



Issue 6

Summer/Fall 2022

FEATURING

**Traditional Christianity:
Why Society Needs Us
More Than Ever**

Christopher Thoma

**Defend the Rights of the
Poor and Needy**

Jonathan Lange

**Bad Company Corrupts
Good Morals: The Only Way
To Keep a Lutheran College
Lutheran**

Christian Preus



What people are saying about



LUTHER
CLASSICAL COLLEGE

& **Christian Culture**

A MAGAZINE FOR LUTHERANS

I've enjoyed reading each issue. Thank you for the work you are doing to create a truly Lutheran college. God bless you! – Stephanie

The magazine itself is outstanding. The layout, old fonts, beautiful old prints, and of course good Lutheran and classical content, set it far apart from any I have ever read. This is how a classical magazine should look and read. Please continue with this beautiful and dignified publication; resist any suggestion to modernize its unique presentation!

– Derrick

This is very exciting! My kids are very young but we are homeschooling using the classical model, and are a conservative family, so a college that promotes those values is wonderful! God be with the development and growth of this place! – Erin

Very glad to see Lutherans being in the forefront of classical education at this level.

– Sherri

May God continue to make good use of your group in establishing a truly Lutheran alternative for those seeking a college degree! – Rev. DeLoach

I saw a copy of the Spring issue and not only is it gorgeous, the content is solid, educational, and timeless. Thank you for this publication, we cannot wait to start getting our copies! – Jesse

I hope to see one or more of my grandchildren attend this college in 10 years' time. What a wonderful thing! I wish I could go! – Barb

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cc.lutherclassical.org

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Traditional Christianity: Why Society Needs Us More Than Ever



I was at a conference in San Diego a few weeks ago. Apart from the time I had with my wife in the evenings, I'm not so sure it was the best use of my life's fast-fleeting hours. I went as a guest of Charlie Kirk. His organization, Turning Point USA, orchestrated the event and paid for our travel and lodging.

I was glad to go. I learned some things and met a few people. Admittedly, I was also glad to leave.

Don't get me wrong. I appreciate Charlie Kirk and his efforts. That's one reason we've partnered with him at Our Savior Lutheran Church in Hartland, MI more than once. He's sharply intelligent and can readily tap into his intelligence and share it with accessible language. I think I appreciate him most for his grasp on the essential crossovers between Church and State. He knows biblically, historically, and practically where these two estates meet, and he knows why it's important for Christians to be mindful of these things.

Unfortunately, the folks running his conference and many of the guest presenters proved to have a far lesser grasp on these things than their leader. When Charlie came on stage to introduce the three-day event, he promised a smorgasbord of speakers who would offer help and resources for navigating the turbulent waters of Church and State engagement. Remarkably, he teed up this promise by first commending the Nicene Creed as essential to the gathering. I was glad about that. Next, he expected the speakers and attendees to put their denominational particulars aside to cooperate in the acceptable externals. In these locales, different branches of Christendom are free to unify to accomplish shared goals. I was glad about that, too. Enough, already! The "us against them" mentality in the Church is not helping!

Still, only a handful of speakers did what Charlie described. David Barton, Dr. James Lindsay, Bob McEwen,

and Dr. Larry Arnn were a few. The rest of the event was dominated by mega-church pastors giving sermons that did, in fact, insist on acceptance of distinctly theological things—things about God laying this or that unprovable premise on the speaker's heart, pre/post-tribulation concerns, "deeds, not creeds" dogmatics, and a whole host of other rudderless theological ramblings particular to popular evangelical Christendom. Moreover, these same speakers went out of their way to take jabs at traditional churches. Lutheran, Roman Catholic, old-school Presbyterian, or old-guard Methodist, it didn't matter. If your church was inclined toward maintaining tradition and creeds, historic rites and ceremonies, you needed to get with the times. You needed to be courageous, to step out of conformity and get radical for Jesus. Courage, courage, courage! Get radical for Jesus!

Every time this happened, as the only one in the crowd wearing a clerical collar, I felt somewhat like a visual representation of what they were belittling—and I'm pretty sure some of the pastors around me betrayed the same discomfort with their glances. That being said, the onstage indictments didn't miss their mark. I actually do believe that creedal Christianity is the best way to preserve truth and foster the genuine courage required for defending it. I think what they were doing was very near the epitome of nonsense. And not only that, but in my experience, the encroaching world appears utterly unconcerned by their zealotry. And the reason? Well, let me get to that.

Relative to my long-standing opinion on this, the guest speaker I appreciated the most was Dr. James Lindsay, the foremost "Paul Revere" on Critical Theory. To grasp his impact, you should know that when people write books decrying Critical Theory, he's often their source material, being the one most frequently quoted in the footnotes. Formerly a devout atheist and now a confessed agnostic, Lindsay was the presenter I appreciated the most. He was an objective observer of the Church, making his insight valu-

ably unbiased. In fact, his observations were a “Trojan Horse” of sorts when it came to the overall vibe of the event.

During his presentation, he referred to Brazilian philosopher and educator Paulo Freire, the father of Critical Pedagogy, as one of Critical Theory’s truest originators. As he did, he made a stinging observation that had many in the room pulling back on their amens and alleluias. He said that fundamental to Freire’s position was the deconstruction of the traditional churches. Lest he offend his hosts outrightly, Lindsay implied that Freire didn’t appear concerned about the newer, more contemporary churches. These churches were already apart from what could shield their deeper connection to truth. They’d given it up voluntarily in their efforts to be found acceptable to the world rather than distinct from it. He inferred that the framework of contemporary churches (whether they’re willing

raised my hand. The microphone runner seemed to avoid me with incredible precision at first. But I kept my hand up. Eventually, someone nearby pleaded my case, and I was granted the last question. The runner handed me the microphone just as the moderator announced that only two minutes remained for the final question. Already somewhat familiar with Freire, especially his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, I asked him if it would be a good idea for mainstream evangelical churches—many of which seem to epitomize the description of chasing after emotional experiences—to start moving back toward embracing creedal traditions that have proven in history to help shield Christians from deceptive ideologies like Critical Theory. Secondly, I asked what suggestions he might offer to churches that want to begin such a return. Before Dr. Lindsay could answer, another speaker sitting beside him took the microphone (much to Dr. Lindsay’s wide-eyed surprise) and re-

In summary, one of Critical Theory’s most influential proprietors appeared to believe that traditional churches were society’s last line of defense against its pedagogies.

to admit it or not) is primarily experiential—the manipulation of emotional highs and lows. He explained this as the best platform for replacing hard and fast truth with subjective sensitivity, namely, making what someone “feels” about truth the center of the experience. On the flip side, he sensed Freire’s concern for traditional churches being natural fortresses against this strategy. Freire believed them to be set apart from culture by objective boundaries. Their creeds hold the line on what is and is not true. Their traditions and worship practices are near impenetrable expressions of those truths. It would seem in Freire’s mind, if Critical Pedagogy was going to help usher in a purer era of socialism, the traditional churches needed to be the target of the effort’s heaviest artillery. Tear down the traditional institutions and rebuild new ones. The contemporary churches have already proven themselves willing to follow along in stride, being shaped by their inherent desires for acceptability to the culture rather than expecting the culture to conform to the truths they hold dear.

In summary, one of Critical Theory’s most influential proprietors appeared to believe that traditional churches were society’s last line of defense against its pedagogies.

Strangely, Dr. Lindsay’s presentation was the only one of the many I attended that allowed questions. Of course, I

turned to the premise that it’s not about style but rather that pastors just need to be courageous.

“You guys just need to be brave. All we really need from you is to step outside your comfort zones and show some courage.”

That was it. The session was over. But I wasn’t done. I ended up connecting with Dr. Lindsay backstage. We had a wonderfully refreshing conversation.

I suppose one of the lessons I learned at this conference is that anyone can prattle on about courage, but in the end, genuine courage is conditional. In other words, the value of any particular belief or effort cannot necessarily be judged by the amount of courage it takes to defend it. Foolishness can very easily be mistaken for courage. Genuine courage can only serve as a natural application for objective truth. It results in a willingness to live and die for truth when living for it will be hard and dying for it will be easy. But it only really associates so viscerally in this way with truth, not lies. Dying for a lie is not courage but foolishness.

Foolishness, not cowardice, is courage’s truest opposite.

Foolishness thinks going against natural law and touting one’s confused sexuality is brave. Foolishness believes disrupting a pro-life rally by shouting “My body, my choice!” takes guts. Foolishness believes that canceling someone for

expressing an opposing opinion is valorous. Foolishness thinks that a fifty-year-old man who leaves his wife and children to live as a six-year-old transsager/transgender girl is valiantly embracing what he feels is his most authentic identity. On similar fronts, foolishness believes creedal things such as pledges and confessional statements of belief are dangerously divisive. Foolishness considers tradition, whether wearing vestments for worship or favoring marriage between one man and one woman, as blind conformity that suppresses progress. Foolishness believes that historic rites and ceremonies, whether kneeling for prayer with hands folded, eyes closed, and head bowed, or standing for the national anthem with your hand over your heart, are all mechanically spiritless and often representative of past oppression.

But in reality, why is foolishness so opposed to these things? Firstly, foolishness cannot tolerate anything that would bind the subjective desires of the radical self to someone or something else's standards. This intolerance foretells the Last Day's future turmoil. When the divine lights come on at the Last Day, the radically individualized self will be measured against God's standards, not its own. Secondly, these things teach. They are ancient conduits for communicating truth from one generation to the next. Freire's sincerest point is that cultural transformation begins by first tearing down the old and its conduits and erecting the new.

I left the conference with a better view of some things. I hope I'm wrong, but it sure seems as though many of America's mainstream churches—perhaps more accurately, their pastors—while they might not be holding hands with the Marxist left, seem to be in a pinky-finger relationship with certain Marxist ideologies. In that sense, they have far too much in common, and that's incredibly troubling.

I've already shared all this in a lengthy phone conversation with Charlie's folks. They need to understand that no small number of clergy and church leaders from some of the largest denominations in the world—many of

whom I continue doing my level best to encourage toward engagement in the public square—would be disinclined to show up at such an event. And if they did attend, perhaps worse, they would likely feel validated in their desire toward disunity and disengagement. Again, I don't want that. We need to be working together.

I don't know for sure how Charlie will receive my commentary. Nevertheless, I know him to be a godly and contemplative man, so I'm assuming he'll at least consider the perspective, taking from it what is helpful toward making next year's event even better. ❧

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Defend the Rights of the Poor and Needy



For nearly five decades, America held her collective breath and waited. Would the highest court in the land judge righteously? Would the Supreme Court of the United States defend the rights of the neediest and most vulnerable people

in the land?

Year after year, the eyes of all looked to see if nine black-robed judges might utter the magic words that would protect unborn lives. Year after year another million children were lost, their parents wounded, their families hollowed out.

But why were we waiting? Is not God's command clear and immediate? "Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy" (Prov. 31:9). The imperatives are personal and singular. Nothing in these words requires others to act. Much less do they require you to wait for permission to act.

Imagine a world in which citizens were legally forbidden to stop a public lynching. Consider a country where it is illegal to defend some ethnic or religious class. Would such laws be valid? Could Christians obey them? Would the situation be improved if such lynchings were performed in a clinic dedicated to the purpose? If doctors in white coats perform hideous medical procedures after the proper people had signed legal forms, does evil thus become good?

These are not idle questions. Christians have faced them before. Hindsight is not hampered by moral uncertainty. We judge evil unqualifiedly—as we judge those who turn a blind eye to atrocities. The Nuremberg defense is indefensible, either by Scripture or by natural law. The cold, steady

eye of posterity inevitably sees through even the densest fog of the cultural wars.

With 20/20 vision, we haughtily assure ourselves that we would have been on the right side of history. Like Peter, we tell ourselves that we would interpose ourselves between Christ and the crowd even if all others fall away. But in Caiaphas' courtyard—in the actual glow of the warming fire—smoke blurs our vision.

Posterity's steady gaze is not colored by the firelight but sees the world by the heavenly light of the Upper Room. There, Peter's vow to interpose came from a Christian heart, and was confirmed by the Scriptural lives of the saints. Jonathan, Esther, Joseph and others saw injustice for what it was, and acted to protect the innocent.

Interposition is neither insurrection nor complicity in evil. It is a full and free exercise of one's vocation to do always, and only, the right thing. Jonathan revealed court secrets to save David (1 Samuel 19 & 20). Esther unlawfully exploited the favor of King Ahasuerus (Esther 4:14-16). Joseph secreted the infant Jesus from the sword of Herod (Matthew 2:13-14).

In every case, interposition involves both vocational wisdom and personal risk. It is a uniquely Christian doctrine because it recognizes the divine authority of every office—even the lowliest of offices—while never ceding the ultimate Lordship of Christ. Lord, grant us such wisdom and fortitude in our day!

