

CONFESSING CHRIST - DAILY LECTIONARY AND PRAYERS

Eastertide 2012

Frederick R. Trost and Colleen Darling, Editors

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“For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.”

(1 Thessalonians 5:5-11)

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Easter Sunday, 4/08	Mark 16:1-8	Richard & Martha Floyd Pittsfield, MA
Easter Monday, 4/09	Matthew 28:1-10 +1945, Dietrich Bonhoeffer	Jerry & Kathy Folk Madison, WI
Tuesday, 4/10	Luke 24:1-12 *1953, Jean Donovan	Ron K. Freyer-Nicholas Wildwood, FL
Wednesday, 4/11	John 20:1-18 1963, Pacem in Terris	Hans-Wilhelm Fricke-Hein Neukirchen-Vluyn, Germany
Thursday, 4/12	Psalms 118:1-4	Theodore Fritsch N. Chatham, MA
Friday, 4/13	1 Corinthians 15:1-11	Michael Frost Kresgeville, PA

Saturday, 4/14	Isaiah 25:6-9 1972, Pax Christi, USA	P.V. George Syracuse, NY
Second Sunday of Easter, 4/15 (Quasimodogeniti)	John 20:19-31	Richard Glatfelter Monroe, OH
Monday, 4/16	1 John 1:1-4	Milton E. Gockley, Jr. Lancaster, PA
Tuesday, 4/17	1 Peter 1:3-9 1521 Luther at Worms	Peter Goguts Wernersville, PA
Wednesday, 4/18	Acts 2:42-47	Gerald Goldsworthy Mt. prospect, IL
Thursday, 4/19	Hebrews 10:4-10 1529, Protest of Speyer +1560, Philip Melanchthon	Charlotte P. Gosselink Kennett Square, PA
Friday, 4/20	Acts 4:32-37	Nancy Light Gottshall Collegeville, PA
Saturday, 4/21	John 3:7-15 +1109, Anselm of Canterbury	Stephen Gould Sheboygan, WI
Third Sunday of Easter, 4/22 (Misericordias Domini)	Luke 24:13-35 +1945, Käthe Kollwitz	Kathryn Greene-McCreight New Haven, CT
Monday, 4/23	1 Peter 1:17-21 1529, Luther's Large Catechism *1940, Ita M. Ford +1960, Toyohiko Kagawa	Christa Gregel Berlin, Germany

Tuesday, 4/24	1 John 3:1-7	Reinhard Groscurth Bremen, Germany
Wednesday, 4/25	John 6:30-34	Ruben Grosshuesch Sheboygan, WI
Thursday, 4/26	John 6:35-40	Linda Gruber Phoenixville, PA
Friday, 4/27	John 6:44-51 *1947, Taizé Community	Robert C. Hamilton Elkhart Lake, WI
Saturday, 4/28	Acts 9:1-20	Joanne Hartunian Belmont, MA
Fourth Sunday of Easter, 4/29 (Jubilate)	John 10:11-18 +1380, Catherine of Siena	Esther Haskell Claremont, MA
Monday, 4/30	Psalms 66:1-9 1975, End of the Vietnam War	Philip Haslanger Madison, WI
Tuesday, 5/01	John 15:1-8 *1830, Mother Jones	Steven Hecky Southgate, KY
Wednesday, 5/02	John 15:9-17 +373, Athanasius +1519, Leonardo d Vinci +1960, Hans-Joachim Iwand	Kim & Fay Henning Two Rivers, WI
Thursday, 5/03	John 15:18-25	Hans Holznagel Cleveland, OH

