledge from an unlikely combination of sources: etymological research, an encyclopedic collection of cetological citations, classical education, first-hand experience ("a whale ship was my Yale College and my Harvard"), and the technical know-how of the

whaling industry. As Ahab chases his fate, we go with Ishmael, armed with this context, chasing down the meaning of it all. But some things, the secrets of the whale's nature and dwelling, are too deep for man, fathoms beneath the sea. From no matter how many angles, the better part of the monster remains submerged from sight. And even when men capture, kill, and cut apart—analyze—things, even then the essence of the mystery eludes us beyond the sum of its dissected and processed parts. For all Ishmael's research, powers of perception, poetry, and philosophy, the whale is no more captured in the pages of *Moby Dick* than he is conquered by captain Ahab.

This helps explain why the novel was reborn, and now lives, as perhaps the definitive American novel. The image of the self-reliant, single-minded, goal-oriented American defiantly destroyed in the quest to slay a mythical beast far from home on the great frontier of the open ocean has become a cultural icon—as inspiration and warning. The novel retells the stories of St. George and the Dragon and Beowulf, and is retold in a film like *Jaws*. It views this story through an epic glass, insisting that this particular series of

maritime events has to do with things universal, things which pertain to the heart and destiny of all humanity. It retains both the moral strength and ambiguity of the Greek tragedians, portraying hubris in its tempting glory and its certain ruin. It explores all this from as many angles as there are disciplines of the academy: empirical science, theology, comparative cultural anthropology and literature, history, poetry and art, psychology, ethics and philosophy, critical analysis of economic and social issues, and detailed reporting about the crafts and trades which run the sailing and whaling enterprise. In short, the story is as simple, as intricate, and as deep as the sea itself.

For all this, though, the narrator is left, at the end, alone and afloat in the midst of this sea. With the messengers who brought Job the news of his catastrophes, he is reduced to the mere witness and reporter of an archetypal disaster whose source and meaning are beyond his words. "And I only am escaped alone to tell thee." ❧

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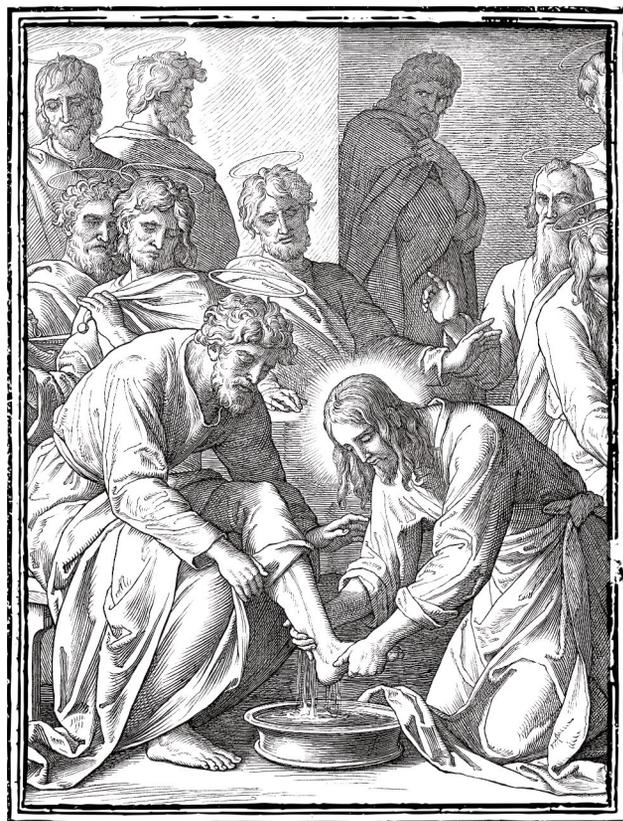
# Humility

