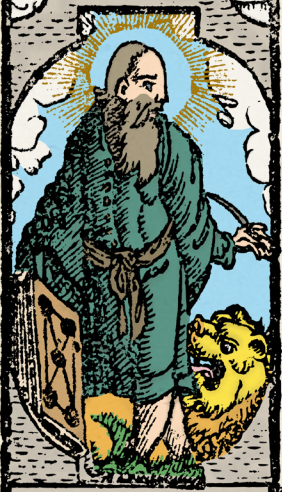


# Christian Culture

A MAGAZINE  
FOR LUTHERANS



Issue 12

Spring/Summer 2024

## FEATURING

**Lessons in Cross-bearing**

*David Buchs*

**Martin Luther, the Lutheran Reformation, and the Enlightenment: Unexpected Areas of Overlap**

*Henry Allen*

**Arianism Past and Present**

*Carl Beckwith*





# Announcements

## CURRICULUM:

- ☞ Admissions Department launching “Great Books Reading Sessions” and “Latin Tutoring” with prospective students online this September
- ☞ LCC Library Wish List now available online at [www.lutherclassical.org/library](http://www.lutherclassical.org/library)

## STUDENTS AND ADMISSIONS:

- ☞ First seven students enrolled!
- ☞ Nearly 200 pre-enrollment forms received from prospective students
- ☞ Priority Admission for high school seniors graduating in Spring 2025 or prior high school graduates who have scored 78+ on the CLT, 25+ on the ACT, or 1200+ on the SAT begins August 1, 2024 through October 1, 2024

## FACULTY:

- ☞ Dr. William Lipke has joined LCC as its Director of Admissions and Professor of Music
- ☞ Dr. Gene Veith has been hired as Adjunct Professor of Humanities
- ☞ Rev. Roger Mullet has been hired as Adjunct Lecturer of Theology
- ☞ Dean of Chapel, Dean of Students, and Registrar positions are posted ([lutherclassical.org/employment-opportunities](http://lutherclassical.org/employment-opportunities))

## STAFF:

- ☞ Mrs. Rebekah Bennick is LCC's new Chief Financial Officer (CFO)
- ☞ Mr. William Gottwalt is LCC's new Librarian and Business Manager

## ADVANCEMENT:

- ☞ First million dollar donation received, enabling LCC to break ground on campus
- ☞ Home Sponsorship Program secures pledges for first student house on campus
- ☞ Grassroots donations continue to exceed operational expenses
- ☞ Over 180 congregations currently supporting Luther Classical College
- ☞ Successful summer conference with over 320 attendees, including young children
- ☞ Launching “cottage meetings” through supporting congregations to raise funds for student housing on campus

## CAMPUS:

- ☞ Groundbreaking ceremony conducted June 4
- ☞ Site grading poised for completion by the end of summer
- ☞ Contractors remain on schedule to build first student housing by Grand Opening, kept working through the generosity of LCC's remarkably enthusiastic support base

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# Lessons in Cross-bearing

“ man's character is like his house. If he tears boards off his house and burns them to keep himself warm and comfortable, his house soon becomes a ruin. If he tells lies to be able to do the things he shouldn't do but wants to, his character will soon become a ruin. A man with a ruined character is a shame on the face of the earth.”<sup>1</sup>

Eight-year-old Ralph Moody had told a lie. He wanted to take the horse out on his own, so he convinced his mother that his father had approved, and he nearly got himself killed. In the course of carefully disciplining his son, Ralph's father gave him the above counsel. It is downright Solomonic. I believe that every father worth his salt desires to give counsel like that, and it is for such wisdom that fathers should endlessly be praying.<sup>2</sup>

The counsel is good, but its effect on Ralph is of greater interest to our purpose. It comes up again and again in his story. Ralph wonders what this or that decision will do to his “character house.” At one point he even wished that his father had never told him about his character house: worry about damaging it was keeping him from joining in a conversation about a man whom everyone loved to hate.<sup>3</sup> He thought often about what his father said and measured his actions by his father's standard.

His father had given him a burden. It was the burden of wisdom and virtue. Ralph could make no plea of ignorance. If he wanted to be honorable and not a shame on the face of the earth, he would have to take care of his character house.

Such burdens are natural. It is natural to hear your parents' voices even when you're grown and out of the house. You can hear them, whether it is their correction or encouragement, whether they were loving or unloving. They are all the time leaving an enduring impression on you. It is only natural.

For Christians, however, this enduring impression and the burdens that parents give to their children reach their ultimate goal. For Christians, it is not merely a matter of honor, character, and temporal wisdom. It is greater. It is a matter of eternal wisdom. It is a matter of faith. Martin Luther puts a point on it in his Large Catechism explanation to the Fourth Commandment: “For this purpose He has given us children and issued this command: we should train and govern them according to His will.”<sup>4</sup>

It is God's will that our children should follow Jesus in faith, that they should repent of their sins and trust in Him for forgiveness and salvation. It is also His will that in following Jesus, they should take up and bear their cross (Mt. 16:24; Mk. 8:34; Lk. 9:23). That is something that does not come naturally to us. As much as natural man may grow to appreciate the burdens his father imposes because of the temporal benefits he thereby gains, that same natural man also wants nothing to do with bearing the cross.

Crosses are the sufferings of Christians that they endure *as Christians*. It is the suffering that comes with self-denial, fear of God, faith in His promises, and devotion to Jesus. It is the suffering that one endures in crucifying the flesh (Rom. 6:6; Gal. 5:24), not for the sake of a character house, but for the sake of doing what is right before God. It is the suffering that one endures through insults and violence on account of Christ's name and the scandal of *His* cross. It is the suffering apportioned by God as a loving, heavenly Father to His own dear children.

Bearing such suffering gladly does not come naturally to us. Counting it a joy (Jam. 1:2), not being surprised (1 Pet. 4:12), and considering ourselves blessed (1 Pet. 4:14) in the face of such suffering—these are all lessons learned only in the school of the Holy Spirit.

This is where Christian parents come in. The Holy Spirit works through means, and among the means he uses to sanctify children, faithful fathers and mothers are the chief. After all, it is father and mother who are meant to bring their children to Baptism, to pray for and with them, to instruct them in God's Word, to cultivate their appetite for righteousness and the body and blood of Jesus, and to show them an example of repentant living. It is in the love between father and mother that children see portrayed that profound mystery: the love of Christ for the Church and the trust of the Church in Christ (Eph. 5:32).

The Holy Spirit also puts fathers and mothers to work in teaching little Christians to bear the cross. We can see this clearly in two different ways. First, we see it in the example parents give while they bear their own crosses. Second, we see it in the ordinary work of fatherly chastening. These are worthy of our reflection, so that we can grow to appreciate and carry out all the more the serious and glorious stewardship that God has entrusted to parents.

Consider first the example of Tobit. In the apocryphal





account of this Assyrian captive, Tobit was devoted to acts of charity. He fed the hungry, gave clothing to the naked, and buried the dead (Tobit 1:17). When an informant sold him out to the king, Tobit fled his home, losing all his property and having nothing left but his wife Anna and his son Tobias. To make matters worse, as Tobit continued to bury the dead in spite of the persecution, he suffered an injury and became blind. Like Job, Tobit even endured reproach from the lips of his own wife: “Where are your charities and your righteous deeds? Behold, everything is known about you!” (Tobit 2:14).<sup>5</sup>

Nevertheless, Tobit entrusted himself to God in his anguish: “Righteous are you, O Lord; all your deeds and all your ways are mercy and truth, and you render true and righteous judgment forever. Remember me and look favorably upon me; do not punish me for my sins” (Tobit 3:2-3). He received all this sorrow as the gracious pleasure of his faithful God, even as he pleaded with God to end his dis-

truss by taking him home to heaven. He fixed his eyes not on his present suffering, but on his future glory.

The clincher, however, was when Tobit gave instructions to his son Tobias. In spite of all his suffering which he endured so clearly as a consequence of his faithful and charitable living, he told Tobias to live in just the same way: “Bless the Lord God on every occasion; ask Him that your ways may be made straight and that all your paths and plans may prosper. For none of the nations has understanding; but the Lord Himself gives all good things, and according to His will He humbles whomever He wishes... Do not be afraid, my son, because we have become poor. You have great wealth if you fear God and refrain from every sin and do what is pleasing in His sight” (Tobit 4:19, 21).

What example did Tobias have in his father? It was not an example of stoicism or a strategy for overcoming obstacles. It was, instead, an example of cross-bearing. Tobit was not shy in crying out to God in his anguish, like Paul suf-





fering from the thorn in his flesh (2 Cor. 12:8). At the same time, he was unflinching in his conviction of the goodness of God. He echoed the attitude that prevails in the Psalms: my cross is real and grievous and from the Lord; nevertheless, the Lord is gracious and good (e.g. Ps. 69). Whatever momentary afflictions I endure now are light in comparison with the eternal weight of glory prepared for me (2 Cor. 4:17). Tobit taught Tobias to bear the cross by giving him a vivid example to imitate. How you, dear fathers and mothers, bear your own crosses is a most powerful lesson for your children. Let them learn from you how to suffer patiently, blessing the Lord at all times with his praise continually in your mouths (Ps. 34:1).

In addition to giving an example of cross-bearing, parents also teach this lesson through the ordinary work of chastening. The Scriptures are replete with admonitions to discipline. “Discipline your son, for there is hope; do not set your heart on putting him to death” (Prov. 19:18).<sup>6</sup> “The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself brings shame to his mother. Discipline your son, and he will give you rest; he will give delight to your heart” (Prov. 29:15, 17).

The discipline that a Christian child receives is a cross since it is painful and ultimately from the loving hand of the heavenly Father. It is God who gives this cross to the child by means of the parents, and like all crosses, it is bearable in faith. He apportions to children the crosses that are fit for them, so that they may learn to bear them with patience. It is in submitting to such discipline that a child gains the “peaceful fruit of righteousness” (Heb. 12:11).

Think of the burden borne by a child in honoring his father and mother even while they discipline him. Think of the spiritual blessings that are prepared for a child who learns to love the glory that comes from God. St. John wonders how you can love God, whom you cannot see, if you cannot be bothered to love the brother whom you can see (1 Jn. 4:20). By analogy, when a child learns to take up the cross given through his parents, he is being prepared to bear the crosses that he will receive from his heavenly Father apart from his parents. Again, in his Large Catechism explanation to the 4th commandment, Luther urges children to thank God for this burden, which amounts to a precious and pleasing work in God’s sight.<sup>7</sup>

Parents who neglect discipline deprive their children of this necessary lesson in cross-bearing. Consider the trouble for David’s son Adonijah which followed from this simple description of David’s neglect: “His father had never at any time displeased him by asking, ‘Why have you done thus and so?’” (1 Kgs. 1:6). Likewise, Eli’s wretched sons learned to despise the cross through their father’s unwillingness to chasten them: “Why then do you scorn my sacrifices and my offerings that I commanded for my dwelling, and honor your sons above me by fattening yourselves on the choicest parts of every offering of my people Israel?” (1 Sam. 2:29). Those sons who despised the cross were like the people of Israel in the wilderness: full of self-pity and grumbling in the face of every difficulty. Their fathers neglected the chastening by which God teaches children to bear the cross. In that way, they deprived their children of

**The discipline that a Christian child receives is a cross since it is painful and ultimately from the loving hand of the heavenly Father. It is God who gives this cross to the child by means of the parents, and like all crosses, it is bearable in faith.**



true joy as they chose temporal, fleeting pleasures instead of eternal treasure.

One of the reasons why parents neglect discipline is their own desire to avoid the cross. It is a cross you acquire when you become a father or mother, not because children are a source of suffering in and of themselves, but because the burden of faithful parenting includes your own suffering as you discipline your children. What parents occasionally say to their children is true in many ways: "This hurts me more than it hurts you." Because it is true, discipline is often neglected.

