

2004

Full Issue, Number 19, Summer 2004

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

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections>

Augustana Digital Commons Citation

The Congregational and Synodical Mission Unit, The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (2004) "Full Issue, Number 19, Summer 2004," *Intersections*: Vol. 2004: No. 19, Article 1.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections/vol2004/iss19/1>

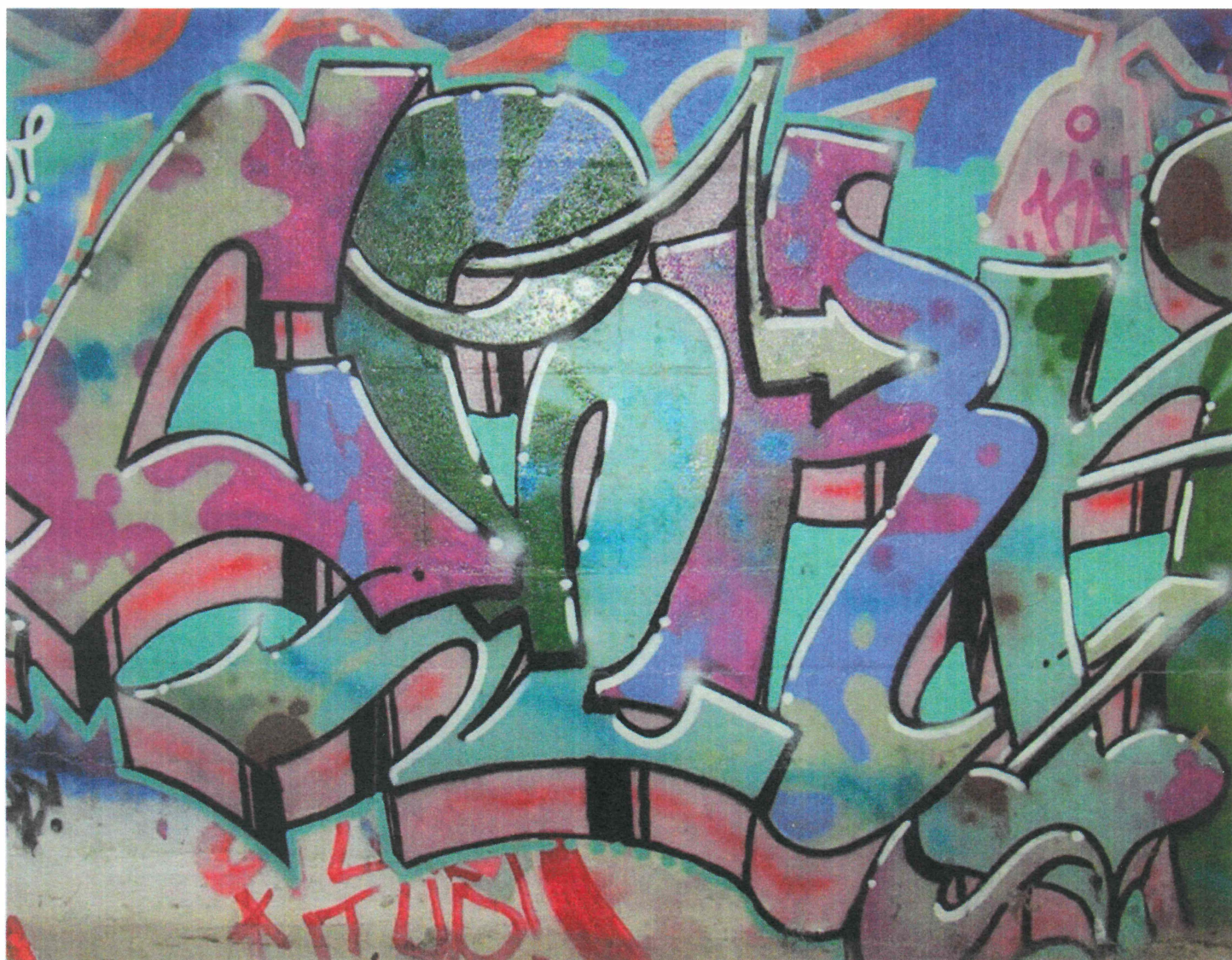
This Full Issue is brought to you for free and open access by Augustana Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Intersections by an authorized administrator of Augustana Digital Commons. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@augustana.edu.

INTERSECTIONS

faith + life + learning

NUMBER NINETEEN

SUMMER 2004



INTERSECTIONS

faith + life + learning

Number 19

Summer 2004

Contributors

- Academic Vocation: What the Lutheran University has to Offer*.....4
Wendy McCredie
- Dual Citizenship in Athens and Jerusalem: Ricoeur's Hermeneutics and the Promise of Lutheran Higher Education*.....13
Mark C. Mattes
- Reflections on Lutheran Identity on Reformation Sunday*.....24
Thomas W. Martin
- The Ought*.....29
Ned Wisnefske
- Impossible*.....31
Tim Knopp

INTERSECTIONS

SUMMER 2004

Published by: The Division for Higher Education & Schools
The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Published at Capital University, Columbus, Ohio USA 43209-2394

Arne Selbyg, *Publisher*

Tom Christenson, *Editor*

Caitlin McHugh, *Student Editorial Assistant*

Vicki Miller, *Secretary*

Editorial Board: Timothy A. Bennett, Wittenberg Univ.; Karla Bohmbach, Susquehanna Univ.; DeAne Lagerquist, St. Olaf College; Victoria Horst, Newberry College.

Cover: Graffiti (artist unknown)

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 has its home at Capital University, Columbus, Ohio which has generously offered leadership, physical, and financial support as an institutional sponsor for the publication.

The ELCA has frequently sponsored conferences for faculty and administrators which have addressed the church - college/university partnership. 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.

From the Publisher

While the primary source of articles for this journal is the papers presented at the annual conference on "The Vocation of a Lutheran College," we now receive other submissions for it as well. We also ask for permission to publish papers based on other presentations we hear that deal with "our" topics. In Issue 17 last year we published four papers that were developed by participants in the **Lutheran Academy of Scholars in Higher Education**, and this issue includes some other papers by participants in that academy.

The Lutheran academy was started with generous grant support from Lutheran Brotherhood and the Lilly Endowment, but those grants have now been exhausted. Fortunately, the colleges and universities that are related to the ELCA recognized that the academy could be a very valuable faculty development opportunity, so the academy has been continued with support from the ELCA Division for Higher Education and Schools and from the colleges themselves. Especially important is support from St. Olaf College, which made it possible for Dr. DeAne Lagerquist, professor of religion at St. Olaf, to take on the task of being the director for the academy.

In 2004 the academy has returned to Harvard University, and the leader is again Dr. Ronald Thiemann, the John Lord O'Brian professor of Divinity at Harvard. At the academy, each of the participants work on scholarly papers in their discipline, and they also participate in scholarly exchanges about the relationships between their faith and their profession, and between religion and society, and they work on interdisciplinary papers, learning from each other both in topical discussions led by the leader and in critiques of the work each faculty member presented.

In addition to the papers presented in *INTERSECTIONS*, numerous other scholarly articles and books have been published by the participants based on the work they did as participants in the academy. We want to especially draw your attention to a book written by the editor of *INTERSECTIONS*, Dr. Tom Christenson, *The Gift and Task of Lutheran Higher Education*, published this year by Augsburg Fortress. That volume should be of special interest to the many people who are fascinated by the topics of this journal.

Arne Selbyg

Director, ELCA Colleges and Universities

From the Editor

It must be that I'm getting old; time is becoming more valuable to me every year and I find that I am becoming less patient with not having enough of it. And please don't be fooled — time is not money. Increases in salary are often accompanied by decreases in time. I don't know how my students do it, but some of them lead such multi-tasked lives — school, work, family — how do they manage it? The candle they're burning must have three ends. I'm able to dance to only one drummer at a time (and that not too well), and some of my previous dance partners are finding that I'm already dancing with someone else (or distractedly, as if with someone else). All of this is by way of saying that I'm looking for someone who's willing to take over this job — I already have too many others to do well. But it's a job I think is important to do so I hope someone is willing to do it.

So I thought to post a help-wanted ad:

Wanted: editor of Intersections. Salary, none. Released time, none. Work load, light with periodic chaos. Experience required, none. Rewards, great if you've got a vivid imagination. Everything else, negotiable. Application deadline, sooner or later.

This issue features the work of three friends and one new acquaintance. By reading what they have written you may become well-informed about the state of Lutheran higher education, about the significance of the work of Paul Ricouer, about the implications of being a reformation community, about the perils and difficulties of teaching ethics. All of these authors would be pleased to hear your comments on their work.

Tom Christenson

tchrste@capital.edu

Academic Vocation: What the Lutheran University has to Offer

Wendy McCredie

The tension between bonds of particular love and a love which is open to every neighbor . . . cannot be overcome by any theory, however intricate. Our thinking can only warn against certain mistakes, certain wrong turnings which we might take. But this central problem of the Christian life must be lived, not just thought. —Gilbert Meilaender

A Methodological Prologue

Faculty, students, and staff at the colleges, universities, and seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) live and work in the tension Gilbert Meilaender describes above. However, in spite of numerous attempts, those of us who care about the church-relatedness of our universities have not adequately articulated this tension to our students, to our constituencies, or even among ourselves. In fact, central claims in the Lutheran tradition forestall such an adequate articulation while simultaneously requiring its continued pursuit. Each of us who attempts such an articulation will do so from disciplinary and faith perspectives that will both neglect and supplement others' points. None of our articulations can stand alone, yet each of them coheres around a central dialogical¹ tension between the bonds of faith, on the one hand, and the openness and love faith inspires for others and for God's created world, on the other hand. What follows is one more attempt to articulate productively this dialogical tension and to suggest how it can promote practical and useful understandings of the vocation of the ELCA-related colleges and universities.

Because profession is intimately grounded confession, this essay begins with an outline of the determining features of my faith as it influences my thoughts. The next section moves away from personal confession to the communal concern about the future of the church-related college, and the last sections represent various dialogical engagements with that concern in a specifically Lutheran context. What I write here, I write as a practicing Lutheran and a trained literary scholar. Until very recently, I taught at a university with "Lutheran" in its name; I now work at the churchwide offices of the ELCA. From one perspective, therefore, I write from a position of insider privilege. From another perspective, my lack of formal theological training may raise questions about my authority. In any case, for a Lutheran who believes the church is *semper reformanda* and who is one among the "priesthood of all believers," any privilege associated with teaching at a Lutheran university simultaneously constitutes a responsibility. My privileged position requires a constant interrogation

of both my faith and the institutions that claim to nurture it. I am called to investigate both confessional and professional claims.

Being a Christian in the Lutheran tradition means that I have faith in Christ, in God's scandalous self-revelation—a self-revelation that transgresses and suspends God's own law. Christ, God Incarnate, transgresses the law that separated the divine from the human. Jesus Christ thus embodies paradox and invites dialogue between God and human. This faith in God's scandalous self-revelation in Christ motivates an attitude of service to that good God and love for my neighbor. My service is motivated by faith, and God's grace enables its efficacy.

From that attitude of service motivated by faith, reason helps determine what is faithful, what I might best do, here and now. This requirement or call to act is as universal as the gracious love to which it is a response. Always, however, I attempt to act with an attitude of humility, because I might be wrong. In fact, it is not only reason that discerns appropriate action; it is God's grace that allows for the possibility that I might be right in that discernment.

The recognition of the limitations of and on human reason may be the most difficult hurdle for scholars to overcome. To be called to employ human reason and to act in accordance with that reason, while simultaneously understanding that reason errs, seems quite silly, even foolish. If one uses the best tools, intellectual or otherwise, to solve a problem, it is quite difficult to act on that solution in good faith, while at the same time recognizing that those best tools might not be adequate to the project. Indeed, they might in fact have precluded the finding of the best solution. Such a paradox can lead to a paralysis that makes action in the world impossible.

How does one recover from such a paralysis, perhaps brought on by too much knowledge? Faith in God's grace makes it possible actually to do what I have reasoned I must do in order to promote goodness and justice, even though I know that whatever I do will not eliminate all injustice in the world; it may even

perpetuate some injustice that I did not recognize. Moreover, my witness to my faith, my evangelizing of the freedom it confers on me, is most true to itself when I respect the freedom of others. I am not trying to convert, to make little Lutherans of my colleagues or my students. I am working in service to God's words of hope for peace and justice. I do not condemn my colleagues who do not share the particularity of my beliefs; I listen hard to the challenges they present to me. I *struggle* with the ways in which I and the institution—both the church and the university—fall short of the ideal community, but I try to keep before me the gospel, the good news of forgiveness and redemption.

Why worry about our vocation, or calling, to be Lutheran colleges and universities?

Like many church-related universities, Texas Lutheran University has struggled to articulate for itself and for others what its middle name might mean. What motivates this need to situate ourselves? Are we fearful of losing students, of not responding to the market, of ceasing to exist, of leaving the church, of becoming the church? Or is there something good we do that ought not to be lost? Are we motivated by fear or by love?

Since the publication of E. D. Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy*, Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, and William Bennett's *Book of Virtues*, there have been numerous fairly popular critiques of the American academy. These books, while at times simplistic in their analyses (perhaps precisely because of that simplicity), do resonant with an audience beyond what the public names the "ivory tower of academia." For that public, what we do in the universities remains esoteric, theoretical, valueless, and suspect.

For writers such as Hirsch, we are no longer teaching the right things, the things that will provide our students, when they are no longer our students, access to the world of the culturally elite. For Bloom and his followers, most of us, with the exception of a few enlightened political philosophers, are no longer teaching the right things. We are no longer doing so because we have succumbed to faddish movements such as Women's Studies, African-American Studies, and Gay and Lesbian Studies, all of which have a political agenda beyond the academy. All these intellectual and curricular movements pollute the purity of the academic endeavor by the importation of a tainted political agenda into what should be a purely intellectual endeavor. The syllabus is fragmented; the objectives unclear at best and politically motivated at worst; assessment procedures, even the right of professors to access students, come under attack as

imperialist tools; the complaints go on. Bennett's *Book of Virtues*, which is sold at supermarket checkouts as well as in university bookstores, elaborates the Bloomian and Hirschite themes by providing a list of virtues that will solve our problems if we could just get them back into the public arena; that is, teach them to our children.² Bennett's work does for K-12 what Bloom's and Hirsch's did for colleges and universities.

