

SEQUITUR SYNOPSIS

September 2023

By Lee Chemin



WHAT WE'RE LISTENING TO

Audiobook:

Keeping with the JRR Tolkien theme from August, *Leaf by Niggle* by Tolkien is one of my favorite short stories of all time. This weekend, gather 'round the Iphone as a family to listen to this imaginative short story! **Right now, the audiobook of Tolkien's short story is available for free on Audible!**

Podcasts:

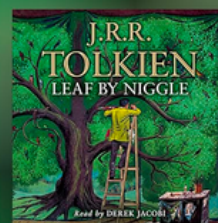
Angelina Stanford and her crew at the Literary Life podcast have an excellent podcast that delves into some of the themes and ideas from Leaf by Niggle.

<https://www.theliterary.life/190-2/>



NEWS FOR THE MONTH

- **SEPTEMBER 28TH** IS OUR FIRST LOGIC AND RHETORIC HOUSE FELLOWSHIP. WE WILL HOLD A PAPER AIRPLANE COMPETITION AT SCHOOL
- **OCTOBER 20TH** IS THE HOUSE GAMES. THOUGH LOGIC AND RHETORIC STUDENTS ARE THE ONLY GAMES COMPETITORS, ALL FAMILIES AND STUDENTS ARE WELCOME. DETAILS TBD IN THE OCTOBER SYNOPSIS.
- PLEASE CHECK TO MAKE SURE YOUR STUDENT IS WEARING THE CORRECT UNIFORM AND BRINGS THEIR ID BADGE EVERYDAY. WE WILL START CHARGING FOR LOST IDS AND THERE WILL BE CONSEQUENCES FOR UNIFORM VIOLATIONS. MR. SWART WILL SEND A FOLLOW UP EMAIL WITH PARTICULAR DETAILS.



LISTENING ON

audible 

WHAT WE'RE READING

The article in this month's synopsis asks: What hath Athens to do with Jerusalem? Another way of putting this in our context is "What does it mean for an education to be both Christian and Classical?" As you contemplate this question, consider refreshing yourself on the basics of a classical Christian education with Chris Perrin's excellent primer "[An Introduction to Classical Education: A Guide for Parents.](#)"

Conferences:

LIFT UP YOUR HEARTS – GEORGIA

POWDER SPRINGS, GA • October 20-21, 2023

<https://circeinstitute.org/events/lift-up-your-hearts-2/>

THIS MONTH, SOME DIFFICULT AND SENSITIVE TOPICS HAVE ARISEN IN BOTH 7TH AND 10TH GRADE ANCIENT HUMANITIES COURSES IN THE CONTEXT OF GREEK AND ROMAN CULTURE. IN BOTH SOCIETIES, CITIZENS WORSHIPPED GODS WHO REGULARLY TREATED ONE ANOTHER AND THEIR SUBJECTS WITH CONTEMPT AND VIOLENCE. THIS NATURALLY AND RIGHTLY WILL ALARM SOME PARENTS, AND WILL PROVOKE THEM TO RECONSIDER THE NATURE OF THE EDUCATION THEIR CHILDREN ARE RECEIVING AT SEQUITUR. AND THEY ARE NOT ALONE. EARLY CHRISTIAN CHURCH FATHERS ALSO QUESTIONED THE MINGLING OF PAGAN IDEAS WITH CHRISTIAN VALUES.

FOR EXAMPLE, THE GREAT CHURCH FATHER TERTULLIAN WROTE,
"WHAT INDEED HAS ATHENS TO DO WITH JERUSALEM? WHAT CONCORD IS THERE BETWEEN THE ACADEMY AND THE CHURCH? WHAT BETWEEN HERETICS AND CHRISTIANS? OUR INSTRUCTION COMES FROM THE PORCH OF SOLOMON WHO HIMSELF TAUGHT THAT THE LORD SHOULD BE SOUGHT IN SIMPLICITY OF HEART. AWAY WITH ALL ATTEMPTS TO PRODUCE A MOTTLED CHRISTIANITY OF STOIC, PLATONIC AND DIALECTIC COMPOSITION! WE WANT NO CURIOUS DISPUTATION AFTER POSSESSING CHRIST JESUS, NO INQUISITION AFTER ENJOYING THE GOSPEL! WITH OUR FAITH, WE DESIRE NO FURTHER BELIEF. FOR THIS IS OUR PALMARY (MEANING EXCELLENT, OUTSTANDING) FAITH, THAT THERE IS NOTHING WHICH WE OUGHT TO BELIEVE BESIDES." TERTULLIAN SAW NO NEED TO POLLUTE THE SIMPLICITY OF THE GOSPEL WITH PAGAN HERESIES.