What tragic neglect this is! See how this ordinary work of fatherly chastening is a profound lesson in cross-bearing! Not only does it teach through the pain suffered by the child who is reprovved, but it also teaches through the example of patient endurance as the parent suffers as well, rejoicing even, confident in a hope that will not be put to shame because it is God's love that governs everything (Rom. 5:3-5). It is unpleasant and difficult to discipline your child lovingly. It brings you low as you risk insult or abuse from your child, which must not be returned in spite of your own flesh. It brings you low as you crucify all your passions and knee-jerk reactions and strive



not to provoke your children to anger (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21), aiming at love that "issues from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith" (1 Tim. 1:5). It brings you low, so that God can raise you up.

"Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22b). So it is for Christians, who receive their crosses not as a measure of God's wrath (Ps. 6:1), but according to His mercy and faithfulness (Ps. 119:75). When we take up our cross and follow Jesus, we receive His lowliness as our own (1 Pet. 4:1), for us and for our children, confident that the glory to be revealed is surpassing in greatness (Rom. 8:18).

To the end that children may learn this lesson, God has given them parents. Like so many God-pleasing tasks, the task of teaching children to bear the cross is confoundingly simple. Not easy, but simple. And yet, what glorious things are accomplished by such simple, ordinary means! God grant to Christian fathers and mothers all joy in believing so that they may take up this task with zeal, assured that it is God who works in them (Phil. 2:13)! ❧

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ralph Moody, *Little Britches*, Norton (1950), 41.

<sup>2</sup> Ralph himself comments, "I wish I knew how Father was able to say things so as to make you remember every word of it. If I could remember everything the way I remember the things Father told me, maybe I could be as smart a man as he was," 177.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>4</sup> Large Catechism quotations are from McCain, Paul T., W. H. T. Dau, and F. Bente, *Concordia: The Lutheran Confessions: A Reader's Edition of the Book of Concord, 2nd ed.*, Concordia Publishing House (2006). LC 1:173.

<sup>5</sup> Quotations from Tobit are taken from *The Apocrypha: The Lutheran Edition with Notes*, Concordia Publishing House (2012).

<sup>6</sup> Biblical quotations are from the English Standard Version (2001).

<sup>7</sup> "You should be heartily glad and thank God that He has chosen you and made you worthy to do a work so precious and pleasing to Him. Only note this: although this work is regarded as the most humble and despised, consider it great and precious. Do this not because of the worthiness of parents, but because this work is included in, and controlled by, the jewel and sanctuary, namely, the Word and commandment of God," LC 1:117.



# Martin Luther, the Lutheran Reformation, and the Enlightenment:

## Unexpected Areas of Overlap



Upon seeing the title of this piece, one could easily be forgiven for being confused, even startled, by the linking of Martin Luther and the Reformation to the subsequent Enlightenment era of late 17th- and 18th-century Europe. After all, these are part of very different and rapidly changing eras, with different values and assumptions about God, revelation, and eternal realities.

Wasn't the Enlightenment all about autonomous "reason" set in opposition to divine revelation and Christian faith? Did not Martin Luther himself shockingly call reason "the devil's whore"? And would not a confessional Lutheran today immediately refer to the Third Article of Luther's Small Catechism on the Apostles' Creed and to the words, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him..." to point out the incompatibility, on Lutheran confessional grounds, of "faith" and "reason?"<sup>1</sup>

Certainly, both post-Reformation progressives and secularists—along with their strange bedfellows, traditionalist Roman Catholics—have long sought to link Luther and the 16th-century Reformation to the rise of modern secularism and religious indifferentism in the post-Christian Western world.<sup>2</sup> Yet if Luther or Philip Melancthon could see the present day, I doubt that they would blame the 16th-century Reformation and its theological proposals and commitments for our current state of Western religious disintegration.

My intention is to demonstrate how aspects of the Enlightenment era, especially its more moderate proponents (albeit problematic Christians or even quiet Deists), dovetail or overlap with Luther, Melancthon, and the Lutheran Reformation's teaching on the legitimate uses of reason.

The history of the Christian faith—from patristic times only a few generations after the Apostles, through the time of the Reformation movement in Western Europe—continually wrestled with the relation of reason (i.e., human rationality and reflection) to the Christian faith. From

the 2nd-century Church Father Tertullian, who famously complained cynically against the use of reason in matters of faith, "What does Jerusalem have to do with Athens?," versus his contemporary Church Fathers Justin Martyr and Clement of Alexandria, who both viewed ancient pagan Greek philosophy (especially that of Socrates and Plato) as being virtually proto-Christian in outlook: a tug of war between the approaches, especially in Western theology, is clearly evident for over a thousand years and up through the Enlightenment of the 17th and 18th centuries.<sup>3</sup> The titanic Church Father Augustine of Hippo seemed to resolve these tensions in the West (at least for a while) by granting a proper place for reason in the Christian life, but only in submission to divine revelation that begins completely through the grace of God. St. Augustine famously asserted, "I believe (first) in order to understand," and in doing so, he "exercised enormous influence on Christian philosophy and on the Christian understanding of the relationship between faith and reason."<sup>4</sup> As I will note, Martin Luther and the confessional Lutheran position in the 16th century in many ways reasserted St. Augustine's position concerning faith and reason.

The medieval period in Western Christianity witnessed the rise of early universities and the accompanying approach to theology: the scholastic method. This methodology incorporated the rediscovery of the philosophy of Aristotle into the overall theological undertaking. The newer monastic order of the Dominicans, led by their premier scholar, Thomas Aquinas, especially viewed Aristotle's approach to questioning and categorizations as a key ally in the quest to probe theological depths. As historian R. W. Southern noted, "Now the time had come for a rapid advance in absorbing the whole body of Aristotelian sciences into theology."<sup>5</sup> However, during this period—which is often proclaimed the "medieval synthesis" of faith and reason, especially by traditionalist Roman Catholics even today—there were dissenters from the scholastic approach: "Whereas Aquinas followed the scholastic tradition, a contemporary of his, the Franciscan theologian Bonaventure

(d. 1274), represented the Augustinian and mystical strand of thought. Bonaventure, like Bernard of Clairvaux, was suspicious of the use of reason.”<sup>6</sup>

This suspicion of reason, however, centered on the fact that limited and fallible human rationality is unable to probe the eternal depths of the divine mysteries of God, grace, salvation, the Trinity, and other matters only revealed to humanity by the special revelation of God as found in the Holy Scriptures. But everyday, mundane, practical, and this-worldly matters still were aided and helped via reason in the more limited sense. That positive estimation of reason (since all people, even though hopeless sinners, still have the imprint of the *Imago Dei*), confined to its proper sphere, was retained by all sides in the Western theological debates through the centuries of the Church’s history up to Martin Luther’s times. And Luther, along with Philip Melancthon and the confessional Lutheran Reformation of the 16th century, like Bonaventure and Bernard of Clairvaux before them, would likewise be suspicious of and eventually reject the inordinate and sinfully audacious confidence in autonomous reason to ascend to the heights of probing theological mysteries that God intended to be received by fallen sinners as matters of simple, trusting faith.

Very tragically, while the Reformation was pivotal in refocusing the Christian faith on the Gospel message of salvation through Christ alone, along with prioritizing the Sacred Scriptures as the ultimate authority for Christians and the Church, nevertheless, the Reformation movements also fractured Western Europe politically and socially. Monarchs and princes (whether genuinely or cynically) used particular Christian confessions as ammunition and even rationales for waging wars over rival territories, or in persecuting those of differing religious beliefs in their realms. Such terrible conflicts included the Thirty Years’ War, the French Wars of Religion, the English Civil War, and others.

This turmoil and religious-based violence in the era of the brutal “Wars of Religion” of the 1600s—in which millions died all across Europe, ostensibly in the name of some confession of the Christian faith—understandably disillusioned many thoughtful people, who began to search for sources of truth outside of contested religious truth claims. The impetus for enthroning autonomous reason apart from the authority of directly Christian sources of divine revelation arguably emerged with early Enlightenment figures such as René Descartes in France or John Toland in England. For these and other Enlightenment thinkers, *contra* historic Christianity, independent human reason did stand independent of, or even above, divine revelation sources

and claims, including the Bible itself, which began to receive skeptical analysis for the first time in Christian history.

Eventually a range of moderate to radical Enlightenment positions emerged, from the moderate Enlightenment, quasi-Christian Englishman John Locke, to the more aggressive French Deism of Voltaire and Denis Diderot, and to the outright skepticism and atheism of the German Baron d’Holbach.<sup>7</sup> The emergence of so-called “liberal Christianity” began at this point during the Enlightenment era and has lasted into the present. Anti-Christian Enlightenment developments are understandably anathema to orthodox Christianity in general and to confessional Lutheranism in particular. Yet, the more positive pre-Enlightenment viewpoint concerning reason found in historic Christian orthodoxy—with reason being in its properly delineated sphere, often termed “general revelation” or “natural law,” and standing under the ultimate authority of special, divine revelation as found in the Holy Scriptures—continued to be supported and promoted in confessional Lutheran circles into the modern era.

Arguably one of the more influential theological voices within the history of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (outside Martin Luther himself and C. F. W. Walther), was the stalwart theologian and church leader Francis Pieper. Pieper’s multi-volume *Christian Dogmatics* (originally published in German from 1917–1924) has been and remains a foundational text in LCMS seminary instruction and confessional Lutheran circles up to the present time. Pieper distinguished between unbelieving reason that seeks to judge and overthrow the eternal, divine revelation of the Holy Scriptures, versus the positive, pragmatic use of reason in the earthly sphere of human existence.

Pieper says that when “the Scripture principle is rejected and, instead, the human Ego installed as teacher in the Church...natural reason is made the judge. By ‘natural reason’ we mean here man’s natural knowledge of God and of divine things, which, without the revelation of Scripture, is limited to knowledge of God’s existence only and of the divine Law, as we have shown repeatedly, and this knowledge leaves man under God’s wrath and curse, since man cannot keep the Law.”<sup>8</sup> Pieper further asserts: “Making natural reason the judge of matters religious is the attempt to set up human unreason as teacher in the Christian Church in place of the Word of God.”<sup>9</sup> This anti-Bible stance is definitely the approach of the aggressively anti-Christian proponents of the Enlightenment era. However, the more moderate Enlightenment proponents who still viewed themselves as Christians in some sense, even if problematic



in doctrine, would not necessarily employ reason to judge the Scriptures and divine revelation in this way.

And Pieper goes on to note how reason can and does have a much more positive connotation when confined to not only matters of this-worldly practicality but also to the ability to read and understand the Scriptures. Pieper says, “However, the term ‘reason’ has a second meaning, in Scripture as well as in secular usage. It means also the mental or rational nature of man, that is, the capacity of man to receive the thoughts of another into the mind, the ability to perceive and think. This is the so-called ministerial use of reason, as distinguished from the magisterial use of reason. The ministerial use of reason is, of course, legitimate in theology because the Holy Ghost works and sustains faith only through the Word of God as it is correctly perceived by the human mind.”<sup>10</sup>

When it comes to the proper relationship between faith and reason for the Christian, Pieper asserts that “by distinguishing between the ministerial use of reason and the magisterial use of reason, the old theologians also decide the question whether there is a real contradiction between theology and reason, or human science (philosophy). They answer: The truth is but one. A contradiction arises only when reason, gone mad, presumes to judge things that transcend its sphere.”<sup>11</sup>

Pieper was echoing what Philip Melanchthon wrote in the *Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1531) concerning objections to the Roman Catholic magisterium’s demands

on the issue of mandated clerical celibacy: “We cannot approve this law concerning celibacy which the adversaries defend, because it conflicts with divine and natural law and is at variance with the very canons of the Councils.”<sup>12</sup> For Melanchthon, as with Pieper, “the truth is but one” and unites the insights gained from both natural and special revelation, because both come from God.

