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

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INTERSECTIONS

faith + life + learning

NUMBER 6

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INTERSECTIONS

WINTER 1999

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Purpose Statement

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

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

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

From the Publisher

The Division of Higher Education and Schools in the ELCA has made it one of its priorities to help the colleges and universities related to the ELCA bring into focus what makes Lutheran colleges and universities distinctive. We think our Lutheran identity is something to celebrate and be proud of, something that can help and has helped make colleges better educational institutions.

We have used many different means to sharpen the image of the Lutheran-ness of the colleges. We see the journal that you are reading now as a venue for thoughtful dialogue about how faith, life and learning intersect at these colleges and universities, and we hope the articles may inspire some of our readers to become better teachers and thereby better servants of God.

Much of the contents come out of the annual conference on "The Vocation of a Lutheran College", and we are glad that the presentations made at the 1998 conference at Wittenberg University in Springfield, Ohio were so well received and that we were given so much positive feedback about that conference will be held at Susquehanna University in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, and the conference topic will be "Identity and Fragmentation: Can the Lutheran Center hold?", a topic inspired by W. B. Yeats vision of the Second Coming.

Among the other means we have used to stimulate this discussion is sponsorship of the book "Lutheran Higher Education - An Introduction for Faculty" by professor Ernest Simmons of Concordia College in Moorhead, Minnesota, which was published in 1998 by Augsburg Fortress. The feedback that we have received on that book has also been very positive, and we are grateful to Dr. Simmons for his hard work and creative effort.

In 1999 we hope to launch a new initiative, which we expect will add new perspectives to the discussions. This will be a series of summer seminars which together will be called "The Lutheran Academy of Scholars in Higher Education". The project is modeled after the NEH and NSF Summer Seminars, and we hope to bring together faculty from different institutions and different disciplines to work on related scholarly project while learning from each other and from a prominent academician. The funding and the details have not been nailed down yet as this is being written, by the time you receive this issue of *Intersections* you can call and or send an e-mail inquiry to us, and we will give you the latest information. We certainly are full of excitement over what that project can add to the discussion of the relationship between the church and higher education, faith and life.

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From the Editor

On this Issue— One of the traditional functions of INTERSECTIONS has been to publish papers shared at the annual Vocation of a Lutheran College Conference. Of the five papers presented at last summer's conference at Wittenberg, only three, because of length, are included here. The remaining two, by Robert Scholz and Cheryl Ney, will appear in the next issue.

Books for Belarus— An acquaintance of mine, Prof. Andy Sheppard of Southwestern College, wrote to me asking me to solicit help for his efforts to send books to the University of Belarus. He informs me that they have no resources for purchase of books and that their collection is, at best "embryonic." They are particularly interested in books in philosophy, theology, cultural history, literature, criticism, in other words books in traditional humanities areas. Sheppard asks us if we would "weed" our personal and library collections and send to him any texts we'd be willing to part with. He will send them on to Belarus. If you're able to help, send books to:

Books for Belarus
Dep't. Of Philosophy
Southwestern College
Winfield, Kansas 67156

If you wish to contact Andy personally his e-mail address is: sheppard@jinx.sckans.edu

Salt, Yeast and Light— I recently read another provocative book authored by Douglas John Hall, *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*. In it he writes:

Christianity has arrived at the end of its sojourn as the official, established, religion of the Western world. The churches resist coming to terms with this ending because it seems so dismal a thing. But in Christian thinking, endings can also be beginnings; and if we are courageous enough to enter into this ending thoughtfully and intentionally, we will discover a beginning that may surprise us. The end of Christendom could be the beginning of something more like the church

Hall goes on to argue that by disengaging ourselves from a central and dominant position and the rhetoric of dominance we may find ways of serving the society in ways that are both more faithful and more humanly needful than Christendom traditionally has done. Disengagement is the necessary pre-requisite for faithful and authentic re-engagement. Can we, Hall asks:

*make the awkward relationship between church and the dominant culture of our nations serve the Christian evangel?
Could it not become a highly provocative situation - a modern application of the scriptural dialectic of being 'in' yet not 'of'?*

So, rather than imagining Christianity as serving the culture from above, i.e. as ruling it, or imagining Christianity at the center, i.e. as in some way controlling culture, Hall suggests we once again pay attention to the metaphors Christ himself suggests for the role of Christians in the world: "a little salt, a little yeast, a little light."

Hall has little to offer by way of fleshing out this suggestion. It is a deliberately short book. Perhaps that is why I find his proposal to shift metaphors so provocative. I do not know what this realization implies for the vocation of Christians involved in higher education, but I certainly would enjoy entering into a discussion of such a question with you, as colleagues involved in living out such a role. Maybe a table or a session at a future VLC Conference could focus on this topic?

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Learning and Teaching as an Exercise in Christian Freedom

Tom Christenson

I. Posing the Question

"More than half the work is done when we have put the question right."
Sig Royspern

What is the Vocation of a Lutheran College / University? I want to both pose this question and at least begin to answer it. But before I do the latter I want to move us away from certain natural but unhelpful ways we might have of thinking about this. The question frequently gets formulated as "What is Lutheran about Lutheran higher education?" The phrasing of the question in this way frequently takes us off in some un-fruitful directions. I'd like to talk about those briefly at the outset.

What is Lutheran about Lutheran higher education?

