

This article is dedicated to a much treasured, special, and old family heirloom of ours that is at my grandmother's house: a Dano-Norwegian pulpit book (which I believe to be a Protestant, probably Lutheran, *Postil* [or *Postille*] and "**Søndag bog**") written in archaic Danish that was published in 1758. It is interesting to note that this is older than the Declaration of Independence for those who are Americans! As can be seen from the picture that I took of the back page (shown at the bottom), the book was published (as I translate it) "*at the expense of the Berlingske Arvingers Bogtrykkerie*" (Berling Family Book Printingpress) in 1758, which I am almost positive is associated with the founders of Denmark's modern Berlingske Tidende Newspaper.



[Click to see the full-sized photo](#)

You might be wondering why a book that was read in, and passed down from, a Norwegian family (my grandmother's side of the family) would be written in Danish. The short answer is really a matter of historical reality in that Denmark ruled over Norway for roughly 300 years from around 1500 to 1800 A.D. and so many things were written in Danish during that period, and sometimes the mixed language that resulted (although they were rather similar to begin with) is referred to as Dano-Norwegian. Because of the book's age and the time period it was written in it is also written in an older script/typeface (called

[Fraktur script](#)

, a successor to

[Schwabacher script](#)

which is quite similar, or sometimes referred to as Gothic script) that for some letters may at first appear unfamiliar to the modern reader (such as the letters S, K, U, and V). See the image below that shows examples of the letters in Fraktur and Schwabacher typeface.

It's not just my love of all things old and my interest in archaic languages that excites me about this book, but it is also because it is a large book (800+ pages) and appears to be a significant piece of Christian literature, with entire sermons and exegesis on Scripture passages attached to (to be read on) certain days like "**the First Sunday in Advent**", "**Palm Sunday**", "**Passover Day**", and "**Three Kings Day**".

e Kings Day

" (a Christian holiday still observed in parts of Europe but not much in the U.S.). For example, if you look close enough at the top of the page in the high resolution photo to the right you will see written on the page, "

Første Sondag i Advent

", indicating that this particular sermon is to be read on the first Sunday in Advent. Additional pictures of the pages with the headings for each day are shown at the bottom of the page. It is most likely a Lutheran and/or Pietist sermon book, and bears similarities to early Lutheran Postils such as the Postils by Martin Luther and Johan Arndt, which had set readings for the congregation for all the major Sundays, religious observances, and holidays during the year. One could imagine that the book has received great use over its 250+ year existence in Scandinavian pulpits or private reading, and my grandmother remembers her father (from whom she received it) reading from the book often. This book is a true treasure of heritage, culture, and religion and is a wonderful witness of

[our own family's Norwegian Christian background](#)



[Click to see the full-sized photo](#)

This book truly fascinates me, and I have two main goals with my research on this book, all of it though aiming at ultimately grasping the true value of the book in order to be edified by it and to glorify God through what I discover: **#1**) Be able to read and understand it (and consequently be able to translate it), and **#2**) to find out who actually wrote the book

! I can tell (from what little Norwegian/Danish I know) who published the book but not the name of any author per se, and over years of occasional research I have yeilded no definitive answers as to who the author might be. As can be seen from the picture of the back page there is a bibliography of Christian writers and their books, some dating back to the 1600s, and I tried to see if I could identify the author with one of those listed in the back. For a while I was getting very excited at the prospect of the author being Erik Pontoppidan - the Pietist Protestant Danish author, theologian, preacher, and historian - some of whose works are listed in the bibliography but I was unable to draw a direct connection. Perhaps the book, being sermon-like in nature, is simply a collection and collation of written works from all those authors listed in the back, which is just as exciting a possibility, making it a kind of "who's who" collection of great ministerial works of early Scandinavian Protestant figures and leaders in Europe.

