

# Christian Culture

A MAGAZINE  
FOR LUTHERANS



Issue 10

Fall 2023

## FEATURING

**Banquet with Boethius:  
Right Pursuits and Right  
Education**

*Andrew Richard*

**The Lutheran Missal Project**

*Evan Scamman*

**But It's Christ's Left Hand,  
Not Everybody's and  
Nobody's!**

*John Stephenson*



The page is framed by a rich, illuminated border. On the left side, there is a vertical strip featuring a brown bear, a green bird, and various floral and leaf motifs in blue, green, and gold. The top and bottom borders are filled with intricate floral designs, including blue and red flowers, green leaves, and gold scrollwork. The central text is contained within a white, arched frame.

# Poetry Contest

FOR PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS OF LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE

The editors of *Christian Culture: A Magazine for Lutherans* are pleased to announce a poetry contest for prospective students of Luther Classical College. Contenders will compose a poem of 12-48 lines that follows a definite meter. Poems will be judged on the following points:

- Doctrinal purity
- Choice of theme
- Development of theme
- Choice of poetic form and meter
- Adherence to the meter
- Alignment of natural stress of words with the meter
- Good grammar

Rhyme is not a requirement, though preference will be given to poems that have a good rhyme scheme, adhere to it, and don't let it drive word choice. Poems must accord with the Word of God, whether they treat a biblical theme or topics within the realm of natural revelation. A prospective student is someone who has completed the Pre-Admission Form at [lutherclassical.org/pre-admission](http://lutherclassical.org/pre-admission) prior to submitting an entry to this poetry contest. Contenders must submit their poems to [editor@lutherclassical.org](mailto:editor@lutherclassical.org) by January 31st. The winner will be announced and the winning poem published in the Winter 2024 issue of *Christian Culture*. The winner will also receive a Luther Classical College shirt, hoodie, and mug.

To enter, email your poem to [editor@lutherclassical.org](mailto:editor@lutherclassical.org), including the name of the poem, the full text of it, your name, home congregation, and the year you will graduate high school. By sending a poem, you give Luther Classical College permission to print it in *Christian Culture* and post it on the *Christian Culture* website.

**D**eus in adiuto  
rum meum  
intende

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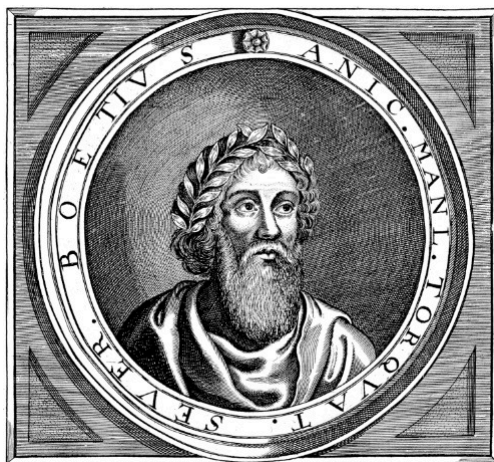
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# Banquet with Boethius: Right Pursuits and Right Education

This was originally delivered as a banquet speech at the annual Wyoming District Tell the Good News about Jesus Convocation on February 10, 2023. Watch at this link:  
[youtu.be/eXTFBp5QgqA](https://youtu.be/eXTFBp5QgqA)



he world in which we live is utterly ridiculous. Consider the things for which it strives and on which it sets its hope: riches, honor, power, fame, pleasure.<sup>1</sup> Now to be clear, none of these things is inherently evil. They are good things, and they find their ultimate good in Christ, of whom the angels sing, “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:12). If these things are ultimately good in Christ, then the temporal things that we call riches, honor, power, fame, pleasure are but shadows of a greater reality, and the man who chases after the earthly versions of them finds himself merely chasing shadows.

## PURSUIT OF RICHES

It is the year of our Lord 523. Boethius sits in prison in Pavia, Italy. He had been a favorite of Emperor Theodoric I, had been very rich, had been able to enjoy the finest things in life, had received the honor of having both his sons appointed as consuls in the previous year, and had himself held the office of *Magister Officiorum*, one of the highest offices in the Roman government. But then his po-

litical enemies falsely accused him of being involved in a plot against the emperor. Theodoric had Boethius exiled, and there Boethius sits in prison.

Boethius was more than a rich statesman. He was a philosopher. And during the months he spent in prison before his execution he wrote one of the greatest works of literature the world has seen: *The Consolation of Philosophy*. In this book he pictures Lady Philosophy coming to him and conversing with him, teaching him to look at his change of fortune rightly. Not long before, Boethius was wealthy. Now he has nothing, and he has become despondent. Lady Philosophy talks some sense into him, and I’ll summarize their conversation. She asks him, “When you were wealthy, were you ever anxious about anything?” “Certainly I was,” Boethius says. “I can’t think of a time when my mind was completely free of worry.” “And what was your worry about?” Lady Philosophy asks. “Was it not that you either didn’t have something that you wanted or did have something that you didn’t want?” “Yes, that’s it exactly.” “And we would say that if a man desires something, then he lacks it?” “Certainly, for who desires what he already has?” “And would we not also say that whoever lacks something is not self-sufficient?” “Yes, that’s true.” And then Lady Philosophy concludes, “Then riches cannot make a man lacking nothing nor sufficient of himself, and this is what they seemed to promise.”<sup>2</sup> She then goes on to show that since money can be taken away by lawsuits or thieves, the person with money actually needs more than the person without it, for the man who has money needs something to keep his

money safe. “Now then,” she says, “the matter is fallen out quite contrary; for riches, which are thought to suffice of themselves, rather make men stand in need of other helps.”<sup>3</sup> Thus the pursuit of money leaves one chasing a shadow, longing for true riches, but only finding more needs the longer the chase goes on. The world pursues money. The world is ridiculous.

But the pursuit of money is not only frustrating, in that it doesn't lead where people hope. It is also dangerous. To follow this thread further, we travel 1,500 miles from Pavia, Italy to a town in the province of Cappadocia. There sits John Chrysostom, the Archbishop of Constantinople and one of the greatest preachers the Church has known. He likewise is in exile, and, like Boethius would do 120 years later, he is writing a theological and philosophical treatise. His is called *A Treatise to Prove That No One Can Injure the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*, and is similar to Boethius' later work. Chrysostom likewise considers that losing wealth has ultimately lost him nothing. He writes:

For wherefore, O man, do riches seem to thee worthy of such diligent pursuit? Is it on account of the pleasure which no doubt is derived from the table? or on account of the honor and the escort of those who pay court to thee, because of thy wealth? is it because thou art able to defend thyself against those who annoy thee, and to be an object of fear to all? For you cannot name any other reasons, save pleasure and flattery, and fear, and the power of taking revenge; for wealth does not generally tend to make anyone wiser, or more self-controlled, or more gentle, or more intelligent, or kind, or benevolent, or superior to anger, or gluttony or pleasure: it does not train anyone to be moderate, or teach him how to be humble, nor introduce and implant any other piece of virtue in the soul.<sup>4</sup>

Chrysostom desires virtue. He desires what is pleasing to God, and shuns what hinders devotion. Therefore he sees

wealth as a hindrance to the Christian, something that must be managed like a wild animal. St. Ambrose, another one of the Church Fathers, spoke this way, “Many who buy lions do not master the lions, but are mastered; so that if they see them restlessly ‘shaking the collars from their neck’ they run and hide. Therefore money makes no difference, for money generally buys masters for itself.”<sup>5</sup>

We see that the world is ridiculous. Not only do people chase money under the delusion that money will give them self-sufficiency, only to find that money only makes them need more, but then they throw themselves into danger by pursuing money, ensnaring themselves. As the Apostle Paul writes, “the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil” (1 Tim. 6:10).

### PURSUIT OF HONOR AND POWER

These dreadful things are not only the result of pursuing riches. Dissatisfaction, danger, and despair await with the world's other pursuits. Consider honor and power. And let's return to Boethius to do so, because the world needs more people who hang out with dead Christian philosophers and personified abstract concepts. Boethius had held high office and exercised a great amount of power in the Roman Empire. He has lost those things too. “But what sufficiency or certainty is there in earthly honor?” Lady Philosophy asks. “Take a man who has been a Roman consul many times and put him among the barbarians. What do they care about the office of consul? If the worldly honor of holding a high office were an ultimate good, certainly that good would be of benefit and recognized everywhere on earth. But it's not.”<sup>6</sup>

And do kings, who wield power on earth, have true happiness from the possession of power? Just think of King Belshazzar in Daniel 5, who thought he was secure in his kingdom and was enjoying a great party and was conquered by the Persians that very night. Think of King Ahab who boldly went into battle and was killed by a randomly fired arrow (1 Kgs. 22). Lady Philosophy continues, “But both former and present times are full of examples that

**Do not seek how he will live a long life here, but how he will live a boundless and endless life there. Give him the great things, not the little things.**

many kings have changed their happiness with misery. O excellent power, which is not sufficient to uphold itself!... Kings would willingly have lived securely, but could not, and yet they brag of their power. Do you think him mighty whom you see desire that which he cannot do? Do you think him mighty who dares not go without his bodyguard, who fears others more than they fear him?"<sup>7</sup> And when Lady Philosophy puts it that way, the world's power suddenly starts to sound like impotence.

But the world's impotence goes even further. What would we say of the man who is the mayor of a city, the governor of a state, the president of a country, who was a slave to his own passions? If he were a glutton, a drunkard, a fornicator, if he easily lost his temper or spoke without thinking or looked lustfully at women and simply couldn't control himself, would we say that man has power? Brace yourselves. You've changed time zones and centuries several times already this evening, and you're about to do it again. But this is part of the fun of a classical education. It's the 9th century AD, and Alfred the Great, king of the Anglo-Saxons, has something to say about power. He ruled a great kingdom, he translated *The Consolation of Philosophy* into Anglo-Saxon, and he was a poet. Here's a poem that he wrote about true power:

He that wishes power to win,  
 First must toil to rule his mind,  
 That himself the slave to sin  
 Selfish lust may never bind:...  
 Though from this, far Thule's isle,  
 Even to the Indian East,  
 One should rule the world awhile  
 With all might and power increas'd,  
 How shall he seem great or strong,  
 If himself he cannot save,  
 Word and deed against all wrong,  
 But to sin is still a slave?<sup>8</sup>

The people of the world are eager to control others, but cannot even control themselves. They are slaves to their own passions and cannot resist their own impulses, and then they set out to exercise governance in all the wrong places. This is the sort of foolish power that the world pursues. The world is ridiculous.

### PURSUIT OF FAME AND PLEASURE

And what about fame? The world wants to be known and adored and affirmed by all. I can recall a certain feast at which men were clambering for the highest seats so that they could puff themselves up with the esteem of other

people. Scripture has a word for this esteem: κενοδοξία (kenodoxía) in Greek, a combination of two words, together meaning "empty opinion" or "vain glory." And that's truly all it is: a bunch of hot air. Jesus told them all a parable about humility and true exaltation, yet they loved their vainglory (Lk. 14).



But why did they love it so much? What is man's opinion really worth? Boethius formerly had the esteem of men, was known by many and respected. Yet Lady Philosophy tells him, "Many have often been much spoken of through the false opinions of the

common people. What can be imagined more vile than that?... Though this glory be gotten by deserts, yet what does it add to a wise man's conscience who measures his own good not by popular rumors, but by his own certain self-knowledge?"<sup>9</sup> There was once a philosopher in Athens in the 4th century BC, and I apologize for not even giving you time to put on a seat belt before we traveled 800 years and 900 miles from Boethius, but we should keep moving. Diogenes was a bit of an odd duck, to say the least. One day a group of people was making fun of him. Someone said, "Diogenes, these folk are ridiculing you," and he said, "But I am not ridiculed."<sup>10</sup> In other words, "What do I care what they say? Should I think their opinion is worth something?" Or if we stay in the same city of Athens and go back just a hundred years—you don't even have to put your wine glass down for this jump—a statesman named Pericles is being loudly harassed by one of his detractors as he's trying to conduct business in the marketplace. Pericles ignores him and conducts his business. Pericles starts on his way home, and the man follows him through the streets, loudly insulting him, calling him names, and trying to ruin his reputation. Pericles ignores him and continues on his way. Pericles arrives home, by this time it's dark, and the man is still there, standing on his doorstep, and yelling at him. Pericles calmly tells one of his slaves, "Take a torch, go along, and see this man safely home." And then Pericles goes inside as if nothing happened.<sup>11</sup> The world doesn't make pagans like it used to. Both Diogenes and Pericles understood what Lady Philosophy told Boethius: "I think popular favor not worth speaking of, which neither proceeds from judgment, nor ever endures."<sup>12</sup>

And yet the world courts popular favor, whether it's celebrities in the media vying for headlines, or the every-

**I**t is not enough to adopt a model of education that the world devised to serve its pursuits and then add a religion class. Christian education must teach, in all its subjects, proper theological and philosophical thinking.

man on Facebook yearning for likes and shares. The Greeks had a wise saying: γνῶθι σεαυτόν, “know thyself.” This self-knowledge is of infinitely more value than the opinion of the masses. Yet people avoid this self-knowledge. They tend to hate what they see in the mirror and would rather see a distorted reflection through the vainglory that others can offer. But where does this lead? We see it all around us: the quest for vainglory leads to insecurity. The very thing that promised to lift man up to the heavens leaves him wallowing in self-doubt like a pig in the mud. The pursuit of vainglory is vanity and a chasing after the wind. Yet the world chases it anyway. The world is ridiculous.

