

1996

The Future of Higher Education

Mark R. Schwehn

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

Augustana Digital Commons Citation

Schwehn, Mark R. (1996) "The Future of Higher Education," *Intersections*: Vol. 1996: No. 1, Article 4.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.augustana.edu/intersections/vol1996/iss1/4>

This Article 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.

Focus: The following paper was presented at a conference of educators from Lutheran institutions of higher learning. The conference, *The Vocation of the Lutheran College*, brought together faculty, administrators and recent graduates from ELCA colleges to consider how the theology of vocation might inform the teaching and mission of the colleges and universities related to the ELCA.

The Future of Lutheran Higher Education

Mark R. Schwehn

When I was in my last year of graduate school, one of my favorite teachers, the American historian David M. Potter, said in the middle of one of his lectures, "If historians had a little more foresight and a little less hindsight we would all be better off by a damn sight." Potter was right about this, I think, as he was right about so much else. So I have been from the beginning ambivalent at best about my assignment here today. To speak confidently about the future of anything, much less the future of Lutheran higher education, would seem to be the height of folly. And this would be especially true for an historian who is, by virtue of occupational handicap, long on hindsight and short on foresight.

Let me begin then by turning first to the past and inviting you to listen to selections from another address given by a Lutheran educator who was attempting to enable his audience to envision the future of Lutheran higher education.

By this time even the most optimistic observer of the course of human events knows that the world has come to an hour of crisis in the life of man which threatens to destroy all the values of Western Civilization as we have known them since the Church emerged from the catacombs. We have come now to the winter of the modern world, and there are few signs of spring... Once before in the history of the Western world the lamps of Truth were kept alive by men in hidden places, in half-forgotten schools and monasteries, while the captains and kings had their little day for almost a thousand years. And then the relentless dust of time covered the sons of the sword, as it always has and always will, and out of the darkness came the bearers of the light, the lone watchers of the lamps, the blessed and terrible Meek for whom Truth is greater than Power, and Wisdom is sharper than a sword... Today, only the school with a Christian orientation can stand before the rising generation and say: We have something to offer you which you can find nowhere else. Others may try to make men scientific; we must do that--and make them wise. Others may give men knowledge; we must give them that--and understanding. Others may try to make men useful; we must do that--and we must make them noble as well. We are not asking you to come to an ivory tower to escape from the realities of life or to a market-place where the voices and minds of men are confused by the immediate and material things of life. We are able to give you the fellowship of men and women whose respect for Truth is not vitiated by doubts concerning its reality and permanence. We are able to offer you a school which recognizes

Mark Schwehn is Professor of Humanities and Dean of Christ College at Valparaiso University.

the supreme dignity and worth of the individual human being. We are committed to the principle that the destiny of a Christian University lies in the quality of the men and women who are graduated from its halls rather than in quantitative production. Our future lies in the development of men and women, perhaps relatively few in number, whose quality will be so high that they will exert an influence on society which cannot be measured in terms of numbers alone.

This address, delivered over a half century ago must seem to all of us a bit quaint and at times even embarrassing (I am thinking here of the sexist language, the supreme confidence that only a Christian University can do thus and such, and the magisterial tone of voice). And it does indeed belong to another era delivered as it was in October of 1940, one year after the outbreak of World War II and one year before the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, as the inaugural address of the sainted Otto Paul Kretzmann who served as Valparaiso University's president for twenty-eight years until 1968.

Think for a moment of what he and Lutheran higher education faced in 1940 compared to what we face today. He envisioned a possible end to Western Civilization brought about in no small part by many of his own blood relatives and co-religionists in Germany. We worry over declining enrollments, cost containment, and the waning of denominational identity. We are seeking in the midst of less obviously perilous times to strengthen the explicitly Lutheran character of our schools. He, on the other hand, never once used the word 'Lutheran' in his inaugural.

++++++
As we enter together the twenty-first century, it will become increasingly important that we think of our schools as formed by the Lutheran tributary of the Christian intellectual tradition rather than as following a distinctively Lutheran stream of thought.

++++++
I would like to expand upon contrasts like the ones I have just drawn between our time and Kretzmann's to order my remarks about the future of Lutheran higher education. His address, however remote it may seem to some, will help us to bear in mind that the challenges we face are not all that unprecedented--in magnitude or significance. It will also help us deeply to feel and consider how radically our world has changed and yet how much it has remained the same as we seek together to envision Lutheran colleges and universities in the twenty-first century. I propose to organize my remarks in terms of the following four topics: the idea

of a Christian University, the pursuit of truth, the critique of knowledge, and, last but certainly not least, Christianity and liberal learning.