My characterization of these positions and the descriptions about where we have gone wrong and how we ought to fix it may be rather hasty and overly generalized, but the point is, they think we have gone wrong; there are a lot of folk who agree with them. Michael Bérubé and Cary Nelson sum up the situation of the 1990s this way:

The 1990s have not been kind to American institutions of higher education. Academy-bashing is now among the fastest-growing of major U.S. industries, and the charges are as numerous as the bashers themselves: teachers don't teach; scholars fritter away their time and your tax dollars on studies of music videos; campus regulations thwart free speech; the Western cultural heritage is besieged by tenured radicals; heterosexual white men are under attack from feminist, multiculturalist, and gay and lesbian groups; universities are buying luxury yachts with federal research dollars; academic standards of all kinds are in tatters; undergraduates lack both reading skills and moral foundations; and, in the midst of all this, to add financial insult to intellectual injury, college tuitions are skyrocketing. (Bérubé 1)

Bérubé and Nelson go on to document the shift from concern about political correctness in the academy to the attempt to define what it is that we should be teaching there. While Bloom and others lament the *type* of values taught in the academy, the latest move in the "culture wars" is to lament the *loss* of values in the academy. Bérubé and Nelson recognize this double movement as ironic. They summarize the character of the debates surrounding higher education as revolving around two contradictory statements: "[Higher education] has abandoned its mission by arrogantly seeking to shape student's moral and civic lives, and, worse still, it has abandoned its mission to shape students' moral and civic lives" (Bérubé 2). Bérubé and Nelson claim that while

faculty at large universities do inculcate values in their students, these values do not correspond to the values immediately conducive to the powerful corporate and governmental cultures pervasive outside the walls of academe. George Marsden, in *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, also notes that neutral and objective perspectives on truth, while still touted as desired, are routinely shunned in the academy in favor of identity-driven perspectives. The point is that even in the large research universities value-free education has not been available; it's just that the values being taught are not the values the secular world seems to require. In this respect the large universities and smaller, church-related universities resemble each other. For, with some exceptions, church-related colleges and universities in the Christian tradition claim that gospel-centered values also challenge the apparently selfish and self-serving principles of the capitalist marketplace and the corporate boardroom.

So, whether we agree with Indiana University's Bérubé and Nelson or George Marsden on all counts, their claims that universities *are* inculcating values in the students warrant our close attention. Bérubé and Nelson's additional statistics on class size and teaching loads of professors in the liberal arts at public institution should also cause us to ponder what truly is the difference between Indiana University and places like Texas Lutheran University. For, in the admissions propaganda from small liberal arts colleges across the United States, the claims of small class size and individual attention from professors resound. However, if an account of large research universities can show that they too can offer such things, then where will our niche be? Are we really needed? What claims can we make for a unique educational experience? What rationale can we produce to justify our vocation as a Lutheran institution?

As a Lutheran institution, we would betray our heritage if we were to become a fundamentalist "Bible" college, although we might find a significant clientele for such a college, especially in some regions of the country. We would likewise betray our heritage were we to become a generic liberal arts college, more or less like any other in the nation. The only option, it seems to me, is to establish for ourselves and for the general public what is distinctively Lutheran about us and why that distinctively Lutheran character is appropriate, perhaps even necessary, in the current pluralistic cultural and academic climate. Why are we called to be the kinds of institutions we are?

Confusion between the exigencies of the secular and the centrality of the sacred

The modern university, while we think of it as a development of the medieval monastic tradition, and certainly Lutheran education must trace its roots to this tradition, also has significant roots in the agora, the open marketplace, of Athens. Jaroslav Pelikan, states: "Although the ancestors of the modern university are multiple and complex, including as they do the seats of learning in many ancient cultures, there is no denying that the university has deep roots also in the monastery and the church. Indeed, . . . the medieval university was the foundation of the university as we know it . . ." (Pelikan 45). The twentieth century university provides both a contemplative place and one connected with the public space of the market and politics. Both the retiring, private scholar or the scientist who spends hours on end in the laboratory, and the public intellectual who views him or herself as duty-bound to change society for the better, find a conducive home in the academy. Our profession has no pre-established borders that define for us whether we are engaged more properly in a public, shared enterprise with, perhaps, certain responsibilities to established authority in the public domain, or whether our proper area of concern should be that of individual intellectual and ethical development.

George Marsden's works, especially *The Soul of the American University*, provide an interesting analysis of the role of the American university in training (for the marketplace) and educating (with an eye to spiritual formation) its future leaders. His emphasis is on higher education's public role. He identifies the post-Civil War era as the site of a decisive shift in higher education's goals. The North, having won the military victory, in large part because of its superior technological and industrial power, could also claim a moral victory. Moral and technological progress were linked; the land-grant colleges were set up to initiate students into the practical and technological mysteries of modern industrial society; and the Eastern establishment universities began to move beyond their missions as simply training grounds for the clergy. They became the forerunners of the modern research university and began the disciplinary specialization we take for granted, and sometimes resist.

Mark Schwehn's book *Exiles in Eden* analyzes the historical and cultural roots of the currently specialized disciplines. He suggests that the American research university modeled itself after the German universities

and especially after Max Weber's ideas on what properly constituted studies at the university. That is, in the university academics aimed for "mastery of the world through calculation and control" (Schwehn 58). Each academic discipline had its appropriate tools with which to fashion its understanding of the world. Weber's disciplined scholarly activity no longer has as a goal the *universitas*; the education of the whole person is not the goal, for questions of ultimate meaning have no place in Weber's academy. However, Weber's language imports to his severely pruned disciplines the moral discourse of the Puritans and provides added impetus for the liberal Protestant movement on the American academic scene.

In the United States, the language that heretofore had been used primarily to describe spiritual as well as intellectual enlightenment was divorced from the realm of the spirit. It applied exclusively to the life of the mind. While Marsden identifies the roots of the disassociation of religion and the life of the mind in American nineteenth-century liberal progressive Protestantism, Schwehn contends that this disassociation owes at least as much to Weber's two works "Science as a Vocation" and *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Marsden 3-21). Weber's call to the German universities to pare all ultimate questions from the core of verifiable knowledge and the progressive Protestant ethic collude in applying the language of faith to the knowledge of the world. The results are twofold. First, certain disciplines, notably the natural sciences, whose methodologies resonate deeply with this call for particular, verifiable, and practical knowledge, come to the fore. Second, the university, as a locus of knowledge, substitutes for the church, as a locus of faith. Instead of faith motivating one's life in meaningful ways, knowledge provides a justification for action aimed primarily at obtaining practical results, verifiable and meaningful in precisely the same way to everyone.

In *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination*, Jaroslav Pelikan recognizes the temptation to treat the university in the guise of mother of the soul, as an *alma mater*:

Because I have been disappointed so often in institutional Christendom and because, by contrast, the university has been for almost half a century the chief repository of truth and the community of wisdom to me personally, and is . . . my spiritual mother who has reared and nourished me, . . . I have sometimes been in danger of regarding it as the embodiment of the One Holy catholic and Apostolic church affirmed in the

Nicene Creed. It is not that; and if we act as though it were, we shall send a charge through the wires that the wires cannot carry, ending in idolatry or disaster. (Pelikan 66-67)

The university culture forms Pelikan's core beliefs as it does most academics'. We, like Pelikan, are products of a university system that speaks of its mission to educate, its moral responsibility to inculcate virtues in its students, and its expectation that society's leaders come from its halls. Even in the state universities, according to Marsden, there is no question that the mission of the university or college as an institution of higher learning and research is consonant with the nineteenth-century liberal progressive mission of Christianity:

Although self-conscious secularism is a significant force in academic communities, its strength has been vastly amplified by the convergence of . . . other forces . . . Liberal Protestantism opposed traditional Christian exclusivism and helped rule it out of bounds. Methodological secularization provided a non-controversial rationale for such a move, reinforced by beliefs concerning the universal dictates of science. Concerns about pluralism and justice supplied a moral rationale. Moreover, to all these forces can be added one . . . , the widely held popular belief, sometimes suggested in the courts but not yet consistently applied, that government funding excludes any religious teaching. (Marsden 34)

Marsden's point is that the "secularization" of the university is a relatively recent phenomenon and, while in its beginning stages it was motivated by a Liberal Protestant ethic that had gone mostly unchallenged in the United States, it was undergirded by a belief in the saving power of the modern way of life, as exemplified, naturally, by the American experience.

After World War II, university scholars begin to challenge the modern agenda set by Descartes and elaborated by the 18th century Enlightenment philosophers. Foundationalism, rationalism and empiricism were themselves identified as biases. Stephen Toulmin, in his remarkable book *Cosmopolis*, identifies a double beginning for this modern era. The first moderns, argues Toulmin, are the Renaissance men

(and women?) of the 16th century. The Renaissance humanist tradition of Montaigne, Shakespeare, Erasmus, Luther and Rabelais ushers in the modern age. Descartes and the others react to that prior pluralistic tradition. Toulmin's work suggests, in what is no longer such a surprising move, that Descartes' desire for some certain ground from which all knowledge would follow, and would therefore be equally as certain as its ground, derived in no small measure from his historical and personal context. In a chaotic world dominated by political instability, religious conflict, and seemingly endless wars that did little to reestablish order, what could be more seductive than a theory or a perspective that would enable its holder to reestablish order with its application?

Toulmin argues that Descartes' reductive philosophy constitutes a reaction to the humanistic impulse of the previous century. He wanted answers for all situations, not perspectives based on individual experience that might have been different if the experiences had differed. Descartes wanted a solid foundation for truth claims. At its root, Toulmin suggests, the rationalist project is *not* purely rational; it is embedded in the social and political particularities of Europe in the 16th and early 17th centuries, and the desire for social, economic, political and theological order that continues to be expressed through the 20th century. The Enlightenment dream of a universal human truth, determined by rational thought and divorced from particular contingencies, proves just that—a dream.³ Perhaps it is even a nightmare.

In the current academic climate, some still cling to the Enlightenment's rational dream. Most, however, recognize the inadvisability, if not the impossibility, of pursuing its ends. However, the privileged spokespersons for public political and cultural agenda, the *polis*, and the marketplace, the *agora*, still call for universalizable virtues that we can all agree on no matter who we are or where we come from. We need these virtues, so the argument goes, in order to "get down to business." It is all very well for privileged university professors to argue about the contingencies of truth, about moral and factual relativism, about the inability to ever completely and objectively know something, but the rest of America has work to do! Hence, I would suggest, the rise of Christian fundamentalism, of biblical literalism, and of unthoughtful recourse to authority and a tradition (mis)understood as static. The academy, naturally (and appropriately), objects. And so should Lutherans.

What the Lutheran University has to offer

Lutherans should object, and have been objecting albeit quietly, since the first Lutheran college opened its doors. Our educational system is grounded in that Renaissance of the sixteenth century and the advances of the ensuing centuries inform it. But at the core of an education in the Lutheran tradition are the affirmation of the human being in this world, God's creation, and a simultaneous affirmation of our essential connection with the kingdom of God. Thus, at the core of Lutheran education there is a recognized and theologically complex tension between the sacred and the secular. In his book *Lutheran Higher Education*, Ernest Simmons asserts that "a sharp line between the sacred and the secular cannot be drawn for the Lutheran tradition" (33). The public space of politics and the marketplace must not be divorced from the spiritual and intellectual tradition of the monastery. Indeed, scholars at Lutheran-related colleges, universities, and seminaries ought to respond to the exigencies of the secular without losing sight of the centrality of the sacred. "The academic institutions of the church, colleges and seminaries, carry special responsibility . . . as frontier places for the engagement of Word and world" (Simmons 29). It is our responsibility to put the sacred and the secular in conversation with one another.

In *Models for Christian Higher Education*, Richard Hughes identifies as distinctive the Lutheran affirmation of *human* being. We delight in our humanity even as we recognize that humans are not perfect. While we are *in* the world (and we love it, for it is God's creation and a gift), we understand our world to be limited and are inspired by what is beyond this world. This inspiration of the kingdom of God helps us to critically assess the created world that we so enjoy and to recognize its imperfections along with its joys.

The Lutheran tradition delights in discovery and exploration of this world, even as those discoveries might lead us to despair of the human propensity for destruction and other evils. These discoveries may also sow doubt and can lead to the loss of faith. On the other hand, such doubt can also lead to a greater awareness of God's infinite grace and a subsequent strengthening of faith. Because we live in *this* world, there are, however, no guarantees that we will experience the latter strengthening rather than the former loss. This uncertainty is a mark of our humanity. If we never risk the loss of faith, we risk intellectual and spiritual stagnation; we betray our God-given nature.

Born out of the monastic university tradition, the Lutheran faith tradition is one grounded in the search for knowledge and the understanding of how best to use that knowledge to serve our neighbor and honor our gracious God. Our mission in the universities is to continue to serve the church and to make knowledge accessible to all—not just to a privileged few who read the required language. We educate in the language of the people, for Luther believed God’s truth should be available to all in a language they could understand. Hence, all should learn to read and God’s word should be translated from Latin into German and other vernaculars. Our universities participate in this on-going mission to educate. Not all our students will be Christians (the privileged class in our contemporary American setting), but all should have access to knowledge. Without knowledge, how can one take care of and participate well in God’s created world?

As Lutheran tradition resists an easy separation of the sacred from the secular, so it resists the collapse of the two. The tension between God’s kingdom and this world remains unresolved. This lack of resolution makes possible continued dialogue. We do not have all the answers, but we have God’s assurance that not having all the answers, living with paradoxes, ambiguities, and pluralism is part of what it means to be human. Our job is to use the gifts from God in order to do the best job possible here and now, in this world. Just as our relationship with God is unmediated by any human authority, just as that relationship with Christ is an individual responsibility sustained by and within the context of a faith community, so our relationship with knowledge must be an individual responsibility. The primary community in which that relationship to knowledge is developed and sustained is the academic community. The Lutheran universities, and one hopes the Lutheran church and its congregations, recognize the ways in which our faith in God and our knowledge of the world are intricately linked. In an age as uncertain and as violent as Descartes’ century, will we succumb to temptation and attempt easy resolutions? Will we give in to the demands of political correctness of whatever ilk or to market pressures? If we do so, we betray our Lutheran tradition that calls us to live in the fallen human world that is nevertheless a gift from God and to be enjoyed and sustained. We must respond to God’s redeeming grace by leading lives “of grace-filled freedom and loving service, or joyful hope and commitment” (Simmons 26).