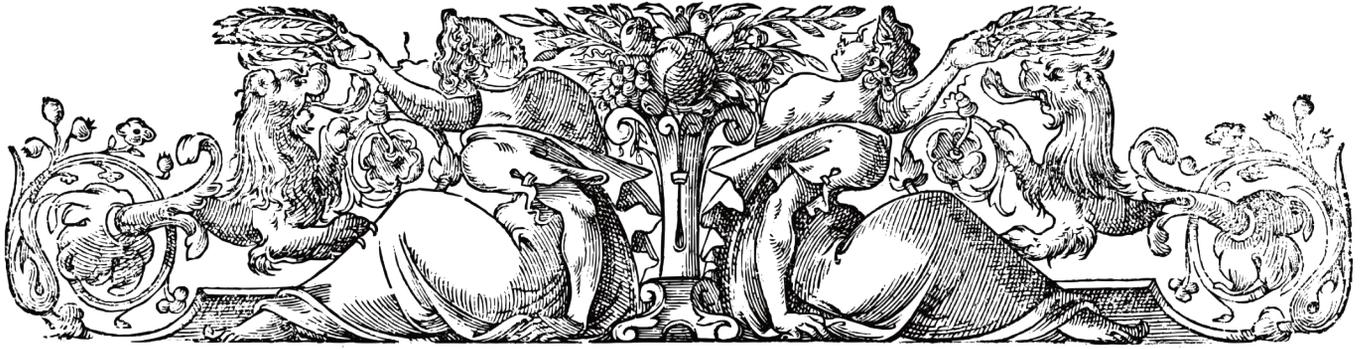
Andrew Richard

O God, make me to know that I am dust,  
For oft a gust  
Of praise from men Thou'st sent to me  
To stir me up in praise of Thee,  
And yet upon this wind I'd put my trust.

On flatt'ring breath I'd fly to lofty height—  
The realms of light.  
Delusion! Why can't I recall:  
The chaff will fly, the wheat will fall.  
So let me be the grain and fall aright.

Lord, bring me back to ground and grant to me  
Humility.  
And there I'll find the Seed who died,  
True Height in lowness glorified,  
By whose Ascension I'll ascend to Thee.





## The Self-Evident Proposition, Part 3

From Part 1 – “We cannot continue to send our children to Caesar for their education and be surprised when they come home as Romans.” When God, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth, says, “Give to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mark 12:17), He is telling us something crucial about the education of our children and grandchildren—about the education of everyone’s children and grandchildren. He is, in so many words, speaking to us about the indispensability of Lutheran education in America in the twenty-first century. In this three-part essay I first explain how and why Lutheran education has a mission-critical role regarding the Self-Evident Proposition of the Declaration of Independence, the essence of our one nation under God with liberty and justice for all expressed and ratified in a single statement of fact. Secondly, I elaborate the reason why the Self-Evident Proposition is today not self-evident to most Americans, which is due to an educational and moral failure. Thirdly, I conclude with a consideration of how the Creator cited as the norm of the Self-Evident Proposition becomes a person’s way of life, but only in terms of what Kierkegaard calls repetition.



Before sketching out what I mean by a lifelong repetition of the sacred texts, I have another prerequisite proposition. This second prerequisite proposition is from our Lutheran Confessions: “God cannot be treated with, God cannot be apprehended, *nisi per verbum*, except through the Word.”<sup>1</sup> As the apostle Paul prays in the text of his epistle to the Ephesians,

This, then, is what I pray, kneeling before the Father, from whom every fatherhood, in heaven or on earth, takes its name. In the abundance of his glory may he, through his Spirit, enable you to grow firm in power with regard to your inner self, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith, and then, planted in love and built on love, with all God’s holy people you will have the strength to grasp the breadth and the length, the height and the depth; so that, knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond knowledge, you may be filled with the utter fullness of God. Glory be to him whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can

ask or imagine; glory be to him from generation to generation in the Church and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen.<sup>2</sup>

You will notice that the apostle is praying and writing about *fatherhood*, a contentious, real-life matter in public education and media agendas today. There is also a clear indication in his text of what I will identify as our educational responsibility to communicate from one generation to the next our shared moral judgments and certain eternal truths. This Christian worldview is clearly opposed to the progressive anti-worldview of Dewey, Roosevelt, Wilson and their Progressive proselytizers today.

A close study of verse 18, “knowing the love of Christ, which is beyond knowledge,” shows that Paul is actually deploying terminology from Greek philosophy to show that knowledge of Christ and God is beyond pagan philosophy and science, an awareness of God that He brings to us only in His Word, the Bible (see Colossians 2:8-9). This Scripturally-formed life is the only form of life in which the self-evident reality of the Self-Evident Proposition *and the fullness of the Life* (see John 1 and 14:6), the *Liberty* (see John 8:36), the *Pursuit of Happiness* (see Revelation 7)—the un-

alienable human rights explicitly recognized in the Declaration as coming from God the Creator—come to fruition.

In the middle of this apostolic prayer, then, there is a real-life abundance of personal relationships and enduring realities, a “life to the full” (John 10:10), because God’s loving work in the Person of Christ the incarnate Word is the center of gravity. This leads us from my second prerequisite proposition in our Apology to Christ Himself.

