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The Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

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# INTERSECTIONS

faith + life + learning

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NUMBER 2

Winter 1997

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*The Vocation of a Lutheran College, II*



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faith + life + learning

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## **Contributors to this Issue**

### Focus:

Walter R. Bouman . . . . . *Lutheran Tradition: Five Continuing Themes*

### Responses:

Steven Paulson . . . *My Wife, We Have Not Come to the End of All Our Trials, but a Measureless Labor Yet": The Lutheran Argument in Colleges.*

Kimberly Hague & Jon-David Hague. . . *Disputatio Pro Quo? The Search for Lutheran Education*

Jane Hokanson Hawks . . . . . *Feeling at Home: Dimensions of Faculty Life*

Ben Huddle . . . . . *"You Shall Know the Truth, and the Truth Will Set You Free:" A Scientist's Perspective*

Chuck Huff . . . . . *On the Outside Looking Out: A Personal and Social Psychological Response*

### **Two Poems:**

Brian Wallace . . . . . *"The Advent Carol" & "The Madonna of Dohany Street"*

### **Institutional Focus:**

Baird Tipson . . . . . *Embodying the Tradition: The Case of Wittenberg University*

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**Intersections**

**Number 2, January, 1997**

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## Purpose Statement

This publication is by and largely for the academic communities of the twenty-eight colleges and universities of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. It is published by the Division for Higher Education and Schools of the ELCA. The publication presently has its home at Capital University, Columbus, Ohio which has generously offered leadership, physical and financial support as an institutional sponsor for the inauguration of the publication.

The ELCA has frequently sponsored conferences for faculty and administrators which have addressed the church - college/university partnership. Recently the ELCA has sponsored an annual Vocation of the Lutheran College conference. The primary purpose of INTERSECTIONS is to enhance and continue such dialogue. It will do so by:

- \* Lifting up the vocation of Lutheran colleges and universities
- \* Encouraging thoughtful dialogue about the partnership of colleges and universities with the church
- \* Offering a forum for concerns and interests of faculty at the intersection of faith, learning and teaching
- \* Raising for debate issues about institutional missions, goals, objectives and learning priorities
- \* Encouraging critical and productive discussion on our campuses of issues focal to the life of the church
- \* Serving as a bulletin board for communications among institutions and faculties
- \* Publishing papers presented at conferences sponsored by the ELCA and its institutions
- \* Raising the level of awareness among faculty about the Lutheran heritage and connectedness of their institutions, realizing a sense of being part of a larger family with common interests and concerns.

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## From the Publisher

With the arrival of issue Number 2 of *Intersections* we are well into the maturing of the Vocation of a Lutheran College project. In August, 1996 we gathered for the second annual conference on this theme. We heard from Walter Bouman of Trinity Lutheran Seminary on just "What is Lutheran; What is the Lutheran Tradition." The following pages capture on the printed page his words to us at the conference. His thoughts can be summed up by the headings for the major sections of his paper. He said that the Lutheran tradition is biblical, catholic, evangelical, sacramental, and world-affirming. I was particularly taken by Walt's words in speaking about the Lutheran tradition being worlds-affirming. He talked about the world as being, "... received, enjoyed, served as God's Gift." As we think about location, not of the college as institution for a moment, but as what we instill in the minds and hearts of our students, this kind of stewardship of creation takes on special meaning.

The conference included three presentations on "How is the Lutheran Tradition Embodied in its Colleges and Universities," Wendy McCredie from Texas Lutheran University and Baird Tipson from Wittenberg University shared their thinking set in the context of the institutions they serve. In Barid's presentation, included in this edition, he concludes by speaking about "... five fundamental things that every Wittenberg students should be able to do upon graduation." He makes the case that all five grow out of the Lutheran roots of Wittenberg. They state that Wittenberg wants every graduate to:

- + respond with understanding to the depth and complexity of the human condition
- + recognize, define, and solve problems
- + develop a sense of vocation
- + assume leadership
- + take moral responsibility

They look good.

Wendy's paper concluded with words about her perspective on the reasons we serve these institutions. She said that we "... do so because in large measure [we] share the concern. . . for justice and for the non-judgmental search for truth. She said that many of us would claim "... that [we] engage in action for the sake of love and justice for our neighbors. She goes on to say that "[i]t is this commitment to the non-judgmental understanding that promotes action for the sake of love and justice that unities us. It is we who embody both individually and collectively the Lutheran tradition." The Vocation of a Lutheran conferences have been an opportunity for all of us to gain a greater understanding of that tradition.

Bob Vogel, in his presentation: "Coherence - And Now what? challenged many of us on the campuses and in the church to think about how we make this tradition of which we are a part more real in the way we do our work. In speaking to those of you who serve on the campuses he said:

*Many have expressed what a joy and blessing it is to be a part of places like ours where you can be totally engaged in what you are doing. You don't have to leave your beliefs, your values, your feelings at home when you go into the classroom and when you are talking with students or colleagues. You can talk about your own beliefs and values. You can share what you hold to be the meaning of life.*

For all that the Lutheran tradition in higher education may mean theologically, and how it has expressed itself historically, it comes to life and has its meaning on the campuses in how we give expression to it in our own lives and the ways we lead them and share them.

The planning committee which serves this project is now engaged in plans for the third conference, which will also be supported by the Lilly Endowment out of funds still available for the 1996 grant. We are also contemplating the direction for future issues of *Intersections*. We are considering putting in place a vehicle to provide opportunities for scholars on our campuses and elsewhere to engage in writing and sharing on this topic. In all of this your thoughts are always welcome. Your evaluations of the two conferences continues to help shape future events.

The Vocation of a Lutheran College project really lives, however, through the continuing and broadening dialogue taking place on your campuses. We are excited by the proposals we received from you about these activities. We are anxious to stay in touch with how they proceed. Thanks to all of you for your interest and your commitment to exploring the tradition in which we live and serve.

James M. Unglaube  
Director, Colleges and Universities  
ELCA Division for Higher Education and Schools  
January, 1997

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### From the Editor

#### An Invitation

Those of you who read the first issue of *INTERSECTIONS* and have this one in hand probably recognize a pattern. Both of these first two issues have much the same format: 1) a lead essay previously delivered at a Vocation of Lutheran College Conference and 2) several responses. The question therefore naturally arises, will all issues of *INTERSECTIONS* look like this? The answer is no, definitely not.

While we plan to devote one issue each year specifically to continuing the dialogue initiated at these conferences, we also intend another issue which is more open-ended, open-textured, and shaped by the kinds of essays, reviews, poems and/or other artwork you, our readers, send us. We'd be particularly interested in getting letters about things we've already published, things that may have inspired, puzzled or upset you. The idea is to engender engaged discussion. We hope, in fact, to receive so much good stuff from you to necessitate publishing more than twice a year. We aren't presently set up to do that, but it would be a nice problem to have.

Thus far a trickle of interesting manuscripts have begun to come in. We are in process of planning an exciting summer issue which will be sent out to your campuses first thing in September. So please write us and share your good work with us and thereby with your fellow faculty / administrators at the other ELCA colleges and universities.

#### Turning Toward Learning

Every semester I have a class of about 30 seniors read some selections from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. What they read includes the following sentences: "Learning and study [*theoria*] seem to be the only activities which are loved primarily for their own sake. For while we derive an advantage from practical pursuits beyond the action itself, from study we derive nothing beyond the activity of learning." These sentences never fail to draw a response, usually a disbelieving hoot of laughter. But frequently a student will say, "Not only is study useful for other ends, but that's the only reason that it's pursued at all. No one would study just for the sake of learning. It's not like it's pleasurable or something. If I didn't think the diploma would get me a job, I wouldn't be studying at all." At this point we usually have an interesting discussion about how an otherwise intelligent Hellene like Aristotle could have gotten this so wrong.

I am not the only person who has noticed that many students are not well disposed toward learning for its own sake. Many faculty colleagues (at my own and other institutions) testify to an array of facts: a) Students rarely pursue a reference or a suggestion to read something in addition to what is assigned. b) Even assigned material may be skipped if "it won't be on the test." c) Faculty are, consequently, spending more and more time "policing assignments." I, for example, find it necessary to have my students turn in daily reading reports on assigned reading. Failing to require this I find only about 1/5 of my students will read the assignments in a timely manner. d) Faculty who require substantial amounts of work from students (even in traditionally high-pressure majors like pre-med) are frequently blamed, negatively evaluated, and even verbally assaulted for expecting the quantity and quality of work they do. e) There is an alarming increase in cheating, plagiarism and academic dishonesty across the country. Frequently students respond to the "inconvenience" of being caught and punished by saying: "After all, I just wanted the grade, not to really learn that stuff."

Faculty gatherings over lunch or coffee often turn toward complaining about the lack of learning motivation in students. The problem is, of course, that our complaining about it does nothing toward addressing the problem. So my focal question is: "What can a college/university do to help turn students in a positive way toward learning?" I will not claim that it's a problem that can be "solved" or eradicated because the sources of it lie so deep in our culture. By the time students arrive in college the attitude may already be quite firmly set. But the question is: "What can we do to *help* turn students toward learning?"

Neil Postman, in his recent book, *The End of Education*, argues that this alienation toward learning takes place as commonly as it does because

young people across our country lack a set of narratives within which the efforts of learning make sense. Postman writes, "Without a narrative, life has no meaning. Without meaning, learning has no purpose. Without a purpose, schools are houses of detention, not attention. This is what my book is about." There are publicly espoused narratives that make sense of getting a diploma: "getting a good job," i.e., one that will support a high-consumption lifestyle, and there are narratives within which educational reform may make sense: "Keeping the US competitive in world markets." But, he notes, there are few, if any, narratives that connect the effort and discipline required for learning to a larger story or sense of purpose that students relate to.

Postman goes on to argue for organizing education around five "mega-narratives" that he thinks would make sense to college-age learners and inspire the effort required for learning.

Spaceship Earth - How can we learn to live sustainably and well in a world with finite resources?

The Fallen Angel - The investigation and acceptance of our history as an error prone species combined with a serious effort to learn from our own mistakes.

The American Experiment - The serious re-posing of Lincoln's question, whether a government of the people, by the people and for the people can long endure.

Word Weavers/World Makers - Learning how the creation of a language also constructs a world.

The Appreciation of Diversity - Learning to appreciate racial, cultural, ethnic, and linguistic diversity and learning to savor the richness of a pluralistic culture.

The discussion of any one of these could, I am sure, occasion lively debate among any faculty group. But I list them here not to discuss each so much as to appropriate Postman's general idea. I believe that there is merit in Postman's suggestion that many students today lack narratives in terms of which learning makes sense and has meaning. Postman suggests that those of us who teach in institutions embedded in a religious context do not have this problem. He suggests that education in a religious context automatically solves this problem since it naturally provides religious mega-narratives that motivate and inspire learning. I only wish this were so, but I think Postman here has overstated the case.

Each of the 28 ELCA colleges and universities has a mission statement. A quick reading of our college catalogues reveals, however, that they are, for the most part, general, vague, and innocuous. They are frequently statements designed to imply little and offend no one. But even in cases where the mission statements are fairly well-focussed and memorable one comes away from the reading of the catalogue with the feeling that there is little, if any, implicit connectedness between mission statement and academic program. So, the question is, how can we expect students to be inspired to learn by our mega-narratives when the faculty, administrators and trustees of our institutions are so little inspired by them?

Even in cases where there may be a close match between mission narratives and program we may fall short of Postman's ideal if we fail to make the connection explicit to each generation of faculty we hire and each generation of students we admit. How clear are we about the narratives that shape what we do and why we do it? Do we simply suppose that because people have read the catalogue that this connection is clear and obvious? Do we assume that the same statements that may have inspired learning and teaching at our institutions in the past continue to do so today? Do any students and faculty come to our institution because of its informing mega-narrative? Like all good philosophers, I have more questions here than I have answers. But sometimes questions can be informing and provocative too.