Practical considerations for the future

Obviously, in a society as pluralistic as ours, we *must* ask ourselves, “How can we make our universities open to others and still maintain our uniqueness as Lutheran

colleges?” Some church-related colleges and universities respond to this question by bracketing it: The others do not belong to this community; non-Christians need not apply. If there are no others to include, the question of inclusivity is moot. This attitude betrays the insights of the modern era; it also betrays Luther’s understanding of the two kingdoms and his call to us to ask difficult questions. “[T]he Christian is called to make common cause with all people, including those of other faiths, in providing for a just and healthy world” (Simmons 27).

Currently, spiritual and moral education are affirmed “add-ons” to the primary academic mission of the university, even at institutions that have a close relation with their church bodies.⁴ Many of the ELCA colleges and universities would fall, or almost fall, into this description. The spiritual is relegated to the realm of the extra-curricular and housed in campus ministry and the Fellowship of Christian Athletes and some other student groups whose spiritual lives are fulfilled through participation in these extra-curricular activities. When we are teaching in the liberal arts university and our goal is integrated knowledge and development of the whole person, then the add-on approach is inappropriate. To eliminate my Lutheran Christian perspective from my teaching amounts to an intellectual and spiritual dishonesty that should not be tolerated. Any attempt to excise reference to Christian (or any other) particularity from our classrooms, our offices, or our scholarship does a disservice to our colleagues and ourselves.

Alisdair MacIntyre suggests that the university is the site of “constrained disagreement.” In order to participate in this constrained disagreement, students deserve to have as many avenues to truth as possible opened to them. Likewise, colleagues can only effectively engage each other’s ideas if those ideas are shared in good faith. Since we live in the tension between God’s created world and God’s divine kingdom, if we neglect one or the other, we are liable to arrest the dialogue not only between the two kingdoms, but also between teacher and student and among colleagues.

Putting the Christian agenda on the academic table is risky. To engage in discussion in good faith, one must be willing to listen well to the other side. Nicholas Wolterstorff says poignantly,

Whereas for a long time now it has been the calling of the Christian scholar to emphasize that Christianity offers a distinctive perspective on reality, the time may be coming when it will be at

least as important to emphasize our shared humanity and the importance of mutual listening. If what emerges from the overthrow of the hegemony of Eurocentric bourgeois white males is not speaking and listening in dialogue but hard-of-hearing multiple power constellations, then nothing has been gained. (Wolterstorff 26)

We cannot take this caution too seriously, and we must realize that in entering the conversation, we agree to listen as part of our responsible participation. Indeed, our Christianity itself mandates this listening.

A theology of the cross requires us to be loving members of the community; it requires us to listen to those who are marginalized by, because, of, or in spite of the community. In such listening, we embody the faithfulness to God's love that Jesus embodied when he listened to the Galilean woman, when he spoke with the Samaritan woman at the well, when he affirmed the listening woman, Mary. At all these times, he rebuked his disciples for a too narrow interpretation of his mission; he rebuked them for their reliance on the law which he scandalously transgressed. Christ is the embodiment of transgression that mitigates all human transgressions. We cannot mitigate transgression; only God can. Likewise, we cannot know with certainty what does not transgress, what is right under the law; what is true in the Richard Rorty's sense of truth.⁵

In the world of empirical proofs and inductive reasoning, we cannot get to God. However, God's resistance to rational thought (or vice versa) does not mean that it is unreasonable to believe in God or to believe in a particular self-revelation of God's self. In my case, I do believe in God. I experience God's presence in my life. I cannot prove that God touches my life; but no one can prove that God does not do so. Now having said that God is present in my life, let me also say that there are many times when I doubt whether I should believe. Some would claim that this doubt disqualifies me from claiming belief. I am, however, reassured by doubting Thomas—just the last instance of a disciple having to be shown that Christ's truth exceeds a limited legalistic understanding of the truth—and by my belief in God's abiding love for me; even when I doubt, God remains. Thus, here I am back in the web of my belief. Wolterstorff affirms that entanglement, as do I, as an appropriate perspective from which to engage in both research and teaching. It is an entanglement informed by both faith and doubt. I doubt that I, or anyone else who

claims to, have the whole truth, the answer, the right that ends all wrongs, but I might and s/he might.

In our teaching, in our collegial relationships, etc., we must therefore *listen* to the narratives of others, including those outside the Christian, outside the Lutheran tradition. Those traditions, as we articulate them in human languages, constitute the law. We respect the authority of the law, but live in the light of the gospel. All human institutions will fall short of the mark. In choosing to work within the Lutheran tradition, we recognize that both institutions and individuals fall short of the mark for which we aim. This is *harmatia*, which is translated in the Bible as sin and in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics as missing the mark (of virtue). Recognizing that we all miss the mark of truth or virtue or justice does not excuse any of us from continuing to try to hit that mark. Trying to hit that mark constitutes our faithfulness to God's self-revelation in Christ Jesus. The recognition that we will miss the mark sows in us humility or at least it ought to.

Pedagogical and theological dialogues

I am faced with proclaiming my Lutheranness within the context of a Lutheran institution. It is the privileged position. I cannot claim that my voiced perspective is equal among the many I know are represented at our universities. In addition, a Christian perspective has been, and in some circles continues to be, associated with Eurocentric imperialism, patriarchy, racism, etc. It has sustained many bad things. Now, I claim that the Lutheran tradition has something good and vital to teach me and my colleagues who choose to work in institutions affiliated with the Lutheran tradition. I can make this claim because of the intellectual complexity of Lutheran theology and its insistence on dialogue.

In *Exiles from Eden*, Schwehn suggests we reformulate our goals so that we recognize our quest as a communal one for integrated understanding, not an individual one for isolated certainty:

Instead of Weberian *mastery* of the world through calculation and control, academics ought primarily to seek understanding of the world through communal inquiry. This latter endeavor follows quite naturally from the affections of awe, wonder, and gratitude that together constitute piety. Finally, the means-end rationality that defined the academic mind for Weber must be absorbed into a far more capacious

epistemology that views qualities of character, mind and spirit as integrally related to one another. (Schwehn 58)

Likewise, a few years ago, Richard Hughes reminded the Lutheran college and university presidents that Lutheran theology insists on human finitude. Because of this insistence, "Lutherans can never absolutize their own perspectives, even their theological perspectives" (Hughes 6). In academe, our perspectives are determined not only by the particularities of history, but also by our training and disciplinary interests. If we are to remain true to the Lutheran tradition, these disciplinary perspectives can never be absolutized. Since the practitioners in each discipline participate in the quest for understanding, we must remain in dialogue with each other, not isolated in self-referential and self-congratulatory niches of truth.

In the classroom, we must demonstrate an approach to knowledge that eschews any rigid adherence to a set of preestablished methodologies. As educators in a Lutheran university environment, we are called to interdisciplinary approaches, recognizing the limiting and limited nature of a single discipline's approach to and effect on the truth. In addition, within our disciplines we are called to take advantage of multiple approaches and to continue to modify our approach to the subject matter proper to the discipline itself.

There is no such thing as a neutral perspective. All truth claims are founded on some perspectival assumption. Even the claim that there is a truth devoid of particularity can only make sense in the context of a system that desires a universal, generically human truth; i.e., a truth that is true for all human beings at all times and in all places. This was the project of the Enlightenment. It has failed, but we should not, therefore, turn to nihilism.

As a teacher, I must be aware of the power and authority I have, justified only by my position and preparation (not by God's grace). Even though I know that I might be wrong, my students will not know that; in some cases, they will not *want* to know that. My work is similar to that of any pastor. I am not a priest who mediates between her students and the truth. I do not hold the keys to the Kingdom; Christ does, my students do. In theological terms, our students have as much access to Christ, Truth, and knowledge as we do. We need to show them that they do have this access, remind them of it in the Platonic sense. Our situation is similar to Luther's. When he traveled to country congregations, he was appalled by their lack of knowledge about the basic tenets of Christianity. The result: Luther's Small Catechism.

He did not set himself up as the authority who could teach others the right way to truth; he gave them the means to teach themselves. He did not condemn them for their ignorance, but facilitated their understanding. He gave them the means by which they could take personal responsibility for their relationship to God. We must provide the means to facilitate such relationships for our students in regards to truth and knowledge as well as to God. This is the Lutheran "priesthood of all believers" implemented in the classroom.

Finally, the Lutheran church is a reforming church. It has not been reformed (past perfect), but is reforming (present progressive). As a member of the church at one of its universities, I investigate possible areas of reform. I am responsible for communicating to the church the view from the outside and modeling for the church how to engage in conversation with those outside the tradition. I may not do it very well, but I keep trying. Jesus is my model. He spoke to the woman at the well—unclean, adulteress, unbeliever, a person unacceptable under the law of Jesus' tradition. It was she to whom he first revealed himself. I must listen to those outside the tradition because God's work is not done just by people of the tradition. In fact, the lure of worldly wisdom can be so strong that sometimes little of God's work can be done; God's words are not heard; God's love is not experienced when we allow the constraining laws of the created world to override the Gospel of good news and loving kindness and God's infinite grace.

This Lutheran understanding of ongoing reformation is essential to my teaching. Recognizing that my education (in French, my *formation*) is not past, nor perfect, I am freed from the need to be a perfect teacher, always right and in control at all times. I freely recognize my own fallibility and am thereby freed to listen to students' perspectives. I am freed to try new pedagogical approaches. And, most importantly, I am freed to critique myself and hear the criticisms of others, without those criticisms destroying me or my teaching. Essentially, I am freed from hegemonic claims by the one claim of Christ, and once again affirm the paradoxical situation of being in the world and simultaneously of the kingdom of God.

Those of my colleagues who are not Christian and those who are Christian and not Lutheran and who work alongside Lutherans in the Lutheran universities and colleges do so because in large measure they share the concern for justice and for the non-judgmental search for truth. This concern, however, is neither exclusively Christian nor perhaps even particularly Lutheran. Many of them would claim, like me, that they engage in action

for the sake of love and justice for our neighbors. It is this commitment to non-judgmental understanding that promotes action for the sake of love and justice that unites us. It is we who embody both individually *and* collectively the Lutheran tradition. And, as with all embodiments, except the one in Christ, we fall short of the virtuous marks at which we aim. We sin. However,

we live in the world in which the one perfect incarnation of truth was made possible through God's incomprehensible, infinite graciousness. This incarnation of truth simultaneously embodies the transgression of the law *and* continues to inspire, motivate and justify our imperfect aspiring embodiments of God's truth in the world.

Wendy McCredie is the associate director for interpretation in the Department for Communication at the ELCA churchwide office in Chicago.

Works Cited

- Bérubé, Michael and Cary Nelson, Eds. *Higher Education Under Fire: Politics, Economics, and the Crisis of the Humanities*. London: Routledge, 1995.
- Hughes, Richard and William B. Adrian, Eds. *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Survival and Success in the Twenty-First Century*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1997
- Marsden, Robert M. *The Soul of the American University*. Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Idea of the University: A Reexamination*. Yale University Press, 1994.
- Schwehn, Mark. *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America*. Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Simmons, Ernest L. *Lutheran Higher Education*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1998.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. *Education for Shalom: Essays in Christian Higher Education*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2003.

Notes

¹ I have chosen this term primarily because "dialectic" has, unfortunately, come to have connotations of conflict that must be resolved through the sublation of one argument into another more comprehensive logic. "Dialogic," on the other hand, retains the sense of simultaneously unresolved *and* motivating logical movements. See Mikhail Bakhtin's *The Dialogic Imagination*.

² Two centuries ago, Benjamin Franklin also enumerated the virtues necessary for good living. His *Autobiography*, however, ironizes an unthoughtful, blinkered approach to virtues and demonstrates that one virtue may contradict another.

³ See Richard Rorty's *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* for an elaboration on the contingency of truth.

⁴ Michael Beaty, "Perspectivalism and its Cultured Despisers," Baylor University, 15 July 1996, given as part of the Lilly Fellows Summer Seminar.

⁵ "Truth is a property of linguistic entities, of sentences." *Contingency*, p. 7.

Dual Citizenship in Athens and Jerusalem: Ricoeur's Hermeneutics and the Promise of Lutheran Higher Education

Mark C. Mattes

Beyond the desert of criticism we seek to be called again. —Paul Ricoeur, *The Symbolism of Evil*.

In contrast with other Christian approaches to the question of the relationship between faith and learning, which tend either to isolate faith from learning or to over-accentuate a continuum between them, the Lutheran approach to Christian higher education seeks to develop a conversation between faith and learning that preserves the integrity of each and can address current secularistic biases that would inhibit the attempt to establish a dialogue between faith and learning. In an attempt to flesh out a model of dialogue that can help us better understand how to model a faith-based approach to higher education, one can look to the work of the contemporary French philosopher and theorist of language and interpretation, Paul Ricoeur. Ricoeur's work can provide a model for discerning various phenomenological elements of dialogue (such as listening, risk, open-endedness, and mutuality), offer a framework from within a "neutral" or non-faith perspective for making the dialogue between faith and learning a plausible and worthwhile endeavor, and show how education as a process is a profoundly hermeneutical task. His understanding of myth as an indispensable category for interpreting human behavior, truth primarily as manifestation and not correspondence, and secularism's ability to dehumanize people calls for a retrieval of a faith-based approach to education congenial to the Lutheran tradition. Himself a layman of the French Reformed Church, Ricoeur offers work that should help us clarify the educational dynamics that can be operative at Lutheran-related schools.

