

The Pastor's Quarry

First Baptist Church of Granite Falls, MN
August, 2010

A Classical Yarn, Part II

From Part I: Four students woke up together in a dream-world. Blinking in the light, each of them was driven by the same thought: Kill the Minotaur. They stood ready before a yawning door to an underground labyrinth, each holding a sword. A woman robed in white stood at the entrance, offering a ball of yarn to each of the students. The Bible College student refused his, insisting that he had faith and would find his way back out by following his heart. The IT student accepted his ball of yarn, but once inside sold it to a troll for a sack of gold coins. Deep inside, the CLA student stumbled and broke his own yarn; despairing, he planted his yarn in that place so he could at least find his way back there.

Plodding along with great care, the Hereditas student had encountered many a dead end. Each time, he carefully retraced his steps using the ball of yarn. And so, with two steps forward and one step back, he drew closer and closer to the Minotaur. Soon he could hear it, and then, he could smell it. He readied his sword in anticipation of the dreadful meeting.

Singing merrily, the Bible College student had rounded many twists and turns in the labyrinth, and eventually he discerned a faint glow ahead. Hastening on, he came upon an alcove that had a strange but pleasant glow coming from its walls. Humming to himself, he investigated further and, to his delight, he found can after can of strangely glowing, brightly colored paint. Marveling at a collection of delightfully gilded paintbrushes nearby, he tentatively brushed some glowing blue paint on the wall. It shimmered like cotton candy, and he was reminded of the county fairs of his childhood. Soon he was painting the walls with abandon, exultant at his find. "This must be the real reason I entered the labyrinth!" he shouted to the walls. "It is by faith that I have found my way to this haven of rest. Surely I must invite people to share with me in this great happiness!"

Meanwhile, the Hereditas student had found the inner chamber where dwelled the Minotaur. A faint glow illuminated the chamber from above. His pulse quickened, his breathing became more rapid, and his mouth went dry and metallic. His hand was slick as he gripped his sword; he wiped it off as he listened carefully for the Minotaur. He set down the ball of yarn, carefully noting its location. He stood slowly, straining his eyes against the gloom – and suddenly the Minotaur was upon him, knocking him to the ground! The Minotaur reared up and roared with a fury that took his breath away.

Trembling, the Hereditas student braced for what must surely be his death. But the Minotaur, blind with rage, fell upon him just as he brought up his sword, and the beast screamed in pain as the sword pierced its heart. It fell, writhing in agony, until finally it lay dead.

The Hereditas student, shaken, struggled to his feet. Finding the ball of yarn, he gratefully retraced his steps until he was blinking again in the sunlight. He sank to his knees and prayed with all the energy he had left, and then, he slept.

In the labyrinth the IT student wandered aimlessly, fingering his gold from time to time with delight. Occasionally encountering the CLA student, he was reminded of the reason he entered the Institute of Technology. The CLA student had not a penny to his name!

The CLA student, confident he could at least find his way back to the Pool of Despair, ventured as far as his ball of yarn would take him. He occasionally encountered the Bible College student, as did the IT student, and the Bible College student tried every way he could to entice them into joining him in his Haven of Happiness.

Both the CLA student and the IT student avoided the Bible College student from then on, though they could still hear him singing his happy songs. They preferred the darkness of the labyrinth, where their eyes grew large and pale until they could not bear the light of the Haven of Happiness.

When finally the Hereditas student woke up in his apartment, he rushed to find his three neighbors. But they slept as dead men, and he could not wake them.

Unable to sleep, the Hereditas student went back to his studies. And even though it had only been a dream, still, somehow he felt the flush of victory as he picked up one of the old books before him and began reading where he had left off.

Mark Your Calendars

Fri., Aug. 27, Sep. 10, and Sep. 24, 7:00 P.M.: Music/Book Discussions in the lower level of the church building.

Sun., Sep. 12, 1:15 P.M.: Special business meeting to vote on a new hymnal recommended by the Music Committee. Samples are available for members to review. You are welcome to discuss this with me at any time.