I want to pose a challenge to all of us who work at education within the Lutheran tradition. The first part of the challenge is to identify some of the mega-narratives which may be of particular salience to Lutheran Christians. Here are some that occur to me: a) An exploration of the meaning of **stewardship**, particularly the stewardship of creation. b) An exploration of **the freedom of the Christian** and its implications for learning. c) The implications of **sacrament**; that the transcendent is present in, with and under the concrete and ordinary. d) An exploration of **vocation** as it applies to career, our responsibility in and to our society, and to the vocation of being a student as well. I am willing to bet you can think of others at least as interesting.

While I think it would be a mistake for all of us to list all of these as informing mega-narratives (since no institution could programmatically do justice to all of them) it would be refreshing to see some of us take some (or at least one) of them seriously. An institution explicitly inspired by the freedom of the Christian or by the dimensions and implications of stewardship would, I think, be an inspiring and interesting place to be. What would be discouraging and dispiriting, on the other hand, would be to be part of an institution that lists all these things in its mission statement but uses the statement merely as a cover letter for business as usual.

Tom Christenson  
Capital University  
January, 1997

# LUTHERAN TRADITION: FIVE CONTINUING THEMES

Walter R. Bouman

Lutherans are "a decent, humble people," says Garrison Keillor, the Lutheran church's best known apologete. And they may have much to be humble about. In the USA, Lutherans are in the middle of the middle class, with lower average incomes than Presbyterians, Episcopalians, and members of the United Church of Christ, higher average incomes than Baptists, Pentecostals, and members of holiness churches. Only 12% of Lutherans are college graduates (compared with 34% for Episcopalians), but they have a high respect for college education.<sup>1</sup> My assignment is to describe the Lutheran theological tradition for college faculty members at colleges related to the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

I propose to carry out my assignment by addressing what I believe to be the most important theological commitments of the Lutheran tradition. It is impossible to tell the complex story of the Lutheran theological tradition in the course of one lecture.<sup>2</sup> What might help to make the task manageable is Alasdair MacIntyre's description of a tradition.

*When an institution -- a university, say, or farm, or hospital-- is the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices, its common life will be partly, but in centrally important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine is, Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict. ... A living tradition then is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument, precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition.*<sup>3</sup>

I want to identify five themes<sup>4</sup> which I believe are central to the Lutheran theological tradition. These themes embody the "continuity of conflict" which MacIntyre says constitutes a tradition. I cannot trace each of them throughout Lutheran history. But I can indicate their roots in the 16th century and something of the case that can be made for them today.

These are themes about which Lutherans argue, for if Lutheranism is a living tradition, it is "an historically extended, socially embodied argument." But more than that, these themes identify the Lutheran voice in that argument which is the larger Christian tradition. Extending this point even farther, these themes are the way Lutherans are involved in the argument about what it means to be human. The colleges and universities related to the ELCA are special

places where all these arguments are -- or ought to be -- vigorously taking place.

## I. The Lutheran Tradition is Biblical

Martin Luther (1463-1546) was a monumental figure in Western history, larger than life in his own life-time. He is of great importance to the Lutheran tradition, but he is not the founder of a religious institution in the sense in which, for example, Mary Baker Eddy is the founder of the Church of Christ, Scientist. He died excommunicated,<sup>5</sup> before there was a "Lutheran Church." If there is a "founding date" for the Lutheran Church it would be the Religious Peace of Augsburg of 1555.<sup>6</sup> The text of this agreement for the nearly 250 political entities which made up the German "Holy Roman Empire" also indicates that the Augsburg Confession, not the theology of Martin Luther, is normative for the Lutheran Church.

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*A living tradition then is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument, precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition.*  
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Nevertheless it is instructive to look briefly at the origins of the reform movement which eventually became the Lutheran Church. In 1515-16, the financial needs of the papacy, the imminent election of a new emperor, and the political ambitions of the Elector of Brandenburg combined in a rather sordid scheme.<sup>7</sup> Albrecht of Brandenburg, newly appointed Archbishop of Mainz, used the sale of indulgences to finance his purchase of a papal dispensation so that, contrary to canon law, he could occupy three bishoprics. His primary salesman was an unscrupulous Dominican monk, Johann Tetzel.

Tetzel was not allowed to peddle his wares in Electoral Saxony, but he came close enough to Wittenberg, where Luther was professor of Bible at the recently founded university, so that parishioners from St. Mary's, Wittenberg, where Luther was also one of the preachers and confessors, returned with indulgence documents which, they thought, gave them forgiveness for future as well as past sins. Luther denounced this outrageous distortion of the church's

traditional teaching on indulgence in an eloquent sermon early in 1517. Seven months later, on October 31, he posted 95 Latin theses for debate in the academic community on the true teaching about repentance, confession, and forgiveness.

The 95 Theses are not a declaration of independence. Luther proposed debate on them "out of love and zeal for the truth and the desire to bring it to light."<sup>8</sup> Luther was a complex person, and we know more about his thoughts than we do about any other pre-modern historical figure.<sup>9</sup> But his concern for "the truth" about Christian teaching, worship, and life is a constant throughout his long and stormy career.

It was this concern for "the truth" which led him to challenge many developments in medieval doctrine and piety, especially if these developments seemed to be in conflict with what Luther believed to be the apostolic gospel. It was not long before Luther, in a 1519 debate with Johann Eck, one of his most severe critics, found himself asserting the primacy of the Bible over against the teaching authority of popes and councils.

Luther did not claim, as did some of his reforming contemporaries, that *only* what is Biblical can be regarded as Christian. He had a healthy regard and appreciation for many developments in Christian history, for the creeds and dogmatic formulations of the ancient church, for music, hymnody, and liturgy, for the memory and example of the saints, for the sacramental power of the Eucharist, Baptism, Confession, and Ordination, for the visual arts and iconography of the church.

But he did claim that these developments could not be uncritically accepted on the basis of the teaching authority of the popes and the councils. Only those developments which were not opposed to the gospel could be accepted. By the middle of the next decade serious reforms were introduced in the churches of various German principalities and cities, reforms which soon spread to other parts of Europe, largely because of Wittenberg University.

Mass was celebrated in the vernacular language. The chalice was restored to the laity at communion. The prayers which made the Mass an offering to God instead of a gift from God were eliminated. Priests were allowed to marry. Monasteries and convents as places of cultivating superior virtues designed to placate God's wrath were dissolved and the monks and nuns were released from their vows. Legends about many saints and relics were subjected to critical scrutiny, and the piety which sought saving help from them was rejected. The practice of confession and penance was

reformed. All of this was done in the name of the authority of the Bible versus the teaching authority of certain institutions in the church.

By the end of the century and the beginning of what came to be known as the "Age of Orthodoxy" (I prefer the term "Scholasticism" to "Orthodoxy"), the authority of the Bible came to be regarded as foundational and essential to the intellectual defense of Protestantism. It was supported by the (non-Biblical) doctrine of the Bible's direct inspiration by God the Holy Spirit. Its divine origin was contrasted with all other sources of knowledge and information, which were said to be of human origin. Because the Bible was regarded to be of divine origin, its literal statements were held to be infallible, inerrant, on all matters about which it spoke. "No error, even in unimportant matters, no defect of memory, not to say untruth, can have any place in all the Holy Scriptures."<sup>10</sup>

The idea that Holy Scripture was inspired and inerrant was common ground for Lutherans, Roman Catholics, Calvinists, and Anabaptists. They argued over interpretation. All regarded the theological interpreters of Holy Scripture as having primacy on university faculties. Theology was "Queen of the Sciences," remembering that *scientia* is simply the Latin term for knowledge. But the claim that the Bible was inerrant in matters of history, geography, the natural sciences, languages, and indeed any area of learning was a claim waiting to be challenged. Making the claim led to the dissolution of the age of scholasticism and its replacement by the Enlightenment at the beginning of the 18th century.

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Can the Lutheran tradition still carry on an argument about authority, especially the authority of the Bible?  
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But "replacement" is too mild a term. The scholastic doctrine of the Bible was used by the theologians to mount fierce opposition to any new discoveries and learnings which seemed to disagree with Biblical information. The consequence was that almost all of the new disciplines in the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities came into existence not in conversation with theology but in the militant determination to be liberated from the hegemony and obscurantism of theology. The universities founded after the Enlightenment often no longer had theological faculties. The Lutheran and Christian argument was no longer part of the human argument. Church related colleges and universities in the USA came to be suspect in their

learning if there was too much conversation with theology or in their theology if there was too much conversation with learning.

Theology was discredited in terms of having anything to do with truth. This situation was exacerbated by the terrible religious wars of the 17th century. The "denomination" was born when in a society like the United States persons stopped murdering each other in the name of religion. Denominations came to recognize the more or less Christian character of each other. Religion became a matter of choice, preference, taste, rather than a matter of truth. Deconstructionism was the *coup d'grace*. Claims were to be evaluated in terms of perspective, not in terms of truth.

Can the Lutheran tradition still carry on an argument about authority, especially the authority of the Bible? The very question evokes for academics visions of religious inquisitors, of censorship rather than academic freedom, of monologue rather than conversation.

But the Lutheran tradition has within it resources for acknowledging a non-oppressive authority for the Bible. The Lutheran tradition asks the question about the authority of the Bible in terms of the Christian gospel. The relationship between Bible and gospel can be formulated as follows: Only the gospel gives the Bible its authentic authority, and only the Bible gives the church normative access to the gospel. The church's gospel is that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Messiah. He is disclosed to be such by his resurrection from the dead. Our access to this event in history comes through the documents which make up the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures, the Bible. These documents are the norm or standard by which the truthfulness, the authenticity, of the church's proclamation of the gospel is judged. The church's truthful or authentic proclamation of the gospel in turn gives authority to the church's Bible.

The argument about the authority of the Bible is currently most evident in the debate on matters of sexuality, especially the question as to the church's position on the sexual expression of homosexuality. Many, perhaps most, Lutherans think that the authority of the Bible is being undermined or rejected if the ELCA ordains sexually active homosexuals or blesses the committed relationships of homosexuals. Other Lutherans argue that the ELCA must reevaluate or change its condemnation of homosexual sexual expression because of the gospel. There is no resolution of this debate on the horizon. So the argument appropriately continues.

## II. The Lutheran Tradition is Catholic

The term "catholic" is here intended to refer to two things: (1) the Lutheran tradition's commitment to the continuity of the faith; and (2) the Lutheran tradition's commitment to the creeds of the ancient church as the content of the faith. The Lutheran tradition recognizes that we have received the faith from our Christian ancestors, that we confess the faith with and to our contemporaries, and that we have the responsibility to transmit the faith to our children. Just this continuity cannot be taken for granted in Protestant and pluralist America. No one who knows the history of Protestantism in America can doubt the fact that it has often been actively hostile to the catholicity of the church. The challenge to the Lutheran tradition in a context where it is a minority is whether and how it preserves its commitment to catholic continuity.

The Book of Concord of 1580 contains the content of the catholic faith: the confessional documents to which the clergy, congregations, synods, and the ELCA are pledged by constitution and ordination. These are the Augsburg Confession of 1530, the Apology (or defense) of the Augsburg Confession of 1531, the Smalcald Articles and the Treatise on the Power and Primacy of the Pope of 1537, Martin Luther's Large and Small Catechisms of 1529, and the Formula of Concord of 1577. The conclusion of the doctrinal section of the Augsburg Confession states:

*This is about the sum of our teaching. As can be seen, there is nothing here that departs from the Scriptures or the catholic church or the church of Rome, in so far as the ancient church is known to us from its writers. Since this is so, those who insist that our teachers are to be regarded as heretics judge too harshly.<sup>11</sup>*

In point of fact, the opponents of the reform movement contested only a few of the doctrinal articles of the Augsburg Confession, and the Lutheran-Roman Catholic dialogues of the past 30 years are demonstrating that even these few differences can eventually be reconciled.

Preceding these documents which grew out of the reform movement of the 16th century are the three ancient creeds, the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Athanasian Creed. There has been no great argument about the creeds in the Lutheran tradition. There are, however, some very important Lutheran "twists" to the essential content of these creeds, that is, to the confession that Jesus is God and that God is the Holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. These Lutheran "twists" surfaced in the creative theological ferment of the 16th century, and they have resurfaced in the

last fifty years of this century.