And here I'll briefly touch on the world's pursuit of pleasure, because it has a similar conclusion to the world's pursuit of fame, namely despair. Lady Philosophy doesn't spend much time on the topic because of the obvious harm that comes from living for one's passions, but she does touch on the topic: “Now what should I say about bodily pleasures, the desire of which is full of anxiety, and the enjoying of which breeds repentance?... I know not what sweetness their beginnings have, but whosoever will remember his lusts shall understand that the end of pleasure is sadness.”<sup>13</sup> And she's really just following the reasoning of St. Paul in Romans 6, “What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death” (Rom. 6:21). Perhaps in this area most of all we see the world overexerting itself only to harm itself. The world is ridiculous.

### THE WORLD'S EDUCATION

Riches, honor, power, fame, pleasure. These are the world's pursuits. And the education that the world offers is rather obviously going to serve these pursuits. Ask your average person, “Why go to school?” “So I can get a job.” “Why get a job?” “So I can make money.” “Why make money?” “So I can have what I want.” “And what do you

want? That's the question. Is it an ultimate good that no one can steal or destroy? Is it a sufficient good that does not leave you lacking anything or longing for more? Or is it something transient that will leave you dissatisfied, bitter, and despairing? Are you merely chasing shadows?”

The world doesn't really stop to ask these questions. It's been taught not to. Dead Christian philosophers and personified abstract concepts are no longer welcome in the schools. *The Consolation of Philosophy* is one of the most widely read books in the history of the world. King Alfred, Geoffrey Chaucer, and Queen Elizabeth I all took the time to translate it into various forms of English. Dante drew heavily from it for his *Divine Comedy* and J.R.R. Tolkien did likewise for *The Lord of the Rings*. Other connections to the literature and thought of the Western world are too many to list. After the Bible, it has arguably had more influence on the shape of Western Civilization than any other book. And, just like the Bible, it has disappeared from modern education. Why?

To answer that question we'll need to get into the history of the American education system, which I really don't want to do, because it's a depressing story, and because it also means traveling all the way from Pavia, Italy to the New World and making our biggest jump of the evening, 1,300 years or so. So take a sip of wine and resist the urge to put on a tinfoil hat, and I promise I'll keep this part as brief as possible. Remember, it's always darkest before dawn.

Modern American education as we know it traces back to people who had attained the worldly goals of riches, honor, power, fame, and pleasure (as much as they can be attained) and wanted to make education reforms, not for the good of those who would receive such education, not even so that all people could pursue riches, honor, power, fame, or pleasure, but for the purpose of a greater social good. This really meant that those who already had riches, honor, power, fame, and pleasure could have more of it. I'll



give some of the details.

At the end of the 19th century and into the 20th, there were several important businessmen whose industries depended on there being a large working class. Andrew Carnegie, J. P. Morgan, J. D. Rockefeller, and Henry Ford all fall into this category, though they certainly weren't alone. The Rockefeller Foundation was formed, which had as one of its main goals the steering of education in America. In 1906 Rockefeller's General Education Board put forward a document called *Occasional Letter Number One*, which says:

In our dreams...people yield themselves with perfect docility to our molding hands. The present educational conventions [intellectual and character education] fade from our minds, and unhampered by tradition we work our own will upon a grateful and responsive folk. We shall not try to make these people or any of their children into philosophers or men of learning or men of science. We have not to raise up from them authors, educators, poets or men of letters. We shall not search for embryo great artists, painters,

musicians, nor lawyers, doctors, preachers, politicians, statesmen, of whom we have ample supply. The task we set before ourselves is very simple...we will organize children...and teach them to do in a perfect way the things their fathers and mothers are doing in an imperfect way...<sup>14</sup>

Don't you feel like a grateful and responsive folk for this education that was foisted on you? And this sentiment had support not only from a group of personally interested businessmen, but from the American government. Woodrow Wilson gave a speech to businessmen before the First World War, in which he said, "We want one class to have a liberal education [by which he meant the liberal arts]. We want another class, a very much larger class of necessity, to forgo the privilege of a liberal education and fit themselves to perform specific difficult manual tasks."<sup>15</sup> Now the goal of making factory workers may have changed, but the goal of education in America has not. As Ellwood P. Cubberley, a very influential educator from Stanford, put it in the early 20th century, "The nature of the national need must determine the character of the education provided."<sup>16</sup> As might be expected, that term "na-



tional need” does not refer to the actual needs of real human beings, but the perceived needs of a certain elite, usually needs that serve their own purposes of acquiring more riches, honor, power, fame, or pleasure.

Well, I said I would keep this part short, and I intend to, if for no other reason than keeping my supper down. But start digging into the web of John Dewey, Columbia Teachers College, the Rockefeller Foundation, the National Education Association, the Humanist Manifestos, and the movers and shakers of the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and you can forget about conspiracy theories, because you’ll see the evidence of a real, actual, successful conspiracy.

### CHRISTIAN PURSUITS

The world’s education is not for our Christian children. We don’t pursue the same things the world does, nor do we want to be pawns in its pursuits. We seek Christ. We desire our Savior. And why? Because we realize what we really need. Γνωθι σεαυτόν, “know thyself.” My problem is not that I don’t have enough dollars in my bank account. My problem is not that I’m not in charge of enough. My problem is that I am a sinner who has transgressed the Law of God, a Law that He gave me for my own good, out of His love for me, and in exchange for such great love I made myself a rebel and brought on myself wrath. My problem is that I was destined for hell, that I could not look on God, my God, in the land of the living. I needed more than a check or a compliment or some good physical feeling, which would only make me more worthy of the punishment that I already had coming. I needed redemption. I needed a Savior. I needed the blood of God to atone for my sins. I needed righteousness before the Judge of the living and the dead. And then Jesus redeemed me, a lost and condemned person, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver, but with His holy precious blood and with His innocent suffering and death, that I may be His own and live

under Him in His kingdom, and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as He is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

Zacchaeus loved his wealth and cheated people and stockpiled as much money as he could, and yet he was lacking something and he knew it. Jesus came to him and received him graciously, “Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house.” And suddenly Zacchaeus had what he had lacked. “Look, Lord,” he says, “I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.” Riches didn’t matter to him anymore. He had Jesus.

A blind man belonged to the synagogue and, even if he was a blind beggar, he nevertheless had the social honor of belonging to the right group. Then Jesus came and healed his sight. He saw his God face to face, the Savior come at last to suffer and die and rise. The blind man sided with that Savior, and it meant siding against those from whom he would have had honor. But what did it matter if they threw him out of their blasphemous club and dishonored him? The Jews ridiculed him when he spoke of Christ, “You were completely born in sins, and are you teaching us?” But he was not ridiculed. What was the world’s vainglory to him? He had the glory of Christ. They cast him out, but He had a Lord who would never cast him out. He had Jesus.

A centurion had power and could command this soldier, “Go,” and he would go and another, “Come,” and he would come, and another, “Do this,” and he would do it. And he was willing to consider his power nothing. He was willing to consider his power but a shadow of the true power that Jesus has, and by his knowledge of the shadow the centurion fled from the shadow to the reality. He said, “Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak the word, and my servant will be healed.” What did he need to gloat in his own power for? He had Jesus.

John the Baptist had become famous in the land of Judea. Yet he did not care about this fame. He pointed people to

**K**ings would willingly have lived securely, but could not, and yet they brag of their power. Do you think him mighty whom you see desire that which he cannot do?

the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. He said of Jesus, “He must increase, but I must decrease.” He didn’t need fame. He had Jesus. Stephen chose pain over pleasure and prayed, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin,” because he knew he had something better than earthly pleasure. He knew that in one brief moment of steadfastness and pain he would enter into the eternal pleasure of His Savior. Earthly pleasure didn’t matter to him. He had Jesus. In him are all riches and honor and power and fame and pleasure. And those are not the shadows, but the reality.

The world is to be pitied as it chases its shadows. Even men like Carnegie, Morgan, Rockefeller, and Ford are to be pitied. They and their ilk are not to be feared, but pitied. They thought they had life figured out and knew what it was all about. And yet they lacked, and they desired, and they still sought in vain. Their riches, honor, power, fame, and pleasure left them empty in the end. Contrast this with Boethius. By the end of *The Consolation of Philosophy* he is ready to die. He recognizes that earthly shadows are nothing and that God alone can satisfy all the longings of man. Boethius was a devout Christian, as we see from his other writings, and though he died lacking everything in the world, he did not die lacking the one true God, and therefore he had everything. “The Lord is my shepherd. I shall not want” (Ps. 23:1). I have the Lord; therefore, I lack no good thing.

It’s easy for us to forget this, because the world around us is so loud, and as a compensation for its insecurity, it acts with an overconfidence that sometimes shakes us. But Christ has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light (1 Pet. 2:9), and the world is just acting and doesn’t really know what it’s talking about. Therefore we say with the Apostle Paul, “Indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith” (Phil. 3:8-9).

## CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

What we pursue, what we desire, namely Christ, is going to determine how we educate. It is not enough to adopt a model of education that the world devised to serve its pursuits and then add a religion class. Christian education must teach, in all its subjects, proper theological and philosophical thinking. We want our children to think like Boethius did and St. Paul before him and be content to lose

all the things of this world and count them as rubbish, because the ultimate reality of any good that we can conceive of on earth exists only in Christ. John Chrysostom in one of his sermons on Ephesians calls us away from thinking of the things of earth when we consider the education of our children and calls us to think of the true wisdom given in the Scriptures:

How long are we going to be mere flesh? How long are we going to hunch over the earth? Let all things stand in the second place for us when compared with taking forethought for our children and bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. If he learns to be a lover of wisdom from the first, he has acquired riches greater than all riches, and a mightier glory. You will accomplish nothing so great by teaching him a craft, and the outward training through which he will acquire possessions, than if you teach him a craft through which he will despise possessions. If you want to make him rich, do it like that. For the rich man is not he who binds himself with many possessions and surrounds himself with many things, but he who has need of nothing.

Discipline your son in *this*, teach him *this*—this is the greatest wealth. Do not seek how you will make him renowned in outward lessons, and make him glorious, but consider how you will teach him to despise the glory that is in this life. Thence he would become more radiant and more glorious. These things are possible both for the poor man and the rich man to do. One does not learn *these* things from a teacher, nor through craft, but through the divine sayings. Do not seek how he will live a long life here, but how he will live a boundless and endless life there. Give him the great things, not the little things.<sup>17</sup>

Give him the great things, not the little things. “The world abideth not; / Lo, like a flash ’twill vanish; / With all its gorgeous pomp / Pale death it cannot banish; / Its riches pass away, / And all its joys must flee; / But Jesus doth abide— / What is the world to me?” (TLH 430).

All of this highlights the importance of having Christian schools and homeschools. This is why we’re starting Luther Classical College, which will teach young men and women to know the Scriptures, and good Lutheran hymns, and the Catechism, and the Greek and Roman classics, and great medieval and modern literature. If it’s not presumptuous

# Let all things stand in the second place for us When compared with taking forethought for our children and bringing them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.

to say, it will teach children to speak and to think the way you've heard me speak tonight. Rockefeller didn't want to make philosophers, and the schooling system he helped form doesn't make philosophers. But we do want to make philosophers, and for obvious reasons. We want our children to remain faithful to Christ and the Scriptures and not be led astray by the world's empty pursuits and ideals.