Martin Luther himself (despite modern analysis often portraying him as an anti-reason fideist), held a high but circumscribed view of reason, as did Francis Pieper centuries later. Certainly, Luther strongly asserted that, because of total human bondage to sin and spiritual darkness, no one by his own independent reason can do anything to merit or even initiate salvation in Christ. Such is a total gift of divine grace by faith alone (see *Small Catechism*, Third Article).

But in his *Postil for Epiphany* from the book of Isaiah, Luther says, “In temporal affairs and those which have to do with men, the rational man is self-sufficient: here he needs no other light than reason’s. Therefore, God does not teach us in the Scriptures how to build houses, make clothing, marry, wage war, navigate, and the like. For here the light of nature is sufficient.” Scholar B. A. Gerrish notes that underlying Luther’s stance on reason “is Luther’s fundamental dualism of the Earthly and the Heavenly Kingdom.... Reason’s sphere of competence, the area within which it may legitimately be exercised, is the Kingdom of Earth. Reason is able to do many things: it can judge in human



CONFESS. EVANGEL. CAROLO V. CÆS. EXHIB. AUG. VINDEL. M. D. XXXX. d. XXV. JUNII.

**M**artin Luther himself held a high but circumscribed view of reason, as did Francis Pieper centuries later.

and worldly matters, it can build cities and houses, it can govern well.”<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, noted German church historian Bernhard Lohse points out that for Luther, “Of all the gifts God has given human beings, the *ratio* (reason) is the greatest and most important.... The gift of *ratio* gives humans their peculiar position between angels and beasts.” Lohse also points out that for Luther, prior to the Fall, reason was closely identified with the image of God in humans, and that in a state of sinlessness, Adam and Eve could indeed know God truly through such reason. But after the Fall, that capacity to know God through reason was tragically lost. However, the more limited usage of reason still continued in human beings in dealing with everyday, earthly matters. Lohse even notes that for Luther, *ratio* remains helpful specifically for believers beyond mere mundane aspects: “A *ratio* that is conscious of its own limits in this sense and that does not arbitrarily judge in matters of salvation is, of course, extraordinarily significant for service to theology. Such a *ratio* aids in understanding Scripture.”<sup>14</sup>

Luther asserts in his commentary on Galatians that “...All men have the general knowledge, namely that God is, that He has created heaven and earth, that He is just, and that He punishes the wicked....” As a result, Luther can say the following about the heathen who have not been blessed by the Word of God: “They are all acquainted with the law of nature. The Gentiles are all aware that murder, adultery, theft, cursing, lying, deceit, and blasphemy are wrong. They are not so stupid that they do not know very well that there is a God who punishes such vices.”<sup>15</sup>

Finally, as pertaining to education, both Martin Luther and especially Philip Melancthon sought to reshape education in 16th-century Germany, utilizing the robust understanding of the Gospel message of confessional Lutheranism via in-depth study of Holy Scripture, but also retaining the classical approach of the ancient liberal arts tradition that emerged in pagan antiquity with the Greeks and Romans and that was reasserted during the Renaissance period of European history just prior to (and alongside) the Reformation era. Melancthon extolled the value of studying much of the pagan classical canon, but only when guided by the overarching commitment to the Gospel message of salvation in Christ alone and of the ultimate authority of Holy Scripture. Such reflects Luther’s and Melancthon’s distinction between general versus special revelation, including finding great educational and even moral value in the general revelation sphere.<sup>16</sup>

An educational approach with a robust view of general and special revelation, including esteem for the noble

aspects of the ancient Western pagan tradition, supported by a high regard for redeemed human reason seeking clarification and fullness in the divine revelation of Christ and the Holy Scriptures: these were all the integral components of the classical Christian educational vision of Philip Melancthon, Martin Luther, and the Reformation-era Lutheran tradition. How wonderful to see that same vision being carried on in our times through the formation of Luther Classical College. 🙏

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Martin Luther, *Luther's Small Catechism with Explanation* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2017), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> See *Interpreters of Luther: Essays in Honor of Wilhelm Pauck*, edited by Jaroslav Pelikan (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), and *The Legacy of Luther: Martin Luther and the Reformation in the Estimation of the German Lutherans from Luther's Death to the beginning of the Age of Goethe*, edited by Ernst Walter Zeeden (London: Hollis and Carter, 1954) for the secularizing Luther; versus a more recent traditionalist Roman Catholic critique, *The Unintended Reformation: How a Religious Revolution Secularized Society* by Brad S. Gregory (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2015).

<sup>3</sup> Tim Dowley, editor. *Introduction to the History of Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), pp. 85-88; 94; 112.

<sup>4</sup> Edward A. Engelbrecht, editor. *The Church from Age to Age: A History* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing, 2011), p. 184.

<sup>5</sup> R.W. Southern. *Western Society and the Church in the Middle Ages* (London: Penguin Books, 1970), p. 296.

<sup>6</sup> Engelbrecht, ed. *The Church from Age to Age: A History*, p. 312.

<sup>7</sup> For good overviews of the Enlightenment era, see Norman Hampson, *The Enlightenment: An Evaluation of its assumptions, attitudes, and values* (London: Penguin Books, 1968); Gerald R. Cragg, *The Church and the Age of Reason, 1648-1789* (London: Penguin Books, 1970); Paul Hazard, *The European Mind: The Critical Years, 1680-1715* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1935).

<sup>8</sup> Francis Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, Volume I* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950), p. 196. From *Christian Dogmatics* by F. Pieper © 1950, 1978 Concordia Publishing House, cph.org. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

<sup>9</sup> Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, Volume I*, p. 197.

<sup>10</sup> Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, Volume I*, p. 197.

<sup>11</sup> Pieper, *Christian Dogmatics, Volume I*, p. 199.

<sup>12</sup> Philip Melancthon, *The Apology of the Augsburg Confession* (1530), XXIII, 6.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in B.A. Gerrish, *Grace and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Luther* (London: Oxford University Press, 1962), pp. 12-13.

<sup>14</sup> Bernhard Lohse, *Martin Luther's Theology: Its Historical and Systematic Development* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), pp. 196-197; 204.

<sup>15</sup> From Bruce A. Demarest, *General Revelation: Historical Views and Contemporary Issues* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing, 1982), pp. 44-46. Quoting Sermons on the Gospel of St. John, 1537, American Edition of Luther's Works, 22:149.

<sup>16</sup> See Philip Melancthon, “On Improving the Studies of the Youth” (1518), and Melancthon, “In Praise of the New School” (1526), both essays found in Ralph Keen, ed. *A Melancthon Reader* (New York: Peter Lang, 1988). See also the Melancthon biography: Clyde L. Manschreck, *Melancthon: The Quiet Reformer* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1958).



# Arianism Past and Present

## ARIANISM PAST



Athanasius' pastor and bishop, Alexander of Alexandria, delivered a faithful sermon on the Trinity around the year AD 320. Arius, a presbyter from the outskirts of Alexandria, who would give his name to one of the most persistent heresies in the history of the church, denounced the sermon for confessing the coequality and coeternity of Father and Son. This made no sense to Arius. He argued that the Son had a beginning, that there was a time when the Son was not, that the Father alone is true God and the Son a creation of the Father. Arius, like all false teachers, sought supporters for his false ideas. He sent letters to influential bishops complaining about Alexander's sermon. He composed praise songs, which Athanasius tells us used effeminate and dissolute tunes, to further spread his false teaching on the Father and the Son.<sup>1</sup>

The Emperor Constantine summoned the council of Nicaea in 325 to address the dispute between Arius and Alexander. The bishops condemned Arius' teaching and published a statement of faith asserting the substantial unity and personal distinction of Father and Son. At the time no one could have anticipated the long and lamentable debate on the Trinity that would ensue. Courageous and faithful bishops like Athanasius, Hilary of Poitiers, Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus, and Gregory of Nyssa, to name only a few, defended the teaching of Scripture that Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are indivisibly one and irreducibly three. They are one in nature, power, and will, and yet eternally distinct and distinguished as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These men suffered hardship, exile, and even attempts on their lives for faithfully confessing and defending the Holy Trinity against those sympathetic to Arius and his ideas.

False teachers never tire of offering subtler arguments for their views. As Gregory of Nazianzus quipped, they "must have something to blaspheme or life would be unlivable."<sup>2</sup> Arius' false teaching developed in two distinct ways in the second half of the fourth century. It either became more explicit about the Son's otherness to the Father, as argued by figures like Eunomius, or it became more subtle by affirming the Son's likeness and eternal subordination to the Father, as confessed by the Homoiousians and Latin Homoians.

Faithful bishops gathered once again at the council of Constantinople in 381 and condemned Arianism in all its varieties. They reaffirmed the faith from Nicaea and added a comprehensive statement on the Holy Spirit. This creed, which the church refers to as the Nicene Creed, continues to be confessed by the faithful today. And yet this council and its creed did not end debate on the Trinity. Gregory of Nyssa, writing after the council, lamented the continued false teaching by everyone—from the bishops to the bakers, butchers, and candle-stick makers:

"For the entire city is filled with such people—the alleys, the markets, the streets, the wards, the clothing merchants, the bankers, those who sell us food. If you ask about the money, he gives you his philosophy on the begotten and the unbegotten. And if you inquire about the price of bread, 'The Father is greater,' he answers, 'and the Son subordinate.' And if you say, 'Is the bath ready?', he declares that the Son is from nothing."<sup>3</sup>

Creeds, as important and as indispensable as they are for the faithful, never free us from defending the Scriptures against false teaching. For Luther that task falls to both pastors and capable lay people.<sup>4</sup> We must all, as best we are able, learn to defend the Scriptures on all matters of faith. This is especially true for the Trinity and the atoning work of Jesus Christ, the very Son of God made man for us and our salvation. If the One on the cross is not true God and true man in one person, the very Lord of Glory, suffering and dying for you and for me, indeed for the sins of the world, and rising for our justification, then, as our Confessions put it, He would be a poor savior for me (SD VIII.40). Arius' denial of Christ's true and full divinity is a denial of the atonement and our reconciliation with the Father. Johann Gerhard put it simply: "If we are ignorant of or deny the mystery of the Trinity, we are ignorant of or deny the entire economy of salvation."<sup>5</sup>

## ARIANISM PRESENT

Ambrose and Augustine, following the council of Constantinople in 381, encountered the subtler form of Arianism mentioned above. These Arians emerged from the council of Sirmium in 357. The bishops gathered at that council rejected Nicaea and all non-scriptural language. They issued a statement of faith that Hilary of Poitiers dubbed the blasphemy of Sirmium. Several responses to

Sirmium followed. Basil of Ancyra and George of Laodicea argued for a middle position between Nicaea and Sirmium. They confessed that Father and Son were not same-in-substance (*homoousios*) but shared a likeness of substance (*homoiousios*). For them the Father acts with “supreme authority” (ἀυθεντικῶς) and the Son “subordinately” (ὑπουργικῶς) and this conveys their likeness in substance rather than sameness.<sup>6</sup> For Basil the creed from Nicaea obscured this difference between the “authority” (ἐξουσία) of Father and Son.<sup>7</sup> Epiphanius, who preserves these writings for us, labels Basil and George “semi-Arians.”