Let me begin with what will doubtless seem to this audience the most controversial topic. I have already noted that Kretzmann in 1940 never once used the word 'Lutheran' in his inaugural address. The more I have thought about this crucial rhetorical decision, the more I believe that he was right in every way to speak of the idea of a Christian University rather than the idea of a Lutheran University. And--now comes the controversial part--I think we would be very well advised even today, perhaps especially today, to follow his example. As we enter together the twenty-first century, it will become increasingly important that we think of our schools as formed by the Lutheran tributary of the Christian intellectual tradition rather than as following a distinctively Lutheran stream of thought. This is no small matter, and, as I shall try to show, the proposal carries with it an enormous number of practical implications.

First of all, those of us who are Lutherans are not very good Lutherans if we do not ask ourselves regularly why we are not Roman Catholics. Let me hasten to say that I can still answer this question to my own satisfaction fairly quickly and that if I were a woman I could and would answer it even more quickly. Even so, it is more difficult for me to answer the question now than it was twenty years ago. And, in any event, we Protestants must always bear in mind that Calvinism and Lutheranism were and are intended as enrichments of and finally as a steps toward the unity of the church catholic, not as ends in themselves.

The educational implications of this constant critical self-examination are, to my mind, enormous. First, we should come to regard our lay people's demotion of the import of denominational identity less as a dreadful departure from orthodoxy and more as a presciently pious act of theological common sense. We might come to see some of our co-religionists as insisting upon something more grand, something with greater intellectual magnitude and spiritual depth, than the sometimes embattled positions we formulate as we try for the fiftieth time to articulate what it means to be Lutheran. Yes, Lutherans should continue to do their part to preserve and extend certain crucial interpretations of the Christian faith, but we should be equally eager to receive correction and instruction from other Christian colleges and universities about the ways to organize our common life and to integrate higher learning with the Christian faith.

Second, we should come to question what has become in some quarters the proverbial wisdom about church-related higher education, namely that a move from denominational (in this case Lutheran) to Christian is the first step down a slippery slope that leads inexorably from generically Christian to merely religious and from merely religious to wholly secular. As we gather here to consider the future, we need to abandon this devolutionary scheme, as developed most forcibly by Professor James Burtchaeil in his article. I would offer in its stead another image of church-related higher education that is based more upon theological and

experiential considerations and less upon the historical and ecclesiastical ones that Burtchaeil emphasized. My proposed image is briefly this: in our present circumstances, it is more fruitful because it is more accurate to envision the many and various Christian colleges and universities, including the Lutheran ones represented here, as voices within a conversation than it is to construe them as phases in an irreversible process.

I said that my proposed image is theological and experiential, so let me attend briefly to each of those aspects in order to give the image more substance and precision. My principal theological inspirations here are H. Richard Niebuhr's *Christ and Culture* and Alasdair MacIntyre's several more recent works. Niebuhr, as Professor Benne and others have already observed, gives us a very useful vocabulary, derived from a loose application of his typology, to distinguish theologically among the several voices in the current conversation among Christian institutions of higher learning. So, we have some schools who construe their relationship to the secular world as one of Christ transforming culture, others who construe theirs as one of Christ creating a culture, still others who construe theirs as one of Christ above culture, or against culture, or in tension with culture. In other words, we have in the many institutions of higher learning that call themselves church-related social embodiments of distinct theological points of view on the question of the exact meaning and significance of the Christ event for our times.

++++++
In brief, Lutheran colleges must stand against all reductionist equations of truth with power save one.
++++++

