



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.

Pastors Said "No" to Nazified Church

"Hitler's military," writes Dr. Ryan C. MacPherson, "was one of the strongest forces in world history. The National Socialists were one of the most well-organized political parties Europe had ever seen. But at the heart of Nazism was bad theology, and Norway's pastors knew it. Hitler's troops had taken over Norway with ease in 1940. Over the next two years, the Nazi puppet regime swallowed up all government departments—including the national church."

It was Easter Sunday, 1942, when "the moment of truth arrived. Ninety-three percent of the clergy resigned from the Church of Norway in order to fulfill their oaths of ordination and serve the people whom God had entrusted to their care. In its outward appearance, the church looked dead; but, like Christ within the tomb, His bride, too, sprung back to life. Norway's underground church was born that Easter, and it left in its wake a testimony of Christians of all times."

In Norway, writes MacPherson, "the National Socialists were forcing a new Sunday school curriculum that featured the swastika in place of the cross. Public school teachers were required to teach a Nazified curriculum. Parents were given three weeks' notice to enroll their children in Norway's version of the Hitler Youth. Leading theologians in Germany said all was well, that Romans 13 requires every citizen to obey the state, yes, even Hitler's state. Few had the insight of [Dietrich] Bonhoeffer, and even fewer had the courage."

Norway's Bonhoeffer, explains MacPherson, was the Bishop of Oslo, Eivind Berggrav. "He fought off the Nazified church's theology with his 'Luther arsenal,' some seventy-five pages of quotations by Luther

concerning the proper relationship between the church and civil government. Inspired by Berggrav's example, a group of Norwegian mothers drafted a model letter to send to the National Socialist regime, reducing the matter to one powerful sentence asserting the rights of conscience. Under Berggrav's counsel, five out of every six teachers refused in writing to implement the new curriculum [and] two-thirds of all parents signed a letter of conscientious objection . . ." Hundreds of pastors, explains MacPherson, read the following words in unison from their pulpits on Easter Sunday 1942:

"We declare, therefore, that it is our highest duty before God and before man—fully and fearlessly—to proclaim all God's Word . . . without hesitation for whom it might displease. Here we stand under God's command. . . No earthly power or authority can impose unchurchly conditions upon the permission to conduct Christian work or to serve as a preacher. . . It is, therefore, intolerable for the church that someone in power—for political, worldly reasons—deprives an ordained man not only of his office, but also of his mission to minister with Word and Sacrament. . . ."

MacPherson points out that in their confession published under the title "The Foundation of the Church," the pastors alluded to the Nazi youth movement, saying, "The church would be remiss in her duty of Christian upbringing if she silently observed a worldly authority arrange the moral upbringing of children and people, independent of Christian views. Parents and teachers must not be sought out and driven, contrary to their conscience, to surrender their children to child educators who want to 'revolutionize their minds' and induct them into a 'new worldview' that feels foreign to Christianity."

Many pastors, writes MacPherson, "were arrested, tortured, or even executed for their confession. Other men replaced them, subscribing both to the Augsburg Confession and to the Foundation of the Church, as they pledged ordination oaths during clandestine ceremonies in remote locales. . . ."

Here, observes MacPherson, at the intersection of theology and politics "was confessional Lutheranism's finest hour of the twentieth century, resonating

powerfully with the Magdeburg Confession of 1550 and the writings of Luther that had preceded it: yes, civil government is God's good blessing; yes, citizens ought to honor the government; but, no, the government should not set itself above either church or the family, and insofar as any government ever does so, no citizen is obligated to submit to it. Such a tyrant has removed himself from God's Fourth Commandment office as established in Romans 13; such a tyrant has instead commingled church and state into the twin beasts of Revelation 13. Clear as Easter's sunrise, fidelity to Christ necessitates resistance to the Antichrist."

(Excerpted from "Eighty Easters Ago: The Mass Resignation of Lutheran Pastors from the Nazified Church of Norway," Christian Culture, Spring 2022; 2-3.)

What can we do? Consider the influence of critical race theory, social emotional learning, and gender identity, for example, on school curricula; the labeling of involved and concerned parents as "domestic terrorists," and the forced closure of churches during covid. Discuss any similarities you see between Norway in 1942 and the United States in 2022. Request to be on the mailing list of *Christian Culture*, the quarterly publication of Luther Classical College, Casper, WY. Visit the websites of the Hausvater Project and Center for Apologetics and Worldviews of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Please pray that the Body of Christ stand on firm foundation and remain true... in Jesus' name.

Living in Indifference Long Enough

We have accepted godlessness. We've been sitting on our hands. We haven't wanted "to talk about political things from the pulpit." But, writes Adam Koontz, "we have lived in indifference long enough."

Koontz writes, "A headlong rush into every kind of self-destruction, every sort of suicide-on-a-time-delay, has been our countrymen's fate. 'Deaths of despair' have risen, the dollar buys less than it has in most of our lifetimes, and a cynicism about our government, our schools, our church body, and our own families has become predictable in ourselves and in our neighbors. Despair and cynicism can watch from a comfortable distance while people devote themselves to demons and to the teachings of demons: to the mutilation of their bodies in the pursuit of their true selves, to the destruction of children either in the womb or in the gender-therapy clinic, to the terror of encountering another human being who may be carrying a disease,

to every specter and every demand of Molech. Devotion to self-destruction and to the destruction of others in the name of Diversity-Inclusion-Equity, in the name of Protecting Ourselves and Protecting Others, in the name of My Body, My Choice—this has been ours and our families', our neighbors', our friends. We have overdosed yet again on what will kill us, the body of America laid out, gasping, and unresponsive, and once that body has been narcanned one more time, we will still love what will destroy us."

Our indifference, observes Koontz, "has taken our children's souls and turned their hearts far from us, so that we barely know our own. Our indifference has allowed our neighbors to go on with their lives unbothered by us, so that they divorce one another and get one another addicted to every kind of evil without our lifting a finger to help where we could have. Our indifference is killing us, and we have mistaken this quiet slip into death for peace."

Koontz asks, "What will be done in the Name of Jesus? Is that Name mightier than all other names?" The Lord God is not terrified by "princes of media, finance, [or] politics . . . the Lord holds those princes, those powers, those forces of darkness in derision. . . . He is not cowed by their mandates, directives, and encouragement to violence. . . . He reigns over all things." (Excerpted from "A Plea for America" by Rev. Dr. Adam Koontz, *Christian Culture*, Spring 2022, 14-15.)

What can we do? Rather than huddle "around the ashes left behind from our fathers' fires," says Koontz, we are called to be "keepers of holy flame, and now the fire of God's Name must spread." We must ask ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ, "What won't you do, what wouldn't you give to see your children in heaven, to see your neighbors living life in the Way of peace, to see your country turned to the fear of the Lord?" Look, urges Koontz, and see that "the robbers have overtaken us and our children and our country, and we lie unresponsive by the road on the way to Jericho." We can see "the priest who passes us by because he has better things to do." We can see "the Levite who is very involved in church life who is too busy to help the helpless." We can see "Christ, the Good Samaritan, cast out, despised . . . He sees us. He sees our children starving for His Word, He sees our country distraught, depressed, demon-afflicted . . . He knows our need, He hears our cry, and now He reaches down to heal."

Please pray to resist indifference... in Jesus' name.