The Latin Homoians confronted by Ambrose and Augustine were not half-hearted Arians. They stood resolutely in the tradition of Sirmium. They also insisted on the subordinationist language used by Basil and George. Palladius of Ratiaria, opposed by Ambrose and condemned at the council of Aquileia in 381, argued that the Father alone possessed “a unique and supreme authority” and that the Son does only what the Father commands Him to do.<sup>8</sup>

Nearly forty years later Augustine encountered these same arguments. In the fall of 419 he wrote a detailed response to an anonymous Arian sermon (*Sermo Arrianorum*) that had been sent to him. That anonymous sermon insisted that the Son acts only at the will and the command of the Father. These Arians appealed to John 5:19 and John 16:13 to show the Son’s eternal subordination to the Father’s authority and the Holy Spirit’s subordination to the Father and the Son.<sup>9</sup> To say these things, insisted Augustine, is to posit a greater God and lesser God and that is paganism.<sup>10</sup>

Augustine frequently mocked his Arian opponents for their carnal-minded and childish ways of reading Scripture. These Arians, insisted Augustine, made the Son nothing more than an apprentice in the workshop of the Father.<sup>11</sup> For Augustine and the Nicene tradition of exegesis, a tradition received and taught by our Lutheran reformers and dogmaticians, the verses from the Gospel of John do not convey subordination but rather the eternal relation of the divine persons. The Son does nothing “from Himself”





(Jn. 5:19) because He is not from Himself but eternally from the Father. Similarly, the Holy Spirit speaks nothing “from Himself” (Jn. 16:13) because He eternally proceeds from the Father and the Son. This scriptural language safeguards the unique oneness of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, the very mystery of the Trinity. To say otherwise—to say, for example, that the Son does something by Himself and apart from the Father—would divide the nature, power, and will of the Father and the Son.<sup>12</sup>

The views promoted by Basil, George, Palladius, and the *Sermo Arrianorum*—views rejected by Hilary, Ambrose, and Augustine, among others—continue to be taught and insisted upon in our day. Bruce Ware, professor of systematic theology at the Southern Baptist Theological seminary, argues that “an authority-submission structure marks the very nature of the eternal Being of the one who is three....The Father possesses the place of supreme authority...[T]he Son submits to the Father just as the Father, as eternal Father of the eternal Son, exercises authority over the Son. And the Spirit submits to both the Father and the Son.”<sup>13</sup> Wayne Grudem, editor of the *ESV Study Bible*, similarly insists that “authority and submission between the Father and the Son, and between the Father and Son and the Holy Spirit, is a fundamental difference (or probably the fundamental difference) between the persons of the Trinity.”<sup>14</sup> Ware and Grudem’s language repeats the anti-Nicene commitments of Basil, George, Palladius, and the *Sermo Arrianorum*.

These are not merely the views of a few misguided theologians. These same views appear throughout the *ESV Study Bible*, which is the product of ninety-five biblical scholars representing nearly twenty denominations. The publisher reports that over one million copies have been sold. Here’s the problem. The translators of the ESV mistranslate several verses on the eternal relation of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They add the word authority, presumably supplying ἔξουσία, to verses like John 7:17, 8:28, 12:49, 14:10, and 16:13. Why would the ESV add the word “authority” to these verses when the Greek does not? The answer is found in the *ESV Study Bible*: “Not...on my own authority indicates again that the supreme authority in the Trinity belongs to the Father, and delegated authority to the Son, though they are equal in deity.”<sup>15</sup> Equal in deity means equal in nature; authority and power belong to nature. For the *ESV Study Bible* the Father and the Son are both equal and unequal in nature.<sup>16</sup> That’s either a subtler form of Arianism, or nonsense, or both.

Arius put his false teaching to music, and that false teaching continues to be chanted in our own day. At the

time of the Reformation, Luther and our Lutheran fathers confronted anti-Trinitarians and sang a different song. They returned to the Scriptures and the faithful trinitarian exegesis of Hilary, Ambrose, Augustine, and the other defenders of Nicaea. We too must do the same today. Pastors and capable lay people must diligently attend to the Scriptures and boldly confess with Johann Gerhard that to deny or compromise in any way the mystery of the Trinity is to deny the entire economy of salvation and the atoning work of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. ❧

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### End Notes

- 1 Athanasius, *Orations against the Arians*, 1.2-4.
- 2 Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration 31.2 in On God and Christ: The Five Theological Orations and Two Letters to Cledonius*, trans. Frederick Williams and Lionel Wickham (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), 117.
- 3 Gregory of Nyssa, *De deitate filii et spiritus sancti et in Abraham in Gregorii Nysseni Opera X.2*, 121.3-12; translation in Andrew Radde-Gallwitz, *Gregory of Nyssa’s Doctrinal Works: A Literary Study* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 221.
- 4 cf. Luther’s Works 73:473; 15:303-304
- 5 Johann Gerhard, *Theological Commonplaces: On the Nature of God and on the Trinity*, trans. Richard J. Dinda (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2007), Exegesis III, §7, 269.
- 6 Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.9.5 (Basil) and 73.18.4-5 (George) in *Epiphanius III: Panarion haer. 65-80. De fide*, ed. Karl Holl and Jürgen Dummer, *Die Griechischen Christlichen Schriftsteller* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1985), vol. 37, 279-80 and 290-91.
- 7 Epiphanius, *Panarion* 73.11.9-10; GCS 37:283-284.
- 8 Palladius, *Apologia* 346r in Roger Gryson, *Scolies ariennes sur le concile d’Aquilée*, Sources Chrétiennes 267 (Paris: Cerf, 1980), 312.
- 9 *Sermo Arrianorum* 20 and 31 in *Arianism and Other Heresies*, trans. Roland J. Teske in *Works of Saint Augustine* 1/18 (Hyde Park, NY: New City Press, 1995), 135-36.
- 10 Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* 18.4.
- 11 Cf. Augustine, *Sermon* 126.9 and 135.4; *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* 18.5 and 20.9.
- 12 Augustine, *Answer to the Arian Sermon*, WSA 1/18, 159: “In accord with this, ‘the Holy Spirit does not speak on his own,’ because he does not come from himself, but proceeds from the Father. So too, the reason that *the Son can do nothing of himself* is that he too does not come from himself.” See also Augustine, *In Iohannis Evangelium Tractatus* 20 (John 5:19) and 99 (John 16:13).
- 13 Bruce Ware, *Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Relationships, Roles, and Relevance* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2005), 21.
- 14 Wayne Grudem, *Evangelical Feminism & Biblical Truth* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2004), 47.
- 15 *ESV Study Bible*, ed. Wayne Grudem (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 2050. Note the word “again” in the explanation. This teaching appears throughout the *ESV Study Bible*. See the notes for John 3:35, 5:19, 14:28; Matthew 28:18, Mark 10:40, Acts 2:33, 1 Corinthians 11:3 and 15:28; and Ephesians 1:4.
- 16 Cf. Martin Chemnitz, *Loci Theologici*, trans. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis, MO: CPH, 2008), vol. 1, 109: “Heresy arises from the improper use of words.”

# Roman Catholicism and Liberalism



Last December Pope Francis made the news when he officially sanctioned church blessings of homosexual couples. He maintained that while homosexual “marriage” isn’t marriage and while the Church cannot bless the actual union, she can bless the couple. Of course, what this looks like to anyone and everyone is the Church blessing homosexual marriage. That’s what all the headlines ran with, and understandably so. Normal people, when they see a priest blessing two men holding hands and claiming to be married to one another, don’t say, “Oh, he’s not blessing the marriage, just them. He’s not blessing their homosexual life together, just them as individuals.” That’s silly. The optics are the message and the optics clearly present a priest blessing two men claiming to be married to one another.

This isn’t the first time Pope Francis has made the news for promoting liberal ideas and seemingly changing the teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. In 2013 he said even atheists can go to heaven, so long as they live a good life. In the same year, when asked if homosexuality was wrong, he answered, “Who am I to judge?” In 2015, Francis

warned of the evils of manmade global warming and called for international pacts of environmental justice.<sup>1</sup>

Roman Catholic conservatives are wondering what is happening in their church. Isn’t the Roman Catholic Church a conservative church? Doesn’t it take conservative stands on abortion, on divorce, on sexual immorality in general, even on birth control? Do they just have to wait out the current pope’s tenure and all will go back to the way it was before?

That’s just the problem. Pope Francis looks more liberal than previous popes, but he is completely in line with the tradition of the Roman Catholic Church. Far from being the “conservative” church, Roman Catholicism is fundamentally liberal and always has been.

Take Pope Francis’ seeming approval of homosexuality. He seems to be more liberal than his predecessors when he says that homosexual orientation is not a sin. But he isn’t. He’s repeating well-established Roman Catholic teaching. He’s not denying that homosexual acts are sinful. He’s only asserting that the inclination toward those acts isn’t sinful. And this is exactly the Roman Catholic doctrine of sin. From the beginning, in their debate with the Lutherans,





the Roman Catholics insisted that the inclination to sin is not sin. The Lutherans insisted (with Jesus) that a good tree bears good fruit and a bad tree bears bad fruit (Mt. 7:17). It's because our inclinations are sinful in the first place that they produce sinful acts. "Out of the heart come sinful thoughts—murder, adultery, sexual immorality," etc. (Mt. 15:19).

Or take the Pope's position on atheists going to heaven. This fits perfectly with *Lumen Gentium*, the 1964 decree of the Second Vatican Council, which states that anyone who leads a basically moral life can come to know and love God and win heaven without ever having heard of Christ or His Gospel. This aligns also with the Roman Catholic Church's liberal view of man, which assumes—despite the doctrine of original sin—that man is basically good and can gain God's grace by his own powers.

As to the Pope's liberal positions on global warming, illegal immigration, the death penalty, and the welfare state, these are in lockstep with the Roman Catholic adoption of other popular "scientific" and social doctrines in the past centuries, including its adoption of evolution and its attempts to influence global initiatives through the League of Nations and later the United Nations, each of which the Vatican made overtures to join.

Francis *looks* more liberal because of how and when he says things, but he is very clearly a product of the Roman Catholic Church.

It is one thing to point out the obvious, present fact that many of the Roman Catholic Church's positions are liberal. It is another thing to see why, systemically, this is the case. The first reason has already been mentioned: the Roman Catholic doctrine of man minimizes sin's effects and so overestimates man's powers for good. It holds this in common with liberalism and so takes many stands that conservatives see as socially liberal. Take the welfare state.

A more skeptical view of man's goodness would question whether a man will work hard if you give him money for not working. St. Paul held that view and so says, "If a man does not work, neither shall he eat" (2 Thess. 3:10).

The second systemic reason for Roman Catholic liberalism is its teaching on the Bible. Lutherans teach that the Bible is the only source for teaching in the Church. This is a conservative principle. It means doctrine cannot change. It's fixed. Just as you can't add or subtract to the Bible, you can't add or subtract to the Church's teaching. You may articulate things differently depending on the time in which you live and so address changing circumstances with unchanging teaching. But you never change the teaching.

That is the essence of conservatism.

The Roman Catholic Church, from their modern origin in the Council of Trent (1545-1563), has always held that the Bible is not the only source of doctrine. They add to the Bible also the Pope himself and Church tradition. The Pope and Church Councils can, in effect, change Christian doctrine. The approval of evolution by Pope Pius XII (1939-1958), with the caveat that God creates human souls directly, simply changed the

doctrine of creation "in conformity with the present state of human sciences" (*Humani Generis*, 36). In 1995, Pope John Paul II condemned the death penalty in his decree *Evangelium Vitae*. This despite the Bible's clear teaching that the state has the right to put criminals to death (Rom. 13:1-4), as well as the ironic fact that the Vatican itself has employed an executioner in past centuries and has put literally thousands of people to death! The universalist stance of *Lumen Gentium*, which states that people of all different religions can obtain heaven without membership in the Roman Catholic (or Christian) Church likewise directly contradicts numerous previous decrees of both Pope and Council, not to mention the Bible (Jn. 14:6; Rom. 3:20).