Friday, 5/04	John 15:26-27 1521, Luther at Wartburg	Ralph E. Houseman Grafton, WI
Saturday, 5/05	Psalm 23 *1813, Søren Kierkegaard	Robert T. Howell Walnut Creek, CA
Fifth Sunday of Easter, 5/06 (Cantate)	Psalm 98:1-3 *1870, Maria Montessori	Robert G. Hunsickler Lancaster, PA
Monday, 5/07	Psalm 98:4-6 1816, American Bible Society 1945, End of World War II in Europe	Joan Hunt Weston, MA
Tuesday, 5/08	Psalm 98:7-9	Dorothy Hutch Branford, CT
Wednesday, 5/09	1 Peter 2:4-5 *1921, Sophie Scholl, White Rose Society	Steven Jaberg West Bend, WI
Thursday, 5/10	Psalm 22:25-28 *1886, Karl Barth	Clifford J. Janssen St. Louis, MO
Friday, 5/11	Psalm 46	Laverne R. Joseph Long Beach, CA
Saturday, 5/12	Psalm 51:6-9	Harvey & Nancy Kandler Kaukauna, WI
Sixth Sunday of Easter, 5/13 (Rogate)	1 John 5:1-6	Robert E. Kasper Elgin, IL

Monday, 5/14	1 Timothy 2:1-6a 1980, Massacre at the Sumpul River, El Salvador	Christoph Keienburg Paderborn, Germany
Tuesday, 5/15	Psalms 30:1-5 *1828, Florence Nightingale	William Kesting Cleveland, WI
Wednesday, 5/16	Matthew 6:5-13 +1543, Copernicus	Ray F. Kibler Claremont, CA
Thursday, 5/17	Psalms 95:1-7 1954, Brown vs. Board of Education	Russell Kimmerly Harrison, OH
Friday, 5/18	Acts 3:1-10 *1925, Malcolm Little (Malcolm X)	Stodden G.N. King Orange, CT
Saturday, 5/19	Matthew 7:7-8 *1974, Bread for the World	Paul Kittlaus Claremont, CA
Seventh Sunday of Easter, 5/20 (Exaudi)	Psalms 27:1-3 +1935, Jane Addams	Armin F. Klemme Union, MO
Monday, 5/21	Psalms 27:4-8	Russell Knoth Germantown, WI
Tuesday, 5/22	Psalms 27:9-10	Robert Koenig Wernersville, PA
Wednesday, 5/23	Psalms 27:11-14	Paul Koepke Goshen, IN
Thursday, 5/24	Ephesians 3:14-19	Gerhard & Ruth Koslowsky Bruehl, Germany

Friday, 5/25

Ephesians 3:20-21

David Kratz
Goshen, IN

Saturday, 5/26

Ephesians 4:1-6

Howard & Martha Kriebel
Collegeville, PA

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PRAYERS AND OTHER RESOURCES FOR EASTERTIDE

2012

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"Hail to thee, Festival Day!"

Hail to thee, Festival Day! Blest day that is hallowed forever; Day wherein God destroyed hell, rising again from the dead.

He who was nailed to the Cross is God and the Ruler of all things; All things created on earth worship the Maker of all.

God of all pity and power, let Your word be assured to the doubting; Light on the third day returns; rise, Son of God, from the tomb.

Ill does it seem that Your limbs should linger in lowly dishonor, Ransom and price of the world, veiled from our vision.

Ill does it seem that You, by whose hand all things are encompassed, Captive and bound should remain, deep in the gloom of the rock.

Rise now, O Lord, from the grave and cast off the shroud that enwrapped You; You are sufficient for us: nothing exists without You.

Mourning they laid You to rest, You who are the Author of life and creation; Treading the pathway of death, life You have bestowed on us.

Show us Your face once more, that all times may exult in Your brightness; Give us the light of day, darkened on earth at Your death.

Out of the prison of death You are rescuing numberless captives; Freely they tread in the way where their Maker has gone.

Jesus has harrowed hell; he has led captivity captive: Darkness and chaos... flee from the face of the light.