This may seem to some of you terribly abstract, so let me quickly turn to the experiential aspect of my image. Here I mean simply to reflect upon my own experience in several ongoing interdenominational projects that concern themselves primarily with religion and higher education. I have thus far experienced very little interest in the kind of distinctions among schools that Burtchaeil has drawn. I have felt instead a high spirited sense of a common enterprise that has expressed itself in dialogue, in writing, in argument, and in worship. And I have learned from all of the distinct voices in the conversation that I have described already. So I have been challenged by the example of Goshen College, a strong Christ-against-culture voice, to rethink the shape of my own university's overseas studies programs. Goshen's program is designed to render service and to teach eighty-five percent of their students to see the globe from the perspective of the poor and marginalized. Valparaiso's overseas programs, by contrast, are for the most part indistinguishable from their counterparts at secular schools. I have been moved by the evermore strenuous endeavors of a Wheaton college to create a Christian culture of inquiry through rigorous and extensive faculty development programs for all new Wheaton appointments. And I have been persuaded by initiatives at the Jesuit Institute at Boston College that one of the best ways to reinvigorate the Christ-above-culture view of the world is to make research -projects informed by the Christian faith

the centers of intellectual energy on the campus. If my experiences are at all typical, they do support the image of Christian colleges as voices in a conversation. And if this is accurate (here we turn briefly to Alasdair MacIntyre), we can construe the conversation as a tradition, as a socially embodied argument extended over time. The colleges and universities are themselves the social embodiments, the argument is over the relationship between Christ and culture, and the voices in that argument are speaking out of one or another of the several classical theological positions on this broad question. The role of the Lutheran college, if this analysis is at all cogent, would be not simply to maintain and reinvigorate the Lutheran accents and emphases in this conversation but also to open itself up to change and enlargement of its own vision of the relationship between Christ and culture. In so doing, the Lutheran college can prepare itself and its students for an even more vital and urgent conversation, the conversation among the Christian tradition and the other great religious traditions of the world.

++++
It is time for Lutheran Christians, together with Christians of all types, to be more aggressive in developing and pressing forward their own theories of knowledge and truth . . .
++++

When we turn from the idea of a Christian University to the principal aim of such an institution, the pursuit of the truth of matters, we may, if our ears are attuned to post-modernity, find that Kretzmann's remarks seem hopelessly dated, even naive. "Truth [with a capital T] is greater than Power," he boldly proclaimed, and he promised, "We are able to give you the fellowship of men and women whose respect for Truth [capital T again] is not vitiated by doubts concerning its reality and permanence." Which of us here today can speak with such reckless confidence about the Truth? I would suggest that, with some important qualifications and elaborations, our continued ability to do so might lie close to the heart of our collective calling in the twenty-first century.

If we consider for a moment the current relationship between all church-related colleges and post-modern culture, we are struck at once with an astonishing fact. The several Christian colleges can be said collectively to represent a tradition at the very moment when post-modern culture, at its worst, has proclaimed that tradition of any kind is at best a delusion. Post-modernity has tended to flaunt the pastiche, *bricolage*, and other incoherent and jumbled patterns in art, architecture, and music, and even philosophy. It has called fundamentally into question the very idea of historical continuity and the possibility of personal identity. It has substituted the quest for meaning for the quest for truth and has then insisted that we all make our own meanings apart from or in opposition to the meanings of others. Post-modernity at its worst is a mere heap of fragments: fragmented selves, fragmented societies, fragmented institutions. Within the university, if there is a quest for truth, post-modernity understands that quest as a thinly disguised quest for power.

Lutheran Christians and the colleges and universities that they support should contest this postmortem notion by first embracing it. Indeed, one could say that in some aspects to remain an old-fashioned Lutheran long enough is to wake up and suddenly find oneself to be a post-modern. Lutherans do, after all, believe that even our highest and best purposes are driven to some extent, given our fallen condition, by selfish interests. Following Augustine, we think that only God can know what is really in our hearts. We are strangers even to, perhaps especially to, ourselves. And how many of us have recently attended a department meeting to consider whether the department's part of the general education program should be reduced? How could we ever, in view of the conversation that invariably ensues, deny that the so-called pursuit of truth is often if not always a quest for power and that the University, church-related or not, is really to a large extent a vast constellation of interests contesting for power.

But having acknowledged this much, we must admit that most postmodernists do not defend the equation of the quest for truth with the quest for power in the nuanced, self-critical, and carefully qualified way that Luther would have. Instead, following Foucault whose name is invoked sooner or later in most of these discussions, postmodernists defend this equation cynically and in an altogether reductionist way in order to urge upon all of us abandonment of any pretension to the pursuit of truth whatsoever. To say that something is true, on this view, is at best to pay a trivial compliment and at worst to make a repressive gesture.

