



PLeni SUNT COELI

GLORIA TUA

Christian Culture

A MAGAZINE FOR LUTHERANS

Issue 1

Spring 2021

FEATURING

The Lie of
Religious vs. Secular

Christian Preus

Fatherhood, Patriarchy,
and Chaos

Peter Scaer

Nimrod's Artists

Hans Fiene



I. Chor. 4. 5. 6. uel. 7. uoc

2. Chor. 4. 5. 6. uel. 7. uoc

Venite, exulte,
mus Dño:

Jubilemus &
Deo salutari nro.

Advenit
qui gemit
ad DEUM
ut saluet eum
Practor. C.

Callam Deo meo
quoniam diu fuero

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. 65,000, Casper has two conservative, liturgical LCMS congregations of about three hundred members each.

Setting: The college will begin with two dormitories (c. 10,000 sq. feet each, apartment style, with a kitchen for every four beds, obviating the need for a campus cafeteria) on the south side of campus and a campus center with offices, classrooms, and study areas on the north side of campus. The Wyoming District Office is just south of Mount Hope Lutheran Church and has the beginnings of a theological library. Mount Hope Lutheran Church has a gymnasium and chapel for the college's use.

Prospective Opening: August, 2024

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.

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 upon completion of the A.A. (e.g. electrical, plumbing, architectural), the college will work with Casper Community College and local companies to learn the necessary skills and find gainful employment. The college is seeking accreditation with TRACS.

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).



Contents

- | | | | |
|----|---|----|---|
| 2 | The Lie of Religious vs. Secular
<i>Rev. Dr. Christian Preus</i> | 16 | Concerning Civil Government
Ordering Masks in Church |
| 4 | Fatherhood, Patriarchy, and Chaos
<i>Rev. Dr. Peter Scaer</i> | 18 | Commentary on the Clod and the
Pebble
<i>Rev. Travis Berg</i> |
| 6 | Nimrod's Artists
<i>Rev. Hans Fiene</i> | 20 | Review: Perpetual War for Perpetual
Peace
<i>Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz</i> |
| 8 | Atonement (Poem)
<i>Rev. Andrew Richard</i> | 22 | Review: Oedipus Rex
<i>Rev. John Henry</i> |
| 9 | Rotten Culture and the Living Word
<i>Rev. Rolf Preus</i> | 26 | The Old and the New Sermon
<i>Rev. Ryan Loeslie</i> |
| 10 | A Call for Patrons of Lutheran Schools
<i>Rev. John E. Hill</i> | 29 | Longing for Family (Poem)
<i>Rev. Mark Preus</i> |
| 12 | Rejecting the Idolatry Inherent in BLM
<i>Rev. David Ramirez</i> | 30 | Jesus Wept Twice
<i>Rev. Jonathan Lange</i> |
| 14 | Christian News in Brief
<i>Rev. Joshua Scheer</i> | 33 | Christ Blessing the Children (Art)
<i>Rev. Andrew Richard</i> |

Christian Culture: A Magazine for Lutherans is published quarterly by Luther Classical College, 2300 Hickory St., Casper, WY 82604. Send address changes to *Christian Culture*, c/o Mount Hope Lutheran Church, 2300 Hickory St., Casper, WY 82604. Copyright © 2021 by Luther Classical College. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America.

Editors: Mark Preus, Christian Preus, Andrew Richard

Letters to the Editor: editor@lutherclassical.org

Scripture quotations are from The ESV® Bible (The Holy Bible, English Standard Version®), copyright © 2001 by Crossway, a publishing ministry of Good News Publishers. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Scripture taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Digital woodcut images provided courtesy of Pitts Theology Library, Candler School of Theology, Emory University.

Fonts: Cormorant Garamond, Washington Text Regular, Julius Sans One, Lato, Cardo, Playfair Display SC, Playfair Display, Peter Schlemihl, Montserrat



The Lie of Religious vs. Secular



If you asked an ancient Roman what his religion was, he would have no idea how to answer or what you were talking about. He made no distinction between religious and secular. The meat he ate was sacrificed to his gods, the emperor he served was his lord, his hearth was adorned with the gods of his ancestors. When he planted and when he harvested, the product depended on religious ritual. There was no aspect of his life that was not

half the heart is a figment of man's imagination. The ancients were honest about this. We have not been. We've acted like we can have two lives, one religious and one secular. But it won't work.

An excellent example is that of the public school. Christians have sent their children to public schools as a matter of routine, as the thing a secular citizen does, as if there were no religious implications involved. Public schools claim to teach no religion, only secular subjects, by which they mean only neutral subjects. But their secular

boys and girls should seek careers instead of fatherhood and motherhood. That making money is the purpose of education. That sex outside marriage is inevitable. That homosexuality is a virtue. That man can become woman and woman man. These are all religious claims. No one can seriously deny this. And, in fact, they didn't even try to deny it until recently.

Every Christian should be familiar with the name of John Dewey. He is the father of modern education. He is the mastermind behind the structure and goal of government schools. And he

*THE SECULAR IS THE RELIGIOUS,
AND IT'S A RELIGION THAT OPPOSES JESUS.*

religious, so to ask about religion as if it were merely a set of beliefs or merely one part of his life, this was meaningless.

The modern mind has been cursed with believing in the false distinction between religious and secular. And it is a false distinction. There is no such thing as secular. Every aspect of life is shaped by religion. This is why Jesus says, "You cannot serve God and mammon." It's why Luther defines a god (and therefore a religion) as whatever you fear, love, and trust the most. And what else does Jesus mean when he says, "Take up your cross and follow me?" Or what else does St. Paul mean when he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always?" A religion that does not consume all aspects of life is not worth talking about. A god who demands

subjects are clearly not neutral. They are religious. In fact, the headmaster of our Lutheran school recently refused federal money because it required the funds to be used for purely "secular, neutral, and non-ideological" curricula. As if a Christian school could teach "secular" curricula! What, after all, does "secular" mean? It means teaching evolution, that matter has always existed, that we evolved randomly from slime, that we are highly developed organic machines. These are ridiculously religious claims! They have to do with the origins of man, with the existence of the soul, with the purpose of life! These are questions religion asks, that must be received by faith, the answers to which determine the worth and value of humanity, and yet they are called "secular!" What else is secular? That

made no bones about his goals being "religious." He called himself a "religious humanist." He stated it as his goal to replace the outdated Christian religion with a religion modern man could actually believe and carry out. He signed the first Humanist Manifesto, where his all-encompassing "religious" agenda was laid out, an agenda of socialism and the remaking of America according to atheistic and evolutionary principles. And again, he openly called his agenda and his goals religious. In fact, the Humanist Manifesto of 1933 agrees completely with us that there can be no distinction between religious and secular: "[Religion] includes labor, art, science, philosophy, love, friendship, recreation—all that is in its degree expressive of intelligently satisfying human living.

The distinction between the sacred and the secular can no longer be maintained" (Humanist Manifesto, seventh). The man who was behind the philosophy of education in our country signed this manifesto! What people today call "secular" he called "religious." And we have seen the results of this secular religion, taught now for generations in our government schools. They are devastating.

It is almost comical that this all sounds like conspiracy theory, as if this couldn't possibly have happened in our country. But it's no conspiracy theory. It was a straightforward conspiracy, and it worked. It worked because we believed the lie that we could send our children to government schools and act like they wouldn't be indoctrinated in a religion diametrically opposed to our religion. It worked because we

thought religion could be lived on Sunday and then we could go on with our "secular" life. It is time that we expose this lie openly and face the obvious consequences of the fact that there is no such thing as "secular." Everything is religious. What is taught to children in public schools is religion, no matter the subject.

So this is the real choice facing us. Will I send my child to be taught the true religion or the false? There is no neutral alternative. And the answer for us Christians, for us Lutherans, is not only to strive to send our children to Lutheran schools or educate them at home as Lutherans, but to make sure that our Lutheran schools and homes are the best, that they openly fight against the secular religion and never allow it into their curricula, and that they have our vocal support to fight the

good fight. Above all we have to rid ourselves of the idea of the "secular" as some neutral category. It doesn't exist. It's a lie. The secular is the religious, and it's a religion that opposes Jesus. Whether in schools, in TV, in social media, in any aspect of life, beware of the secular! Love Jesus instead. The religion that gives true hope, meaning, and purpose is the religion bought by Jesus' blood and spoken from His lips, the religion written down by His apostles, the religion of reconciliation with our Creator by the cross of His Son, the religion we are convinced of by His Spirit, and this is the religion that is worthy of our entire lives, our eternal life. 🙏

Rev. Dr. Christian Preus is Senior Pastor at Mount Hope Lutheran Church in Casper, WY and holds a PhD in Classics.



Fatherhood, Patriarchy, and Chaos



he streets have become dangerous as businesses are burned down and looted. Police back away and have themselves become targets. Anarchy and disorder are the order of the day. What lies, we wonder, are at the heart of all the madness? What has changed? Many of us remember 9/11, when police officers and firefighters were the heroes. And now we start fires instead of putting them out and villainize those who put their lives on the line to serve and protect us.

The devil, we know, is the father of all lies, and he certainly is working his wiles in our society today. Racism, we know, is a great evil, and yet there is something else that is going on. Look at the website of Black Lives Matter Inc., and you will see that their issues touch upon race, but in new and strange ways. Those who read *White Fragility* by Robin D'Angelo may know what's happening. It's a Marxist ideology that has nothing really to do with racism, but a new and radical "anti-racism." According to this way of thinking, every white person, simply by virtue of being a white person, is a racist. If you deny your racism, that only shows how truly racist you are. How can you avoid the sin of racism? Well, you can't. All you can do is own it, as it is systemic. What particular sins might we confess? If you ask that question, you are missing the point. Read *White Fragility*, and you will find no real evidence or analysis of the facts, but only an accusation that is assumed, and that transfers power to the accuser, to the one who claims to be aggrieved.

But make no mistake. This movement has little to do with Martin Luther King, Jr. or the Civil Rights movement of the past. It has nothing to do with Abraham Lincoln, who freed the slaves on the proposition that we have all been created equal. These past leaders drew upon natural law and worked

to restore human dignity. If you want to know what is really going on, you have to go just a bit deeper. Look at the BLM Inc. manifesto, and you will see that they have more to say about transgenderism than race. They decry the nuclear family and patriarchy.

In a sense, this movement, though new, is hardly new at all. Patriarchy has been taking it in the chin for many years. Who now can imagine a TV show the likes of "Father Knows Best"? Fatherhood has long been laughed at, its value denied. In TV show after TV show, the father was either a bumbling fool or absent altogether. Or perhaps, the father was portrayed as a bigot. This view of fatherhood has been reinforced at the colleges we have spent so much money to send our children to. Whether it's Women's Studies, sociology,

history, psychology, or just about any other discipline, patriarchy has become the enemy. Patriarchy is supposedly a great darkness, as can be seen in "A Handmaid's Tale."

Yet, look at our society and ask what is really going on. Are some grievances due to racial prejudice? Surely some, though white

supremacy is a culturally fringe and relatively powerless group. Other factors are at play, and we are judged in so many ways, whether it is our looks, our height or weight, our age or accent. But there is one factor that dwarfs all others. The leading indicator of a child's success, psychological and physical health, financial stability, and yes, spiritual well being, is the presence of a father in the home. It may be strange to think, but the average African American child with a mom and dad at home fares better than a white child who lives with both present.