The medieval Christianity out of which the Lutheran reform movement emerged inherited an approach to the doctrine of God which can be traced back to Plato and Aristotle in Greek philosophy/theology and which received powerful expression in the writings of St. Anselm of Canterbury (1033-1109) and St. Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274). This approach held that God is a being distinguishable from the universe, and that God's existence can be rationally demonstrated or proven.

Two proofs or arguments were advanced, the ontological (Plato/Anselm) and the cosmological (Aristotle/Aquinas). The ontological argument held that if God is the greatest thing that one can think, God must necessarily exist, for anything that exists is greater than anything that does not exist. The cosmological argument held that a creaturely phenomenon like effect and cause, when traced back to its ultimate source, must result in acknowledging the existence of a First Cause, that is, God.

The critical philosophy of Immanuel Kant (1724-1804) ushered in modern secularity by demonstrating that these arguments cannot prove or demonstrate the existence of God. The existence of God cannot be regarded as knowledge, *scientia*, but is simply opinion. Secularity does not mean the end of religion or the end of belief in God's existence. It simply means that religion and the belief in the existence of God become options. Some persons are religious, some are not. Some believe in God's existence, others do not. What is more, the notion of true or false gods is irrelevant. Since the existence of God or gods is a matter of opinion, one opinion is as valid as another, as long as no one is threatened by the opinion. Edward Gibbon's description of the late antique world fits the modern world: The people thought all gods equally true; the philosophers thought them equally false; and the politicians thought them equally useful.

Martin Luther provided the Lutheran tradition with an "end run" around the critique of Immanuel Kant by reformulating the question of God, and by doing so in ancient Jewish rather than ancient Greek terms. Luther does this in his commentary on the First Commandment, "You shall have no other gods," in the Large Catechism. There he writes:

*What is it to have a god? What is God? Answer: a god is that to which we look for all good and in which we find refuge in every time of need. To have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe him with our whole heart . . . That to which your heart clings and entrusts itself is, I say,*

*really your God.*

Luther here defines "god" as whatever drives us, animates us, functions as the center or focus of our existence. Since every human has such a focus, all are "religious." The question now arises as to whether our center or focus is authentic or inauthentic, that is, whether our "god" is true or false!

Lutheran scholasticism did not exploit this move of Luther, and because it returned to the medieval theological strategies of Anselm and Aquinas it fell victim to Kant's critique. In the 20th century, however, Paul Tillich reintroduced the insight of Luther in his path-breaking book, The Dynamics of Faith. A "god" is an ultimate concern. "Faith" means having an ultimate concern. To regard something as ultimate which is not, in fact, ultimate (such as one's nation or race or family) is to have a false ultimate. Having a false ultimate is both idolatrous and destructive.

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The gospel starts with Jesus and thinks of God in terms of Jesus. Luther called this Christology "from below."  
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Note once again the character of these insights of Luther, and ultimately Judaism, as revived by Tillich. The very meaning of the term "god" has to do, first of all, with whoever or whatever one regards as ultimate, final. When the validity of these insights are acknowledged it is possible to raise appropriately the question as to whether someone or something which is being regarded as ultimate is authentically or inauthentically ultimate, that is, whether one has a true or false "god." False "gods" have been evident in the destructive dynamics of uncritical patriotism, nationalism, racism, and sexism. These insights have influenced the thinking of culture critics as diverse as Theodore Roszak, The Making of a Counter Culture; Neil Postman, Technopoly, and Ernest Becker, The Denial of Death. Great plays like Arthur Miller's Death of a Salesman and Lillian Hellman's The Little Foxes, and movies like The Pawnbroker disclose the destructive power of false "gods."<sup>12</sup>

These insights do not prove or demonstrate that there is a true "god." But they do help us to understand what Christian tradition means when it claims that Jesus is to be confessed as "God." Luther's insight into the meaning of "god" has had a profound effect on the way in which 20th century Lutheran theologians have understood the ancient church's confession that Jesus of Nazareth is an incarnate

person of the Holy Trinity, "God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God," as formulated by the Nicene Creed. The ancient church had formulated its confession in terms of the Hellenistic meaning of "God." "God" in Hellenistic terms meant a being totally outside of the physical universe whose primary characteristics were infinity and immortality.<sup>13</sup> How then to think of Jesus, who was both finite and mortal?

In order to make Christianity intelligible to the Greco-Roman culture, theologians and apologetes thought they needed to use the Hellenistic term "Logos" (Word) as the primary title of Jesus instead of the Jewish "Christ" (Messiah). They concluded that the Logos was the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, infinite and immortal. Attention shifted from Jesus' resurrection to the incarnation of the Logos. Logic compelled them to confess that the infinite Logos became a finite human being, that Jesus is in some sense God. But to confess that Jesus is God was to affirm ontological nonsense: the finite is infinite; the mortal is immortal. In making such a confession the ancient dogma lost its connection with the gospel and became instead an item of Christian ideology.

Martin Luther insisted that the creeds and dogmas of the ancient church have to do always and only with the gospel. But the gospel does not apply prior understandings of God to Jesus. The gospel starts with Jesus and thinks of God in terms of Jesus. Luther called this Christology "from below," that is, thinking about Jesus as the Christ historically rather than philosophically. Contemporary theologians Werner Elert, Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jürgen Moltmann, Eberhard Jüngel, Gerhard Forde, and Robert Jenson have retrieved the ancient dogma about the divinity of Jesus in a way which is both Jewish and apostolic.<sup>14</sup>

We pay attention to Jesus at all because of his resurrection from the dead. The resurrection is intelligible only in terms of a Jewish understanding of God as moving history toward a final destiny: the full realization of the Messianic Age. In the resurrection of Jesus the outcome of history is disclosed. Jesus is revealed as Messiah, as final "judge." He, not death, will have the last word. This is the gospel, the good news, proclaimed by Jesus' disciples, by Christianity. Hence the earliest witnesses already give Jesus the highest titles, including the title "God" (e.g., Romans 9:5; Phil. 2:6).

But "God" does not mean a being outside of the universe, infinite and immortal. "God" means whoever has the last word, whoever is final, authentically ultimate, whoever can make unconditional promises, that is, promises not conditioned by death. The resurrection reveals the identity

of that "whoever:" Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ, the Messiah! This is the meaning and power of the confession that Jesus is God.

If Jesus is revealed to be God in the resurrection, then the history of Jesus can also be said to be the history of God. Christian theology therefore should not make a priori statements about God, for example, that God is immortal, cannot die. Rather Christian theology should look at what happened in the history of Jesus and make statements about God on the basis of that history. Luther delighted in making such statements. God suckles at Mary's breasts. God dirties his diapers. And ultimately, God dies on the cross. An early 17th century Lutheran Good Friday hymn says: "O sorrow dread! God himself is dead! On the cross he has died."<sup>15</sup>

Because Jesus determines what Christian theology can say about God, the suffering and death of Jesus on the cross supplies the basis and content for the Christian doctrine of the Holy Trinity. Greek theology developed the doctrine of the Holy Trinity on a speculative basis, namely the relationship of the Logos to the Father in eternity prior to and apart from the incarnation. Augustine, in the West, made the doctrine of the Trinity irrelevant to Christian life because he taught that the distinction of the persons is appropriate only to describe the inner life of the Trinity itself. The activity of God in relation to the world is "indivisible," without distinctions.<sup>16</sup>

If Christian theology begins with the cross, however, then the doctrine of the Trinity is the way the church must confess God on the basis of the cross. In the cross suffering and death are taken into the being of God, and there they are overcome so that they do not have the last word. The cross and resurrection of Jesus are the basis for the church's proclamation of God as suffering and victorious love. The Trinity means that we are not abandoned in and to our suffering and death, that nothing can ever separate us from God's love (Romans 8:28-39).

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When justification by faith becomes one in a list of doctrines to be believed, it has lost its power.  
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This also affects our understanding of the language used in the Trinitarian confession. The meaning of "Father" does not derive from our experience or expression of fatherhood. It derives from the cross. "Father" means the self-offered vulnerability and participation of the Creator of Life in the suffering and death of the creature. The "Father" of Jesus,

the Eternal Son, is about self-offering and vulnerability, not about patriarchy and oppression.

### III. The Lutheran Tradition is Evangelical

The evangelical dimension of Lutheranism has its focus in the confession that justification is by faith. Martin Luther's personal struggles as a monk involved the question of how he could be certain of God's grace. The medieval arrangements of confession and penance, monastic discipline and pious works simply were of no help to his troubled conscience. Sometime, probably in 1513, while giving his first lectures on the Psalms in his new professorship at the University of Wittenberg, Luther made the astonishing discovery that God's grace is total and unconditional in Christ, that grace alone, and not works, is to be trusted in life and in death.

This all often seems irrelevant to modern persons. Paul Tillich observed (in The Courage to Be) that modern persons are concerned about the meaning of life, not the graciousness of God. When justification by faith becomes one in a list of doctrines to be believed, it has lost its power. It is evident that justification by faith has been seriously misunderstood when it is viewed as easy rather than rigorous discipleship (Yoder), as cheap rather than costly grace (Bonhoeffer).

Robert Jenson and Gerhard Forde have placed justification by faith into a context that is both true to its origins in the life of Luther and capable of perjurating power.<sup>17 18</sup> Luther's encounter with mortality both raised the ultimate question and drove him into the monastic life.<sup>19</sup> Mortality confronts us with the most radical question: What justifies my existence? Whatever we are able to do in this life to answer or evade that question, our lives have consequences which we are often not able to control in this life, and which we have no ability to control once we are dead. Only one who is beyond death is able to justify the existence of those who have death before them.

All justification of existence is by faith. The only appropriate question is, by faith in what? The Christian proclamation is that Jesus, the crucified one, lives. Death no longer has dominion over him (Rom. 6:9). He alone can make the unconditional promise that death does not have the last word, that your life and every life is justified. Life is to be lived in trust of that promise. Justification by faith in Jesus means that, if death does not have the last word, then there is more to do with my life than to preserve and protect it. I am free to offer my life.

### IV. The Lutheran Tradition is Sacramental

The sacramentality of the Lutheran tradition means that

when the Word of God is proclaimed, when the Holy Eucharist is celebrated, when Holy Baptism is administered, God is doing something in and through the human action of saying words, eating bread and drinking wine, washing someone with water. At this point the Lutheran tradition is unmistakably catholic, that is, it is offensive to every tradition which is non- or anti-sacramental.

When Samuel S. Schmucker (1799-1873), president and professor of Gettysburg Theological Seminary, proposed in 1855 an American version of the Augsburg Confession intended to make Lutheranism more acceptable to Protestant America, he sought to revise or eliminate precisely the sacramental articles of the confession. His proposal was rejected.<sup>20</sup> But the sacramental dimension of the Lutheran tradition continues to be threatened by the American revivalist tradition and its contemporary expression in the Church Growth Movement.<sup>21</sup>

How are we to understand that God is doing something in the Word, the Eucharist, and Baptism? Only a brief response is possible. When the gospel is proclaimed, that Jesus the crucified one is risen, that Jesus is the Messiah, that the messianic age has come, a new reality occurs. Those who receive the proclamation in faith are set free from the illusion of the denial of death, free from the desperation of despair. God creates an authentic vision for the future.

On the basis of his promise and the church's prayer Jesus, the Christ, comes to be present as the crucified and risen one in, with, and under the bread and wine of the Eucharist. He does not come from the past, evoked as a memory. He does not come from outside the physical world, wherever that might be, if at all. He comes from the future. He has not ascended to a different place in space, but to a different place in time. He has ascended to the final future of the consummated Reign of God. We are still at that point in time where the Reign of God has already begun but is not yet consummated. Hence Jesus is present as the power of the future. It is Jesus, embodied in history who comes as the self-offering one (his crucified body and shed blood) so that the community, shaped by the power of his offering, has the power to offer itself.

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We are to regard the world as good, as gift. It is gift and good in its finitude.  
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Holy Baptism into the Triune Name is initiation into the Triune life of God. The power of death is displaced by the

Lordship of Jesus. We are set by the Triune God into the struggle between the power of death and Reign of God, a struggle which takes place within ourselves and as well as within the world. In Baptism we are grasped by the God who will not give up on us and who will not let us go.