Such education does not have as its goal cloistering ourselves off from the world. Rather we recognize that by bringing our children up with such an education, we are providing the world with exactly what it needs. I've been saying the world is ridiculous. The word ridiculous means laughable. You don't fear what you laugh at. We don't fear the world. We pity it. And so we raise up our children in the nurture and education of the Lord, and we make them spend time with dead Christian philosophers and personified abstract concepts and most of all the Scriptures, both because we love them and want them to know Christ and because we pity the world and want it to know Christ. John Chrysostom in that same sermon on Ephesians speaks of the great blessing a child is who has been brought up in true Christian philosophy and education and then enters into the world, and I'll close with his words:



S. CHRYSOSTOM .

Think, then, how great your son is, going in there like the best physician: entering with the instruments that are able to reduce the inflammation of each, and approaching each one and conversing, and making the sick body healthy, applying the medicines from the Scriptures and pouring out the words of philosophy.<sup>18</sup> ☩

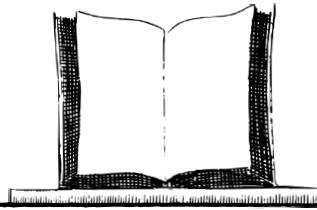
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## End Notes

- <sup>1</sup> cf. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. III.2
- <sup>2</sup> Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. III.3; translated by H. F. Stewart in Loeb Classical Library No. 74, pg. 237, translation altered. *Opes igitur nihilo indigentem sufficientemque sibi facere nequeunt et hoc erat quod promittere videbantur.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 239
- <sup>4</sup> Chrysostom, *A Treatise to Prove That No One Can Injure the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself*, §7; NPNF1-09, pg. 276, translation altered
- <sup>5</sup> Ambrose, *Letter 7*, §13; quoted in *From Irenaeus to Grotius: A Sourcebook in Christian Political Thought*, ed. Oliver O'Donovan and Joan Lockwood O'Donovan, pg. 81.
- <sup>6</sup> cf. Boethius, *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. III.4
- <sup>7</sup> *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. III.5; pg. 243, 245, translation altered
- <sup>8</sup> *King Alfred's Poems: Now First Turned into English Metres* by Martin F. Tupper (London: 1850), pgs. 63-64
- <sup>9</sup> *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. III.6; pg. 247, 249, translation altered
- <sup>10</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Fabius Maximus*, X; translated by Bernadotte Perrin in Loeb Classical Library No. 65, pg. 149. Διογένης ὁ σοφός, εἰπόντος τινὸς πρὸς αὐτόν· "Ὅττοι σοῦ καταγελωσιν," "Ἄλλ' ἐγὼ," εἶπεν, "οὐ καταγελωμαί."
- <sup>11</sup> Plutarch, *Life of Pericles*, V
- <sup>12</sup> *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. III.6; pg. 249, translation altered
- <sup>13</sup> *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Bk. III.7; pg. 251, translation altered
- <sup>14</sup> *Occasional Letter Number One* (1906); quoted in *The Underground History of American Education*, Vol. 1 by John Taylor Gatto (2017), pg. 109
- <sup>15</sup> Quoted in *The Underground History of American Education* by John Taylor Gatto, pg. 99
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 107
- <sup>17</sup> Chrysostom, *Ephesians, Homily XXI*; translated by the author from *Patrologia Graeca*, Vol. 62, col. 151. Τὰ μεγάλα αὐτῷ χαρίζου μὴ τὰ μικρά.
- <sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, col. 152. ...φάρμακα ἐπιτιθέντα τὰ ἀπὸ τῶν Γραφῶν, καὶ τοὺς περὶ φιλοσοφίας ἐκχέοντα λόγους. Chrysostom uses the word "philosophy" here in the sense of "Christian worldview."

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# The Lutheran Missal Project

## THE HISTORIC LECTIONARY



he Lutheran Reformation was never about creating something new—whether a church, a system of theology, or a way of worship—but about recovering what had been lost. Unlike the radical reformers among the Calvinists, the Lutheran reformers sought to retain, wherever possible, the treasures and traditions of the Church. The chief treasures of the Church are, of course, the Gospel of Christ and the Holy Sacraments. These we must never give up, even though it cost us our lives. But there are many other salutary traditions that the Reformers considered a valuable part of our inheritance in the faith. Regarding the Lutheran observance of the Divine Service, or the Mass, as the Reformers called it, our Confessions state: “We do not abolish the Mass, but religiously maintain and defend it... And the usual public ceremonies are observed, the series of lessons, of prayers, vestments, and other like things” (Apol. XXIV, 1).

The ancient series of lessons and prayers referenced by the *Book of Concord* is the Church’s historic Lectionary, a series of appointed Bible readings (lections), psalm verses, and prayers to be used within the Divine Service for nearly every day of the Church Year. This Lectionary was not the product of an individual, a committee, or even a single generation. Instead, it developed organically over many centuries of Christian worship and has, in some form, been in continuous use by the vast majority of believers for

nearly sixteen hundred years (and perhaps longer). How wonderful to be united in this way with countless generations of the faithful departed, hearing the same words of Holy Scripture read aloud in our worship on any given day of the Church Year!

Believers used to spend much more time in church than we do today. Thus, the historic Lectionary included readings not only for the chief Sunday services, but also for many of the weekdays: most Wednesdays and Fridays of the year, all forty days of Lent, the Octaves of (eight days following) Easter and Pentecost, the twelve Ember Days (seasonal periods of fasting and repentance), and a host of other occasions, including commemorations of the saints.

The devout Lutherans of old, even the simple farmers, ordered their lives around the rhythm of the Church Year. They planted their crops, forecast the weather, and named their children according to the Calendar of the Church. But sadly, the greater part of this treasure has been forgotten or lost to us today. During our synod’s hurried transition to the English language following the World Wars, many valuable German-language resources, including the full historic Lectionary, were left behind. Where the historic Lectionary (titled the *One-Year Lectionary*) is presented in English by our synodical publishing house today, it is but a shell of what our fathers once held in their hands. Nearly all of the weekday occasions with their readings have disappeared, leaving only Sundays and a few dozen chief feasts and festivals. The *One-Year Lectionary* book by CPH could more properly be titled *One-Third of the Historic*



Lectionary, since the greater portion of the Scripture readings, psalm verses, and prayers are no longer present.

### THE LUTHERAN MISSAL

For the past six years, I and a handful of other volunteers have been engaged in a project to recover the full treasure of the Church's lectionary. Our offering, when published, will be titled *The Lutheran Missal*. For those unfamiliar with the word, a missal, or mass book, is a large, ornate book from which a pastor can conduct the Divine Service from beginning to end. A missal is ornate because it is meant to be placed on the missal stand of the church altar, next to the Body and Blood of Christ. A missal is large because it contains every Scripture reading, psalm verse, and prayer of the historic Lectionary, including those for special services, such as Ash Wednesday or Good Friday. Our Lutheran fathers, who inherited the Latin missals of the late-medieval Western Church, continued to use and pro-

duce missals (sometimes in Latin, but more often in German) in the centuries following the Reformation. But, inexplicably, we did not continue this tradition in North America after adopting the English language. *The Lutheran Missal*, the first such publication for English-speaking Lutherans, is an effort to restore the full use of the historic lectionary within our parishes.

### SOURCES

*The Lutheran Missal* makes use of three types of primary sources: the Latin missals of the late-medieval Western Church, the German missals and prayer books of the Lutheran Reformation, and the liturgical publications of our synod. Some might find it strange that Lutherans would pay any heed to pre-Reformation sources, but the old Latin missals, as the last publications of the unified Western Church, were the starting point for the Lutheran reforms of the liturgy. Long after the Reformation began,

Lutheran liturgical texts were still making reference to the Latin missals in a positive way. For example, the missal for the Lutheran Cathedral of Havelberg, compiled by Matthäus Ludecus in 1589, omits the forty Lenten masses, “lest the book grow too large” (p. 63). Even so, Ludecus commends the omitted portions, which “were hardly assigned without wisdom or good order by the godly doctors of the early church,” and directs the inquiring reader to “seek elsewhere,” that is, to consult the old Latin missals.

But what about more recently established traditions, some of which can be found in the liturgical publications of our synod? Is there a place for these? Quite possibly, yes. Of course, we should endeavor to retain all that is salutary of the Church’s ancient tradition—as did the Lutheran Reformers—but not in a slavish sort of way. The ancient and living tree of the Church’s liturgy and tradition still grows, though much more slowly now than when it was a sapling. Whereas it was necessary for our fathers to graft in whole branches or prune away large sections of diseased trunk, our task today, as the inheritors of a fully mature tree, is largely one of careful cultivation and preservation: trimming a small branch here or there, inspecting for disease, etc. Lutherans are right to be wary of liturgical innovation. Even so, the historic Lectionary has continued to develop in the five hundred years since the Reformation. Perhaps the biggest example of this is the relatively recent addition of Prophecies (Old Testament readings) to the historic Epistles and Gospels for Sundays. Even though these readings are less than a century old, they have become part of our current tradition, and they serve the proclamation of the Gospel. Thus, they ought to be preserved. Our goal with *The Lutheran Missal* is not one of historical repristination. Rather it is to bring forward the best of our ancient Catholic inheritance—cleansed from Roman dross—with an eye toward certain worthy traditions that have developed in our use since the Reformation.

### INTENDED USE

*The Lutheran Missal* is intended as a supplement for our current hymnal and lectionary, not as a replacement. Much of the content for Sundays will be familiar to those who use *Lutheran Service Book*, especially to those who follow the *One-Year Lectionary*. In fact, if your pastor were to begin using *The Lutheran Missal* after its publication, you would likely not notice a difference on Sundays, unless, of course, it was that a large and beautifully bound book now graced the missal stand. But the real benefits of using *The Lutheran Missal* might not become apparent to the congregation until the next season of Advent or Lent.

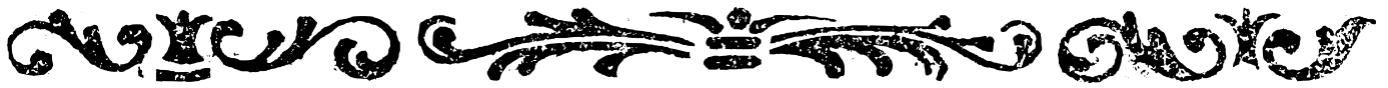
Most of our Lutheran pastors would not dream of abandoning the assigned Sunday texts in favor of an invented sermon series. Why then, would we do exactly that on the Wednesdays of Advent and Lent? With the publication of *The Lutheran Missal*, our pastors will, for the first time in a century or two, be able to read and preach on the historic texts appointed for these days, texts chosen by the Church Fathers for their connection to the theme of the previous Sunday’s Gospel reading. Is your congregation considering offering services during the Twelve Days of Christmas, or the weekdays of Lent, or the Octaves of Easter or Pentecost? Perhaps your parish would like to observe the feast day of St. Lawrence, which is listed on its historic date of August 10th in *LSB*’s calendar, but without any of the necessary texts. If so, the missal will prove a great aid, providing easy access to the historic readings, Psalm verses, and prayers for each occasion. A smaller edition of *The Lutheran Missal* will also serve well at home upon the family altar, allowing devout fathers, mothers, and children to more fully immerse themselves in the texts and rhythm of the Church Year. And perhaps the devotional use of the mid-week occasions in our homes will help to restore their public observance within our parishes.

### CONCLUSION

It has been five years since work on *The Lutheran Missal* began, and it may take another five before it is ready to publish. To those eager for the finished work, this may seem a very long time, but consider that we have been without a missal for nearly two hundred years. We can wait a few years more in order to ensure that it is well made, and that the texts presented are truly those of the universal Church, rather than of a single source or diocese. For those interested in our editing process, or learning of the unprecedented amount of research that has already been done, please visit [lutheranmissal.home.blog](http://lutheranmissal.home.blog), or simply search the web for *The Lutheran Missal*. It is our hope that this missal will become a great blessing to the English-speaking Lutheran Church, restoring to our use the full treasure of the historic Lectionary and aiding the saving work of the Gospel among our parishes and families. May God grant it for Christ’s sake. ❧

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## But it's Christ's Left Hand, not Everybody's and Nobody's!

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I never lightly disagree with any of the positions articulated so eloquently by my dear late father in God, Kurt Marquart, a man endowed with a laser sharp mind and the prince of systematic theologians in his generation. But I recall an uncomfortable conversation in which the celebrated Fort Wayne dogmatician and I disagreed about the status of the so-called 'Two Kingdoms doctrine' (*Zwei-Reiche-Lehre*), which Kurt (for example, in his dogmatics locus on the Church) treated as an untouchable component of the Lutheran dogmatic edifice, while I was and am more inclined to think of it as consisting in imagery that Luther freely used from time to time as he was considering issues under the umbrella of Church and State or Church and Society. As far as I can see, our binding dogma in this area is found in the Augsburg Confession XVI and XXVIII rather than in the Reformer's private writings.