(Easter Processional, Western Rite, Venantius Fortunatus)

[Venantius Fortunatus, Bishop of Poitiers and poet, was born in Upper Italy around the year 525. He died at Poitiers early in the seventh century A.D. Gregory of Tours encouraged him to publish his poems, many of which were composed for special occasions. Some of his poetry was set in hymnody, such as "The Royal Banners Forward Go" and "The God whom Earth and Sea and Sky," translated from Latin into English by John Mason Neale, 1818-1866, who also translated the 12th century Latin hymn "O come, O come, Emmanuel."]

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A Prayer for Easter Day:

Almighty God, who through Your only-begotten Son Jesus Christ has overcome death, and opened to us the gate of everlasting life: We humbly ask You, that as by Your grace You put into our minds good desires, so by Your continual help we may bring the same to good effect; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, ever one God, world without end.

("Book of Common Prayer," adapt.)

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A Prayer in Eastertide:

O Lord Jesus Christ, Who rose victorious from the tomb,... opening to us the gates to everlasting life: Receive, we pray, our adoration and praise for this victory which You have obtained for us, and grant that we may always follow You the way, hold fast to You the truth, and live now and eternally in You the life, who with the Father and the Holy Spirit, lives and reigns, ever One God, world without end.

(Parish School Hymnal)

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“Te Deum Laudamus”:

We praise you, O God.

We acknowledge you to be the Lord.

All the earth worships you,

The Father everlasting.

To you all Angels cry aloud;

The Heavens and all the Powers therein.

To you Cherubin and Seraphin continually do cry,

‘Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Sabaoth;

Heaven and earth are full of the Majesty of your glory.’

The glorious company of the Apostles praise you.

The goodly fellowship of the Prophets praise you.

The noble army of Martyrs praise you.

The holy Church throughout all the world acknowledges you.

And we worship your name ever world without end.

(“Canticle of St. Ambrose and St. Augustine.” According to an old legend, when Augustine was baptized by Ambrose, the canticle was sung antiphonally by the two saints. It is believed by some scholars to date earlier than the mid sixth century.)

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A Prayer for the World:

O God, we thank you for this universe, our great home; for its vastness and its riches, and for the abundance of life which teems upon it and of which we are part. We praise you for the arching sky and the blessed winds, for the driving clouds and the constellations on high. We praise you for the salt sea and the running water, for the everlasting hills, for the trees, and for the grass under our feet. We thank you for our senses by which we can see the splendor of the morning, and hear the jubilant songs of love, and smell the breath of the springtime. Grant us, we pray, a heart wide open to all this joy and beauty, and save our souls from being so steeped in care or so darkened by passion that we pass heedless and unseeing when even the thorn bush by the road is aflame with your glory.Enlarge within us the sense of fellowship with all living things; the little ones and least to whom you have given this earth as their home in common with us. We remember with shame that in the past we have exercised our high dominion with ruthless cruelty, so that the voice of the Earth, which should have gone up to you in song, has been groaning in travail... When our presence in this world is over and we make room for others, grant that we not leave anything ravished by our greed or spoiled by our ignorance, but entrust our common heritage sweeter through our use of it, undiminished in fertility and joy...

(Walter Rauschenbusch, 1861-1918, adapt.)

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A Morning Prayer:

We give you hearty thanks, O God, for the rest of the past night and for the gift of a new day with its opportunities of pleasing you. Grant that we so pass its hours in the perfect freedom of your service, that at eventide we may again give thanks to you; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(Daybreak Office of the Eastern Church, third century)

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An Evening Prayer:

Watch, dear Lord, with those who wake, or watch, or weep tonight, and give your angels charge over those who sleep. Tend your sick ones, O Lord Christ; rest your weary ones, bless your dying ones. Soothe your suffering ones, shield your joyous ones, and all for your love's sake.