#### V. The Lutheran Tradition is World-Affirming

The sacramental dimension of the Lutheran tradition leads directly to the Christian affirmation of the world. The Christian doctrine of creation is the way we are free to look upon the world, to regard the world, if indeed the gospel is true. We are to regard the world as good, as gift. It is gift and good in its finitude. God alone is God. The world is not infinite, ultimate. Therefore it cannot be the source of ultimate terror nor the object of ultimate value. It is to be received, enjoyed, served as God's gift.

If the creation of the world is a vision of the world, that vision involves not only how the world is to be received but also how the world is to be treated. Humanity is called to stewardship of creation, a calling never more urgently necessary than in the face of the growing ecological challenge which confronts humanity. Christian prayer, according to Martin Luther's explanations in his Small Catechism, means asking how we hallow God's Name, serve God's Reign, do God's will, etc. This is expressed in the offertory prayer of the Lutheran Book of Worship.

*Blessed are you, O Lord our God, maker of all things. Through your goodness you have blessed us with these gifts. With them we offer ourselves to your service and dedicate our lives to the care and redemption of all that you have made, for the sake of him who gave himself for us.*

#### END NOTES

1. Wade Clark Roof and William McKinney, American Mainline Religion (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1987), pages 110-113.
2. The best introduction is Eric W. Gritsch, Fortress Introduction to Lutheranism (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994).
3. Alasdair MacIntyre, After Virtue (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), pages 206-207.
4. In Carl Braaten, Principles of Lutheran Theology (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), there are seven themes. My selection does not coincide with these; but I deal with most of the thematic material which Braaten identifies.
5. This is a matter of very little significance for present relationships between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. I mention it here only to indicate his ecclesial status at his death.

Herb Brokering said this in a similar, but inimitable way.

*Once there was a church where the people took the offering back home with them. First it was collected and brought to the altar. After they asked God to bless it, they took it and put it back into their pockets. They mixed it up with all their other money, so that they couldn't tell which was blessed and which was not. Then they left. All week they spent as though each piece was blessed and was to be used lovingly.*

There are many themes in the Lutheran tradition which give expression to its world affirmation. The place given to marriage by the Lutheran reform movement meant that celibacy was not to be regarded as holier, more pleasing to God. The concept of vocation meant that being parent or spouse, farmer or merchant, teacher or laborer was doing God's work as surely as if one became a clergy person.<sup>22</sup> With this vision and these themes comes an accountability before God to engage in authentic stewardship, authentic affirmation of the world.<sup>23</sup> Lutherans have not always trained themselves or wanted to be accountable. Often it is difficult to discern what responsible and accountable stewardship involves.

Just these factors makes Lutheran world affirmation an argument. Those who teach and learn are called to participate in this argument. If the church-related college or university is not only an instance of the church teaching, but also an instance of the church learning, then you are called to be learning for us so that we can be learning with you what is the will and work of God in the world today.

6. Henry Bettenson, Documents of the Christian Church (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), pages 301-302. The text states in part: "Let neither his Imperial Majesty nor the Electors, Princes, etc., do any violence or harm to any estate of the Empire on account of the Augsburg Confession ...Likewise the Estates espousing the Augsburg Confession shall let all the Estates and Princes who cling to the old religion live in absolute peace and in the enjoyment of all the estates, rights privileges."
7. Barbara Tuchman, The March of Folly (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), pages 52-126, describes the Renaissance popes, and especially the pontificate of Leo X from 1513-1521.
8. Luther's Works, American Edition, Vol. 31, page 25.
9. From among the many books about Martin Luther, three seem especially helpful. Eric Gritsch, Martin -- God's Court Jester

(Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), is an excellent combination of biography and theology. Peter Manns, Martin Luther (New York: Crossroad, 1983), is a sympathetic biography written by a great German Roman Catholic scholar. Gerhard Forde, Where God Meets Man (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1972) is an excellent introduction to Luther's theology for nonspecialists.

10. Abraham Calovius (1612-1686), Systema Locorum Theologicorum, Vol. I (1655), page 551. Quoted in Heinrich Schmid, Doctrinal Theology of the Evangelical Lutheran Church (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961), page 49.

11. The Book of Concord, edited by Theodore G. Tappert (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1959), page 47, par. 1. Future citations from The Book of Concord will be identified in the text by page and paragraph number.

12. Ernest Becker, in Angel in Armor (New York: Free Press, 1969), pages 73-98, has a brilliant analysis of The Pawnbroker, in which he does not make explicit reference to Tillich or Luther but whose influence he acknowledges elsewhere.

13. Robert Jenson, "The Triune God," Christian Dogmatics, Vol. I, edited by Carl Braaten and Robert Jenson (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984), pages 115-118, gives an excellent account of why and how hellenism's tragic view of life and history resulted in the attempt to protect "god" from the ravages of time and matter.

14. See especially Wolfhart Pannenberg, Jesus -- God and Man, Gerhard Forde, Where God Meets Man, Eberhard Jungel, God -- The Mystery of the World, Jurgen Moltmann, The Way of Jesus Christ, and Robert Jenson, Story and Promise.

15. The German text reads: "O grosse Not! Gott selbst ist tot, Am Kreuz ist er gestorben." The English translation somewhat weakens the dramatic German text: "O sorrow dread! God's Son is dead!" Then it continues with a theological reason for the death and has no translation at all for the third line. W. G. Polack, The Handbook to the Lutheran Hymnal (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1942), page 131.

16. Catherine LaCugna, God For Us: The Trinity and the Christian Life (San Francisco: Harper, 1991). Ted Peters, God as Trinity (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1993), pages 122-128, has an excellent summary of LaCugna's book. See also Walter R. Bouman, "The Trinity in the Experience of the Christian Life," Trinity Seminary Review, Vol. 15, No. 2 (Fall 1993), pages 57-68.
17. Eric Gritsch and Robert Jenson, Lutheranism: The Theological Movement and Its Confessional Writings (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), pages 36-44.
18. Gerhard Forde, Justification by Faith: A Matter of Death and Life (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1982).
19. Gritsch, Martin -- God's Court Jester, page 6.
20. Gritsch, Fortress Introduction to Lutheranism, pages 58-62.
21. Walter R. Bouman, Like Wheat Arising Green: How the Church Grows and Thrives, Vol. 8 (Valparaiso: The Liturgical Institute, 1991).
22. Gustaf Wingren, Luther on Vocation (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg Press, 1957). Cf., Robert Benne, Ordinary Saints (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), and Carter Lindberg, Beyond Charity (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1988), and Carter Lindberg, Beyond Charity (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993). Adaptation of the Lutheran understanding of vocation to a current issue is evident in Marc Kolden, "Christian Vocation in Light of Feminist Critiques," Lutheran Quarterly, Vol. X, No. 1 (Spring, 1996), pages 71-85.
23. Douglas John Hall, The Stewardship of Life in the Kingdom of Death (New York: Friendship Press, 1985).

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**“MY WIFE, WE HAVE NOT YET COME TO THE END OF ALL OUR TRIAL, BUT A  
MEASURELESS LABOR YET”:  
THE LUTHERAN ARGUMENT IN COLLEGES**

Steven Paulson

I remember hearing a professor tell our class that Homer's Odyssey was a voyage of self-discovery like the one on which we were to embark. But these days I think less of the voyage of discovery and more about the unreasonable patience of Penelope:

*She, the godly woman, told how much she endured in the halls; To look upon the destructive throng of the suitors; Who on her account had slaughtered oxen and goodly sheep in numbers, and much wine had been drawn off from the jars. And Zeus-born Odysseus told of the many cares he had brought upon men, and the many he had suffered himself in his woe. He told them all, and she enjoyed hearing, nor did sleep fall upon her eyelids before he told it all (XXIII, 301-309).*

Such was the joy of his return, but she seems never to have questioned his identity or her own, and knew what Odysseus could not see. The question of finding one's own identity is hard enough, but the complexity increases manyfold when identifying a tradition that is carried through time, often lumberlingly, by institutions like colleges. It seems right to me, then, that Dr. Bouman would consider the Lutheran tradition and its role at a university in light of Alasdair MacIntyre's description:

*When an institution--a university, say, or a farm, or a hospital--is the bearer of a tradition of practice or practices, its common life will be partly, but in a centrally important way, constituted by a continuous argument as to what a university is and ought to be or what good farming is or what good medicine is. Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict...A living tradition then is an historically extended, socially embodied argument, and an argument precisely in part about the goods which constitute that tradition (206-7).*

There are many questions we might ask about Lutheran identity in light of this, but two in particular stand out. What *is* the tradition of a Lutheran college? And perhaps more to the point today, is it a *living* one? Dr. Bouman's introduction (numbers down, Garrison Keillor making jokes) causes me to wonder if this is more the making of "a continuous argument" or the reading of a eulogy for an old, dead friend. Nevertheless, I would like to consider the

Lutheran liberal arts college as a "continuous argument," but for what, and against what?

Bouman suggests we can identify this argument by culling "principles" from the intellectual history of theology, and in this way express the "goods which constitute that tradition." His principles are five: a non-oppressive authority for the Bible, the Triune identity of God (Catholicism), that a person's meaning comes through faith, and is perhaps best if the faith is in Jesus (evangelical), that God does something to humans in the stuff of the world and not outside it, and that the world is good and humans should behave accordingly. These are impressive and no doubt descriptive of "Lutheran identity" in some way. I think what is most impressive about Dr. Bouman's speech is the remarkable range that allows us to see the Lutheran argument "extended in history," as MacIntyre had it. He takes us from Luther's nailing of the theses to the Confessions, the scholasticism of Lutheranism, Kant and up to today. It is a glorious romp!

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... I would like to consider the Lutheran liberal arts college as a "continuous argument," but for what, and against what?  
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Along the way he gives us many interesting arguments among Lutherans, and Christians generally, which raise questions for a Lutheran college. For example, is he correct that by falsely adopting an oppressive authority of the Bible-- apart from its use as gospel--Lutherans marginalized theology in the academy? Perhaps so. Yet as his own illustration of a better use of the Bible shows, when one comes to an issue like homosexuality there appears only to be increased friction today with "no resolution of this debate on the horizon." I ask myself, if this is the result of "non-oppressive" use of the Bible, why would anyone at a university bother to pick it up, except to be contentious? Is this really an example of what is meant by the Lutheran "argument," the increase of argumentativeness with no resolution on the horizon? It sounds too much like my students who mistake an argument for the mere assertion of various opinions. Shouldn't we rather be more interested in

what Luther himself meant when he said that it would have been better that the gospel had never been written at all, but that sad necessity compelled it--that the Bible is precisely for proclamation of God's own word resulting in death and new life? Shouldn't we rather become aware that this proclamation was as shocking in a world without modern scientific consciousness as it is today? Is this not the benefit of modern science and philosophy to remove those matters that are not the offense of the gospel, such as the miracles of healing a blind man, so that the real offense of Christ can be heard?

In this way I am glad to have Dr. Bouman rehearse the argument for what Lutherans have considered "goods." It allows me as a teacher in a Lutheran college to start asking the right questions. But what I want to see more than anything else is the earlier part of MacIntyre's description: "Traditions, when vital, embody continuities of conflict," and "a living tradition then is an historically extended, socially embodied argument..." For it seems to me that these are the real questions most universities have. Where are the "continuities of conflict," and how is the tradition extended in history to be "socially embodied"? We want to know if the tradition is alive, or if it should simply be recorded for posterity. The appearance of a journal like this one, and gatherings for discussions about the tradition are signs of life, but simultaneously they are signs of the lack of vitality and the end of a social embodiment to carry the argument forward. There may be life, but the pulse is feint.