The book itself opens with a short page-and-a-half prayer, "*A little prayer, which each can read for themself*", asking God to open the eyes and ears of the hearers of the message, and prepare their hearts to receive it, and also is a praise and blessing to God for His goodness, extolling His salvation and sovereignty, in a truly moving and powerful manner. Men spoke in a way back then, as is also so in the words of this prayer, that we do not often hear anymore. But the words here too may go down in history

with the powerful words and convictions of other great men of God - and heroes in the faith - like George Whitefield, Charles Wesley, Johnathon Edwards, and Charles Spurgeon. The historical testimony of the Christian faith - from the growth of the early Church, to the proliferation of Scriptures in all languages, and the lives of great theologians, reformers, and martyrs - is one of the most amazing and exhilarating evidences and landmarks of God's activity in the history and hearts of man. There are few things that emotionally impact me more than hearing of the saga of that faith carried down through the ages by faithful men and women who sacrificed much, and stood with power and conviction in their beliefs, having a basic and fundamental faith in God and His word. This book, I hope and trust, can be added to the annals among the books and writings of Christian history and can be counted among "the great cloud of witnesses" giving testimony of the faith, and I hope it can benefit other Christians through an edifying testimony. So most of all I hope to glorify God with my research and study of this book, and I hope that I too can impact people with this research, and my passion in studying it, to spur them on to feel a keener sense of faith and glorify God through whatever may be of value from my studies.

Now, without further adieu, I have attempted to translate parts of the front page. Here are some pictures of the book, as well as a transliteration and an accompanying translation of the front page:



Click to see the full-sized photo

"En liden Bøn, som Eenhver kand læse for sig selv, før han begynder at læse eller høre Prædiken, som paaminder os om vor egen Uduelighed i vor Saligheds Sag: og om Guds store Magt, til at gjøre os duelige til alt Godt. O! Allmægtige evige gode Gud, og barmhiergtige Fader, som randsager hierter [

hjerter

] og Ryrer, ja som den sande aandelige Pottemager og Skabere, veedst, hvad I Mennesket er. Du veedst at vi ikke, som af os selv, ere deulige at tænke noget godt som af os selv. Og derfor, af din store faderlige kierlighed mod os arme Folk, haver givet os dit hellige of saliggjørende Ord, at det skal oplyse vore andelige formørkede Øyen og Forstand, at vi ved Loven, de hellige Ti Guds Bud

, skulle see og forstaae, os at være Syndere, og skyldige til evig Siæls [

sjæls

] og Legems Piine. Og af Evangelio, I Troens Artikle

, see og sinde Rad og Middel, mod Synden og den evige Død: Som er den egen faderlige urandsagelige kierlighed, som du os I din Søn Jesu Christo beviist haver, hvis Fortienneste [Fortjeneste] og Værdskyld vi os ved Troen, som din gode hellig Aand i os ved Ordet virker, skulle tilegne, og saa ved hannem have Magt at vorde Guds Børn, ja Arvinger til det evige Liv og Salighed. Du og, allerhiertekiereste himmelske Fader, vel veedst, at intet Menneske af egen Forstand, sig til Salighed, enddog hand et læser, eller hører læse, forstaae kand, eftersom dine Domme er en stor Afgrund, og derfor meget mindre, sig eller andre til Salighed, af sig selv der om tale kand, after som ingen af sig selv kand oplade sine Læber, at forkynde din Priis. Og eftersom han er intet, der planter eller vander. Og eftersom Guds Rige bestaaer ikke i Ord, inen I din Aands kraft, bede vi dig, o naadige Gud, som alleene haver den sande Nøgel til Skriftens rette Forstand, som og haver alle Folkes hierter [hjerter] I din goddommelige hand, og kand gjøre

[gjøre]

af den døde Ford et levende Menneske, efter dit bilede, og af Steenhierter kand du gjøre

[gjøre]

kiødhierter

[kjødhierter]

, ja den som end er død Synden, kand du gjøre levende, I din Søn vor Herre Jesu Christo, at du [vilt?] udgyde din hellige og gode Aand over os, som kand krafteligen være...

[second page]

(

...være

) tilstede I Ordet, efter din faderlige Forjættelse, til at oplyse vor formørkede Forstand, at den rettelig forstaaer Skriften, og til at give os Mundens frimodelige Opladelse, til at forkynde Evangelii hemmelighed, din Sons Jesu Christi Fortieneste

[Fortjeneste]

og Værdskyld, og til at igiennembore os Ørene, og at salve vore aandelige Øyne, at de see din

gudgommelige

[guddommelige]

Villie i Ordet, og at de, af de legemlige agte de aandelige os beredte gode Ting, og til at skrive din Lov I vore hierter

[hjerter]

, og foreene dem med dig, at de frygte dit guddommelige Navn, og at fore vore aandelige Fødder, Tanker, Ord og Gierninger, paa Saligheds Veye

[veje]

, paa det vi arme Mennesker maatte rives af Satans Lenker, vort eget fordervelige afvendt sind fra gud, og af hans aandelige Mørkheds Riige, vor Sinds Uforstandighed, saa vi retteligen kiende