(St. Augustine, 354-430)

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The Women and the Empty Tomb:

The women came to the sepulcher, and when they could not find the body of Christ—for he had risen—they were quite perplexed. And what followed? For the sake of their love and zeal for Christ, they were counted worthy of seeing holy angels who then told them the joyful news as the heralds of the resurrection, saying, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen!" The Word of God ever lives and by his own nature is life. Yet, when he humbled and emptied himself, submitting to be made like us, he tasted death. But this proved to be the death of death, for he rose from the dead to be the way by which not so much he himself but rather we could return to incorruption. Let no one seek among the dead him who ever lives. But if he is not here, with mortality and in the tomb, where then is he? Obviously, in heaven and in godlike glory."

(Cyril of Alexandria, "Commentary on Luke," Chapter 24, in "Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture," New Testament III, edited by Arthur A. Just, Jr., Downers Grove, Illinois, InterVarsity Press, 2003)

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The Meaning of the Easter Message:

The meaning of the Easter message is: God is death's death, God lives, and also Christ lives, death could not hold him against the superior power of God... Certainly we assume the grave was empty. But only one thing is important: God has declared himself to Christ and has touched him with his eternal life. Now Christ lives because God lives and because God's love lives. That is enough for us. We can brood over the 'how.' We cannot change the 'that.' But if God lives, then so too love lives, in spite of

the cross—then we don't live in sin, then God has indeed forgiven us. He has declared himself to Jesus, but Jesus has declared himself to us. If Jesus lives then our faith gains new meaning... A Yes of God to guilty humanity, a new meaning for all our doing—that is Easter. Not being deserted by God—but being full of God, not humans and their titanic victory over godhood, but God and his mighty victory over humankind, over death and sin and indignation—that is Easter.

(Dietrich Bonhoeffer in "The Mystery of Easter," New York,
The Crossroad Publishing Company, 1997)

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The Road to Emmaus:

Ah yes, brothers and sisters,... where did the Lord wish to be recognized? In the breaking of bread. We're all right, nothing to worry about—we break bread, and we recognize the Lord. It was for our sake that he didn't want to be recognized anywhere but there. So if you're a believer, any of you, if you're not called a Christian for nothing, if you don't come to church pointlessly, if you listen to the Word of God in fear and hope, you may take comfort in the breaking of bread. The Lord's absence is not absence. Have faith, and the one you cannot see is with you. Those two, even when the Lord was talking to them, did not have faith because they didn't believe he had risen. Nor did they have any hope that he could rise again. They had lost faith, lost hope. They were walking along, dead, with Christ alive. They were walking along, dead, with life itself. Life was walking along with them, but in their hearts life had not yet been restored...

He had foretold it all, but his death had erased it from their memories..."

(Augustine, Sermon 235, 1-3, in "Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture,"
New Testament III, edited by Arthur A. Just, Jr., Downers Grove, Illinois,
InterVarsity Press, 2003)

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Baptism, Ethics, and Trinitarian Theology:

Baptism is incorporation into Christ by the power of the Spirit, and therefore entry into covenant with God and with each other. It is an eschatological gift, a foretaste of the true destiny of all creation, a promise of what it is like to live in the kingdom of God. Its fruits, however, are realized only imperfectly in the course of human history. The ethical implications of baptism have always been acknowledged. Previous patterns of relationship are to be re-configured. Unity in Christ and the Spirit transcends the dictates and un-freedoms of culture, ignorance, prejudice and intolerance (cf. Col. 3:5-11). The conferral of God's name upon us should signal the end of an identity determined (alone) by gender, nationality, race, et. al., and the beginning of new identity in the ekklesia or Body of Christ. Baptism into the name of "the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit," means incorporation into the power and essence of God, into the history and story of God... Living "in the name of" someone else or being blessed into another's name, means being incorporated into their personal history. To take on and live in the name of God is bold and radical. Through baptism we surrender ourselves to transformation by a personal power which promises to restore in us the disfigured image of God. The disfigurement is personal as well as collective; as much as we are to become a "new creation" in Christ, so too is the community of Christ to acquire a new profile, one in which "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:10).