HOWEVER, THERE WERE EARLY CHURCH FATHERS WHO EMBRACED A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE. ST. AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO RECOGNIZED THAT PAGANS HELD FALSE BELIEFS ABOUT GOD, THE WORLD, AND THE HUMAN CONDITION. HE NOTICED AND PREACHED ABOUT THE CLASH OF WORLDVIEW BETWEEN CHRISTIAN THEOLOGY AND PAGAN PHILOSOPHY. BUT HE ALSO RECOGNIZED THAT PAGANS EXIST IN THE IMAGO DEI (IMAGE OF GOD). TO DEFEND THIS POSITION, ST. AUGUSTINE REFERENCES ST. PAUL SPEAKING TO THE GREEKS IN ACTS 17:22-30—

"THAT THEY [THE GREEKS] SHOULD SEEK THE LORD, IF HAPLY THEY MIGHT FEEL AFTER HIM, AND FIND HIM, THOUGH HE BE NOT FAR FROM EVERY ONE OF US: FOR IN HIM WE LIVE, AND MOVE, AND HAVE OUR BEING; AS CERTAIN ALSO OF YOUR [THE GREEKS] OWN POETS HAVE SAID, FOR WE ARE ALSO HIS OFFSPRING."

HERE'S AUGUSTINE COMMENTING ON THE PLATONIST PHILOSOPHERS' NEARNESS AND FARNESNESS TO TRUTH:

"PLATONIST PHILOSOPHERS EXCEL ALL OTHERS IN REPUTATION AND AUTHORITY, JUST BECAUSE THEY ARE NEARER TO THE TRUTH THAN THE REST, EVEN THOUGH THEY ARE A LONG WAY FROM IT."

ST. AUGUSTINE'S POSITION ON THIS TOPIC BECAME WIDELY KNOWN THROUGH AN ANALOGY CALLED "PLUNDERING THE EGYPTIANS" (FROM ST. AUGUSTINE'S WORK ON CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE). THAT IS, WHEN IT COMES TO CULTURE BEFORE CHRIST, CHRISTIANS SHOULD SIFT FOR NUGGETS OF GOLD, AND LEAVE BEHIND THE DIRT AND DETRITUS.

THIS ANALOGY BECAME THE HISTORICAL CONSENSUS POSITION AMONG CHRISTIANS. FOR EXAMPLE, THE GREAT CATHOLIC PHILOSOPHER THOMAS AQUINAS (1225-1274) FULLY EMBRACED THE SYMBIOSIS BETWEEN PAGAN TRUTHS AND THE GOSPEL. ACCORDING TO GERALD MCDERMOTT'S DESCRIPTION OF AQUINAS'S APPROACH TO EVALUATING THE PHILOSOPHY OF PERHAPS THE MOST FAMOUS GREEK, ARISTOTLE:

"THOMAS ACCEPTED FROM ARISTOTLE WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS IN ACCORD WITH CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, REJECTED WHAT HE THOUGHT WAS NOT (AND EXPLAINED WHY), AND USED SOME OF ARISTOTLE'S CATEGORIES TO HELP TEACH CHRISTIAN FAITH."

IF YOU CHOOSE TO PLACE YOUR KIDS IN A CLASSICAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL, YOU HAVE JOINED THE HISTORICAL CHRISTIAN CONSENSUS THAT WE CAN AND SHOULD TAKE FROM THE PAGANS WHAT IS GOOD, TRUE AND BEAUTIFUL, AND USE WISDOM AND DISCERNMENT TO REJECT THAT WHICH IS NOT. TEACHERS AT SEQUITUR EXIST TO HELP YOUR STUDENTS TAKE WHAT IS GOOD FROM PAGAN LITERATURE, AND DEMONSTRATE THE WAYS IN WHICH CHRIST HAS TRANSFORMED EVIL INTO GOOD. WE ALSO EXIST TO SUPPORT PARENTS AS THEY UNDERTAKE THE DIFFICULT AND WONDERFUL WORK OF DISCIPLINING THEIR CHILDREN TOWARD THE PRUDENCE TO KNOW WHAT TO ACCEPT AND WHAT TO REJECT. IN THE CLASSROOM, WE HANDLE THESE DIFFICULT TOPICS THROUGH CONTEXTUALIZING THEM IN THEIR CULTURAL PLACE, AND THEN CONTRASTING THE CULTURAL HABIT WITH THE TRANSFORMATIVE AND RADICAL LOVE OF CHRIST.

PLEASE DO REACH OUT TO YOUR CHILDREN'S TEACHERS IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT OUR CLASSROOM APPROACH TO THE INTERACTION BETWEEN PAGAN AND CHRISTIAN LITERATURE THROUGHOUT THE YEAR!