God granted such wisdom to lawmakers in Texas in May 2021. A year before SCOTUS overturned Roe, the Texas Heartbeat Act¹ effectively circumvented it. Its genius lay in its enforcement mechanism. Rather than states defying

federal fiat, individual citizens—fathers, grandmothers, and friends—were given standing to sue abortion clinics for unlawful death. This kept the matter away from federal jurisdiction.

For decades the Court had overturned state laws in “pre-enforcement challenges.” Last September it could not. Thus Texas blazed a trail² that was followed a year later by the state of Oklahoma.³

More important than the subtle legal maneuverings in Texas and Oklahoma is the steadfast resolve of all who refused to concede to manifest injustice. They did not wait for those in high office to cease their own ungodly actions. Rather, they made full use of their lower offices to protect the children under their own care from manifest injustice.

In early May, an anonymous actor leaked Justice Alito’s draft opinion on *Dobbs v. Jackson*. The leak triggered pro-abortion activists into obnoxious and illegal contortions designed to keep the draft from becoming the official opinion of the Court. The gambit failed. The five concurring justices held the line.

During the seven weeks of suspended animation—between the leak and its becoming official—observers of culture came to a bracing realization. Even if Chief Justice Roberts had prevailed in his feverish efforts to save *Roe* from extinction, Alito’s words could never be unsaid. The sheer power of Alito’s reasoning forever impeached any constitutional, statutory, jurisprudential, or moral legitimacy that *Roe* and *Casey* seemed to hold.

During those seven weeks, Christians were forced to ponder how they would respond if one of the five tried to unsay what had already been said. We were in a position to see, in real time, the judgment of our children and grandchildren. After such clarity, could we ever again pretend that *Roe* was legitimate?

Alito’s leaked draft blew away the smoke of the warming fire long enough for us to remember the doctrine of interposition. When higher authorities fail in their God-given duty, lower authorities are not required by God to follow suit. The duty of interposition summons every individual to be both wise and bold and to do always, and only, the right thing.

Now we are poised to put this doc-

trine into practice. For as much as the *Dobbs* decision was true and praiseworthy, it stopped short of justice. It declined to protect every human life as legitimate governments are duty-bound to do. Rather, it merely took the federal judiciary out of the game. One illegitimate claim to power has been deflated. But justice will still require wisdom and courage on the part of every office holder.

The unborn will still need governors to protect them from federal injustice. State legislators will still need to craft laws that defend the innocent from congressional overreach. County commissions, city councils, fathers, mothers, and grandparents must never again wait for someone else to act. But wisely and courageously use all the authority that God has vested in even the lowest office to “open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.” 🙏

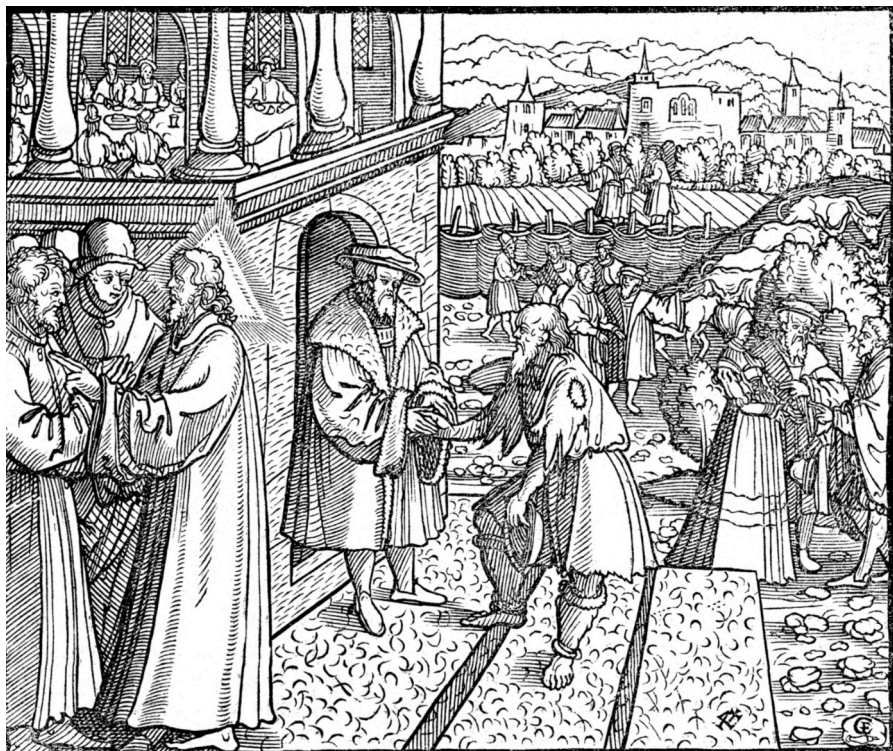
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End Notes

¹ <https://capitol.texas.gov/tlodocs/87R/billtext/pdf/SB00008F.pdf>

² <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/texas-absolutely-genius-victory-for-life/>

³ <https://dailycaller.com/2022/06/05/opinion-roe-v-wade-is-already-dead-josh-hammer/>





Bad Company Corrupts Good Morals

The Only Way To Keep a Lutheran College Lutheran



There's a lot of talk about mission drift in our universities. President Harrison, God bless him, recently pointed it out in the case of Concordia University Wisconsin. The basic concept is that a college drifts away from its mission because of a self-survival instinct. It takes money to operate a college. What good is a mission if you can't fulfill it? But if you compromise it a bit, let it drift into something a little different, then more students will come, then the accreditors will be happy, then the institution can survive. This drift in mission was very obvious in the woke Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity push at Wisconsin, obvious enough to create the stir it did and invite a visitation from the president of Synod. But in all the talk of mission drift, what gets lost is a more important and far-reaching change that has taken place in all conservative Lutheran institutions of higher learning, not just in the LCMS, but in the ELS and WELS. And that is not simply a drift in mission, but a complete shift, a change. The shift was not so much in the change from two-year to four-year colleges,¹ but the unspoken assumption that went with that change, that all of these colleges needed to grow, get bigger. And in order for that to happen, they needed to attract non-Lutheran students. It started slowly, but it increased exponentially at the end of the twentieth century, until the Concordias all became majority non-Lutheran, and Bethany (ELS) and Wisconsin Lutheran (WELS) are at least approaching that mark. And this is the great shift: from being a Lutheran college preparing Lutherans for life in the church and the world to being a Lutheran college preparing anyone, even non-Christians, for careers in the world.

Every single Concordia was founded to be a Lutheran institution for Lutheran students with Lutheran professors. The main focus was to educate church workers, pastors and

teachers. Since this paper was originally presented in Nebraska, I'll give a shout out to Seward, because it has retained a strong focus on this mission and continues to supply the majority of church workers to Synod. It also has the most Lutheran student body, at least among the undergraduates, at 50%. This is by far the best among the Concordias. Wisconsin is less than 40% Lutheran among its undergraduates. The others aren't even close. But all of the Concordias, Bethany, and WLC abandoned the all-Lutheran approach. Their mission ceased to be by Lutherans and for Lutherans. The professors aren't all Lutheran. In most cases, the majority of professors are non-Lutheran. And the students are majority non-Lutheran. It is this great shift that brings with it everything else—high cost of tuition, woke pressure, careerism, financial instability, and secular culture. The original mission is found in pockets—pre-sem programs and theology faculties and sometimes chapel worship—but the mission itself has not simply drifted; it has shifted entirely.

The great shift is a money problem as much as a theology problem. The two are completely intertwined. If you have seventy majors to attract thousands of undergraduate students, and if you have built many massive buildings to accommodate all these majors and students, it takes millions, even hundreds of millions, to meet budget each year. If you don't meet that budget or fall short of it by too much, you end up bankrupt and closed like Portland, Bronxville, or Selma. But in order to bring in that kind of money, you need not only to hike up your tuition, but to attract as many students as possible. And that means attracting more and more non-Lutheran students. The basic trend at the Concordias, Bethany, and WLC is that their Lutheran student population has remained static throughout the last decades, it hasn't changed, but their growth has been rapid and it is due entirely to non-Lutherans filling the ranks,

until the Lutherans are a heavy minority and the entire culture of the campus changes. As of 2019, if you included graduate students, the percentage of Lutherans in the Concordia University System was only 11%.²

The tuition of the conservative Lutheran colleges and universities averages around \$30,000 a year. Add to that room and board, books and fees, and the yearly price tag hovers around \$50,000. As interim president of Concordia Wisconsin, Dr. Cario, recently pointed out, the expected decrease in student enrollment across all colleges and universities in the coming years is 15%. At Concordia Wisconsin that would be a reduction of over 300 undergraduates. Multiply 300 and \$50,000 and you get a \$15,000,000 loss in revenue a year. These are the kinds of differences, crushing differences, student enrollment makes when you charge these high prices for tuition. So the push is for growth. Grow bigger and you will be financially stable. But what does this growth mean for the mission of the college?

First, it means bringing in non-Lutheran students. I cannot stress how important this is for the mission of a Lutheran college. Most of the people you go to class with aren't Lutheran, don't go to chapel, don't pray before eating, don't have the same views about dating and sex outside of marriage, and this, even more than what you hear from your professors, shapes your reality, shapes your view of how the world works. When I attended Bethany Lutheran College twenty years ago, most of the students were Lutheran and the regular flow of campus life moved from class to chapel. You were the exception if you skipped chapel. It was normal to discuss the sermon afterward. Now at the same college the vast majority don't attend chapel, and despite the college being twice the size it was when I was there, the attendance at chapel is half what it was, even though the same number of Lutherans are there now as when I was there. The culture changed, not just for the non-Lutherans but for the Lutherans. The same trend exists, exponentially so, at the Concordias.

Chapel life is not the life of the campus. It is the life of a tiny minority of the campus. The cohesion—shared Lutheran beliefs and shared moral assumptions—that prevailed years ago simply does not exist.

But this is not only the case with students. It's the case also with faculty and staff. The proliferation of majors needed to drive student population up requires the hiring of more and more professors. And there simply aren't enough Lutherans interested in these positions or qualified to take them. The number one complaint from the faithful presidents of our Concordias is the trouble they have find-

ing Lutheran professors. The positions, though, are not very attractive to most Lutherans, even if the Lutherans are qualified. Let's look at business, for example. A college position might pay you \$50,000 with benefits. But you can make twice as much and more with a job in the real world. And so the college positions are very often attractive only to professional academics, and very few of these are Lutherans. Concordia Chicago made the news this last year after the suspension of Paul Stapleton, an English professor at the university. Stapleton's theatrics after his suspension, which included open opposition against the biblical doctrine on marriage, showed him a pompous liberal and promoter of LGBTQ

A college is not primarily for equipping students for a future career. It is for equipping them to live as Christians in the church and the home and the world. This has to be the goal of a Lutheran college or it will necessarily slip into worldliness, compromise the first things in order to gain the secondary.

anti-culture. But he taught at CUC for years. Thank God for President Dawn at Chicago and Dr. Francisco who have consistently acknowledged the problem and taken big steps to correct it. Chicago cut 15 programs and dozens of faculty and staff in 2020 in order to make the university accord with a Lutheran mission. But the problem remains. Most of the faculty is non-Lutheran and more than eighty percent of the student body is non-Lutheran. In order to survive, they need to market themselves to non-Lutherans and they need to hire non-Lutheran faculty. In response to bad press attacking Concordia Chicago for lack of diversity in the wake of the Paul Stapleton fiasco, the university is quoted in the Chicago Tribune, "Concordia-Chicago has

been very clear that it openly accepts students, faculty and staff of all faiths as members of the University community.”³ This is simply the reality all the Concordias have to work with, even when you have the best president and provost imaginable.

All the conservative Lutheran colleges and universities now have a campus community that is in fact religiously and philosophically diverse—different faiths, different worldviews—and this among both the faculty and the student population. It does not take a perceptive person to notice that this is a shift, not a drift, in mission from the original purpose of these institutions. The push for more majors was made without regard to the obvious fact that it would be impossible to fill the faculty positions with Lutherans and it was done without regard to the obvious fact that it would attract a non-Lutheran student population. The Lord Jesus asks, “For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’” (Luke 14:28-31). We simply did not count the cost of these decisions. And the cost is the loss of the original mission: an all-Lutheran faculty with all-Lutheran students for the good of the Church.