I believe that what I am left with in Dr. Bouman's review of Lutheran principles is an argument for the catholicity of Lutheranism. This is no doubt true. That Lutherans are catholic in some sense is no doubt an important argument for Lutherans, especially in this age of ecumenical theology. I must then ask what he means by this for a Lutheran liberal arts college. Does this mean, as is often argued, that there is no longer a distinctiveness to *Lutherans*, or should not be? That what we need now is a "nondenominational Christian" university, or a college that is "open" to religion? Or perhaps the thought may be that it was a distinctive theological tradition once, but only temporarily, and its time is past. Lutheranism, so that argument goes, is meant to self-destruct when its mission is complete, and that time is now. How must we reconfigure then? Perhaps Dr. Bouman would have us think that Lutherans should be distinguished from non-Catholics who do not believe in the principle of sacramentality, but should not be distinguished from sacramental Catholics. Here the question just starts to get interesting for a university. For if there is a distinction on the sacramental line, or on the Christian line, or a distinction anywhere on theological grounds amid America's

smorgasbord of religions, what should this mean in terms of the "socially embodied," nature of the Lutheran argument? This is always where the matter becomes painful in universities, because it involves direct choices. Who should be hired. Who should be given tenure? What departments should be given "required" classes? Is the Lutheran tradition, or the Catholic tradition, or the Christian tradition to be given what is commonly called "privileged status," at one of these universities? If so, then doesn't this destroy the notion of free inquiry?

It seems to me when I contemplate what Bouman wants for a Lutheran university it is to say that if at times the Lutheran tradition was opposed to science, it should not now be, and if at times the Lutheran tradition was opposed to Catholics it should not now be. Its proper argument is against false identifications of "god" in the world, and for the identity of the Triune God revealed in Jesus Christ; as he says, "All justification of existence is by faith. The only appropriate question is, by faith in what?" Yet why at this point do the "continuities of conflict" seem to disappear in a conclusion that is so holistic and inclusive (beloved words in academia) that it becomes impossible to see where the rub is? There is, for example much more of a rub that people feel, it seems to me, between church and university than Bouman expects when he says that the church-related college is not only an instance of the church teaching, but also of the church learning. What church? A non-denominational one? The true catholic church? But is this embodied, and if so in what way? And don't the Lutherans have something to say about the church to help here? Are all the universities' teachers the church's teachers? Or only those who identify themselves as Lutheran, or generally "Christian?" Or only, God help us, those in the religion department?

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The thing which colleges and universities (as socially embodied arguments) don't like, and can't like, is that this truth is given outside of them.  
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Finally, after appreciating the skill and perception that Bouman brings to the task of identifying "principles" of Lutheranism, this makes me think that the real "continuities in conflict" that mark this tradition are glossed over. What marks this tradition is a praxis that seems embarrassingly small and foolish: "but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles" (I Cor. 1:23). This action comes into direct conflict with the world and is not a kind of pleasant relationship of service and inquiry in continuity with it. The *practice*, the *deed*, the *doing* which

marks a Lutheran is proclamation, which is embodied socially by a speaker and hearer and the material means of communication through persons and sacraments. A Lutheran finally is one who says and does something to another to end the search for life inside the law and gives it outside through hearing Christ's word. The thing which colleges and universities (as socially embodied arguments) don't like, and can't like, is that this truth is given outside of them. That means that a Lutheran college or university would have to admit that the search for truth, begun within its walls, must end outside them--that one cannot control this either by forcing a person into faith or by forcing a person out of it. Reason, though it may be its own penultimate goal, cannot be its own final goal. And this is just the beginning of the "continuities of conflict" a truly Lutheran practice would raise within an academic institution whose primary shape is given by the enlightenment.

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Why don't we conflict with the common intellectual experience like a good living tradition should? Are we afraid that Penelope won't wait for us or recognize us in our disguise, and that we will lose whatever scraps of identity we have left?  
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But let us return to our starting point. Isn't this sort of continuity of *conflict* what makes a tradition live? Isn't that what MacIntyre must mean by an argument that actually makes people behave and think differently, and perhaps even act counter-culturally? Perhaps Lutheran institutions have been too cautious and even frightened about what will happen if they really talk about what makes for truth, freedom and faith: proclamation. Why don't we conflict with the common intellectual experience like a good living tradition should? Are we afraid that Penelope won't wait for us, or recognize us in our disguise, and that we will lose whatever scraps of identity we have left? Why not assume what the *praxis* of proclamation assumes, that God is a trinity of persons who share one Holy Spirit, that God is not "whatever does not change," but the one who shares this Holy Spirit with those who are not God, that humans are not free but bound outside God's declaration, that the body is not a prison of the spirit, that the earth groans under sin and awaits relief, and that economy is not all there is to human polity! In other words, why not make the argument that there are good reasons for physical education and health at Lutheran institutions which may not fit with a society obsessed with body for the wrong reasons, that music proclaims something and does not merely entertain, that the political arts are more than the economic, that the economic

cannot be excluded lest we make differences again between male and female, slave and free? Why not float the question that if this Lutheran *praxis* is anything, then law is not merely a game of outwitting an opponent but has eternal consequences, because it is God's own will? Why not assert that though human beings construct certain realities, God is not a ghost in a machine or reduced to the mere play of metaphors, but uses human words to kill and make alive, that the present is not the only reality--trapping us with no exit, that fate is not all so grab it with gusto.

Are we afraid as educators to tell our students that if the proclamation Lutherans talk about would have any truth, then there would be "yes" and "no" in this world? Are we afraid to say that words may have meaning, that arguments can change a person and persuade the world but that some may be better and others worse, in fact some right and others wrong? Are we afraid that this is not neutral enough, or that it lacks pluralism? Perhaps some are correct in thinking that a new, post-modern situation enhances the possibilities of the conflict raised by Lutherans to live and thrive, but I suspect this will not be the help some hope for. The problem for Lutherans is not the Enlightenment, or even Post-Modernism, but what Paul called the "old Adam" (the old person), the Odysseus who slays all suitors and is still unsure of his identity. The problem for any of us, especially in a university, is that truth is made outside the walls of the institution and its continuing argument in a *praxis* which Lutherans call proclamation, which brings a person to an end in the law and raises a new person by word of the gospel. But the problem is even more complex than that, for the Lutheran understands precisely that this is not the *praxis* of merely an individual or an institution like a college or church, and is rather the *praxis* of God, the Father speaking the Word, his Son, which makes new people in its hearing by their Spirit. It is clear to me that an institution, however embodied, can't do that by following "principles," but it would be of the greatest worth to have an institution engaging its students in all the great arguments about truth and identity that knows at least that much. To know that one does not know has in the past been considered something, after all. If that actually happened, we might have a school to which our young Odysseus' might profitably be sent! Meanwhile, Penelope should put off other suitors, even if it doesn't look likely he'll return.

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# DISPUTATIO PRO QUO? THE SEARCH FOR LUTHERAN EDUCATION

Kimberl Hague and Jon-David Hague

Walter Bouman's essay, "What is the Lutheran Tradition?," speaks particularly to the question of Lutheran identity. Implicit in his argument is the fact that identity - being able to articulate what is unique or distinct about the Lutheran tradition - is important if the Lutheran affiliation of colleges is to be meaningful now and in the future. Bouman begins by offering Alasdair MacIntyre's definition of tradition as "an historically extended, socially embodied argument." This definition suggests that a living tradition embodies "continuities of conflict." Bouman then goes on to offer five theological themes from a historical perspective, which he sees as the core arguments comprising the Lutheran tradition; the Lutheran tradition as Biblical, Catholic, Evangelical, Sacramental and World-Affirming.

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Luther's proposed curriculum, which included training in biblical languages, emphasized an individual's ability to reason over the authority of the ruling church bodies.  
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In addressing the question of identity with a view to history, Bouman places emphasis on something we all know well on a personal level, that continuity with the past is the key element of present and future self-definition. The reason I know I am the same individual that I was years prior is because of the story I tell about myself. Similarly, if there is to be any pride or even identity in calling a college Lutheran (and not just a nominal or financial association) it must begin with an understanding of the past that creates continuity with where we are now and where we hope to be in the future. Bouman offers his five themes as the substance of the inner-Lutheran argument and leaves it to us to carry on the tradition by continuing to discuss and elaborate on them. Furthermore, he challenges us to recognize the Lutheran tradition as one voice amid larger arguments such as the Christian tradition and the argument over what it means to be human.

In our response, we would like to do as Bouman suggests and recognize Lutheranism as one voice within the larger argument of what compromises good higher education. Similar to Bouman's historical perspective on his five themes, we point out that this Lutheran voice has a continuity with the past that can be drawn on to provide a sense of identity for our colleges and their place within the larger academy. We offer a brief glance at one historical

event which has been important to our thoughts in the search for Lutheran academia and which offers useful perspectives to the discussion of higher education. This event is Luther's curriculum reform at Wittenberg University. The reform is an interesting place to begin addressing the Lutheran voice in higher education.

As a professor at Wittenberg University, Luther spent several years formulating and fighting for changes in the curriculum. Luther was unsatisfied with the methodology of medieval scholasticism, which emphasized the dictation of doctrine and authority of the church institution over a student's own direct engagement with the biblical text. Inspired by certain humanistic principles, Luther adopted a position which challenged this method and the then current curriculum at Wittenberg. He proposed that the university begin to introduce lectures on classical authors and offer, for the first time, instruction in Greek and Hebrew language. This training provided the students with the skills they needed to encounter the scriptures themselves and to ponder important theological questions. In the spring of 1518, only months after the 'posting' of his 95 theses, Luther's reforms were actually instituted.

The nature of these reforms was vitally linked to Luther's own theological development. His conception of justification by faith and his assertion that no one person or body of persons had the authority to dictate for all the true interpretation of holy scripture formed a foundation for his approach to theological education. These notions gave the students at Wittenberg the awesome responsibility, or even obligation, to read and interpret the biblical text. It forcefully asserted the primacy of the biblical text and acknowledged God's gift of revelation. Certainly, in the classroom and pulpit, Luther argued for his own interpretation of scripture and his legacy provides evidence that he did so persuasively. However, his curriculum reforms and the premises upon which they were founded tell us that he did not believe his understanding to be the only valuable one. His teachings were not intended to replace a student's own engagement with scripture.

To be sure, the motives and results of Luther's reforms present a complex picture which can be viewed from many different angles. In thinking about our philosophy of higher education, it is the spirit of these reforms that we have found most useful and which may be helpful in the search for

Lutheran academia. As Luther proposed to give the students at Wittenberg the skills they needed to engage the biblical text, we believe that we also have a responsibility to provide students with every possible tool for understanding and drawing conclusions in our respective fields. In the classroom, we do not hesitate to offer students our own interpretations of a certain topic and we encourage students to practice the important skill of arguing their perspective in a persuasive manner. However, in the spirit of Luther's reform, we find it imperative to acknowledge that our understanding is neither the ultimate authority nor the final word on a matter. The presentation of an instructor's perspective cannot replace a student's own engagement with the relevant subject matter. With respect to Lutheranism, "Our challenge is to give the tradition life in the context of the academy and allow it to rub up against the disciplines and epistemologies of the modern world." (Keljo, p.14) This implies that we trust in the authority of the Christian gospels and believe that the value of Lutheran tradition will stand on its own merit if students are made aware of it.

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We do not mean that colleges should make courses in Luther mandatory for all, but that in some way. . . students and staff should become familiar with the events that shaped the tradition and its relationship to the academy.  
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Luther's curriculum reform and our reflection on it is only one small part of the Lutheran voice in the argument over good higher education, In mentioning this example, we hope

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concerning Luther and Lutheranism to students and staff to emphasize that the simple presentation of issues will go a long way toward establishing meaning in the Lutheran affiliation of colleges and creating the dialog which is the life of the tradition itself. We do not mean that colleges should make courses in Luther mandatory for all, but that in some way (through lectures, reading in the freshmen curriculum or introductory sessions for new professors) students and staff should become familiar with the events that shaped the tradition and its relationship to the academy. Regardless of how individuals choose to embrace the tradition, it is important to recognize that when they come to a Lutheran school (by choice or chance) the Lutheran tradition becomes, at least in some way, part of their life and they become part of the Lutheran tradition.

Being at a Lutheran college, we suggest, means that the Lutheran voice will be represented more frequently in larger discussion, by a faculty member or student who feels the perspective may have something important to offer to a given discussion. It is in this context that students and faculty members will take themes and historical reflection like those offered by Bouman and carry them into intra-Lutheran dialogue and dialogue where Lutheranism is one voice in a larger discussion. The tradition will naturally evolve with the currents of the present and the future.