Around forty-five years ago, while a doctoral student in Germany racing to gain fluency in Luther's language, I devoured and digested a weighty symposium of essays on the *Zwei Reiche Lehre* published under the title *Reich Gottes und Welt* (The Kingdom of God and the World). The essays in question featured widely differing interpretations of this facet of Luther's teaching and brought sharply to my attention the stunning fact that the 'doctrine' that some consider a done deal did not see the light of day until precisely a hundred years ago. Classical Lutheranism had pondered Church and State and Church and Society under the framework, inherited and developed from the middle ages, of the Three Estates instituted by God, namely, the 'domestic' estate (built on man-woman marriage anchored in households whence comes the 'economy'), the 'political' estate made up at that time mainly of hereditary rulers, and the 'ecclesiastical estate' or office of ministry given to exercise spiritual fatherhood over the household of God. Far from superannuated, the Three Estates framework needs sensitive interpretation and application for our contemporary situation.

The sudden collapse of the 'Christian' German monarchies at the end of 1918, followed by the unforeseen prompt disestablishment of the Roman Catholic and 'mainline' Protestant churches with the emergence of the Weimar Republic, seemed to call for a different model within which to rethink the perennial issues involved in the Church's being a pilgrim community distinct from but very much involved in the institutions and life of this passing world. Accordingly, from the early 1920s a rash of publications appeared on Luther's two kingdoms imagery and the *Zwei-Reiche-Lehre* familiar to us sprang to life in the minds of the learned guild of Luther scholars.

Luther is apt to frustrate his students as he avoids terminological exactitude and plays games with specialist vocabulary, sometimes giving well known words a special twist of his own. So, as he dealt with the topic under discussion here, he sometimes pictured God as exercising His authority over 'Two Kingdoms' (*Reiche*), while on other occasions setting forth His rule over this one world through the operation of 'Two Governments' (*Regimente*). When speaking of *Reiche*/Kingdoms Luther mainly had in the background of his thinking the still unfinished conflict between God and the devil, while his use of *Regimente*/Governments stood in the service of explaining how God has established two distinct authority systems to preserve His work in creation and redemption against the devil. A grave misunderstanding of the *Zwei-Reiche-Lehre* is to think of God's taking different governing approaches to two contiguous territories on the analogy of the geographically adjacent kingdoms of Belgium and the Netherlands. I recall once driving out of a seminary parking lot to behold the fatuous sign 'You are now entering the mission field'—as though the Church and her institutions are not the devil's playground, with repentance being constantly needed as much within as outside their physical premises!

One of the most informative essays in the *Reich Gottes und Welt* volume supplied the intriguing argument, which I blithely dismissed in the folly of youth, that Luther's testimony on the Left Hand Government of God should

rightly be understood as having a Christological basis (*christologische Begründung*). Aha! In His public ministry Jesus steps forth and behaves as King, not timidly presenting His credentials to people before whom He stands in terror, but calmly, even meekly speaking and acting as One on the same level as God. His royal bearing even in the state of humiliation invites comparison with the demeanor of Aragorn before he was crowned king of Gondor. Hence those who witnessed His words and deeds were ‘alarmed’ or even ‘struck with panic’ rather than merely ‘astonished’ at Him (see Mk. 1:22, and check out the meaning of *ekplēssō* there). By His own account, in His resurrection He has been invested with ‘all authority’ in heaven and earth (Mt. 28:18), while the seer of Revelation makes no bones about describing Him as ‘Ruler of the kings of the earth’ (Rev. 1:5), a truth that all bearers of civil authority discount at their peril. Since there is no square inch of this earth where the ascended Lord is not sovereign, all that Christians do and undergo in the realm where we picture God as ruling through His Left Hand takes place under the kingship of Jesus.

We need to beware of picturing the area governed by God’s Left Hand as simply those wide tracts of space where the world ‘does its own thing’ as the Church looks unconcernedly on. Quietism began as a mystical aberration promoted by Madame de Guyon in seventeenth-century French Roman Catholicism while an extended use of this term can refer to an attitude that leaves the world and its ways to their own devices while the pious hunker down in their bomb shelters hoping that the evils being perpetrated in the wider society pass them by. God preserve us from such Quietist caricatures of the Two Kingdoms Doctrine as we have witnessed from most church leaders and many pastors here in Canada over the past several years where, as the covid situation went into top gear, Revelation 13 was stunningly fulfilled before our eyes, while so many who bought into the masks and experimental injections hysteria stubbornly refused to acknowledge the true nature of what was going on. If history does not repeat itself, it surely rhymes, but most in the True North failed to hear the eerie echoes of 1930s Germany.

Yes, the Left Hand governance of God takes place under

the kingship of Christ, and all that happens in this realm is not, as Marxists past and present suppose, unmitigatedly evil in such a way that the only remedy is to be found in the Utopia that allegedly lies on the other side of the Revolution. Despite the Fall, Providence kindly sees to it that divine goodness is still manifest in the lives of sinners. Back in early 2022 the Freedom or Truckers’ Convoy displayed a multiracial Canada that, however imperfectly, acknowledges the natural law so eloquently attested by C. S. Lewis in his *Abolition of Man*, a Canada with a healthy sense of what all is entailed in human life in community. Many participants in that extended peaceful demonstration held in sub-zero Ottawa were heavily engaged in philanthropic activities for the benefit of the city’s otherwise neglected homeless and abandoned. Yet our Prime Minister, who famously declined to meet with blue collar workers staging a peaceful protest, finds time to appear on drag queen shows and displays his contempt for due constitutional process by having the two leaders of the Freedom Convoy put on trial for the offense of ‘insurrection’.

Wednesday 20 September 2023 seemed in some ways a repeat of those heady days of February 2022 as hundreds of thousands of concerned Canadians gathered in many places across this huge land to protest the brutal imposition of gender ideology in the country’s public school system, once again giving evidence of healthy sentiments and behavior in the midst of this undeniably fallen

world. These peaceful protests had barely begun before the Prime Minister dubbed the whole exercise a manifestation of hate by those guilty of ‘homo-, bi- and transphobia’. Alas, given governmental control of most of our broadcast media and governmental subsidies to our tame ‘legacy’ print media, the large scale and great measure of public sympathy for both these popular movements has sedulously been kept from the eyes of the people. The Deep State has omnipresent, mighty tentacles bent on suppressing free thought and expression. The ‘long march through the institutions’ perpetrated since Trudeau Senior’s revolutionary constitution of 1982 has had the effect that most bearers of authority and holders of influential positions (supremely in the educational system) will enforce the tenets of Cultural Marxism to the bitter end, callously dis-





missing the concerns of blue collar Truckers and working parents determined to withstand the depredations of gender ideology.

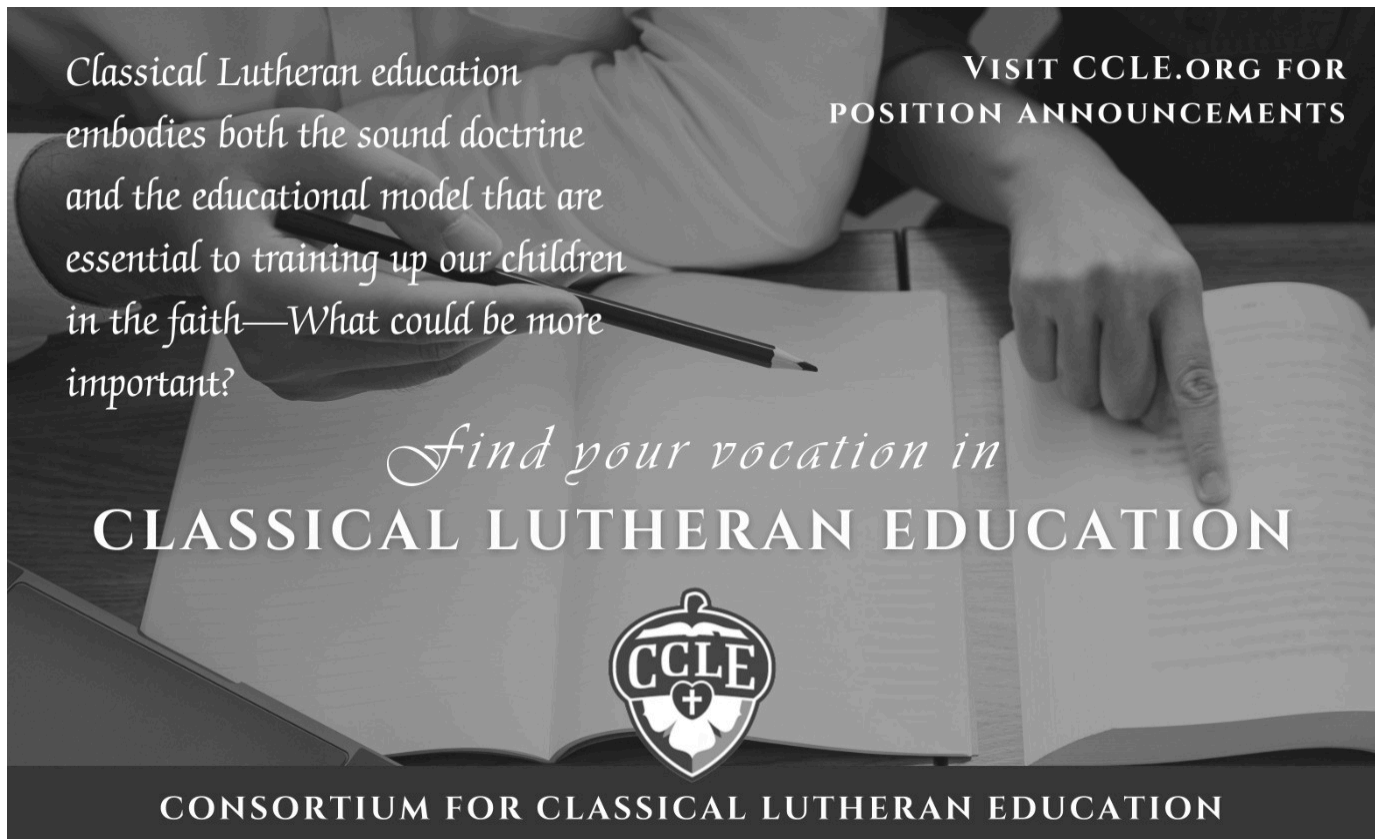
Both the Freedom Convoy and the One Million March 4 Children demonstrate the existence of a healthful Canada open to human flourishing that wondrously continues to exist beneath the tyranny imposed by an increasingly totalitarian State, and they invite comparison with the Solidarity movement that emerged in Poland in the 1970s and 1980s. But it seems little action has been or is being taken to keep up the momentum of these hopeful events, and Canadian conservatism painfully lacks both leadership and articulate advocacy and expression. Polish Solidarity had the advantage of being built on a bedrock of widespread religious involvement and Christian profession, whereas church leadership and parish clergy in Canada have voiced hardly any sympathy with the popular movements of 2022 and 2023, with most of them functioning as willing echo chambers of government policy and attitudes. The March 4 Children was in fact the brainchild of a Muslim businessman in Ottawa and while it quickly attracted widespread Christian support, this came almost entirely from the laity with scant support coming from those with Reverend be-

fore their names and collars around their necks.

The bitter example of your Northern neighbor should act as further encouragement and incitement to Lutheran Christians in the United States to be prepared to make big sacrifices in order to maintain and even increase the number of Christian secondary classical schools, and to found and support the sort of Classical College being envisaged and prepared for in Casper, WY. While education is partly but not wholly a matter discharged under God's Left Hand, we should bear in mind that this Left Hand carries the wounds of the Crucified Jesus Who can never be indifferent to what is placed in the minds of young people made in God's image and redeemed by and incorporated into Christ to bear this image out into the world. Handing on the Faith to future generations cannot adequately be done in Quietist enclaves populated mainly by the elderly, but must be carried out publicly by those unashamed to profess the kingship of Christ over this and the future world. The time to adjust popular misunderstandings of the so-called *Zwei-Reiche-Lehre* is long overdue. ☩

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*Rev. Dr. John Stephenson taught for over thirty years as professor of theology at Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Catharines.*




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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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**THE MISSION OF THE COLLEGE IS** to educate Lutherans in the classical, Lutheran tradition and to prepare them for godly vocations within family, church, and society, fostering Christian culture through study of the best of our Western heritage.