In response to the dynamics of disengagement outlined by Marsden and Burtchell, we need to maintain that Christian higher education should indeed attempt in a specifiable way to integrate faith and learning across the curriculum and in various facets of student life. Admittedly, a school is not a church—nor should it be. A school is a community of scholars seeking to further the life of the mind. However, the unique heritage and calling of church-related institutions of higher learning is to attempt to find ways for faith and learning to connect. This is a task unique to the church-related school, since it is not promoted by secular institutions or by other agencies of the church. If we conceive of this integration as a *conversation* between faith and learning, we can recognize that both questions addressed *to* the faith from outside of faith and questions arising *from* the faith to

that which is outside of faith are permitted and encouraged as essential components in the development of the life of the mind. In other words, unlike much secular-based education, Lutheran higher education proposes that questions of faith are worthy of one's reflection; and, in contrast to many sectarian Christian institutions, at Lutheran colleges and universities it is permissible—indeed sometimes necessary—to criticize our presuppositions of faith in the hope of refining our faith-inspired perspectives. Admittedly, this task is risky for faith. We might lose our faith in the process of self-criticism. Nevertheless, as it will be seen, if we follow Luther's and/or Ricoeur's thinking, a faith that insists on security of whatever sort proves not to be genuine faith at all.¹

In some perspectives in higher education, faith issues and questions are thought to be solely a private matter. In this view, scholars want to preserve human autonomy from the threat of authoritarianism and defend scientific research from the challenge of "obscuritism." Hence, in their view, faith is an irrational disposition or blind acceptance of the religious legitimization of social institutions. By contrast, for church-related higher education, faith issues are thought to engage the life of the mind and even challenge our assumptions about social legitimization. Faith issues are permitted to be public, even though these issues will not receive univocal answers from church-related faculties, whose views often reflect the pluralism of the wider academy. Hence, church-related colleges should seek to foster both academic excellence and spiritual growth, and not just provide opportunities for spiritual growth. How might this be possible in an academic environment? Issues of faith are nurtured as much, if not more so, by the *questions* that faith raises, and not merely by the historic creedal or confessional answers that faith has traditionally given. Indeed, the very transmission of faith has been sustained by the questions generated by the faithful. Hence, one should agree with former St. Olaf College president Mark Edwards that "there should be in most cases no substantive difference between scholarship by Christians and by non-Christians." However, one can assume that the pedagogy at church-related campuses at times might be markedly different from that at secular campuses, since the church-related community of scholars will expect and encourage questions about

various disciplines, methods, and subject matters that might address faith or be addressed by faith. In church-related colleges, a confessional tradition meets the wider world of scholarship: this encounter mixes not the ingredients of oppression or repression, but of lively debate. Of course, one should not assume that religion courses required for the baccalaureate degree by many Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) schools will guarantee that faith and learning will be cross-fertilized. As an academic discipline, the study of religion in a church-related school may be done, indeed perhaps often ought to be done, from a vantage point of critical distance from faith, a "second order" reflection on "first order" faith propositions. However, such critical distance should never quiet questions of faith for the very sake of achieving an alleged "academic freedom" in the classroom. There is no wholly neutral stance in which scholars do their work. Scholars are always framed by traditions or perspectives. In a church-related environment, questions and issues of faith are, ironically, a guarantee of the pursuit of academic freedom across the curriculum, since they are not dismissed out of hand due to secularistic bias.

The integration of faith and learning can happen and often occurs in the outreach programs of campus ministry centers at state and/or secular universities and colleges or by various groups within currently demarcated research arms of the academy. However, church-related colleges ought to endeavor to bring faith and learning into conversation in an intentional way in their many endeavors and venues. From the perspective of democratic ideals and free inquiry, such a goal in no way jeopardizes the autonomy or academic freedom of faculty or students, since all members of a church-related academic community have freely consented to the value of this endeavor by their joining this particular community of scholars. Hence, as suggested by Ricoeur's thinking, the atmosphere that ought to be fostered on church-related campuses would avoid, on the one hand, a skepticism that thinks that it is pointless to seek truth or, in this case, the integration of faith and learning, and, on the other hand, a dogmatism in which one presumes to have discovered the definitive truth so that no further questions need be asked.² Rather, church-related higher education can foster an attitude of hopefulness that faith can provide a vision of meaning, meaningfulness, and even truth in and for the academy as it inspires students to consider lives of dedicated service to the world. Church-related higher education ought to produce graduates who understand the responsibilities of dual citizenship in both Athens and Jerusalem. The skeptic needs to take the risk of questing for meaning in inherited symbols, despite these symbol's limitations,

while the dogmatist needs to see his or her symbols appropriately critiqued.

The Lutheran Approach to Christian Higher Education

As several scholars have argued, different Christian traditions have tended to construe the relationship between faith and learning in different ways.³ The Reformed tradition has tended to integrate faith and learning by subordinating learning to faith in order to construct a unified and coherent single understanding of reality, a purported "Christian worldview" since, after all, all truth is God's truth. A consistent Reformed position tends to be alarmed by the threat of secularization, since it will attribute secularization as resistance to the distinctive Christian perspective.⁴ The Roman Catholic perspective tends to emphasize continuity between faith and reason since it is apt to construe the material world in virtually a "sacramental" way as a vehicle of God's grace and presence. The Mennonite and/or "free church" traditions emphasize not so much a distinctive Christian understanding of the world as distinctive Christian behavior—radical discipleship—a personal, practical, and unique discipline as over against the world. While appreciating the desire to relate faith and learning found in all these approaches and, in fact, sensing a core of truth in all of them, Lutheran higher education resists the attempt to impose a "Christian worldview" on the world, or the desire to insulate itself from the world, or the supposition that there is an uncontested continuum between faith and learning. Perhaps less confident in our ability to interpret either our world or God's truth for the world than these other perspectives, Lutheran higher education tends to see its mission as establishing a dialogue between faith and learning for the sake of mentoring citizens who will serve both church and society. The integration of faith and learning in a Lutheran perspective, then, suggests thematizing a conversation between the implications of faith for learning and the implications of the various disciplines in the arts and sciences for faith, when and where it is appropriate.

A conversation between faith and learning should not be misconstrued as one between public (learning) and private matters (faith issues). It is not an exercise in "values clarification." Rather, it involves the "to and fro" or "give and take" movement in a dialogue generated by two sets of possibilities: those of new life granted by the gospel as they bear upon the life of the mind, and those of the life of the mind as they bear upon our comprehension of the gospel. A Lutheran approach to higher education is guided by an affirmation that the world is properly

God's, not our own, and that this truth liberates us from any pretentiousness towards divinity that we might foster. As people of faith, we can be free to accept our creatureliness, our ultimate dependence upon God as a loving creator. As people of faith, we can be free from the anxiety that can cause humans to be "curved in" upon themselves, as Luther put it. Indeed, we can be liberated from our own quest for self-security and in this way we are available to consider the needs of our neighbors and the earth. Hence, people ought not to insulate their faith from the challenges and prospects of the world, since the gospel frees them to accept their creatureliness in and for the world. We also ought to be suspicious of any attempts to impose a "Christian worldview" on the world since we can never assume, this side of the eschaton, that our faith can somehow become sight. We walk, as St. Paul puts it, "by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7). Faith indeed should seek to understand everything it is capable of understanding. Faith is seeking understanding, as St. Augustine taught us. Indeed, St. Augustine is right to note that far from faith making one blind, it is rather on account of faith that one can see or understand anything at all. However, furthering Augustinian thinking about the relationship between faith and understanding, Luther contended that genuine faith is bereft of empirical measuring. Indeed, faith must be content to find God under the "sign of the opposite," in suffering and the cross,⁵ rather than in security or triumphalistic glory, with which reason might feel more secure. Guided by a healthy suspicion in the ability of the power of human reason to determine or share a common home ground with divine truth as such, since it is vulnerable to the onslaught of the "labyrinthine depths of human self-deception,"⁶ a Lutheran understanding of the gospel naturally can affirm dialogue as the best model for the relating or integrating of faith and learning, since dialogue especially can accommodate the ambiguity, or the lack of sight, that genuine faith must accept even as it seeks to make sense of its world.

While historically the Lutheran tradition has tended to be "quietistic" with regard to the economic, political, and social "powers that be" that operate in the created order, and has rightly been chastised for this social passivity, there are certainly enough theological resources and leverages within Lutheranism, were Lutheranism to challenge its quietistic heritage. These powers are susceptible to self-serving incurvation, our tendency, as Luther put it, to be turned in upon ourselves. They should not be uncritically trusted. These powers can be instruments that further God's good creation, when they help us to focus on the needs of our neighbors or the earth. Nevertheless, they also are capable of systemic distortions when they become self-serving. With regard

to education, Lutherans can especially walk freely because they know that education is not, and can never be, salvific. While education can help sustain social health, it can also be a vehicle of systemic distortions or social "incurvation." It is the gospel alone, then, that justifies the ungodly, not the processes or outcomes of education. From a Lutheran perspective, education does its job best when it directs us away from ourselves and toward the needs of our neighbors and the earth. Lutheran higher education holds out the prospect of being guided by awe and wonder towards the creation, rather than the fierce attempt to control nature for human's own purposes. We are, as Robert Jenson has nicely phrased it, to be gardeners of someone else's (i. e., God's) garden (Jenson 113).

The wider academic context in the twentieth century has not always been amenable to the cultivation of a conversation between Athens and Jerusalem. The "liberal-rationalist" tradition, as Richard Baepler has designated it, has looked to the scientific method alone as a norm for authority and has configured the purpose of higher education to be primarily pragmatic in outlook. It discredits the role of faith in public matters; faith, then, is relegated to private matters. Lutheran higher education has responded in different ways to this academic tradition. The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) schools, it could be argued, have generally opted for a "sectarian" strategy that rejects many, if not most, aspects of this tradition out of hand. ELCA schools, perhaps, have in various degrees and ways tended to accommodate this tradition. Much is to be learned from the liberal-rationalist tradition.⁷ We should affirm the use of scientific method and the important contributions that an individual's creative self-expression in the academy can offer the world. However, the overall record of the liberal-rationalist tradition is ethically ambiguous and some aspects of its outlook on the world are incompatible with the Christian gospel. The liberal-rationalist tradition rejects external authority and tradition, and affirms a "common rationality" that presumes that objectivity belongs solely to mathematics and the "hard sciences" of physics, chemistry, and possibly biology. It tends to reduce questions of truth to matters only of verification within the confines of controlled inquiry and demonstration. Since the attempt to specify an overarching common good is unobtainable to scientific pursuit, the liberal-rationalist tradition fosters a highly individualistic social policy. The self is "free" for any number of ends as long as it does not limit the autonomy for others. This tradition has altered the terrain for the kind of education offered in "denominational colleges," such as Lutheran schools which, as established in the nineteenth century, encouraged students to consider the

unity of knowledge, human moral purpose, societal leadership, and the classics of the West (Baepler 48). For the liberal-rationalist heritage, Athens and Jerusalem should not be in dialogue. Why? When seen as affecting the public, faith threatens to constrain the autonomous self. Furthermore, faith—lacking scientific verification—is viewed by those espousing this tradition as largely an irrational matter.

In an era of increasing pluralism, the hegemony of the liberal-rationalist tradition is less secure today than, say, twenty or thirty years ago. However, it is still a widespread and powerful social stance in the academy and it is fueled by the conviction that both scientific method as a path to truth (as opposed to “superstition”) and personal autonomy (as opposed to the heteronomy of hierarchical churchly and political authority) need to be preserved. Surely, the insight that this tradition offers for faith is that genuine faith must be on guard lest it become either superstitious or oppressively authoritarian. However, many scholars have rightly challenged a “verificationist” approach to truth that tends to pit science against faith. Indeed, the humanities are relegated to mere “taste” (about which, as the saying goes, there is no dispute) from the perspective of “verificationism.” While verificationism has been widely discredited by many thinkers, in *The Outrageous Idea of Christian Scholarship*, George Marsden helpfully designates four specific objections to it. Since the liberal-rationalist tradition continues to wield considerable force in the academy, it is worthwhile to present Marsden’s four points. First, the reliance on empirical scientific models as the specific criteria for truth is simply misguided since empirical science is not competent to provide definitive answers to the larger questions of life, which we should not assume to be properly configured as wholly subjective issues. Second, the conviction that all academic beliefs must be empirically based is inconsistent, a double-standard; “it [the empirical criterion] is not applied consistently to other nondemonstrable beliefs that play prominent roles in the secular academy.” For instance, most academics believe in the value of equal treatment for all people regardless of gender or race. However, such a belief cannot be derived from scientific argument. Third, religious beliefs cannot be excluded from the academy since many “academics are religious” and their beliefs will inevitably shape some of their scholarship. And, finally, verificationism unduly favors scholarship based on purely naturalistic presuppositions. Scientific method has been widely successful in much of the natural sciences. It, however, is not itself scientifically self-verifying.

In some perspectives, the liberal-rationalist approach to higher education may be less ethically neutral or innocent than it would lead us to believe. Indeed, as Max Weber conceived the goal of the university from its perspective, the university should seek mastery of the world through calculation and control (Schwehn 58). That goal, from the traditional Lutheran perspective, ought to be challenged. It would be tantamount to *ambitatio divinitatis*, the attempt of humanity to be its own god for itself. It is the exact opposite of living by faith. The results of our attempts at world mastery have consequences for the overall health of the planet as well as social, economic, and political inequities between rich and poor. ELCA schools can offer society far more by examining and challenging these aspects of the liberal-rationalist tradition. Some aspects of this tradition, such as promoting free inquiry, are helpful and consistent with the mission of ELCA-related higher education. However, other aspects, such as its inherent individualism, run counter to the goals of ELCA higher education. Individualism undermines the attempt to develop a concern for vocational service to church, neighbor, and the earth.

Ricoeur’s Hermeneutics of Suspicion and Retrieval: A Challenge to the Liberal-Rationalist Tradition⁸

The need for church-related higher education to move beyond the confines of the liberal-rationalist tradition motivates the concern of this paper to investigate and present the hermeneutical phenomenology of Paul Ricoeur (born 1913), and to draw out the implications of his philosophy for Lutheran higher education. Since the liberal-rationalist tradition is unsuited to provide a dialogical encounter between faith and learning for which Lutheranism quests, it then behooves us to seek an alternative model for education. Ricoeur is not an educational philosopher. Nevertheless, Ricoeur’s development of a reflexive philosophy that seeks to interpret or rehear symbols, myths, and texts in terms of suspicion and retrieval, or “distanciation” and “appropriation,” provides a model of dialogue with these symbols, myths, and texts, harmonious with and illustrative of how Lutheran higher education as itself dialogical can be construed. In Ricoeur’s work, issues of faith are seen as public matters, offering plausible perspectives on human identity, the nature of the good, and the nature of the world. Developed within a modern perspective, Ricoeur’s work indicates that modernity need not entail secularity. Furthermore, Ricoeur’s thinking unmasks a darker side to secularism that should not be ignored. This section of this essay will offer an in-depth study of the development of Ricoeur’s approach to symbol, myth, metaphor, and narrative in order to reclaim

a space for the construal of faith and learning as dialogical, public, and worthwhile.