**The Reformation was itself a conservative movement. It dispensed with only those things that corrupted the Church, and it kept all traditions that came down from the apostolic age, basing all things on what is most ancient: the Bible.**

These three examples (and there are many more) show a Roman Catholic Church that changes according to the times. More than that, it shows a Roman Catholic Church that is *designed* to change with the times. Yet despite this inherent liberalism within the Roman Catholic Church, they keep a façade of conservatism in outward form: the sacrifice of the mass remains a constant, the celibacy of priests remains intact, the Pope remains the head of the Church, with all the clothes and hats and colors. Things look the same.

But the Roman Catholic Church also asserts a conservatism of doctrine. The claim here is that nothing has changed, despite the obvious changes. Once the Roman Catholic Church asserts something new, she insists it's always been taught (or at least never taught against). It is the same trick Orwell satirized in 1984: "The past was alterable. The past never had been altered. Oceania was at war with Eastasia. Oceania had always been at war with Eastasia." We call this retroactive continuity. You change something and then you simply assert you have always taught it. Take for instance the change to the Roman Catholic teaching on the death penalty. The doctrine, Pope John Paul II said, has not changed, but now that in modern society we can keep people safe from criminals without the death penalty, it is no longer morally acceptable to put murderers to death. And yet we have had the ability to keep prisoners in prisons securely for hundreds of years. And this didn't stop Giovanni Battista Bugatti (1779–1869), the Pope's executioner, from cutting off 514 heads in his tenure as papal executioner. The fact is the doctrine did change. And it changed because the Roman Catholic Church moves with the times. It is a liberal church.

Ironically, the very element that seems so ancient and conservative in the Roman Catholic Church is the seed of liberalism within it. The papacy seems an ancient institution. But it overturns what is more ancient: the Bible. The tradition of the Roman Church, it is claimed, goes back to the apostles themselves. But that tradition, insofar as it has strayed from the apostles' teaching in the New Testament, is liberal. The conservative principle is the principle articulated in the Lutheran Reformation: *Ad fontes*, back to the sources! Back to the Bible, which is pure and clear and does not change. Only the Bible (*sola Scriptura*) can serve as the basis for teaching in the Christian Church. Otherwise we rely on men who change with the times.

What is the answer for conservative Roman Catholics? The truly conservative Church. The Church that can actually claim a tradition that has not changed for two thousand years, since the time our Lord Jesus sent His apostles

to convert the nations (Mt. 28:18–20). The Church that was renewed and reformed by Martin Luther, but founded by the Lord Jesus. The Lutheran Church did not suddenly appear in the sixteenth century. The name "Lutheran" did. But the Lutheran Church is simply a continuation of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church. The Reformation was itself a conservative movement. It dispensed with only those things that corrupted the Church, and it kept all traditions that came down from the apostolic age, basing all things on what is most ancient: the Bible.

This is why Roman Catholic conservatives should come home to the Lutheran Church. It's not only that the Lutheran Church has conserved the liturgy and lectionary and vestments and reverence that have always belonged to the conservative Church. It's not only that the conservative Lutheran Church still looks like church and has not chased after the fads of rock bands and entertainment worship. It is that the conservative Lutheran Church confesses and gives what all Christians long for, even if they can't quite articulate it. And that is the unchanging truth. We preach Christ crucified for sinners. We preach the Lord Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection are our righteousness before God. We preach the beautiful truth that God declares us righteous and counts us as His children through faith in His Son. The love of Christ compels us, because we have judged thus, that One died for all (2 Cor. 5:14). In this is Love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins (1 Jn. 4:10). This pure Gospel is what everything conservative in the Church must serve and the reason the true Church will by God's grace remain committed to the unchanging truth of the Bible until her Lord returns. ❧

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#### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> See "8 of Pope Francis' Most Liberal Statements" <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2015/09/07/what-has-pope-francis-actually-accomplished-heres-a-look-at-7-of-his-most-notable-actions/>.





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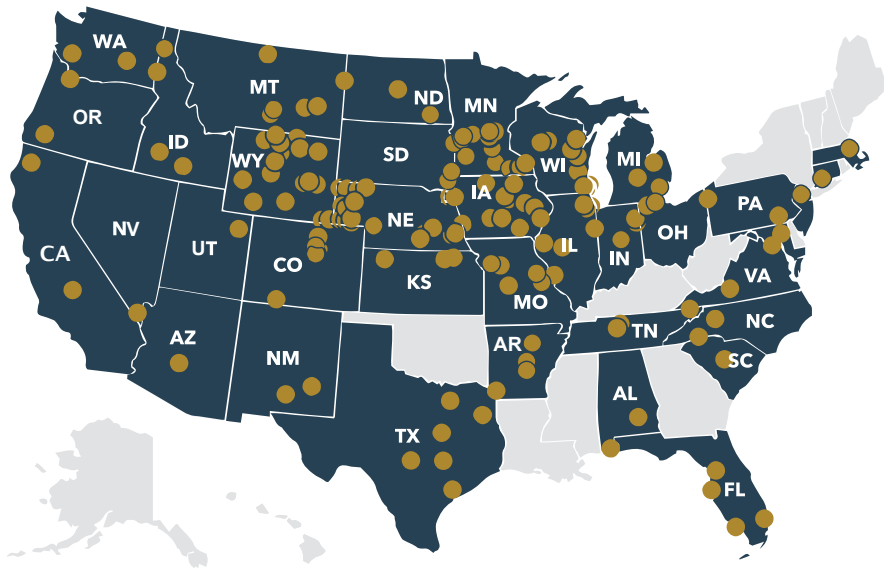


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## The Sixth Article: He Rose from the Dead

*This sermon is part of a series in which John Arndt preaches on all of the Ten Commandments, every line of the Apostles Creed, and every petition of the Lord's Prayer.<sup>1</sup>*



eter says in his first epistle, chapter 1: "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to

an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." In this beautiful quote the Holy Apostle Peter highly extols the resurrection of our Lord

Jesus Christ from the dead because of the great benefit we receive from it.

First, he says: We are thereby born again, that is, brought back to life from death in Christ. St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15: "For if Christ were not risen, we would still be in our sins," and therefore still in eternal death. Thus, were any to fall asleep in or with Christ, he would be lost. But now that Christ is risen, we who believe are all made alive in Him, we are all born anew, we are all snatched out of death, and in Christ we have all become partakers of life.

Secondly, St. Peter says: "We are born anew through the resurrection of Christ unto a living hope." If Christ were not risen, then we would, for all eternity, have no hope of life. Rather our hope would be a dead hope like that of all unbelievers who have nothing to hope for after death other

than an eternal death—indeed not a different, let alone a better, life.

In the third place, he says that we are born again through the resurrection of Jesus Christ to a living hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, reserved for us in heaven. For if Christ were not risen, He could not have placed us in an eternal inheritance, because it is in Christ that we are given our eternal inheritance. Now if Christ would have remained dead, so, too, would our hope. Our eternal inheritance would be lost. But now that He is risen, and lives eternally, and has conquered, and has inherited all things, and since God has made Him heir over all things, thus will He now establish all the faithful as fellow heirs. As St. Paul says in Romans 8: “Since we are then children, we are also heirs, namely heirs of God, and fellow heirs with our Lord Jesus Christ.” Behold, this is the living hope of all the faithful. Since our inheritance is a living, eternal, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading inheritance, it therefore produces a living hope. But those who put their trust in what is temporal have an empty, dead hope, which dies and decays along with the temporal.

We now want to treat this Article in the following three questions.

### THE FIRST QUESTION

What do you believe and confess concerning this Article when you say, “Resurrection of the dead”?

I sincerely believe in my heart and confess with my mouth that the eternal Son of God, Jesus Christ my Lord and Savior, after He truly had died on the cross and departed and lay dead until the third day, and after He had kept His Sabbath day of rest in the grave, came alive again through His own almighty, divine power and authority. On the third day He rose from the dead, because it was impossible that He could be held down by death. For His holy humanity was united with the divine nature, and He Himself was also clean and without any sin, death having

no authority over Him on account of His sins. Therefore, in His resurrection He proved Himself a Lord, a Conqueror of sin and death, and our Prince of Victory, who through His great, triumphant resurrection saved us from sin and death. In the place of sin, He gives everlasting righteousness. In the place of death, He gives everlasting life. Upon His victory He distributes these gifts, bounties, and everlasting goods to all believers, as St. Paul says to the Romans in chapter 4: “Christ was handed over for our sins and rose again for our righteousness.” As also the prophets prophesied, such as Isaiah in chapter 25: “The LORD will swallow up death eternally.” And in chapter 53: “When He has given up His life as a guilt offering, thus shall He have seed and His days be multiplied: He is torn from fear and judgment; who shall speak of His generation?” Also Psalms 16 and 18: “I will not die, but live and proclaim the works of the LORD.” Which mighty work of His joyful resurrection is also prefigured<sup>3</sup> by the Prophet Jonah, by Daniel in the lions’ den, and by Samson, whom the Philistines captured and detained in their stout city. But Samson slept until midnight, and then he got up and tore off the posts and nails of the gates and carried them off. Likewise has Christ in His resurrection vanquished the power and authority of death through his divine omnipotence, as St. Paul says: “Christ has taken away the power of death, and has brought immortality to light.”

In this confession are found the reasons for the resurrection: because Christ is almighty God, because He is without sin, and because He has paid for sin in full. Second, the prophecies of the Prophets. Third, the power of His resurrection.

### THE SECOND QUESTION

But how did Christ rise?

The historical accounts of the Lord’s resurrection as taught by the four evangelists, which we always hear read during the joyful Eastertide, are sufficient. It is, therefore, unnecessary to explain further, so long as we take for grant-





ed that He is risen.

First: Christ rose majestically, for there was an earthquake. An angel also soared down from heaven and removed the stone, opening the grave after the Lord's resurrection. His countenance shone bright as lightning. The guards were so terrified that they became like dead men.

Second: Christ rose powerfully and authoritatively of Himself, through His own divine omnipotence, power, and authority. John 10: "I have power to lay down my life and to take it again." John 5: "The Son has life in Himself." John 11: "I am the resurrection and the life." But then St. Paul says: "He was resurrected by the glory of the Father." And St. Peter in Acts 2 and 10: "God raised Him from the dead and loosed the pains of death." And again St. Paul says in Romans 8 that the Spirit of God quickened Him: "But if the Spirit of Him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by His Spirit that dwells in you." But none of this contradicts the fact that Christ was quickened through His own omnipotence. After all, there is one united Divinity: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and these three persons are one united substance with equal authority. Therefore, since the divinity of the Father is not separate from the divinity of the Son, and the divinity of the Holy Spirit is one substance with the Father and the Son, it all amounts to the same statement when the Holy Scriptures say that Christ was quickened of Himself, or that the Father resurrected Him, or the Holy Spirit, because these three remain one God, and one united divine substance.

Third: Christ rose most assuredly, with angelic testimony. For how kindly the Angels spoke with the women at the grave, showing them the place where the Lord had lain, reminding them of what the Lord had spoken to them previously concerning His resurrection, as the accounts give.

Fourth: Christ's resurrection is lovely and comforting. How many times He Himself appears on Easter morning! How glorious an Easter sermon He preaches! John 20: "Go forth and tell my brethren, 'I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.'"

### THE THIRD QUESTION

What benefit, fruit, and comfort do we get from this article?

First: Since Christ is truly risen, it is thus an infallible testimony that all sin is paid for in full. For if sin had not been obliterated through the death of Christ, neither would death have let go of Christ, because death is sin's



most precious reward. Christ was our guarantor and died for this purpose. He was cast into the debtors' prison, from whence He would not have been freed had the debt not been paid in full. But now that Christ is risen and death is not able to retain Him, thus must the cause of death, namely sin, also be abolished. Therefore no sin of man remains that was not paid in full, because Christ is risen: "For the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Is. 53). Hence, St. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 15: "If Christ is not risen, you are still in your sins." Because wherever sin has not been completely taken away, there death still rules.