All of this is to say, there are other issues at play, and they are issues more fundamental to our humanity. Marriage is a good way of unpacking this. More than ever, the children of our nation are engaging in interracial marriage, and that is



NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN: MOCKING FATHERS

"But now to pass from this to the shameless corruption of the stage. I am ashamed to tell what things are said; I am even ashamed to denounce the things that are done—the tricks of arguments, the cheatings of adulterers, the immodesties of women, the scurrile jokes, the sordid parasites, even the toga'd fathers of families themselves, sometimes stupid, sometimes obscene, but in all cases dull, in all cases immodest."

from On the Public Shows, attributed to Cyprian of Carthage, 3rd century

surely a good thing, a sign of progress. Interracial marriage is based on natural law, which is to say, we are all sons and daughters of Adam. We all belong to one human race, created by God and redeemed by Christ.

Male and female, though, are different categories altogether. We do well to say men and women are equal, but that is hardly sufficient. God created us in His image; male and female He created us. That is to say, we were made for each other. We complement each other. Together we can do what we could never do alone. Every child comes from the blessed union of one man and one woman. And every child needs a mom and dad. As nature so obviously demonstrates, mom will be present at the birth of a child. Marriage is given so that dad will be there too, not just at the birth, but through his life. While the mother embraces the child, the father joyfully tosses the giggling child into the air. While mom offers comfort, dad gives strength and courage.

Look into the streets. Black, brown, or white: it doesn't matter. We share one societal problem, and that is the lack of fathers in the home. Without a dad at home, a girl has a much more difficult time recognizing her worth, learning to wait to marry a man who is truly going to care for her. Without dads at home, boys are much less likely to harness their strength for the common good, in service of others.

BlackLivesMatter Inc. is really a tragic situation. They fight against the very things that would make life better for all of us. What we really need is reassertion of the family, and not just the nuclear family. A healthy institution of marriage creates a network of mom and dad, aunts and uncles, grandparents, and cousins. When marriage is healthy, children are raised in an environment of both belonging and expectations. No government service or community center

can make up for a missing dad, or grandfathers who are out of the picture or unknown. Look at the restlessness in the streets, and you will see a people untethered by natural bonds.

But we must also note here the spiritual component. Satan is at work. He hates the Christchild and so promotes abortion. He doesn't like to think about Christ's love for the Church and doesn't want us to think about it either, so he breaks up and distorts marriage among us. And, of course, he hates our Heavenly Father, so he does everything he can to make fun of fathers, to make us think that they are dispensable, even somehow sinister.

Feel sorry for those who riot, for they know not what they do. They are living out a dystopian world created for them by an elite culture that cares nothing for them. As Christians, we know a better way. It starts with the good God of our creation and ends with Christ who is our Alpha and Omega, the Bridegroom who comes to reclaim the rainbow as His own. For now, we pray and work. So many will be saved by a faithful witness. So, as we fight, we also rebuild. As we stand up to the oppressors, we offer shelter to those who have been deceived, confused, and left behind.

Bringing down the patriarchy will only end in a much harsher rule by those who do not care for us. What we need now are men with chests, men whose fatherhood is a picture of providence and whose fighting does not aim at destruction, but is a defense of those who are vulnerable. The Secular Left has gone after patriarchy as if for the jugular. It's high time we recognize it and get into the game. 🐉

Rev. Dr. Peter Scaer is Chairman and Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, IN.



Nimrod's Artists



What exactly were the people who built the Tower of Babel trying to accomplish? A rather compelling theory goes something like this:

Nimrod, called “a mighty hunter before the LORD,” is not a heroic figure blessed by God. Nimrod’s name means “rebel,” and he’s “mighty” in the sense that he’s a powerful man who lives in defiance of Yahweh. The grandson of Noah’s cursed son Ham, Nimrod hates the God of Noah, the God who drowned the wicked of the world for turning away from Him. On account of this hatred, Nimrod becomes king of those who have migrated east and declares that they are going to build a tower so great and tall that this God of Noah can never drown mankind again. Through their united efforts, they will accomplish what those rebels before the flood could not. They will build a fortress enabling them to escape the wrath of the God they refuse to serve.

I find this theory rather convincing—not because it is explicitly taught in the text of Genesis 11 (it’s not), but because this is the way that sinners frequently respond to the threat of God’s judgment. When sinners won’t repent, they recruit, convincing themselves that, by working together, they can continue successfully to hide from divine punishment while holding onto their sins.

A great example of this foolish belief is found in how people view art. What is the purpose of painting? What is an artist seeking to accomplish when he molds a piece of clay?

Throughout most of Christendom’s history, we had a common answer to that question: the purpose of art is to glorify God. When we use art to depict the majesty of creation, we glorify the One who created it. When we use art to lament the tragedies of this life, we glorify God by confessing that these sorrows and hardships are alien elements in this world, that they are not a part of the perfect creation He

gave to us in Eden. Whether it’s the Sistine Chapel or the works of J.S. Bach, whether the authors intended to glorify God or not, this is what makes art *art*.

But in more recent years, as artistic credibility has been gobbled up by secularists, a new mindset has emerged—a mindset that is very much the polar opposite of the Christian view. Art doesn’t exist to glorify God. Art exists to mock Him. Art exists to defy God, to reject His word and commandments. Art exists to continue Nimrod’s legacy. It exists to unite men together in their hatred of God. It exists to build a tower where all who cling to their sins imagine they can escape the judgment of God.

During the First World War, Marcel Duchamp famously debuted a piece known as “Fountain,” which was nothing but a porcelain urinal. Less than 20 years later, Henry Miller wrote “Tropic of Cancer,” a novel that was initially banned in the United States for its obscenity. In the years following the Second World War, Brutalism, an architectural style famous for its soulless, monochrome slabs of concrete, began to infect the London Skyline.

Following the sexual revolution, Andres Serrano attempted to convince us that placing a crucifix in a jar of his own urine was a bold, visionary statement. World-renowned writer Terrance McNally conjured up *Corpus Christi*, a play depicting Jesus and the Apostles as homosexuals.

When you look at these artistic pieces and movements in the context of their creators’ lives and culture, it’s easy to see what was happening. Nimrod’s artists had gathered together, confident that they could use their art to build a tower where God could not possibly hurt them anymore.

This God of their parents who had twice flooded the world with war and bloodshed on an unimaginable scale—they would not be subject to Him. They would not be judged by Him. They would not be intimidated by Him. This God

who had the audacity to withhold from them the beauty and the majesty He created, they would mock Him by depicting filth and hideousness and then praise each other for their boldness. They would trade arches and colors for lifeless, brown blocks of brick and commend each other for their authenticity. This God spent six days painting the great tapestry of creation; they would spend thirteen seconds haphazardly slapping paint on a canvas and then bathe in the adulation of their peers who called them “brave” and “daring.”

This God of the Bible who had dared call them to lives of chastity—they would not submit to His authority. They would not hear His call to repentance. They would mock the images of His crucifixion, blaspheme His name by portraying Him as a child of Sodom rather than a Son of God, and give each other awards for their creation. They would film themselves worshipping the unholy desires of their flesh and insist that it was art because it dared to defy the sensibilities of those square Christians and their equally square God, all the while convincing themselves that the applause of their fellow bricklayers somehow meant that they had successfully built that tower into the heavens, eternally insulating themselves from the judgment of God.

When you consider the pop art of recent years—oversexualized music, drab and pornographic television shows, supposedly inspiring films about people who liberated themselves through sexual deviancy—it’s easy to see how the Nimrodian school of art has become the dominant one in our culture. And, as Christians, it’s easy for us to get bullied out of debates with those who are convinced that the highest thing art can do is shock the sensibilities of

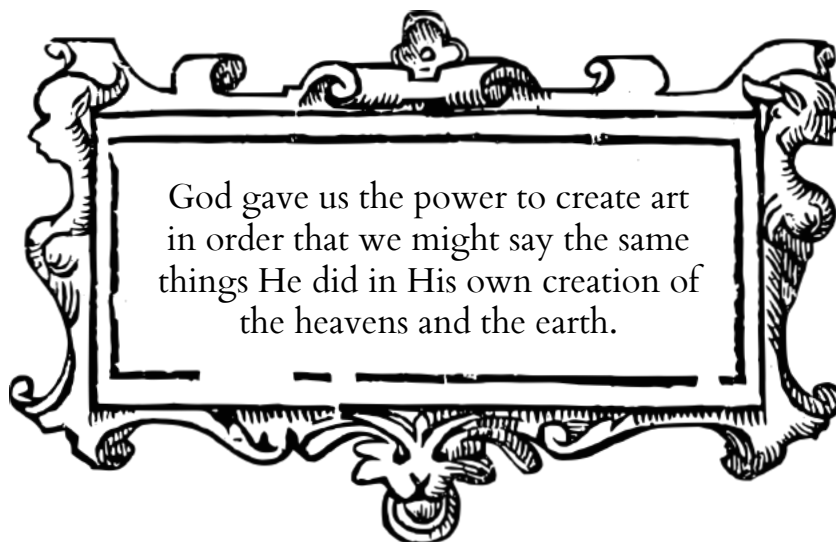
your Bible-loving grandmother.

But we shouldn’t let ourselves get bullied out of maintaining a godly understanding of art. We know the truth.

“The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims His handiwork.” So says Psalm 19:1. And the goal of art is to point to the glory of God that is seen in creation, even as the goal of sacred art is to proclaim the glory of God that was manifested upon the cross. And because this is what art is supposed to accomplish, then those who accomplish it are greater artists than those who don’t. Rembrandt was a better artist than Jackson Pollock because Rembrandt painted Christ with honesty and awe, while Pollock with ego and sloth painted nothing. Bach is greater than John Cage, because Bach paired music with the Word of God in an attempt to magnify the One who created us to live with Him forever, and John Cage mocked his Creator by spending four minutes and thirty-three seconds refusing to create anything and then calling it his creation.

You don’t need a Masters in Fine Arts to know what the purpose of art is. All you need is a pair of eyeballs and a Catechism. God created our bodies and souls, our reason and all our senses. He gave us the intelligence to mold clay, to write songs and tell stories. God gave us the power to create art in order that we might say the same things He did in His own creation of the heavens and the earth: that He is great, glorious, and, as He revealed so clearly on the cross, that He is merciful. ❧

Rev. Hans Fiene is Pastor of Prince of Peace Lutheran Church in Crestwood, MO and the creator of Lutheran Satire.





Atonement

*A sonnet for the Eleventh Sunday after Trinity
by Rev. Andrew Richard*

'Twas in the year when Judah's archon died
That I beheld the Lord upon the tree,
Exalted, lifted up, and crucified,
While seraphim were singing rev'rently
The Sanctus of the Holy Trinity,
Which chanting made the very thresholds quake;
And I, with unclean lips, cried, "Woe to me!"
As Jesus bled and did atonement make.
With tongs a seraph winged his flight to take
The flesh of Him who died all-gloriously,
And touched it to my eager lips, and spake,
"Take, eat; the body of the Lord, for thee."
"Amen! Amen!" with clean lips I replied,
And went down from the temple justified.



