



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on September 19, 2019

“Lettuce Pray”: Seminary Students Confess Their Sins Against Plants ... to Plants

At last, the students at leftist Union Theological Seminary have dropped any pretense of association with traditional Christian thought. On Wednesday, the school proudly announced on Twitter, the scholars gathered in their chapel and confessed their sins to houseplants.

The unsettling yet amusing event invited what one might expect and what the event so richly deserved: one sneering tweet after another, the synopsis of which might be this:

The seminary’s professoriate is off its rocker.

The Confession

The tweet from the citadel of “progressive” Christianity showed a [young woman sitting crossed legged](#), like a Hindu in meditation, or a Navajo in his sweat lodge, in front of potted greenery, which in turn rested upon what appears to be soil tossed on the floor.

Behind this thoughtful setting sat the students, presumably uttering silent reparation for their sins against Kingdom Plantae.

“Today in chapel, we confessed to plants,” the [tweet began](#). “Together, we held our grief, joy, regret, hope, guilt and sorrow in prayer; offering them to the beings who sustain us but whose gift we too often fail to honor. What do you confess to the plants in your life?”

Normal folks don’t confess anything to plants, but in any event UTS’s tweet about the event inspired an amusing litany of replies, [including this gem](#): “Jesus spoke to a plant once....didn’t go so well for the plant.”

“What Jesus said: Let us pray,” [a Christian mom wrote](#). “What they heard: Lettuce pray.”

Others joked about the Veggie Tales cartoon series, but among the replies [was a succinct explanation](#) of what was wrong with the “confession.”

We don’t confess to plants, but to God. Plants don’t sustain the earth, God does. Plants are important to our ecosystem, and we are commanded to care for the earth, but the Plants AREN’T GOD, and the whole exercise is pantheistic and pagan in nature.

UTS was not amused, and hurled [an 11-tweet encyclical defending](#) the pagan ritual, which it called “beautiful,” and averred that our “work must be building new bridges to the natural world” and “creating new spiritual and intellectual frameworks by which we understand and relate to the plants and animals with whom we share the planet.”

“Churches have a huge role to play” [one of the UTS tweets pontificated](#). “We must birth new theology, new liturgy to heal and sow, replacing ones that reap and destroy.”





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[Noting that UTS is treating](#) plants as “fully created beings, divine Creation in its own right — not just something to be consumed,” the thread posed this question: “Because plants aren’t capable of verbal response, does that mean we shouldn’t engage with them?”

No wonder one reply to the original news [was this](#): “I think you smoked one of the plants first.”

No Campus Group for Plants

The event was “just one expression of worship here,” and UTS “is grounded in the Christian tradition,” the [website apologia for the “ritual” explains](#). Yet that explanation, which links to the long Twitter thread, divulges that the school is less “grounded in the Christian tradition” than the generic, progressive Christian’s indifference to objective truth.

“Union’s daily chapel is, by design, a place where people from all the wondrous faith traditions at Union can express their beliefs,” the *mea culpa* continues.

One day, you may come in to find a traditional Anglican communion, another day you may enter into a service of Buddhist meditation or Muslim prayer. Another, you may find a Pentecostal praise service or a silent Quaker meeting.... Through this process, we learn from our neighbors and discern our own faith more deeply. In a world riven by religious and sectarian violence, we hope to model faith that seeks to build bridges and peacefully discern God’s will together in community.

In other words, UTS does not base its theology on the [words of Christ](#): “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man cometh to the Father, but by me.”

That is unsurprising. “Education at Union Theological Seminary is ... significantly instructed by the insights of other faiths,” the [UTS “About” page explains](#). “It makes connections between these traditions and the most profoundly challenging issues of our contemporary experience: the realities of suffering and injustice, world religious pluralism, the fragility of our planet, and discoveries of modern science.”

[Thus does the school offer](#) several caucuses that appeal to “contemporary experience,” but are not confined to the usual campus standards. In addition to its black, “Latinx” and “queer” caucuses, the school features caucuses devoted to the “body,” “disability justice,” “ecology,” and yet another that really reaches into the fringes: “Fierce” is a caucus for “queer P.O.C.,” meaning minority homosexuals.

But, happily, this mix does not include a caucus for plants.

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