1) It is not essentially an education program *for Lutherans*. It is fine and excellent if it serves Lutherans. It isn't that we should chase Lutherans away. But we are not Lutheran institutions in proportion to the percentage of Lutherans we serve. When we do well what we can do best I believe we serve most, if not all, of our neighbors well, not just Lutherans.

2) It is not essentially an education program *by Lutherans*. It is fine and excellent that there are Lutheran faculty, administrators and secretaries and steam engineers working on our campuses, and our task may be made easier by their presence (or not), but we are not Lutheran institutions in proportion to the percentage of Lutherans we employ.

3) We are not Lutheran in proportion to the ways in which we are *ethnically Lutheran*. It is fine that we celebrate a variety of ethnicities on our campuses, whether that be German or Scandinavian or Finn or (perhaps in the future) Namibian or Korean or whatever. I think it would be good to maintain those identities even if the students and staff of those institutions no longer represent those ethnicities in large numbers. I think it's great that students from Detroit who go to Suomi learn about sauna and *sisu*! I think it's great that the large number of Asian students at Capital learn to eat brats and kraut and dance to a polka band.

Tom Christenson is professor of philosophy at Capital University.

These things are great, but they are not what make us essentially Lutheran institutions.

4) We are not Lutheran primarily in the ways we are different from others. Our differences may be obvious in some cases and not in others. The problem here is not with being different, but with taking difference as the defining essence. That's what frequently happens when marketing becomes management. If we begin with the question, "How will we be different?" we will end up in the wrong place just as much as if we begin with the question, "How can we be like everyone else?" As someone at one of these earlier conferences so beautifully put it, "We should be concerned to be *essentially Lutheran*, and not worry about being *distinctively Lutheran*." I believe if the "essential" part is taken as primary, the "distinctiveness" part will more than look after itself. I once heard Willem de Kooning say to a bunch of aspiring painters, "Be true to your self, your subject and your paint - and eventually your style will emerge. The artist who sets out in search of a distinctive style always ends up being a phony."

So, if those aren't the best ways to pursue the question, what is a better place to start? Consider this: I'll bet that if you think of the half - dozen or so faculty who most thoroughly embody and "carry" the Lutheran-ness at your institutions (the people who are caretakers of the tradition) you will find that some of them aren't Lutheran. I know many of these faculty - the Calvinist who in his loyal criticism calls the institution to be as well founded in its tradition as his Calvinist alma mater is in its tradition - the Catholic professor who feels genuinely blessed to be teaching at a Lutheran institution and enthusiastically shares her excitement and understanding of the place with her students - the Evangelical and Baptist professors who continually challenge their students and colleagues to boldly state what they believe, who read Luther in order to engage the tradition in argument - the Jewish professor who confesses that his faith is taken more seriously at his Lutheran institution than he ever was at Brandeis or the state university where he previously taught - the Buddhist professor who admits a deepening of her appreciation of her own tradition through her dialogue with colleagues at a Lutheran college.

How is this possible? What is this odd thing, "Lutheran-

ness,” that makes something like this possible? My conclusion is that it has to be something communicatable, something learnable, something that a sensitive, perceptive and concerned person can catch onto whether or not it is literally “their tradition.” What can this be?

II. Proposing an Answer

My answer is that what makes our institutions Lutheran is *a vision of the educational task itself* that is informed by a tradition of theological themes or principles as well as embodied in practice.

Mistaken assumptions that we often make about the nature of “religious” education make us look for evidence of our Lutheran-ness in the frosting and the decorations. I believe that it’s in the cake itself. We are Lutheran by means of our educational vision, a theologically informed orientation that manifests itself in what we do as we learn and teach together and our understanding of why we do it.

I think this is what Joe Sittler intended when he said:

Any effort properly to specify the central and perduring task of the Church-related college must pierce through and below the statements of purpose that often characterize public pronouncements. ... The Church is engaged in the task of education because it is dedicated to the truth If its proposals, memories, promises, proclamations, are not related to the truth, it should get out of the expensive business of education If [our] commitment to the faith is not one with [our] commitment to the truth, no multiplication of secondary consolations ... will suffice to sustain that commitment for [our] own integrity.

In weaving, it’s usually what weavers call the woof or weft of the weaving that carries the color, the texture and the distinctive pattern of the weaving. That’s what makes any collection of institutions here as wonderfully different as they are. But it’s the warp that holds the whole thing together, that makes it a weaving at all. The “for whom”, the “by whom”, the “where”, and “the ethnic roots” of our institutions make them different weavings. We should celebrate those differences. But I think there’s a common warp to all of us. We were, after all, cut from the same loom. We should celebrate that commonality. I think that’s why we gather together in these conferences; to celebrate our differences and to recollect what we have in common.

Now this common theological orientation may not be so obvious to us, who are part of this tradition, as it to some

of our friends and colleagues elsewhere in higher education. During this last year I have been invited to speak to conferences of Catholic educators, Baptist professors, and to a conference of presidents, provosts and deans of south-eastern Baptist institutions. Why would these people want to hear from a Lutheran educator, I asked myself. Well, my attendance at these gatherings has been a real education - for me.