The poem is something of a Spenserian sonnet (named after Edmund Spenser, 1552-1599), which would typically follow the rhyme scheme ABAB BCBC CDCD EE. This poem is a variation on that and follows the scheme ABAB BCBC CBCB AA. The *octave* (first eight lines) builds up to the atonement that Jesus made on the cross, then the rhyme scheme works its way backward so that the justification of man in the final line is connected by rhyme with the death of Christ in the first line. At the same time, the *octave* can be seen as objective justification and the *sestet* (final six lines) as subjective justification. In other words, the *octave* shows

that Christ has atoned for all people objectively in dying for them. Since the benefits of this atonement are received individually, or subjectively, by faith, the *sestet* portrays a man receiving the fruits of Christ's atonement as he receives the Lord's Supper. The language of the poem was inspired by Isaiah 6:1-7 and Luke 18:9-14 (the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector). ❧

Rev. Andrew Richard is Assistant Pastor, Headmaster, and Upper Level Teacher at Mount Hope Lutheran Church and School in Casper, WY.

The Rotten Culture and the Living Word



God promised Abram that he would bless those who blessed him and curse those who cursed him. God has blessed America because America has blessed Abraham. America has blessed Abraham by protecting the Church. Our right to preach the gospel purely and to administer the sacraments according to Christ's institution is protected by the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States. God gave us this right. The first amendment also protects rights that God did not give. God does not give heretics the right to promote their soul-destroying teachings. That America has defended the rights of heretics helps explain why this country has been fertile soil for the growth of sectarianism, heresy, and such looney-tune religions as Christian Science and Mormonism. Still, up until recently, the United States has defended the rights of those who believe, teach, and confess the true Christian religion. America has defended us in the performance of our duty to preach the whole counsel of God and to contend for the faith once delivered to the saints.

Until recently. Things have begun to change. There used to be a general understanding among Americans of a natural law that undergirded the political rights of the people. The natural knowledge of the law entails the natural knowledge of God. The natural knowledge of God and his law are not sufficient for a true knowledge of the true God. Due to the spiritual blindness in which all of us are born, the natural knowledge is twisted into service to idolatry. The natural knowledge of God and the law do, however, provide a foundation for civil law. As long as there remained in America a cultural consensus on the basics of what is morally right and wrong, the government in the United States would continue to protect the rights of Christians to confess their religion. As we have been losing this cultural consensus, we have also been losing our legal right to the free exercise of our religion, despite the guarantee of the first amendment of the Constitution of the United States.

As American culture has sunk deeper and deeper into the cesspool of pagan vice, the honor that American law once paid to Abraham's religion has sunk with it. The influence of Christendom on America has been waning for some time.

We saw it coming. We experienced it. We saw the wind being sown. We now must face the whirlwind. The Christian doctrine of creation was replaced by the evolutionary myth that human beings are descendants of the animals. This myth became dogma in the academy, the arts, popular culture, public education, the mainline Protestant denominations, and the Roman Catholic Church. The denial of the creation is a denial of the Creator whom we Christians know to be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To call God "Our Father" is no longer a confession of who God is. It is regarded as a human effort to humanize God. "Our Mother" would do just as well. What once was grounded in creation is now the result of evolution. This has caused incalculable harm to the dignity of man. Human life is no longer sacred. Whether in the womb or in old age, we do not derive our value from our Creator but from people who may or may not want us around.

Disciples of the evolutionary dogma deny that the God who has created us in His own image has provided us with any evidence of His work. They can no longer discern what creation teaches us about the Creator or about creation. When divine agency and design are eliminated from consideration, we are left to define ourselves as we see fit. The result is that men do not know what a man is. Women do not know what a woman is. They do not know what marriage is or why chastity is a good thing for men, women, and children. Everything we know from God's creation about the differences between men and women is up for grabs. Contrary to nature, women become soldiers to fight the nation's wars. They preach publicly from pulpits all over America. Men and women publicly identify themselves as homosexuals, and the government of our country celebrates such pride in perversion. In 2015 the Supreme Court of the United States usurped the legislative authority of the states, legislating same sex "marriage" in defiance of the institution God established in creation. In March of the following year, President Barack Obama celebrated this defiance by declaring LGBT Pride Month. The new civil religion officially endorses same sex "marriage" while condemning Christians for confessing what natural law and revealed biblical law teach about men, women, and marriage.

...continued on page 24

A Call for Patrons of Lutheran Schools



I have urgent advice for our Lutheran newlyweds and young parents: Raise your children in such a way that your grandchildren (and great-grandchildren!) may someday join you in the fellowship of your Lutheran church to receive the Lord's Supper. I am a grandfather. There is nothing more important to me.

There is a generational chain-reaction that must be intact for this goal to succeed. Work it back from the end to the beginning: If your grandchildren are to be faithful Lutherans, they must be raised by deeply committed Lutheran parents. If your grandchildren are to have faithful parents, you must pass deep Lutheran convictions to your sons and daughters, and they must marry Lutherans with the same commitments of faith and life. This brings us to the payoff advice for Lutheran parents: You must bring up your children with a faithful and well-informed confession of faith, with piety and virtue in heart and life, with wisdom and understanding of God and man, and with the skills and aptitude of body and mind to embrace and fulfill their vocations in home and church and community. And to all of these things God must give the blessings of His grace.

We have described a Lutheran

school or homeschool! And here is God's mandate: "And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children. . ." God gives this command for this purpose: ". . . that you may fear the LORD your God, you and your son and your son's son, by keeping all His statutes and His commandments, which I command you, all the days of your life" (Deuteronomy 6:7, 2). And where this generational chain of teaching and believing God's Word is broken, there follow unbelief, sin, and broken lives. We have seen and experienced it too often in our own children and grandchildren. Here is a matter of utmost urgency.

God will always add believers to His Church. But His first source of new Christians is the marriage and household of Christians, to whom He has given the sacred duty to hand on the treasure and inheritance of God's Word to the next generation. This next generation of Christians is the great care and duty of every Christian. It applies to young man and maiden, to husband and wife, father and mother, grandfather and grandmother, unmarried adults and elderly, widows and widowers, to Christians of every station and walk of life. What must we do to keep the generational chain complete? And if it is broken, what can be done to give a later generation a fresh start in the Christian faith? As our

present world unravels, we must apply all we have to the answer to these questions.

The resources of our labor and money must be put in three places: the household, the church, and that unique partnership of household and church—the Lutheran school. The head of the household must read and teach God's Word, lead in prayer and in Christian piety, discipline himself and his household in Christian virtue, and instruct his children, that they may take their place in their own household, church, and community and assume the duties of their callings in life. Nothing should distract us from this priority. For example, Christian grandparents must support and encourage their children's households in the use of God's Word, not in the exercise of materialistic comfort, entertainment, and financial prosperity. Remember the parable of the Sower and the Seed! (Luke 8:4–15)

For her part, the Church must carry out the ministry given to her with all zeal and godliness. Her pastors are to teach God's pure Word faithfully and constantly, to administer the sacraments according to Christ's command, and to carry out the duties of their office. Both pastors and people are to confess the truth, pray unceasingly, give of themselves generously, love and serve each other, forgive one another, and do good to all, especially those of

the household of faith. The people must support their pastors and congregations with their gifts and service and prayers. All must reorder their lives toward these most important things.

And the Lutheran school—elementary, high school, college, seminary—must teach God's pure Word, fulfilling God's command to both household and church. The Lutheran school is to be a nursery of Christian virtue, a garden for the cultivation of faith and love and all good works, a gymnasium for the exercise of piety and discipline, a homestead for inheriting and passing on the wisdom and knowledge received by past generations under God's Word.

Each of these three—household, church, and Lutheran school—must be supported with commitment and finances. The household is supported by the labors of the household and other members of the extended family, as

God's Word directs (e.g. 1 Timothy 5:8). The church and her ministry is supported by the generous giving of her members, as God's Word also commands (e.g. 1 Timothy 5:17–18). The Lutheran school must be supported and funded by both, for it is both the goal and the duty of all Christians to do their part to enable the Christian education of the next generation.

This is why we ask you to be a patron of a faithful Lutheran school. What is a patron? A patron is a defender and protector of the next Lutheran generation. A patron is an advocate for the Lutheran school. A patron strives to be a pattern of Christian faith and good works for the school community. A patron prays for the school and encourages its leadership, teachers, and parents. A patron gives money generously and regularly to the school to support its financial needs. It is this vision for the future of confessional Lutheranism that moves us to serve as

Lutheran school patrons.

And what kind of school should you support? Look for and demand an education that enables, informs, and inspires these goals: Lutheran doctrine and practice in our churches. Lutheran worship and hymns in household, church, and school. Marriage and children as the pinnacle of Christian vocation. Vigorously Christian households rooted in God's Word. The wisdom and virtues of the classical education tradition grounded firmly in Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. And look for faithful pastors and teachers with sound governance and discipline.

It is the great importance of the generational chain of Christians that moves us to this patronage. "For one real Christian is better and can do more good than all the men on earth" (Martin Luther, 1524, *AE* 45:350). Passing the Christian faith and life to the next generation is of highest importance to us. It informs our priorities, our labors, our sacrifices, and our generosity. And we have the Apostle Paul's command to Pastor Timothy for those of us who have incomes, estates, or money in the bank (1 Timothy 6:17–19):

"As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life."

May God move you to bear this good fruit for His glory and for the future of His Church. ☛

Rev. John E. Hill is President of the Wyoming District of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.





Rejecting the Idolatry Inherent in BLM



Folks with even a shred of common sense and propriety can see that the antics and actions of those associated with Black Lives Matter are debased, wicked, and counter-productive to earthly peace and harmony. However, we Christians should recognize not only the manifestly obvious evils of BLM but also the deeper ways in which such an organization and movement oppose God's Word. Let us evaluate BLM according to the Decalogue—especially in regard to the 1st Commandment.

To begin with, we ought to recognize that BLM is a revolutionary communistic/socialistic organization and movement. This can be recognized by the statements and training of the leaders of BLM. For example, Patrisse Cullors, one of the co-founders of the organization, has described herself as a “trained Marxist.” She was mentored by Eric Mann, a member of both Students for a Democratic Society and the Weather Underground. For fuller details, one can read a good summary on Breitbart News in the article “Black Lives Matter Founder Mentored by Ex-Domestic Terrorist Who Worked with Bill Ayers” by Joshua Klein.

Perhaps more importantly, one can see the revolutionary spirit in the BLM organization and movement in their use

of common communistic/socialistic imagery and language. The raised fist, seen in BLM-associated artwork and held high at rallies, is a universally acknowledged symbol of communistic or socialistic movements. The frequent references to “liberation,” “justice,” “equality,” “human rights,” and “comrades” in slogans, cheers, and statements

betray the same spirit. If one wishes to see the radical BLM agenda laid out in their own words, the infamous “What We Believe” page, which was recently scrubbed off of the official website, was archived and can still be accessed. It calls for the disruption of “the Western-prescribed nuclear family structure” and the fostering of “a queer-affirming network...with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of heteronormative thinking.” Those who would attempt to make an artificial distinction between the BLM organization and the BLM movement inevitably run into the reality that a revolutionary spirit enlivens and dominates both the official organization and the broader movement.