## Imagine a college where students learn:



To value family over success



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



That Christian culture grows through supporting faithful churches and leading pious homes

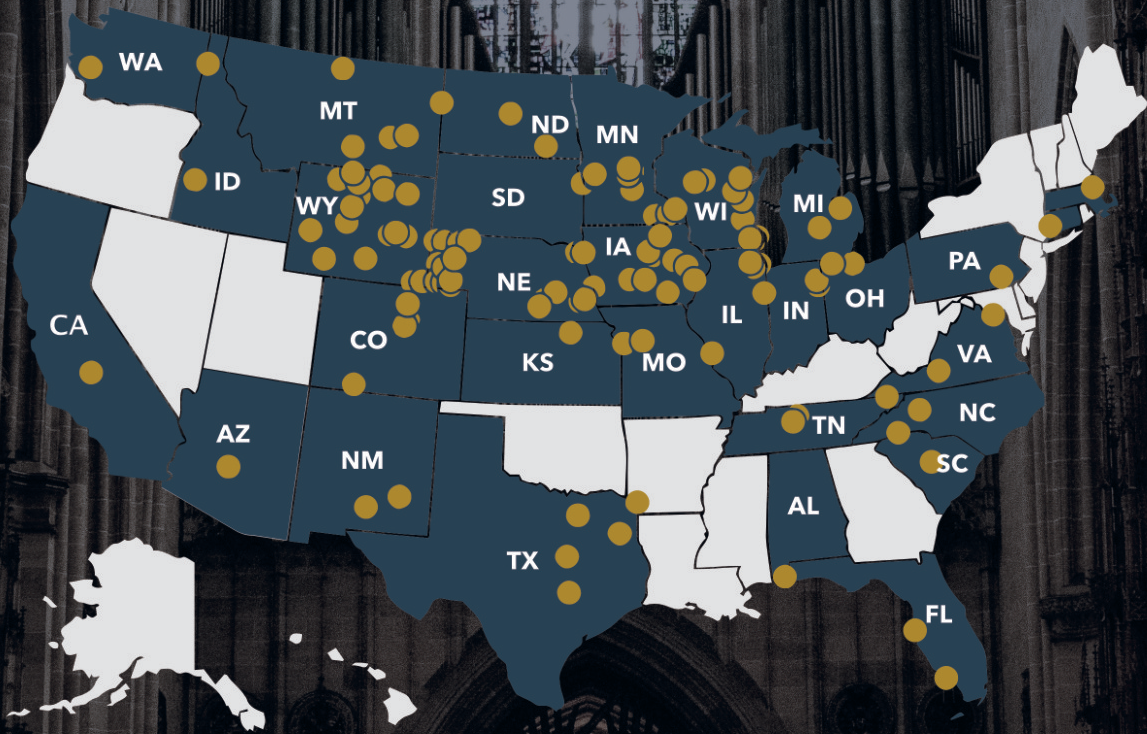
## This is why Luther Classical College exists.

We're passionate about authentic Lutheran culture, lives rich with learning and Christian virtue, and humble service in Lutheran homes, churches, and communities. Proudly and unapologetically Lutheran in theology and culture, we seek to be a college of Lutherans, by Lutherans, and for Lutherans.

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# The Christenlehre



The following translation was first printed in the March 12, 1895 issue of *Der Lutheraner* under the title “Die Christenlehre.” The author is Friedrich Bente, who was a professor at Concordia Seminary—St. Louis from 1893 through 1926. Bente also was editor for *Lehre und Wehre*, the main theological journal of the Missouri Synod.

The term “Christenlehre” is left untranslated in this article, as it is not neatly translated into English. We could call it the “instruction of Christians.” The Christenlehre was a notable feature of Missouri Synod congregations, especially in the German-speaking era of the 19th and first half of the 20th centuries. It was essentially a Catechism lesson, where the children would sit in the front pews and would be called on to stand up and answer questions asked by the pastor. If the children did not know the answers, the pastor would also call on the adults. The intent of the Christenlehre was that children would not forget the important doctrines and Catechism truths which they had learned, especially after Confirmation. The Christenlehre usually took place in the sanctuary after the regular morning worship or during Sunday afternoon, as Bente writes.

The Christenlehre was generally replaced by Sunday Schools after World War II as a means of teaching children. However, we can see from this article that the Christenlehre was a unique feature of our congregations with a specific purpose in mind for retaining the youth in the doctrine which they were taught. Mindful pastors and congregations might consider how they can incorporate elements of the Christenlehre into congregational life again today.



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

## THE CHRISTENLEHRE



Il spiritual life in the church is a fruit of Christ's Word. Therefore God also wants every congregation to let this Word dwell within it richly. As in nature seed is sowed in lavish fullness, so also this sowing of the Word should not be lacking in our hearts.

The bread of life should be richly distributed to the children of God. Young and old, great and small alike should be suckled and nourished with the milk of the Gospel. Neither the entire congregation, nor a part of it, nor any single individual of the same should suffer lack of the Word. Therefore the church has also established alongside the regular preaching the so-called “Christenlehre.” The Christenlehre makes its own contribution to congregational life, that the Word of God has free course and grows in the congregation. This practice gives dignity and value to the instruction of children. The same Word of holiness and power, of grace and God's truth, which is poured out in a wide stream over the listeners in the Sunday sermon, should also find its way in smaller streams into the heart of the congregation through the individual questions of the Catechism examination. The very same things that inspire the congregation, especially the preaching of the Word, should also make the Catechism exercises precious and valuable to us. The glorious Small Catechism of Martin Luther, which is laid down as the foundation of the Christenlehre, is the most valuable little book. Our Formula of Concord says, “the Christian doctrine from God's Word is comprised in [the Catechism] in the most correct and simple way, and, in like manner, is explained, as far as necessary for simple laymen.” The Formula calls the Small Cate-

chism “the Bible of the laity, wherein everything is comprised which is treated at greater length in Holy Scripture, and is necessary for a Christian man to know for his salvation.”

The Catechism examinations have not been established by the church for the sake of mere change for change’s sake, as if we were trying to spend the Sunday afternoon in a different way, more pleasant and attractive than the morning worship. The Catechism examinations correspond much more to an actual need of the Christian congregation. They are not so easily replaced by the sermon, and certainly not replaced by the so-called Sunday School. The Word of God has much use and value for teaching, reproof, correction, instruction, and comfort [2 Tim. 3:16, Rom. 15:4]. But the most important is its use for teaching, the instruction for salvation. And exactly this use for teaching is,

cles which pertain to the faith and life of Christians, it is exactly the Christenlehre which is the always repeatable, simple, and thorough instruction in the most holy faith. It should be held in highest importance and regarded as downright indispensable.

Also the lovely, simple method of the Catechism examination—to make the divine truths clear to understand and warm in the heart—is an overall useful, salutary, and fruitful way to teach, especially for the weak in knowledge. Here the pastor relates well to the simple. He personally brings the difficult articles of doctrine to clear understanding and thoroughly clears away any slippery false teaching. The process is so simple, and yet it is so solid. When the doctrine is drawn into the light point for point through simple questions, when it is explained in clear answers and substantiated by God’s Word—it is minted like



**Even for experienced Christians, nothing gets lost easier than the simplest Catechism truths. Christian knowledge is no such thing, that a man can avail himself of it once for all and then never lose it.**

as in the sermon, the predominant use in the Christenlehre. While the Sunday sermon provides instruction according to the different festivals and times of the church year, as well as the special needs of the congregation according to its time, place, and circumstances, the Catechism examination treats the articles of the faith according to the six chief parts, in context and in finely ordered sequence. It moves step-by-step through all doctrines of the Law and Gospel, from the Ten Commandments to the Creed, from the Creed to Prayer, from Prayer to the Means of Grace: Baptism, Absolution, and Holy Communion. Here no piece of doctrine is overlooked, but every piece and every piece in its place is thoroughly explained. It is proven from the Holy Scripture and applied as necessary. Here every error which is dangerous to the congregation and its individual members is exposed on all sides by the light of Holy Scripture. Every error is repudiated and decidedly rejected. Here the specific duties of faith, love, and life are counted, addressed, and warmly set upon the heart of the congregation. No article is skipped over, no important question remains unanswered. If a Christian congregation wants its members to be well-grounded in all arti-

cles which pertain to the faith and life of Christians, it is exactly the Christenlehre which is the always repeatable, simple, and thorough instruction in the most holy faith. It should be held in highest importance and regarded as downright indispensable.

Also the lovely, simple method of the Catechism examination—to make the divine truths clear to understand and warm in the heart—is an overall useful, salutary, and fruitful way to teach, especially for the weak in knowledge. Here the pastor relates well to the simple. He personally brings the difficult articles of doctrine to clear understanding and thoroughly clears away any slippery false teaching. The process is so simple, and yet it is so solid. When the doctrine is drawn into the light point for point through simple questions, when it is explained in clear answers and substantiated by God’s Word—it is minted like

pure gold. Every particular article—the ones that even an attentive listener might miss in a sermon—may here come clearly into focus. The question spurs the listener on to use serious reflection in bringing to mind the great treasure of his knowledge, formed by God’s Word, to answer the questions. When an answer escapes him, the question makes him vigorously attentive to fill the gap in his knowledge. It offers him the opportunity to replace what is lacking. In the course of the questions and answers the preacher also notices where he must dig deeper, where he must connect better, and where he must follow up. A wrong answer shows him where the rays of God’s Word have failed to connect. This examination concerns all people. The easier questions are set before the weaker, the more difficult questions set before the more advanced. Words of special instruction, application, and admonition are woven in for the adults also. When the children answer in an orderly and respectful way with clear and lively answers, it is not only instructive for everyone who is present. It is also a delightful joy to be there.

The Catechism examination is especially important, necessary, and useful for those youth who are weaker and sim-

ple. It is especially for these that the Christenlehre is established. You can accurately call it a children's instruction and children's worship. Just like the adults, so also the children are members of the church, for in Christ Jesus there is neither male nor female, neither master nor slave, and therefore neither child nor adult. And as our Savior Himself, so also the church does not despise the children whom she has accepted into the kingdom of God through the washing of Holy Baptism in the name of the Lord. The church knows that she should give attention to the youth not only in school, but also in worship. In the Christenlehre the congregation wants to offer first of all to the youth exactly what it needs. Exposition of the chief parts of Christian doctrine in question and answer is correct and necessary instruction, exactly what the youth needs. What the children have learned from God's Word at home and in school—this should be publicly confessed, strengthened, and expanded in the church. The children should know this and hear it repeatedly from their parents and teachers: the Christenlehre is a children's worship which no child should miss, except in case of emergency. Also Christian parents should not merely hand this over to the school, but they themselves should see to it that their children are adequately prepared for the examination. This will only be lively and fruitful if the children are well-familiar with the material to be handled, and answer will follow question like an echo follows a sound. The swifter and readier the children are in their answers, the more their desire grows to be attentive and to participate in the Sunday Catechism exercise. Also the school should always hold the instruction of the church's children in consideration, and from the beginning they should accustom the youth to answer with a clear and distinct voice. This way it does not become boring or drudgery for the congregation, where paying attention becomes impossible.

While the Christenlehre is important and necessary for the school children, it is still more important and necessary for the confirmed youth, who have special need for the motherly care and nurture of the Christian congregation. The saddest experience teaches this, that as soon as the flighty youth go into the world and experience temptations and dangers, they forget that they praised God in school and what they learned in Confirmation instruction. They deny their spiritual disposition, and worldly thoughts and desires gain the upper hand. The longer the confirmed youth grow, the more they should grow into serious, knowledgeable, and well-grounded Christians. As a rule they should grow into a mature age in Christ. They should no longer be children, tossed to and fro by every wind of

doctrine, seduced by alluring human treachery to let falsehood enter in. They should become Christians, who are happy in and certain of their faith. Everyone should be able to offer a defense of the hope which is in him, to withstand the deceiver, to stop the mouth of the blasphemer, and to exercise their priestly duties and rights. Finally, they should be able to serve the congregation as loyal and well-regarded members with much blessing. This can only happen when the Word is held by the youth and the youth is held by the Word. This is why the Catechism examinations have been established, and they are especially suitable for this task. In these examinations the glorious and salutary knowledge, which our confirmed youth have taken into their lives from the school and their Confirmation instruction, which is a thorn in the eye of Satan and aggravating to the sinful flesh—this is refreshed, strengthened, grounded more deeply, more clearly explained, further expanded, and applied to every facet of life. The regular review of the chief Christian doctrines must result in inexpressible blessing in the congregation, especially for the confirmed youth. Parents, preachers, and congregations should hold the youth to the Christenlehre with care. They should allure and tantalize, plead and admonish, warn and discipline them all as a group and as individuals, and they should not grow tired of it. No measure should be left untried. They do it to this end—that the Catechism exercises remain dear and valuable to the youth.

If the Christenlehre is especially suitable for the needs of the youth, and if the preaching worship is especially suited for the needs of the adults, note that it does not in any way follow that the Christenlehre is only for the youth and the preaching only for the adults. Unfortunately it is too often handled according to the principles of the Old Adam. But for Christians who fear God, it is enough if they know that it is the same Word of God which is in both the Christenlehre and in the sermon. The milk which nourishes the children is also salutary and healthy for the adults. They operate according to the word: "Come, that you may hear," where, when, and in whatever way the Word of God is publicly proclaimed. Even for experienced Christians, nothing gets lost easier than the simplest Catechism truths. Christian knowledge is no such thing, that a man can avail himself of it once for all and then never lose it.