Accreditation has played a role in this also. When Dr. Gregory Schulz publicly stated that accreditation concerns played a role in the woke agenda at Concordia Wisconsin, the administration openly retorted that this was a lie. It was not a lie. It was and is obvious and it’s embarrassing not to admit it. The Higher Learning Commission (HLC), which accredits all of the Lutheran colleges in the Midwest, has a five-year plan called EVOLVE 2025, where it states that “an equity framework should permeate...all levels of institutions (e.g., students, staff, faculty and governing boards)” and then further states that “HLC will ensure that concepts of equity, diversity, access and inclusion are demonstrated in its mission and other foundational statements.”⁴ Their visitation teams lecture the administration and faculty on how overly white and non-diverse our Lutheran colleges are. The expectation is for more women in authority, more non-white faculty, staff, students, and regents, and more public acceptance or toleration of LGBTQ or BLM-type groups. If any of our Lutheran colleges or universities loses accreditation they will go bankrupt almost immediately. Enrollment will dip so drastically that it would be impossible to sustain their enormous budgets. Every regent knows this and every administrator knows this. The fact that HLC is openly woke and pushes

wokeness on the institutions it accredits is a problem and an obvious factor in the leftward shift.

Sports have also played a role in shifting away from Lutheran culture. They have led to the active recruitment of non-Lutherans. They have sunk millions of dollars into stadiums and buildings that make the yearly operation of the universities far more expensive, which requires more students to pay the bills and so more dependence on non-Lutheran attendance. Once again, no one cared to count the cultural and missional cost of expanding organized sports on our campuses.

A word here about the “missional” argument for inviting so many non-Lutherans onto campus. The argument goes like this: We are a mission. We bring the unchurched and the non-Lutheran in and then they learn the Christian and Lutheran faith, and so we are spreading the Gospel. It does happen occasionally that people are converted to Christianity or become Lutherans because they attend these colleges. Thank God for that. But it happens rarely, because the non-Lutherans outnumber the Lutherans. And it is undeniable that the influence goes the other way too. When most people around you aren’t Lutherans, there will be little encouragement to become one, especially when most majors do not require much instruction in the faith at all—one class, most of the time, and there is no chapel requirement at all.

But the theological and cultural problem is also the financial problem at these institutions. The business plan is unworkable. The times are coming, and are now here, when young men and women will not want to go into outrageous amounts of debt to get a college education. As I said, the estimate is a 15% decrease across the board. That’s a conservative estimate. And it will hit institutions like the Concordias harder than other institutions. Hillsdale College, for instance, won’t suffer. Hillsdale now has a 20% acceptance rate, compared to a 55% acceptance rate a few years ago. People really want to go there. But only one in five who apply get in. If the number of students applying decreases by 15% it doesn’t matter at all. And in fact the number of students applying won’t decrease. It will increase, because Hillsdale is known for being conservative and for being academically rigorous and for being pro-American. And it has already maxed out its student population. It’s not growing any bigger. It has found a niche, acknowledged its limitations, been true to its mission, and so secured its future. It has no money problems at all. Lutheran money, a lot of conservative Lutheran money, has gone to Hillsdale instead of to our Concordias, because Hillsdale found a niche that the Concordias, Bethany, and

WLC easily could have joined. That is the classical, conservative niche. But there is no classics department at any of these Lutheran colleges, and the word “conservative” is hard to find on their websites—at least not in any positive sense.⁵

Dr. Cario at Concordia Wisconsin openly acknowledged in a virtual town hall that other sources of revenue will have to be found in order to make up the enormous difference this impending 15% decrease in student population will bring.⁶ The closures of Portland and Bronxville are the proverbial writing on the wall. Charging \$30,000 a year tuition and relying on non-Lutheran students for tuition revenue, while trying to maintain massive campuses that were built for a much larger student population, is an unenviable position to be in. It is in recognition of the great shift and the financial issues that it involves that the Board of Directors of Synod and the Board of the Concordia University System will be recommending through the 7-03 committee, that the LCMS vote in its 2023 convention to change its relationship with the Concordias. If the resolution passes, and it almost certainly will, the Concordias will receive theological accreditation from the LCMS and be associated with the LCMS, but the Concordia University System will be dissolved and the assets will be released to the individual universities.⁷

And so we come to the actual point of this essay, which is not how to make a Lutheran college non-Lutheran, but the opposite, how to keep a Lutheran college Lutheran. We are starting a new Lutheran college and we often get the question, “How can you be sure Luther Classical College will remain Lutheran?” How do we avoid the great shift that happened to every single Lutheran college in this country? We learn from history. Those who don’t are doomed to repeat it.

1.

First, a Lutheran college is for Lutheran students. It is not an outreach to unbelievers. Outreach happens elsewhere, and the students of Luther Classical will be eager to reach out to unbelievers, because they’ll know their Lutheran doctrine and they will love it and they will want to share it with anyone who will listen. They’ll experience the joy of singing Lutheran hymns with fellow Lutherans. They’ll see the knowledge and happiness that liberalism and unbelief robs from people. And they’ll learn from their professors and their fellow students what it means to be a city set on a hill and the light of the world, as Jesus says His Christians are.

So every student at Luther Classical College will sign a

Lutheran faith statement, conservative, confessing the Bible as the inerrant Word of God and the Lutheran faith as they have learned it from the Small Catechism to be faithful and true. They will promise to attend church faithfully and chapel daily. They will promise by the grace of God, as they did at their confirmation, to live a godly life to the glory of God, and in faith, word, and deed, remain true to God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit even unto death. Every single student at Luther Classical College will be a conservative, confessional Lutheran. No exceptions, ever.

This acknowledges the enormous importance of community at a college. The reason so many send their kids off to college and then receive them back changed—liberal and rebellious against what they had learned at home—is not mainly because of what they are taught at university, but because of who they were with. When those around you think like heathen, you will not remain unaffected. Bad company corrupts good morals. God said that. But good company creates good morals. I’ve seen it. The reason Lutheran hymns ring out in my house every day is not because anyone told me to sing hymns with my family. It’s because I saw it again and again and I loved it and then I did it naturally. And that is what happens on a college campus filled with Lutherans who love Lutheran theology and hymnody and who sincerely want to live virtuous,



Christian lives. Beautiful culture is lived and it gets handed down and shared and then invigorates every congregation these students end up making their home.

2.

Second, a Lutheran college has Lutheran professors. If we are seriously going to say that every subject taught in college has something to do with Christ, then we had better make sure that every professor teaching is a Lutheran, specifically, an LCMS Lutheran. And more specifically, an LCMS Lutheran who agrees completely with our conservative, Lutheran mission, because every single class at Luther Classical College will be taught from a Lutheran perspective. The lie is that there is such a thing as neutrality in teaching. There isn't. Everyone is biased. You can't teach literature without one bias or another, or you wouldn't be able to speak or comment at all. And the selection of literature to read is already a theological, biased decision. Why read Milton's *Paradise Lost* and not, say, James Joyce's *Ulysses*? Because one teaches virtue and censors vice and the other teaches vice and censures virtue. And you certainly can't teach science, the study of God's creation, without bias, or what our moderns call "theory." Your theory is either that God is Creator or not, that He is actively involved still in maintaining His creation or not. So you never compromise on this. Not a single professor can be anything but a confessional, conservative Lutheran, who lives his life like it and is an example to the students.

3.

Third, a Lutheran college has Lutheran goals. The careerism that has taken over higher education is so obviously of the world. Jesus says, "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God" (Matt. 6:33), not second, after career. In fact, when He says that we should plan and count the cost before we build, He says, "Whoever does not take up his cross and follow Me cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:27). Plan and count the cost, knowing what it takes to remain a Christian in this world. A college is not primarily for equipping

students for a future career. It is for equipping them to live as Christians in the church and the home and the world. This has to be the goal of a Lutheran college or it will necessarily slip into worldliness, compromise the first things in order to gain the secondary. That's not to say the secondary considerations aren't there. Students, especially men, need to be able to provide for their families. God says that the person who doesn't provide for his own family is worse than an unbeliever (1 Tim. 5:8). But a classical education will give the type of intelligence, hard-work ethic, speaking ability, clarity of thought, and respect for authority that employers across the spectrum are looking for. But you never make the secondary primary. It is more important that our children remain Christian and Lutheran than

that they gain the mammon of this world. (As a side note, no one is complaining about not getting a job after graduating from places like Hillsdale or Wyoming Catholic College or New Saint Andrews. Their rate of graduates getting jobs is better than our Lutheran colleges.)

4.

Fourth, a Lutheran college doesn't get entangled in the world. A Lutheran college runs by Lutheran

support, not by funding that comes from an increasingly hostile government. There are always strings attached to the money the government gives. And as our government—obviously the Democrats but also the Republicans, with very few exceptions—as our government becomes more and more friendly toward the LGBTQ agenda, we will see strings attached to the money it lends or grants to students. We've already seen this related to Diversity and Equity and Inclusion. It's already happening. Hillsdale can do what it does and say what it says, it can remain so vocally conservative, in large part because it doesn't accept government funds. The same is true of New Saint Andrews College and many others. It's far past time that we have a Lutheran college doing the same. I was informed recently that even if we at Luther Classical College tried to change our mind on receiving government aid or seeking more liberal accreditation, it's already too late. We've said too much. We're too conservative and unapologetically

It is not only possible to keep a Lutheran college Lutheran. It has to be done. And it has to be done with purpose from the very start. That is exactly what we are doing at Luther Classical College.

Lutheran. So we are blessedly locked in—no federal funding; and our accreditation will have to be friendly to Bible-believing Christians.

Besides this, the access to federal funding also drives up the cost of tuition. The kids can borrow the money from the government, so you can drive up the cost of attendance. That's what happens. It's time for us to realize that it's immoral to impose crippling debt on our children. I have a friend who ended up \$200,000 in debt going to Concordias. He was irresponsible, obviously. But he was also a kid. No financial officer should have allowed that. And while that may be an extreme example, it's not uncommon to find a husband and wife coming out of a Lutheran college with well over \$100,000 in debt. And then they make life decisions based on this debt—not based on the Bible, but based on debt. They put off having children, even though children are a gift from the Lord and would make their life so much happier, because a hundred thousand dollars can't give you a hug or say, "I love you, Daddy," or, "I love you, Mommy." They get sucked into careerism and make their goal in life paying off debt and then saving enough to retire. It becomes all about money. We have adopted a system that is systemically anti-family and pro-money. We are Christians. We are pro-family. We cannot allow our children to go into these loads of debt.

5.

And this means a Lutheran college has to be an affordable college. Luther Classical College is purposely setting our tuition at \$8,500 a year, because a student can make that amount in a summer of working. I made \$6,000 a summer twenty years ago when I worked my way through college. You can make \$8,500 a summer working at Walmart or waiting tables. And if you get scholarships, the cost will be easily manageable.

How can we afford to do this, charge only \$8,500? The answer is twofold. First, we can't. We don't want to be able to afford it. We want Lutheran support that will make it possible. And we're getting it. Fifty congregations are supporting LCC right now. Our goal is a hundred by the end of the year, and we'll get it by God's grace. We don't want to survive as an institution without Lutheran—congregational and individual—support. Second, we actually can afford it, because Luther Classical College won't have a ridiculous number of faculty and staff. We'll only need twelve full-time professors. Twelve. Because everyone at Luther Classical College will take basically the same classes—80% or more of the classes. There will be only one major. We won't have a business major, a marketing major,

an underwater basket-weaving major. Employers aren't even looking for these majors anymore. They're looking for competence. Teach everyone to be competent, to speak well, think well, to be hard working, to be respectful, and they will be able to learn just about anything. Ask anyone whether he learned more in college or more on the job, and the answer is always the same. You learn by doing, so long as you have a good foundation. And that's what a classical education gives: a beautiful foundation. This is how New Saint Andrews does it in Moscow, Idaho and Wyoming Catholic College in Lander, Wyoming, and they've had amazing success. You cut out the bureaucracy and the proliferation of majors⁸ and the sports and the pampering programs, and college becomes affordable again.

6.

The great shift took place in all three synods because the colleges wanted to get bigger than their mission allowed. It is puzzling to me why this was ever a goal, getting bigger. Why? But it was a goal and it spelt not only the shift in mission and the non-Lutheran population but also the rising tuition. So it's also essential that a Lutheran college remain small, in the same way as a Lutheran congregation should remain relatively small. If you get much over 300 regular attenders, start a new congregation. A pastor can't take care of 1500 souls. He can't even know all their names. So it goes with a college. Once Luther Classical College has to start turning down qualified applicants, we'll start another college. We've got a few places in mind already.

7.