Marxism, like communism and socialism, is not merely a political ideology, but a utopian vision that is best understood as a religion. What I mean by this is that these “-isms” are not merely ideas about how best to shape and structure a community, but ideologies fundamentally based upon (false) beliefs concerning God and man. The religion behind these “-isms” is humanism. Hu-

*MARXISM, LIKE
COMMUNISM AND
SOCIALISM, IS NOT
MERELY A POLITICAL
IDEOLOGY, BUT A
UTOPIAN VISION THAT
IS BEST UNDERSTOOD
AS A RELIGION.*

manism tries to make a god out of man and holds up equality, freedom, and perfect happiness on earth as idols—goals defined by man himself and fulfilled in this earthly life.

In “Slavery, Humanism, & the Bible,” C. F. W. Walther defined humanism in this way: “We define humanism as the belief in a human ideal, a belief that man within himself has the ability to develop into a state of completeness and achieve happiness. Therefore, in order to reach this ideal state nothing else is needed than to grant each person as much room as possible to develop freely and without restraint. Freedom and equality, equal rights, equal possessions, equal enjoyment and pleasure, are thus the goal of man’s striving, the attainment of which will eradicate poverty and suffering from this earth. Happiness will have found its domicile on earth, there will be heaven on earth.” This is what utopianism means—trying to make heaven on earth. But as history shows, when you try to create heaven on earth, you only wind up making earth more hell-like.

Ultimately, this idolatry arises from unbelief. Unwilling to trust in God’s Word, in His fatherly goodness and mercy, in His plan and providence for what is truly best for us, men turn from contentment to the covetousness of their own sinful hearts and desires. As Walther says, “This humanism is as old as the fallen world itself. As soon as man had fallen away from God, he became aware of the bitter consequences of his sin, of the curse under which God had placed this earth because of him. Despite all that still had remained for man, he felt dissatisfied, unhappy, and wretched. However, instead of recognizing his sin as the cause of his wretchedness, seeking to return to God and His help, he saw the consequences themselves as the cause, and deemed that he could achieve happiness by gaining what this world has to offer.” Here is where we Christians must recognize how in the last two commandments God points us back to the first, from which all the others flow. The opposite of coveting is being content with what God has provided. And what He has provided is more glorious than anything we could ever think up in our fallen dreams. He gives us Himself: to be our God, to be our Savior, and to provide for us in all things according to His fatherly wisdom. What more could we ask for? What greater thing could there be to desire? Therefore, we should



have no other gods, and fear, love, and trust in Him above all things.

But the depth of our depravity and the snares of our sinful hearts are not to be underestimated. Again, listen to Walther’s wisdom, “However, humanism, which wants to be independent of God and men, wants that man renounce happiness and the life to come as something which is dubious. It wants that man find this happiness within himself, which will surely change the earth into heaven and promises equal happiness to all. *This humanism is the chiliasm [millennialism/utopianism] of the secular world; it is its religion. It always appears with force wherever Christianity wavers.*” [emphasis mine]

We do sinfully waver, both individually and corporately. Yet as we tremble like Peter when he took his eyes off His Lord and heeded the troublesome winds and waves, we are to fix our attention back upon our Savior and cry out, “Lord, save me!” And our faithful Lord, who brings true contentment, true liberty, true happiness, and eternal peace through the forgiveness of our sins will indeed provide all things needful—including the strength to resist the idolatries of humanism and the covetousness of our sinful hearts.

Note: Readers are encouraged to read “Slavery, Humanism, & the Bible” and “Communism and Socialism” by C. F. W. Walther, both of which can easily be found in English translation online. 📖

Rev. David Ramirez is Pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in Union Grove, WI and is on the Planning Committee for the Bugenhagen Conference.

Christian News in Brief

FOUND: PRESIDENT FOR CSL

Concordia Seminary, St. Louis has finally completed its search for a new president. Rev. Dr. Lawrence Rast declined the call to serve as the seminary's 11th president in Spring 2020. A second round of the process resulted in the calling of Rev. Dr. Thomas Egger to be the new President. Dr. Egger has been on the faculty at CSL since 2005. He has accepted the call and will replace the Interim President, Rev. Daniel Preus. Dr. Egger will have a difficult task ahead. The key issues at CSL will be restoring trust by the wider church after a series of controversies over doctrine have taken place. Another more immediate and yet perhaps related issue is the dramatic decline in new seminarians. These first years will prove crucial to the churchly role of CSL and its new President.

NEW PRESIDENTS ALL OVER THE CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

In 2019 Concordia Chicago received its new President, Dr. Russel Dawn (formerly of Concordia, Irvine). In January 2020 Concordia Irvine received Dr. Michael Thomas (formerly of Concordia, Portland). At the same time Concordia, St. Paul received Rev. Dr. Brian Friedrich (formerly of Concordia, Seward). Concordia, Seward (Nebraska) also will be receiving their new President, Dr. Bernard Bull in August. Notable in these new presidencies is the trend to have laymen serving in that office. Also notable was the effort of some within the LCMS to put forward women to serve in this authority-wielding office. Following this academic year Rev. Dr. Patrick Ferry is retiring as well and a new presidential search for both Concordia Wisconsin and Ann Arbor is underway.

SEMINARY CONFESSES IN THE FACE OF FEARS

The faculty of Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary in St. Catharines, Ontario has issued a *Gutachten* (faculty opinion) entitled "Facts and Faith: What we know to be true in the face of a pandemic". The opinion offers the Church at large a faithful assessment of the situation and a proper theological mindset with which to approach the variety of issues presented to the Evangelical Lutheran Church by the Coronavirus pandemic. The opinion can be found at:

<https://concordia-seminary.ca/2020/06/23/faculty-opinion-facts-and-faith-what-we-know-to-be-true-in-the-face-of-a-pandemic/>

MISSOURIANS POSTPONE THEIR CONVENTION

After going to extraordinary lengths, including a voting initiative involving every congregation, the LCMS has decided to postpone the National Convention from 2022 to 2023 in order to give Districts another year to conduct their own conventions. The effort to postpone demonstrated some differences in opinion, as the Council of Presidents was in favor, but a letter from Rev. Dr. Michael Kumm, chairman of the Synod's Board of Directors, expressed some misgivings about the plan and its related costs and rush to action. The votes are now in, and the synodical convention has been delayed until 2023. Terms have been extended for elected and appointed positions.

SYNOD OPEN FOR BUSINESS?

The International Center of the LCMS, which serves as the LCMS headquarters, has been largely shut down for almost a year now due to concerns over Covid. Required work has been done remotely by employees. This should raise some questions for

readers – if such work can take place remotely and if we can manage without having a dedicated headquarters for almost a year, perhaps it's time to think about revamping our normal work processes and where that work needs to take place. As far as business headquarters go, the price for real estate may soon decline as more and more businesses revamp their operating models due to lessons learned this past year.

CONCORDIA, PORTLAND WOES CONTINUE

Concordia University, Portland (CUP) continues to find itself in the news. After the closing of the University was announced in February 2020, there has been a variety of responses from within the Church, academia, and the secular world. Hotchalk, a business with which CUP contracted for online degree programs, has sued the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod and the Lutheran Church Extension Fund for \$302 million in damages. The lawsuit was also reportedly a reason for the failure to successfully sell Concordia Portland's law school, which was based in Idaho, to Concordia University, St. Paul. Continued news articles are trying to draw in the issue of the student clubs at CUP that advocated the acceptance of the LGBTQURUS agenda. The media have not been friendly to the church in this matter. The entire scenario reminds us of the monetary cost of secularization and the high spiritual cost of doctrinal compromises at LCMS universities.

CONCORDIA, NEW YORK CLOSING DOWN

Concordia College, New York announced that it will close at the end of this academic year. It had struggled after being under probation with its accrediting agency, the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. It also has seen some difficulty after Hawk Newsome, an alumnus who was honored last year with the "Servant of Christ" award, has become a very vocal advocate of violence towards the police and government. No statements have been made about this honored alumnus. Lawsuits by former students and employees have also harmed the college. This will mark the third Concordia to shut down

in recent years. In each case, the number of students seeking to be trained for service in the church has been very low and the number of Lutheran students and faculty continues to decline.

LCMS CTCR SPEAKS AGAINST THE PRACTICE OF ONLINE COMMUNION

This has been called the "Age of Absurdity." During times in which people perceive a crisis, temptation comes for sinful innovations to be introduced into the Church. Some congregations in the LCMS have opted to conduct communion services over internet connections, as if such a thing were possible. Thankfully seminary faculties have issued statements against this virtual ridiculousness, and now the LCMS CTCR has also submitted their opinion on the matter. They are opposed to the practice for many reasons, but of course every Christian should know that such practice is in violation of the clear words of Jesus. Pastors have justified this heterodox practice with emotional appeals that ignore Jesus' clear words of institution. No further statement or action by Synod has been made in the past months as the pandemic has started to wind down.

LCMS DISTRICT CONVENTIONS 2021

Despite the delay of the National Convention, some LCMS District Conventions will still be held in 2021. Other conventions are coming in 2022. These conventions will consider various resolutions that may affect the whole of the LCMS. They will also elect men to the office of District President to serve for a three (or four) year term. Circuits will have forums prior to deadlines (including amended deadlines) to put matters of business forward. It will be a crucial time to be aware of bad cultural influence upon the Synod and ponder how to stop its further intrusion. Inquire of your pastor and congregational leadership to learn more and be a part of this process.



Rev. Joshua Scheer is Senior Pastor of Our Savior Lutheran Church in Cheyenne, WY and Editor-in-Chief of Steadfast Lutherans.





Concerning Civil Government Ordering Masks in Church

The following statement concerning the presumption of civil government in giving orders about the Church's worship is from the Bugenhagen Conference website, and the editors of Christian Culture heartily endorse it and commend it to your reading.

Below are 3 points that several pastors in the Kenosha and Racine area discussed last week after Governor Evers of Wisconsin made another executive order—this time concerning masks. The points below [on the facing page] are being put on the Bugenhagen Conference website and blog for two reasons: first, because the conference is specifically focused on practical/nuts and bolts type issues such as this; and, second, so that folks can discuss and debate them.

We, the undersigned, agree on the three points below, and humbly offer them to the ministerium for further discussion and debate. We are hoping that they will spark further reflection and bring to greater clarity how we as the Church are to move forward during this crisis. We know that we are to proceed in fear and trembling when it comes to matters respecting the governing authorities, yet we are also to be courageous in the face of assault against the Church and protective of the congregations that we have sworn to serve and lead.

Our hope is that further discussion, and perhaps more articles and brotherly debate, will aid our synod and our understanding.