Trinitarian theology is especially helpful in thinking about the nature of God into whose life and personal identity we are engrafted; God is not a static and impersonal "force", but profoundly relational, dynamic, ecstatic, passionate, fecund. God is alive as communion. God's tri-personal reality is characterized by the mutuality of perfect self-giving and self-receiving, and by the freedom which derives from being sacrificial, inclusive, compassionate love. Neither Unitarian nor functional language about God (e.g., Creator-Redeemer-Sustainer) adequately provides for the radically personal and relational character of God as God. Trinitarian theology, in contrast, asserts that it is the essence or substance of God to be relational..."

(Catherine Mowry LaCugna in "Ecumenical Trends," Graymoor Ecumenical Institute,
Vol. 17, No. 5, May 1988)

John W. Nevin, Baptism and Confirmation:

Confirmation for Nevin is “the proper end” of Baptism and not something new. It would appear that Confirmation provides the way by which catechumens give an account to the congregation of their appropriation of Baptism, while the congregation accounts to itself in regard to its religious and ethical productiveness in the nurture of the young. The life of the whole congregation, and indeed the life of the whole Church, is involved in all of this. Here the understanding of the Church comes to the fore with power. Baptism is not a matter of an individual decision. It is essential to the understanding of the life and witness of the Christian Church. It means that those who are the recipients of God’s grace in Baptism put on Christ and become members of the visible Church. They become visible in their witness to... the Gospel. They understand themselves to be Christ’s own people who, by the grace and mercy of God, have received the promise and assurance that their sinful lives have been redeemed by reason of Christ’s act and the power of the Holy Spirit working in them...

(Sheldon E. Mackey in “Baptism According to Mercersburg,” an address given to the Biblical-Theological-Liturgical Fellowship in the United Church of Christ in 1978. A limited number of copies of this paper are available by writing to this address: fredericktrost@yahoo.com)

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Baptism and Membership of the Church:

“There is a psychological aspect of the problem here which is too often disregarded. Baptism and membership of the Church is made too easy when it demands nothing on the part of the recipient. Perhaps there is no psychological need as deep in the western world as the need for commitment, the desire to find something worth the sacrifice of life and heart... This raises the important questions of the nature and mode of baptismal confirmation—if the Baptism that an individual has undergone as an infant is to be confirmed, should it be confirmed in an action which conveys the terms of the Baptism? At the point, the point of commitment, the New Testament meaning of membership in the Church should surely be conveyed sacramentally by going down oneself into the waters and experiencing what it means as a baptized convert to be buried with Christ and raised with him into newness of life. A similar case could be made for actualizing the sacramental gift of the Holy Spirit by Laying on of Hands. Are our sacramental actions, (i.e. or Confirmation) big enough to proclaim the meaning of Baptism?” (cf. Robert Paul, “The Atonement and the Sacraments,” Grand Rapids, Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1960).

I suggest that if we were to take our confirmation practices with this kind of baptismal seriousness, we might go a long way to meeting the major problem of the different modes that still divides Protestantism, and which is still an issue between ourselves and (other) churches... At least we would be offering ourselves as an ecumenical pointer to the way in which this issue might be breached. And if our mission does not include ecumenical witness as one of its primary goals, I have yet to understand what our (reason for being) is.

(Robert Paul in "Baptism and Mission," an address given to the Biblical-Theological-Liturgical Fellowship in the United Church of Christ in 1978. A few copies of this paper are available by writing to the following address: fredericktrost@yahoo.com)

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"Anything New in Psalm 23?"

Psalm 23—who would think one would find anything new there? I was sitting in chapel and I heard the reader say, "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil..." Look at that phrase. You walk through the valley of the SHADOW of death—not the valley of death. The valley of death is constituted by the moment of death itself, but for all of life one walks through a valley over which the SHADOW of death moves. One moves toward death. That is not just rhetoric. "Walk through the valley of the shadow" says that we live toward nonliving; we move toward nonbeing. We move every day toward the moment when we shall not move at all. The whole of life is a valley under the shadow of death, and the only way to celebrate the gravity of life is to know that.