Second: The other benefit and comfort is our righteousness. For just as Christ died for our sin, He also is risen for our righteousness. That is to say, His resurrection is an immense attestation of our righteousness, because ultimately He rose that we might be made partakers of the

righteousness that He purchased for us with His death. For even though our sins were all destroyed by His death, still the fruit of the forgiveness of sins and the absolution from sins depend on the resurrection. If the resurrection would not have occurred, our salvation would be incomplete, nay, absolutely nothing at all. But just as God the Father truly laid our sins upon Christ that He might through His death atone and make payment for them, so, too, has He proved that He absolved Christ and counted Him free from our sin by raising Christ from the dead. Thus, He also has freed us in Christ. For Christ's resurrection is not only a powerful testimony of our righteousness, but an actual absolution and acquittal from all of our sins. For this reason St. Paul says that Christ's resurrection is our righteousness and that on account of Christ's resurrection, we are no longer in our sins. Christ is risen as a righteous man,<sup>4</sup> but not for Himself. Rather, it was to make us righteous, to impart to us His righteousness. So God gave Him for our righteousness and sanctification.

Third: The third fruit is the defeat of death (Hos. 13). "Death is swallowed up in victory," etc. (1 Cor. 15). The victory is ours. By Christ, in Christ, with Christ, we defeat death. Christ defeats death in us. John 8: "Amen, amen, I say unto you, whoever keeps my Word, he will never taste death." John 11: "I am the resurrection and the life, etc."

Fourth: The fourth benefit is that we have been awakened by the power of Christ's resurrection to a new life, and that Christ now lives in us. For our justification always has with it the new birth and quickening of the Spirit, or of the new man, which all believers obtain from Christ through the power of His resurrection. Therefore, Christ who lives forever is our life. Yes, our new life is now and always shall be lived through faith with a fresh vitality, because we are spiritually risen to a new life in Christ through His resurrection. Through this resurrection, we truly give up and forfeit ourselves to God. Christ is our head. From Him, as His members, we must have a new spiritual life. As our King, He makes His residence in our hearts, therefore He should also live in us, rule, triumph, and reign in us. Thus, since the new life must begin in us, the Old Adam must be destroyed, as St. Paul says in Romans 6: "Our old man is crucified with Him, that we should no longer be slaves of sin." And again, we should spiritually rise with Christ and "walk in the newness of life." 2 Corinthians 4: "We are always delivered to death, that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh." Galatians 2: "It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." 2 Corinthians 5: "If One died for all, then all died; that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died

for them and rose again." Romans 6: "Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord." Ephesians 2: "God raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Revelation 16: "Blessed is he who has part in the first resurrection." Bernard: "*illi vivas, qui ut semper viveres, semel pro te mortuus est,*" that is, "to Him you shall live, who once died for you, that you might live forever."

Fifth: The fifth benefit and comfort is the joyful resurrection of our bodies on the Last Day, which is so gloriously described by St. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15: "For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive." Thus, Christ's resurrection is an actual reason for our own resurrection. John 11: "I am the resurrection, etc." A second reason for our resurrection is Christ's triumph over death. 2 Timothy 1: "Christ has taken away the power of death." A third reason is that since all believers are members of Christ, the Lord will not leave them in death. The fourth reason is the redemption of both bodies and souls from death. Job 19: "I know that my Redeemer lives, etc." The fifth reason is the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, as St. Paul says in Romans 8: "God will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you." Isaiah 26: "Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of the green fields." In other words, the Holy Spirit will make our rotting bones to be as verdant as the dew upon the earth, like when Ezekiel 37 speaks of the wind that breathed upon the dead, dry bones. The sixth reason is the Kingdom and inheritance of Christ, which He did not prepare for the dead, nor for anyone less than man. The seventh reason is because we are blessed and drenched in Christ's quickening flesh and blood unto life everlasting. Therefore we should not fear death. Christ has taken away its power and turned it into a slumber. Through His resurrection He has snatched us, along with Himself, away from death forever, and translated us into an eternal life. ☞

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#### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> Translated from *Auflegung Deß gantzen Psalters Davids, Deß Königlichen Propheten* by Johann Arndt, Lüneburg, 1710.

<sup>2</sup> Actually Psalm 118:17.

<sup>3</sup> *vorgebildet*.

<sup>4</sup> *Gerechter*.

<sup>5</sup> Actually Revelation 20.



# Getting to Know the Fathers: Paulinus of Nola



Paulinus of Nola was a member of the Roman elite, an eloquent and cultured man, a man of senatorial rank who came from old money, a man wealthy beyond imagination, whose vast estates and business interests stretched across the empire. And yet he renounced it all, the world and its treasures, to seek those treasures that moth and rust cannot destroy and that thieves cannot steal. Paulinus of Nola stands as proof that even though “it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God... with God all things are possible” (Matt. 19:24, 26).

In the middle of the fourth century, c. AD 354, Pontius Meropius Anicius Paulinus was born to one of the wealthiest families of Aquitania. His was an old patrician family. Having been educated in rhetoric and law, as a senator (a role inherited from his father) he quickly rose to some prominence and was, it seems, named a suffect consul by the emperor Gratian at the age of about 23 or 24. A few years later, at about age 27, he was given the role of governor of Campania in southern Italy.<sup>1</sup> Being rich and powerful did not lead to a life without difficulties, however. Managing and protecting vast wealth was a monumental task, especially with the ever-present threat of those seeking in some way to rob one of it, and with the threat of imperial confiscations necessary to fund a faltering empire. After Gratian’s murder, perhaps in order to remove himself from the attentions of the new regime, Paulinus moved his family and his great wealth to his wife’s family estates in Spain (yes, he had gained even more wealth through marriage!).<sup>2</sup>

He had been baptized before leaving Bordeaux, and had been influenced by the great Ambrose in Milan.<sup>3</sup> As his fortunes in the world began to turn, Paulinus and his wife Theresa became even more devoutly invested in the Faith. After the death of their only child, the couple, recognizing the emptiness of worldly life, decided to renounce their immense wealth and their place among the Roman elite in exchange for a life of service to the Lord and to the poor. Although lauded by great churchmen like Martin



of Tours, Augustine of Hippo, and Ambrose of Milan, it was a decision that many of Paulinus’s friends simply could not comprehend.<sup>4</sup> St. Ambrose reports on this momentous turn of events: “Paulinus, the lustre of whose birth was inferior to none in the region of Aquitania, has sold both his own possessions and those of his wife, and entered upon a course of life which enables him to bestow upon the poor the property which has been converted into money; while he himself having become poor instead of rich, as one relieved of a heavy burden, has bid farewell to his home, his country, and his kindred, in order to serve God more diligently... When the great of the world hear this, what will they say? That a man of his family, his ancestry, his genius, gifted with such eloquence, should have seceded from the senate, that the succession of a noble family should become extinct, such things, they will say, are not to be borne.”<sup>5</sup>

But the bewilderment and even animosity of others would not deter Paulinus from his chosen path. Writing from Barcelona to his friend, Sulpicius Severus who was following a similar course of action, Paulinus says: “For them the flesh and cross of the living God are foolishness, or a stumbling block; for flesh and blood, to which they are slaves, do not reveal to them that Christ Jesus is the Son of God. But may our belief in the flesh and death of

God become the odour of life unto life. Dearest brother, let not our feet be diverted from the ways of the Lord or from treading the narrow path, should the wicked or foolish voices of worldly men from time to time bark around us... We should not fear the displeasure of such men; indeed we should desire it, for from their taunts and curses is born the abundant reward which God has promised in heaven... So let us displease these men, and be thankful that we displease those who find God displeasing. For, as you know, it is not our work that they assail in us, but that of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is almighty God.”<sup>6</sup>

A year after renouncing his wealth, on Christmas Day 395, Paulinus was ordained to the priesthood.<sup>7</sup> Much like St. Augustine with whom he often corresponded, this ordination was somewhat forcibly conferred upon him at the insistence of the populace. He acquiesced only after first having gained the assurance from the bishop that he would not be bound to any particular parish or diocese, a practice later condemned by the Council of Chalcedon.<sup>8</sup> Having begun to have been freed from the bonds of worldly obligations (for the disposal of such great wealth was no easy or quick task), Paulinus did not wish to be obliged to remain in Barcelona. Rather, he longed to return to a place he had known as governor of Campania, the shrine of St. Felix in Nola.<sup>9</sup> And it is there that Paulinus, who was eventually made bishop of Nola, remained for the rest of his life, and from there that he used his vast wealth to enrich the Church and her poor.

We know of Paulinus not only from the reputation of the churches he built and beautified, and not only from the reports of his more famous contemporaries, but also from his own correspondence and poetry. These literary treasures reveal to us an eloquent and surprisingly humble man whose faith was deeply rooted in the grace of Christ Jesus and who knew well the Holy Scriptures, the language of which is generously peppered throughout his works. For example, when writing to the poet Ausonius, who was both his mentor and one of those mourning his renunciation of wealth and position, he contrasts the writings of pagan philosophers, rhetoricians and poets to the truth of Christ. “[The pagan authors] fill hearts with false and empty opinions and instruct only in rhetoric, making no effort to confer salvation or clothe us with the truth. What good or truth can they have, when they do not have the Head of it all, the flame and fount of the true and the good, God, whom no one sees except in Christ? He is the Light of truth, the Way of life, the Power, Mind, Hand, and Strength of His Father, the Sun of justice, the Fount of good, the Flower of God, the Begotten of God, the Creator of the world, Life of

our mortality and Death of our death. He is the Teacher of virtues. He is both God to us and Man for us. He deprived Himself by taking us on, establishing eternal fellowship between man and God, being Himself both. Therefore, when He sends His radiance from heaven on our hearts, He wipes away the sick filthiness of our indolent flesh and renews the disposition of our mind. Everything that delighted us before He draws out and replaces it with holy pleasure.”<sup>10</sup>

And when writing to his friend Jovius, a fellow writer and poet, he exhorts him in regard to Jovius’s love of the pagan writers: “I beg you, devote your zeal and work to reading and writing these things [of Christ]: Sing of the great beginnings of the Thunderer’s universe. Write of the foundations of things created by His Word, the chaos before the first day, and the dusk of the first light, and what was said and done by God through all the elements in various ages. You will learn them through the Holy Scriptures, the things which Moses taught, written down on the tablets of the Law, or the things which the new Law of the Gospel Testament confirms, which uncovers the mysteries of Christ previously hidden. Then I will call you a truly divine poet and I will drink up your poems like a draft of sweet water.”<sup>11</sup> Such sweet draft we find throughout the letters and poems of Paulinus, the rich man become poor, that in Christ he might be found rich. By His faithful confession and works he shows us that in the grace of our Lord Jesus all things really are possible. ☞

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### End Notes

<sup>1</sup> W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1984), 713. A suffect consul is one elected to complete the term of a consul who dies or resigns before the end of his term. Note that there is some debate among historians concerning whether Paulinus ever actually held this post.

<sup>2</sup> Peter Brown, *Through the Eye of a Needle: Wealth, the Fall of Rome, and the Making of Christianity in the West, 350-550 AD*, (Princeton University Press, 2012), 210.

<sup>3</sup> Saint Paulinus of Nola, *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola: Volume 1, Letters 1-22*, Letter 3, trans. P.G. Walsh (New York: Paulist Press, 1966), 46.

<sup>4</sup> Brown, 216-217.