Rev. Joshua P. H. Conradt
Rev. Brian T. Crane
Rev. Jack Gilbert
Rev. Jesse R. Gullion
Rev. Brian D. Liermann
Rev. James A. Roemke
Rev. David P. Ramirez
Rev. Kyle T. Verage



Concerning Civil Government Ordering Masks in Church

1. We cannot in good conscience refuse to allow a Christian to come to church services because he is not wearing a mask. We are not lawless rebels nor deny that civil government indeed has appropriate interest and authority in matters pertaining to public health and safety. However, the authority of the civil government is not absolute. We do not recognize the civil government's authority to order our churches to require masks. The coronavirus situation is not so severe as to warrant such an intrusion into the affairs of the Church--especially as the intrusion pertains to worship.
2. We cannot categorically nor generally consider it a sin for a Christian to come to church without a mask. (This is not only in reference to recognized exceptional circumstances due to health or other reasons, but against the orders of the civil government.)
 - a. A Christian may come to a church service without a mask with a clear conscience, recognizing that the government is illegitimately intruding into the Church's affairs, as explained in the first point.
 - b. It is inappropriate for Christians to claim or imply that not wearing a mask is necessarily violating the law of love. There are different goods, goals, and circumstances that Christians will need to weigh out in how best to love their neighbor in this, and every other, matter. While the safety of our neighbors in regards to earthly health is an important good, it is not the sole good to be considered. Concerns regarding the normal worship life of the congregation, the spiritual and earthly health that is damaged by the isolation that comes from overzealous safety precautions, and the potential, and seemingly likely, further intrusions by the civil government into the life of the Church are all goods that ought to be considered by Christians. Faithful Christians may come to different conclusions on how best to love their neighbor in this matter depending on their circumstances and how they carefully weigh out various concerns.
3. While we as pastors are most focused upon the life of the Church, the Scriptures have much to say about civil government, marriage and family, and the relationship between the three estates. We cannot definitively say that it is a sin for a Christian citizen not to follow orders concerning masks under present circumstances.
 - a. There are good reasons for a citizen to think that these orders are an unnecessary, illegitimate, and gross overreach of the civil government's authority that will intrude upon and harm familial life, including social, economic, and other aspects of earthly life.
 - b. There are also good reasons to believe in many jurisdictions that these orders are in violation of the clear meaning and intent of the laws of the civil government itself.

Some of the pertinent passages of Scripture in relation to this issue are: Exodus 20 (Ten Commandments); Matthew 22:15-22; Romans 13; Exodus 1:15-22 (Shiphrah and Puah defy Pharaoh); Acts 5 (the Apostles before the council); 1 Samuel 19-30 (the complex relationship and lines of authority between Saul, Jonathan, and David); and 1 Samuel 25 (Nabal and Abigail); Acts 25 (Paul appeals to Caesar).

Commentary on William Blake's "The Clod and the Pebble"

"Love seeketh not itself to please,
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair."

So sung a little Clod of Clay
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

"Love seeketh only self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite."



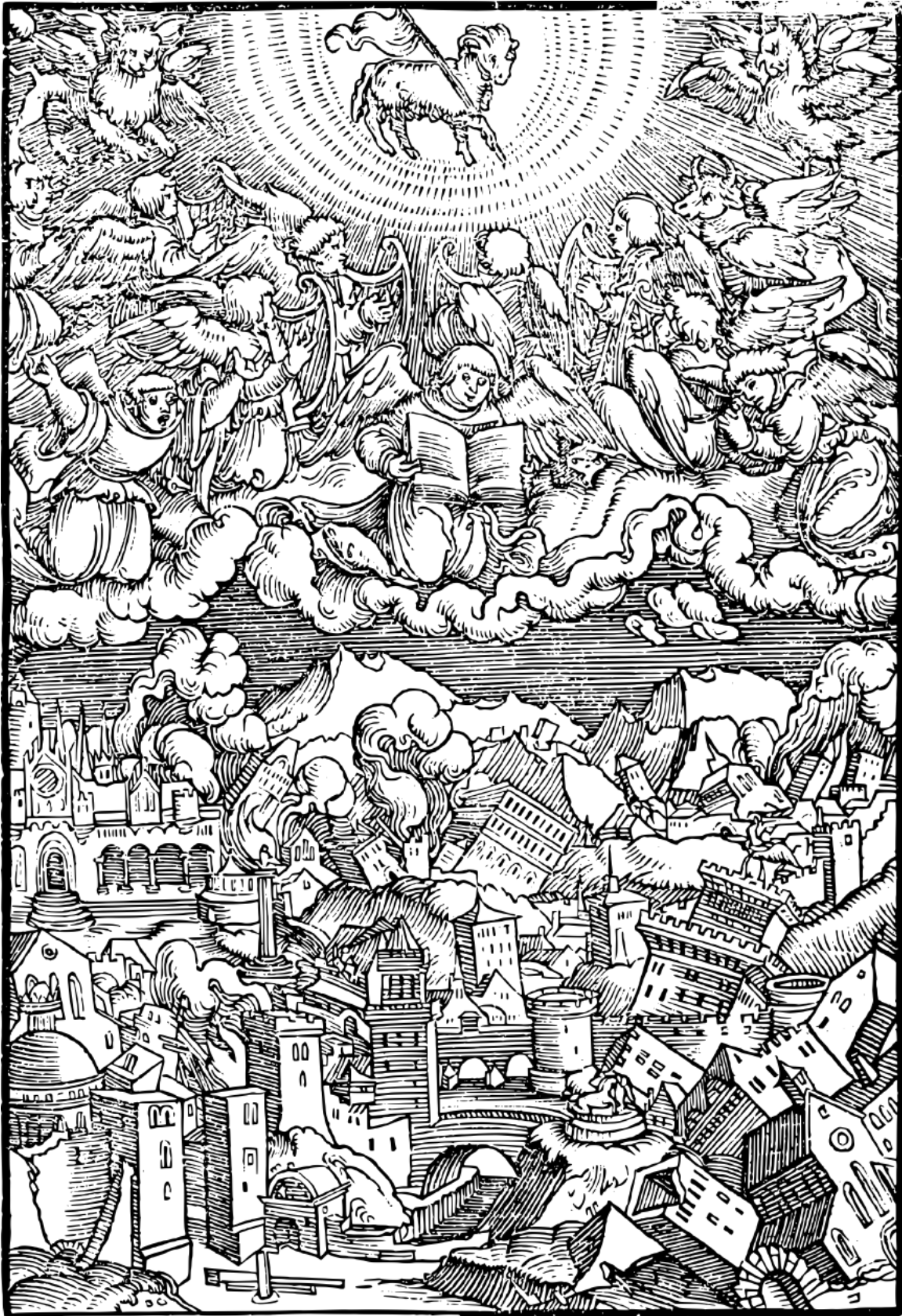
This poem is part of a larger poetic and theological project. This project, called the Songs of Innocence and Experience, juxtaposes the innocence of childhood and the experience of the adult. In Blake's theology, both innocence and experience seem like opposites, but they are not. Blake describes them as "contrary states of the Human soul." Blake seeks to point out the deficiencies of both innocence and experience and embrace both in a new unity. We see parallels to this in his work *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*. Blake's theology is not orthodox. But his willingness to portray the evil and darkness of the Industrial Revolution and the dreadful "Tyger" will help keep the orthodox Christian from falling into the tempting trap of theodicy.

The Clod and the Pebble contrasts the love of the clod with the love of the pebble. The clod is lowly and contemptible. And yet, the clod is the stuff from which God made Adam. Its love is self-sacrificing and thinks only of the other. The pebble, warbling "meters meet" from the stream, says that love is selfish. The pebble is hardened by its experi-

ence in the world and endures the constant flowing of the stream as the clod is flattened by hooves. The pebble will endure because of its selfishness; the clod will not.

The applications of this poem for the Christian are manifold. One might contrast the world's love with Christ's love. Christ, like the clod, was considered lowly and contemptible, and His love finally destroyed Him upon the cross. One might also draw from this that Christian love is considered contemptible or cloddish by the experienced world. One might use the imagery of the hardness of heart to describe selfish love. One might also use this contrast between innocence and experience to speak on the role of God's Word in our lives. Love must be learned from the innocent and spotless Lamb of God, through the pages of Holy Writ. If we base our love upon experience, we will inevitably end up hardened, selfish, and alone. ❧

Rev. Travis Berg is Pastor of St. Pauls Lutheran Church in Latimer, IA.



Woodcut of Revelation 19:1-10 from a 1533 printing of Luther's translation of the Bible



Gone But Not Forgotten

Review: *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace: A Critical Examination of the Foreign Policy of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and Its Aftermath*, ed. Harry Elmer Barnes (Caldwell, ID: Caxton, 1953)



Unpopular opinions are ruthlessly suppressed. Freedom of speech is curtailed on every media platform. Taxes get higher, personal liberties decrease, and the government, academia, and the media are agreed in the propagation of certain narratives, many of them tales of blood libel against people who won't go along with the government. This probably sounds familiar to you. When did cancel culture begin? What appears recent and strange to many of us was already known a few years after the end of World War Two. In 1953 the historian Harry Elmer Barnes edited a large evaluation of recent American policy and warmaking called *Perpetual War for Perpetual Peace*. At the cusp of what we imagine were the golden years of very high church attendance and endless economic growth in the 1950s and early 1960s, Barnes described American culture as suffocating under a "historical black-out."

Barnes did not see the 1950s as wonderful. His portrayal of his own time in the volume's introductory essay sounds more like our own time than like what we imagine his time was. The

evil flowering of centralized media control and the frenzy it induces had germinated through the time from Woodrow Wilson's promise not to get Americans into the First World War to Franklin Delano Roosevelt's promise not to get Americans into the Second World War. Barnes could remember a time before the world wars in which Americans paid almost no



taxes, had great personal freedoms in life, and had a variety of political opinions undomesticated through centralized media consumption in radio and TV. But that world had disappeared by the time *Perpetual War* went to press.

Perpetual War's authors picture the

events from 1914 through 1945 as one series of interconnected events, recalling now-forgotten negotiations, tensions, and events such as the murder of Germans after the First World War in formerly German Silesia or Roosevelt's public promises not to engage in another world war. If historical revisionism is according to Barnes simply the "discovery of historical truth," the largest revision to our own picture of the twentieth century is seeing its world wars as a single, sustained act of self-cannibalism. From the opening decades of the century to the 1950s, the West was engaged in consuming itself through premeditated aggression. This volume provides copious detail on the negotiations throughout the 1920s and 1930s that led to Germany's disarmament and (contrary to express treaty provisions) Britain and France's continual growth in military capacity. The Allies' push for disarmament was finally only a push for some nations' disarmament. "Making the world safe for democracy," Wilson's stated aim when we finally entered the First World War, meant truly that the world would be made safe for American ascendancy. What the people read in the papers or heard on the radio was only ever one-tenth of the story.

You can pick up any book on the history of either world war and find similar discussions of how the desire to arm oneself to the teeth existed alongside the desire for one's enemies to disarm. America demanded that Japan forsake all foreign conquest in the 1930s while also stationing its Pacific forces in provocative places destined to irritate the Japanese. Britain first sought peace with Germany, then prepared the Polish to resist all German aggression, and finally refused to intervene in Poland when it was invaded. Several authors point out how all Anglo-American objectives practically resulted in an enormous expansion in the Soviet Union's influence in eastern Europe and in Asia. Communism was much more powerful after the Second World War than before.