Finally, a Lutheran college can never be impressed by the academic elite. The LCMS and Lutherans in America have an inferiority complex. We have the greatest doctrine, the pure teaching of Scripture, but we want to flirt with secularians. We have the best music—we have Bach!—and we adopt schmaltzy fluff or embarrassingly repetitive soft rock from our inferiors. So it goes with academia. We have the greatest knowledge and tradition in the world, and we apologize for it and seek after the recognition of fools who are wise in their own eyes. Religious academics are famously terrified of being called fundamentalists, of being *that* type of Christian: so ignorant as to believe in the verbally inspired Word of God, so backward as to believe in a young earth, so bigoted as to believe in the divinely created differences between men and women. It's time we defend the fundamentals and scoff at an academy that believes sci-fi theories of humans evolving from slime and searches for nothing in history, the Bible, or literature but gender and

gay theory. We know the better way, the best way. And we need to be unapologetic about pursuing it. We have nothing to hide when we pursue knowledge purposefully as confessional, Bible-believing Lutherans. And that, by the way, is all “classical” means: an honest, God-fearing, patriotic, conservative pursuit of knowledge in every area, from math to science, literature, history, theology, music, and language.

It is not only possible to keep a Lutheran college Lutheran. It has to be done. And it has to be done with purpose from the very start. That is exactly what we are doing at Luther Classical College. We start classes in Fall of 2025. Professors are excited to come on board and students can't wait to attend. We conservative, confessional Lutherans have to be done wringing our hands. It's time to build up the good and the beautiful and the bold and look forward to the bright future of the Lutheran Church in our native land. ☞

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

End Notes

¹ As J.A.O. Preus pointed out fifty years ago, this spelled the end of the “system” and the senior college.

² <https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/27Hs9niRSnV7fL5Xj5RaQqPeBq3dziJ?>

³ <https://www.chicagotribune.com/suburbs/river-forest/ct-rfl-concordia-tl-0519-20220517-t7y3wgwwpfvj6thexb4zgrju-story.html>

⁴ <https://www.hlcommission.org/About-HLC/evolve-2025-equity.html>

⁵ Compare the following from CUW's vice provost, Dr. Michael Uden, “Yet even amid a shared global experience, our sinful human nature still attempts to divide and conquer us. We focus on measurements and definitions regarding our differences—vaccinated vs. unvaccinated, conservative vs. progressive, caring vs. calloused.” This is typical of LCMSers, as if the conservative vs. progressive is not also Christ vs. Satan! <https://blog.cuw.edu/advent-preface/>

⁶ February 24, 11am CST, virtual townhall.

⁷ <https://files.lcms.org/file/preview/27Hs9niRSnV7fL5Xj5RaQqPeBq3dziJ?>

⁸ CUW boasts over 70.

Watch this paper presented by the author:
<https://youtu.be/dlZJnQK4csY>





A Discussion on John Donne's La Corona, part seven, Ascension

Salute the last and everlasting day,
Joy at th' uprising of this Sun, and Son,
Ye whose true tears, or tribulation¹
Have purely wash'd, or burnt your drossy clay.
Behold, the Highest, parting hence away,
Lightens the dark clouds, which He treads upon;
Nor doth He by ascending show alone,
But first He, and He first enters the way.
O strong Ram, which hast batter'd heaven for me!
Mild Lamb, which with Thy Blood hast mark'd the path!
Bright Torch, which shinest,² that I the way may see!
O, with Thy own Blood quench Thy own just wrath;
And if Thy Holy Spirit³ my Muse did raise,
Deign at my hands this crown of prayer and praise.⁴



John Donne was born in 1572 to a recusant family in England. To be recusant meant that one practiced Roman Catholicism, which was illegal in England at that time. Privately educated, he could not graduate from university since he would not take the Oath of Supremacy, which required state and church officials to acknowledge the monarch of England as the head of the church in England. During and after his education, Donne led a prodigal life, literally wasting his inheritance on women, literature, pastimes, and travel. He was a soldier and chief secretary to Sir Thomas Egerton.

Donne secretly married Anne More in 1601, against the wishes of her father. This ruined Donne's career and brought him to prison. After prison, Donne lived a life of financial insecurity. His wife Anne bore him twelve children in sixteen years of marriage. The stresses of life were

almost too much for Donne to bear, leading him to write his unpublished work *Bianthanatos*, his defense of suicide. Anne died after bearing a stillborn child, their twelfth, in 1617. Donne mourned her deeply and commemorated her in his 17th Holy Sonnet.

Having converted from Roman Catholicism to Anglicanism, Donne was awarded an honorary doctorate in divinity from Cambridge University and became a Royal Chaplain. In 1621 Donne was made Dean of St. Paul's, a position he held until his death in 1631.

Donne is the main and best known representative of the movement known as metaphysical poetry. Donne's life grants us an insight into his poetry. Donne's earliest poetry was profane and erotic. The misfortunes in Donne's life seared away the stubble of fleeting eroticism to a lasting, eternal pleasure of Christ. His challenges to death and the grave on the basis of Christ's resurrection and ascension are powerfully depicted in poems like "Death be not Proud." In fact, the last sermon that the dying Donne preached was entitled "Death's Duel," based upon Psalm 68:20. His last words were these: "[W]e leave you in that blessed dependency, to hang upon him that hangs upon the cross, there bathe in his tears, there suck at his wounds, and lie down in peace in his grave, till he vouchsafe you a resurrection, and an ascension into that kingdom which He hath prepared for you with the inestimable price of his incorruptible blood. Amen."

John Donne's magnificent sonnet cycle is entitled "La Corona," or "The Crown." A sonnet crown is a sequence of sonnets concerned with a single theme. Each of the sonnets explores one aspect of the theme. The sonnets are not just connected by theme, but they are also connected poetically. The last line of each sonnet is the first line of the next sonnet. And so, after an introductory sonnet, we move

through our Lord's life: the annunciation, nativity, the Boy Jesus at the temple, crucifixion, resurrection, and the ascension. And each sonnet is connected to the previous one, both thematically and by the last line of the preceding sonnet.

One poetic device that Donne employs is called the metaphysical conceit. A metaphysical conceit is a complex, and often lofty, literary device that makes a far-stretched comparison between a spiritual aspect of a person and a physical thing in the world. The first example of this is the Son of God, who ascends to heaven just like the sun rises in the morning sky. The images of the Son as a sun and a torch teach us that Christ is the Light of the World, which lights the way to heaven. The "darkened clouds" work on both a literal and spiritual level. Our sin, which darkened the heavens, is now dispelled by Christ. This enlightening happens both objectively in the ascension but also subjectively in our hearts.

But Christ's ascension not only shows the way to heaven by illumination. Christ has opened heaven for us by waging spiritual warfare. Donne uses a beautiful and complex image of Jesus as a ram. Christ is a battering ram, knocking down heaven's pearly gates on our behalf. But this image of a ram is also nuanced when he uses "mild Lamb" in the next line. Here, we see that Christ is both a battering ram, but also a sacrificial ram, whose blood quenches "Thy own just wrath." This collage of images recalls warfare, forgiveness, the Old Testament sacrificial system, and its connection to the crucifixion of Christ.

I encourage all of you to not only read this poem, but to learn it by heart. Its imagery is not only beautiful, but it accurately and poignantly teaches us how important and necessary Christ's ascension was for us. 🐏

Rev. Travis Berg is Associate Pastor and Headmaster of Trinity Lutheran Church and School in Cheyenne, Wyoming.

End Notes

¹ Pronounced Tri-bu-lay-shee-un

² "Shinest" may be pronounced as "shin'st" to keep the meter, or left as an irregularity.

³ Pronounced throughout Donne as one syllable.

⁴ A sonnet uses iambic pentameter, or five measures (feet) of iambs, which are usually two syllables of an unstressed and then stressed syllable (buh-BUM), ten syllables altogether. Donne knows the rules and breaks them beautifully in this sonnet to emphasize certain words and make the pace less monotonous.





Prospectus for

LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE

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

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

Prospective Opening: Fall, 2025

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

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

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

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

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



LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE

Individual Support

Ways to Support LCC

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

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

Patron Program: Join our Patron Program and pledge monthly gifts of **\$10, \$25, \$50, \$100, or \$250**. Patron members help us to cover start-up and building costs in these years leading up to our opening. As a special thank you for pledging recurring support, we like to send Patron Program members LCC merchandise gifts from our online store.

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

You can also ask your church to become a Supporting Congregation. With **over 50 supporting congregations as of October**, our goal is to have **100 by the end of the year!**

How to Give

1. Online: scan the QR code to be directed right to our website or go online to www.lutherclassical.org/support.



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

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

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



How It Happened in the Times of Lot



The following is a translation of an article which appeared in the January 22, 1901 issue of *Der Lutheraner*, under the title “Wie es geschah zu den Zeiten Lot.” The author is Friedrich Pfotenhauer, who at the time served as a parish pastor and as president of the Minnesota and Dakota District of the Missouri Synod. Pfotenhauer later served as president of the Missouri Synod (1911-1935). Pfotenhauer’s words are a sober reminder that we must teach our children of the dangers and snares we encounter living in this fallen world. Even more, they are a message of hope in our Savior, whose blood covers all sin. ❧

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

How It Happened in the Times of Lot

In Genesis 18:20-21 we read that the Lord spoke to Abraham: “Because the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave, I will go down to see whether they have done altogether according to the outcry that has come to Me.” What were the grave sins which were happening in these cities during the times of Lot? They were the most abominable vices against the Sixth Commandment. The inhabitants of these cities did not commit merely whoredom, but they also lived in unnatural and shameful lusts. Man acted shamefully with man, or one indulged the sensual desires alone, without the fellowship of a suitable person. These horrors cried to God in heaven for vengeance, and so “the Lord rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the Lord out of heaven. And he

overthrew those cities, and all the valley, and all the inhabitants of the cities” (Genesis 19:24-25). On the one hand, God did this to the whoring inhabitants to give them what was due. On the other hand, He did this to set up an example for the godless people still to come (2 Peter 2:6). And He did this for those who live in silent sins, who through self-defilement shame their own bodies, or who satisfy the desires of the flesh in unnatural ways. These may think that their sin is not so serious as whoredom, but they should know that they have arrived upon the last step of depravity. They should learn that God is a holy and jealous God. He is a consuming fire for all those who distort His holy institutions and so abominably shame the body, which God’s hand designed so delicately and marvelously.

God set this example of Sodom and Gomorrah in place for all times. Has the world taken this example to heart? The answer is clear: No. Read the prophets and apostles (Isaiah 3:9, Ezekiel 16:48-50, Romans 1:24-32, 2 Peter 2, Jude 7-8). You will recognize that with Sodom’s demise Sodom’s sin has not ceased. Yes, our Savior characterizes the last time of the world as downright sodomitic. His words are these: “Likewise, just as it was in the days of Lot...so will it be on the day when the Son of Man is revealed” (Luke 17:28, 30).

The last days of the world are here. We live shortly before the second coming of Jesus Christ. Therefore according to the prophecy of our Savior, the generation of our days is a sodomitic one. Unnatural sins of every kind take the upper hand in shocking ways and corrupt thousands of young men and women. They become the worm-infested fruit, which falls prematurely. The vice of self-defilement wreaks such grisly havoc on body and soul that you can already see the remedies for the consequences of this sin being touted



in all the newspapers and in the secret places of hostels and trains.

Like Lot, our congregations must raise their defenses amongst this sodomitic generation. Our Christians come into closer contact with the children of the world. They hear from them what they do, and they are aroused and enticed to various sins through the evil examples. Or where this does not happen, there the devil himself becomes all the busier. He arouses the sinful flesh, so that the young people step into all kinds of mischief by their own choice. The old evil foe knows that his time is short, so he does all he can to transform the entire world into Sodom and Gomorrah. Oh, what shame and vice must the all-seeing, holy eyes of God look down upon now, how now the cry is so great and the sins of the world so grave! God will not bear it for much longer. Soon He will come down for judgment and condemn the sodomitic world. And now sodomy has also penetrated its way into our congregations. Many among us have already fallen by this pestilence which

prowls in darkness, this disease which spoils the day. They have lost the faith, their good conscience, and the divine sonship. They have also buried the health of their bodies and have become like hollowed-out trees. If God's Spirit does not renew them, they will be useful for nothing, except to be chopped down and thrown into the fire of hell.

The danger which threatens our youth in this regard is too little recognized. Many parents deceive themselves, thinking that they have nothing to fear with their children. Or they are embarrassed to talk about these things with their maturing sons and daughters. What irresponsible shortsightedness! Our Savior already said that our time is just like it was in the times of Lot in Sodom and Gomorrah. It is no wonder that many a victim of self-defilement complains, "Would that I had been warned! Then I would have refrained from such a sin, but neither my parents nor my pastor made me pay any attention. So I have sunk down step by step and now recognize that it is too late. What a horror I have committed!" There are those whom God has

appointed to be caretakers and watchmen over the young people, who must give an account for them. Would that they recognize the seriousness of the time! Would that all preachers, teachers and above all, all parents, take seriously their office, so that as far as it depends on us, our youth lead a chaste and disciplined life and keep body and soul undefiled.