(Joseph A. Sittler in "Grace Notes and other Fragments," Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1981)

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"No Other Foundation..."

As I review (my) pilgrimage from the time of my ordination to the present, I am inclined to say that continuity rather than change is the dominant characteristic. Whatever change may have occurred is little more than a gradual shift from a culture-oriented to a Bible-centered theology. Scripture as revelation

is the focal point of my theological stance; also its fulcrum for wrestling with theological and ethical issues.

“The foundation for my Bible-centered stance was laid by virtue of growing up in the evangelical tradition. Later, it may have been aided and abetted by a chance remark of a faculty colleague at the seminary. His exact words I have forgotten, but the substance was this: ‘If what you write and say is firmly rooted in Scripture and supported by Scripture, you need not worry what people think or say.’ Those words served me well, when, figuratively speaking, I was getting my feet wet in the unfamiliar waters of the theological enterprise. As I review the passing years, I am moved to say, that Scripture has supplied the ‘meat’ of my teaching and preaching ministry. What is equally important is the fact, that it has also provided a firm foundation on which to stand and a point of reference from which to evaluate the changing theological systems that come and go... In Scripture, the Church finds its message and its marching orders...”

(Frederick Schroeder, former President of Eden Theological Seminary, in an essay entitled “The Revealed and Revealing Word in Scripture.” In a cover letter dated May 19, 1981, Dr. Schroeder pointed to this essay and said: “As a spiritual descendant of Luther I say: “Here I stand.”)

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“A Glimpse of the Heart of God”

Pope John XXIII (Angelo Giuseppe Roncalli) was a smiling barrel of an old man whose eyes watered both with mirth and with love. He roamed around the Vatican looking for all the world like a country pastor in town for the day and out of place in the halls of pomp and power. He had clearly become pope at an age too late to be impressed with it. Nor were people all that impressed with him. He was defined as “an interim pope,” a colorless old man who would have a short and ineffectual reign between what would surely be two long ones. The most a baffled world could hope was that he would at best be someone who would be a bridge between the twenty-year papacy of Pius XII and an equally stable administration of whoever would come next, once the world caught its breath and was ready to elect a real pope again. It was to be a different kind of papacy from what the world had known. What people failed to understand, perhaps, was that Roncalli was a difference kind of man as well.

Roncalli was born in 1881; he was made pope in 1958 at the age of seventy-seven... By 1958 secularism, the shift of the center of society away from things sacred to things worldly, was a given. The scientific method of data and proof, experimentation and certainty, had cast great question marks on the realms of theology. A technological era that every day brought threat to the life of the entire planet was having a heyday. In the midst of so much science and secularism, churches had not become a nuisance to society; they had become irrelevant to it... Ideas about the universe and obedience and truth were in flux, doctrine was in question; old teachings about private morality were remote from new questions about social sin. Not just the world that his predecessor had lived in was gone; the church that Pius XII had shepherded was gone as well...

Roncalli was obviously efficient, but few remember him for that. He was clearly intelligent, but seldom is he remembered for that. He was undoubtedly politically astute, but only rarely is he remembered for that. What Angelo Roncalli, what Pope John XXIII, is really remembered for is making the political, the scholarly, the efficient, the clerical, and the papal, human. Godlike, even. What stands as his monument is a rare example of a moment in church when the church was open to the world and conscious of its limitations. What stands as his monument is the indictment of ageism by an old man who turned a system upside down to make it new again. What stands as his monument is a bureaucrat's disdain for the bureaucratic. In John XXIII humanity is faced with the need to be human...

Joan Chittister in "A Passion for Life: Fragments of the Face of God,"
Maryknoll, Orbis Books, 1996)

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The Courage to Confess: Excerpts from a Draft of "The Darmstadt Declaration" of 1947:

-We went astray when we began to dream the dream of a special German mission, as if the German way could cure the world. Thus we prepared the way for an unlimited use of political power and placed our nation upon the throne of God. It was disastrous when we began to build our state internally on a strong government and externally, solely on the development of military power. In doing this we denied our calling to participate in the common tasks of the nations through the gifts with which we... had been endowed...

