



Lutheran Historical Society **Of the Mid-Atlantic**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Lutheran Historical Society announces A.R. Wentz Prize Winner

The Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic announces the winner of the 2016 A.R. Wentz Prize in American Lutheran History. Seminarian Hans Becklin, a third year seminarian at the Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago (LSTC), won for his paper “Herbjorn Gausta’s Good Shepherd (1895) at First Lutheran Church, Decorah, Iowa: Printed American Visual Culture as Painted Norwegian-American Propaganda.” Society president Stephen Herr indicated the panel of judges commented on how Becklin presented “a rather complicated development in Norwegian-American Lutheran history, using this painting as his text.” Becklin drew from “several seemingly disparate places,” painting a story that “is both beautifully and effectively told.” On receiving the news, Becklin shared that he was “truly honored to receive the prize.” The society offers the prize every year for papers addressing Lutheranism in North America.

Abdel Ross Wentz, for whom the award is named, was a leading figure in 20th century Lutheranism. From 1916-1956 he was a professor of Church History and later President of Gettysburg Theological Seminary. He was the first Vice-President of the Lutheran World Federation and the lead writer of its first constitution. The Wentz family established an endowment to provide prize money for the best historical paper on Lutheranism in North America. The prize can be awarded each year in two categories: 1) first degree seminarian and 2) M.A or PH.D graduate students. The prize is in the amount of \$2,500. Read more about it on the Society web site: www.lutheranhistoricalsociety.com

Becklin, a lifelong Lutheran, was raised among Norwegian Lutherans in south-central Wisconsin. Interested in history and research from an early age, he majored in history at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa. At Luther he focused on the history of Lutheranism in America and on the history of art. These two areas combined well during his grant-funded research on First Lutheran Church in Decorah, the Norwegian Synod, and Herbjørn Gausta, supervised by Dr. Kate Elliott and Dr. Edward Tebbenhoff. Throughout seminary he has continued to explore church history. Hans is a member of the ELCA’s Church Council, which provides legislative leadership between Churchwide Assemblies. He is the council’s representative to the Moravian Church in North America. He and his wife, Marissa, live in Chicago and both are preparing for ordained ministry in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA)

The society also announces a call for papers for the 2017 prize. Any first degree seminary student regardless of denominational affiliation and anyone enrolled in a higher degree program at the M.A. or PhD level are eligible to apply. Paper topics should be historical papers on some aspect of Lutheranism in North America. Full details can be found on the society’s webpage.

Questions can be directed to Pastor Stephen Herr, President of the Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic, 334-5212, info@lutheranhistoricalsociety.com or Lutheran Historical Society of the Mid-Atlantic, 61 Seminary Ridge, Gettysburg, PA 17325.

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