AN AFFIRMATION OF OUR LUTHERAN IDENTITY AND HERITAGE
CHRIST CENTERED LEARNING FROM WITTENBERG TO CONCORDIA COLLEGE–NEW YORK

From the start, the living Lutheran tradition has accentuated and actualized the concordance of scholarship and Christ-centered vocations of grace, contemplation and action. Wittenberg’s university and parishes were the epicenter of the Lutheran Reformation. Concordia College–New York is a Christian institution in the Lutheran tradition, a diverse and Christ-centered liberal arts college, preparing students for lives of service to church and world. By Word and Spirit, we seek here at Concordia to study and serve in the convergences of faith and reason, theology and the liberal arts and professional studies, Christian college and Lutheran congregations. Our congruence is Jesus Christ, the Logos (Word) made flesh, the wisdom and knowledge of God, who came not to be served, but to serve and give his life for the salvation of the world.

In an age dominated by the flux of materialism and zeitgeist of the transitory, we are committed to transforming the lives of our students in time and for eternity through a dynamic Christ-centered education where Jerusalem (faith) interacts with Athens and Wittenberg (reason as illumined by Christ) in all its transcendental complexities and fullness. As a college in the Lutheran tradition, we are dedicated to the pursuit of academic excellence in the spirit of discovery as enthralled by the wonder the created universe evokes. And as a Christ-centered college, we are devoted to inspiring our students who come from various backgrounds and contexts to live lives of faith and

1 In the catholic (western) medieval theological tradition (from which the Lutheran church and movement arises), contemplation is coupled with action as faith is expressed in the charity of the Christian life (see for example, Thomas Aquinas, Summa Theologica IaIae, qs. 179-182). Learning who Jesus is and why he matters addresses more than the acquisition of knowledge, but also includes matters of the heart and forming habits of virtue and service.

2 The English word secularism is derived from the Latin saecularis: worldly, secular, pertaining to a generation or age. On secularism, see Charles Taylor, A Secular Age (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). Materialism is as old as Lucretius and Epicurus, but has morphed into new expressions in the western (and increasingly globalized) agnostic milieu of shifting interpretations and overemphasis on self, power and value without God (Cf., Adam Smith, Charles Darwin, Friedrich Nietzsche, to name just a few influences). John 1:1-18; 1 Corinthians 1:24; Colossians 2:3; Matthew 20:28. Cf., Proverbs 8. Patristic and orthodox Christology confesses the universal scope and exclusiveness of the Logos as pre-incarnate Word and Wisdom, and incarnate Messiah as the way, truth and life (John 14:6).

3 Acts 1:8; Acts 17:16-34. Cf., Tertullian, Prescriptions Against the Heretics; Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, chapters II-VIII; Clement of Alexandria, Miscellanies. On time and eternity, note the Christian medieval concept of aeviternity.

4 Aristotle, Metaphysics I, 1. Luther’s explanation to the first article of the Apostles’ Creed in The Small Catechism.
service with meaning and purpose as directed by Divine providence. Indeed, as Saint Augustine voices, our hearts are restless until they find significance and wholeness in God. At Concordia College–New York, Christ-centered education and vocation are realized in our students who come from around the world and right next door.

CONCORDIA COLLEGE AND LUTHERAN EDUCATION: BIBLICAL EDUCATION VS. EDUCATION FOR THE BIBLE

Concordia College–New York proudly operates within this Wittenberg educational tradition, which from its birth was expansive both in its outlook and its inclusion and which had educational reform both as one of its goals and one of its means. The Reformation was heavily dependent on the humanist educational foundations that were laid prior to the full flowering of the Reformation in the early-mid 1500s. As a result Lutheran education was not a simple Biblicism that rejected a robust humanist education. To the contrary, “there was much less direct teaching of the Bible in the protestant schools of central Europe than is commonly supposed by those who have not had access to the original sources.” The aim of the reformers was not simply to replace the humanist

5 Augustine, Confessions I, i. As Augustine affirms, God finds fallen humanity even as he found Augustine. For Augustine, God is Father, Son, Holy Spirit, incarnate Word, i.e., what Augustine did not read or find in the Platonists or the philosophers (Confessions VII, xx-xxi).


and monastic-based educational systems with a Bible-focused pedagogical program. The aim of the reformers was not an anti-Catholic Biblicism, but rather was on religious education as a whole, of which the Bible played a significant but not exclusive role.  