We have so much opportunity for warning and teaching. The preachers have confirmation instruction, the pulpit, the confessional, and the announcement. The teachers are in the school. Parents have home devotions where they can read the Scripture to their children, not to mention their daily contact and interaction. To be sure, this requires great wisdom, which we do not have in and of ourselves. But God desires to give it as an answer to our prayers. James writes, "If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him" (James 1:5).

So what do we say to our maturing youth concerning these things? We have a threefold answer. First we should say to them, that also their heart is by nature evil and inclined to all kinds of impurity, and that they live in a sodomitic world, in which all kinds of abominations are committed openly and shamelessly. Without vigilance, supplication, and prayer, they would certainly soon fall into temptation and snares. Secondly, we should rightly set before them the wrath of our holy God over all impurity and His disgust over all forms of self-defilement. The Lord looks with His great eyes into the most hidden corners and sees what happens. And He "is a righteous judge, and a God who feels indignation every day. If a man does not repent, God will whet His sword; He has bent and readied His bow; He has prepared for him His deadly weapons, making His arrows fiery shafts" (Psalm 7:11-13). The lot of all impure is the pool which burns with sulfur, where their worm does not die and their fire is not quenched. And thirdly, to be sure we know that we do not make our children pious through threats of the law. The wrath of God only somewhat holds the members of the body within outward boundaries, but it does not give a chaste and disciplined heart. Only the Gospel accomplishes this. It is the power of God to save all who believe in it. Therefore we should set before our children God's love in Christ Jesus above all else as their greatest possession. We should always remind them what wealthy, privileged, and blessed people they have become in Holy Baptism. You father and mother, say to your son or your daughter, "My dear child, forget not that your body is a temple of God, a beautiful and glorious house of God, in which the Holy Spirit lives. Therefore do

not defile this temple, and do not grieve the Holy Spirit. See, my child, how your Savior has poured out His blood for you, and He has redeemed you from all impurity. Therefore fight the good fight of faith; grasp the eternal life, to which you have been called."

When we often admonish our children in such an evangelical manner and call upon God to give our words power and lasting impression, they will be able to live in the middle of Sodom and lead chaste and disciplined lives. They will flee the lusts of youth. If they are already trapped in the vice of self-defilement, they can be rescued again and be made healthy in body and soul. The Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians in the first Epistle in chapter 6, "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral...nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality...will inherit the kingdom of God...And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God." Even as the Word of God made holy children of God out of the deep-sunken slaves of vice during Paul's time, so our faithful Savior wills to free all those caught in Satan's trap through his Spirit. His blood washes every mess of sin away, even as it did in Corinth. His good Spirit is able to work holy resolutions in those weakened by the vice of self-defilement, so that they can lead a chaste and disciplined life. He is able to set their feet on the narrow way, which leads to life. May none of these unfortunate people, who have come to a recognition of their confusion, despair of rescue. But let them entrust it to Jesus, the great physician, that He can heal them too. He is sent to preach liberty to the captives and release for those who are bound.

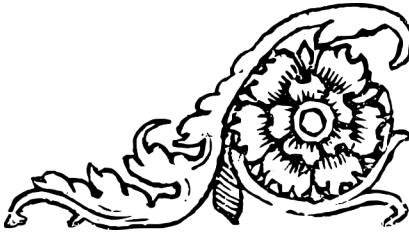
Jesus, faithful Savior, have mercy on us and on our children. Help us, that we be not condemned with the unbelieving world, but save our soul as you once saved Lot!

Take our hand, O sweetest Jesus,
Lead us in the pilgrim's way,
That on paths both straight and narrow
We may go and not delay;
Keep us every snare eschewing,
Past ways ne'er with lust reviewing.

F. Pf.

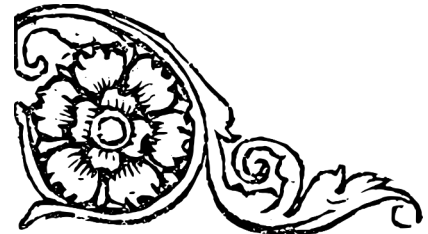
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Perfect Love

Rev. Andrew Richard



Ah Love! I can recall the days
Of longing for a sideways glance,
And when she would return my gaze,
Then how my heart would dance!
I held her hand. I fell! I flew!
Which way was up? Why would I care?
Infatuation as it grew
Pursued me everywhere.
My mind would only think of her.
What else was there to think about?
Such...fondness? folly? feelings were
Delight, yet cause of doubt
That such a heart would constant prove,
For are such feelings really love?

Ah Love! I now have brighter days.
At midnight I hear her arise,
And to the bassinet she sways
To hush the baby's cries.
For twelve years we've been married now,
And some would say the flame has died,
But Cupid's funeral I'll allow
If I can have my bride.
She sits to nurse and I can see
That love is in self-sacrifice.
She gives of her, I give of me,
And this is true love's spice.
Thus does our love both live and move
Within its Source, the truest Love.

Ah Love! who were before all days
Enthroned on high, yet came down low
As man, us fallen men to raise
And blessings to bestow,
You said, "Til death," You breathed Your last,
For me You poured out all Your heart,
And now You ever hold me fast,
For death did not us part.
O Love, You grant me and my wife
To be a picture of Your grace,
To live the sacrificial life,
Until we reach that place
Of marriage feasting up above
And live with You, our Perfect Love. ❧



What about the Atonement?

“Therefore the righteousness which is imputed to faith or to the believer out of pure grace is the obedience, suffering, and resurrection of Christ, since He has made satisfaction for us to the Law, and paid for [expiated] our sins.”

(Solid Declaration, Article 3, par 14)



he Atonement is the answer to our inability to fulfill the law. St. Paul says in Romans 8:3, “What the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh.” Some have argued that defining the atonement as Jesus fulfilling the law on behalf of sinners makes our salvation dependent upon the law.¹ They argue that Jesus could not possibly have fulfilled all of the rules for all kinds of stations in life. After all, Jesus wasn’t married, and there were many vocations in life He didn’t hold. Jesus, they say, could only fulfill His own personal vocation, which was to carry out God’s mission to reveal His kingdom. They go so far as to say that Jesus was simply obligated as a man to fulfill the law for Himself and that He could not therefore do it on behalf of all sinners. So why did Jesus die? According to Gerhard Forde, the late ELCA theologian still popular among radical Lutherans today, Jesus’ death was not a sacrifice to appease God’s wrath at all. Instead, he taught that Christ’s death did no more than show the extent to which He was willing to go in order to reveal that God isn’t angry with sinners.²

However, those who make these arguments show themselves to misunderstand what the law is. It isn’t just a line-upon-line list of arbitrary rules for living (Is 28:10-13).

Much more than that; it is God’s eternal will (Solid Declaration V, 17). The law requires us to love God above all things with our entire being. It requires us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Of course, this includes various duties in this life, depending on one’s particular station. Are you a husband, wife, father, mother, son, daughter, master, or worker? These are all situations in which God would have us love our neighbor. We call this the second table of the law. And yet, without the first table of the law (Love God above all things!), these situations are no more than that—situations. They remain random moral acts with no vision or purpose.

But Christ, the only begotten Son of the Father, fulfilled His earthly duties with a clear vision and purpose toward His Father. He came to do the will of his Father, entrusting Himself to His good judgment (1st Commandment), confessing His name and Word (2nd Commandment), and teaching what alone gives sinners spiritual rest (3rd Commandment). It was in fulfilling this first table of the law that Jesus also honored His parents and other authorities (4th Commandment) while saving and healing His neighbor (5th Commandment), blessing and defending the institution of marriage (6th Commandment), being generous with what He had (7th Commandment), defending the defenseless and speaking the truth (8th Commandment), becoming poor with nowhere to lay His head in order to

bless even those who cursed him (9th Commandment), and urging people to do their duties with a good conscience (10th Commandment). Jesus didn't need to meet the criteria as a butcher, a baker, or a candlestick maker in order to fulfill all the rules for living. He is the eternal Son of the Father who came to do His eternal will.

It isn't legalism to insist that the law must be fulfilled. It is the comforting gospel that the law has in fact been fulfilled for us. As Jesus says, "I did not come to destroy the law and the prophets, but to fulfill them" (Matt 5:17). The law can't give life. It was never meant to. And yet, this is not because there are too many rules and regulations to follow. It is rather because of our own sinful flesh, which is hostile to God. It all goes back to the 1st Commandment.

So when the law is rightly accusing you in your failure to honor those in authority (4th Commandment), to help your neighbor in his body and possessions (5th and 7th), to love your spouse (6th), to speak well of your neighbor (8th), and to be content with what God has given you (9th and 10th), this is all a witness that your flesh does not have God as its only treasure (1st), confession (2nd), and rest (3rd). They aren't merely rules. They are God's witness against you (Deut. 31:26). But Jesus, who is begotten of the Father with perfect and eternal love, fulfilled this law for you. Love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom 13:10). This love of Christ—this obedient fulfilling of the law—is the very basis of the righteousness your faith receives. You can therefore be confident in all your duties and learn from the law despite its accusations against you. It has been fulfilled in Christ. It must finally say Amen to the Atonement and to the righteousness your faith receives by God's grace.

The teaching that Jesus fulfilled what we were obligated to fulfill, that he bore our sins and

IESVS NAZARENVS
REX IVDÆORVM

satisfied God's wrath against us, is simply the gospel. Many Lutherans who imagine that they are rather smart claim that this is only

one theory of the Atonement with an-

other theory being that Jesus defeated the enemies of sin, death, and the devil. But it is either stupid, dishonest, or both to pit these two so called "theories" against one another. The truth of the gospel is that Jesus has silenced the devil's accusations precisely by fulfilling the very law of God. This is all summed up in what the prophet records Jesus saying: "The Lord rebuke you, O Satan." He rebukes Satan by appealing to the Lord, submitting to the Father, obeying His law, and thereby winning reconciliation for all sinners (Zech 3:1-5; cf. Jude 9).

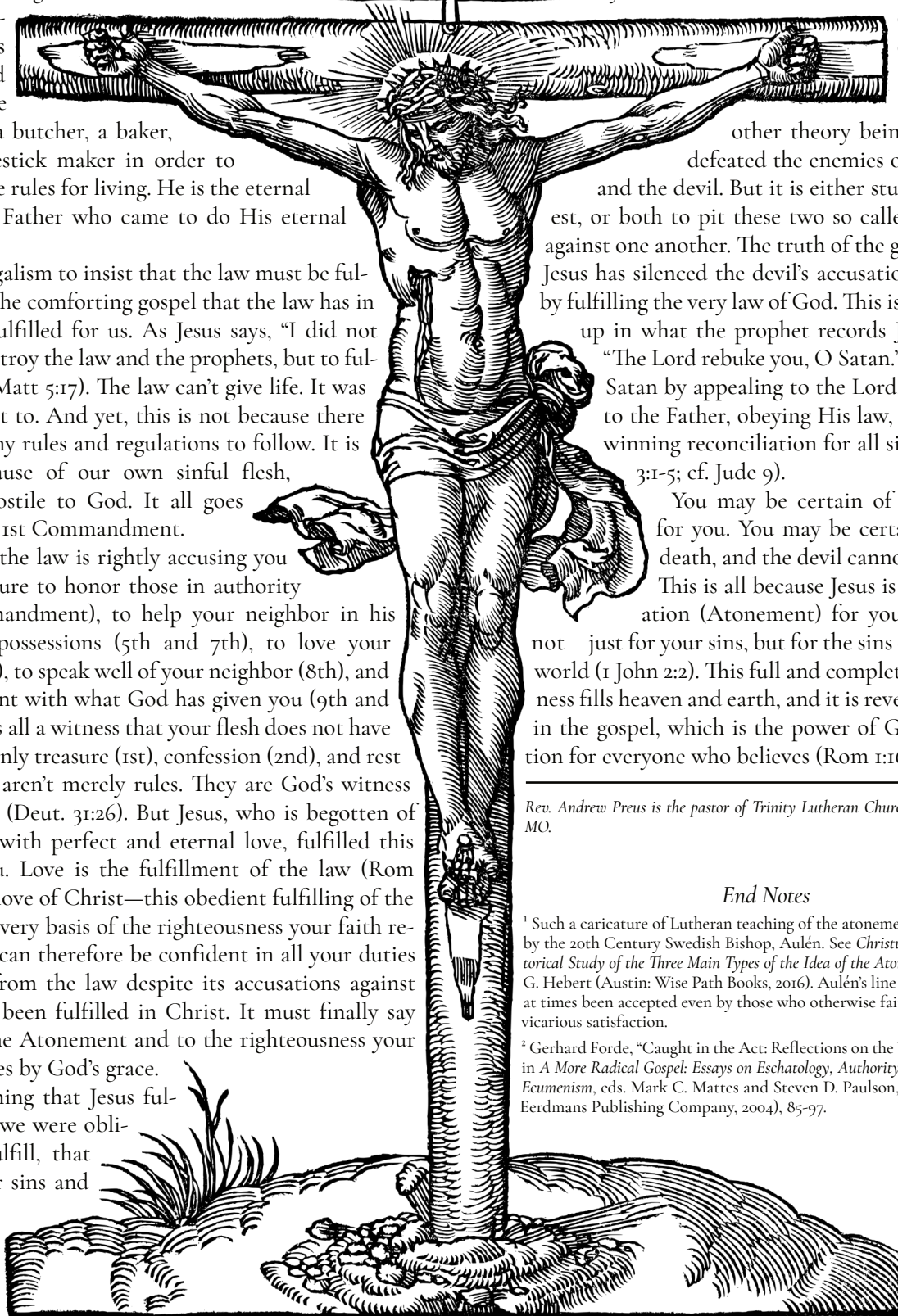
You may be certain of God's favor for you. You may be certain that sin, death, and the devil cannot claim you. This is all because Jesus is the propitiation (Atonement) for your sins. And not just for your sins, but for the sins of the whole world (1 John 2:2). This full and complete righteousness fills heaven and earth, and it is revealed for you in the gospel, which is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes (Rom 1:16-17). ¶

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End Notes

¹ Such a caricature of Lutheran teaching of the atonement was espoused by the 20th Century Swedish Bishop, Aulén. See *Christus Victor: An Historical Study of the Three Main Types of the Idea of the Atonement*, trans. A. G. Hebert (Austin: Wise Path Books, 2016). Aulén's line of argument has at times been accepted even by those who otherwise faithfully teach the vicarious satisfaction.