<sup>5</sup> “*The Letters of S. Ambrose, Bishop of Milan*, by Saint Ambrose—A Project Gutenberg eBook,” n.d., Letter 58, <https://www.gutenberg.org/files/58783/58783-h/58783-h.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola: Volume 1, Letter 1*, 30, 33.

<sup>7</sup> *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola: Volume 1, Letter 1*, 37.

<sup>8</sup> *Letters of St. Paulinus of Nola: Volume 1*, 213-214.

<sup>9</sup> Brown, 219.

<sup>10</sup> Saint Paulinus of Nola, Poem 10, lines 39-62, trans. Christian Preus.

<sup>11</sup> Poem 22, lines 148-158, trans. Christian Preus.



# American Christianity: The First Great Awakening



wake, then, you that are sleeping in a false peace, awake, ye carnal professors, ye hypocrites that go to church, receive the sacrament, read your Bibles, and never felt the power of God upon your hearts; you that are formal professors, you that are baptized heathens; awake, awake, and do not rest on a false bottom. Blame me not for addressing myself to you; indeed, it is out of love to your souls. I see you are lingering in your Sodom, and wanting to stay there; but I come to you as the angel

did to Lot, to take you by the hand. Come away, my dear brethren—fly, fly, fly for your lives to Jesus Christ, fly to a bleeding God, fly to a throne of grace; and beg of God to break your hearts, beg of God to convince you of your actual sins, beg of God to convince you of your original sin, beg of God to convince you of your self-righteousness—beg of God to give you faith, and to enable you to close with Jesus Christ.

George Whitefield, *The Method of Grace*,  
September 13th, 1741







America finds its roots in the Calvinist Pilgrims and Separatists who came to the continent in search of religious freedom. They sought to be free from the shackles of the established English church. Through a generation of trial and hardship, they would find success. Believing that true Christian worship was found generally apart from prescribed liturgies and prayer books, free from mandated vesting and adherence to bishops and kings, they flourished in newly settled colonies. They would be guided by called elders, and their rule would be the Scriptures alone, typically the Geneva Bible.

The religious fervor of these settlements would begin to decline by the eighteenth century. The prosperity of the American colonies led to a complacency and a lack of fervor concerning religious devotion. In Europe, the Enlightenment would begin to take its toll on traditional Christianity. A solid understanding of original sin and grace would be replaced with reason and humanism. Even the humble and uneducated people would soon find themselves influenced by these new developments. After sliding into the pit of Deism, the people of Britain and America were primed for a religious awakening.

Many preachers would soon emerge to light the proverbial fire under the heart of their nations, including familiar names like Gilbert Tennent, John Wesley, Jonathan Edwards, and, most notably, George Whitefield.

These men worked mostly within their established denominations. The First Great Awakening was built upon the foundation of Presbyterianism, Congregationalism, and Anglicanism. They saw a downgrade within their own church bodies. Ordained men were embracing Enlightenment ideas. They had begun to despise evangelism and focus more on worldly pursuits. No longer was the care of souls at the forefront of the professional theologian. Particularly in urban areas, they sought instead to improve society through relief efforts and other social programs.

Even among the more traditional minded clergymen, a kind of apathy had taken root. A significant number of old Calvinists were extremely cautious about evangelism. Some would go so far as to say that election unto salvation would come even apart from preaching. They would be some of the fiercest opponents of the large crowds and open-air preaching that was to come.

Since the forces of the Enlightenment and old-guard

religion both achieved the same end, namely a religious downgrade, others began to kick against the goads. Jonathan Edwards, a New England professor and minister, could clearly see what was happening in America. He saw a dying people in need of a Savior. There was an urgency to his task that is evident in his preaching.

His most famous sermon was *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God*. This is, so far, the most famous sermon in American history. It was once a standard text even in American public grade schools. It is simultaneously the most revered and most reviled of sermons in the English language.

Edwards preached it in Enfield, CT in the summer of 1741. It was delivered earlier to his own congregation in Northampton, MA. The content is stark and vivid. God is a firm and fierce judge who is ready to cast sinners into hell at any moment. The wicked deserve this and at this very moment are already consigned to hellfire. Satan and his imps stand eager to pounce upon the ungodly at any time. The sinner should not feel secure, because death can claim him at any time. Unbelievers are pictured as spiders or insects dangling over a fire. Their fall into the bottomless pit is imminent. There is no hope of escape apart from the finished work of Christ. These strong words hit their mark, and many were moved to convert:

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: His wrath towards you burns like fire; He looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; He is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in His sight; you are ten thousand times more abominable in His eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours. You have offended Him infinitely more than ever a stubborn rebel did his prince; and yet it is nothing but His hand that holds you from falling into the fire every moment. It is to be ascribed to nothing else, that you did not go to hell the last night; that you were suffered to awake again in this world, after you closed your eyes to sleep. And there is no other reason to be given, why you have not dropped into hell since you arose in the morning, but that God's hand has held you up. There is no other reason to



be given why you have not gone to hell, since you have sat here in the house of God, provoking His pure eyes by your sinful wicked manner of attending His solemn worship. Yea, there is nothing else that is to be given as a reason why you do not this very moment drop down into hell.

Overwhelmed by what they were hearing, many repented on the spot. They recommitted themselves to Christ. This is where concerns about the First Great Awakening are evident. While you would not see the open and obvious psychological manipulation of later “awakenings,” the questions always looming over these new preachers was whether these conversions were legitimate. Is it truly a case of the Spirit working through the Word, or were people only under the spell of powerful orators?

The First Great Awakening would see the rise of many celebrity pastors like Edwards. Amid the celebrity status, there was always suspicion regarding the conversion of their hearers. Were they simply going through the motions because it was the popular thing to do? Similar questions would also surround men like John Wesley (whom we will discuss in a future article) and George Whitefield.

On December 27th, 1714, in Gloucester, the most famous revivalist of the First Great Awakening was born. George Whitefield would be ordained a deacon in 1736 and would preach his first sermon a week later. He was not assigned a parish. He would soon find himself reaching out to those who would not attend church. He preached in parks and fields. He went to places where men worked long and hard hours to evangelize. In 1738 he came to America to preach in Georgia. In 1739 he returned to Britain in order to secure funding for colonial evangelism. While there, he was ordained to the priesthood.

In 1740 Whitefield was in America and preaching nearly every day. He would travel from New York to South Carolina on horseback, evangelizing wherever he went. Large crowds flocked to

hear him. Like Edwards, he preached in a style intended to elicit an emotional response from the crowd. He spoke of a real hell, real consequences for sin, of real grace, and real freedom from the bonds of sin. Although an avowed Calvinist, he was not one of the Old Lights. He firmly believed that the Gospel should be preached to all. Unlike Wesley, he did not subscribe to an Arminian view of salvation. He understood that man’s will was bound. Man had to hear the Word in order to be loosed. He became the first “American” celebrity. No less a figure than Benjamin Franklin came to hear him preach, and Franklin estimated that 30,000 were in attendance on that day. Whitefield’s work would have a lasting effect upon American Christianity.

The die was now cast for a new kind of Protestantism no longer shackled to the strict church structures of the past. Now preaching was for the farmer plowing his field, the miner tooling away with pick and shovel, or the street urchin on a corner in Philadelphia. If the established churches were not going to participate outside of Sunday morning, as these men saw it, then the church would go to them. Its influence at this time was so great that it would embolden the efforts of the soon-to-come Revolution.

The roots of American evangelicalism are found here. It is undoubtable that there were distressing issues among the American population at the time. However, in some estimations, the negative consequences might have outweighed the benefits. Americans were coming back into the church but soon newer measures would be employed that went beyond the techniques of men like Edwards, Wesley, and Whitefield. A more worldly approach would be invented and the blueprint for contemporary evangelism would be drafted. As we study the later awakenings, we will see what happens when new means are deployed, and discernment is abandoned. Can one crack in the foundation of established religion lead to the downfall of many? 🐛

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***The die was now cast for a new kind of Protestantism no longer shackled to the strict church structures of the past. Now preaching was for the farmer plowing his field, the miner tooling away with his pick and shovel, or the street urchin on a corner in Philadelphia.***



Last year I had the opportunity to visit Pastor Jais Tinglund, an LCMS pastor, originally from Denmark and now serving in the U.S. We discovered a common love of Lutheran hymnody, and he lamented that some of his favorite hymns from the Danish hymn tradition aren't available in English. I said I would gladly versify a text if he could provide me with a literal English translation. The first hymn he mentioned was *Sorrig og Elendighed* (which I've rendered "Sorrow, Grief, and Misery") by Thomas Kingo (1634-1703), who was a Lutheran bishop and hymnwriter in Denmark. The original hymn is 27 stanzas long. The hymnal from which Pastor Tinglund sang had the first half of stanza 1 combined with the second half of stanza 11, followed by stanzas 12, 15, 17, 21, 22, and 27. He provided me with a literal translation of all 27 stanzas, to which I added the help of an old Danish-English dictionary to get a feel for the semantic range of the original words. I translated the stanzas he requested, along with a few others that struck me.

A couple notes on the translation, both having to do with the fact that Danish is a Germanic language. First, I have generally avoided Latin-based words for the trochaic rhymes at the ends of lines 2/3 and 5/7 of the stanzas. Many English translations of hymns rely on Latin word endings like -ation, -ated, -ection, -ended, and -ition for trochaic rhymes, but such Latinate endings would have clouded the simplicity of Kingo's language and made the hymn feel foreign and convoluted. English, unfortunately, doesn't have a large stock of its own word endings that lend themselves to trochaic rhyme. There's the usual -ing and -éd, plus the archaic and lovely -est of 2nd singular verbs and -eth of

the 3rd singular. I ended up settling for some slant rhymes, which is common enough even among the greatest of the German-Lutheran hymnwriters. Since vowels are extended in singing and consonants happen quickly, I leaned toward matching the vowel sounds between the two words and using similar middle consonants, for example "rages" and "blazes," or "risen" and "driven." While certain trochaic rhymes might look like a stretch, when sung they are all agreeable.

Second, Danish can do what German and Old English do in combining words. I retained some of these in the translation, such as *Lyste-knæged* "lust-bent" or *Hierte-grav* "heart-grave." Such word-joining may sound strange at first, but it's a potent manner of expression, capturing large and deep things in only a few syllables. It's native to English; kennings were typical in Old English poetry, e.g. *hron-rād*, "whale-road" (the sea). Word-joining also happens in the Psalms, e.g. "tsalmaweth" in Ps. 23:4, a combination of "tsel" (shadow) and "maweth" (death). This is a longstanding poetic device, also has precedent among the greatest of the Lutheran hymnwriters, and deserves a comeback.

The tune is Sebastian, from J. A. Freylinghausen's *Gesangbuch* of 1714. The setting is largely a realization of the figured bass attributed to J. S. Bach (BWV 472) and found in Schemelli's *Gesangbuch*, though somewhat simplified for congregational singing. The original numbers of the included stanzas are 1/11, 2, 9, 12, 15, 17, 19, 21, 22, 23, 25, and 27. ♪

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# Sorrow, Grief, and Misery

Sorrig og Elendighed

7.8.8.7.8.7.8.7

Sebastian

Thomas Kingo, 1681

J. A. Freylinghausen, 1714

Tr. Jais Tinglund & Andrew Richard

1. Sor - row, grief, and mis - er - y, Sighs and salt - y tear - drops flow - ing—  
 2. Sin's broad moun - tains on me lie And my lust - bent shoul - ders crum - ble,  
 3. Oth - ers may be free from care, And re - joice in God with smil - ing,  
 4. Is there an - y to ad - vise? Is there an - y com - fort wait - ing?