Ricoeur's hermeneutics grew out of his work as a reflexive philosopher working within the French phenomenological tradition; Ricoeur saw the role of philosophy as offering possibilities of an increased self-understanding linked to the questions of a meaningful life and action. While himself a French Reformed Christian, he bracketed issues of faith in his philosophical pursuits in order to protect the integrity of both philosophy and theology.⁹ For Ricoeur, philosophy should not be an apologetic handmaid to theology, and theology should feel its freedom to position itself with relation to philosophy as it sees fit. His approach offered a self-critique of the Reformed perspective on relating faith and reason, since he was not seeking to establish a Christian "worldview." Similar to the Lutheran position presented earlier, Ricoeur's work implies that faith offers philosophy not a worldview but a critical engagement upon its assumptions, methods, and intentions. Faith may be able to accommodate diachronically and perhaps synchronically a number of worldviews, but not every worldview. The standard of testing a worldview for Lutherans in light of Ricoeur's views ought to be whether or not a given worldview is compatible with the cruciform existence of Christian discipleship, one which seeks to honor God above all things and seeks the neighbor's and the earth's well-being. An analysis of Ricoeur's intellectual journey, as we shall see, helps illustrate an intellectual basis for the viability of a dialogical approach to faith and learning, and how faith issues are genuinely public.

The key to understanding Ricoeur's view of dialogue is his analysis of a modern appropriation of mythical and symbolic thinking. Some moderns tend to ridicule myth, but for Ricoeur myths hold the secret to some aspects of human experience, if we are willing to engage them dialogically. Early in his career, Ricoeur sought to extend the thinking of his teacher Edmund Husserl¹⁰ by producing a phenomenological description of the human will.¹¹ In order to attain the phenomenological standard of "pure description" or a transparency between the will as such and our conception of the will, Ricoeur initially bracketed the experiences of fault and transcendence. When he undertook to study the notions of fallibility and fault, however, he acknowledged the limitations of Husserl's approach to explain these phenomena.¹² The Husserlian perspective was far more comfortable with notions like motives, powers, conditions, and limits rather than understanding how human fallibility is capable of moving to fault. Ricoeur concluded that the condition of fallibility is due to the fact that for humans it

is difficult, if not impossible, to establish a proportion between desires and ends, or freedom and finitude. However, he determined that in order to understand fault, phenomenology needs to appeal to and then interpret the *mythical* tales of the origins of evil that pre-scientific peoples devised.

In *The Symbolism of Evil*, Ricoeur explored various myths that sought to interpret the origin of evil such as "primordial chaos," "primeval fall," "original defilement," "exile from paradise," and "tragic fate," culminating in the affirmation of a "servile will." In Ricoeur's view, such myths ironically were the attempt to *make sense* of something inherently *irrational*, the phenomenon of evil. Ricoeur's insight was that finally it is *only* myth that can help us attempt to provide categories for philosophical reflection about evil. Ricoeur concluded that myth is a species of symbol—an extended or "narrated" symbol. Following Rudolf Bultmann¹³ but likewise much of modern thinking about mythology, he argued that myth must lose its explanatory pretension or presumed "etiological function." Nevertheless, Ricoeur contended that the quest to "demythologize" should not be to deprive us of myth, but instead to rid it of a "false logos" (*Symbolism of Evil* 162), the illusion of offering a kind of crude "science." In this way, myth can thus affirm its exploratory significance, "its power of discovering and revealing the bond between man and what he considers sacred" (5). Or, as he stated it, "The dissolution of the myth as explanation is the necessary way to the restoration of the myth as symbol" (350). Hence, in contrast to Husserlian phenomenology, meaning is not limited to the cognitive and empirical modes of understanding; it is rather profoundly hermeneutical,¹⁴ an attempt to "listen" to the dimensions of experience that would, without myth or symbol, be "closed and hidden." Since much human behavior is symbolically construed, Ricoeur's work opens vistas for philosophical and literary inquiry that are either closed or limited when we focus solely on concepts alone (as does Idealism) or sensations alone (as does Empiricism) to help us understand reality.

Ricoeur contended that far from being irrational, as many in the liberal-rationalist tradition might claim, symbols provoke us to think. How are they capable of doing this? They do this because they are many-layered or "polysemic." For example, the symbol "defilement" conveys both a literal and a figurative connotation. The latter, an analogy, where defilement is *like* stain or spot, encourages our attempt to decipher just how similar in any given judgment the analogy holds. Hence, as Ricoeur so famously noted, "the symbol gives rise to thought." This is because the attempt to decipher

symbols is a thoroughly interpretive or hermeneutical enterprise. Ricoeur affirmed that the critical moment of modern thinking (the heart of the liberal-rationalist tradition) is a necessary and indispensable aspect of humanity's process of intellectual maturation. We have indeed "come of age," as Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught. However, we are not limited solely to the resources of this age. We can, and indeed should, "critique the critique" by recognizing modernity's limits and its tendency to inhibit our full understanding of reality or the exercising of our full range of human inquiry. Myth and symbol can continue to speak to us, if we are willing to listen to them. Hence, Ricoeur described the hermeneutical enterprise as a "wager"—a risk that pre-modern symbols can still address us, disclose truth to us, and reveal possibilities of new experiences for us, despite the fact that they die as causal explanations for things (351). In this light, he claimed that it is not possible for us moderns to return, like pre-scientific peoples, to a "primitive naivete." However, by interpreting these symbols, we can hear their truths again.

Ricoeur concluded that hermeneutics involves a circular process that can be thematized as: "We must understand in order to believe, but we must believe in order to understand." Faith will wager or risk the possibility that the symbol can still address the human by disclosing meanings that can help humans position themselves with regard to their relation in the cosmos and even to the sacred. Hermeneutics, in a sense, is an act of faith, though a kind of "secular" and not a specifically religious faith.¹⁵ It clearly is never a "blind faith." Rather, it is more a faith like St. Augustine's who claims that apart from faith one cannot see. Symbols, then, encourage us to think as we attempt to decipher their meanings for people today.¹⁶ But thought also returns us back to the symbol, because we inescapably live within symbol systems. There is no metaphysical or scientific "second order" discourse that can dispense with the symbolic and mythic "first order" discourse. Since Ricoeur acknowledged that symbols can legitimate and sustain oppressive social systems, he listened carefully to the "masters of suspicion" such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Freud who unmasked idols used to justify social repression or inequities. Such idols must be smashed in order to allow symbols to speak (*Freud and Philosophy* 532). An appropriate way in which to communicate to others about the truth of a symbol is then "attestation," which for Ricoeur has become the hermeneutical equivalent of certitude in other disciplines (*Oneself as Another* 21). The upshot here for Lutheran higher education is that Ricoeur's work allows a space for reflection to open about faith without the liberal-rationalistic bias that faith is inherently non-cognitive.

Ricoeur's move from Husserlian phenomenology to hermeneutics, giving a public status to myth as an unavoidable symbolic form of human self-understanding and communication, provides a forum for faith matters to position certain aspects of human life, such as freedom, sin, origins, and destiny. It also suggests that the human quest for truth involved in asking these questions is meaningful, even though these questions transcend our finite ability to achieve definitive answers. In Lutheran terms, the purpose of education as dialogue is not to foster the life of the mind for its own sake but is guided by the possibility of nurturing a self-dispossessing life of discipleship. The primary symbol of the cross, in the Lutheran understanding, calls people to challenge idols which they invent in order to gain security and a false view of the self in which the self owns itself, and to live "outside themselves" in God and for the sake of the neighbor.

Truth as Manifestation

Having moved into hermeneutics, Ricoeur must undertake the difficult task of better understanding the ability of language to refer to extra-linguistic reality. For Ricoeur, truth is to be found as manifestation and not merely correspondence. Ricoeur inquired into the question of truth in language by investigating the semantic structure of referentiality in metaphor and narrative.¹⁷ In order to clarify his stance on language as referential, Ricoeur appealed to Gottlob Frege's linguistic distinction between "sense" and "reference." "Sense" semiotically conveys the intra-linguistic dimension of language—how words are to be distinguished from each other in the intelligibility of a sentence as such. The "reference," however, is the semantic dimension of language that indeed refers to extra-linguistic possibilities for human living in the world. Referentiality should no longer be construed, as the Structuralists conceived it, as solely an interplay among various signs within a text, nor as the Romantics construed it, as a reader's reproduction of an author's intentions. Instead, the text refers to reality by disclosing possible new horizons of experience for a reader.¹⁸ From this perspective, truth is radically reconceived, similar to the views of Martin Heidegger¹⁹ and Hans-Georg Gadamer,²⁰ as no longer an equivalence between an image in the mind and reality as such but as a disclosure of possible ways of living or new horizons of experience.²¹

Emphasizing the importance of discourse as the avenue to truth-as-manifestation, Ricoeur's work naturally turned in the mid-1970s through the mid-1980s to the question of narrative, particularly toward the question of establishing a relationship between narrative and time.²²

For Ricoeur, time is to be construed narratively as human time and narrative is to be construed as temporal experience. He isolated three hermeneutical moments to narrative: prefiguration, configuration, and refiguration. Our ability to *prefigure* our world means that we approach life with a preunderstanding of what human acting and communication are. Our ability to *configure* our world is our ability to "emplot," the act of "eliciting a pattern from a succession," that is, to configure episodic and unrelated temporal events into a meaningful totality. It is the text, not the reader, who projects a world and thus enlarges the reader.²³ Our ability to *refigure* our world is the ability to decipher the ethical possibilities in a situation suggested by the text. Education, from a Ricoeurian perspective, ought to be seen as itself a profoundly hermeneutical process as it exposes students to various traditions and canons of critical inquiry. Clearly, we can also infer from Ricoeur's hermeneutics that faith is capable of bearing on public matters by disclosing possibilities for how to reconfigure life in light of faith in the gospel and love towards one's neighbor. Truth is insight into the world and human relations, into new directions for human life, and into discerning God's will for humans; this reconception of truth parallels the Lutheran view of education both as dialogical, open to new horizons of experience, and as humble with regard to our attempts to comprehend reality. It also implies for Christians, in light of the power of the God who justifies the ungodly, the possibility of serving in new practices of charity in one's vocation on behalf of others and the earth.

Ricoeur as Interpreter of Religion as a Dimension of Human Experience

Ricoeur worked from within a "secular" framework. He did not see himself as a Christian apologist. Indeed, he bracketed issues of faith. Nevertheless, he criticized secularistic assumptions that tend to trivialize faith or actually repress questions of faith. His quest to retrieve questions and issues of mystery and myth was solely for the sake of unleashing the possibility of a *more human* and *more humane* humanity, a possibility which is lessened when the religious dimension to human experience is repressed or ignored.²⁴ In an important article "Manifestation and Proclamation," he lamented that modernity "is constituted as modern precisely by having moved beyond the sacred cosmos" (61). Hence, "Modern persons no longer have a sacred space, a center, a *templum*, a holy mountain, or an *axis mundi*. Their existence is decentered, eccentric, a-centered."²⁵ The ramifications of our domestication of nature and our demystification of it through our adoption of scientific method and our ubiquitous use of technology (the "real

metaphysics of the twentieth century,"²⁶ as Ernst Jünger phrased it), is that "we no longer participate in a cosmos, but we now have a universe as the object of thought and as a matter to be exploited."²⁷ It is the exposure of this hidden ideology of exploitation laden in much scientific and technological pursuit that led Ricoeur to note: "this same consideration ought to lead us to call into question the judgment modernity passes on what it makes appear as an archaism. This judgment in its turn has already begun to be judged itself. Modernity is neither a fact nor our destiny. It is henceforth an open question."²⁸

In a sense, for Ricoeur, the nature of the human is neither fully nor properly expressed apart from some kind of acknowledgment of the sacred. Technology's demystification of the cosmos results not only in the "death of God," as it was expressed in the mid-1960s, but also in the death of humanity. This is the darker side of secularity, which needs greater acknowledgement in the academy. When the participants in the universe are reduced to combinations of impersonal, albeit interconnected machinery, it is not only the universe as mysterious that dies, but also humanity as uniquely self-transcendent. Humanity is properly self-constituted only within the horizon of mystery, wonder, awe, and joy, and certain human events such as births, deaths, or coming of age, are so evocative of both wonder and threat that only religious ritualization offers an etiquette that rightly responds to these mysteries. Ricoeur retrieved a sense of mystery to the cosmos by means of affirming the exploratory nature of myth, and the meaning-producing patterns of metaphor and narrative in order to help provide tools for better understanding our humanity and to critique the one-dimensional aspect of human interest that technology suggests. He also believed that while talk of faith is not susceptible to empirical testing (faith after all does not become sight)—nevertheless it is capable of being rationally configured. Like Immanuel Kant, Ricoeur was convinced that matters of faith can be *thought*, even if they can not be *known*. Far from violating one's personal autonomy, faith retrieves the possibility of allowing the human to be seen in non-reductionist terms as personal and meaningful. For Ricoeur, the attempt to discern possible horizons of experience from a symbol or a text is a risk, a *hope* that being-as-such will or can give meaning to one's life by venturing or wagering that life-altering possibilities can be offered or given by the text or the symbol. Both the skeptic and the dogmatist short-circuit the possibility of hope because they think they can bring closure to the discussion prematurely. Neither position genuinely represents a stance of faith. However, a faith which can embrace questions, even doubts, fulfills our humanity and allows us to become ever more human in relation to God,

others, and our own very selves. Hopefully, a Lutheran understanding of the gospel in the context of higher education affirms this truth.