Many, if not most, Catholic institutions were historically founded by communities of monks and nuns. The presence of these communities has traditionally solved the problem of “the Catholic identity” of these institutions. I once interviewed for a position at such an institution and I asked the faculty what it meant to them that they were part of a Catholic institution. Over and over again the lay faculty said to me, “We don’t have to worry about the religious character of the place, they [the brothers or sisters] take care of that.” Now, however, those religious orders are dying out. At many institutions the founding religious community is now a community of the aged and infirm. At many places there are two or three people left who are part of that supporting (and defining) community. They are concerned about this. So the question they have for us is, “How do we transfer the defining essence of our institution over to the lay faculty and administrators who really make the place go? How do you Lutherans do it? Will you show us how?”

The Baptists are going through a similar crisis. The Baptist identity of colleges and universities across the nation has traditionally been guaranteed *de jure* by their being owned by the Baptist conventions of their respective states. As these legal ownership ties are being severed these institutions are asking, “How can we still be a Baptist university if we are no longer owned by the convention? How do you Lutherans do it? Will you show us how?”

What I learned this year is how gifted, as Lutheran institutions, we are. Yet it’s a gift many of us have not noticed that we had. This is a gift most of us have undervalued, and a gift many of us, perhaps, have not yet unwrapped. Others have noticed our giftedness, and are asking us to share what we may not be aware we had. So, how do we do it? What is our vision? What is the warp that holds us all together? That’s the question I want to try to answer in what follows.

III. The Theological Tradition and Its Informing Vision

Previous speakers at these conferences have generated

some lists of things that characterize the Lutheran tradition and its informing vision for higher learning and they have done that very well. So last winter when DeAne Lagerquist proposed that I keynote this session she said, "Don't do what's already been done. Don't try to talk about everything, just talk about Christian freedom and its implications for our institutions." That sounded like a good idea, but I have discovered that it's a very difficult task. In order to talk about the idea I want to focus on, Christian freedom, one needs to see how this notion is situated among other concepts. But I am going to resist the temptation to do systematic theology here. I only want to "frame" the idea of Christian freedom by speaking briefly about two other crucial concepts: the idea of gift or giftedness, and the idea of vocation. It is freedom's location between these two ideas that makes it a peculiarly Christian understanding of freedom in the Lutheran tradition.

A. Gift & Being Gifted

I teach gifted students and I teach with gifted colleagues in a context of many gifts. Now I know what we usually mean when we talk about being gifted. There are special gifts: some have the gift for music, some the gift for mathematics, some the gift for repairing things, some the gift of imagination, etc. But there are also gifts that we all share, gifts we could realize if only we'd unwrap them, value them, develop them, and celebrate them. For such gifts I like to use the Shaker phrase, "Simple Gifts." What do you suppose would happen if we erected a large sign on our campuses that said, for example, "Wittenberg University, School for the Simply Gifted"?

A Christian encounters all of life and all of creation as a gift. This can make a great deal of difference. We've probably all been at the birthday parties of the two children I am going to describe: The first greedily opens present after present, paying no attention and giving no care to those already opened, finds no joy in them, never says thanks nor pays attention to what came from whom, always expecting that the next acquisition will be the one that fulfills, bursts into tantrum and tears when the last one is opened. The second child thoroughly enjoys, carefully uses, perhaps even savors, what is received, is genuinely thankful to the giver and though excited by the wonder of a new gift celebrates each to the delight of all those present. Which child would you rather give a gift to? Which child are we in the receiving of our gifts?

How does one teach science if one sees the cosmos and our

own powers of intelligence as a gift? How excited can one get looking through a microscope or telescope? How does someone informed by the idea of gift teach a Bach chorale, or a favorite author? There were teachers I had in college who opened the same gifts in the presence of students semester after semester, in some cases the gift was swamp ecology, in other cases the dialogues of Plato, the pre-Columbian history of the Americas, or the poetry of Rilke. In each case these teachers were as excited as kids, not at finding what was in there (they had a pretty good idea about that already) but they were excited at *our* coming to discover what was in there. The classroom was a potlatch, a celebration of gifts, giving, opening and receiving. A celebration of gifts and giftedness!

How do we approach and encounter a world given as gift?

1) With wonder and delight, i.e. as a world with depth, not as a world reduced to the dimensions of human manipulation. 2) With thanksgiving. 3) As caretaker and steward. 4) With an attitude of sharing, as part of what may be appropriately called a gift economy. 5) With celebration. What we've just described here has another name, "sacrament," which we could do worse than to understand as giftedness realized, shared and celebrated. In such a way education can become, as Nicholas Wolterstorff has said, "a eucharistic act."

For Christians, of course, Christ is the paradigm of gift and giver, gift realized as God with us in person, the reign of God among us. What's it like to realize this gift? St. Paul calls it redemption, but he also calls it freedom, "For freedom Christ has set us free," he writes in Galatians. Freedom, for a Christian, is not our natural condition, nor is it an earned achievement. It requires a death, even a crucifixion, and a resurrection to occur. Christian freedom, being a gift, needs a response (and consequently a response - ability). That is to say our freedom, being a gift, makes a call to us to which our lives are the response. There, the connection has been made explicit; gift - freedom - vocation.