From a historical perspective, Bouman sought to convince us that the Lutheran tradition is distinctive. For him, Lutheranism is not to be characterized by any one trait but by many traits whose significance has been discussed and debated over the course of time. In a similar way, we suggest that there is a uniquely Lutheran voice in the argument over good higher education. In offering the example of Luther's curriculum reform, we hope to encourage discussion on the history of Lutheranism and the academy and how that history is relevant to the present identity of the Lutheran college.

# FEELING AT HOME: DIMENSIONS OF FACULTY LIFE

Jane Hokanson Hawks

The themes identified by Walter Bouman in "What is the Lutheran Tradition?" at the "Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference II" helped me further define my role as a faculty member in a Lutheran institution. The Lutheran tradition has greatly influenced the person I have become during my lifetime.

## My Lutheran Influence.

I was baptized, confirmed, and married in the Lutheran Church. Because I lived across the street from the church for most of my childhood, I played with the pastor's children and had good vantage point for watching all of the activities that took place at the church--both happy and sad.

When I left for college in 1973, I felt much more comfortable attending a small Lutheran college than a state university. Hence, I was delighted to receive an Aid Association for Lutherans Scholarship that helped bridge the money gap created by my desire to attend a more expensive Lutheran college. The BSN I received from St. Olaf College prepared me well for my new role as a professional nurse. However, after I graduated and began my career, I realized that I had received a very special education that provided me with much more than the credentials needed to practice as a nurse. I also had developed the skills needed to succeed in life, cope with difficult circumstances, and enjoy the fine arts.

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After listening to Dr. Bouman, I suddenly realized why teaching at a Lutheran institution feels so "right" for me and why it is something that should not be lost as we move into the next century.

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I practiced nursing for a few years before beginning a nursing education career that has now spanned eighteen years. I spent thirteen of those years as a faculty member at four non-church-related colleges and universities. It wasn't until I began my fifth teaching position at Midland Lutheran College five years ago, that I finally found a special place as a faculty member. It was almost like coming home. After listening to Dr. Bouman, I suddenly realized why teaching at a Lutheran institution feels so "right" for me and why it is something that should not be lost as we move into the next century.

Dr. Bouman's address helped me to see that helping students understand and cope with what it means to be human is what we do so well at Lutheran institutions of higher learning. The foundation for this success may be in the liberal arts course work, but it is also depicted in the day-to-day interactions that faculty have with students and other faculty. I can best illustrate this with three examples: the role of a member of the faculty organization, the role as a teacher, and the role as a nurse and teacher.

## Role as Member of Faculty Organization.

First, I will address my role as a member of the faculty organization. I recently chaired an ad-hoc committee that developed a faculty mentoring program for Midland Lutheran College. Although we could identify key points under the areas of curricular, teaching, social, and political roles of faculty, the committee struggled with how to explain and foster the spiritual role as we oriented the mentors for the program. Dr. Bouman's presentation helped me solidify what the committee meant by the spiritual role. Dr. Bouman's assertion that the five themes are the way that Lutherans are involved in the argument about what it means to be human was a wonderful starting point. The mentoring committee used Dr. Bouman's assertion to orient the mentors and it seems to have worked well. I make this conclusion based on the initial (first two months) success of the mentoring program and the recent funding for the program from the Lilly Foundation.

The mentors and mentees have developed relationships built on caring and support that have reached across disciplines to create a greater sense of community. For example, when one of the mentors learned of the recent death of a mentee's father, he called the faculty member's mentor. The assigned mentor immediately went to find the mentee. He was standing at the front of the classroom writing on the chalkboard. The moment he saw the mentor, he left the class and went into the hallway. The mentor hugged the mentee. That hug expressed more than words could at that moment. Helping the mentee through the loss of a family member is an example of how faculty interact with other faculty in dealing with human emotions such as grief or joy.

## Role as a Teacher.

All faculty, novice or expert, in liberal arts or professional disciplines, have a responsibility to facilitate the idea of what it means to be human with all students. Grief, joy, patience,

sorrow, and suffering are just examples of feelings and behaviors that can be explored in literature, nursing, business, music, journalism, chemistry, religion, and etc. classes. Only the approach used to examine these human feelings will differ with the class content being studied.

In college, students struggle with life situations and decisions. When given the opportunity, I have found that they enjoy discussing these events, decisions, and emotions because they have experienced many of them. As a teacher facilitates discussion of a musical performance or literature composition, it is easy to have students relate personal anecdotes that support the musical or literary message. Ethical questions can be addressed in business, journalism, nursing, and science courses.

Certainly, exploring what it means to be human in the classroom corresponds with the five themes outlined by Bouman. First of all, human feelings and behaviors were described in the Bible. Multiple references for study in the Bible can be found for those behaviors and feelings listed above. For example, grief is cited in Job 17:7; Proverbs 17:21; Jeremiah 8:18; Isaiah 53:4; and 2 Corinthians 7:9. Some of the citations concerning joy can be found in Psalms 4:7, 47:1, 51:2, 105:43, and 119:11; Isaiah 24:11, 35:10, 55:12, and 61:7; Matthew 2:10, 13:44, and 28:8; Acts 8:8; and John 3:29, 15:11, and 16:20. Matthew 18:26, Luke 8:15; Romans 8:25; and Hebrews 6:12 contain discussion of patience. Sorrow is cited in Proverbs 10:1; Ecclesiastes 7:3; Isaiah 35:10 and 53:3; Jeremiah 31:13 and 45:3; and John 16:20. Suffering appears in Romans 5:3; 2 Timothy 1:9; Hebrews 2:10; and 1 Peter 4:13. Citations of pride are found in Proverbs 16:18; Isaiah 2:11; Jeremiah 13:17; and Amos 6:8.

Secondly, the feelings and behaviors that humans experience are catholic in that they have been passed from generation to generation. Despite our human feelings and behaviors and their related struggles, we are saved by faith in God through his grace which ties us to Dr. Bouman's third point that Lutheranism is evangelical. Fourth, human feelings and behaviors are experienced with celebration of the sacraments. Whenever the Holy Eucharist or Holy Baptism are celebrated, we continue to experience what it means to be human and know that God is doing something through the human action of saying words, eating bread, drinking wine, or washing someone with water. Finally, to study what it means to be human is related to the fifth theme which Dr. Bouman states is world-affirming. This theme encompasses marriage as opposed to celibacy as well as the concept of vocation as a parent, spouse, farmer, teacher, laborer, or clergy being of equal importance for responsibility and

accountability are required in each case. Hence, these themes can also be tied into various classroom discussions.

#### Role as Nurse and Teacher.

In nursing, helping students to understand what it means to be human is relatively easy because nurses experience humanness each day--the loneliness experienced by nursing home residents, the fear experienced by the hungry and homeless, the joy experienced by new parents, the grief experienced by the terminally ill, the loss experienced by one who has lost a leg, a breast or a loved one. Hence, in the classroom these situations and how to provide care and comfort are discussed. Also, ethical issues are frequently encountered. For example, how much care should a person who cannot pay for services receive? What kind of treatment should the 90 year old patient whose kidneys have failed receive? Finally, nurses have to look at a patient's cultural practices and religious beliefs and provide care accordingly. Students may pray with patients or offer to get the chaplain when providing care.

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During my years of teaching, I have observed that nursing students display tremendous growth and maturity as they progress through college.  
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As a nurse educator it is also important to deal with the student's feelings and behaviors--joy with successfully performing a procedure for the first time, grief experienced when preparing a dead client for the mortuary, sorrow experienced when disposing of an aborted fetus, and disappointment with the grade received on an examination.

#### Conclusion.

During my years of teaching, I have observed that nursing students display tremendous growth and maturity as they progress through college. Perhaps the basis for this is that nursing students frequently encounter a variety of human emotions and behaviors. Hence, they regularly examine what it means to be human. I cannot think of a better setting for that experience than a Lutheran institution of higher education. No wonder I feel at home and am able to define my faculty role better! Thank you, Dr. Bouman!

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**“YOU SHALL KNOW THE TRUTH, AND THE TRUTH WILL SET YOU FREE”  
A SCIENTIST’S RESPONSE**

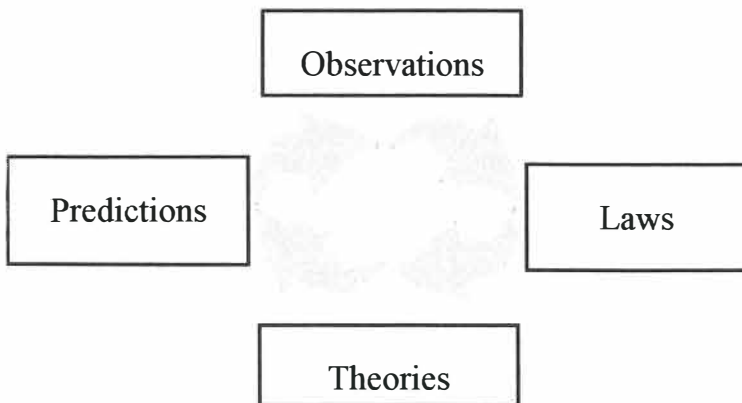
Ben Huddle

Prof. Walter Bowman presented a helpful paper at the 1996 Summer Conference for faculty at Lutheran colleges in response to the question "What is the Lutheran tradition?". He proposed five major themes that inform Lutheran (and other Christian) colleges: the Lutheran tradition is Biblical, catholic, evangelical, sacramental, and world-affirming.

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... I suggest that there is a way for students to look for the Truth that sets them free that is as valuable as the five traditions listed by Bowman: that is the scientific method.  
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I am neither equipped nor inclined to critique Prof. Bowman's proposals. As a scientist, however, it seems to me that Bowman overlooks a tradition, albeit a newer one, important at contemporary church related liberal arts colleges. That is a tool for knowing the Truth that was not available to Martin Luther, but is certainly available to twentieth (and twenty-first) century students. That tool is, of course, the scientific method. I would therefore add a sixth tradition critical for Lutheran (and other Christian) colleges.

I do not mean science, although strong arguments can and have been made that citizens are poorly equipped to live in a modern society without a good understanding of science. Rather, I suggest that there is a way for students to look for the Truth that sets them free that is as valuable as the five traditions listed by Bowman: that is the scientific method. This method can be summarized by four steps in a continuous cycle.



The scientific method begins with observations, made either in a laboratory where some conditions can be controlled, or in nature. When an observation is made repeatedly, or related observations are made by many observers, the collected observations are called laws. Theories are proposed to explain those laws. Theories try to answer the question "Why?" at a fundamental level. Theories lead inexorably to predictions, and predictions lead to further observations, and the cycle continues.

Some scientists have seen this cycle as the "engine of science". Others see an ever-expanding spiral representing our knowledge of the universe. Others see an ever-narrowing spiral focussing in on the Truth. Whatever the metaphor, the scientific method has been remarkably successful in understanding and in mastering our universe. It has been so successful that many "non-scientific" fields have adopted it; thus we have, for example, political science.

"Science" comes from the Latin "scientia", knowing. The scientific method is thus a method for learning the Truth. Everyone can participate in the scientific endeavor, if not as an active scientist, as a citizen knowledgeable of the power of the scientific method, who insists on rational answers. Application of the scientific method offers perhaps our best hope for solving many of the next century's problems, including human problems such as poverty, famine, pestilence and war.

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Scientists are expected to speak and act ethically, but too often we don't expect scholars in other fields to know the scientific method.  
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Because science is sometimes thought of as being difficult, there is a temptation to excuse our students from understanding science. We don't do our liberal arts students a service when we do this, just as we don't do our science students justice if we teach them science at the expense of ethics. My thesis is that we need to do both. For example, environmentalists are sneered at when they ignore the effects of the Second Law of Thermodynamics. Scientists are expected to speak and act ethically, but too often we don't expect scholars in other fields to be aware of the scientific method.

One of the pleasures of teaching at a Lutheran college is the opportunity for "truth seekers" to work together, sharing methods and insights. Not only is this conversation possible, it is (or should be) welcome, even expected. One of the traditions of a Lutheran college should be to treasure, cherish, and zealously protect this conversation. Colleges which stifle the religious tradition do so at the peril of losing their meaning. Colleges which stifle the scientific tradition do so at the peril of losing their significance.