The devil himself has ambitions upon the Catechism truths, to darken them for Christians, to mix them with errors, or to rob them from us outright. Satan himself tells someone that he knows it all and no longer needs the children's teaching. Therefore it is worthwhile that even experienced Christians repeat the Catechism over and over and



refresh it in their spirit. The gold of salutary knowledge must be maintained through regular exercise. And where can that better happen than in the Catechism examination, where you consider every question to be directed at yourself, and you seek to answer it! To go through the six chief parts attentively once a year with the congregation—this is not too much to do. And when you regularly and attentively attend the Catechism examination, soon you will find that you still have much to do. Yes, that even the children can answer some questions which you can't. There will always be parts which are unfamiliar to you, others

which you have forgotten. You will find points of doctrine which you do not thoroughly understand, phrases which you still have not impressed securely enough in your memory. You will learn about false doctrines, which you have not yet recognized sharply enough, and there will be applications which are new to you. And even if you could know everything, you will still have to learn until the end of your life how you can best share it with others—how to give a defense of your faith to the children of this world or false believers, or how to give comfort to a Christian brother on his deathbed. No scholar or theologian rises above the

Lutheran Catechism and its simple doctrines, his whole life long! Luther himself and with him all the blessed theologians of our church have recognized it in their old age, even as learned and experienced doctors of holy theology, that they must remain children and students of the Catechism, and remain so gladly. Even as no one can become too learned by listening to a simple sermon, no one can become too learned through a simple Catechism examination. Experience also teaches us this. Exactly those people who think they no longer need the children's teaching still go about in their children's shoes. In the hour of temptation they become easy prey for the sects, or they even fall

they pay special attention to you. They gladden themselves or are disappointed over your answers and your behavior.” In the Christenlehre parents have then the best opportunity to observe whether their children are reverent and behave like Christians, whether they have a desire for God's Word, whether they can give answers and make progress, or if they are still lacking in some ways. Then they must help them at home and spur them on to keep working at it. Parents will find so much opportunity for glad praise and thanks towards God, that the work in the home, in the school, and in the church will not be in vain. They will also find opportunity for fervent supplication and prayer, that



## No scholar or theologian rises above the Lutheran Catechism and its simple doctrines, his whole life long!

into manifest unbelief. But the very members who tend with care to the Christenlehre and are zealous to grow in salutary knowledge—these prove themselves as the keenest, most capable, and most reliable members of the congregation. These are those who, when it comes to difficult questions of doctrine and life, examine everything well and are able to make judgments according to God's Word. Therefore they also may be safely entrusted with congregational leadership.

Parents who have children in the school and confirmed sons and daughters should for their own children's sake take regular part in the Sunday Catechism exercise and not miss it. If they themselves stay home, while the youth are forced to go to the Christenlehre, the children learn from the start to see the Christenlehre as a coercion. They regard it as a burden and look forward in advance to the time when they also, like their parents, will outgrow the children's instruction. Whoever Sunday to Sunday gives such an offense to his children must only indict himself when his children turn their backs on the church after Confirmation, fall prey to the world, and distress their parents with much humiliation and grief. But if the parents show in the act that the examination is dear and valuable and important to them, this establishes a good model for the youth, as well as a powerful encouragement. What an advantage, what salutary stimulus for a child, to be in the Christenlehre with a keen, attentive, and orderly attitude. If the parents also participate with zeal, son and daughter must say to themselves, “Father and mother are here, and

the Lord bridle the flesh of their children and lead them in the good work already begun and bring it to completion. Through regular attentive participation in the Catechism exercises parents will also become more skilled to discharge their special duties as housefathers and housemothers, to use God's Word for teaching, reproof, correction, instruction, and comfort of their loved ones. In this way they will exercise their spiritual priesthood in the home.

Would that all our dear Christians recognize here what is so right and necessary before God for the blessing and edification of our Lutheran Zion. And where the word “Christenlehre” touches a sore spot in congregation or family life, let one consider that this does not have to do with a false estimation of the value and importance of a merely Lutheran and churchly institution, but it has to do with the clear symptoms of a penetrating laziness, indifference, and satiation with regard to God's Word itself. “Therefore I entreat you all for God's sake, my dear sirs and brethren, who are pastors or preachers, to devote yourselves heartily to your office, to have pity on the people who are entrusted to you, and to help us inculcate the Catechism upon the people, and especially upon the young” [Small Catechism, Preface]. May everyone let these penetrating words of Luther be earnestly said among them, and preachers, teachers, congregation members, parents, and children accept the Christenlehre with ever-renewed seriousness and zeal, to the praise of God. May this be a blessing for the church, and temporal and eternal usefulness and godliness for our neighbor and for us all. — E.B. ☛





# Of a Faithful Pastor



*This sonnet follows the rhyme scheme ABAB BCBC CDCD EE (i.e., a Spenserian Sonnet). It's set up at its ends like a chiasm: The first six lines are answered in reverse order by the last six lines, with the middle lines as a core. – Anna Hahn*

How Jesus speaks His comfort unto me!  
For when my conscience cannot find repose,  
And sins o'ertake me and I cannot see,  
And "There is no salvation!" taunt my foes,  
The weakness of my flesh my Savior knows.  
For He has sent a shepherd in his stead,  
Through whom His peace and pardon He bestows  
And hears confessed the sins for which He bled.  
Then Jesus lays His hands upon my head:  
My flesh no more can disbelieve His Word,  
For "I forgive you" unto me He said.  
These very eyes have seen, these ears have heard.  
My conscience is at rest, and I rejoice  
That through my shepherd speaks my Shepherd's voice!



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# Getting to Know the Fathers: Athanasius



“The Catholic faith is this: that we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity in Unity; neither confounding the Persons, nor dividing the Essence. For there is one Person of the Father; another of the Son; and another of the Holy Ghost. But the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one; the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal.” Thus we confess in the creed bearing the name of St. Athanasius. While almost certainly not composed by the great patriarch of Alexandria, it bears all the marks of his orthodox faith, a faith which was exhibited in his exercise of his office as bishop, in his eloquent teaching about Christ, in his staunch defense of our Lord’s Divinity against the Arians, and in his perseverance in the face of persecution. St. Gregory of Nazianzus said of him, preaching on the day of his commemoration in Constantinople only a few years after the death of the great saint: “In praising Athanasius, I shall be praising virtue. To speak of him and to praise virtue are identical, because he had, or, to speak more truly, has embraced virtue in its entirety. For all who have lived according to God still live unto God, though they have departed hence.”<sup>1</sup>

Athanasius, who lived from about 297 until 373, first comes to our attention as a deacon serving Alexander (then patriarch of Alexandria) as his assistant. In that capacity he was present at the Council of Nicaea in 325. Already he had written one of his most important works, *On the Incarnation*, in which he simply and elegantly puts forth an explanation of the person and work of Christ, the very subject that the Council would deal with.

Shortly after Nicaea, in the year 328 he succeeded



Alexander (who had directed his appointment before his death) and was himself made patriarch of his home city.<sup>2</sup> It was not to be a peaceful term of service, for within a few years of the close of the Council of Nicaea, Arianism, the very same novel heresy condemned by the Council, whose adherents claimed that the Son of God was himself a creature and not of the same nature as God the Father, was gaining traction again. The Arian factions opposed Athanasius’ elevation to the episcopacy, but without success. The historian Sozomen reports: “But when, on the death of Alexander, the succession devolved upon him, his reputation was greatly increased, and was sustained by his own private virtues and by the testimony of the monk, Antony the Great. This monk repaired to him when he requested his presence, visited the cities, accompanied him to the churches, and agreed with him in opinion concerning the Godhead. He evinced unlimited friendship towards him, and avoided the society of his enemies and opponents.”<sup>3</sup> The fact that the reclusive ascetic Antony so supported Athanasius and even visited others on his behalf il-

lustrates the great saint's ability to draw the disparate parts of the church together in the cause of the Gospel. Gregory of Nazianzus explained: "the great Athanasius, who was always the mediator and reconciler of all other men, like Him Who made peace through His blood between things which were at variance, reconciled the solitary with the community life: by showing that the Priesthood is capable of contemplation, and that contemplation is in need of a spiritual guide."<sup>4</sup>

The emperor Constantine, once bitterly opposed to the schismatic teachings of Arius, grew more tolerant of Arianism toward the end of his life and had some prominent Arians in his court. Athanasius found himself continually accused before Constantine by the heretics (with the aid of the schismatic Melitians) of everything from destroying the unity of the church in Alexandria to murder and witchcraft! Proven innocent each time, the Emperor at first encouraged the bishop to faithfully continue his ministry in Alexandria and publicly supported him. Eventually, however, the Emperor convened a council to deal with the repeated accusations against the faithful bishop. The council, dominated by the Arians and their allies, succeeded in deposing Athanasius and exiling him from Alexandria. This time Athanasius' appeal to the emperor did him no good. He was sent to live in Treves in Gaul.<sup>5</sup> The people of Alexandria and even Antony (the famous monk) called to the emperor for his return to Alexandria and the episcopacy, but the emperor would not listen.<sup>6</sup>

Athanasius continued his defense however. Writing to his fellow bishops, he said, "That the ordinances which have been preserved in the Churches from old time until now, may not be lost in our days, and the trust which has been committed to us required at our hands; rouse yourselves, brethren, as being stewards of the mysteries of God, and seeing them now seized upon by others."<sup>7</sup> It would not be until after Constantine's death that he would be recalled to Alexandria by Constantine II who, while defending his father's actions by portraying them as acts performed to protect Athanasius from further attack, reversed his father's decision and reinstated the saint to his bishopric.<sup>8</sup>

The same support would not be had for long, however, as Constantine II was killed less than three years into his reign. His brother and successor in the East, Constantius II, made the Arian confession his own, as would the Emperor Valens who began his reign in the East in 364 after the relatively short rule of Julian the Apostate. Athanasius would be deposed and reinstated four more times by these heretical and apostate emperors, all the while maintaining both his innocence in the face of their charges, and his or-

thodox confession of Christ Jesus as the Son of God and a person of the consubstantial Trinity: "He is then by nature an Offspring, perfect from the Perfect... before every rational and intelligent essence, as Paul also in another place calls Him 'first-born of all creation'. But by calling Him First-born, He shows that He is not a Creature, but Offspring of the Father. For it would be inconsistent with His deity for Him to be called a creature. For all things were created by the Father through the Son, but the Son alone was eternally begotten from the Father, whence God the Word is 'first-born of all creation,' unchangeable from unchangeable."<sup>9</sup>

This staunch defense of the truth in the face of worldly powers both political and heretical gave birth to the famous slogan, "Athanasius *contra mundum*," Athanasius against the world. Athanasius's theology, conveyed to us through his numerous writings, help us also stand *contra mundum*, teaching us to confess the Nicene faith without fear of persecution, exile, or death: that Christ Jesus is the very Son of God become man for our salvation. "For since He Himself is mighty and the Maker of everything, He prepares in the Virgin a temple for Himself, namely, His body, and makes it His very own as an instrument, being made known by it and dwelling in it. And thus taking from our bodies one of like nature, because all were under penalty of the corruption of death He gave it over to death in the stead of all, offered it to the Father—doing this, moreover, of His loving-kindness, in order to...turn them again to incorruption, and make them alive from death by the appropriation of His body and by the grace of the Resurrection, banishing death from them like straw from the fire."<sup>10</sup> ❧

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Oration XXI:1* <https://www.elpenor.org/gregory-nazianzen/athanasius-alexandria.asp>

<sup>2</sup> Sozomen, *Ecclesiastical History*, 2:17. Translated by Chester D. Hartranft. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 2. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890.) Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <<http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/2602.htm>>

<sup>3</sup> Sozomen, 2:17

<sup>4</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus: *Oration XXI:19*

<sup>5</sup> Sozomen, 2:28

<sup>6</sup> Sozomen, 2:31

<sup>7</sup> Athanasius, *Encyclical Epistle to the Bishops Throughout the World* <https://www.elpenor.org/athanasius/encyclical-epistle.asp?pg=3>

<sup>8</sup> Sozomen, 3:2

<sup>9</sup> Athanasius, *Statement of Faith* <https://www.elpenor.org/athanasius/statement-faith.asp>

<sup>10</sup> Athanasius, *On the Incarnation*, 8. From *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 4. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1890.), 40. Alt.