Since the Latin term *verbum* is itself a translation of the New Testament Greek term *logos*, we can agree that God cannot be treated with except in the Person of His only-begotten Son, the Logos “who became flesh and tabernacled among us,” of whose divine glory Saint John and the other apostles were eyewitnesses (John 1:14). We can also agree that *verbum* and *logos* identify the entirety of the Hebrew and Greek Scriptures, which are all about Jesus the Messiah (John 5:39 and Hebrews 1:1-3). In the texts of John 1 and Hebrews 1 we learn that Christ the Son of God is God and the exact and final presentation of God to us. In a word, in order to apprehend or even to treat with the Creator of the Declaration, we are dependent upon what He shows and tells us of Himself in the works and words of Jesus of Nazareth. There is no other way (see John 14:6). In a lesser but undeniable sense, because of the first two senses of *logos* (Greek) or *verbum* (Latin), this prerequisite proposition also reminds us of the fellowship of language itself as a given, a gift of God. God the Creator is dialogical. Therefore, we human creatures made in His image are dialogical. We are meant for ongoing, continuing, repetitive dialogues with our God.

It follows from the directly inspired

and vetted words of His Scriptures, which are all about Christ the Word, apart from whom God cannot be treated with or apprehended, that we actually cannot recognize the fullest meaning of human life apart from Christ and His words to the human race, which is the entire biblical text. Dietrich Bonhoeffer puts it this way:

My life is outside myself, beyond my disposal...‘I am the Life’—this is the word, the revelation, the proclamation of Jesus Christ. The statement that our life is outside ourselves and in Jesus Christ is in no way the result of our own self-understanding. Instead, it is a claim that encounters us from outside, which we either believe or contradict.”<sup>3</sup>

Here we find ourselves far beyond the simple self-evidence of the proposition that all men are endowed by their creator with unalienable rights, such as the right to life, to liberty, and to the pursuit of happiness (the genius of the American way of life). Having come to this point, we discover the actual, lived-out kind of life memorialized in the Self-Evident Proposition.

Educationally speaking, this life to the fullest is what the nineteenth-century Lutheran writer Søren Kierkegaard calls *Gjentagelsen* in his Danish language, “repetition” in most English translations and commentaries. According to Julia Watkin, it can also be rendered as *continuity*.<sup>4</sup> This element of the individual life well lived, an educational philosophy in action, is worked out especially in Kierkegaard’s books *Fear and Trembling*, *Repetition*, and *Either/Or*. In Kierkegaard’s well-known *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, repetition is presented as ethical altruism.

While it is not possible to experi-

ence repetition briefly and in theory, since it is a phenomenon akin to repenting, a hallmark of the believer’s entire life that is ongoing (see the first of Luther’s Ninety-Five Theses), perhaps the easiest introduction to it is Kierkegaard’s philosophical sermon on Job 1:21 in his *Edifying Discourses in Various Spirits*.<sup>5</sup> After the sudden death of his seven sons and three daughters Job says, “Naked I came from my mother’s womb, naked I shall return again. Yahweh gave, Yahweh has taken back. Blessed be the name of Yahweh!”

To modern ears Job’s text sounds like an obsolete cliché, perhaps a wise proverb at best. Worse, these words may be the only fragment of dialogue from the entire book of Job that most twenty-first people even recognize. But these fourteen Hebrew words are emblematic of an entire way of life for Job. This confession is, in effect, the creed, the philosophy of life, the theology of Job in the midst of his life of suffering.

In the face of modernity’s vast and demoralizing force [of vast cultural processes and prevalent individual self-deception], repetition stands for the task each individual has of appropriating for his or her own life the faith of old Father Abraham, the wisdom of Job, and the grace of Jesus Christ, each won *in extremis*. “Going beyond” these simple gifts to something more sophisticated (like Hegel’s wanting to go beyond the primitive images of story to universal concepts systematically displayed in Theory [such as Marx’s dialectical materialism and its violent clash of classes of people, GPS]) is the grand illusion of Kierkegaard’s and our age. In place of our addiction to nov-

elty, our compulsion for progress [as in Wilson's political progressivism, GPS], our infatuation with theory, Kierkegaard thought it enough that we should strive for a repetition.<sup>6</sup>

Taking *repetition* in the sense of *continuity*, I will say that his repetition of his thoughts is evidence of Job's integrity (*tamim*, Hebrew) with the LORD His Redeemer. In fact, I teach that it is best to think of repetition as *a person's integrity with God lived out in*

sation with God in Christ, of which the Self-Evident Proposition is one moment, one glorious element, is the distinctive purpose of Lutheran education. You can say that classical education, the kind of education where the repetition of classical texts is underway, is one dimension of the unique kind of education that we strive to provide in our Lutheran day schools, Lutheran home schools, Lutheran high schools, and Lutheran universities and seminaries. The other dimension, the repetition and dia-

it will not be surprising, I think, if our LCC comes into existence with a ready-made Latin motto, classical but taught anew by our professors, our undergraduates, and our dedicated supporters, to our churches and to our nation: *REPETITIO MATER STUDIORUM*.