The Contours and Value of Dialogue

What then are the contours or texture of dialogue for Ricoeur? How can Athens and Jerusalem be in dialogue, if this is indeed what the dual citizen of Lutheran higher education desires? Ricoeur stresses that we need to check our modern anti-mythic assumptions and learn that some issues can only be understood mythically. We need, in other words, to take the risk of challenging ourselves and listening to the voice of the other in the myth. Likewise, Ricoeur teaches us to think through the new possible patterns of life suggested by various symbols. Symbols push us towards a “give and take” relationship between the other and ourselves. Narrative, for Ricoeur, asks us how our lives might be refigured in light of a story, implying a kind of attitude of open-endedness as we inquire how a text may alter our lives. It seems, then, that there are four crucial components to a phenomenology of dialogue on the basis of our investigation of Ricoeur’s hermeneutics and theory of narrative: risk, listening, mutuality (give and take), and open-endedness. These four are not to be understood in either a temporal or a hierarchical sequence. However, they do represent the phenomenological contours or texture of authentic dialogue. First, when interpreters approach a text or a symbol they must take the risk in hopefulness and faith to venture that this symbol can indeed continue to speak. The symbol of course may in some sense deceive. The symbol or text may, for instance, authorize or legitimate repression. Ricoeur would have us test or question this of the symbol or text. It may provide some kind of “false logos” that would seek to explain reality in a quasi-scientific way. He would have us challenge our assumptions about the symbol or text. We need to be suspicious and yet hopeful of retrieval as we undergo our suspicion. The hermeneut falls short of certitude, yet not of thought. Second, the hermeneut is a listener. Hermeneutics allows the symbol or text to question us, to challenge us, to provoke us, to permit us to question and test our deepest convictions and assumptions. It is risky business indeed! It is an interplay between exclusion and embrace, distance and closeness, suspicion and retrieval, skepticism and attestation. It is in this way that we *listen* to the text or symbol—even as we question it. We ask: How might it refigure our lives and make us different or hold out new possibilities for us? Third, the fact that we stand between suspicion and retrieval and reject both skepticism and dogmatism guarantees that our task of interpretation, our analysis of the possibilities of life reconfigured by the

text or symbol, will be a process of mutual give and take, and hence, fourth, an open-endedness due to the “surplus of meaning” in a text. Demythologization does not have to lead to demystification or demythication. Indeed, even scientific method in Ricoeur’s perspective, should be understood as likewise a hermeneutical task, the interpretation of data and experience in light of models which attempt a “critical realism,” a possible, imaginative way of representing the world. Ricoeur, like C. S. Lewis, teaches Christians to affirm the mythic character of their primary narratives. Gary Dorrien, interpreting Lewis says, “If the Christ myth is true in the way that it claims to be true, it stands to other myths as the fulfillment of their promise and truth. It is not an illustration of mythic truth, but the ground of its possibility and the realization of its fragmentary glimpse of the Real”²⁹ In this regard, Lutherans need, at times, to look to the work of Thomas Aquinas as a model in the art of Christian dialogue. While risking his own faith by bearing the brunt of some incompatible aspects of Aristotelianism with orthodox Christian faith, Aquinas was also able to discern various degrees of truth in Aristotle that he believed Christians must appropriate. Likewise, contemporary Christians will look to thinkers as diverse as Stephen Hawking and the Buddha in their quest for truth, even though these thinkers will challenge Christian faith while giving great insights about life and the world.

What then does Ricoeur have to teach us about the value of dialogue for church-related education? In Ricoeur’s perspective, issues of faith can engage the public arena; they are no longer positioned by the “liberal-rationalist” tradition. A dialogical approach to faith deals with public matters by allowing scholars to reflect on religious symbols and narratives with an eye to their impact upon public life. In the context of the church-related college, this discussion allows for how Christian narratives might suggest new horizons of interpreting experience. It should be clear that dialogue about matters of faith and public life sometimes takes the voice of argument and criticism. For both Lutherans and Ricoeurians, the Christian scholar must often internalize important criticisms of the Christian tradition made from outside the tradition and seek to defend or revise the stance of Christian faith. However, at other times, both Lutherans and Ricoeurians recognize that the Christian scholar must unmask secularity as itself offering an alternative faith stance in opposition to and certainly no more justifiable than Christianity. With dialogue, the Christian scholar will seek to be as charitable as possible to the stances of the non-Christian and extra-theological disciplines. Even ethicists, in a sense, can teach chemistry, since the attitudes they express about the discipline of chemistry and how chemicals are best used offer important ideas for

students to wrestle with. Since Christian scholars recognize the world as God's world, even though this truth is not universally acknowledged, they will seek to build as many bridges as are possible with non-Christian faith stances and extra-theological disciplines. They will risk, listen, seek mutuality, and open-endedness in their quest. Some features of the Christian perspective, however, will remain non-negotiable in this discussion. Christians might deliberate about how to accomplish practices of peace in the world. However, they will not debate the truth that peace is a goal that ought to be achieved. In the Lutheran perspective, the scholar as a Christian disciple will build such bridges between disciplines and amongst people in order to be Christ to and serve the "neighbor" in the context of the academy. Both accomodationist and sectarian strategies towards modernity short circuit dialogue, since they tend to collapse the dialogue to a monologue, over-prioritizing only one voice of the conversation. Lutheran higher education will be best served when it charts a path between these extremes. Lutheran higher education can fulfill this task because it expresses the freedom to transgress boundaries established by Weberian orthodoxies in the academy. Instead of favoring the Weberian prioritization of instrumental reason and its concomitant "fact-value" split, the pedagogy of Lutheran higher education will sustain itself by raising those irrepressible questions about human destiny, purpose, and service to God and neighbor.

Conclusion

Again, why should the church support institutions of higher learning? How can the church fulfill its mission through them? We might be tempted to think that the attempt to establish a "Christian worldview" would be the best answer to this question. However, following both Luther's and Ricoeur's thinking, it is clear that simply because a scholar uses "Christian" data or attempts to devise a "Christian" method for seeking truth, a "Christian" worldview is not guaranteed. However, is not the attempt to establish such a worldview presumptuous, in light of the gospel? Our faith will become sight at the eschaton—but only at the eschaton.

This side of eternity, we need to be very humble in how we relate faith to learning. Our construction of models of reality, even within theology, fail isomorphically to correspond to reality. The Lutheran position of attempting to establish a dialogue between faith and learning honors the ambiguity that men and women of faith actually experience in their current pilgrimage. Nevertheless, worldviews will be constructed, especially within the academy. Christians should join in the task of building them. To the conversation, they will bring a "discretion of spirits" (1 John 4:1); they will raise questions of how the ultimate or God is named and served, how the neighbor's needs are met, and how stewardship of the earth is best done. The Lutheran quest to establish this dialogue is a vigorously Christian, albeit a humble, endeavor. The Lutheran educational insights that (1) dialogue between faith and learning is an appropriate endeavor, (2) the world can be affirmed as an arena of creative, spiritual activity, and (3) self-critique is important in all our activities, can be furthered as we have seen, by an encounter with Ricoeur's hermeneutics of suspicion and retrieval, the plausibility of myth as disclosing truth, and the attempt to dialogue with the other.

The Lutheran church is a confessional church. Throughout its symbolic writings we encounter the phrase "we believe, teach, and confess." In the school, the church risks her confessional heritage. She is willing to bracket it in order to listen to critiques and to discern how to engage the gospel with the life of the mind. This endeavor is a necessary venture, if Christians are to continue their earthly pilgrimage in faith in God and in service toward the neighbor. In the academy, the contemporary Christian is no different than Abraham who hears and obeys God's call, not knowing where he or she will arrive. This legacy is worth our while to transmit to our youth and also to model before the world. In light of the inroads of the liberal-rationalist tradition in ELCA schools, the challenge for many of our colleges will be to create a space for this unique dialogue to occur. One might well wager that those institutions which seek to retrieve this calling will find their academic journey adventurous, rewarding, and true to their calling.

Mark C. Mattes is professor of religion at Grand View College in Des Moines, Iowa.

Works Cited

- Baepler, Richard. "Toward an Understanding of Lutheran Character in Higher Education." *The Lutheran Reader*. Ed. by Paul J. Contino and David Morgan. Valparaiso: Valparaiso University Press, 1999.
- Jenson, Robert W. *Systematic Theology: The Works of God, Vol. 2*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*. Trans. Denis Savage. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970.

- Ricoeur, Paul. "Manifestation and Proclamation." *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*. Trans. David Pellauer. Ed. Mark I. Wallace. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *Oneself as Another*. Trans. Kathleen Blarney. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992.
- Ricoeur, Paul. *The Symbolism of Evil*. Beacon Press, 1990.
- Schwehn, Mark. *Exiles from Eden*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Notes

- ¹ L. DeAne Lagerquist has shared with me the insight that for many Lutherans, the Lutheran tradition in higher education functions as a compass that orients our outlook on the world and not a map that would seek a totalizing perspective.
- ² In his article "Philosophy and the Unity of Truth," Ricoeur claims "If all history engenders a degree of skepticism, every claim to truth fosters a degree of dogmatism. From this point of view, history would only be a history of errors and truth would be the suspension of history." See *History and Truth*, trans. C. Kelbley (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1965), 42.
- ³ The following discussion is dependent on Richard T. Hughes and William B. Adrian's *Models for Christian Higher Education: Strategies for Success in the Twenty-First Century* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997).
- ⁴ See Ernest L. Simmons, *Lutheran Higher Education: An Introduction for Faculty* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1998), 31.
- ⁵ Hence in *The Bondage of the Will*, trans. J. I. Packer and O. R. Johnston (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1957), 101, Luther wrote, "... faith's object is things not seen. That there may be room for faith, therefore, all that is believed must be hidden. Yet it is not hidden more deeply than under a contrary appearance of sight, sense and experience. Thus, when God quickens, He does so by killing; when he justifies, He does so by pronouncing guilty; when he carries up to heaven, he does so by bringing down to hell." Consider also Luther's 20th thesis of the *Heidleberg Disputation*: "He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross."
- ⁶ See Richard Baepler, "Toward an Understanding of Lutheran Character in Higher Education" in *The Lutheran Reader*, ed. by Paul J. Contino and David Morgan (Valparaiso: Valparaiso University Press, 1999), 50.
- ⁷ I am adapting the categories "sectarian" and "accommodationist" from Ronald Thiemann's categorization of strategies among churches for dealing with secular critique of religion from modernity. See his *Religion in Public Life: A Dilemma for Democracy* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 1996), 55.
- ⁸ I am grateful for Bruce Reichenbach's perceptive critique of this section of this essay, which pushed me to connect with greater rigor Ricoeur's approach to dialogue with that of Lutheran higher education.
- ⁹ Hence, in *Oneself as Another* [trans. Kathleen Blamey (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1992)] Ricoeur claims that "It will be observed that this asceticism of the argument, which marks, I believe, all my philosophical work, leads to a type of philosophy from which the actual mention of God is absent and in which the question of God, as a philosophical question, itself remains in a suspension that could be called agnostic" (24). He also argues, "The reference of biblical faith to a culturally contingent symbolic network requires that this faith assume its own insecurity, which makes it a chance happening transformed into a destiny by means of a choice constantly renewed, in the scrupulous respect of different choices. The dependence of the self on a word that strips it of its glory, all the while comforting its courage to be, delivers biblical faith from the temptation, which I am here calling cryptophilosophical, of taking over the henceforth vacant role of ultimate foundation" (25). He goes on to cite Eberhard Jungel's anti-foundationalist approach to theology as a convincing and winsome theological method.
- ¹⁰ For an examination of Husserl's philosophy, see his *Ideas: General Introduction to Pure Phenomenology*, trans. W. R. Boyce Gibson (New York: Collier, 1962), *Cartesian Meditations: An Introduction to Phenomenology*, trans. Dorion Cairns (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1960), and *Experience and Judgment: Investigations in a Genealogy of Logic*, trans. James S. Churchill and Karl Americks (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973).
- ¹¹ See Ricoeur's *Freedom and Nature: The Voluntary and the Involuntary*, trans. E. V. Kohak (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1966). For studies of Ricoeur's thinking, see Don Ihde's *Hermeneutic Phenomenology: The Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1971), David Wood, ed. *On Paul Ricoeur: Narrative and Interpretation* (London: 1991), Charles E. Reagan, *Studies in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1979), T. Peter Kemp and David Rasmussen, eds. *The Narrative Path: The Later Works of Paul Ricoeur* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989), David Klemm, *The Hermeneutical Theory Of Paul Ricoeur: A Constructive Analysis* (London: Bucknell University Press, 1983), and David Klemm and William Schweiker, eds. *Meanings in Texts and Actions: Questioning Paul Ricoeur* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993).
- ¹² See *Fallible Man*, trans. Charles A. Kelbley (New York: Fordham University Press, 1986), xlii.
- ¹³ In "Preface to Bultmann," published in *Essays on Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Lewis S. Mudge (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1980), 49-72, Ricoeur criticizes Bultmann for jumping too quickly from kerygma to faith; one should not bypass the question of language's ability to reconfigure our lives.
- ¹⁴ Ricoeur defined the task of the hermeneutics as twofold: "to reconstruct the internal dynamic of the text and to restore to the work its ability to project itself outside itself in the representation of a world that I could inhabit." See "On Interpretation" in *From Text to Action: Essays in Hermeneutics II*, trans. Kathleen Blarney and John B. Thompson (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1991), 18.
- ¹⁵ Hence in *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation*, trans. Denis Savage (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 28,

Ricoeur concludes "The contrary of suspicion, I will say bluntly is faith. What faith? No longer, to be sure, the first faith of the simple soul, but rather the second faith of one who has engaged in hermeneutics, faith that has undergone criticism, postcritical faith."

¹⁶ Here Ricoeur's Kantianism can be seen at its clearest. Ricoeur's notion of "symbols" is comparable to Kant's notion of "aesthetic ideas," ideas for which no concept is adequate. Kant describes this category in his Third Critique which, unlike the First Critique which deals with knowledge or the Second Critique which deals with desire, deals with judgment, specifically the attempt to establish regulative, a priori, non-constitutive principles that can help us understand both our aesthetic judgments and our teleological approach to nature. For Kant's discussion of "aesthetic ideas" see *The Critique of Judgment*, trans. J. H. Bernard (New York: Hafuer, 1951), 157.

¹⁷ In order to affirm a referential dynamic to language he countered the structuralist perspective on language, popular among French intellectuals during the mid-twentieth century. Structuralism reduced language to a finite system of signs whose significance is determined by differences among the signs themselves and not from the signs' ability to refer to extra-linguistic reality as such. Ricoeur was troubled that in the structuralist perspective language is no longer treated as a "form of life," as Ludwig Wittgenstein would call it, but as a "self-sufficient system of inner relationships." Ricoeur's major criticism of structuralism was that "Language is not a world of its own. It is not even a world. But because we are in the world, because we are affected by situations, and because we orient ourselves comprehensively in those situations, we have something to say, we have experience to bring to language." See *Interpretation Theory: Discourse and the Surplus of Meaning* (Fort Worth: Texas Christian University Press, 1976), 20-21.

¹⁸ As Ricoeur noted: "What has to be appropriated is the meaning of the text itself, conceived in a dynamic way as the direction of thought opened up by the text. In other words, what has to be appropriated is nothing other than the power of disclosing a world that constitutes the reference of the text." See *Interpretation Theory*, 92.

¹⁹ According to Heidegger an artwork "sets up" a world. See "The Origin of a Work of Art" in *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper, 1971), 44.

²⁰ *Truth and Method* (New York: Continuum, 1975), 273.