It is remarkable to read a book from the beginning of America's global power in a time when that power is surely waning. Barnes and his co-authors understood America to have changed fundamentally between 1914 and 1945. We had been a country devoted mainly to her own affairs and altogether uninterested in European power politics, and our sincere and

perhaps idealistic attachment to international peace was so firm that neither the First nor the Second World Wars were supported by anything approaching a majority of Americans when we entered them. What was denigrated as "isolationism" appears to have been the natural position of the vast majority of Americans, not only German-Americans. By 1945 we were altogether changed. We had instituted the first peacetime draft in American history (the Selective Service Act of 1940), sent millions of women into the workplace for the first time (in both war mobilizations), shifted populations all over the U.S. to manufacture wartime materiel and then to staff the burgeoning defense industry (the birth of the Sun Belt), and we had military bases all over the world, as we still do.

Yet the draft may never come back as the military doubles down on using the small percentage of Americans (mainly white men from the South and the Midwest) who staff our combat arms. Women have now been in the workplace within almost every American's living memory, and our demographics continue to shift due to the enormous

social and political upheavals in our country in the past decade. We are in chaos, and on some level we all know it. We may admit it to ourselves or others or not, but we all know it. Money is often more honest than people are and thus a better gauge of what people truly believe. Commercial rents are becoming a lot cheaper in Manhattan, and real estate investors continue to exit California, the locus of so much hope, defense spending, and economic growth in the twentieth century. America in 2021 is no longer the optimistic dynamo that it was in 1953.

That's for the Church's good. The reign of political cant and media babbling is ending as more people realize the truth is the last thing they will tell you. The Church will have to look out for itself far more than it did in the 1950s, but that will also be for the good as we realize that what we have in Christ is not a guarantee of prosperity in a miraculously growing economy. What we have is Christ and one another. Our nation's days of power wane now, but Christ's power over heaven and earth will see no end. ☞

Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz is Assistant Professor of Exegetical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, IN.





Oedipus Rex



In c. 430 BC, the Athenian dramatist Sophocles (c. 495-406 BC) won second prize at an Athenian drama festival for his production of what has come to be known to us as *Oedipus Rex*, King Oedipus. Sophocles' famous tragedy is an original retelling of a well-known Greek hero-myth about a man, Oedipus, who kills his father, marries his mother and has children with her, and is punished by the powers that be for his crimes.

Such a story might seem like precisely not the one to promote in the first issue of *Christian Culture*. You might be forgiven for suspecting that such a story, coming from a time and place far removed from the culture and Spirit that produced the Bible, might be more at home on the shelf next to *Game of Thrones* than with Shakespeare, Dante, and Milton. It was, after all, no less than Freud who (correctly or not) taught us about the "Oedipus Complex," the resentment of the paternal and the desire to merge intimately and permanently with the maternal.

Yet, the tragedies of Shakespeare, the spiritual dramas of Dante and Milton, and Christian literary culture in general all draw deeply on the Greek tradition of tragedy. Aristotle's *Poetics*, a study of Greek dramatic art still revered today, holds Sophocles' second-place play as the prime and most perfect exemplar of this tradition.

And, so far as Athenians go, Sophocles was a pious man. His hero is not tragic simply because his actions are debased. Oedipus often acts ignorantly, sometimes even innocently. His real sin is his pride (*hubris*), his relentless drive to justify himself before gods and men and avoid

a dishonorable fate. When combined with ignorance, this pride carries Oedipus headlong into blindly pursuing the very shame he is desperate to avoid.

At his birth, Oedipus' parents, King Laius and Queen Jocasta of Thebes, receive an oracle that their son will kill Laius and marry Jocasta. To escape this prophecy, they nail the baby's feet together and give him to a shepherd, who will kill him. Instead, the merciful shepherd secretly passes the victim into the care of a Corinthian herdsman, who in turn hands him over to Polybus and Merope, the childless king and queen of Corinth, who raise the child as their own.

As a young man, Oedipus hears for himself the prophecy of patricide and incest, but believes that it refers to Polybus and Merope. To thwart this divine decree, he flees Corinth and comes to the vicinity of Thebes, his hometown. There, on the road, he is accosted by an old man. Ever prideful, Oedipus slaughters the aggressor and his entourage, though one servant escapes. Unbeknownst to Oedipus, the old man was Laius, King of Thebes, his true father.

When he arrives at the gates of Thebes, Oedipus, through his wits and prowess, delivers the city from the oppression of a sphinx-monster and is acclaimed a hero and deliverer. He ascends to the newly-vacant crown, marries the newly-widowed Queen Jocasta, and settles into his success, believing he has escaped the decree of the gods.

All of this backstory is revealed in the drama of the play as the now King Oedipus seeks to solve the mystery of the murder of King Laius. Thebes is suffering under a plague until the guilty are punished. At the outset of the investigation, it is thought Laius was killed by a gang

of bandits, and Oedipus vows to punish the murderer. Oedipus consults with the blind prophet Tiresias, whose gift of prophecy comes with the burden of never being believed. Tiresias accuses Oedipus of the murder—"you are the man"—warning that, if he presses ahead, he will only uncover his own guilt and destruction. Tiresias is, of course, ignored, but the testimony of other lowly shepherds and servants is not so easily dismissed. What began for Oedipus as a murder mystery changes quickly into a quest for his own identity and resolves into a single tragedy. Blind Tiresias could see, but was never believed. Oedipus, certain of his insight, is blind to reality, and ends the play without eyes.

Again, Sophocles was a pious man, from the city dedicated to the goddess of wisdom, Athena. His works preach a high form of natural theology (see Romans 1:19-20; 2:14-15), that the meaning of existence comes in humility and reverence toward the powers governing the cosmos. Man is the willing agent of his own actions, yet his agency is constrained by wills and webs that often have the strength of inexorable fate. Oedipus is a victim of fate, but at the same time his own unrepented decisions leave him without excuse. Free will is not an illusion, but a deep moral liability. Oedipus is not undone by the restriction of his will or agency, but precisely in acting out his unconquered convictions.

Sophocles' wisdom, like that of his fellow Athenian Socrates, bends toward humility and chastened self-estimation. The nobility of the human condition emerges in the acceptance of full responsibility for our actions and their

consequences, regardless of motives, and in bearing up under the full weight of life's injustices while gracefully walking in harmony with the laws of gods and nature. Our own plausible exculpations do not shift the blame to God, the gods, or the cosmos, as the biblical Job discovered, and the piety of Sophocles has something of the spirit of the Preacher of Ecclesiastes.

Aristotle believed that the communal experience of witnessing a tragic unravelling like Oedipus Rex could produce a salutary katharsis, a moral cleansing of the psyche. Read or watched in the right light today, the story of a man hell-bent on his own destruction in the very pursuit of his own salvation can still have the same effect. For readers today, I would recommend Robert Fagles' translation, *The Three Theban Plays* (Penguin: 1984).

As an epilogue or analog to the reading of Oedipus the King, you will certainly want to seek a cathartic cleansing of the soul in 2 Samuel 11-12. Here, again, we find the hubris and humbling of the self-condemned hero-king and the prophet who speaks truth to power ("you are the man"). And note here: for all the piety and wisdom of the Greek sources of our literature, truly Christian culture begins with the leavening of the tragic sense of life with absolution and atonement.



Rev. John Henry III is Pastor of St. James Lutheran Church in Northrop, MN and Zion Lutheran Church in Fairmont, MN.

SUBSCRIBE TO *CHRISTIAN CULTURE*

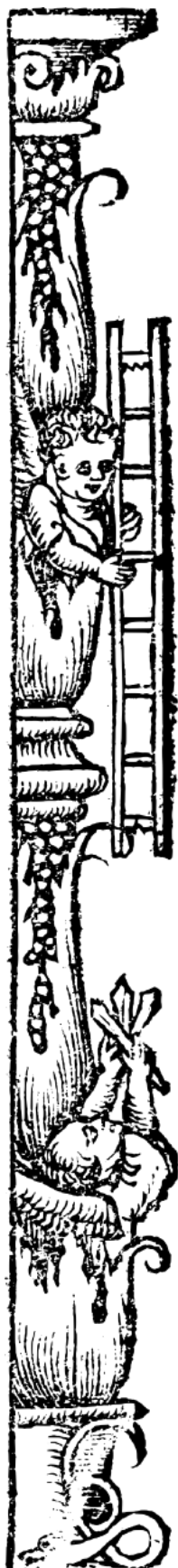


Enjoying these articles? Subscribe to *Christian Culture* today.

Email subscriptions@lutherclassical.org

or

Visit lutherclassical.org/journal and fill out the subscription form.



...continued from page 9

The America that blessed Abraham now curses him. Americans who refuse to adopt this new paganism promoted by the government find themselves driven out of business as the right of perverts to celebrate their perversion supersedes the right of Christians to engage in lawful business according to the standards of God's law.

What do we who speak for the church have to say about this? We love our country. Patriotism is more than sentimental attachment to a particular land and people. It is our duty. God says: "Honor your father and your mother." We therefore are to honor our fatherland, our motherland. We who confess Abraham's faith have been blessed by the blessing with which God has blessed America. When we see her descending into anti-Christian paganism, should we not fight for her? Fighting entails alliances with likeminded people. So we join together with our allies in the culture wars.

Here is where it gets a bit dicey. We are called to preach the blood and righteousness of Jesus Christ. Ministers of Christ are ambassadors of reconciliation, not agents of the state or soldiers of the culture wars. The Jerusalem that is above is free and she is our mother! We have here no continuing city. Our King confessed before Pilate who crucified him: "My kingdom is not of this world." We who speak for the Church speak the Word of Christ. We neither seek nor want political power to effect the goals of Christ's kingdom. We rely solely on the authority and power of God's Word. Christ's kingdom is a spiritual kingdom that does not depend on coercion. The power of the Holy Spirit is the power to make the unwilling willing and to do so by revealing the authority of Jesus to forgive us all our sins. As Jesus was murdered by the civil authorities with the title above his head that Pilate in his cynicism displayed – "Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews" – He gained His eternal kingdom that will endure when all the nations of this world have been destroyed.

This kingdom is Christ's Church. She lives in this world. God governs the nations of this world by means of civil authority. Civil authori-

ty relies on the use of guns, armies, policemen, judges, fines, and prisons. It wields the sword. The civil authority in America is elected by the people. Surely, we Christians may fight within the civil arena to save our country from cultural destruction! If we love our neighbor, do we not want to protect him from the ruin that the new paganism will bring if left unchecked? We pray every Sunday that God will bless the president, governor, and legislative bodies under which we live and that He would give them wisdom. Should not our prayers be accompanied by responsible political activity to support good government? We Lutherans call the spiritual authority of Christ's kingdom the kingdom of God's right hand and God's rule through the civil authority of the state the kingdom of His left hand. We live in both kingdoms at the same time.

In the kingdom of God's right hand, we proclaim the truth and rely on the Holy Spirit to gather together Christ's Church on earth. There is no compromise of this saving truth. The gospel cannot tolerate it. False gospels destroy souls. The kingdom of grace covers all our sin and makes us saints. The righteousness of this kingdom is nothing less than the obedience and suffering of the Lord Jesus. It covers everyone in the kingdom of grace, rendering them righteous before God. God rules in this kingdom by His gospel. God tolerates no false teaching that would rob us of His free forgiveness for Christ's sake. The pure gospel glorifies Christ and comforts poor and lowly sinners. We may under no circumstances compromise the gospel on which Christ's kingdom of grace is established!