The self-evident shall be made self-evident to everyone. The continuity of life to the full in Christ alone shall be repeated in the lives of your children and your children's children, Lord willing!

## In due time it will not be surprising, I think, if our LCC comes into existence with a ready-made Latin motto, classical but taught anew by our professors, our undergraduates, and our dedicated supporters, to our churches and to our nation: *REPETITIO MATER STUDIORUM*.

*the midst of suffering*. Furthermore, I teach that this takes place especially in praying the psalms of biblical lament.<sup>7</sup> But please note well: neither this one verse from Job himself, nor my sentences of explanation, nor Kierkegaard's books about repetition—none of these constitute the full life or a fully educated life that we have been given in Christ.

What does make up this life to the full is the ongoing dialogue with Christ's own words in our lives, His Word and our words—as men endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights. The rights are not the end game, nor is the acknowledgment of the Self-Evident Proposition. The endgame, the never-ending endgame according to the Word of our Creator, is living today and everlastingly in dialogue with Christ the Word and the Life (John 1 and 14).

Taking *repetition* as a way of teaching and learning, we can look at it this way. This endgame of endless conver-

logue with biblical texts in the lives of everyone we can reach, is of course the work of Christ's Church overall, making Lutheran education part and parcel of our divine commission to make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in His name and teaching them by repetition, by continuity, by integrity, by confession (we Lutherans know many apt translations for Kierkegaard's *Gjentagelsen*) to obey everything He has commanded us.

After all, we have had over five hundred years of experience in making self-evident truths evident to church members and students, young and old, via the Holy Scriptures. We have also had over half of a millennium's experience teaching repetition, continuity, and integrity—teaching *confessionally*, in a word. Both of these dimensions will make Luther Classical College the right school at the right time for commending our sons and daughters to Christ—rather than entrusting them to Caesar. In due time



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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Apology to the Augsburg Confession*, Article 4. On Justification

<sup>2</sup> Ephesians 3:14-21, Jerusalem Bible

<sup>3</sup> Bonhoeffer, *Ethics*, Part One, 213

<sup>4</sup> Julia Watkin, *Historical Dictionary of Kierkegaard's Philosophy* (Lanham, Maryland: The Scarecrow Press, 2001). See especially her entries "Repetition" and "Fear and Trembling and Repetition."

<sup>5</sup> For a one-chapter introduction to repetition in Kierkegaard, see Timothy Houston Polk, *The Biblical Kierkegaard: Reading by the Rule of Faith* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), Chapter 5 "The Praise of Job: Edifying Discourse against Theodicy," 153-200. Hereafter referred to as *The Biblical Kierkegaard*.

<sup>6</sup> *The Biblical Kierkegaard*, 171-172.

<sup>7</sup> See Gregory Schulz, "Our Lamentable Lacuna: How Western Churches have Undermined the Plausibility of Christian Faith" (*LOGIA: A Journal of Lutheran Theology*, Volume 28, Number 1, Epiphany 2019), 7-14.





# Things Can Get Lost in Translation

Christ and the Adulteress by *Lucas Cranach the Elder* (c. 1512)  
*Painting on wood, 75 by 122 cm, Dommuseum Fulda*



Things can get lost in translation, and sometimes language has little to do with it. Such is the case with “Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery,” a piece—or rather a series of pieces—created by the Cranach enterprise. The version housed in the Dommuseum in Fulda, Germany, painted by Lucas Cranach the Elder, circa 1520, is worth considering, but it must be viewed in contrast to later versions copied either by the same artist, his sons, or any of their workshops.

The fact that the patriarch of the artistic family did not paint everything attributed to the name “Cranach” becomes immediately problematic and is important in considering the “Fulda version.”

The elder Cranach was a shrewd businessman in his day, and demand for his work became such that a workshop of skilled artists was necessary to produce copies. The general practice was that less-skilled artists would work on less important parts of the painting, while more crucial details, such as heads and hands, would be overseen by the master, if not personally painted by his hand. Copies continued to be produced by his sons, their workshops, and even followers of the style. Hence, there are several copies of this particular image, each bearing a different look from different hands.