B. Freedom

There are many mistakes the modern world has made (and continues to make) but one of the most serious and far reaching, I believe, is a misunderstanding of freedom. Just consider these two contrasting ideas of freedom: a) Being bound by nothing, connected to nothing, I make myself who I want to be, from nothing. Since I have no one to please but myself, my whole life is devoted to the fulfilling

of my "preferences." Like a store manikin my identity and value is determined by what I have. I shop therefore I am. Since there are always new things to buy the possibilities for recreating myself are endless. Since there is nothing (besides myself) to give the world (or myself) value, the world frequently becomes boring, irrelevant, and I go from one extreme thrill to another - seeking to jolt myself into existence. The most common reason given by teens for violence: "It was something to do!" The most common response from their parents: "But we get over eighty channels on cable?"

But consider an alternative view of freedom: b) Being called by those to whom I am connected, I discover myself as I discover what I love, care about, care for, am connected to. Hearing the call of others' needs and the call of truth, justice, love, beauty, I am encouraged and enlivened. I become who I am in the context of the call I have received. In place of a freedom that says: "What shall I buy today?" we have a *freedom* that can say, "Here I stand, I can do no other." Such freedom depends on vocation. As Luther put it, "We exist by being called by God. And we exist only so long as God continues to address us."

Martin Luther interpreted freedom in his famous treatise, *On the Freedom of the Christian*:

A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all. -- Freed from the vain attempt to justify him [her] self ... [the Christian] should be guided in all his [her] works by this thought alone ... considering nothing but the need and advantage of his [her] neighbor. -- This is a truly Christian life. Here faith is truly active through love, that is it finds expression in the works of the freest service, cheerfully and lovingly done....

What would a college or university informed by such an understanding of freedom look like? What does this freedom mean? What are we thus freed from? What are we thus freed to?

1. Luther understood freedom as the consequence of grace, i.e. of God's gift. Thus we are freed from the necessity to work our own salvation. We are freed from trying to climb the staircase to God's love. God came all the way down. This also means that we are freed from the captivity of the hierarchical dualisms one usually finds in religions and it means we are freed to be fully human. We have no need to transcend the bodily in service of some "higher"

spiritual realm, we have no need to deny the secular to serve the sacred, we have no need to depart the natural to serve the super-natural. Luther was adamant that we are called to serve where we are, in the stations in which we find ourselves, thoroughly embodied, concrete, earthen and particular. This freedom to be fully human also implies that we are freed to be eating, drinking, excreting, sexual, working, sweating, hoping, fearing, crying, nurturing, and thinking beings. Piety, by this view, is not a denial of part of our own reality so much as an embracing of all of it. We come before God not pure and unspotted but in our honest wholeness. Rabbi Harold Kushner in his book, *How Good Do We Have To Be?* offers the following commentary:

My candidate for the most important word in the Bible occurs in Genesis 17:1, when God says to Abraham, "Walk before me and be tamim." The King James Bible translates it as "perfect"; the RSV takes it to mean "blameless,".... Contemporary scholars take the word to mean something like "whole hearted." My own study of the verse leads me to conclude that what God wants from Abraham, and by implication from us, is not perfection but integrity That, I believe, is what God asks of Abraham. Not "Be perfect," not "Don't ever make a mistake," but "Be whole." [169 - 170, 180]

As a consequence of this freedom there is no part of ourselves that we may not embrace because it is "lower" or "unclean" in some phony pious sense. So when we do our work we may work thoroughly engaged, alienated neither by the dirtiness of hauling garbage, the chaos of teaching fifth grade, the smell of a nursing home, nor the mess of politics. This also implies that we are freed from the power of our self constructed and self-maintained hierarchies. So we may be called to be women, not "not quite men," to be children, not "not quite adults," to be students, not "not quite careered," to be secretaries, not "not quite CEO's," to be custodians, not "not quite clergy," to be even (*pace* Luther) philosophers, not "not quite theologians."

Most important perhaps, for the life of our colleges and universities, we are freed to engage the problems of the world by the use of the very fallible but still useful tools to be found in our academic disciplines. We have no need to become a one dimensional "bible college" because we are free to become engaged inquirers and learners in biology, psychology, economics, history, nursing, etc. There are no writers whose thoughts we must avoid thinking about, no books we need to consider banning, no theories we must

dismiss without thorough examination. We can learn from Marx about new dimensions of human slavery and liberation, we can learn from Nietzsche a suspicion of religious and moral motivation, just as Jesus' hearers learned the meaning of neighbor from the example of the otherwise despised Samaritan. There is also no authority we may not question, no ignorance we may not admit, and no doubt that we need to silence. Why? Because our salvation is not worked by such efforts since it is not worked by us at all.

This freedom is what distinguishes education in the Lutheran sense from "religious education" that we commonly find in some other contexts. Where people see education as a means or evidence of salvation or sanctification it frequently ends up being an indoctrination that is frightened, closed, authoritarian, and defensive. Education informed by the freedom of the Christian can be, by contrast, bold, open, multi-dimensional, dialogical and engaging. Education, informed by freedom, is not afraid of the largeness, the darkness, the inexplicable mystery of the world. A religious view without freedom tends to reduce the world, to shrink it to one that confirms the opinion of the believer and does not open one to challenge.