² Gerhard Forde, "Caught in the Act: Reflections on the Work of Christ," in *A More Radical Gospel: Essays on Eschatology, Authority, Atonement, and Ecumenism*, eds. Mark C. Mattes and Steven D. Paulson, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2004), 85-97.





Beowulf



Beowulf is about things distant in time and culture, even from the perspective of its anonymous author. Like Homer's *Iliad*, the epic poem was not written down until the spirit and people that first gave it life had all but vanished from history.

The poem as we have it today bridges two bygone worlds: ancient, pre-Christian Scandinavia, where it was born, and eighth-century (or later), Christianized Britain, where it was laid down to rest in old English script, probably by a monk. The written poem is, then, already an adaptation, a retelling.

The quest for *undying fame* is a strong, consistent thread in the literature of the ancient west. It drives the heroes of poetry in Greek, Sanskrit, and the old Germanic languages. This and other evidence suggests *undying fame* as the heroic prize going all the way back to the unwritten songs of Proto-Indo-European. The coming of Christianity to the west largely undid the winning of *undying fame* as the chief virtue of the masculine code, at least explicitly, substituting instead the defense of the defenseless, the virtues of self-renunciation, the rescuing of damsels and the protection of their honor, and the like. This, of course, is an oversimplification; but if allowed to stand for the moment, it brings out a central, unresolved tension in the Christian remixing of the pagan song.

Beowulf begins and ends with the funeral of a king. The first is the funeral of Shield Sheafson, an original "good king". The last funeral is of the titular character (it will help your reading of the poem if you know that Beowulf dies at the end). All his heroic and kingly deeds are done under the shadow of death, in pursuit of honor that will not die.

The story is woven around three battles with as many monsters. At the outset, the young Beowulf travels from

his native Geatland (in southern Sweden) to come to the aid of the Danish King Hrothgar, whose lands are beset by a dark being, Grendel. After slaying him in Hrothgar's great hall, Beowulf must also defeat Grendel's mother, who naturally comes to avenge her son, in her underwater home. These battles, and the honor and gold they bring to his homeland, ensure that Beowulf's fame will be sung long after his death, which comes in the third battle of the story. In his final conflict, Beowulf fights in his old age, as the long-lived king of his people, against a rampaging dragon with a lair full of treasure. In killing the dragon, he achieves his undying fame. In dying from his battle-wounds, he leaves treasure to his people, but also leaves them headless and defenseless. Does the author suggest here that what is required to be a hero and what is required to be a good king are different, perhaps irreconcilable, sets of virtues? Read for yourself and decide.

Besides this conflict, attentive readers will sense a deeper clash of Christian culture itself. In *Beowulf*, we see into a moment in the process of converting pagan poetic culture into Christian culture, a process incomplete in the text of the poem, and perhaps forever incomplete in the real world. The author wants us to know that, in his tradition of the poem, Grendel is descended from the biblical Cain. The dragon, likewise, easily maps onto the image of Satan, via the Revelation to St. John. The monsters of the story are connected with biblical archetypes of pure evil. Beowulf, however, is not yet St. George. Yet he and his culture as presented in the poem are still very much dominated by the same darkness that the monsters personify.

Pre-Christian Scandinavia is shown to be a world held together by shifting networks of loyalty, rebellion, blood-feuding, honor-killing, and negotiations of retribution and revenge as complicated as they are violent. How much

difference is there between the motives of Beowulf and those of Grendel or his mother? Between king Beowulf, and the dragon? Beowulf dies desiring not the vision of “Jerusalem the Golden,” but the comfort of the sight of the gold he has won; there his treasure, and there his heart. And any descendant of Cain, or any architect of Babel, could make his own this creed of vengeance and undying fame, confessed by Beowulf himself: “It is better for us all to avenge our friends, not mourn them forever. Each of us will come to the end of this life on earth; he who can earn it should fight for the glory of his name; fame after death is the noblest of goals” (1384-1389).

As the anonymous monk was retelling the story in print, the pre-Christian worldview was giving way to Christian culture. The author never resolves this tension between the two, between his own Christian interpretation of the world and the clearly pagan values—including *undying fame*—of the myth. We also live in this tension, but from the other side. We are living through the slow-rolling divorce of the marriage that is being made in the pages of *Beowulf*.

Recommended translations are those of Burton Raffel (quoted above), or, more recently, of Seamus Heaney, among many others. ☛

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O Jesus Christ, Your Supper Is

Mark Preus, 2020

4.4.II.4.4.II

O Jesu Christ, dein Kripplein
Johann Crüger, 1653

1. O Je - sus Christ, Your Sup - per is The heav'n - ly man - na
 2. My heart pre - pare By grace You share With ever - y sin - ner
 3. I will not doubt, Though li - ars shout That you can - not reach
 4. You, God and Man, Most sure - ly can Be with us al - ways

that has here sus - tained me; For here Your Word Gives me my Lord,
 who has seen his sin - ning; Je - sus set free Un - worth - y me
 earth while still in heav - en; Your pro-mise clear Tells me You're here
 to the end of a - ges; You fill all things, Your Spir - it brings

And all Your bod - y and your blood have gained me.
 From un - be - lief which is my sin's be - gin - ning.
 To feed my soul and speak my sins for - giv - en.
 All You have pro - mised in the Scrip - tures' pa - ges.

5 You give to me
 What on the tree
 Was offered once for Adam and his children;
 What for me died
 Is here supplied
 To lift from my weak soul sin's heavy burden.

6 Your blood most pure
 Is heaven's cure
 For all my falling and my conscience-terrors;
 What here I taste,
 It has erased
 Sin's every single stain and all its errors.

Free recording available at cc.lutherclassical.org/supper-hymn

7 How often I
In weakness sigh
For strength that cannot come from me, a mortal;
How often You
Still speak what's true
And show me in Your wounds Your heaven's portal.

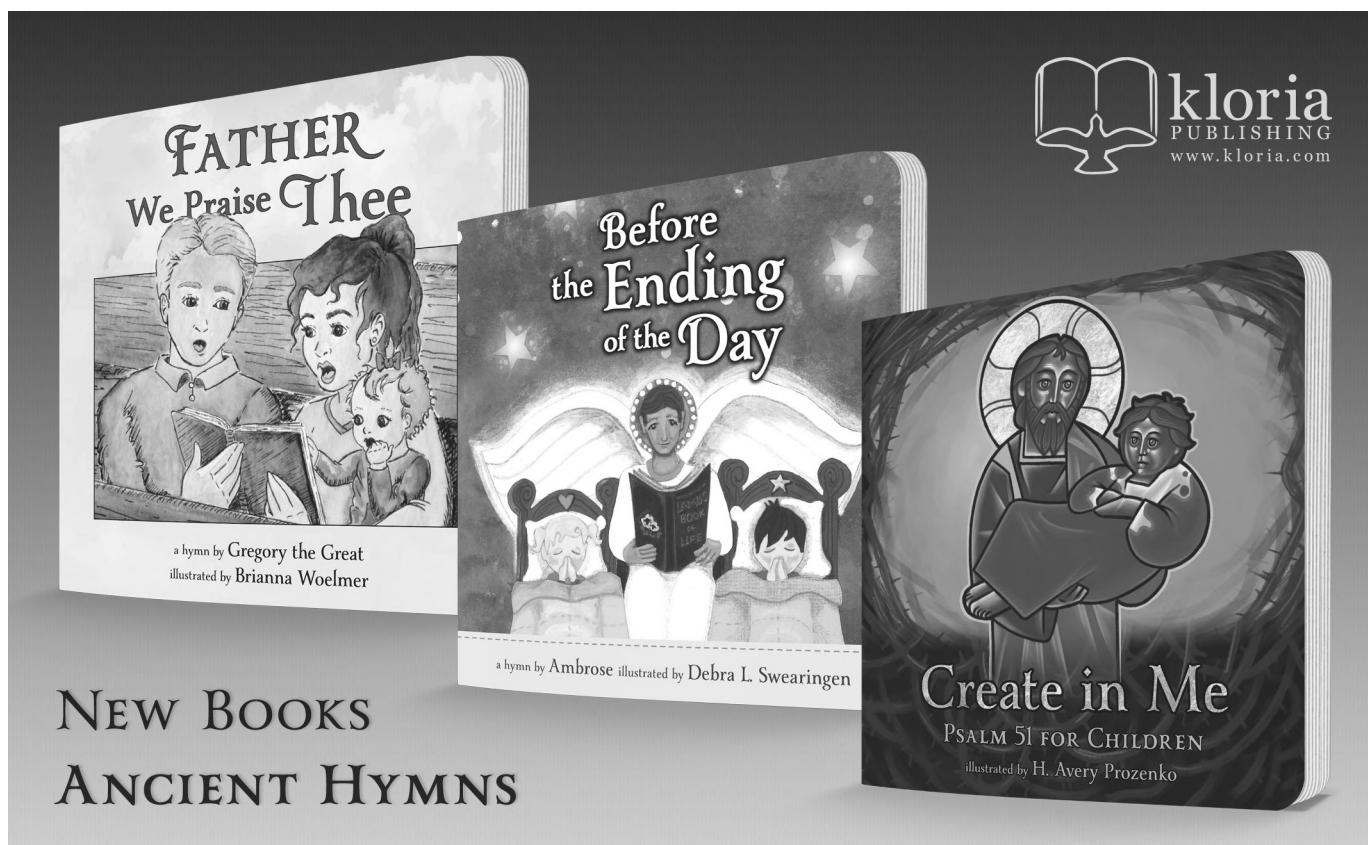
8 The blood You spilt
Removes my guilt,
The body that You give me is salvation;
By faith I see
You joined to me
To rescue me from death and condemnation.

9 Dear Paschal Lamb,
You will not damn
The one who here in faith receives Your merit;
Washed in Your blood,
God calls me good
And shows my soul the glory I'll inherit.

10 Christ, give to me
The will to see
That love for others is the greatest gladness;
And help me bear
The cross and care
That often cloud our minds with so much sadness.

11 Lord, let me hide
Where is supplied
The body at which death and hell must cower;
There let me feast
Till sin has ceased
And in my weakness You reveal Your power.

12 My song I raise
In thanks and praise
To You, my Lord and Brother, Friend and Savior;
Give faith and love,
Until above
I feast with all Your saints and You forever.



Christian News in Brief

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY WISCONSIN AND THE STRUGGLE TO RETURN TO FAITHFULNESS

CUW Regents were put on notice of official Synodical Visitation to see what cancer had infested the place over the last decade or so. Months later, no report of the visitation is available to synod or her members. The Board received a letter from President Harrison of the LCMS citing their many violations of bylaws. The willful disobedience to synodical policies has been a large factor in the search for the University's new president. The new president will have to clean up the apparently wayward institution after President Patrick Ferry retired from his many years leading the institution. The question is when will the new president be elected—delay tactics cannot last forever.