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# Defy the Old Dragon: Johann Franck, Hymnist

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he poetry of Johann Franck is sharp, crisp, to the point, and vivid: *Trotz dem alten Drachen. / Trotz des Todes Rauchen. / Trotz der Furcht darzu!* “I defy the old dragon. I defy the jaws of death. I defy fear as well!”<sup>1</sup> We know this as stanza three of “Jesus, Priceless Treasure” (*Jesu, Meine Freude*) in our English hymnals using these memorable words: *Satan, I defy thee; / Death I now decry thee; / Fear, I bid thee cease!*

This poetry is deeply personal. The hymnist wanted each singer to sing it as his very own confession of what comforts him in every time of need. I delight to sing these words with all my might with the memorable tune of Johann Crüger carrying the words forward! In German, singing that bright and sharp “Trotz” (Defy!) three times, thus invoking the most Holy Trinity against three of the great enemies of God and His Kingdom, stirs the heart to great confidence—indeed God has and will continue to put down His enemies and He does so for my sake. He answers these prayers in Jesus Christ.

Johann Sebastian Bach in his well-known funeral motet, *Jesu Meine Freude* (BWV 227), makes use of “Trotz” as he sets Franck’s text, using the Crüger tune, in choral movements completed by settings of comforting texts from Romans 8. (One can see references to Romans 8 all over Franck’s original hymn text.) After Bach has the choir sing Romans 8:2, “For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death,” in comes Bach with “Trotz! Trotz! Trotz dem alten Drachen!”

Who is Johann Franck, who wrote these vivid words that inspired such a response some seventy years later from the greatest Lutheran Kantor and composer, and whose words still inspire Christian singers and musicians to this day?

As with nearly all the great Lutheran hymnists, Franck took up the pen in times of suffering and cross bearing. Franck was born in Guben, Brandenburg, on the first of

June, 1618, just at the beginning of the horror that was the Thirty Years’ War (1618–1648).

Johann’s father was a lawyer and town council member in Guben, but he died when Johann was only two years old. He was adopted by his uncle Adam Tielke, the town judge. Tielke provided for Johann’s education from early Latin school through the *Gymnasium*. In 1637, Johann went on to university studies at Königsburg, which was somehow undisturbed by the great war. There he studied with poet and hymnist Simon Dach (author of “Oh, How Blest Are They Whose Toils Are Ended” and “In God, My Faithful God”) while he studied law.

His widowed mother asked for Johann to come home to Guben after his marriage to Anna Kastner in 1640. He returned to support his mother as the war raged about the town. Guben was 80 miles to the southeast of Berlin, an area certainly Lutheran in theology and practice, but nevertheless negatively affected by both Swedish and Saxon troops swirling around. As with Paul Gerhardt’s hometown of Gräfenhainichen, Lutheran towns were often beset by pillaging armies who were moving through to battlefields. Citizens were forced to pay tribute to “Lutheran” troops demanding tribute money and food at spear point. Especially in a time like this, things were uncertain for a widow all alone.

There in Guben, Franck survived the war and became a practicing attorney and town councilor, and was elected mayor in 1661. After a life of civic service to the people in practicing law and serving in government, Johann Franck died on the eighteenth of June, 1677.

Through the war and his early career, then on into his later adult life, Franck stuck to crafting poetry. It was more than a hobby or a distraction. Not forgetting the lessons of his teacher and mentor Simon Dach, Franck, as a faithful layman, produced devotional, pious Lutheran hymns much in the style of his contemporary Paul Gerhardt. These men

were building on the stirring “doctrine and comfort” hymns of the Reformation which taught the faith into the hearts of Lutherans so reverently and steadfastly. But these new Lutheran hymnists were moved by the almost universally difficult circumstances and horrors of the times they lived in—war, poverty, plague, death all around—to write hymns that take all this truth of the Lutheran doctrine and apply it to me—me, the suffering sinner living under the cross.

For example, Luther wrote in *A Mighty Fortress* that “...the old, evil foe (...*der alte böse Feind...*) now means deadly woe, deep guile and great might are his dread arms in fight...”

This is the objective truth taught by the Holy Scriptures concerning the devil and all his wicked works and ways. Of course, Luther and the other Reformation hymnists gave the truth of the Gospel. “One little word can fell him... He’s judged, the deed is done...” This should certainly comfort every fearful sinner!

Just a few generations later, Franck and his contemporary Lutheran hymnists stirred each singer’s heart to know and trust that this truth of the Scriptures is important to me, and is what I need to confess to the world: *Under Thy [Jesus’] protection, / I am free from the attacks / of all my enemies (...Aller Feinde frei...)* [stanza two].

Franck acknowledges that there are enemies raging against the Christian, but immediately turns to their defeat and why they are defeated. For even if a thirty-year nightmare of a war should break out all around me, not only do I know the devil is judged and defeated, but I know that the Savior did it for me, and nothing will separate me from His love. *Let Satan track me down / Let the enemy become embittered / Jesus stands by me.* [stanza two]

In the penultimate stanza of “Jesus, Priceless Treasure,” Franck has the singer renounce and turn away from the great spiritual enemies by saying a vivid and extended *Gute Nacht* to them (which does not come out in the English translation used by our hymnals):

Good night, existence which is chosen by the world...

Good night, you sins, stay far behind me...

Good night, you pride and glory... once and for all, you life of vice, I bid you, good night. [stanza five]

Whether they knew it or not (and in the case of Paul Gerhardt one can argue that he certainly did know it due to the persecution he and his family experienced from Calvinist rulers), the Lutheran hymnists of this generation, in writing vividly of the implications of the Gospel for me, were writing hymns that work very well against the Reformed theologies and their errors. Who could possibly question one’s election in Christ, for example, after singing Franck’s final stanza of “Jesus, Priceless Treasure” (*Jesu, Meine Freude*)?

Depart, you mournful spirits,  
for my master of joy,  
Jesus, enters in.  
For those who love God  
even their afflictions  
become pure sweetness.  
Even if here I must endure shame and disgrace,  
even in suffering you remain,  
Jesus, my joy. [stanza six] ♣

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End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Wooden translations of German stanzas provided by the author.

Ein anders/ Johann Francke.



# Libretto for the Third Sunday after Trinity

**E**rdmann Neumeister (1671-1756) is perhaps best known among us as the author of the hymns “Jesus Sinners Doth Receive,” “God’s Own Child, I Gladly Say It,” and “I Know My Faith Is Founded.” Neumeister was a marvelous poet. He studied poetry and theology at Leipzig, wrote a dissertation on 17th century poets, and then lectured on poetics in Leipzig.<sup>1</sup> Yet hymns were not his main poetic work. In 1697 Neumeister received his first call as a pastor and, as a fruit of his sermon preparation, not only wrote a sermon for delivery to the congregation, but also regularly wrote a set of poems, interwoven with Scripture passages and occasionally stanzas from Lutheran hymns, that likewise captured the main themes of that Sunday of the Church Year.<sup>2</sup> Such a series of poems is called a libretto, and each libretto was meant to be set to music.

In the first half of the 18th century, Neumeister wrote ten cycles of libretto texts, each cycle covering the Sundays of the Church Year.<sup>3</sup> Certain movements in his librettos were arias, that is, concise poems, meant to be sung ornately and with repetition. Other movements were recitatives, whose texts were significantly longer than those of

arias, yet were to be sung straight through in a style more akin to speaking. While arias and recitatives already existed in the opera house, Neumeister pioneered their use in the church. Musicians composed music to accompany Neumeister’s librettos, and the resulting cantatas became a regular part of church services.<sup>4</sup> Other librettists arose, and musicians to compose for them. By the time of Bach’s tenure as cantor in Leipzig, there was a cantata every Sunday.

Neumeister wrote the following libretto for the Third Sunday after Trinity, on which we hear the Parable of the Lost Sheep and Parable of the Lost Coin (Lk. 15:1-10). Because it is difficult to do justice to the irregular meters of librettos when going from German to English, we here present Neumeister’s original German text alongside an unversified English translation by Pastor Mark Preus.

– A.R.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *The Cantatas of J. S. Bach* by Alfred Dürr, pg. 6

<sup>2</sup> *Johann Sebastian Bach and Liturgical Life in Leipzig* by Günther Stiller, pg. 213

<sup>3</sup> Dürr says that Neumeister wrote 10 cycles (pg. 6) and Stiller says that he wrote 8 (pg. 217). Whichever is the case, Neumeister was a prolific poet.

<sup>4</sup> Indeed, Johann Sebastian Bach himself set 5 of Neumeister’s librettos fully and a sixth partially (Stiller, pg. 217).

1. Kommt! Kommt! Kommt, alle,  
Die von so manchen Sündenfalle  
Verwundet, schwach und zitternd stehn,  
Wir wollen hin zu Jesu gehn.  
Er heilet alle Wunden.  
Er spricht ein einzig Wort,  
So ist der Angst verschwunden,  
Und alle Schmerzen fort.  
Die Gnaden-Thür  
Ist dir und mir  
Bei Jesu aufgethan.  
Denn Jesus nimmt die Sünder an.

1. Come ye! Come ye! Come, all,  
Who from so many falls into sin  
Wounded, weak, and trembling stand,  
We want to go to Jesus.  
He heals all wounds.  
He speaks a single word,  
And the fear disappears,  
And all pains leave.  
The door of grace  
Is for you and for me  
Opened in Jesus.  
For Jesus receives sinners.

2. So komm ich auch zu dir allhie in meiner  
Noth geschritten,  
Und thu dich mit gebeugtem Knie von  
ganzem Hertzen bitten:  
Vergieb mirs doch genädiglich,  
Was ich mein Lebtag wieder dich  
auff Erden hab begangen.

3. Sprenge, Jesu, über mich  
Deines Blutes Seegen.  
Wie sich Laub und Graß erquicket,  
Das des Tages Hitze drückt,  
Durch den Abend-Regen:  
Also tröstest du das Hertz.  
Da, da muss sich aller Schmerz  
Augenblinklich legen,  
Und die Seele lebt durch dich.  
Sprenge, Jesu, über mich  
Deines Blutes Seegen.

4. Ich gläube festiglich,  
Und soll mich nichts von solchem Glauben kehren  
Wenn meine Sünden grösser wären,  
Als dein Verdienst, mein Jesu, ist,  
So könnt ich dennoch nicht verderben.  
Du würdest da vor mich,  
Vor mich, zum andern mahle sterben.  
Allein, da du einmahl gestorben bist,  
Ist dein Verdienst unendlich groß und gut.  
Und wären Millionen Welten,  
So könt' ein eintz'ger Tropffen Blut  
Für alle yur Versöhnung gelten.  
Unmöglich ist, daß der verlohren bleibet,  
Der Busse thut, and gläubet.

5. Jesus' Hertze brennt voll Flammen.  
Ihre Gluth ist Lieb'und Huld.  
Meine Schuld  
Kan mich nimmermehr verdammen.  
Seine Treue küsset mich,  
Und die süssen Lippen sprechen:  
Laß dich keinen Kummer stechen.  
Ich bezahle ganz vor dich.

6. Wo ist solch ein Gott, wie du bist; der die Sünde  
vergiebet, und erlässet die Missethat den übrigen seines  
Erbtheils, der seinen Yorn nich ewiglich behält. Denn er ist  
barmhertzig. Mich. VII, 18.

2. So I also come to Thee, here in my need  
that I stepped into,  
And beg Thee with bended knee from  
my whole heart:  
Forgive me that graciously  
Which I have committed against Thee  
my living days on earth.

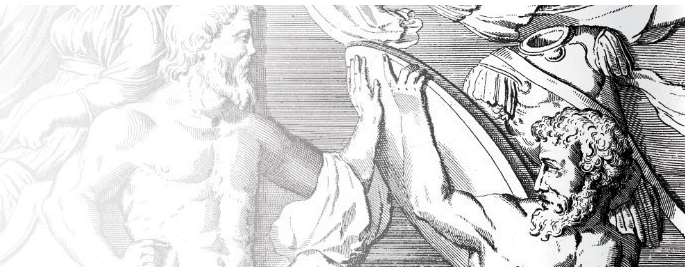
3. Sprinkle, Jesus, over me  
Thy blood's blessing.  
As leaf and herb come alive,  
Which the day's heat oppressed,  
Through the evening rain:  
So Thou comfortest the heart.  
There, there all pain  
Must pass away in the blink of an eye,  
And the soul liveth through Thee.  
Pour, Jesus, over me  
Thy blood's blessing!

4. I firmly believe,  
And will not turn myself from such faith,  
That if my sins were greater  
Than Thy merit is, my Jesus,  
Then I could nevertheless not perish.  
Thou wouldest for me,  
For me, die a second time.  
Only, since Thou once hast died,  
Thy satisfaction is unendingly great and good,  
And were there millions of worlds,  
So could one single drop of blood  
Count to reconcile them all.  
It is impossible, that he remains lost,  
Who repents and believes.

5. Jesus' heart burns full of flames.  
Their embers are love and favor.  
My guilt  
Can nevermore condemn me.  
His faithfulness kisses me,  
And the sweet lips speak:  
Let no worry prick thee.  
I pay for thee entirely.

6. Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity and passing  
over the transgression of the remnant of His heritage? He  
does not retain His anger forever, because He delights in  
mercy. Micah 7:18 ☝

# Review: *Mythology* by Edith Hamilton



Edith Hamilton's *Mythology* (1942) is a classic about the classics. In her forward she states, "My hope is that those who do not know the classics will gain...not only a knowledge of the myths, but some little idea of what the writers were like who told them." Across the decades, as knowledge of the classics has certainly waned, her book has become, in English, a definitive introduction to the mythology of the Greeks and Romans, and somewhat of the Norsemen as well. As this review is an introduction to an introduction to classical mythology, readers who already know these things may stop reading here.

Today our sense of ancient mythology, most often "Greek myths," is something of a jumbled mess. Some stories have assumed an outsized importance in our collective consciousness relative to their place among ancient peoples; one thinks here of our readiness to categorize various sinful patterns of behavior under the archetype of Narcissus. On the other hand, we know next to nothing about the house of Atreus, unless we are fans of *Dune*. We know of Pandora and her box, perhaps; isn't this just the Greek version of blaming women for the world's ills? Maybe we catch the reference in the title of the book upon which a recent film was based, *American Prometheus*<sup>1</sup>—something about stealing fire from the gods? We'd probably know a Pegasus or a Trojan horse if we saw one, and then there's the Disney version of *Hercules* (1997) and the Percy Jackson books and movies. Zeus and Jupiter might be familiar to us by name, but did we recall that these are different names (Greek and Latin) for the same god? And do we really remember the Titans?

To add to the confusion, all of the stories just mentioned have come down to us through a complex variety of literary sources spanning two classical cultures, the Greeks and the Romans. Among the Greeks there's Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Hesiod's *Theogony*, the tragedians, and the poets. Then the same gods (under different names) and similar stories appear in the literature of the Romans, for example Virgil's *Aeneid* and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

For several generations of English readers, Hamilton's

*Mythology* has proven helpful in both sorting the various stories into their proper places and order and also integrating them into the single story that many have known and loved in the West for centuries. In doing so, she provides a guide to those perplexed and curious, both about the stories and their classical sources. If you let her, she'll tell you everything you need to know to begin, and then point you where to go next.

As to sorting the stories, she lays them out and expounds them in a semi-chronological order, beginning with the primeval stories of the Titans, the births of the gods, and the creation of mankind. The stories of familiar heroes—Perseus, Theseus, Hercules—come before the great cycle surrounding the Trojan War, which is followed by the accounts told often by the tragedians: the fates of the great houses of Greece in the eras following the war. This is followed by a collection of less important myths of the Greeks and Romans—here we find the well-known King Midas of the golden touch—and a final section introduces the mythology of the Norsemen. Thus, a place for everything, and every important story in its place.

As to integrating them into a single story, here I say that Hamilton really shines. She says that she "determined from the outset to dismiss any idea of unifying the tales," yet her own talent with language weaves an epic in English that is more than the summary of its Greek and Latin parts. This is especially true of the story of the Trojan War—its lead-up, execution, and aftermath. As apparently many men today think often of the Roman Empire, so also many men in Greece and Rome often thought and wrote and sang of the fall of Troy. The story is told many times by different authors, with different twists and details, for different purposes. We likely associate the story with Homer's *Iliad*, but consider Hamilton's introduction to her chapter on Troy's end:

The greater part of this story comes from Virgil. The capture of Troy is the subject of the second book of the *Aeneid*, and it is one of the best, if not the best, story Virgil ever told—concise, pointed, vivid. The beginning and end of my account are



not in Virgil. I have taken the story of Philoctetes and the death of Ajax from two plays of the fifth-century (BC) tragic poet Sophocles. The end, the tale of what happened to the Trojan women when Troy fell, comes from a play by...Euripides. It is a curious contrast to the martial spirit of the Aeneid. To Virgil as to all Roman poets, war was the noblest and most glorious of human activities. Four hundred years before Virgil, a Greek poet looked at it differently. "What was the end of that far-famed war?" Euripedes seems to ask. Just this, a ruined town, a dead baby, a few wretched women.

So the story she tells is linked in our minds to Homer, but comes through her from Virgil, Sophocles, and Euripides; yet the credit for bringing the rhapsody alive in English belongs to Hamilton. It is not just correct and precise, but good reading, and good for reading aloud.

A few caveats are in order. First, a work like Hamilton's could invite the misperception that Greek mythology and mythic history were for the Greeks and Romans what the Bible is to Christians: a written, authoritative canon of eternal truth. I say *Mythology* could invite that idea, but properly used could help dispel it. Suffice it to say, avoid the notion that in a book like this you have a compendium of a pagan bible. No such canonical text exists.

Second, purists may note that Hamilton sanitizes some of the stories. For example, Hesiod is certain that the Titan Cronus castrated his father Uranus with a sickle, and from the various discharges of this wound the Giants, the Furies, and Aphrodite were born. Hamilton simply says that Cronus "lay in wait for his father and wounded him terribly." Of course, in a book for the young, this is appropriate euphemism; yet the loss of the graphic detail also seems part of Hamilton's somewhat overstated humanistic perspective on Greek religion, that the classical stories are "worlds away" from the "dark picture" presented in other pagan mythologies. "What the myths show is how high [the Greeks] had risen above the ancient filth and fierceness by the time we have any knowledge of them." This statement may be more true of Hamilton than of her sources.

Finally, these two caveats ask for a third: what is the value to Christians of knowing any of these things? After all, does not Paul say of these gods that "the things the pagans sacrifice they offer to demons" (1 Cor. 10:20)? And does not Christ himself call the altar to Zeus at Pergamum "the throne of Satan" (Rev. 2:13)? Yes. But references like these also suggest that some knowledge of classical antiquity is valuable for the student of the New Testament.

Furthermore, in Hamilton's *Mythology*, at least, the gods of the ancient nations lay defeated at our feet. What is more, in our hymnody, the thoughts of the pagan poets have been taken captive to Christ. This was brought home to me after our family devotions awhile ago. We often sing Paul Gerhardt's evening hymn, "Now rest beneath night's shadow" (LSB 880), and I was moved to look it up in the ever-handly Polack's *Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*.<sup>2</sup>

The *Lutheran Service Book* has:

Now rest beneath night's shadow  
The woodland, field, and meadow;  
The world in slumber lies.  
But you, my heart, awaking  
And prayer and music making,  
Let praise to your Creator rise.

Which, says Polack, "is almost a verbatim translation" of Virgil's *Aeneid*. He cites Book IV, 522 ff:

Night: and tired creatures all over the world were seeking slumber; the woods and wild waters were quiet, and the silent stars were wheeling their course half over; every field was still; the beasts of the field, the brightly colored birds, dwellers in lake and pool, in thorn and thicket, slept through tranquil night, their sorrows over, their troubles soothed. But no such blessed darkness closes the eyes of Dido; no repose comes to her anxious heart. Her pangs redouble, her love swells up, a great tide of wrath and doubt and passion.<sup>3</sup>

The reason Dido is awake, of course, is not to praise Christ, but because Aeneas, her lover, has left. She's about to kill herself, and you can read all about it in Hamilton's *Mythology*. But notice that Gerhardt works both by allusion and by contrast. His children's bedtime hymn is a re-singing of Dido's last, sleepless night, yet we can rest securely in Christ. This is how much of Christian appropriation of Greek and Roman mythology goes, and it's good to know where these things come from. ☞

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> The book is by Kai Bird and Martin J. Sherwin, *American Prometheus: the Triumph and Tragedy of J. Robert Oppenheimer*, Alfred A. Knopf, 2005. The film is Christopher Nolan's 2023 biography *Oppenheimer*.

<sup>2</sup> W. G. Polack, *The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1942.

<sup>3</sup> From Rolfe Humphries, *The Aeneid of Virgil: A Verse Translation*, New York: Scribner's Sons, 1951, page 106.



## The Oldest Image of King Jesus



In our last issue (Summer 2023), Adam Carnehl wrote:

Early in 1522, angry crowds in Wittenberg broke stained glass, burned paintings, and toppled statues of Mary and the child Jesus.

Inspired by the iconoclastic rhetoric of scholar and reformer Andreas Bodenstein von Carlstadt, the rabble believed they were upholding the ancient commandment against idolatry by smashing the sacred art of the city church. When Luther returned in early March, he put an immediate end to the violent destruction by preaching a series of powerful sermons in which he condemned the unruly violence.

This Carlstadt was not the first to destroy imagery in the Church in the name of God, and the first Lutherans were not the first to resist such destruction and misuse of God's name. Two major waves of iconoclasm washed over the Christian East during the first millennium of Christianity, the first in AD 726-787 and the second in AD 814-842. Far from being a fringe movement, the widespread destruction of religious imagery in churches and other public places during these times was encouraged and enforced by some Christian imperial and episcopal authority, and it included persecution of those who supported the use and veneration of Christian iconography. During these times, a great deal of Christian artwork was lost in precisely those places where it was born and flourished, the eastern centers of Christianity.

However, some very ancient works survived. One such survivor is the artwork here, called "Christ Pantokrator," that is, "Christ Almighty." It is located at St. Catherine's Monastery at Mount Sinai. The monastery was founded

under the Emperor Justinian I (c. AD 482-565) toward the end of his reign. This icon dates from that same period, and Justinian may have been the one who gave it to the monastery.

It is the "first icon" or image of Christ in several senses. It is one of the oldest depictions of Jesus Christ that survives to this day, and it is the oldest depiction of the Christ Pantokrator motif. This motif, in turn, is one of the earliest consistent ways of depicting Christ in the early Church. It aims to grasp, display, and confront the viewer with the central truth of the cosmos: Jesus has conquered and now reigns over all. The elements of the motif include the face of Christ pointed directly toward the viewer, with the Lord dressed in kingly clothing. In His left hand He holds a book, and with His right hand He gestures. The book can be variously interpreted as the Gospel or as the Book of Life, mentioned many times in the Revelation. In some images the book is open, and text, often a passage from the Gospels, is present; in other cases the book is closed, as in this image. The gesture He makes with His right hand is either of teaching (following the gesture conventions of the Roman oratorical tradition), or of blessing, or of both. Many Lutheran pastors use a similar hand posture today when tracing the sign of the cross over the congregation at the conclusion of the Divine Service.

When looking at this particular icon, perhaps the first thing that jumps out is the asymmetry of Jesus' face. His eyes don't point in the same direction. His eyebrows, mouth, and facial hair are not balanced. His right side is soft and lit, while His left side is shadowy and harsh. What is the artist's purpose in this?

Cover up the left half of the icon so that the left side of Jesus' face is showing. Notice that he is entirely angry. His eye rages and His mouth curls in disgust. This is Christ condemning the goats whom He will place on the left in

the Judgment (Mt. 25:33, 41-45). The book that He holds in His hand is shut to them, for they rejected the Gospel. And note well: Jesus is not looking at you.

Now cover up the right side of the icon so that Jesus' right side is showing. Notice how meek and kindly Jesus looks. His face is peaceful, and He holds up His right hand in blessing. This is Christ welcoming the sheep into the kingdom that was prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Mt. 25:34-40). And notice His eye! He isn't looking off to His right, as if you, the viewer, were somehow neither a sheep on the right nor a goat on the left. But He looks at you! His left eye looks at the goats over there somewhere, but His right eye looks at His sheep, His dear little lambs, and there you are, held in His gaze.

This is a call for steadfastness. On the Last Day we know which eye we want looking at us. The artist has given us a taste of what we desire, inspiring us to press on toward the goal, to go to church, to listen to God's Word, to love our neighbor and not the things of this world. May the Lord preserve us steadfast in the true faith to life everlasting. ❧

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# LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE

## CANDIDATES FOR — PRESIDENT — OF LUTHER CLASSICAL COLLEGE

*Nominations for President* of Luther Classical College closed on October 15. The Presidential Search Committee has since narrowed down the list and contacted those qualified to serve. We are happy to present the resulting list of candidates for President.

REV. JEFFREY HEMMER (PHD, ABD)

REV. BRANDON KOBLE (PHD, ABD)

REV. ROBERT PAUL (PHD, ABD)

REV. DR. DAVID PREUS

REV. DR. HAROLD RISTAU

REV. DR. GREGORY SCHULZ

REV. DR. ROSS SHAVER

*We ask for* your prayers for each of these men and for Luther Classical College, that God grant us the right man to lead the college in faithfulness to Christ, to the Scriptures, and to our Lutheran Confessions.

*The presidential search* continues with 1) the collection of résumés and a presidential questionnaire; and 2) interviews. The Board of Regents will meet on December 7 to elect a president.

*We pray God* to give His blessing to this process and bless Luther Classical College now and into the future with faithful leadership, for the sake of Christ's Church and the furtherance of His Kingdom.