[kjende]

og elske dit guddommelige Ord, for det sande aandelige Ord og Lys, som det og er, og krafteligen finde [sinde?] din hellige gode Aands Virkning og Besegling, paa din kiære

[kjære]

Søns Fortieneste

[Fortjeneste]

og Værdskyld, som kand krafteligen styrke os I Jesu Christo, og stadfæste os I all god Tale og gode Gierninger, og ogholde os med sin guddommelige hand, at intet Fald maa styrte os om, I hvor stort det komme kand, paa det, at vi til evig Tid maatte bevares iblant alle gode udvalde Engle, Folk og Tungemaal, din herlige Raade til Lov og Ære, og os dine arme Børn til evig Siæls

[Sjæls]

og Legems Beprydelse og Glæde.

Amen.

"

Tentative translation into English

A little prayer, which each can read for one's self, before he begins to read or hear the sermon [message/exhortation], which reminds us of our own incapability in the matter of our Salvation

[
Saligheds Sag

]

:

and of God's great power to make us capable of all Good.

O! Almighty, eternal, good God, and merciful Father who searches the heart and minds [lit. *kidn eys* ;

Jeremiah

17:10

]

, You who, as the true spiritual Potmaker and Creator know what is in man

[John

2:25

]

. You know that we are not, by ourselves, capable of thinking anything good. And therefore, out of your great Fatherly love toward us impoverished people you have given that holy and saving Word, that it should illuminate our spiritually darkened eyes and intellect [our reason], that we, by the law – the holy

Ten Commandments of God

, should see and understand that we are sinners, and guilty unto eternal torment of

soul and body. And from the Gospel, in the

[Church's doctrinal]

faith articles

, see the wise council and remedy to sin and eternal death: Which shows your own Fatherly, unsearchable love, by which you have established us in your Son Jesus Christ, whose merit and worth we by faith, as your good Holy Spirit works in us through the Word, should acquire, and thus by him have the power to become the children of God. Yes, even heirs of eternal life and salvation. And You (most beloved?

Allerhiertekiereste

all-heart-dear?) Heavenly Father surely know that no man can of his own understanding (intellect) understand unto salvation, even he that reads or hears read, because Your judgments are a great deep (abyss) (

Psalms 36:6

), and therefore much less can anyone, for oneself or others, (understand) unto salvation by themselves, that in speech (word) can(?), since no one by themselves can open their lips to proclaim Your praise

(Psalm 51:15)

, and because he who plants and he who waters is nothing (

1 Cor. 3:7

).

And because God's kingdom does not consist in words, but in Your Spirit's power, we pray thee, O merciful God - who has all the true keys (Nøgel?) to the correct understanding of Scripture and has all people's hearts in Your divine hand, and who can make from dead earth a living man, according to Your image, and can from a stony heart make a heart of flesh, yes even the one who is dead in sin, you can make alive in your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ - that You will pour out Your Holy and Good Spirit upon us (**Joel 2:28**) which may be powerfully [...second page...]

present in the Word, for your Fatherly promise to enlighten our darkened understanding so that it rightly understands the Scriptures, and to give us boldness to open our mouth, to proclaim the Gospel secret of Your Son Jesus Christ's merit and worth, and to open [pierce through] our ears, and to anoint our spiritual eyes that they see Your divine will in the Word, and that, of the body heed the spiritually good things prepared for us, and to write your law in our hearts, and unite them with you that they fear Your divine name, and to keep our spiritual food, thoughts, words and deeds on the ways of salvation, on that we poor people had to be snatched from Satan's chains (bondage), from our own depraved and twisted mind, by God, and from his (Satan's) spiritual kingdom of darkness and our foolish mind.

So then we rightly know and love Your divine word, the true spiritual Word and Light, which it is, and (find strength?) in your Holy Spirit's good work and sealing, upon thy dear Son's merit and worth, that it might greatly strengthen us in Jesus Christ, and uphold us in all good speech and good deeds, and keep us with his divine hand that no fall should overthrow us (no matter) how great it may get (become), in the fact that we forever must (will) be preserved amongst all good chosen (elected?) Angels, people and tongues, your glorious (wonderful) Council of Law and Honor, and ourselves your poor children of eternal soul and body's adornment (beauty) and joy.
Amen.

Here are some more pictures of the book:





For even more photos [see this page](#) .