I think Hilary Putnam, among others, is right to dismiss this proposal on the grounds that it is "simply dotty." (p. 124) Putnam agrees with many postmodernists in thinking that a certain philosophical tradition, and with it a certain picture of the world, is collapsing. But, Putnam argues, the retail collapse of certain conceptions of representation and truth that went with that picture of the world is very different from a wholesale collapse of the notions of representation and truth. In their assaults upon a "metaphysics of presence," the view that reality dictates its own unique description, postmoderns, especially the deconstructionists among them, have ironically given to metaphysics an exaggerated importance, according to Putnam. Our language and way of life have not been destroyed by the passing of a certain world picture. We still make perfectly good sense of the idea of an extra-linguistic reality that we did not create.

Putnam's own rejoinder to the postmodern invitation to regard talk of reason, justification, and truth as politically repressive is worth quoting. Such an invitation is "dangerous," says Putnam, "because it provides aid and comfort for extremists (especially extremists of a romantic bent) of all kinds, both left and right. The twentieth century has witnessed horrible events, and the extreme left and the extreme right are both responsible for its horrors. Today, as we face the twenty-first century, our task is not to repeat the mistakes of the twentieth century. Thinking of reason [and truth] as just repressive notions is certainly not going to help us do that."(p.132-133) Here we have Hilary Putnam, among the most gifted Jewish philosophers of this generation, echoing in his 1990 Gifford Lectures some of the same concerns that O.P. Kretzmann, a devout

German Lutheran, articulated fifty years before, in 1940, on the eve of the Holocaust. We may be led to wonder, in view of these and many other historical ironies, whether if and when religion disappears altogether from its formative influence upon higher learning truth itself will be the first casualty.

In brief, Lutheran colleges must stand against all reductionist equations of truth with power save one. And the one version of that equation that Lutherans can embrace wholeheartedly is at one and the same time a critique of the position. I have in mind here the saying of Jesus that my father passed on to me as my confirmation text: "If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed, and ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free." In short, for Christians, the quest for truth is bound up inextricably with discipleship, and therefore the shape of power is for them always cruciform. To put it another way, the Christian discovers truth *ambulando*, in the course of becoming what she already is, one marked with the sign of the cross. So long as Christians remember that, for disciples, power is not dominion but obedience, faithfulness, and suffering servanthood, they can rightly claim an integral connection between truth and power.

We have already broached my third topic, the criticism of knowledge. My thesis here is rather simple. It is time for Lutheran Christians, together with Christians of all types, to be more aggressive in developing and pressing forward their own theories of knowledge and truth, theories that emerge both from the classics of the Christian intellectual tradition and from the rich diversity of Christian reflection and Christian practice around the world today. For Lutheran colleges and universities this more ambitious agenda will not, of course, take the form of a set of impositions or restraints. We should not be asking our biologists to abandon their research methods in favor of meditations on the book of Genesis. Instead, Lutheran colleges and universities should so order the common life of their faculty and students that all of them must consider together from time to time certain epistemological questions that involve intense engagement among certain Christian accounts of knowing, teaching, and learning and the myriad rival contemporary accounts of these matters.

Notice that this is a somewhat different prescription from those that other writers and speakers, including Professors Benne and Lotz, have set before you. They have stressed the Lutheran teaching that within the earthly kingdom reason reigns supreme. And so they have been more or less content to let the separate academic disciplines pursue their own methods in their own ways for their own purposes so long as this methodological autonomy does not lead to a kind of ontological autonomy, so long as the claims of reason do not infringe upon the kingdom of heaven. This is well and good, and I agree entirely with Professor Benne that Lutheranism's full-bodied secularity has prevented our colleges and universities from deteriorating into Bible schools.

But new occasions teach new duties. As Benne himself noted, "Luther and the early Lutherans were operating in a world pregnant with Christian meaning and values." In that world a Christian celebration of secularity is a very different matter from a similar

celebration of secularity today. I take it that Professor Benne would not think that it behooves us as Lutherans to read George Marsden's account of the secularization of the academy cheerfully as a kind of fulfillment of the Lutheran program for higher learning in America.