In last December's issue of *The Christian Century*, James Schaap wrote a provocative article about the difficulty of being an avowedly Christian writer. A reviewer of one of his novels told him she had liked his novel a good deal even though she'd thought she wouldn't when the review was assigned to her. "Why does your novel say the word "Christian" on the back cover?" she asked him. "Now nobody is going to read it." The same novel was reviewed in the newsletter of the Christian Booksellers Association. That reviewer did not recommend it since it included references to characters who were homosexual, adulterous and drug users. No bookstore that was a member of the CBA carried the book because it did not pass their standards for sanitized subject matter and inoffensive language. Among other writers the CBA will not carry are Flannery O'Connor (offensive language and despicable characters, too much violence) John Updike, Wendell Berry, Doris Betts, Madeleine L'Engle, and Larry Woiwode. Schaap comments that the only "offensive" book the CBA carries is the Bible.

God help us when the word "Christian" has come to mean "inoffensive," "sanitized," "asexual," or when Christian writers can only write about nice folks, in nice towns, doing nice things for nice reasons, in nice language. The

freedom of the Christian is, among other things, a freedom from the suffocating and nauseating law of niceness. It is a freedom to see the truth and tell it. John Updike has written:

God is the God of the living, though many of his priests and executors, to keep order and force the world into a convenient mold, will always want to make him the God of the dead, the God who chastises life and forbids and says No.[As a Christian writer] I have felt free to describe life as accurately as I could, with especial attention to human erosions and betrayals. What small faith I have has given me what artistic courage I have. My theory was that God already knows everything and cannot be shocked. And only truth is useful. Only truth can be built upon.

2. We are freed to serve the world by being skeptical of and challenging all worldly claims to ultimacy. We are called, in other words, to recognize idols when we see them. We can recognize them, in part because we know as well as anyone what it is to be tempted by them and by the power they can have over us. We call attention to them not as problems that "they" have that "we" are now going to condemn and correct, but as things we are all tempted by and whose influence we have fallen under. But the freeing power of the gospel should also have shown us that they are false ultimacies, i.e that they truly are idols.

Certainly materialism in all its modes is one such idol in our society. How many of us have felt the temptation of believing that we are valuable for what we have, for what possessions are ours? How frequently do all other concerns take a back seat to economic progress? How tempting is the idea that having more will bring us happiness and fulfillment? For how many is success *defined* by income and consumption? David Orr states the issue very boldly in his book, *Earth in Mind*:

The plain fact is that the planet does not need more successful people. But it does desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of every kind. It needs people who live well in their places. It needs people of moral courage ... And these qualities have little to do with success as our culture defines it.

So many students are convinced that education serves only to get a job, and that a job serves only to earn money, and that earning money serves only the end of copious and

conspicuous consumption. Why is this so widely believed? For many it's believed because it is a story convincingly told daily in all the media. We are informed about what human excellence is mainly by people who are trying to sell us something. For many students it is their story because they have never heard any other story or because they have never heard anyone challenge it. May our students encounter voices like Wendell Berry:

So I have met the economy in the road, and I am expected to yield it right of way. But I will not get over I see it teaching my students to give themselves a price before they can realize in themselves a value. Its principle is to waste and destroy the living substance of the world and the birthright of posterity for monetary profit that is the most flimsy and useless of human artifacts.

A Christian college/university informed by Luther's interpretation is free to challenge this and other pervasive "ultimacies." We are also called in this freedom to embody some viable alternatives, for we educate much more persuasively by what we do in our institutions than only by what we say in them. We are called to explore what Christian freedom implies for a community of inquirers, not only in regard to curriculum and campus policies but also in regard to the economic, social and political life of our institutions. Realizing the liberation of the gospel we become aware of the bondage we work on each other. Having been rescued from alienation we are aware of the fault lines of alienation in our own midst. We are thus called not only to be honest critics but also to become communicators, peace makers, healers, enablers of community and bearers of hope.

Just as the freedom of the Christian articulated above, frees us to something beyond "religious education," in the restricted sense, so the freedom articulated here frees us to do something that secular institutions have a hard time doing, i.e. being skeptical of the ultimacies ruling in the culture and embodying genuine alternatives to them. We serve the real need of the neighbor, in this case the wider culture, not by following the dominant voices in it nor by worshiping at all of its altars. Our colleges and universities are not excellent stewards of their gifts insofar as they succeed in being like all other institutions in the culture, nor insofar as they teach, research or publish more brilliantly, nor even for being more caring and friendly, but insofar as they create a space within which the liberating truth can be heard in freedom.

We, as academics, may feel ourselves to have been freed from some of the culture's ultimacies only to have become worshipers at the shrine of other, more specifically academic ultimacies. I know many academics who are willing to think critically about anything *except* the assumptions and methodologies of their own disciplines or sub-disciplines. But the freedom of the Christian realized in our thinking ought to make such idolatry obvious to us as well. Our scientists ought to be free enough to recognize and critique the ends that "value free science" serves. Our artists ought to be free enough to recognize and critique the agendas of institutions that rank the arts and artists. Whom does the idea of "the high arts" or "the fine arts" serve? Whose work is demeaned by it? Our law professors ought to be free enough to recognize and critique the way in which their profession serves itself more frequently than it serves the ends of justice. Our economists ought to be free enough to recognize and critique what the international market economy has done to many working families. And so also for the rest of us, no matter what our disciplinary allegiance is.

If you need a good example of the way our disciplines both facilitate and limit inquiry read Robert Coles' account of his psychiatric internship and the difficulty he had learning to see his patients without the diagnostic categories his teachers had taught him so well. I can't think of a better narrative about the way a discipline can trap and limit a mind and the way a good teacher can liberate one from it than the first chapters of Coles' book, *The Call of Stories: Teaching and the Moral Imagination*.

