



Christian Citizenship

“You are the salt of the earth . . . You are the light of the world” (Mt. 5:13-16). One way to be salty and let our light shine is by being good citizens on earth. Our vocation as citizens of both the secular kingdom and God’s kingdom gives us the responsibility to proclaim God’s Word and care for our neighbors. We are called to engage the “public square” with our message of Christ’s mercy for all. Please pray for God’s will to be done... in Jesus’ name.

The Project of Knight George

“After making his stand at Worms,” writes Gene Edward Veith, Jr., “Luther and some friends quickly . . . hightailed it back to Wittenberg.” It is important for us to know what happened next. In his book, *Embracing Your Lutheran Identity*, Veith explains.

While on the road, “horsemen . . . surrounded their wagon, forcing it to stop. The soldiers grabbed Luther, threw him on a horse, and galloped away. . . . It turned out, though, that these were soldiers of Duke Frederick, the ruler of Wittenberg. They took Luther to a remote castle called the Wartburg, had him trade his monk robes for the clothes of a knight, and told him to go by the name of Knight George. In hiding, in disguise, and under an assumed name, Luther would soon take on his most important work, which would bring untold numbers of people and entire nations to his side.”

Who was Luther’s defender at Wartburg? Duke Frederick, known as Frederick the Wise. In “an age notorious for its financial corruption, Frederick really was a man of integrity. Out of religious zeal, he had accumulated Europe’s largest collection of relics—saints’ bones, alleged fragments of the cross . . . and the like. If anyone could venerate them all, it would be enough to take nearly two million years from one’s sentence to purgatory. Luther’s attack on indulgences would make Frederick’s collection worthless and, since pilgrims had to pay for the privilege of viewing the relics, cut off a valuable revenue stream. Nevertheless, Frederick the Wise protected Luther.”

Luther was safe and in good company. But, used to be busy with “teaching, preaching, and writing, now he had time. Nothing but time. So he wrote to his good friend and fellow professor Philip Melancthon—

universally admired as one of the top classical scholars of the day—and asked him to send over a Greek New Testament (recently made available by Erasmus, probably *the* top classical scholar of the day), a Hebrew Old Testament, and a raft of reference books. Whereupon Luther used his time in hiding to take up an enormous project: translating the Bible into the language of the people.”

Veith continues. “In the Middle Ages in Western Europe, the Bible was available only in Latin. This translation of the Bible was the work of Jerome back in AD 384 and was known as the Vulgate. To this day, the officially approved Bible of the Roman Catholic Church is the Latin translation, not the Hebrew and Greek original as written by the Spirit-inspired authors. The Bible, or usually, parts of it had been translated into German, English, and other vernacular languages. But the translation always worked from the Latin version, so they produced translations of translations, which were of dubious accuracy and readability. Luther was the first translator to work from the Bible’s original languages since Jerome. Luther sought to render the Bible accurately but also to use language that ordinary people could understand. Luther’s talents as a scholar and writer came to the fore. Even his harshest critics agree that his rendition of the Bible is a literary masterpiece.” Luther made “good use” of the time that he had been given. “He finished translating the New Testament in only eleven weeks! . . . Luther’s New Testament in German was published in September 1522 . . . [and] his translation of the entire Bible [both Old and New Testament] was published in 1534.” (Excerpted from *Embracing Your Lutheran Identity* by Gene Edward Veith, Jr. [2024, Concordia Publishing House, 111-118].)

What can we do? Perhaps instead of being cynical about politicians, we do well to pray that those who represent us on local, state, and federal levels of government be more like Frederick the Wise who responded to the Gospel. Veith tells us that “many of the Lutheran princes . . . paid a price for their Lutheranism.” We can pray that our elected officials rightly understand that their vocation as a politician is to serve God and the people they represent. We can pray that they have integrity, good conscience, and

love for God as they resist the temptations of money and power. We can encourage them to ethical, moral, and biblical decisions that best serve “we the people” through our letters, e-mails, and phone calls.

Please pray that we honor God through our vocation of citizens... in Jesus’ name.

The Necessity of Schools

After Luther’s translation of the Bible into the language of the people, “there was still one problem. Most people,” writes Gene Edward Veith, Jr., “could not read it. This is because most people did not know how to read. So, as the churches that bought into the Reformation were getting reorganized, having been cast out of communion with Rome, they, along with the Lutheran princes, established a new priority: opening schools.”

Veith continues. “Luther wanted *everyone* to be able to read God’s Word—women as well as men; poor as well as rich; peasants as well as nobles. Not to interpret it in the sense of formulating their own doctrines, as later Protestants would have it. But so that the Holy Spirit, who is present with the Word, would fill them with faith, hope, and love. Since he wanted that for everyone, Luther became the first major advocate for something that we take for granted today: universal education.

“In starting the new schools, Lutherans could have made them simply Bible reading schools. Bring in the peasants and teach them to read the Bible, then send them back to their hovels. Even that would have been an advance, since someone who can read the Bible can read just about anything. But instead, Luther put Melancthon in charge of developing a wide-ranging curriculum for the schools. Students would learn how to read, but they would also learn how to write. They would learn the liberal arts of grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. They would read great books and study great authors. They would learn about history and the great ideas. At the same time, they would be catechized in the Christian faith, going deeper in theology and the study of God’s Word. Melancthon, the great classical scholar, implemented what has recently been revived today as classical education. As a result, students—even the children of peasants—graduated with an education that developed all their human powers.” (Excerpted from *Embracing Your Lutheran Identity* by Gene Edward Vieth, Jr. (Concordia Publishing House, 2024: 117-119.)

What can we do? We should test our understanding of universal education. We shouldn’t be afraid to ask questions or join with our neighbors in discussion. For example, in taking a stand on the Word of God, what difference did Luther and other reformers make for society? Think about why Luther didn’t limit universal education only to the reading of the Bible. It has been said: Censorship is theft. Were the people in Luther’s day being censored? Was truth being kept from them? Do you see censorship practiced in education today? Veith asks: “If a peasant received a good education, would he or she have to remain as a peasant? How would universal education eventually make political liberty and democracy possible? If everyone had a good education, what else would that do to a society?” In what ways does a classical education help strengthen the fortress of family, church, and society? How might it help resist tyranny?

Please pray that for our children and neighbors, we take a stand on the Word of God... in Jesus’ name.

Kings Take Counsel Together, but Their Project Will Fail

The project of men who take counsel apart from God, and even natural law, will fail. But only, writes Douglas Farrow, “after first appearing to succeed. Already we behold its outline and discern its nature. We believe authority to be grounded in God. These people do not believe in God. We believe all authority to have been given to God’s Christ. They do not believe in Christ. We believe that the present age is a time for choosing to enroll in the service of Christ and to discover there ‘the greater operation of liberty.’ These men are not interested in liberty. We believe in law and lawfulness as indispensable to liberty. These men introduce lawlessness into law. They rule by crisis, by emergency, by a state of exception.” These men are “intent on destroying the family, on erasing the boundaries of people and nations . . . they would have men call on none but themselves . . . they hate religion and erase cultural memories . . . because there must be no thick centers of culture by which men might resist their will . . . Everywhere they introduce chaos. . . . (Excerpted from “When Kings Take Counsel Together” by Douglas Farrow, *Touchstone*, Nov/Dec 2024.)

What can we do? Read Psalm 73: 5-11; 18-20 and 22:2-5, 28-29. Read Farrow’s article in *Touchstone*. Fearlessly adhere to Truth and its order. Resist evil. “Have no other gods before Me.” Bear witness to Jesus Christ. Rejoice in the victory of our Savior and Lord!