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY TEXAS DREAMS OF SECESSION

A June 6th memo from President and CEO Don Christian of Concordia Texas informed constituents of the university of a desire to separate from the LCMS in governance matters. The university, which sits on its new campus purchased during the previous Synodical administration, owes much to the LCMS.

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY CHICAGO UPROAR AND RESPONSE

Last spring a large, concerted effort was made to run the new administration of Concordia, Chicago out of power and onto the isle of canceled men. The administration stuck to its decisions and policies in the face of non-LCMS professor complaints, coached student outrage, and even media attempts to prop up the shouts and dig up old dirt. The result of the administration holding ground? The outrage died down and the press and activists alike moved on. Other institutions may want to sit at the steadfast feet of President Russell Dawn, the administrators, and the regents of the university.

LCMS NATIONAL CONVENTION COMING TO MILWAUKEE

The synod will meet in convention in July-August 2023 in Milwaukee under the theme of "We preach Christ crucified." This means circuits are now selecting delegates and members of synod are putting in nominations for various offices. Don't forget resolutions also!

LCMS NATIONAL YOUTH GATHERING HAPPENS

Cognitive dissonance could be felt as the usual happenings of the youth gathering occurred this summer. The utter diversity of practices growing from widening differences in belief were on display for all to watch. In the face of demographics showing more youth moving away from church, the LCMS seems to have doubled down on doing the same old things for our youth. Time will tell what this trained the youth of the synod to expect from the LCMS and her congregations.

DISTRICT CONVENTION DIGEST (A LOT TO DIGEST!)

In order to briefly treat these, each note will mention the election results for District President and also any notable resolutions from the district. More information can be found at the site of the LCMS Reporter and individual District websites.

Atlantic District – Rev. Derek Lecakes re-elected. Asked the LCMS to represent more diversity in its photos and media. Also asked the State of New York to declare churches as essential.

California-Nevada-Hawaii District – Rev. Michael Lange re-elected. Encouraged support for more distance based programs leading to ordination, noting especially a current well-used avenue at Concordia Irvine's Cross-Cultural program.

Central Illinois District - Rev. Michael Mohr elected.

Eastern District – Rev. John Pingel elected.

English District – Rev. Dr. Jamison Hardy re-elected. Rejected online “communion.” Rejected unfaithful ideologies and movements which use race, diversity, and equity to virtue-signal. Condemned government overreach of its authority by closing churches.

Florida-Georgia District – Rev. James Rockey elected. Asked synod to encourage non-traditional paths to ordination. Asked synod for only regional elections at Synod level (currently regionally nominated and synodically elected because they are officers of the whole synod).

Indiana District – Rev. Dr. Richard Stuckwisch elected. Online “communion” rejected. Also rejected was the false theology of diversity, equity, and inclusion as they are being used by the world.

Iowa District East – Rev. Dr. Brian Saunders re-elected. Online “communion” rejected.

Iowa District West – Rev. Steve Turner re-elected. District President also now allowed to serve a congregation while also serving as DP—a wise and faithful practice.

Kansas District – Rev. Justin Panzer elected. Church worker care emphasis.

Michigan District – Rev. David Davis elected. Asked synod to delay proposed changes to the Concordia University System and to grant the Michigan DP a seat on the Concordia University Wisconsin–Ann Arbor Board of Regents.

Minnesota North District – Rev. Brady Finnern elected. Rejected critical theory.

Minnesota South District – Rev. Dr. Lucas Woodford re-elected. Rejected Critical Race Theory. Rejected online “communion.” Affirmed parents as primary God-given authority over children.

Missouri District – Rev. Dr. Lee Hagan re-elected. Affirmed parental responsibility for teaching children the faith. Asked synod to review the issue of fetal tissue in medical matters.

Montana District – Rev. Terry Forke re-elected. Rejected online “communion.” Rejected practice of distant church memberships. Asked synod to cease admitting, reinstating, or colloquizing divorced and remarried men into the ministry. Asked to change Concordia University regent make-up so that appointed members are not a near majority over elected ones.

North Dakota District – Rev. Arie Bertsch re-elected.

North Wisconsin District – Rev. Dr. Dwayne Lueck re-elected. Efforts to help with student debts for teachers especially.

Northern Illinois District – Rev. Dr. Allan Buss re-elected. Affirmed church as essential and denied govern-

ment authority over its worship.

Northwest District – Rev. Dr. Paul Linnemann re-elected. Asked synod to form diaconate for Word and Sacrament ministry (remember Licensed Lay Deacons?). Asked synod to delay proposed changes to Concordia University System.

Nebraska District – Rev. Richard Snow re-elected. Asked synod for same term limits across the whole synod.

New England District – Rev. Robert Beinke elected.

Ohio District – Rev. Kevin Wilson re-elected. District transparency efforts. Affirmed the importance of the Head of the Household.

Oklahoma District – Rev. David Nehrenz elected. Asked synod to expand permissions of the 1986 translation of the Small Catechism.

Pacific Southwest District – Rev. Dr. Mike Gibson re-elected. Asked synod to strengthen the voice of commissioned ministers, denying the historic polity of synod and seeking to unseat the vast majority of the synod that has voted conservatively and faithfully over the past 12 years.

Rocky Mountain District – Rev. James Maxwell elected. Affirmed the doctrine of creation with the special note of a young earth.

SELC District – Rev. Waldemar Vinovskis re-elected. Efforts made to strengthen advisory delegate participation.

South Wisconsin District – Rev. Dr. John Wille re-elected. CUW matters, demanding them to follow bylaws. Asked synod to make all appointed regents advisory (non-voting) for Concordias. Asked synod to allow District President to discipline wayward Concordia regents and also to change how Concordia Presidents are chosen. Directed SWD Board of Directors to take legal action if government interferes again with the duty of Christians to gather for worship.

Southeastern District – Rev. Dr. William Harmon elected. Adopted a form of nonbinding suffrage for advisory delegates (what does advisory mean again?). Asked synod for a day of repentance and prayer for racial equality and healing.

Southern Illinois District – Rev. Timothy Scharr re-elected. Rejected online “communion.” Declared church as essential. Rejected Critical Race Theory. ☛

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



Getting to Know the Fathers: Bernard of Clairvaux



It is the way of men to make of great figures either heroes or villains. There are good guys and bad guys, black hats and white hats. Real people, however, are not so easily categorized. We are, all of us, complicated creatures. The best among us has elements within him more appropriate (we suppose) to the worst among us. This is as true of the saints of the Church as it is of anyone. The great thinkers and preachers of the Church, like any Christian, struggled in that state of being that theologians identify as *simul justus et peccator*, simultaneously saint and sinner.

Bernard of Clairvaux too was a complicated man. He was a humble and pious monk, yet found himself caught up and deeply involved in the affairs of kings and popes. He was one of the greatest preachers the Church has known and was greatly admired by Martin Luther for his teachings on grace and absolute reliance on Christ. Yet we find Luther saying that while he “was superior to all the doctors of the church when he preached... he became quite a different man in his disputations, for then he attributed too much to law and to free will.”¹ St. Bernard was very much a man of his time. What we see as theological inconsistencies were not always viewed as such in his day. Bernard could uphold papal authority and yet debate about who legitimately sat on St. Peter’s throne. He could speak of the absolute dependence of the sinner upon the grace of Christ, and yet talk of things like indulgences and merit. He could promote warfare in the name of God, yet teach that those who took up arms for Christ should conduct themselves as monastic pilgrims. A complicated man indeed!

He was born to a family of minor nobility in the year

1090 and received an education typical of those of his class.² He became a monk in the newly founded order of Cîteaux at the age of 21.³ His rise among the Cistercians was rapid. Within three years of having taken the cowl, Bernard was sent off to found a new monastery with a few other monks and was chosen to be their abbot. That monastery was to become known as Clairvaux. Chiefly due to his reputation for piety and fine preaching, so many men rushed to join his new Cistercian house that Clairvaux quickly became one of the chief Cistercian monasteries in Europe, and it became necessary to spawn several daughter houses. Even his own father became a monk under Bernard’s leadership.

It is as an abbot and preacher that Bernard truly shines. His sermons are eloquent and insightful. His preaching breathed the vocabulary of Scripture, with the person and grace of Christ at its center. Martin Luther opined, “Whenever monks were saved, however, they were constrained to crawl to the cross of Christ again. This is what St. Bernard did. I regard him as the most pious of all monks and prefer him to all the others, even to St. Dominic. He is the only one worthy of the name ‘Father Bernard’ and of being studied diligently. He is dressed in a cowl. But what does he do when matters become serious? He does not try to satisfy the judgment of God with his cowl; instead he takes hold of Christ.”⁴ We can see this ourselves, for example, in a sermon he preached on the Feast of All Saints: “But what can all our righteousness amount to before God? Will it not, as the prophet says, be considered as a menstruation rag (Is. 64.6), and if judged strictly will not all our righteousness be found unrighteous and lacking? What then of our sins when not even our righteousness can answer for itself to God? Therefore, resolutely crying out with the prophet, ‘O Lord, do not enter into judgment with Your servant,’ let us

in complete humility run to His mercy, which alone can save our souls.”⁵

By the 1120s Bernard’s writings began to be published and his fame as a theologian spread. Though a monk, increasingly as his reputation flourished, Bernard found himself called upon to function as an arbiter, advisor and statesmen. He traveled widely in this capacity, and often counseled kings and queens, popes, bishops, abbots and members of the nobility. In this role he, though personally humble, was not afraid to call to repentance those in the highest offices, encouraging faithfulness to vocation and the courage to do what is right. But it is as a crusade propagandist that Bernard’s statesmanship is best remembered.

Around 1147 a former monk of his, Pope Eugenius III, appointed Bernard to preach the second crusade.⁶ So successful were his efforts in this that he later wrote in a letter to the pope, reminding him in regard to a certain matter that Eugenius was just a little in his debt: “I have declared and spoken it: they have multiplied beyond number.’ Cities and villages are empty. And now hardly will seven women find one man to call their husband, so many everywhere remain widows with their husbands still living.”⁷ Unfortunately Bernard’s crusade sermons are no longer extant. But we learn from one of his letters promoting the ill-fated crusade how impassioned his preaching must have been: “Behold, brothers, now is the acceptable time, behold now is the day of full salvation. The earth is moved and shakes because the God of heaven has begun to lose His land. His, I say, in which He was made manifest as the Word of His Father, to teach and to converse for more than thirty years as a man and with men. His own land, yes, which He made famous by His miracles, which He made holy by His blood, in which the flowers of His resurrection first appeared. And now, because our sins asked for it, the enemies of the cross have raised their sacrilegious head, depopulating the land of promise by the edge of the sword. Indeed, the time is near, if no one resists them, that they will attack the very city of the living God, overturn the workhouse of our redemption, pollute its holy places, once dyed crimson by the blood of the spotless Lamb.”⁸ No wonder so many forsook the safety of home and hearth to fight in distant Palestine!

Sadly, Bernard’s success in this endeavor rested not only upon his rhetorical genius, but also upon the dangled promise of complete remission of sins for all who took up the cross, which Pope Eugenius would grant via a jubilee indulgence. Bernard, however, proves a complicated man again, for he never detaches such things from faith in Christ. He doesn’t question the pope’s authority to grant



such an indulgence. But he was no Tetzl. Pious devotion to Jesus and His cross was necessary for remission of sins. The cross, rather than the indulgence, was the sign of salvation. And the indulgence he treats as absolution given in response to repentance, signified by the taking up of the crusading cross.⁹ It was faith in Christ, moreover, that was to motivate the crusader all along his pilgrimage, and faith that was to guide the crusader’s behavior as a warrior of the cross.¹⁰

Personal faith, expressed in love, was a chief theme of his great work on the Song of Songs, delivered as a series of homilies to the monks of Clairvaux.¹¹ In the first of these sermons, commenting on the Song of Songs 1:2, Bernard proclaims, “Let him kiss me with the kiss of his mouth; let his gracious presence and streams of beautiful teaching become in me the spring of water springing up to eternal life... His living and active word is to me a kiss indeed, not the union of lips, which meanwhile belies the union of souls, but the full infusion of joys, revealing of secrets, a marvelous and somehow inseparable fusion of the heavenly light and the illuminated mind. Clinging to God, it is one spirit with him (1 Cor. 5.17). With good reason, then, I put no stock in visions and dreams, I desire no images and enigmas. I tire even of angelic beauty. So far my Jesus surpasses them all with his splendor and his beauty. I seek no

other therefore, whether angel or man, but him alone, to kiss me with the kiss of his mouth.”¹²

Much later in these homilies, Bernard speaks more explicitly of the connection between faith and love: “How then can he be righteous who loves neither God nor God’s Church, to whom it is said, ‘The righteous love you’? If then neither faith without works nor works without faith suffice for the righteousness of the soul, we who believe in Christ, brothers, must be zealous to make our ways and our pursuits righteous. Let us lift our hearts to God along with our hands, so that we may be found completely righteous, proving the righteousness of our faith by righteous actions, as lovers of the bride and loved by the bridegroom Jesus Christ, our Lord, who is God, blessed forever. Amen.”¹³

The theme of love for Christ also rings out in one of Bernard’s hymns:

“Jesu! the very thought of Thee
With sweetness fills my breast;
But sweeter far thy face to see,
And in thy presence rest.