In the kingdom of God's left hand, compromise is essential. God's permanent standards of right and wrong cannot change, but their application in civil law is constantly changing. Politics is the art of compromise. Dogmatism in political matters leads to authoritarianism. Ideologues rely on raw power to impose their will on everyone else. When we Christians engage in the political process to protect life, to uphold marriage as the lifelong union of one man and one woman, to protect the authority of the

home from statist usurpations, and to defend our right to practice our religion according to God's Word, we appeal to that natural law that is knowable by everyone. We do not try to establish the kingdom of God on earth through the political process. We maintain the sharp distinction between the spiritual authority of God's eternal kingdom and the civil authority through which he governs the nations of this world.

When religiously motivated people representing different religions join together in the civil realm to defend marriage, the family, and the unborn, they often appeal to God.

But they are speaking in the public square of the civil arena where compromise is essential. This is the source of much mischief. We Christians who are devoted to the teaching of the Holy Scriptures as faithfully set forth and confessed in the creeds and confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church cannot compromise on our confession of the true God for political purposes. But politics is the art of compromise! This means that when we act politically to defend our nation and culture from the assault from paganism, socialism, feminism, and other destructive -isms, we may not join with purveyors of false doctrines, false gospels, and false gods to speak together about God. We may not talk about what God says or does in union with those whose "gospel" denies the grace of God in Christ. We must stand firm against every form of religious unionism, that is, a false fellowship with false doctrine. To join in speaking about God with people who do not worship the Holy Trinity is to take God's name in vain.

We must distinguish between the spiritual kingdom of God's right hand and the civil kingdom of God's left hand, but we may not separate them any more than we can separate the law from the gospel. We confess the whole counsel of

God. We don't reduce it to little sound bites about Jesus. Speak out, Christian! Speak out against the dehumanizing dogma of macroevolution. Speak out against the killing of the unborn, the perversion of marriage, the assault on fatherhood, and the claims of the state for devotion that can only be given to God. Do so as you confess Christ to be the only Savior of sinners, whose righteousness forever covers God's saints. Jesus reigns!

It is hard to watch the culture decline. It's like watching slime thrown upon a beautiful painting. We love America and we see her being destroyed. What can we do?

Pray for our leaders, that God will direct them in the way of righteousness. Pray that God will turn the hearts of Americans to treasure what is now being trashed and to rescue Christendom from destruction. Pray that the blessing God gave to Abraham would rest on America.

Preach! Preach the pure Word of God that bestows life in the midst of worldly decay. Preachers

preach. All Christians "preach" whenever and wherever they confess the gospel that forgives us our sins for the sake of Christ's holy obedience and vicarious suffering and death. We immerse ourselves in God's Word, wherein we find the kingdom of grace. From within this kingdom we can view a rotten culture without fear or anxiety. In the living Word we hear the voice of Him who bore our sin and washed it away by His blood. Having been washed in clean water, we walk through the rotten culture smelling roses, confessing the crucified and risen Jesus Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords, who shall reign forever and ever! ☞

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

Pray that God will turn the hearts of Americans to treasure what is now being trashed and to rescue Christendom from destruction. Pray that the blessing God gave to Abraham would rest on America.





The Old and the New Sermon



The following mini-article is taken from the February 13, 1894 issue of *Der Lutheraner*. The author is A.L. Graebner, who served as a theological professor both in the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods during the latter nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Such small articles were commonplace in *Der Lutheraner*, as were longer series. Despite its brevity, Graebner's article provides much food for thought.

Graebner's thesis is that preachers should not be afraid to repeat basic Christian truths from the pulpit, as opposed to getting swept up by current trends and events of the day. In asserting this, he is following St. Paul's words from Philippians 3, "To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and makes you all the more certain." Hearers too should not be afraid to value this type of preaching. What Graebner calls "old sermon" grounds the hearer in the Christian doctrine, while the "new sermon" tends to be of little consequence anyway.

Reading with our twenty-first century eyes proves how Graebner is correct. When he gives temperance and prohibition as examples of the "new sermon" in his day, he brings up topics of little interest to us who live over a century later. It is clear that this "new sermon" in 1894 was of little enduring

value. Similar themes headline the news cycle in our day, which history will prove are wasting the time and breath of many preachers and their hearers.

In mentioning women's rights, Graebner makes clear that the church of his age did not necessarily hold fast the same values which secular culture has laid down for us today, values which the post-modern church has by and large accepted as its own. No doubt Graebner would be branded a sexist or misogynist in our day, and such writing would not find a place in most mainstream church publications. This simple popular literature from the past therefore challenges our assumptions and thinking, which is a great exercise for God's people today. Mindlessly accepting the values of secular culture has no doubt contributed to the decline of our congregations, leaving them with nothing unique to offer.

This does not mean preaching should be stale or out of touch with the world in which we live. Preaching is meant to be contemporary, and Graebner would not dispute that. It is to be an exposition of the Bible speaking to the times in which we live. At the same time, there is no need for the preacher to get swept up in the latest trends which are here today and gone tomorrow. Preaching must remain catechetical, always proclaiming the

whole counsel of God. When preachers let contemporary issues form their preaching, not only does this not help their people, but history will most likely not look on them kindly. It is better to remain with the simple Catechism truths, the Law and Gospel, which are the spiritual nourishment of God's people in every age. ☛

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

The Old and the New Sermon

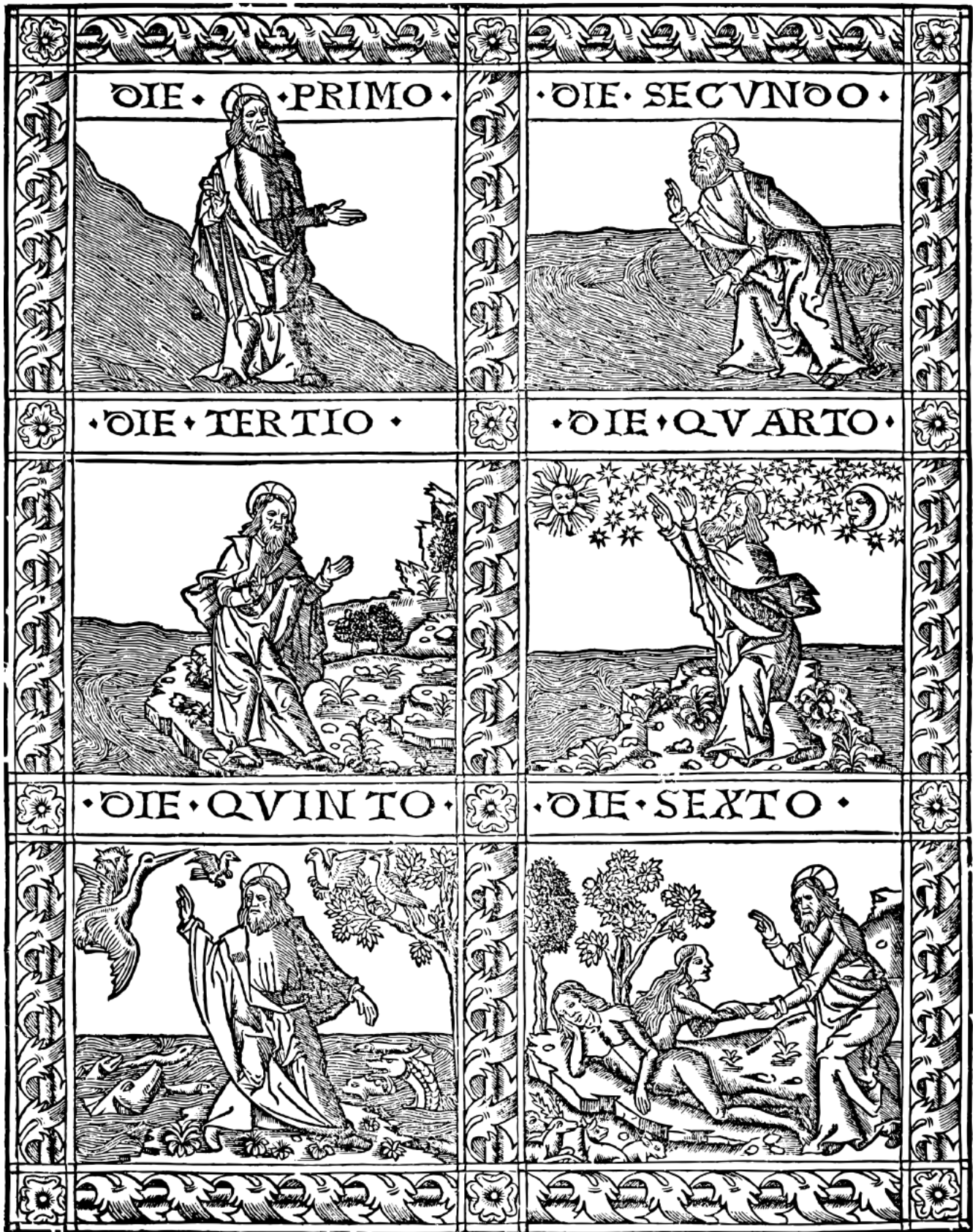
By Rev. Dr. A. L. Graebner

"To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and makes you all the more certain," wrote St. Paul to the congregation at Philippi, and even so faithful and orthodox preachers remain with the old, often-preached truths of God's Word. They preach repeatedly of sin and grace, of Christ the Savior, of the redemption, of justification, sanctification, the church, the comfort of the cross, of a blessed end, of the resurrection of the body, the life everlasting, and other truths from the Catechism. This is the old sermon, which even our young preachers put before their congregations; this sermon edifies the congregations and makes them "all the more certain," and the congregation hears them gladly. For it knows that it is a precious thing when the heart remains firm.

The new sermon, which you find especially in our English-speaking American churches, is of another kind. One hears of “women’s rights,” of “the world’s fair,” of “temperance” or “prohibition,” of “prize boxers,” and of various current events with themes which are taken out of the newest newspapers instead of the Bible. Meanwhile, the old doctrines of the Scripture remain untouched, only occasionally taken up, or they are even openly disputed. The result is easy to imagine, and experience proves it. Listeners of such sermons are not able to be schooled, strengthened, empowered, or grounded in the doctrine. The treatments of current events and questions of the time from the pulpit are often, even most of the time, very shallow and superficial; the hearers learn little which is useful from such things. So the hearers remain a generation poor in discernment, indifferent to doctrine, and are blown by every wind of doubt. Such a generation has neither of divine nor of human things correct, well-grounded ideas. It holds no firm ground in the storms of life, and it has no firm heart in life or death. A.G.



“To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and makes you all the more certain,” wrote St. Paul to the congregation at Philippi, and even so faithful and orthodox preachers remain with the old, often-preached truths of God’s Word.



Woodcut of the days of creation from a 1527 printing of the Bible



Longing for Family

by Rev. Mark Preus

The night has come without the usual noise,
The girly giggles, laughter from the boys,
The occasional scream, and then a mom's stern voice –
What sometimes bothered me, makes me rejoice...