A modest scientist would not claim that the scientific method is the only way to know the Truth, or even necessarily the best way to know the Truth. For two hundred years,

however, it has been an integral part of the human endeavor, and it deserves to be included in the Lutheran college tradition. The scientific tradition is not unique to Lutheran colleges, but neither are the five traditions enumerated by Bowman. And there may be others, but my assignment was to give a scientists' response to Bowman. I would conclude that the Lutheran tradition is Biblical, catholic, evangelical, sacramental, scientific, and world-affirming.

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### ON THE OUTSIDE LOOKING OUT: A PERSONAL AND SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSE.

Chuck Huff

Several years ago, sitting after dinner on the front porch, my friend DeAne Lagerquist suggested to me that I was likely a Lutheran at heart. I took this remark from such a staunch and storied Lutheran to be a compliment, but felt it as unlikely as my taking up buttered lutefisk instead of buttered grits; cold aquavit instead of warm bourbon. But research on couples suggests that they come to resemble each other more, in both opinion and physical appearance, the longer they live together. I may now have lived long enough among Lutherans to understand why DeAne made her comment, and having now heard Professor Bouman's comments on the Lutheran tradition, may even have some words to put to this foreboding.

In my comments here, I would like to make some personal responses to Professor Bouman's themes of Lutheran tradition, and to offer at least one social psychological comment on his observations. The personal comments are more in line with a conversation that might occur between a theologian and a beginning student -- I bring no special expertise to them, and am aware of Professor Bouman's immense reputation. The social psychological comments are more about who should participate in the conversation that currently defines the tradition on Lutheran college campuses.

#### A PERSONAL RESPONSE TO THE THEMES:

I am a Metho-Bap-terian, raised in the Southern United

States. Of the three traditions, Baptist is likely the most evident in my foundational beliefs (or at least in those I now react against). This is partly because Baptists are certain to be clear about what they believe (or at least about what you should believe) and partly because the place I picked up my Baptist schooling is Bob Jones University, an oddly apolitical but staunchly conservative institution. After steeping in fundamentalism for some time, I began inexplicably to think. This led to disastrous consequences for my youthful faith, along the lines of Kant's critique, outlined by Bouman.

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I appreciate honesty in people, and coming from the South, am still surprised when I find it in religious scholars.

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My main reason for remaining with the Christian faith has been my conviction that there is a "mysterium" both "tremendum" and "fascinans," and that Christianity is as fine a tradition as many within which to explore it. It has been around long enough so that we have markers for many of the most egregious mistakes (crusades, inquisitions, etc.) and are not likely blithely to believe we are immune from repeating them. Some of Bouman's themes begin to convince me there may be a more stable reason for my choice than the existential and pragmatic one I have made.

First, I was pleasantly surprised to hear Professor Bouman say baldly what I had often surreptitiously thought, that biblical inerrancy is a non-biblical doctrine. I appreciate honesty in people, and coming from the South, am still surprised when I find it in religious scholars. I was also pleased with his description of the current tension in the discussion of the authority of scripture; that scripture gives us unique access to the gospel, but only the gospel gives real authority to scripture. This preference for a dynamic story rather than a static idolatry (or even bibliolatry) seems to run through many of the themes Bouman explicates. To search for the gospel within the scripture is a fine way of bringing to life what in my youth was a rule book rather than a storybook.

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To search for the gospel within the scripture is a fine way of bringing to life what in my youth was a rule book rather than a storybook.  
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This distinction between gospel and scripture has the advantage of giving people on both sides of the debate about homosexuality something to say. We can surely say (like Paul in Romans over the eating of meat) that people on both sides of this difficult debate have at least some good intentions. The more usual conclusion relies on conspiracy theories to understand the disagreement. The standard conspiracy theory runs thusly: The plain truth of the scripture (or the gospel) is self-evidently true to me, and anyone who cannot see it the way I do must not be able to see well. Why would they persist in their blindness? Perhaps it is because they are ensnared in a conspiracy to destroy [insert beloved thing here]. The trick is to believe your perceptions are the true ones, and that the other's claimed perceptions are really cover for moral inadequacy. If we found we were both claiming a good, we might be able to have a calmer (though no less difficult) discussion.

I have always been most uncomfortable in those parts of Christian services where we are required to read millennium old committee documents about what it is we believe. On these occasions, having swallowed a resurrection, it seems no large thing to add a virgin birth or two or even a logical impossibility before breakfast. The gospel as a story comes up again as a central issue in Bouman's claim for the Lutheran tradition in dealing with these uncomfortable creeds. As in the scripture, it is the gospel in the creeds we should care about. With one roundhouse conceptual swing (it is about who can make promises unconditioned by death) Bouman helps me to scale off the

Hellenistic accouterments that have puzzled me for decades. It now seems less about exactly what I believe, but rather who I believe in. Whether there is some third (or fourth) way to solving the conundrums in the creeds (e.g. through process or feminist approaches) I don't know. Perhaps another conference will tell us.

Its also nice to see from Professor Bouman's pen that the "evangelical" that first scared me about ELCA is not the evangelical with which I became acquainted in the South. Bouman even makes a fine case that our present day difficulty of finding meaning can be constructed in the same terms as Luther's concerns about finding grace. Both salvation and meaning are, in Bouman's version of Lutheran theology, about death not having the last word. And if death is not the final word, I may have "more to do with my life than preserve and protect it." This makes the gospel relevant to the way I live my life, to the meaning in my life, rather than the simple insurance policy I took out at the altar many years ago.

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. . . the problem of getting the tradition to continue is precisely the problem of getting the conversation to continue. . . in a way that is thoughtful, fair, inclusive, charitable, focussed, and still true to the tradition. . .  
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The sacramental part of the Lutheran tradition is the one I have the most trouble with. This may be partly because as a Baptist from the South, I enjoy shocking Lutherans at the dinner table by talking about the three times I have been baptized. Each was a different aesthetic experience, though I only remember two, having been cast as an infant in the first experience. Bouman admits his explanation is short and telegraphic. But the Jewish storytelling tradition seems again central in his interpretation of the Lutheran understanding. Having Jesus come "from the future" fits the story-telling tradition well, but I am still left with a question about whether this approach is magic or meaning-making (do we mean really from the future or from the end of the story?).

#### A SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSE

The tradition that Professor Bouman gives us is constructed out of the historic conversation, arguments, discussions, and even schisms within the Lutheran church. I, for one, feel enlightened to have heard it, and feel he has done admirably in summarizing a complex subject in a paper short enough

for an empiricist social scientist to read. I am still left wondering about how the conversation he has described relates to the ones I have with my colleagues on a Lutheran college campus everyday.

In many churches, tradition is treated as a reason for doing something. Bouman treats tradition as a continuing conversation about what we ought to do. MacIntyre's description of tradition that Bouman quotes is twofold; it is a historically extended and socially embodied conversation. Bouman gives us much of one and a little of the other. Professor Bouman prefers to avoid demographics as defining characteristics of the tradition. But if the tradition is a continuing one those demographics must be important to understand.

How is the conversation currently socially embodied? Which conversation are we talking about? I presume (and Bouman hints) we are talking about the conversation on college campuses of the Lutheran church. Here, it does matter who is included in the conversation and who is not. The demographics do matter.

A colleague of mine and I thought a year ago to do a study of the social networks on our campus. We were encouraged in this by people who felt that the less religious among our faculty felt like "outsiders," like they were not included in the conversation on campus about what the college was "about." Preliminary interviews led us to a surprising conclusion: everyone felt "outside" in some way. Those who were highly religious, who came from the most storied Lutheran and Norwegian families, felt outside, felt there

weren't very many of "them" left, felt isolated. They suspected the secular turks (or the cold hearted administrators) had taken over. More secular (or at least non-Lutheran) faculty, seemed to think there was an inner cabal of Norwegian Lutherans who ran things and who were loath to explain the rules. Everyone felt outside, feminists, fundamentalists, Lutherans, non-Lutherans, all; no one felt comfortable. This odd pattern stumped us, and led us to discontinue plans for the interviews.

With this isolated morsel of data to motivate a point, let me suggest that the problem of getting the tradition to continue is precisely the problem of getting the conversation to continue. And the conversation has to continue among those who will show up for it. We cannot compel them into it (despite the dinner parable), nor can we simply hope that nice folks will come to dinner. We ought to offer, in the way I think Professor Bouman has, some fine food for thought. We should also invite other people to bring their favorite foods with them to contribute. If we all think we are outsiders, there is no sense having a conversation.

The problem then involves constructing the current conversation in a way that is thoughtful, fair, inclusive, charitable, focussed, and still true to the tradition. To do this will require more than a good grasp of the historical roots of the tradition (though it will certainly require that).

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Chuck Huff is associate professor of psychology at St. Olaf College.

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## THE ADVENT CAROL

Perhaps it would have been better  
if they had killed the baby in the manger,  
crushed his tiny head with a rock.

Perhaps it would have been better  
if they had put a Luger to the back  
of his Jewish head and pulled the trigger.

Perhaps it would have been better  
if they had taken his black body out  
and hanged him from a tree.

If they had ripped the messiah from the manger  
and tossed her into a river  
because she was a girl.

Perhaps it would have been better  
if the Tutsi baby were sliced to pieces by machetes,  
if the Japanese newborn were incinerated by atom  
bombs.

If the Chinese baby were crushed  
under the rubble of buildings  
demolished by Japanese bombs.

Perhaps it would have been better  
if Mary had aborted.  
Hope is such an endangered child  
here in a world so impatient for crucifixions.

Perhaps we would do better  
taking hope in our hands  
and squeezing the life out of it.

Instead we adore the baby  
whom we do not understand, cannot feed,  
whom we kill.

## THE MADONNA OF DOHANY STREET

It is a quiet Sunday afternoon  
in Budapest  
on Dohany Street.

I can hear the clank and clink  
of lunch dishes being washed,  
music is playing through open windows,  
a cat sits at a window  
intense  
looking at a flock of pigeons  
on the street below.

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Brian Forry Wallace, the author of these poems, is  
professor of Political Science at Capital University.

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This lazy afternoon is full of peace  
as I sit in front of the synagogue  
in what used to be Budapest's ghetto,  
but my heart is troubled  
as I think of the Holocaust image  
I saw earlier in the day  
at the museum.

The image is a common one  
full of meaning and reverence  
for believers, and others, too  
The Madonna and Child  
signifying God entering the world of the living  
and our divine roots.

I have seen a hundred Madonnas  
with a hundred children  
hanging in museums  
or painted on cathedral walls  
but today I saw a different view  
a photograph Madonna and Child  
that has left my life  
changed.

The setting is not Nazareth  
but the Budapest ghetto.  
The Christ child is a girl.  
She has a face I recognize  
looking as she does  
just like a little girl I know  
named Abbie.

But this Madonna and Child  
is sadly different from all the others.  
The child in the picture  
is not smiling under the gaze  
of a loving mother;  
her mouth gapes open, dead,  
from a sunken, shrunken face.  
The Christ child lies, eyes open,  
in her dead mother's arms.

And there, in an instant,  
I see it all,  
together in time and place:  
annunciation, nativity, adoration, crucifixion.

And what of resurrection?

Maybe it began  
with the change  
I felt in my soul  
when I saw this picture.

May god have mercy on us all.

## EMBODYING THE TRADITION: THE CASE OF WITTENBERG UNIVERSITY

Baird Tipson

Wittenberg University represents a strain within American Lutheranism that has been out of fashion among Lutherans almost since the moment of our founding. I see that we've now become out of fashion in the broader Christian academic community, too, at least among those academics like George Marsden who call for a resurgence of the Christian university. But I will assert in this presentation that we represent an important and viable model of a college of the church, albeit not the only important and viable model. I will suggest further that we face two particular challenges in the near and longer terms. Our success or failure in meeting these challenges will bode well or ill for the future of all the colleges of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America.