²¹ Hence, Ricoeur claims "Far from saying that a subject already mastering his own way of being in the world projects the a priori of his self-understanding on the text and reads it into the text, I say that interpretation is the process by which disclosure of new modes of being—or if you prefer Wittgenstein to Heidegger, of new forms of life-gives to the subject a new capacity for knowing himself. If the reference of the text is the project of a world, then it is not the reader who primarily projects himself. The reader rather is enlarged in his capacity of self-projection by receiving a new mode of being from the text itself." See *Interpretation Theory*, 94. Mark I. Wallace further clarifies Ricoeur's position on understanding with the statement that it "occurs in the to-and-fro dialogue between text and interpreter whenever the interpreter is willing to be put into question by the text and risk openness to the world of possibilities the text projects." See "Introduction" to Ricoeur's *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, Narrative, and Imagination*, trans. David Pellauer and ed. Mark I. Wallace (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 9.

²² See his magisterial *Time and Narrative*, trans. Kathleen Blarney and David Pellauer (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984, 1984, 1988).

²³ In his last major work, *Oneself as Another*, Ricoeur explores ethics from his narrative perspective. He argues that the question of personal identity should be constructed as *ipseity*, the quest to give intelligibility to one's life by means of composing one's own narrative about the self and not *idem*, the notion of the self as same. Hence, the self is best seen as developed by means of dialectic between self and the other than the self.

²⁴ See "Manifestation and Proclamation" in *Figuring the Sacred*.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ See John Wilkinson's "Introduction" to Jacques Ellul's *The Technological Society*, trans. John Wilkinson (New York: Vintage, 1964), ix.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 61-62.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ See *The Word as True Myth: Interpreting Modern Theology* (Louisville: Westminster, 1997), 237.

Reflections on Lutheran Identity on Reformation Sunday

Thomas W. Martin

Stories of beginnings are, like the fields of force reaching out from the quantum void, vehicles of immense and superhuman power. Just as these fundamental physical forces, which although hidden away deep within the universe's subconscious, are capable of controlling the actions of galaxies and atoms, mythic stories reach from their primal vortices to exert their forces on our images of ourselves and our sense of order and purpose in the universe. The mythic casts within which we rehearse varied aspects of our always occurring beginnings give shape to life, purpose to action, meaning to living and, when shared by whole cultures or subcultures, sanction to social structures and mores. Such myths have been with us, as near as anthropologists can tell, *since* the beginning. From the *Ennuma Elish* to *The Boston Tea Party* such stories have served to legitimate identities and produce seemingly self-existent frames of reference by which we anchor our thinking and very existence. They also enable us to ignore or subsume the thinking, or even existence of those who differ from us.

On Reformation Sunday as Lutherans we gather to rehearse our foundational myths. We tell the story, in narrative and abstract doctrine, which serves as the basis of our identities and provides the lens through which we view our God, our Church, and those around us. It is a story whose immense force in shaping our lives achieves an inertia in driving us, often unaware, toward the future.

If we are to reflect critically on our Lutheran myths, to judge their power for good or ill, it is important first to note that it is innately human to see the speck in someone else's eye before noticing the log in one's own. The *other's*¹ myth is always easily debunked, seen through. One's own myths stand as self-evidently true, opaque, obviously *just the way things are*. It has been easy for most Americans to *see* the foibles of Marxist economics. Yet a significant majority of us accept the myths of market driven consumer capitalism and its attendant economic theory as simply exhibiting the facticity of universal laws. It is similarly difficult, if not impossible, for us Lutherans to see being simultaneously saints and sinners, or dividing our lives into two paradoxically related kingdoms as anything other than *just the way things are*. To return to the allusion to Jesus' words which began this paragraph, "criticism of myths should begin at home," or, perhaps, "people who live in mythic constructs shouldn't throw bricks."

My experience of Reformation Sunday this year began with a disconcerting moment. The celebrant called us to begin worship by saying, "Today the Church gathers to celebrate the Reformation." Instantaneously I experienced an intellectual vertigo as my mind teetered on the brink of a chasm filled with variant definitions of *church*. None of my Roman Catholic friends had this particular Sunday marked on their calendars. (They don't even celebrate Counter Reformation Sunday!) I briefly wondered how many of the world's Orthodox Christians are aware that a thing called The Reformation took place, or could name its major players. My mind recoiled at the thought that those in the Anabaptist tradition, whose ancestors Lutherans tortured and killed in the name of Jesus had much to celebrate with us. I struggled to try and name even other mainstream Protestant denominations that marked this day with such finely focused festival. I tried desperately to remember from when I was a United Methodist pastor, still blissfully ignorant in his Arminianism that he was predestined to be a Lutheran, if Methodists made much of Reformation Day. But I could not remember having ever told my congregation we had gathered to celebrate Reformation Sunday. Would those in the Reformed tradition be celebrating the same things I was meant as a Lutheran to be celebrating? (And if they did, wouldn't John Calvin be watching somewhat uncomfortably from Heaven?) What exactly *were* we celebrating for *The Church*? And why was I having such a difficult time imagining *all* the Church as seeing the *same* (or any) celebratory content in the Reformation? All this flashed through my mind before the Brief Order of Confession, like one's life replaying itself just before death.

Anyone even slightly aware of ecumenical moves in the past decades will object that this is much too complex a topic to fit between the Greeting and the Brief Order. I have left out a great deal. First, I need to make clear that I am speaking from my experience. My life has played out in formal relationship to four different Protestant denominations (currently ELCA) and in informal relations with many others. I am reflecting on my sense of grass-roots understandings and celebrations of Reformation Sunday, not the way in which this festival Sunday is viewed by clergy types intimate with liturgical calendars and ecumenical committees. Reformation Day does appear on the calendars of a significant number of Protestant churches. However, in a brief and non-scientific survey of on-line calendars I found it often to be printed parenthetically. Lutheran celebration of

Reformation Sunday is anything but parenthetical! Thus not being able to recall a single Sunday as a Methodist pastor having formally focused liturgy and sermon on the Reformation, even though it was most likely printed on denominational calendars, is not surprising. Methodists just don't identify with the Reformation as Lutherans do. And in meetings with clergy colleagues, I don't remember it as topic of conversation. ("I need new ideas for Reformation sermons. Got any?") In my five years as a member of the Church of England, All Saints always trumped the Reformation. (I am, tongue-in-cheek, doubtful that many Lutheran laity even know that All Saints is a liturgical day!)

I am certain that my Roman Catholic friends are unaware of our premier Sunday for similar reasons. Yes, a year ago Roman Catholics and Lutherans signed an historic accord. Catholics now have on their liturgical calendar "Reformation/Reconciliation" Sunday. Yet when I talk with real Catholics who fill Roman pews on Sundays it is not in their awareness. If it is being celebrated in their churches it went unnoticed by large numbers. Other celebrations trump their awareness of our Lutheran day.

These thoughts having interfered with listening to the readings the sermon pulled me back into the service and answered many of my questions, at least the ones about what we were celebrating. It was an articulate and creative rehearsal of the gifts Luther brought to the Church.² It laid out in enlightening prose and apt metaphor issues of corruption set against theological insights of grace and faith which exposed the abuses. The speaker's story told of the restatement of an age-old Pauline-Augustinian theology which was God's prescription for healing the abuses that had crept into the Church. The sermon went on to ask the ongoing question of Lutheranism, "Given such underserved grace freely bestowed upon the vilest of sinners who continue to *be* sinners, just how is it we live out the need to *behave* ourselves?" We do so in the paradox, of course, of being simultaneously both saints and sinners. We live the life of grace in the struggle of being what we are not. All good Lutheran stuff!

My (formerly Wesleyan) heart was strangely warmed, if not perfected. This *was* a festival Sunday. We genuinely have much to celebrate. The world was righted, the vertigo gone. Once again neatly opaque my Lutheranism anchored my universe. Or did it? Experiences of *seeing through* are not so easily exorcised. The initial experience of this festival Sunday would not go away, even though it struck such a convenient paradoxical balance with the exposition of Lutheran theology.

The real issue is, of course, not the importance of the Reformation and Luther's magisterial place in starting it, nor is the issue the choice of a festival day to focus such importance. Luther must be somewhere in anyone's list of top ten theologians. He ranked quite high in *Time Magazine's* list of most important people for the last millennium (but then so did Aquinas). Although Protestantism could have arisen from other persons and events, we cannot ignore that it in fact began with Luther. All Protestants owe him a debt. Catholics cannot ignore the historical impact he has had on their beliefs and structures as well. All of this goes without saying.

The issue is *how* the myth is told, framed, celebrated; it is the significance drawn from the story. Roman Catholics almost certainly tell the story with an emphasis on the present, and reconciliation.³ It is a day to celebrate healing of past wounds and misunderstandings. From a Catholic theological perspective it is not that Catholic doctrine has changed. It is the recognition that common vocabulary and frameworks now exist which allow us to see that we were always trying to say the same thing, but in differing keys. The Reformation was, in one sense, a talking-past one another. We now celebrate talking-to one another. My experience of Lutheran celebrations is quite different. The focus tends to be on the past. The locus of holiness and sanctity is on a "then," which we try to recapture for our "now." Some Lutheran laity (and some clergy) I have spoken with saw the Joint Declaration more as a *they-finally-got-it*, a *see-we-were-right-all-along*. The myth, even after the Joint Declaration, was celebrated to confirm superiority with its attendant separation.

Although told as if this was a new experience *this* Reformation Sunday, in truth the story reveals an ongoing struggle I have with my Lutheran identity. I am in many ways disadvantaged in achieving the elusive goal of a being a good Lutheran. One is that I am a biblical scholar/theologian. I live in a professional relationship with a book that continues to astound me with its ability to say one thing in a first reading and something very different in the second or hundredth reading. A multivalent (perhaps, infinitely-valent) God uses the Bible I read to consistently step outside my hermeneutical frames to say the unexpected, to say things my theologically preconceived *gospel* sometimes says God can't say. The God of the texts I read professionally is sometimes a Jew, or a Baptist, sometimes a Catholic, often Orthodox, and frequently Lutheran, but never settles into any one viewpoint. Seeing both, indeed all, sides of a text is a curiously de-centering, unnerving practice. And this cubist dismantling of theologically unified views to see all sides of a thing also applies to

how I look at the founding myths of Lutheranism in its reading/telling of the theological and historical stories of the Reformation.

A curious feature of foundational myths is the way in which they frequently hide or obfuscate a dark side of the events they celebrate. Those of us who came of age during Vietnam and Watergate will never again hear the myths of American origins in the same way. This is true even if, post 9/11, we might like to recapture some small part of a patriotic naiveté. The realities behind our founding national myths were, in fact, less about freedom and justice and more about privileged and advantaged white-males seeking a still more privileged institutional structure to be able to exploit more effectively their advantages over others and the environment than the British Crown and Parliament were willing to allow. Our nation's founding myths fail to speak of American Patriots set over against American Loyalists and the silencing of the latter in the myth telling process. We silence the Native Americans who fought for the British having prophetically seen that the revolutionary rhetoric of freedom and justice would not be for them. Our stories, in their orthodox form, fail to speak of an uncompromising militant belligerency intent on its own way no matter what. What dark secrets fail to be told in our recounting of the Reformation in its guise as the foundational myth of Lutheranism?

For all the good Luther unleashed, he also helped in birthing unspeakable horrors. He (we Lutherans) was (are) no less culpable in the sin of schism than was Pope Leo. The oft trumpeted sincerity of Lutherans in efforts to avoid schism does not lessen the culpability. In the end both sides *schismed*. It takes two to tango. This is true, even if in historical judgment, as a post-colonial analysis might suggest, a greater burden is placed on the Papacy because of its institutional power. The Pandora's Box, Luther himself only wanted to crack open, was opened nonetheless. In the wake of the Reformation the Body of Christ has been hopelessly fragmented. So much so that one of the chief tasks of post-modern theology has been to remake a vice into a virtue. The Reformation for all its good, spawned more than a century of religious warfare in which millions died in the name of Jesus.⁴ Protestants killed Catholics, Catholics killed Protestants and everybody killed Anabaptists.⁵ Even though the historical causation of these events is incredibly complex, it is at least true that this horrendous evil occurred because each side insisted that somehow their reading of God was privileged, their foundational myth alone was sacred.⁶ They claimed their definition of *gospel* exhaustive and full to the exclusion of other insights. Europe emerged from the carnage so tired of

Christian squabbles and so convinced of the abject failure of Christianity to provide answers to life that it has yet to recover from the ensuing wave of secularism. From any viewpoint, the Reformation was a mixed bag. Indeed, a Lutheran take may be a satisfying analysis. So full of hope, promise and good the Reformation, under the tutelage of human sinfulness, became a tool of both divine grace and demonic hate.

It is also problematic that Luther himself was such a truly mythic figure. Diverse in his thinking, prolific in literary output, shifting costumes throughout life, his theology developing and shifting across his life, and with a flair for flamboyance and over statement Luther's legendary status even during his lifetime was already writ larger than life. The sheer mass of materials, stories and first and second hand accounts creates an historical problem similar to that encountered in attempting to understand Jesus. The discontinuity between the Luther of history and the Reformer of Faith is real, even if Lessing's *great ugly ditch* is not quite as great or ugly. As the Father of Protestantism Luther's person and thought belong not only to Lutherans, but to countless others who follow his legacy.

The diversity of appropriation of both his person and thought mean that there are multiple interpretations of just who he was and what his ideological legacy should be. Baptists can in some measure own an interpretation of Luther, even though they don't always self-identify as Protestants. If I were Baptist I would find it hard to forgive, even after 500 years. But time eases hurt and Baptists can identify with the fact that "Luther was a radical."⁷ Radical?! That isn't the Luther I meet in Lutheran circles. *That* Luther is almost always distanced by parsecs from anything smacking of radicality (which still includes anything remotely Anabaptist). Methodist wouldn't exist without Wesley's auditory experience of Luther's *Preface to Romans*, yet the Luther I knew as a Methodist was colored like Menno Simmons. This is not the Luther I have met since becoming a Lutheran. Such a mythic figure, capable of multiple appropriations from various interpretive frames, cannot be monopolized. Diversity of interpretation will follow in such a person's wake. The Reformation's Luther was a part of are much more complex than Lutherans, or even Protestants in general have allowed.⁸ All tellings of the story are thus selective. And there's the rub.