And there are other difficulties that are mentioned but, I think, underestimated by Professors Benne and Lotz. No terms in contemporary academic discourse are as contested as the terms 'reason' and 'knowledge.' We have, to cite a recent book title, *Women's Ways of Knowing*. And we have the questions, posed in the title of another book, *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* This profusion of competing accounts of rationality and the related academic replacement of all talk about Culture with a capital C with talk about lower case and multiple cultures renders much Lutheran talk about a simple dialectical tension between grace and reason anachronistic at best and downright unintelligible at worst. If H. Richard Niebuhr were writing his classic today, he would surely entitle it Christ and Cultures, and if we are to carry his project forward, we must be alert to the possibility that some forms of human rationality may not so much conflict with faith and hope and love as complement them. There has been, for example, a resurgence of interest in Jean LeClerc's wonderful book on the monastic (as opposed to the scholastic) tradition of study in the Middle Ages, The Love of Learning and the Desire for God. We Lutherans may soon wish to revisit Luther's own great teacher St. Augustine who thought that love of the truly lovable was itself both a precondition for and a part of all genuine knowledge. That insight might well resonate with at least some contemporary accounts of human rationality in such a way so as to attenuate or even to transform the Lutheran sense of a perpetual tension between the life of reason and the life of faith.

+++++
. . . part of what it means for humankind to be fashioned in the image of God is that we are imbued with this capacity for critical self-consciousness.
+++++

Whatever the case may be here, the destruction of a unitary concept of human rationality presents the Lutheran college or university with a new and urgent set of infinite tasks. These tasks are best pursued, I think, piecemeal and on a case by case basis. We must for a time suspend the urge to new and grand syntheses and foster on our campuses a myriad of smaller but more intense and intensely focussed conversations between thoughtful Christian specialists and thoughtful secularists about how we can best understand ourselves and our world. In these conversations the term 'University' must modify the term 'Lutheran' as much as the term 'Lutheran' modifies the term 'University.' The idea of university should press Lutherans to think in terms of a more capacious, even a universal Christendom, even as Lutheranism presses the university to keep alive certain accounts of truth, reason, and knowledge that strive to integrate the life of the mind with the life of the spirit and that take up ultimate questions as well as penultimate ones.

I realize that this is getting terribly abstract, so let me try to make some of my implicit recommendations more concrete by turning to my fourth and final topic, the relationship between Christianity and liberal learning. Though liberal learning is extremely difficult to define theoretically, it is relatively easy to recognize in practice. It involves the cultivation of certain arts and skills of analysis, criticism, and interpretation. It frees students and teachers from unexamined tyrannies that hold dominion over their souls and minds, even as it frees them for love of the world through responsible and life-long engagement with fundamental human questions. Liberal learning therefore includes both the improvement of the mind and the cultivation of those virtues that are indispensable to the pursuit of the truth of matters. Since liberal learning is a public, not a private, endeavor, most of these virtues are social, governing the manner in which human beings relate to one another. In *Exiles from Eden*, I sought to demonstrate the interdependence of liberal learning and the cultivation and practice of certain Christian virtues like humility and charity. Let me turn now briefly to two other examples of the close connections between liberal learning and Christian virtue.

++++++
I really do think that the future of our schools will depend less upon material factors and more upon the power of our collective imaginations to refurbish an ideal of the Lutheran college or the Lutheran university for the twenty-first century.

++++++

Let us first reexamine briefly what thoughtful Christians might say to the almost unanimous contemporary rejection of the notion that objectivity is a precondition for knowledge. Let us agree with our postmodern colleagues who construe objectivity as a Janus-faced concept, referring on the one side to being in touch with the object, with the way things are, and on the other side to being impartial, i.e. to becoming free from the distorting lenses of personal bias. Let us also agree with them that this ideal can be and has been both crippling and impossible of attainment. Finally, let us agree that we should celebrate the several different standpoints from which various postmodernists see the world as giving them access to realms of reality that would otherwise be extremely difficult to come by. Let us, in other words concede to the postmodernists that all knowledge is to some degree perspectival.

The trouble with this wholesale concession is that it omits or abbreviates important features of both academic life and our ways of thinking generally that require careful attention if Christians are to join the general celebration of perspectival knowing. First of all, we should all recognize that our narrative identities might just as well distort as disclose aspects of reality, and we need to be able somehow to distinguish at any given moment whether we have an instance of the former or the latter condition--distortion or disclosure. Christians would or should insist that all human beings share a capacity for self-transcendence, an ability to bring their own narrative identities under some measure of critical scrutiny. There is, after all, as Nick Wolterstorff has observed, a "conviction,

fundamental to Christianity, Judaism, and Islam alike, that there is more to human beings than the merely particular." I would put it this way: part of what it means for humankind to be fashioned in the image of God is that we are imbued with this capacity for critical self-consciousness. That consciousness is, moreover, best exercised within communities of learning that cultivate certain habits like attention and certain practices like repentance and forgiveness.