Give me pain that's ev - er grow - ing, For my God holds wrath toward me.  
 While my soul be - gins to rum - ble In its flesh - 's dir - ty sty.  
 Laugh when sor - row's darts are fly - ing: I shrink back and do not dare;  
 Is there an - y hope re - main - ing? Is there an - y point in sighs?

Heav - en has its help for - sak - en; Earth has naught to help my fate.  
 God's Law threat - ens me and rag - es, And con - demns me at my core.  
 For if an - y glad - ness urg - es Me to smile, I feel the strain,  
 Is the well of mer - cy emp - ty? In - to death have I been sold?

From me I've made an - gels has - ten. Ah, how wretch - ed is my state!  
 Sa - tan throws me Hell's hot blaz - es That his cave - mouth holds in store.  
 For my con - science hands me scourg - es Made of sin's most griev - ous pain.  
 Is a lock on heav - en's en - try? Is the heart of God grown cold?

5. No, oh no! My soul, take heart!  
Rise and see! Though thou dost totter,  
Though the loads of sin press harder,  
On the path of faith thou art!  
God will still be won by praying.  
Jesus lives and ever will.  
Still the Spirit is sustaining  
Thy sore mind that sorrows fill.

6. I by faith, O Jesus, see  
How Thou once Thyself wert lying  
'Neath my loads of sin and crying  
For Thy God to comfort Thee.  
Thou for all my bloody sinning  
And my crimes hast sweated blood;  
Hence my comfort is beginning;  
Here I find joy's perfect flood.

7. Crown of thorns has piercéd Thee,  
That the thorns of my transgression  
Should be rotted by Thy Passion,  
Ere they set their root in me.  
Thou the cross didst gladly suffer  
And didst tear my note of debt,  
Else Death's sentence I were under,  
On the path to hell were set.

8. Thou hast borne a death most fell,  
Such death as can't be imagined,  
In which every death is fastened  
In the boundless woe of hell,  
Which upon Thy pure heart batters,  
Till it ruptures finally;  
But the moment it was shattered  
Thou didst draw me unto Thee.

9. In Thy closed and fast-sealed grave  
Thou didst lay Thyself to slumber,  
Break the darts of Death asunder,  
And remove each sting he gave.  
Thou from night's dark tents hast risen,  
Sun and Joy from east to west;  
Thou my sorrow's stone hast driven  
From my heart-grave and my breast.

10. Into hell Thou didst descend,  
Hell, which had me sorely shaken.  
Thou hast bound and shackled Satan.  
Now his reign is at an end.  
Death and bonds of hell defeated,  
Thou didst go to heaven's height.  
In my flesh Thou hast been seated  
Joyful at Thy Father's right.

11. Let the Law make thunderclaps;  
Let the devil lift hell's cover,  
Open up its throat of sulfur;  
Let the whole wide world collapse;  
Let the demons try to fright me;  
Let the ancient serpent's sting  
Chase me; yet I will hold tightly  
To my faithful Savior King.

12. O my Soul, be joyful, then,  
Jesus is thy cheer and comfort,  
Jesus has thee robed and covered,  
Jesus grants thy faith's "Amen."  
Jesus is thy gain in living  
And thy joy eternally.  
Jesus, Jesus, mercy give me,  
That I die thus trusting Thee.



**Thou the cross didst gladly suffer  
And didst tear my note of debt,  
Else Death's sentence I were under,  
On the path to hell were set.**



# Review: The Iliad



The *Iliad* is a book-length poem about a war between the Mycenaean Greeks, called “Achaean,” and a certain city-state on the western coast of Asia Minor. This city is called Ilium (and the poem therefore “the Iliad”), or Troy. It is a foundational text and story for classical, Western culture, and has been deeply influential on Christians since the early days of the Church.

The poem was composed by a blind bard named Homer in about 750 BC and written down shortly thereafter using the brand new Greek alphabet, but the story had been sung

by poets for many generations before. The setting is the end of the era historians now call the Late Bronze Age, with c. 1200 as a point of reference. Most such historians believe that the *Iliad* has some basis in historical events, that it represents a foggy, distant, highly mythologized memory of a war, or series of wars, between inhabitants of Mycenaean Greece and the western coast of Anatolia.

This sketch of a timeline should be important to students of the Bible who read the *Iliad*. Have a look at the “Biblical Chronology and World History” section at the front of *The Lutheran Study Bible*. On page xcvi, in the column furthest to the left, you will find that Troy was violently destroyed



*Achilles in exanimem Hectora sœvit* — *Achilles vents his rage on Hector*

*From the Original Painting in the collection of his Grace the Duke of Bedford*

at c. 1275 BC (it was actually destroyed more than once, perhaps by Greeks, perhaps by others, perhaps by natural disasters). From this point on, as you follow the timeline through the rest of the page and onto the next, you will find that the majority of nations surrounding Israel go through hard times until about 900 BC. The Hittite capital of Hattusa is burned and its empire is no more. Egypt is diminished and weak. The Mycenaean culture—the Greek Achaeans of the *Iliad*—collapses. Historians call the period in Greece that follows the Greek Dark Ages, and they call the decline of civilizations that affected all the empires of the Mediterranean—Assyria to Egypt—the Late Bronze Age Collapse; some think this Collapse was more consequential for world history than the decline and fall of the Roman Empire.

Before we turn directly to the subject of this essay, the *Iliad*, you should notice one last thing about this timeline: only in Israel do fortunes change for the better from 1200 to 900 BC. Shortly after the collapse of Mycenaean culture, Israel experiences its brief golden age under David and Solomon. As Solomon's kingdom divides after his death, Assyria ominously revives.

To summarize: the *Iliad* was written down just as Greece is emerging from its Dark Ages (c. 1100-800 BC). The poem is set in an Age of Heroes before the Dark Ages. In the mythology of the poem, the Age of Heroes is coming to an end with the Trojan War; outside of myth, in archaeology and history, the splendors of the Late Bronze Age Mediterranean world are coming to an end at the same time, c. 1200 BC. Homer is rhapsodizing for his contemporaries in c. 750 BC a world which to him was already a long-vanished, more glorious time.

All of this is background for the real action of the story. The poem begins after the war between the Achaeans and the Trojans has been raging for years. The Achaeans have invaded the land around the city and have besieged it, but have been stymied by the bravery of the Trojans and the huge walls of the city. Homer begins the story, according to Robert Fagles' (1990) recommended translation, thus:

Rage—Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles,  
murderous, doomed, that cost the Achaeans  
countless losses,  
...great fighters' souls, but made their bodies car-  
rion, feasts for the dogs and birds...  
Begin, Muse, when the two first broke and  
clashed,  
Agamemnon lord of men and brilliant Achilles.  
(Book 1:1-8)

So, the poem is specifically about the rage of the warrior Achilles, and the story begins with his clash not with the Trojans, but with the leader of the Achaeans, Agamemnon. Achilles believes himself slighted by Agamemnon regarding a captured maiden from a Troy-allied town. Enraged, he refuses to fight any more for the Achaeans, leaving them without their best warrior. The Trojans then press the Achaeans into a desperate position, fighting to save their ships on the beach. The tide turns when Patroclus, Achilles' dearest friend, puts on Achilles' armor, disguising himself as Achilles to rally the Achaeans and drive back the Trojans. Patroclus, though, is struck down by Hector, the champion of Troy. This death turns Achilles' rage from Agamemnon to Hector, and he prepares for battle in new armor from the gods. The story reaches its climax as Achilles and Hector join in single combat outside the walls of Troy. Hector is slain by Achilles, and the victor drags the body of his victim back to camp. He continues to abuse the body through the many days of funeral games for Patroclus and only agrees to return Hector to his family for burial after the intervention of the gods and the personal pleading of King Priam of Troy, Hector's father. The narrative concludes with Hector's funeral.

Perhaps unexpectedly for those who know the story of the Trojan War, Homer's text does not begin with the theft of Helen from her Mycenaean husband by the Trojan prince, Paris, though this inciting cause is referred to elsewhere in the poem. Likewise, the *Iliad* does not include the story of the wooden horse by means of which the Greeks enter and destroy the city; this will have to wait until the poem's two most famous sequels. Both the city and Achilles, however, are understood to be doomed at the end of the story. The gods of the Greek pantheon are involved in all of this and, though they capriciously choose sides against each other, on the side of Greeks or Trojans, the fate of Ilium and its enemies cannot be avoided.

But why should any Christian care about any of this? What has the Bronze Age mindset, which lives by and for its own glory, to do with the Jerusalem from above, which lives by faith and love?

Christians have wrestled with the question of what to do with the literature of antiquity for a long time, and have offered varied answers. Here, I'll suggest two ways that Christian readers can profitably digest the *Iliad*. The first way deals only with the story itself, the second reads it under the shadow of the Bible; both have to do with a major theme of the poem, namely heroism.



First, I would point to the surprising conjunction of heroism and humanity in the *Iliad*. Not everyone presented as a hero is truly heroic, nor do the real heroes always behave heroically. Sometimes honor is most clearly displayed in its opposite, as when Achilles refuses to return the body of the vanquished Hector to his family, and instead drags the corpse behind his chariot around the funeral bier of his darling Patroclus. But then the relentless Achilles relents when confronted with the love of a father for his son, as Priam entreats him for the body of Hector:



Those words stirred within Achilles a deep desire to grieve for his own father. Taking the old man's hand he gently moved him back. And overpowered by memory both men gave way to grief. Priam wept freely for man-killing Hector, throbbing, crouching before Achilles' feet as Achilles wept himself, now for his father, now for Patroclus once again, and their sobbing rose and fell throughout the house. (Book 24: 592-599)

This catharsis, after which Achilles releases the body of his enemy to Priam, is not merely a detail to tie up a loose end. Insofar as the *Iliad* is the story of what Achilles' feelings have wrought for friend and foe, his turn from rage to humane pity is the completion of his arc within the story and the conclusion of the human drama of the story itself.

Is heroism deformed or completed in this humanity, by tears and compassion? Or, are the Greek poets straining for something in their stories that no human hero can actually embody? Many such examples in Homer raise these questions.

Now, to read the *Iliad* profitably in light of the Bible, I suggest you first re-read the story of David and Goliath in 1 Samuel 17. As you hear Goliath say to David, "I will give your flesh to the birds of the and to the beasts of the field" (1

Sam. 17:44), recall the *Iliad*: "Goddess, sing the rage of Peleus' son Achilles...that...made their bodies carrion, feasts for the dogs and birds." The transformation of Bronze Age aggression-glory into Christian courage begins with David's response to the spirit of Goliath and Achilles: "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the LORD of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied... that all this assembly may know that the LORD saves not with sword and spear" (1 Sam. 17:44-47).

The Greek heroic spirit fights to immortalize itself by the greatness of its works, but the Spirit driving David strives to establish the Kingdom of God by the power of God. Invoke this Spirit and power for yourself, the true Muse of holy history, and follow Him through to the enthronement of David's Son: "The Lord Jesus Christ, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them" (Mk. 16:19-20). Now go out with these Apostles and their Gospel into the Greco-Roman world, built by Homer, Alexander the Great, and Caesar Augustus, and watch as Bronze Age perversions are made into a footstool for David's Son and Lord (Ps. 110:1; Mt. 22:41-46).

I've heard it said outright here and there that what we need today is more heroism, a more heroic form of Christianity. There is plenty of dauntless grit and audacity within and without the walls of Ilium, and here, if we squint, perhaps we can see glimpses of David, and in him of Christ, and herein find resources to make us anxious for the fray. But let all rage be tempered by the humanity that even Homer knew, and as Achilles dons the armor forged by the god Hephaestus, remember the panoply of our own true God, wearing which we stand not against flesh and blood, but against the spiritual forces over this present darkness (Eph. 6:10-20). ☛

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Hector Greets Andromaca and Astyanax by Francesco Hayez, 1791–1882.





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