3. It is my belief that Christian freedom also implies something specific for the priorities of our learning and teaching. Many Christian colleges emphasize the liberal arts. I wish to make an argument here for a slightly different way of looking at things. As you will see it is not so much a new set of things we ought to teach as it is a new agenda for the way we teach what we do. I refer to this agenda as *the liberating arts*, i.e. the arts of embodied freedom. I wish to identify four sub-groups within this general category. I will explain and illustrate each briefly.

The Critical/Deconstructive Arts. These are the studies by which we learn critical thinking, come to recognize our own and others' presuppositions, learn to articulate our assumptions as well as work out the implications of our thinking. Until one realizes the assumptions one operates with, and recognizes alternatives, one cannot really be said to be choosing or acting freely. A student responded to an

essay in one of my classes by saying: "I really hate it when people push their ideas on me." I responded, "Then you must get very upset watching advertising on TV." Her response was, "Oh no! They don't push that on me. Those are things I think already."

Examples: Sister Alice Lubin's course at St. Elizabeth's College on The Victorian Novel. In the process of this class the students not only come to identify the roles and rules that apply to women (and men) in the world of the Victorian novel, but come to identify by contrast the roles and rules that apply to gendered life in our own society as well. The outcome is definitely a liberation, for the forces that daily pressure young women and men to specific roles and behavior can surface, can be articulated, can be seen in the light of day, and be considered with a new degree of freedom. A second example is a course my oldest son took at St. Olaf College (sorry, I do not know the instructor). In this course students did an analysis of local and national news broadcasts, posing questions about the different ways stories were told, what kinds of things got priority, and how all of this was related to the sales of ad time for such programs. The students got to interview producers, some national news anchors by conference phone, and media critics and representatives from alternative media in this process. They all came away realizing that the news is not just a 'given' but that it is very intentionally scripted and prioritized to convey particular kinds of messages and to avoid others. The passion with which my son communicated his response to this course was evidence of the level of critical thinking that had been enabled there.

The Embodying/Connecting Arts: So much of the learning we subject students to in the university is completely disconnected from meaningful action. Yet many times we have heard students say after returning from an internship or work experience, "I learned more in those weeks than I learned in the three preceding semesters." The embodying arts connect learning to doing, deciding, and to the becoming of the student.

Examples: The service learning semester at Goshen college, or the field focused learning experiences of nursing students at my own university. Students not only learn their own disciplines with a sense of urgency in such situations, they come to know themselves as well. They uncover fears, prejudices, things in their preparation that need more work, and new potentialities in themselves. They learn that knowing something one can actually do is more freeing than merely knowing *about* a whole host of

things. The musician who can play one instrument has more freedom than the dilettante who has heard them all but can play none.

The Melioristic/Creative Arts: There is more than one model of creativity. Let me illustrate with the example of my mother who was, I believe, a creative cook. But she wasn't creative in the way some cooks are: seeing a recipe in *Gourmet*, going to the market to buy all the ingredients, following the recipe to gustatorial paradise. She was creative in a different way. I remember her often, particularly as we got on toward the end of the month, making what we called, "end of the month soup." She would go to the refrigerator, ponder what she saw and say, "Now, what can we make out of this." By the way, this image is so firm in my mind that when I hear about God creating the universe I think of my mother looking out on what is "without form and void" saying, "Now, what can we make out of this." This image not only informs my idea of creation but shapes my understanding of redemption as well. God looks into the end of the month refrigerator that is my life and says, "What can we make out of this mess?"

Arts are melioristic that avoid the optimism/pessimism binges we are all so good at, asking not, "How would I like the world ideally to be?" but asking instead, "Can we make something good out of what we are given?" Such arts need to be practiced in the classroom by middle school teachers, at home by husbands, wives, parents and children, at work by managers and employees, in public by citizens and politicians. We learn such arts in concrete problem-solving situations, where wishing for some far off ideal or wishing we could start over are not open options. It is the art of making the best of what's left of the present semester rather than planning for the naively hopeful next one, a fantasy both students and faculty are expert at.

Examples: What can be learned from a year's commitment in a communal living arrangement? From raising and caring for a pet through its whole life? From conversations with spouses, parents, teachers, politicians? We can learn about the compromises they have had to make in order to make things work. As teachers we can design problem-solving modules where the problem must be solved with the materials at hand. Meliorism can be learned from a few lessons in cooking or mending or auto repair from a frugal parent.

The Arts of Enablement and Change: One of the courses I teach enrolls almost exclusively seniors. Many times I

have read in their journals comments like these: "I think I've gotten a good education, but in some ways I feel disabled by it." "I've learned a lot of great ideas but they're pretty impractical. I've learned how to think critically. I know a lot of things that are wrong. But after all, you can't change the world." One student wrote: "People of my generation are like a bunch of intelligent robots. We understand the world, we understand what's wrong with it, yet we feel like we can't help but continue to contribute to what's wrong with it. It's like we are programmed to be tragic figures or addicts, seeing the problem but not being able to act on what we know."