Memory Verses

Here are the verses we will recite from the ESV at the beginning of the Sunday School hour, one week after the date assigned:

Aug 29: Psa 62:5-8

Sep 5: 1Jo 1:8-9

Sep 12: 1Jo 2:15-17

Sep 19: Psa 73:25-26

Sep 26: Psa 77:13-14

Quote of the Month

The greatest irony of anti-traditionalism is the unbounded confidence with which its advocates seem to view their own inventions . . . If we have grown up in a healthy tradition, it will provide us with certain fixed points against which we can measure ourselves. Lacking such a tradition, we become increasingly self-referential, which is the essence of pride.

Kevin T. Bauder

2010

Love (II)

George Herbert (1593-1633)

Immortal Heat, O let
Thy greater flame
Attract the lesser to
it; let those fires
Which shall consume the world
first make it tame,
And kindle in our hearts
such true desires.
As may consume our lusts,
and make Thee way:
Then shall our hearts pant Thee,
then shall our brain
All her invention on
Thine altar lay,
And there in hymns send back
Thy fire again.
Our eyes shall see Thee, which
before saw dust,
Dust blown by wit, till that
they both were blind:
Thou shalt recover all
Thy goods in kind,
Who wert disseized by
usurping lust:
All knees shall bow to Thee;
all wits shall rise,
And praise Him Who did make
and mend our eyes.

A Bit of History

As an interlude to our series on the history of liturgical development from Luther's day to our own, here is an illuminating word from Martin Luther on music (from the preface to George Rhau's Symphoniae iucundae, 1538, trans. Ulrich S. Leopold).

Greetings in Christ! I would certainly like to praise music with all my heart as the excellent gift of God which it is and to commend it to everyone . . . next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. She is a mistress and governess of those human emotions – to pass over the animals – which as masters govern men or more often overwhelm them. No greater commendation than this can be found – at least not by us. For whether you wish to comfort the sad, to terrify the happy, to encourage the despairing, to humble the proud, to calm the passionate, or to appease those full of hate – and who could number all these masters of the human heart, namely, the emotions, inclinations, and affections that impel men to evil or good? – what more effective means than music could you find? The Holy Ghost himself honors her as an instrument for his proper work when in his Holy Scriptures he asserts that through her his gifts were instilled in the prophets, namely, the inclination to all virtues, as can be seen in Elisha [II Kings 3:15]. On the other hand, she serves to cast out Satan, the instigator of all sins, as is shown in Saul, the king of Israel [I Sam. 16:23].

Thus it was not without reason that the fathers and prophets wanted nothing else to be associated as closely with the Word of God as music. Therefore, we have so many hymns and Psalms where message and music join to move the listener's soul, while in other living beings' and [sounding] bodies music remains a language without words. After all, the gift of language combined with the gift of song was only given to man to let him know that he should praise God with both word and music, namely, by proclaiming [the Word of God] through music and by providing sweet melodies with words. For even a comparison between different men will show how rich and manifold our glorious Creator proves himself in distributing the gifts of music, how much men differ from each other in voice and manner of speaking so that one amazingly excels the other. No two men can be found with exactly the same voice and manner of speaking, although they often seem to imitate each other, the one as it were being the ape of the other.

But when [musical] learning is added to all this and artistic music which corrects, develops, and refines the natural music, then at last it is possible to taste with wonder (yet not to comprehend) God's absolute and perfect wisdom in his wondrous work of music. Here it is most remarkable that one single voice continues to sing the tenor, while at the same time many other voices play around it, exulting and adorning it in exuberant strains and, as it were, leading it forth in a divine roundelay, so that those who are the least bit moved know nothing more amazing in this world. But any who remain unaffected are unmusical indeed and deserve to hear a certain filth poet or the music of the pigs.

But the subject is much too great for me briefly to describe all its benefits. And you, my young friend, let this noble, wholesome, and cheerful creation of God be commended to you. By it you may escape shameful desires and bad company. At the same time you may by this creation accustom yourself to recognize and praise the Creator. Take special care to shun perverted minds who prostitute this lovely gift of nature and of art with their erotic rantings; and be quite assured that none but the devil goads them on to defy their very nature which would and should praise God its Maker with this gift, so that these bastards purloin the gift of God and use it to worship the foe of God, the enemy of nature and of this lovely art. Farewell in the Lord.

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