As Wolterstorff also acknowledges, "The current argument for allowing [particularist perspectives] entrance [into the academy] is purely political: it assumes that no one ever has any awareness of reality, and argues on that ground that it would be unjustly discriminatory to exclude any perspective." He might have added that this postmodern position leads directly, both logically and sociologically, to tribalism, to a lack of genuine engagement and a hardening of the lines that divide human beings from one another, and finally to the argument that diversity is an end in itself rather than a means to a larger end that is connected to the pursuit of the truth of matters.

Is there an escape from these difficulties short of a return to an untenable notion of objectivity? I think that objectivity, properly refurbished under Christian auspices, should refer neither to the notion of unmediated access to reality nor to the view that we could ever become free from bias or purified of distortions or generically human (whatever these achievements might mean). Rather, I think objectivity should refer, and to a larger extent than we realize it has always referred, to what Thomas Haskell calls, "the expression in intellectual affairs of the ascetic dimension of life." Though he ignores altogether the significance of the historical connection between asceticism and monasticism, Haskell is right, I think, in understanding ascetic practices like objectivity as "indispensable to the pursuit of truth. The very possibility of historical scholarship as an enterprise distinct from propaganda," Haskell continues,

requires of its practitioners that vital minimum of ascetic self-discipline that enables a person to do such things as abandon wishful thinking, assimilate bad news, discard pleasing interpretations that cannot pass elementary tests of evidence and logic, and, most important of all, suspend or bracket one's own perceptions long enough to enter sympathetically into the alien and possibly repugnant perspectives of rival thinkers. All of these mental acts --especially coming to grips with a rival's perspective-- require detachment, an undeniably ascetic capacity to achieve some distance from one's own spontaneous perceptions and convictions, to imagine how the world appears in another's eyes, to experimentally adopt perspectives that do not come naturally -- in the last analysis, to develop, as Thomas Nagel would say, a view of the world in which one's own self stands not at the center, but appears merely as one object among many.(p. 131)

What Haskell has said here, about historical scholarship applies, I think, to liberal learning in general. If we really mean to be freed from the tyrannies that hold sway over our minds, we must be able, to some degree, to distance ourselves from our own prejudices rather than to construe all of our intellectual experiences--

perceptions, judgments, and interpretations--as mere manifestations of those prejudices.

My second point about liberal learning and its connection to Christianity involves the way many academics read today, and it is more a speculative idea than a settled conviction. I would propose to you that we must maintain two seemingly incompatible things at once if we are to be credible teachers of the liberal arts today: first, that these arts have no subject matter, second, that liberal learning is nonetheless subject-centered, that in another sense these arts always have a subject. Perhaps our principal pedagogical challenge these days is to maintain these two positions at once in the face of congeries of invitations from colleagues to deconstruct our subjects altogether or to dissolve them without remainder into the imagination of the teacher or the responses of the students or both.

What resources, if any, are still available to us as warrants for the tacit assumptions upon which a great deal of liberal learning rests, e.g. that texts have something to teach us, that their meanings, though perhaps inexhaustible, are nonetheless discernible through disciplined inquiry and available through interpretations that really are better and worse, and that we become more fully human and perhaps more fully humane as we come to extend and enliven the conversation that they collectively represent? What, in short, can prevent our texts from becoming what they have in fact become, in operational terms at least, at so many universities: at best intricate historical formations and at worst occasions for psycho-photography or imaginative license.

I would suggest to you that all that remains as a stay against these confusions of our time is a set of several religious traditions, including in this country especially Judaism and Christianity, that regard at least some texts as revelations, as manifestations of the divine diagnosis of and remedy for the human condition, as sources that have claims upon us, to which claims we must be in some sense or another obedient or otherwise responsive if we are to comprehend them. This is not a proposition I can fully defend: it is an agenda for research, not a considered conclusion. The historical aspect of the research program would surely include a revisitation of the New Critics, of the Chicago Neo-Aristotelians, and of other formalist readers who were themselves deeply religious people--Protestants, Catholics and Jews--and who helped to found those liberal arts programs that have served many of us as models or inspirations for our own liberal studies programs over the course of the last fifty years. The philosophical aspect of the research program would seek to locate the tradition of rationality implied by the kind of pedagogy practiced in most liberal arts programs within an ongoing set of habits and beliefs that regard at least some texts as sacred.