This may strike some of us older folks as peculiar, for we know that there have been incredible changes in this century, in the last thirty years, even in the last decade. Yet we can understand the problems these students cite because we too know it is much easier to complain about how awful things are than to make a continuing effort toward making things better. We all know the passive helplessness behind the words, "Why don't *they* do something about it?" Crime, a culture of violence, environmental problems, lowering expectations and performances in schools, these are all problems we know in a first hand way, yet we suppose that these are problems to be solved only by persons on the far side of the TV screen, the people who make the news, not by folks like us who merely watch it. Yet only a little reflection reveals to us that this too is a learned response. How can we unlearn it?

Examples: By making our own educational institutions, at least, an arena where learners can practice the arts of change. By making sure students meet community persons who are involved in change at all levels, including law-makers, inventors, members of twelve-step programs, protestors, intervenors and effective teachers. If change is not possible education is the most tragic of all human enterprises. We should make sure that our institutions honor at least one significant change agent every year.

These "liberating arts" can, and in fact should, be taught in all disciplines. They would make a fine core to a goal-focussed general studies requirement. They might spur a lot of creative thinking on the part of faculty and certainly would provoke a lot of argument. Luther would approve of both. I think that a place that took such an education in freedom seriously would be a fun and invigorating place to learn and to teach.

C. Vocation

Here are three images, metaphors to regard playfully:

*There is no recipe for communion bread or communion wine. So we may, on biting in, discover whole wheat, egg hallah, French baguette, or Finnish limpa, or on drinking the cup discover a Beaujolais nouveau or this week's Thunderbird special. Sacrament is always the sacred embodied in the particular, and, I believe, the more particular the better. Grandma's sugar buns and grandpa's rutabaga wine will do just fine.

* Martin Buber relates the story of a man, let's call him Scholem Gerschwitz, being taught by his rabbi: The rabbi says, "When you come into the presence of the creator of the universe he will not ask you, 'Why weren't you another Moses?' But he will ask you, why weren't you Scholem Gerschwitz?"

* Remember again my mother and her question as she looked into the refrigerator, "Now, what can we make out of this?"

What can we learn from these images about the Vocation of a Lutheran College / University? I think we can learn at least three things, maybe more.

1) There is no generic recipe for such an institution. We should not strive to be generically Lutheran, nor do we serve well by striving to be "all things to all people."

2) Though we have much to learn from each other, we should not ask, "Why isn't Wittenburg more like Wartburg? Why isn't Capital more like Concordia?" I once knew a philosophy professor who couldn't quite get over the fact that he was teaching at North Dakota State rather than at Harvard. So acting out a form of academic denial he prepared his lectures and chose the texts he would have if he had been at Harvard. He did not understand his students, and needless to say, they did not understand him. He could not figure out why he was not promoted. "After all," he said, "I was working up to a very high standard of excellence." I know the temptations of wishing we were more like some other institutions: when I taught in Minnesota the temptation was to be another Carleton or Macalister. In Ohio, we yearn to be another Kenyon or Oberlin. I have done this as well as you. But let me tell you, this is not the direction we should go.

3) We should not ask, "What kind of college or university

would you create if you could go to the store and buy all the right ingredients?" We should not ask, "What kind of institution would you create if you could create one *ex nihilo*?" This is a Dean's dream, I know. Instead we should open the door of our own refrigerators and ask, "Now what kind of university can we make out of this?" Our refrigerators contain our particular students, our particular faculty, our particular administrators, our physical plant, our location, and the challenges and opportunities that each of these bring. We must know ourselves, know our limits and our potentialities, know our histories and the visions for our futures. The colleges and universities I admire the most are not the most prestigious, but the ones that have found a way to serve their particular students, with their particular needs, in their particular place, and do it well.

III. Bringing It All Together

Frederick Buechner defines vocation like this: "The kind of work God calls you to is the kind of work a) that you need most to do and b) that the world most needs to have done.... The place God calls you to is the place where your own deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."

Here is some good news: we are freed to know and to serve both of these needs. Freed to be "a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none" we are *therefore* freed to be "a perfectly dutiful servant" seeing the deep needs of the world and working in service of our actual neighbor and actual neighborhood.

So, now we are in a position to re-address the question with which we began: "What is the vocation of a Lutheran college or university?" Realizing God's gifts and ourselves as gifted, we are freed to boldly engage (in our fallible way) and to tell the whole truth. We are freed to make end-of-the-month soup with the stuff in our own refrigerators, in service of the deep needs of the world and to the greater glory of God.

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Of Imaginary Cows and a White Toy Sheep: The Freedom of a Christian College

Ryan LaHurd

Harvard Psychologist Robert Kegan tells the story of a little boy he worked with who, as I remember it, was named Tommy. Tommy had an imaginary farm. One morning Tommy's mother asked him what he would be doing that day.

"I'll be working on the farm," Tommy answered. "Today is the day the cows and bulls make the new calves."

His mother couldn't resist the *entré*. "Tell me," she said, "How do the cows and bulls make the new calves?"

"It's real simple," answered her son. "The cows and bulls trim their toenails and bury the little pieces of toenails and a baby calf grows."

"Well, Tommy, not exactly," his mother countered. And she proceeded to tell him for nearly twenty minutes the biological facts of cattle reproduction. "And *that*," she concluded with a sense of satisfaction is how calves are born."

Tommy looked up at his mother, shook his head and replied, "Not on *my* farm it's not."