Wittenberg was founded in 1845 by the "American" faction of Ohio Lutherans. The decades before the Civil War saw colleges spring up in little towns all across the Midwest. If only because purely "secular" education was unthinkable to most Americans, almost every one of these new colleges was related to some Christian denomination. The very name "denomination" raised questions in the minds of some Lutherans; it suggested that every Christian group, or at least every Protestant Christian group, was expressing the same essential Christian truth in its particular fashion. The names "Presbyterian," "Congregational," "Methodist," or "Lutheran" *denominated, named* the ecclesiastical tradition in which that truth was embodied, but all preached a similar -- and presumably authentic -- Gospel. Not a few Ohio Lutherans looked beyond the walls of their churches and saw more Law than Gospel: a strange mixture of moralism and revivalistic fervor. But Wittenberg's founders saw their future *in, not apart from*, this strange American culture. Though German in origin, they had been agitating for preaching in the English language and for at least some instruction in English rather than German in the newly founded Lutheran seminary at Columbus. They called as Wittenberg's first president the Rev. Ezra Keller, a Pennsylvania College and Seminary at Gettysburg graduate and a disciple of Samuel Simon Schmucker. Keller emphasized personal piety; avoided elaborate ritual, and placed far more importance on an experience of conversion in adolescence or adulthood than on whatever new birth might have occurred to infants in baptism. He led a revival

on campus in 1847, eight students were converted.

In practice as well as in spirit, Wittenberg was ecumenical. The new college accepted financial support from the New England Society for the Promotion of Collegiate and Theological Education in the West, a pan-Protestant agency which had been organized to support any denominational college so long as it maintained the sort of classical curriculum found at older institutions like Yale and Brown. Non-Lutherans were welcome as students, even as seminary students. There were Presbyterians on the Board of Directors, and an Episcopalian taught Latin. Wittenberg's founders were already exchanging pulpits and sharing communion with members of other Protestant denominations.

I would argue that from its founding, Wittenberg's brand of Lutheran higher education stemmed from two complementary sets of convictions. The first set was *theological*: that the Gospel preached on Wittenberg's campus should emphasize personal piety, the need to demonstrate a living faith through good works, preferably done in service to the community, and the importance of extending the right hand of fellowship to like-minded Christians in other denominations. The second set we would call *cultural*: the men and women who founded and supported Wittenberg believed that they and their children would take their place in a generally Christian but denominationally pluralistic "American" society, rather than in an ethnically-defined subculture within that society. Wittenberg aimed to provide a broad, liberal education that would produce not only pastors but leaders in the secular world: in the government, in commerce, and in the other learned professions of the larger American society.

This presentation is not a history of Wittenberg, so I will not follow the twists and turns of these two sets of convictions for the next 150 years. Doctrines developed, as John Henry Newman would say. There was change, and there was compromise. But as a newcomer to Wittenberg, I would make two observations.

First, we retain a theological commitment not entirely different from that of our founders. A large percentage of

our students, probably most, do not arrive on campus firm in the conviction that they were born again in baptism. For those students, the college years represent an opportunity to question the values of their childhood and to develop a set of values that will shape their adult lives. To a degree that is deeply upsetting to any disciple of Karl Barth, they see themselves as religious consumers, ready to choose that set of convictions that "feels right" to them. This is a personal rather than a liturgical quest; a minority of our students will be at Weaver Chapel or at one of the congregations in town on an average Sunday morning. Like Ezra Keller, when I address the student body I look out not at a worshipping community but at a group of seekers still largely ignorant of the power of the Gospel. [I must add that while I have preached a few times, no one appears to have been converted. But I did witness a bona fide revival in our chapel last fall, at a concert by our gospel choir, where two of our students did respond to the altar call. Ezra Keller must have smiled!]

If the original student body was diverse by contemporary standards, so is our present student body, both religiously and ethnically. Just under a quarter are Lutheran. Before those of you from deeper in the Midwest chortle at that small number, I hasten to add that the percentage of Lutherans in the population of our primary service area is about 5%. Affirmative action for Lutheran applicants is alive and well at Wittenberg, but we also recruit Lutheran students aggressively!

The founders' conviction that authentic faith spills over into service to the larger community is also alive and well today. By faculty action, each of our students spends a minimum of thirty hours doing community service in Springfield in order to receive a diploma. We intend to make service a habit for our students and to impress upon them that personal convictions cannot be divorced from commitments to others.

We still share Luther's conviction that a broad general education in the liberal arts is the best intellectual preparation for leadership in church and community. We recruit faculty members with the strongest possible credentials in their disciplines and welcome teacher/scholars of all religious persuasions -- and of none -- so long as they are committed to our liberal arts mission and respect our relationship to the ELCA. Ninety years ago, in June 1906, the Board of Directors adopted the following statement:

*In the Collegiate and Academic departments of Wittenberg College, the following is and has been the policy of Wittenberg College: no denominational test is imposed in the choice of trustees, officers, or teachers, or in the*

*admission of students, nor are distinctly denominational tenets or doctrines taught to the students.*

We require our faculty members not only to be effective classroom teachers but also to be actively engaged in the pursuit of knowledge in their academic disciplines. Faculty control the curriculum. They require every graduate to gain an understanding of how central questions of reality, knowledge, and value are pursued, and they make effort to explore in every course the ethical dimensions of their subject matter.

Finally, we are still ecumenical in the sense that, all other things being equal, we would rather have a student or faculty member who is a committed Methodist than a lukewarm Lutheran, and we feel we have succeeded, not failed, if a Muslim or Jewish student leaves here even more firmly committed to her tradition. We want there to be no mistake about where we stand: worship in Weaver Chapel uses the Lutheran Book of Worship, our campus pastors are ordained Lutherans, and, at least in my poor judgment, they preach the Gospel rather than the Law. But though the Lutheran tradition is privileged; other traditions are encouraged and given a sympathetic hearing. We Lutherans need constant exposure to other expressions of the Gospel and to those traditions that challenge our claims to final truth.

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To continue to be an institution of higher education authentically related to the ELCA, we face two critical challenges. . . how to remain authentically Lutheran while respecting and welcoming a pluralistic student body. . . [and] making our tradition clear and compelling to the large majority of our students who are non-Lutheran or lukewarm Lutherans. . .

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Let me be clear about what this means in practice. We do not have first- and second-class citizens, religiously speaking, on this campus. We assume that Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, Catholics, and members of other Christian denominations are "us," not "them"; that their expressions of the Gospel, like ours, are legitimate if incomplete. We do not wish they were Lutheran; we celebrate their contributions as fellow-Christians from whom we Lutherans have much to learn. Like Ezra Keller, we believe that the Gospel transcends denominational boundaries and that Christians of all persuasions need to work in concert to leaven the world with Gospel yeast.

Second, we retain what I termed our founders' *cultural*

convictions: we remain committed to help our graduates succeed in the larger culture rather than a committed Christian subculture. I am not particularly proud of it, but it is probably the case that our Lutheran students are no more enthusiastic about organized religion than our non-Lutheran students. On the other hand, we want all our students to understand a Christian's obligation to live out her faith in the larger society as well as in the community of committed Christians.

So much for what we have been and what we are. What of the future challenges I spoke of? To continue to be an institution of higher education authentically related to the ELCA, we face two critical challenges. The first is one Wittenberg has faced from the outset: how to remain authentically Lutheran while respecting and welcoming a pluralistic student body and preparing that student body to succeed in a pluralistic world?

As a liberal arts college, we could argue that we are authentically "Lutheran" by striving to offer the best possible liberal education. But then we would be no different from Kenyon or Grinnell or many other fine liberal arts colleges. Still, it has not always been obvious how we should go beyond excellence in the liberal arts to define ourselves as Lutheran. Our President and University Pastor must be Lutheran. A majority of our Board members must be Lutheran, including at least six active pastors. We state forthrightly and proudly on all our publications that we are a university related to the ELCA.

More important than these, to my way of thinking, our organized worship is authentically Lutheran. There is a visible ministry of Word and Sacrament in the center of our campus. We maintain a continuing relationship with the bishops of the six synods in our region and wherever possible with pastors in those synods. I should add, though, that none of the bishops I have talked to has a clear sense of how Wittenberg can best serve the ELCA in the late twentieth century. I am convinced that the burden lies upon us to propose viable models of church relationship for the twenty-first century.

That brings me to the second challenge, which I find absolutely critical: making our tradition clear and compelling to the large majority of our students who are non-Lutheran or lukewarm Lutherans. I am not necessarily talking about evangelism here, but neither am I talking simply about objective, accurate, understanding of what we Lutherans are about. To me, this is where the truth claims of the academy and the truth claims of the Gospel legitimately meet. Our deepest commitments reflect themselves in the goals we set

for ourselves as a university. I believe that if we can articulate those goals in clear, understandable -- and that means non-theological -- language, our students will not only come to share them but can be drawn through them to the source of their vitality, the Gospel itself. I have been engaged throughout this past year with a group of faculty members, members of our Board, and other administrators to revise Wittenberg's strategic plan. We determined that there are five fundamental things that every Wittenberg student should be able to do upon graduation. All five stem, in my judgment, from our Lutheran roots.

The first two reflect our, and Luther's, commitment to the liberal arts. We want every graduate to *respond with understanding to the depth and complexity of the human condition*, and we want every graduate to be able to *recognize, define, and solve problems* from a number of different intellectual perspectives. Future leaders need to be able to define issues, put them in context, take appropriate steps to develop responses and solutions, and persuade others of the validity of those responses and solutions. As I suggested above, these are authentically Lutheran but held in common with many fine non-Lutheran institutions.

The final three are all given their force by our relationship to the church; without our grounding in the Gospel, we would express them differently and carry them out differently. We intend that our graduates *develop a sense of vocation*. We mean to help them see their professional lives as opportunities to serve their neighbors and their communities rather than simply as a means to a comfortable life-style. We urge them to accept the responsibility of giving back some of what they have been privileged to receive.

We expect our graduates to be prepared to *assume leadership* when opportunity arises. Leadership is a slippery word; too often our students associate it with respect, status, power. But Jesus speaks of a different kind of leadership than that of the Gentiles who "lord it over" their followers; Wittenberg means to produce leaders who are "servants in society." [Statement of Mission, 1977]

Finally, we expect our graduates to be ready to *take moral responsibility* in their personal relationships, within their various communities, and toward the natural environment. We will not impose our moral standards on our students, but we will make it clear what those standards are, and we challenge our students to confront those standards as they firm up their own convictions.

Developing a sense of vocation, preparing for the kind of leadership that serves rather than lords over, taking moral

responsibility, these are all authentic expressions, I would argue, of the Gospel as well as of our specifically Lutheran convictions. Together with our academic expectations, they create a compelling mission in which faculty members of every religious persuasion will be able to share. If they lack a certain theological clarity, we hope they make up for it in casting a wider net for the serious enquirer. They sound and resound the chords of service, constructive social change,

cooperation, and self-sacrifice. They are not the cross, but I would argue that they are a valid preparation for the cross, and an authentic embodiment of our relationship to the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America.

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## ELCA Colleges and Universities

**Augsburg College**  
Minneapolis, Minnesota

**Augustana College**  
Rock Island, Illinois

**Augustana College**  
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

**Bethany College**  
Linsborg, Kansas

**California Lutheran University**  
Thousand Oaks, California

**Capital University**  
Columbus, Ohio

**Carthage College**  
Kenosha, Wisconsin

**Concordia College**  
Moorhead, Minnesota

**Dana College**  
Blair, Nebraska

**Gettysburg College**  
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

**Grandview College**  
Des Moines, Iowa

**Gustavus Adolphus College**  
St. Peter, Minnesota

**Lenoir-Rhyne College**  
Hickory, North Carolina

**Luther College**  
Decorah, Iowa

**Midland Lutheran College**  
Fremont, Nebraska

**Muhlenberg College**  
Allentown, Pennsylvania

**Newberry College**  
Newberry, South Carolina

**Pacific Lutheran University**  
Tacoma, Washington

**Roanoke College**  
Salem, Virginia

**St. Olaf College**  
Northfield, Minnesota

**Suomi College**  
Hancock, Michigan

**Susquehanna University**  
Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania

**Texas Lutheran College**  
Seguin, Texas

**Thiel College**  
Greenville, Pennsylvania

**Wagner College**  
Staten Island, New York

**Waldorf College**  
Forest City, Iowa

**Wartburg College**  
Waverly, Iowa

**Wittenberg University**  
Springfield, Ohio