LUTHERAN EDUCATION AND THE COMMUNITY: EDUCATION FOR CHURCH and SOCIETY

Neither was Lutheran education solely about preparing church workers. Rather the reformers quickly adapted to meet the complex societal challenges of their day. Luther, himself, believed that education provided both religious and secular benefits. In his Sermon on Keeping Children in School, he argues that education was necessary not just to provide clergy for the church but also workers for the good and protection of the state, If the government can compel such of its subjects as are fit for military service to carry pike and musket, man the ramparts, and do other kinds of work in time of war, how much for can it and should it compel its subjects to keep their children in school. For there is a worse war on, a war with the very devil, who is out to secretly sap the strength of the cities and principalities, emptying them of their able persons until he has bored out the pit and left only an empty shell of useless people whom he can manipulate and toy with as he will.

Luther was not alone among the reformers in extolling the societal advantages of education. Melanchthon in his discourse In Praise of the New School, credits education with benefiting the state by preventing citizens from becoming barbarians and argues that without good literature, religion and good laws cannot endure. Historian Mark Noll summarizes the two-fold benefits that the Lutheran reformers believed education ultimately provides, “In short, proper Christian education was regarded as nothing less than the foundation of Christian life and guarantee of stability in the world at large.”

It should not be surprising that given the humanistic climate and the tremendous societal need under which Luther and Melanchthon carried out their reforms, that their school curriculum reflected a broad-based humanist approach to education. Curiously, though, although the study of the Bible took place, it was never the central activity of the reformed education curriculum. The goal was not a Biblical education but an education that had Biblical and religious foundations.

9  Ibid p. 133.
12  Ibid p. 63.
14  Green, L. (1972). The Bible in sixteenth century humanist education. in Studies in the Renaissance, 19. p. 120.
Melanchthon believed that true religion was rooted in sound learning and as such there was a divine command of God to study and learn that superseded and material-gain motivation to study particular subjects. For Melanchthon, educational curriculum was to remain focused on a broad classical liberal arts education, and should include music and the arts, regardless of one’s ultimate career aspirations.\(^{15}\) Luther, likewise, recommended that the classics of literature be made available for all levels of society.\(^{16}\)

### EDUCATION FOR SOCIETY: THE EXPANSIVE LUTHERAN APPROACH

The Reformation’s new theological emphases led to an opening of educational possibility for a wider socio-economic class,

> It was the reformers’ doctrine of the priesthood of believers that moved education in a democratic liberalizing direction. If there was no special class of priests uniquely sanctioned by God, then all believers needed to partake of the same body of Christian knowledge. The reformers also held a high view of the spheres of life created by God: no legal occupation was dishonorable.\(^{17}\)

The new theological emphases had a practical impetus in impelling education to broader base of citizenry, “First, the elite education for ministers and rulers was offered to those who would never be ministers or magistrates. Second, and most radically, education began to be designed for the one who would never preach or govern.”\(^{18}\)

Luther believed that education had a broader societal value than simply training individuals, “If all manner of problems are to be dealt with successfully, then the young people who are to live and govern on this earth after us must be trained and guided accordingly.”\(^{19}\) Luther advocated with the German nobles that education ought to be seen as an investment, “My dear sirs, if we have to spend such large sums every year on guns, roads, bridges, dams, and countless similar items to insure the temporal peace and prosperity of a city, why should not much more be devoted to the poor neglected youth – at least enough to engage one or two competent men to teach school?”\(^{20}\)

His belief in the societal value of education led Luther to praise the city of Nürnberg

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18 *ibid.*


for supporting the school founded by Melanchthon, and for providing free education to her citizens. While the Reformation maintained much of the humanist emphasis in education, there was also growing concern for broadening the educational audience, “When the less enduring values of the Northern Renaissance began to fade away, these evangelical successors almost imperceptibly converted it from an elite to a popular movement, and institutionalized much of humanism in the school, church, and state, so that the movement became a part of the life of every Protestant community.”

EXPANSIVE LUTHERAN EDUCATION:
EDUCATION FOR SOCIETY, FOR ALL

While humanist educators like Erasmus began the process of calling for the improvement of educational opportunities for women in the 16th century, it remained limited in scope. Since Erasmus held that one of the key purposes of education was service to society, and since women could not have societal roles, the theory of providing education to women and girls on a large scale reached a pragmatic dead end as the best that most non-aristocratic women could hope for was to be a wife and mother. Thus, even the educational programs reformed by the humanists still maintained a predominantly aristocratic clientele.