The Fulda version is, however, decidedly different from nearly every subsequent copy, and it may be that the prevailing culture and the Cranach business model affected that image. Germans were not immune to the pagan immodesty which took root in the Italian Renaissance and spread to the Northern Renaissance. What was on one hand a reassessment of the Greek and Roman ideal became, on the other hand, an easy excuse to titillate the viewer, often with nude bodies of mythical gods and goddesses; what was taboo in sacred art suddenly became acceptable in recreating scenes of pagan myths.

Eventually, however, the lines began to blur, even for the family Cranach. One could expect to see in the Cranach

portfolio a seductive painting of Venus, sure enough, and there were seemingly countless paintings of the semi-nude Lucretia, who was a Roman figure from dubious antiquity. When copies of “Christ and the Woman Taken in Adultery” became sought after, it seems the temptation to titillate through its particular sin was simply too much.

Nearly all of the late copies show a woman not only caught in the act, but shown in various stages of undress. Nothing is left to the imagination. The strings of her corset are loosened here. The top of her bodice is pulled down there. Once again, the opportunity was not ignored, even when an overarching theme was the reaction to the grievous sins of others. The viewer cannot look away from a scene that has been frozen in time.

If the viewer does not fully understand the seriousness of sin, later versions of the painting also show Christ taking the woman by the arm, as an angry parent would a naughty child. The analogy is correct, but it is severe, and the viewer can't help but wonder to which precipice the Lord is about to haul her.

In these images, Christ also confronts a rather seamy crowd. There are soldiers, Pharisees, and teachers of the Law, albeit through the lens of the Northern Renaissance. Their faces are defiant toward the woman and Christ Himself. Cranach even leans a bit toward the work of fellow artist Hieronymus Bosch in the brutally-distorted visage of one character. The notion is not lost on the viewer that Christ is here faced with two kinds of ugliness, with two kinds of sin.

What is unfortunate is that a richness of meaning was forfeited when copies were made after the Fulda version.

The crowd, at least, was not changed from the earliest versions of the painting. In the earlier painting, there is an added layer of symbolism subtly painted into the crowd. Each of the men poised to throw rocks is using his left hand. This was clearly understood in Cranach's day as the “sinister” side, and it labeled the men not simply as sinful, but overtly sinister.

The woman in the Fulda version, by contrast, is depicted



as one who is overtly sinful, but not sinister. She is not ugly. She is not disheveled or the least bit undressed, as in later versions. Her ornate dress is trussed up tightly and every clothing detail is in place. We are not allowed to be spectators of sin. Furthermore, the viewer must push through proper decorum to even imagine the effects of her sin.

Christ's hand is also in a different position, making a very different visual statement. He does not grab her forearm as in later versions, but gently holds her hand. This visually takes the meaning from harsh rebuke to loving correction.

However, the biggest difference by far between the early Fulda version and later copies is the position of Christ Je-

sus Himself. In the Fulda version, He does not face the ugliness of the crowd or look off in some vague direction. Jesus instead confronts the viewer. His direct gaze at us, taken with the painted admonition, "Let him who is without sin among you be the first to throw a stone," changes everything. We are not allowed to imagine the woman's sin or judge the menacing crowd. Instead, we are forced to confront our own sin, and the merciful face of our Savior.



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*Edward Riojas has been a professional artist for over 35 years and has pieces in church sanctuaries, institutions, and private collections in the U.S. and abroad.*



# LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE

The Board of Regents of Luther Classical College held our second annual in-person meeting June 6th-8th in Casper, WY. During our time together, we accomplished much in the realms of curriculum, accreditation, development, and building. A highlight was signing a contract with Collaborative Design, an architectural firm in Billings, MT that will design our Old Main building. Collaborative Design has much experience designing education buildings and does great work. One of the architects, Keith Myhre (pictured below), is a member of an LCMS congregation in Billings and has worked on LCMS churches in Wyoming and Montana. We look forward to working with Collaborative Design as we make our college a reality. The picture below includes nearly all the regents, the Wyoming District Business Manager, and three men from Collaborative Design. We are standing on the future site of Luther Classical College. Please consider donating to Luther Classical College to help us make it a reality: [lutherclassical.org/support](http://lutherclassical.org/support).

*Back Row:* Jeffrey Snyder (Wyoming District Business Manager), Brian Johnson (Collaborative Design), Micah Christensen, Justin Benson, John Hill, Reed Shoaff, Mark Preus, Joshua Hayes, Christopher Maronde. *Front Row:* Larry Harrington, Paul Cain, Dax Simex (Collaborative Design), Keith Myhre (Collaborative Design), Christian Preus, Hunter Andersen, Andrew Richard. *Not Pictured:* Robert Paul.