-We went astray when we felt compelled to build a front of the good people against the evil ones, a front of light against darkness, of the just against the unjust in the political life and with political means. By doing this we adulterated the free gift of the grace of God to all through a political, social, and ideological polarization which left the world to its own self-justification.

-We went astray when we overlooked the fact that the economic materialism of the Marxist doctrine should have reminded the Church of her mandate and of the promise to the faith community for the life and co-existence of people in this world. We failed to make it a concern of (the Church) to take up the cause of the poor and those deprived of their rights according to the gospel of God's coming kingdom.

-By recognizing and confessing this, we know that as the Church of Jesus Christ we have been acquitted to new and better service for the glory of God and the eternal salvation and well-being on all people on earth. What our nation needs, and within it especially we Christians, is... a turning toward the neighbor in the power of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

-We professed it before, and we are professing it again today: "Through Jesus Christ we experience joyous liberation from the godless enslavements of this world to free and grateful service for his creation." Therefore, we plead urgently: do not let despair overpower you because Christ is Lord. Dismiss all faithless indifference; do not be seduced by dreams of a better past or speculations about an impending war. Instead, become aware-in this freedom and in great objectivity-of the responsibility which all of us... bear for the building of a better state, serving the rights, welfare, and the internal peace and reconciliation of the nations.

(Translation by Hedda Durnbaugh, monograph)

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Paul Lehmann: "Is the Theology of Crisis a Crisis Theology?"

The theology of crisis has followed its protest against the theological compromise of the nineteenth century with a similar protest against the imminent ecclesiastical compromise of the second quarter of the twentieth century. The author of the Commentary (on Romans) has become the author of a tract for the times. Karl Barth who once spoke to the world through the letter to the Romans has spoken again through a monograph called "The Existence of Theology Today." We are confronted with a clear and

unequivocal statement of the theology of crisis with respect to a crisis which this time in no sense produced it, but which must hear the same essential message. It could be that the theological world, hearing the same voice a second time, will leave off beguiling itself with the prospect that it has to do with a disturbance that is largely temporary, and really turn its attention to the full implications of this theology for Christian thinking and Christian living.

The monograph arrived in Bonn on Saturday, July the first, 1933, with the ink of the Munich printing presses scarcely dry upon it. Rumor had it, that the very timely and not altogether favorable nature of the publication would result in its confiscation. And the mysterious summons to Professor Barth to appear in Berlin was not calculated to dispel whisperings. The one rumor seemed to support the other. The fate of the monograph is not known to the present writer. But seeing that it did not bring about the author's dismissal from the chair of theology in the University at Bonn, it may be inferred that the rumors attending its initial appearance were without foundation. Perhaps some knowledge of its contents may disclose the reason why a man could defy the claims of a totalitarian state and still remain one of its employees.

The brochure begins with a significant distinction. "Should I, nevertheless," writes Barth, "venture to utter the 'word for the situation' which is expected of me, dear theological friends of mine near and far, it can really consist essentially only in this question: whether it would not be far better for the Church and for all of us, if just now we actually did not speak 'to the situation' but rather now above all, each of us within the confines of his calling, spoke 'to the essential matter', resp. would consider and elaborate the presuppositions which are requisite for speaking to 'the essential matter', day by day....? To speak 'to the situation' or 'to the essential matter'! To speak to both at once—to the former without jeopardizing the latter; to the latter so that it may effectively determine the former! Who does not recognize in this juxtaposition the perennial task and the perennial perplexity of the Christian theologian worthy of the name? But if with this query, Barth has embarrassed the ambassador of Christ, he has also emboldened him. On the one hand, he will not let the Church either evade or postpone the recognition that in the quandary between the word 'to the situation' and the word 'to the essential matter' its very existence is at stake. On the other hand, he is very sure that unless the word 'to the situation' is determined solely by the word 'to the essential matter', yes, is identical with it, the existence of the Church, resp. theology, is doomed. "That which cannot now under any circumstances be allowed to happen is this, that in the zeal for whatever we may regard as a good thing, we lose our theological existence. Our theological existence is our existence in the Church and to be sure as the ordained preachers and teachers of the Church... This our theological existence... can be lost to us today..."