Luther’s aim in advocating for education for women was unique both in that it was explicitly a part of his reform program, and in that it had a goal not of training girls how to complete household chores, but in forming them to be better Christians and citizens. In his letter To the Christian Nobility, Luther encourages them to include girls in their reform of the schools, “And would to God that every town had a girls’ school as well, where the girls would be taught the gospel for an hour every day either in German or in Latin.” Although complete egalitarianism between the sexes was not a part of Luther’s educational plan, his approach nevertheless was progressive for its day,

Higher education is reserved for male students. Yet when Luther calls for qualified women to become teachers, he takes a step toward a more comprehensive education of women. Women would need to be given special training to enable them to work as teachers. And, as we have seen, Luther forcefully advocates the institution of schools for girls.

Humanist scholar Lowell Green notes that “although Luther’s educational ideas were generally linked to the social structure of his time according to which the woman’s place was in the home, he also wrote of the possibilities of a professional career for young women. Intellectually qualified girls should study the liberal arts, like their brothers; among the available vocations he pointed out the need for female teachers.” This small but significant shattering of an educational glass ceiling is another important legacy of Lutheran education.

The curriculum of schools for women varied by reformed territory. In Wittenberg, where Luther and Johannes Bugenhagen helped to found the girls’ school, the 1533 school regulations give some indication of the approach,

Classes were taught on all working days. The morning sessions were devoted to learning to read, to practicing reading, and to repeating what had been read. Those who had mastered reading were given lessons in writing after lunch from 12 to 2 pm. Following this, the singing of psalms and the practicing of scales were scheduled. In due course the girls were also supposed to learn the numbers and some arithmetic. Wednesday and Saturday mornings were reserved for catechism lessons. The girls had a lunchtime break. There were no classes on Sunday. It was not a Biblicist approach designed to teach women to read the Bible. Rather, Luther believed that, “girls as well as boys should learn not only religion but also history, classical and modern languages, literature, music, and mathematics.” Compulsory school attendance for boys and girls became the norm throughout many of the protestant territories, Württemberg inaugurated compulsory school attendance for all boys and girls in 1649. But this was not the first occurrence of compulsory attendance for Germany. Already in 1642, Duke Ernest the Devout of Saxe-Gotha had instituted compulsory education for all boys and girls between the ages of 5 and 12, and it appears that Hessen-Darmstadt may have been still earlier. There was also a strong emphasis upon female education. (pp. 94-5)

CHRIST CENTERED DIVERSITY FROM WITTENBERG TO CONCORDIA COLLEGE–NEW YORK

Education for all and thinking critically and constructively are tenets of the Lutheran Reformation and principles of the living Lutheran tradition. Though his academic career and ministry in the church and for the world, Luther bequeathed to the Lutheran tradition as embodied in Concordia College, the underlying pedagogical fundamentals

30 Ibid p. 94-5.
of communicating effectively, critical and creative thinking, and the Christian faith and ethos.\(^{31}\) The Reformation of education and revitalization of the liberal arts and emphasis on vocation that occurred in the university, parishes, schools and public square of Wittenberg in the sixteenth-century continues to find fruition and expansion in the dynamic and diverse intersection of Concordia College, metropolitan New York, and the world.

Saint Augustine famously described and delineated the world and history as the intersection of the temporal city of humanity and the everlasting city of God.\(^{32}\) The city of humanity is created by God but fallen into sin and consequently will not endure. The city of God is from above and will last forever. It exists now hidden in Christian faith, hope and love, and waiting to be revealed when Christ returns. For Luther, following Scripture and the Augustinian theological tradition, Christians live between the kingdom of the left (temporal authority and government), and the kingdom of the right (the church where the gospel is proclaimed and sacraments administered).\(^{33}\) Vocation means living lives of faith hidden with God in Jesus Christ, but clearly active in the world as salt and light.\(^{34}\) Thus, the Christian is free of all, and servant of all, in and through Jesus Christ who is both God and man, infinite and finite.\(^{35}\) The passive righteousness of God finds its

\(^{31}\) Luther’s translation of the Bible into the vernacular and Small and Large Catechisms express his emphasis on communicating clearly and effectively. The Heidelberg Disputation (1518) and Leipzig Debate (1519) in particular profess his penchant for critical and creative thinking. Luther’s entire life and ministry testify the Christian faith and ethos.