We have learned from Michel Foucault that all human activities are in some way tainted with desire for power. Human telling of the most holy stories for the purest of expressed intentions nevertheless can hide latent plays for power and control over others. The complexity of

Luther, his thought and legacy contribute to the dark side of our foundational myths when we insist on rehearsing the story to support our theological constructs, institutions, history, denominational clout, and to bolster our membership roles to the implied exclusion of differing theologies and institutions which, in some manner different than ours, also look to Luther for at least partial inspiration for their existence.

It is to be expected that the dark side would be suppressed in our celebration of the Reformation Myth. Such a telling of the myth would have a tendency to undermine the ideological means by which we construct our Lutheran identities. We want to be the guys in the white hats. It was, of course, *others* who are culpable for the evils of the Reformation. If only they had listened to us, all this could have been avoided!

So just how should this myth be told? Mythic origins can be told *over and against* the other. This is, it would seem, the normal way in which they have functioned in human history. One group tells its story of good and right over and against the outsider, the evildoer, and the unenlightened. In sociological analysis, this is simply good strategy for building group identity and cohesion. Well-defined group boundaries over against other groups in the environment are necessary for group survival. And when God's truth is what's at stake in the group's survival, well, this becomes serious business indeed. These latent needs for institutional continuance lurk unseen in our appropriation of our history. So, our Reformation myth continues to be told in ways that set us over and against other Christians; continues to be rehearsed so that our institutional structures are strengthened, keeping our fences repaired, and our gates guarded. It can do so even as we work to be more ecumenical. Can we tell our foundational myth another way?

I would suggest that as Lutherans in our corporate and individual worship we need to explore ways of telling and remembering our foundational myth that are not *over and against*, but *together with* the rest of the Church. Some years ago I was part of a search committee screening candidates for a teaching position at our ELCA college.⁹ The position was specified to teach Lutheran theology. However, given that only some 30% of our student body was Lutheran, we had come to the decision that this professor needed to be a very ecumenical Lutheran. I had learned in my own teaching that working at an ELCA college meant I had to be much LESS Lutheran than, say, a Lutheran chaplain at a state university. I had to respect, accept and give validity to the theological positions of Methodists, Baptists,

Catholics, Episcopalians, and a host of other Christian viewpoints in my classroom or my teaching would be a failure. The classroom necessitated that there had to be some sort of *mere Christianity* we were all trying to get at and to which each was contributing differing pieces. I could not simply teach Lutheranism as *the* viewpoint, even though I worked hard to ensure that this view was well comprehended.

In this light we decided to ask candidates two related questions. First, what does the Church Catholic need to learn from the Lutheran tradition? Hardly any of the card-carrying Lutheran Ph.D.s we interviewed found this difficult. Then we asked, "What do Lutherans need to learn from other Christian denominations?" Many candidates choked. Others began to talk incoherently and unconvincingly. Some almost immediately said, "Nothing!" The few who spoke articulately to this question made the cut. I found it surprising that so many Lutheran trained theologians were unable to see the rest of the Church as a gift to us, and that their vision ended with our Lutheranism as the only gift God had given the Church.

James Sanders, has, in the context of understanding early Christian-Jewish relations, spoken of two types of reading: constitutive reading and prophetic reading.¹⁰ Constitutive reading assumes that the blessings of scripture are directed to one's own group and the curses/challenges of scripture are directed to outsiders. It is a reading which builds group confidence in the idea that group membership equates with access to the truth and right living. Prophetic reading takes as its stance an internal hermeneutic of suspicion in which the negatives of scripture could be read as applying to "us." We all usually wish to identify with the good guys in a story. We read of the disciples and say, "That's us!" We look at the Pharisees and say, "Wow! *They* are bad." Prophetic reading is to say, "We're the Pharisees. Help!" It is a reading which takes seriously the possibility that standing within a tradition one could challenge the tradition itself as insufficient or perhaps even wrong. (Lutherans are always ready to acknowledge this stance vis-à-vis our status as sinners, but tend to be blind to its critique of the self-righteousness we find in having good theology.) Prophetic reading is to acknowledge the failure inherent in one's own ideological positionality.

Several years ago an ELCA seminary president was visiting the campus at which I was teaching. I remember only a single sentence from that day. It was, "Lutherans need to repent of the Reformation." It was so shocking as to burn itself indelibly into my memory. If I remember correctly this was near to the time that Pope

John Paul II had begun initiatives for Catholics to repent of institutional failures across the centuries. Perhaps this had influenced his statement. But it comes back to haunt me periodically.

If the Reformation itself was/is a mixed bag, so should our celebration of it on its festival day be. I envision the celebrant standing to say, "Today we gather to repent of our sins in the Reformation!" "Today the Church gathers to celebrate Reformation Sunday!" The juxtapositioning of such a discordant proclamation gets at knocking us out of our complacency about the inherent goodness, righteousness, of our theological and institutional identity. Dealing with it in this paradoxical manner is curiously more Lutheran than only telling one side of the myth. To do so would address liturgically the way in which Lutheranism, if understood as protest against all human *ism*-ing, de-centers itself and would view such a de-centering of the *ism* as a good thing. It is to read

ourselves in our Lutheranism against a prophetic critique and to let it unnerve the simplicity of our identity as Lutherans. If we wish to begin to learn to tell this foundational myth *together with*¹¹ rather than *over and against* we will have to begin by owning our complicity in the beginning of¹² and continuance of division in the Body of Christ. We will have to learn both sides of our myth, its dark side as well as its glorious side. We need to mix repentance for the dark together with celebration of the glory. And, perhaps even more difficult, we will need to begin to relativize the glory we identify in our theological heritage in the context of a God who speaks through others than just us. When we invite Baptists, Pentecostals, Catholics, and the new Evangelicals to come and teach *us* on Reformation Sunday we will have begun to own a new relationship to our foundational myths and will have begun a worthy celebration of the Reformation for the *whole Church*.

Thomas W. Martin is professor of religion at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania.

Notes

¹ Simone de Beauvoir's sense of "other," not Emmanuel Levinas'.

² It was preached by Rev. Mark Radecke, Chaplain to the University, Susquehanna University, Selinsgrove, PA, not only to celebrate the Reformation, but also to commemorate the 25th anniversary of his ordination to the ministry of Word and Sacrament.

³ E.g. www.saintjosephcathedral.org/sitemap/bulletins/Bulletins_2000/10292000.htm

⁴ I almost always avoid any red clothing on Reformation Day. I know that the overt message is of the Church's foundation in the blood of Christ and the Martyrs. But the covert message is of the towns and villages of Europe turned blood red by the slaughter of children, women, old men, as well as soldiers, all to glorify Jesus. This makes the liturgical red tradition a participation in Christian imperialist triumphalism I can no longer stomach.

⁵ Just recently I had a conversation with a fellow church member who was proudly telling me of his son-in-law's doctoral research in Spain on Spanish persecution of Lutherans. The story was told with pregnant body language and vocal emphasis to indicate that "they" persecuted, "we" didn't.

⁶ Cf. Regina Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago: 1997).

⁷ Found in my unscientific survey at www.tribune.org/Archives/Tribune/2002/OctoberPg30.shtml

⁸ Cf. Felipe Fernandez-Armesto and Derek Wilson, *Reformations: A Radical Interpretation of Christianity and the World (1500-2000)*, (New York: Scribner's, 1996).

⁹ Midland Lutheran College, Fremont, NE.

¹⁰ First laid out in a series of articles in the 1970s: esp. "From Isaiah 61 to Luke 4" in *Christianity, Judaism and Other Greco-Roman Cults*, Ed. Jacob Neusner (Leiden, E.J. Brill: 1975).

¹¹ It must be acknowledged that such explorations are beginning and services planned to focus on reconciliation over division do exist.

¹² This is not to forget that Catholics and the Orthodox have a whole other context to deal with this in light of the Great Schism, which predates our contribution to Christian division by 500 years.

The Ought

Ned Wisnefske

Nobody likes the Ought. Everyone tries to flee from the Ought whenever it comes around, or even deny it exists.

Moral education is all about the Ought: we ought to do this; we ought not to do that. There is opposition to moral education in college, from students as well as faculty, because not even they want to hear this or be around the Ought. Some say (with respects to Dr. Seuss), "You cannot teach morals to college students because it is too late. They have already been formed by family, school, church, and state." Or else you hear, "You cannot teach values to college students because that would mold them. You must only expose them, not compose them."

Now note something about these two very common claims: they make opposite assumptions. The first complaint assumes that students are already formed (and can no longer be shaped morally), whereas the second charge assumes that students are not formed (and should shape themselves). Curiously, you hear both objections out of the same mouth in the same conversation: "You cannot teach morals because students' morals are already formed." "You cannot teach morals because you will form students' morals." Both cannot be true.

Why do we hear these contradictory objections to moral formation? The answer is that both share the same fear, the fear of the Ought. As is often the case, opposites are joined by a common threat. In this case, both feel threatened by the demands posed by the Ought. They feel threatened because the Ought intends to shape them in ways they do not want. So when students meet moral demands in the classroom and feel the presence of the Ought they will say, "The Ought cannot be real. Since our upbringings are so diverse, and we see things so differently, the Ought has to be something different for each us." In this way they convince themselves that the Ought is not actually there in the classroom with them at all, but only their personal, pet oughts—which is not the real animal. Or, when some faculty find out that the Ought has been allowed into the classroom, they complain, "The Ought must leave. There must only be oughts in the room. Only those oughts are allowed which we choose to be oughts." In so professing they too banish the Ought, since an ought we choose is really not the Ought at all. (A clever way to deny the Ought—while appearing to acknowledge it—is to allow that we each already have oughts we bring with us, so why concern ourselves with the Ought which supposedly

encounters us?) Once more, when the Ought starts to enter, we close the classroom door.

This fear and denial of the Ought tells us something important about ourselves. For one, the fact that we feel threatened shows that we sense the presence of the Ought. How else do we explain our contradictory objections to the moral formation of students, or why we protest so zealously against it? If the Ought were really nothing, we would simply ignore it, as we would the claim that there is a ghost in the room. We feel threatened because we realize that the Ought intends to shape us. That is why we flee from it and even deny it exists. Evidently we have the mind, heart, and will to sense the Ought, to respond to it, and to be shaped by it, yet we do not want to use those capacities. Finally, what does it say about us that we realize something exists, yet refuse to respond to it and even deny it? It says that there is something obstinate about our moral nature. This entrenched stubbornness, whatever it is, prevents us from seeing moral demand before our eyes, and obstructs moral education.

How might we overcome this obstinacy? Can we get the Ought in the classroom without causing students and faculty to flee? As we have seen, we refuse to see the Ought in front of us; but we might sense it behind us, nudging us. Perhaps there we can hear its presence and not close our ears, feel its breath and its clasp on our shoulders and not cover up.

It might work this way. Let students and faculty begin by supposing that there really could be an Ought. (Isn't it possible that moral demand encounters us and is not invented by us? That the difference between right and wrong is objective and not subjective?) Then, let us see whether we might find out what the Ought is, if together we search for it by using our moral capacities: examining our moral senses, applying the rules common to us, and weighing our moral judgments, discerning the better ones from the worse.

When we do that we may not find the Ought, though it will find us; for then we will realize that the persons participating in this enterprise deserve respect. To exercise our capacities to be impartial, to sympathize, and to exert our free will gives us distinction and sets us apart as beings with dignity. To realize this is to be grasped by the claim that humans should and should not be treated in certain ways. When that happens the Ought has entered

the room and nudged us. Then we can no longer deny it, and we will realize that we need not fear it, though we might be awed by it.

This might seem like a small thing, a naught rather than the Ought, but in that little thing is contained most everything. For it is the Ought which shapes our minds

to think clearly, our hearts to feel genuinely, and our wills to act rightly. The Ought can reform the formations of our past, and transform our wants to give purpose to our future.

It is never, therefore, too late, or a mistake, to be shaped by the Ought.

Ned Wisnfske is professor of religion and philosophy at Roanoke College in Salem, Virginia.

Impossible

Tim Knopp

Some say childhood ends in the period between high school and college, that in growing up you make a trade off like bartering baseball cards with the neighbor, "I'll give you late night talks with friends fooor a career in education. Or how 'bout two Wet Willy's for a Jack Daniels?" It seems fair, maybe, that this should be, as I twist the shower knobs and test the water with a single sandled foot. I step into the warm stream, stand a moment before bathing.

I've given four years to this higher education, four years closer to some hidden knowledge, four years farther from what I once knew, four years of reading Emerson, watching "The Simpsons," thinking, *Me fail English? That's impossible*. The chimes ring in the afternoon sun. It's noon and the ding-ding-BONG of the bells pulls me to the heart of the warm, bubbling campus.

Around the grassy courtyard, strewn bodies teach strewn bodies about relationships, advice about hard topics coming all too easy. They read a poem, write a song, talk the physics of cigarette ash and how long it can grow before falling, clumped or floating on the wind, from their scissored fingers. Along the worn brick paths professors walk side by side with students, taste an apple between classes, hear the latest political news, or ask squirrely freshmen, "What is love?" They don't know, of course, that the answer doesn't start, "Love is," but rather "Love can be."

For now I spend evenings with friends, say, "You should have heard what this kid in my second period class said," or just play Tecmo Super Bowl on the original Nintendo, an old school game for those trying to remember their old school days.

Tim Knopp graduated from Capital University as an education major on May 8, 2004.

ELCA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES



Augsburg College
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Luther College
Decorah, Iowa

Augustana College
Rock Island, Illinois

Midland Lutheran College
Fremont, Nebraska

Augustana College
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Muhlenberg College
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Bethany College
Lindsborg, Kansas

Newberry College
Newberry, South Carolina

California Lutheran University
Thousand Oaks, California

Pacific Lutheran University
Tacoma, Washington

Capital University
Columbus, Ohio

Roanoke College
Salem, Virginia

Carthage College
Kenosha, Wisconsin

St. Olaf College
Northfield, Minnesota

Concordia College
Moorhead, Minnesota

Susquehanna University
Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania

Dana College
Blair, Nebraska

Texas Lutheran University
Seguin, Texas

Finlandia University
Hancock, Michigan

Thiel College
Greenville, Pennsylvania

Gettysburg College
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Wagner College
Staten Island, New York

Grand View College
Des Moines, Iowa

Waldorf College
Forest City, Iowa

Gustavus Adolphus College
St. Peter, Minnesota

Wartburg College
Waverly, Iowa

Lenoir-Rhyne College
Hickory, North Carolina

Wittenberg University
Springfield, Ohio