If I could think to farthest lands and seas,
I'd see You, Painter of the skies and trees,
Reminding me of You, who beauty made,
And beauties gave for which I had not prayed.

So far away they are! But you are near
To me, to them, and, God, be near to her,
Who is my flesh and bone, who, after heaven,
Is greater than all gifts to me You've given.

I know Your beauty's day, Lord, soon will come;
Until then, bring my family safely home.



Jesus Wept Twice



he first time Jesus wept, it was over the death of his friend, Lazarus. They showed Him the place where he lay. Jesus wept. It was an exhibition of His true humanity—raw emotion at the wrongful intrusion of death into human life.

The second time Jesus wept also exhibited His humanity. He wept over the city of Jerusalem—a piece of real estate, a political subdivision. This time, instead of weeping silently, He wept out loud. It was a raw display at the wrongful intrusion of war, fire, slaughter and wholesale destruction that soon would come upon the city.

“If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace.” The city of peace refused to receive her Creator, the King of Peace. The temporal consequences of such rebellion are dire. “We have deserved both temporal and eternal punishments.” So Jesus addresses her as a person—as an entity of His own creation—because she is.

We live in a culture that is characterized by the denial of God the Creator. Deep philosophical currents that date back to a time even before the Renaissance burst into popular consciousness with the doctrine of Charles Darwin (1809–1882). Like every Gnostic before him, he desperately wanted to deny any direct creative links between God and man.

This poison passed from the academy into popular culture through the intentional indoctrination of our children. Incrementally—from the Scopes Monkey Trial (1925), through *Epperson v. Arkansas* (1968), and culminating in *Edwards v. Aquillard* (1987)—generations of impressionable minds have been taught that they are random accidents with no purpose and no design.

Christians recognized early on that Darwinian evolution not only turns the Genesis account into empty myth; it is a direct rejection of the One True God. It replaces the loving Creator with the gods of chance and time (the Fates and

Chronos). Against this, Christians insist that purpose and design are integral to confessing that the Triune God is both Maker and Redeemer.

While the challenge of Darwinian biology drew a vigorous response from the Church, her response to Darwinian sociology has been largely muted. Few noticed that a man nine years Darwin’s junior carried that doctrine one step further. Karl Marx (1818–1883) reasoned from the random assemblage of molecules into humans to the random assemblage of humans into societies. He claimed that societies and cultures were just as random and purposeless as Darwin’s evolutionary man.

Marxism sees every culture, every political subdivision, and every society as random arrangements that can just as well be blown apart by revolution and rearranged by evolutionary forces. This should have set off alarm bells across Christendom. But rather than assert divinely created origins of societies and nations against Marx, American Lutheranism tended to retreat into a novel construct of the Two Kingdoms doctrine.

Under the guise of Luther’s terminology, the idea came to be widely implied that the estates of family and Church are direct and purposeful creations of God, while the civil estate is the creation of man. This false dichotomy concedes holy ground to Marxism and affirms the central tenet of secularism. This concession is less a developed doctrine than it is a mood. But it permeates modern theology like the fumes of Mordor.

If the Church and the family are divine creations with an intrinsic purpose and structure, but particular states and nations are not, the Church has nothing to say either to the state itself or to her members’ responsibility toward the state. Thoughtful Lutherans have spoken against this false “separation of Church and State,” but it remains part of the air we breathe.

If the city is not a direct and purposeful creation of God, why would Jesus cry over her? But if the Creator of the city is wailing at her demise, the Church cries with Him. The city

is not “His new Creation by water and the Word” (*LSB* 644.1), but she does remain His old creation just as surely as every family within her is a creature of God. This is the relationship between Christ and culture that this magazine strives to reclaim.

The body politic is not the Body of Christ. She is against Christ and still wants to see Him crucified. Nevertheless, Christ does not hate her on this account. He loves her enough to die for her and to call out to her. “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing!” (Luke 13:34).

Jesus is not indifferent to the wickedness of the city. Nor does he abandon her to fire and brimstone before the time appointed for her destruction. He surpasses even the solicitude of Abraham to account for every last righteous soul within her (Genesis 18:22-33).

Jesus cares that His name is blasphemed in government-run indoctrination centers. Jesus cares when public worship and prayers are hindered. Jesus cares that insurrection and rioting go unpunished, and are even encouraged. Jesus cares

when the innocent blood of the unborn pollutes the land. He grieves for children taught to hate and mutilate the bodies He lovingly gave them. He weeps when the sins of Sodom are celebrated in the streets and when lies and slander pervade the land.

Jesus cares not only because individual souls are destroyed by sin, but because particular nations of His own creation are destroyed by such abominations. As Jesus cares, so His Church cares. As Jesus’ love of the city moves Him to wail and address her, so Christian love for her moves us.

The estates of family, Church, and state—all three—are creations of the same almighty and all merciful Lord. The Church is the body of Christ called out of the world and called to be separate, for sure. But Jesus deliberately keeps her in the world (John 17:15) precisely for the sake of the world. The Church is called to address God on behalf of the world and the world on behalf of God (1 Timothy 2:1-4).



Rev. Jonathan Lange is Pastor of Our Saviour Lutheran Church in Evanston, WY and St. Paul Lutheran Church in Kemmerer, WY.



Call for Support

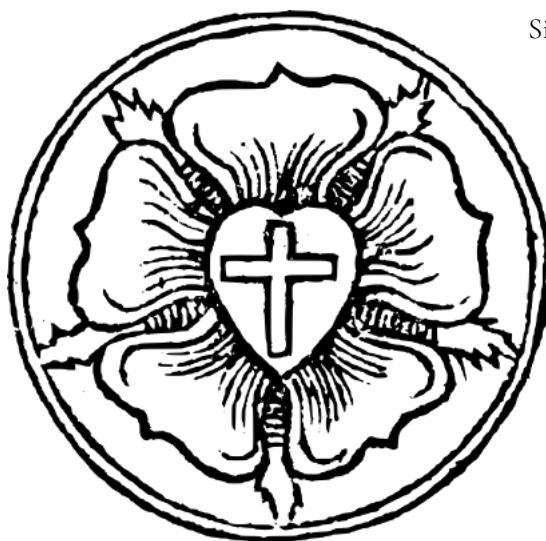
We need classical Lutheran colleges. By God's grace, Luther Classical College in Casper, WY, will be the first of many. We need to promote genuine Christian culture in our homes, communities, and churches. We need the next generation of Lutherans to be prepared to fight the good fight of faith in a country hostile to their faith, to find their pride in being Christ's, to raise up another generation of Lutherans with Christian goals directed at congregational life, devotional piety at home, and promotion of virtue within their communities. The college years are critical for this. So Luther Classical College is asking for your support.

The Board of Regents would like to welcome congregations to become supporting congregations of the college, by committing to four years of support of \$5,000, \$10,000, or \$20,000 a year (or a number that fits within their budget). With a hundred such supporting congregations, Luther Classical College will be able to break ground while keeping tuition costs low for our future students.

We also encourage individual or group contributions of any amount. The money given to support Luther Classical College will be an investment in our children's future and the future of the Christian Church. Jesus tells us to make eternal friends for ourselves by means of unrighteous mammon (Luke 16:9). We on the Board of Regents are committed to doing just that. We ask you to join us according to your ability. God bless our endeavors for Jesus' sake!

For more information or to donate online, please visit our website at
www.lutherclassical.org

You may also contact us directly with questions at
regents@lutherclassical.org



Sincerely,

The Regents of Luther Classical College:

Mr. Hunter Andersen
Mr. Justin Benson
Pastor Paul Cain
Mr. Micah Christensen
Mr. Larry Harrington
Pastor Joshua Hayes
Pastor John Hill
Pastor Christopher Maronde
Pastor Robert Paul
Pastor Christian Preus
Pastor Mark Preus
Pastor Andrew Richard
Pastor Reed Shoaff



"Christ Blessing the Children" by Lucas Cranach the Younger (AD 1515-1586), oil on panel, 19¼ by 29¾ in.

"Lasset die Kindlein zu mir kommen und wehret ihnen nicht; denn solcher ist das Reich Gottes." Thus Martin Luther translated Mark 10:14 into German, which appears with slight variation at the top of this painting. Or as we know it, "Let the children come to me and do not hinder them, for to such belongs the kingdom of God."

In the 1530s through 1550s, Lucas Cranach the Elder and Lucas Cranach the Younger produced multiple versions of this painting. I've seen at least a dozen of them, and there are likely more. Christ blessing the children captured the heart of the Lutheran Reformation: "Truly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God like a child shall not enter it" (Mk. 10:15). We receive the kingdom of God. We don't earn it or work for it. An infant can't make his way to Jesus and scale His robe and climb into His arms for a blessing. The infant is completely dependent. He must have everything done for him. "For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

"Christ Blessing the Children," in all its iterations from the Cranach workshop, features Jesus in the center showing obvious affection for the babies whom the mothers are presenting to Him. The disciples stand off to the side with varying expressions of shame, confusion, and indignation, having just heard Jesus' words of indignation toward them.

Yet often in the paintings, at least one of the disciples is looking toward Jesus with awe and piety, as if humbling himself and seeking to learn from Jesus. The grace of Christ defies human wisdom and the self-trust that comes so easily to adults. When confused and at a loss, the best course of action is to listen reverently to Jesus and believe what He says.

Another staple in these paintings is the prominence of a mother nursing a baby. I've only found one version of the painting that doesn't have a mother with bare breast giving her baby to suck. What's the significance of the nursing mother? The significance lies in the words of Psalm 22:9, "you made me trust you at my mother's breasts." According to those words, a nursing babe can have faith in the Lord. Jesus spoke similarly in the previous chapter of Mark, taking a child in his arms and then speaking of him as "one of these little ones who believe in me" (Mk. 9:42). Denying faith to children is to deny salvation apart from works. By committing that error, the Anabaptists, albeit unwittingly, landed squarely in the camp of the Papists, together blasphemously confessing that some capacity in man had to be a prerequisite to his salvation. And against the Anabaptist and the Papist stands someone who can't stand at all: an infant nursing at his mother's breast, an infant who has faith in Jesus. *A.R.*

Imagine a college where students learn

to value marriage and family over career and money.

that men are men and women are women, with God-given and beautiful differences and roles.

that to be a father is greater than being the president and to be a mother is greater than being a queen.

that the Bible is the wisdom of God far surpassing all the wisdom of men.

that the Lutheran Church has the greatest theology, the best hymns, the most excellent music in the history of the world.

that Scripture, hymns, prayer, devotion, and talking about God belong in our homes every day.

that children are a heritage from the Lord, the only thing in all the earth we can take to heaven with us.

that piety is better than wealth and virtue is better than fame.

that the Western tradition, with its literature, philosophy, music, scientific discovery, and Christian theology, is by far the greatest tradition the world has ever seen.

that socialism is theft and wokism is bullying.

that Christian culture grows through supporting faithful churches and leading pious homes.

This is the mission of Luther Classical College. Proudly and unapologetically Lutheran in liturgy, theology, and culture. Lutheran. Conservative. Classical. A college for Lutherans.

Please check out our website at lutherclassical.org.