Nor voice can sing, nor heart can frame,
Nor can the memory find,
A sweeter sound than thy blest name,
O Saviour of mankind!

O Hope of every contrite heart,
O Joy of all the meek,
To those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek!

But what to those who find? Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show:
The love of Jesus, what it is,
None but his loved ones know.

Jesu! our only joy be Thou,
As Thou our prize wilt be;
Jesu! be thou our glory now,
And through eternity.”¹⁴

Bernard had such a longing for Christ. Though he was as complex as any sinner-saint, and though we might well find fault with some of the positions he maintained and the things he did, he was consistent in this: he preached Christ Jesus. “Heal me, O Lord, and I will be healed; I will sing praise and give thanks to your name, and I will say, Your name is oil poured out...because you crown me with mercy and kindnesses... O name so gentle and so sweet! O name so renowned, so excellent, so exalted, yes, highly exalted forever and ever. This is truly the oil that gladdens the

face of man, that anoints the head of the one who fasts so that he may not pass over the oil of the sinner. This is the new name which the mouth of the Lord has declared (Is. 62.2), which also was named by the angel before he was conceived in the womb (Luke 2.21). Not only the Jew, but anyone who calls on this name will be saved (Joel 2.32). It has been poured out absolutely everywhere. This name the Father gave to his Son, the Bridegroom of the Church, our Lord Jesus Christ, who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen.”¹⁵ ❧

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End Notes

¹ Martin Luther, *Table Talk*, ed. Helmut Lehmann, vol. 54, in *Luther’s Works*, American Edition, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1967), 105.

² Beverly Mayne Kienzle, Introduction to *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, translated by Bruno Scott James, (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 1998), xix.

³ Kienzle, Introduction to *The Letters of St Bernard of Clairvaux*, xix.

⁴ Martin Luther, *Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, Chapters 1-4*, ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 22, in *Luther’s Works*, American Edition, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1957), 388. *Luther Works Vol. 22* © 1957, 1985 Concordia Publishing House. Used with permission. cph.org.

⁵ Bernard, “On the Feast of All Saints, Sermon One,” translated by Christian Preus.

⁶ Malcomb Barber, Introduction to *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, Cistercian Fathers Series: Number 19b, translated by M. Conrad Greenia, (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2000), 23.

⁷ Bernard, “Letter 247,” translated by Christian Preus.

⁸ Bernard, “Letter 363,” translated by Christian Preus.

⁹ Bernard, “Letter 363”

¹⁰ For more on Bernard’s teachings on the crusade, see his treatise *In Praise of the New Knighthood*, translated by M. Conrad Greenia, (Kalamazoo, MI: Cistercian Publications, 2000).

¹¹ Author Leon Podle, among others, has found fault in Bernard for this and blames him for setting in motion a feminization of the Christian Church. See Leon Podle, “The Feminization of the Church,” *Baltimore Sun*, May 24, 1994, <https://www.baltimoresun.com/news/bs-xpm-1994-05-25-1994145063-story.html>. Podle opines that Bernard, “preached that God was the lover and the human soul his spouse. After that a feminine emotional relationship with Jesus replaced masculine comradeship in spiritual warfare as the most common Christian experience.” While it is true that Bernard preached an intimacy with the Savior and expressed such intimacy in emotional terms, Podle’s accusation is unfair. There has always been in Christian theology and piety a balance between the corporate love for and faith in the Bridegroom of the Bride herself and the individual aspects of the same in all who are members of the Bride. The Church, corporately, is feminine, after all, even as believers individually are sons of God. Bernard upheld both of these truths. Both the Bride (whom Bernard unfailingly identifies as the Church) and her members love and long for the Bridegroom.

¹² Bernard, “Sermon 2 on the Song of Songs” translated by Christian Preus.

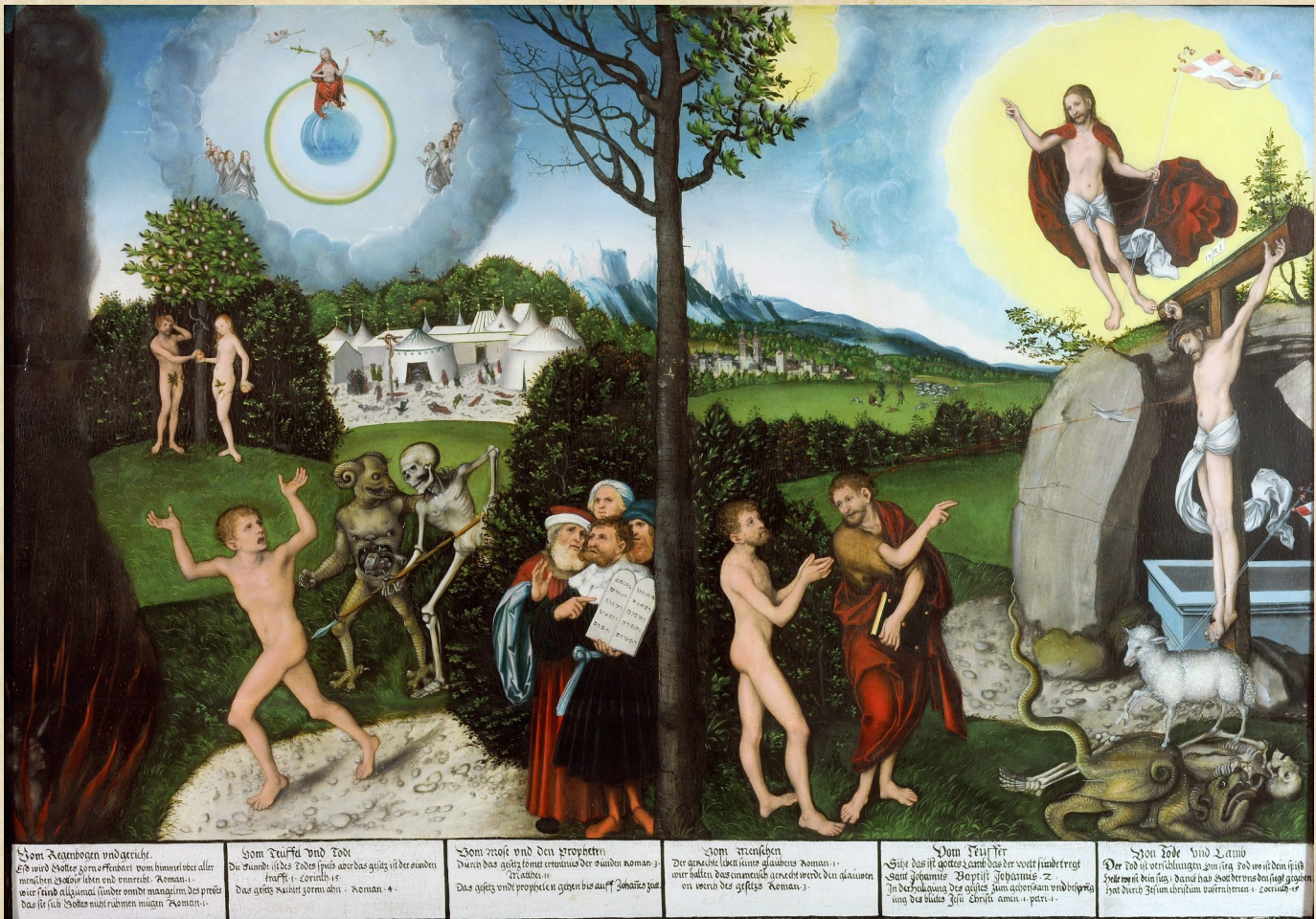
¹³ Bernard, “Sermon 24 on the Song of Songs” translated by Christian Preus.

¹⁴ Bernard, “Jesu, dulcis memoria,” in *Lyra Catholica*, edited and translated by Edward Caswall (New York: E. Dunigan and Brother, 1851), 102-103. This hymn is taken from the first five stanzas of what is a longer poem. For all 12 stanzas of the original poem in translation, see the notes on Hymn 350 in *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*.

¹⁵ Bernard, “Sermon 16 on the Song of Songs” translated by Christian Preus.



Law and Grace



Each issue of *Christian Culture* features a woodcut on the cover. These woodcuts have come from the title pages of 16th century books, mainly from the works of Martin Luther. This issue's woodcut is an imitation of Lucas Cranach the Elder's 1529 painting, "Law and Grace" (pictured here). Such imitations were quite popular; there are other paintings like it and many woodcut title pages that follow its themes. In the center of the Law and Grace artworks grows a tree, which is dead on the left and alive on the right. The left side is characterized by the Law of God, man's sin, and God's judgment against sin. Typically in the lower left corner, the tablets of the Law send a sinner flying to hell. The image calls to mind such Scripture passages as, "through the Law comes knowledge of sin" (Rom. 3:20) and "the Law brings wrath" (Rom. 4:15). The left side, however, is not devoid of God's grace. The account of the bronze serpent appears in the Law and Grace artworks, which shows the wrath of God against sin, but at the same time His provision for the salvation for man. "All the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John" (Mt. 11:13), foretelling and foreshowing salvation.

The right side features the work of Christ. Cranach's painting shows the Incarnation in the announcement of the angel to the shepherds. The woodcut on the cover pairs the Annunciation with this, which theologically complements the image opposite on the left: the manifestation of the Word of God in the Law is followed by the manifestation of the Word of God in the flesh. Typical of the Law and Grace artworks are the death and resurrection of Jesus. John the Baptist stands on the right, directing the sinner to Christ for salvation, proclaiming "the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn. 1:29). The blood of Christ spurts from His side and sprinkles the sinner (1 Pet. 1:2). Death and the devil from the left side lie defeated under our resurrected Savior. "Death is swallowed up in victory. 'O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?' The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 15:54-57).

A.R.



LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE

Luther Classical College is excited to announce a number of developments.

First, work on our curriculum is progressing beautifully. Curriculum is by far the most important part of the college. It will, along with the quality of our professors and the zeal of our students, determine the value of the education received at LCC. We plan to release the full Course Catalog by the end of next year, but highlights include a survey of the entire Bible, a survey of Western philosophy *kata Christon* (in view of Christian theology), the history of political thought from Moses to modernity, mathematics for capitalists, and courses covering the great histories and literature of the Western tradition.

Second, the design of our Old Main building is almost ready to be released. We have been working hard with our architects to design an absolutely beautiful building that will accommodate all our needs as a small college.

Finally, we have updated our website to include a Pre-Admission Form. Within just a few weeks of the update, we have had over 60 prospective students fill out the form. We especially want students to fill out this form who anticipate beginning their studies at LCC in the first two years of its opening (2025-2026 school year or 2026-2027 school year). The Pre-Admission Form allows us to keep in contact with prospective students, giving them updates on the progress of the college and information on how to apply when the time comes.

It is less than three years till we open, with so much still to do! We look forward to announcing more exciting updates in our next issues, including the appointment of the Academic Dean and the full-time President of LCC. Please continue to pray that our Lord Jesus would bless Luther Classical College. Continued thanks are due our gracious God for all the individuals and congregations currently supporting our mission!

The screenshot shows the Luther Classical College website. The header includes the college's logo and navigation links: ABOUT, SUPPORT, ACADEMICS, APPLY, CHRISTIAN CULTURE, and STORE. The main banner features a classical painting of a building with the text "Pre-Admission" overlaid. Below the banner, there is a section titled "Pre-Admission Form" with a form to be filled out. The form includes fields for Full Name, Parents' Names, Mailing Address, City, State, and Zip. A small "Privacy Policy" link is visible in the bottom right corner of the form area.

Luther Classical College would love to hear from you if you are planning to apply in the years to come. Please fill out the form on this page or you can download the paper form [here](#) and mail it to:

Luther Classical College
2300 Hickory St.
Casper, WY 82604

Pre-Admission Form

Full Name *

Parents' Names *

Mailing Address *

City * State * Zip *

[Privacy Policy](#)

Thinking of applying to Luther Classical College? Fill out the pre-admission form! We'll keep you updated and let you know when we're accepting official applications.

[lutherclassical.org/
pre-admission](http://lutherclassical.org/pre-admission)