\(^{32}\) Augustine, \textit{City of God} bk I.

\(^{33}\) Luther, \textit{Temporal Authority: To What Extent it Should be Obeyed}. Cf., Luther, \textit{The Freedom of a Christian} and the Lutheran distinction between the commandments and promises of God (Law and Gospel), as well as the two kinds of righteousness (passive and active) as found in Luther’s \textit{Lectures on Galatians}.

\(^{34}\) Colossians 3:3; Matthew 5:13-16.

\(^{35}\) Luther, \textit{The Freedom of a Christian}; Leo’s \textit{Tome}. 
Christocentric nexus in the active good works of the Christian.\footnote{Luther, \textit{Sermon on Two Kinds of Righteousness} (1519); \textit{coram Deo, coram mundo}.} For Luther, the world, in all its variation and opportunities for service, provides daily intersections for faith to be active in love and vocation to be made purposeful by grace.\footnote{For Luther, the world (home, workplace, university, etc.) becomes the monastery or context of sacred callings and living in, with, and under the unmerited grace of God (Luther, \textit{Sermon on the Three Kinds of Good Life for the Instruction of Consciences} of 1521, \textit{Smalcald Articles} III, 14). On faith active in love: \textit{Augsburg Confession} IV, VI.}

Concordia College is a polis in the Lutheran and Augustinian tradition, a unique and diverse community of faculty, staff and students where education and training for careers intersect with meaning and purpose as found in the person and work of Jesus Christ.\footnote{Polis is Greek for city and inclusive in semantic range with citizens and where one learns the art of living together in society, thereby similar to what Concordia College–New York strives to accomplish in transforming lives of students to be citizens of both heaven and earth (the Lutheran theology of the two kingdoms; Philippians 3:20; Romans 13:1-7; Matthew 22:20-21, Revelation 21:2). In ancient Hellenic philosophy the soul was understood as commonwealth and microcosm of the cosmic macrocosm (Plato, \textit{Republic}).} And Concordia College intersects with metropolitan New York, the largest urban area in the United States and one of the most diverse cities in the history of the world, and all the opportunities and resources the city provides for learning and service. Our intersecting values at Concordia include academic integrity and investigation, cultural sensitivities and expressions, service and experiential learning, critical and constructive questions in the pursuit of truth.\footnote{We are reminded of the medieval seven liberal arts and the original concept of the university: the \textit{trivium} and the \textit{quadrivium}: grammar, logic, rhetoric, arithmetic, geometry, music, and astronomy. The meaning and etymology of \textit{trivium} and \textit{quadrivium}: where three or four vies or paths meet and form a whole, i.e., intersections leading to harmony and wisdom. Concordia College is also a \textit{universitas} in the Lutheran tradition (\textit{universitas} is Latin for the whole, total, the universe, and, literally, all turned toward and into one), a polis of higher learning of teachers, scholars, administrators, coaches and staff who instruct, serve and guide students through the intersections of faith and reason, vocations and the Lutheran understanding of the two kingdoms, and passive and active righteousness. As a whole (Concordia College–New York as Lutheran polis and \textit{universitas}), we are turned toward Christ, the Word and Wisdom of God and Savior and Lord, the One (Father, Son, Spirit) who turns restless hearts and propels the universe in revolutions of love (Jeremiah 32:39; Dante, \textit{Paradiso}, Canto XXXIII).} We are guided by the abiding belief that Jesus Christ, who is the same, yesterday, today and forever, intersects the life and ethos of our multicultural college community.\footnote{Hebrews 13:8.}

In the daily intersections of classroom and chapel, playing field and lab, fieldwork and clinicals, the commons and dorms, we seek to guide our students in the discovery of who Jesus is and why he matters as they learn to navigate our diverse world.\footnote{Mark 8:29-30 ESV, central question of the New Testament, “Who do you say that I am” (who is Jesus and why he matters), and the response of faith: “You are the Christ.” Yet the Christological titles of Mark’s Gospel follow and flow from the narrative of the Christ event, the incarnational-relational encounter with Christ (Mark 15:39).} Our Lutheran identity at Concordia College–New York is articulated in our Christ centered commitment to faith and reason, service and scholarship, vocation and diversity.
Concordia College—New York, a college of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, engages and nurtures a diverse student body in a Christ-centered, value-oriented, liberal arts education for lives of service to church and community.

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