(Excerpt from Lehmann's essay that appeared in the "Theological Magazine of the Evangelical Synod of North America," Volume 62, Number 1, January, 1934. Karl Barth wrote the momentous first number of "The Existence of Theology Today," also known as "Theological Existence Today," June 24-25, 1933. It is this pamphlet to which Paul Lehmann is referring [above]. In it, Barth described the teachings of the German Christian Movement, bending theology to meet the expectations of the state, as "heresy." The pamphlet was banned by the state on July 28, 1934.)

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Social Justice and Peace:

... Social justice and peace are Siamese twins: neglect one and you endanger the other. There is no peace without justice, no justice without peace. It is estimated that 149 million people have died in war since the first century. Of these, 100 million were killed in the century just passed, and in the 1990s, ninety percent of the victims were civilians. Clearly, peace demands serious disarmament overseen by international inspection. Let us not forget that nuclear weapons are designed to commit indiscriminate mass murder. Hiding this reality behind innocuous terms like "nuclear capability" or "nuclear option" hides nothing. Reagan was right: nuclear weapons should never be used. But deterrence demands a willingness to use them; the only question being the number needed...

Several years ago, Herbert York, founder of the famous Livermore nuclear labs in California, returned there for a visit. Thousands of workers gathered to hear their aged icon. He asked: "How many nuclear weapons would it take to deter a nation rational enough to be deterred? Would it take ten or one? I tell you the answer is nearer to one."

More recently another aged icon,... arms negotiator Paul Nitze, wrote in the New York Times, "I find no compelling reason why we should not unilaterally get rid of our nuclear weapons." In saying so he joins former Strategic Air Command's General Lee Butler—for twenty seven years steeped in nuclear targets, weapons, and delivery systems—former supreme commander of NATO forces General Goodpaster, and sixty-three other generals and admirals from seventeen countries, all of whom have called for the abolition of all nuclear weapons under strict rules of inspection on the grounds that they are illegal and immoral, costly to maintain, and add nothing to national security.

Is it utterly absurd to think war might someday be buried in history alongside slavery, colonialism, and apartheid? That more than three billion people will not have to live as they do today, on less than two

dollars a day? That we might yet save the transcendent majesty and beauty of God's creation" I don't know. But I do know the following:

- that only those who attempt the absurd achieve the impossible.
- that God, in Luther's words, "can carve the rotten wood and ride the lame horse."
- that Chesterton was right: "Christianity has not been tried and found wanting; it has been tried and found difficult."
- and that Easter demands not sympathy for the crucified Christ but loyalty to the risen Christ. The proof of Easter is not a rolled-away stone, but carried-away Christians.

So, rise up, O people of God!

(William Sloane Coffin, "Civic Responsibility in the New Millennium: An Address to Christians," in "Fellowship," November/December, 2000)

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Sight:

We must find an alternative to violence. The eye-for-an-eye philosophy leaves everybody blind.

(Martin Luther King, Jr., 1929-1969)

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You are invited to refer to the Confessing Christ website at the following address:

<http://confessingchrist.net>

Confessing Christ materials are being prepared at the Mission House Center, Lakeland College. Those no longer wishing to receive materials or those with address changes should contact Colleen Darling, Lakeland College, PO Box 359, Sheboygan, WI 53082-0359 by e-mail darlingca@lakeland.edu or by calling 920-565-1538.

"For no one can lay foundation other than the one that has been laid: that foundation is Jesus Christ."

(1 Cor. 3:11, NRSV)