And so I leave you with tasks rather than predictions, opportunities rather than prescriptions, and large ideas rather than a set of discrete practical and programmatic suggestions. I really do think that the future of our schools will depend less upon material factors and more upon the power of our collective imaginations to

refurbish an ideal of the Lutheran college or the Lutheran university for the twenty-first century. Let me nevertheless close by putting in a word for rhetoric, for a sense of audience, for a renewed devotion to what seems fitting-- and to the discovery and invention of the most fitting ways to articulate our common Lutheran heritage for our times.

I began by quoting to you what once seemed like stirring words addressed to a generation of young people on the brink of World War, the Holocaust, and the nuclear age. It may be that Kretzmann's peroration to the effect that we must make men and women noble as well as useful, wise as well as scientifically literate, and understanding as well as knowledgeable seems either too exalted or too presumptuous by our own standards. But unless we find an idiom in the way in which we order our intellectual communities, in the force of our living examples, and in the vocabulary of our collective convictions, to move young people today to feel in their bones the truths that we bear, we shall leave the field of higher learning open to those who increasingly pander to whatever our students most want instead of giving them the few things truly needful.

It is true that people young and old long for meaning; we must convince them that an education that addresses simultaneously the mind and the spirit is the most meaningful. It is true that our democracy is on trial. We must convince our young citizens that the Lutheran tradition of education will not only equip them for informed citizenship but will also cultivate within them those social virtues that make democracy possible. It is true, as we have always said, that the Lutheran idea of vocation gives to all walks of life work a measure of dignity and meaning that they would not otherwise possess. It behooves us now, however, to render more explicit the intricate connections between vocation and commitment on the one hand and vocation and truth on the other.

Finally we must ponder anew the fact that both the corporate vocation of our colleges and universities and our individual vocations as teachers and scholars depend upon faith. In God's hands and not in our own rest the final fruits of our endeavors. We cannot fully regard our academic work as a calling without a reckless confidence in the promises of the One who calls us to our common tasks. Absent faith, our calling will become an intolerable and lonely burden. Absent a deep commitment to the truth and a deeper conviction of it, our vocation will diminish to mere career. And absent both of these things, faith and truth, we will become what Max Weber foresaw as the final corruption of the Protestant ethic--specialists without spirit and sensualists without heart. Let us pray that, whatever successes and failures the future may hold for us, God may use our own efforts on behalf of the Lutheran tradition of education, however weak and fretful they may sometimes be, to bring about the fuller presence of the peaceable kingdom. And may we hear in our teaching and our learning, our reading and our writing, our knowing and our doing the faint articulations of eternity.

Works Cited

- Belenky, Mary et al. *Women's Way of Knowing*. New York: Basic Books Inc. 1986.
- Benne, Robert. "A Lutheran Vision/Version of Christian Humanism," paper presented at August 1995 conference, *The Vocation of a Lutheran College*.
- Burtchaell, James Tunstead. "The Decline and Fall of the Christian College." Parts I and II, *First Things*. April, 1991. pp. 16-29.
- Haskell, Thomas. "Objectivity is not Neutrality : Rhetoric vs. Practice in Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream*," *History and Theory*. May, 1990.
- LeClerc, Jean. *The Love of Learning and The Desire for God*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1988.
- Lotz, David W. "Education for the Citizenship in the Two Kingdoms: Reflections on the Theological Foundations of the Lutheran Higher Education." In the *Papers and Proceedings of the 65th Annual Convention Lutheran Educational Conference of North America*. Washington D.C. February 3-4, 1997.
- MacIntyre, Alisdair. *Whose Justice? Which Rationality?* Notre Dame University Press, 1988.
- Marsden, George. *The Soul of the America University*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1994.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper and Row, 1956.
- Putnam, Hilary. *Renewing Philosophy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992.
- Schwehn, Mark. "Christianity and Postmodernism: Uneasy Allies." *Proceedings of the Christianity and Culture in the Crossfire*, Calvin College. April, 1995. To be published by Eedermans: Grand Rapids. Spring, 1997.
- Schwehn, Mark. *Exiles from Eden: Religion and the Academic Vocation in America*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.
- Wolterstorff, Nicholas. "Suffering, Power, and Priveleged Cognitive Access: The Revenge of the Particular." *Proceedings of Christianity and Culture in the Crossfire*, Calvin College, April, 1995. To be published by Eerdman's: Grand Rapids. Spring, 1997.