I am not exactly sure why I find that story so appealing, but I have repeated it many times since I first heard Kegan tell it at a conference I attended some years ago. Perhaps it is that satisfying feeling of hearing a child say something challenging and wise. More likely it is that the story contains a profound insight into how we human beings tend to operate. Because someone has a grasp of fact or truth or useful knowledge, it does not necessarily follow that the insight will adequately address another person's perspective on the world.

We adults know that Tommy's mother was factually, scientifically correct in her explanation of bovine reproduction, but we realize that Tommy had an insight into, a control of, and a commitment to his imaginary farm that superseded the "facts." At least Tommy's response permits us to realize that the mother does not have the *full* story though she has a *correct* story. This understanding contains the approach I would like to take in responding to

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Professor Tom Christenson's valuable essay relating Luther's "The Freedom of a Christian" to the idea of the vocation of a Lutheran College or University. He has managed to demonstrate openness to the diversity of our individual histories and realities as Lutheran institutions while simultaneously elucidating the core of the tradition we hold in common. He has done a great service by suggesting some new ways to consider the liberal arts curriculum and help us bridge the traditions of the liberal arts and Lutheranism on the one hand and on the other the contemporary demands for an education that responds to our current situation.

In fact, I found myself agreeing with nearly everything Dr. Christenson says -- not only agreeing with it but feeling the tug of enlistment. For those of us who view educating others as our true vocation, the summons to rise to our highest calling -- to liberate and to help students achieve their greatest possibilities -- is stirring. Still, as I read and re-read the essay in preparation for forming a written response, I heard a little "Tommy voice" whispering "Not on my farm."

It took me some time to put words to my uneasiness. Because I believe it is relevant to my later comments, I hope you will indulge me as I re-create the process of my own discovery about my initially-unnamable reaction. One of my first thoughts about Dr. Christenson's paper was that he and I must be kindred spirits. I recalled that in the early 1980s as a professor in the English department at Thiel College I had given a presentation at the Association of Lutheran College Faculties meeting entitled "How Liberating are the Liberal Arts?" My answer was "Not very." My paper, like Tom Christenson's, was based in Luther's treatise "The Freedom of a Christian." My primary argument, different from his, said that the liberal arts are truly liberating only insofar as our colleges emphasize them for their own sake and not as practical preparation for some career work and a road to success. I decried our having fallen into the clutches of the marketplace, preparing students to fill slots in an economic machine rather than truly liberating them.

I realize I would not write that same paper today because of the path my own education has taken since then. I moved from that very small town in Pennsylvania and

being a full-time professor at Thiel to the large city of Minneapolis and being a full-time academic dean at Augsburg then to a small city in the South and being a college President at Lenoir-Rhyne. I learned first-hand three quite different Lutheran colleges; two are to a large extent traditional residential liberal arts colleges, the third—Augsburg College—hosts a very diverse student body including over one thousand working adults in its weekend program. In my administrative roles I have had to work more directly with alumni, parents and other constituents than I did as a professor; and now I have become responsible for the recruitment of students, raising funds, and balancing the budget

In the fifteen years since I wrote that paper, the environment of higher education has also changed dramatically. You know most of what I mean -- from the burdens of institutionally-funded financial aid to the national hostility over tuition costs, the inadequate preparation of students, and the impact of computer technology. Even greater and more dangerous changes inhere in the attitudes our constituents have toward our kind of education. Researchers James Harvey and John Immerwahr reported in a 1993 review of public opinion surveys a consistent public view that higher education is necessary for employment but that liberal arts education is irrelevant to their goal of preparing for a career (reported in Hersh). More recently, Richard Hersh, president of Hobart and William Smith Colleges, wrote about a large study Daniel Yankelovich conducted for his institution on the same issue. The study concluded that few people believe in the importance of learning for learning's sake. Few have any idea what a liberal arts education is; 85% of high school students and 75% of their parents believe the reason to go to college is to prepare for a prosperous career; and they believe that a liberal arts education should teach them workplace skills.

So in reviewing my reaction, I traced the growing complexity of my own views -- my experiences about where colleges stand, where potential students and their parents stand, and where I stand on the issues of what an education should do for and with students. As I made this journey, I grasped more clearly my disjunction from Tom Christenson's use of Luther's treatise to speak about colleges and universities. It is not as correct to say that I disagree with him, rather that I think he has left out an necessary part of how we can most usefully view the vocation of our colleges. The crux of my perspective is this: just as we can say that a Lutheran college is a

ministry of the Church but must be clear that it is *not* the Church; so I believe we must be clear that while a college is composed of people, it is not a person. This distinction is critical, I think, for Luther is writing about Christian persons and their salvation and not about Christian institutions.

Luther clearly makes this distinction in his treatise. When he asks how a "pious Christian, that is, a new and inner man becomes what he is," Luther answers that "it is evident no external thing has any influence in producing Christian righteousness or freedom or in producing unrighteousness or servitude" (278). The inner person is an individual. The inner person is the free Christian. A college or university cannot cause, prevent or, most critically, share in this freedom. The college lacks, except in a metaphorical sense, a soul that could be thought of as free. Luther exhorts every Christian "to lay aside all confidence in works and increasingly to strengthen faith alone" (281). This exhortation is not something colleges and universities can take to heart. A college without works, and lots of them, is dead.

I want to argue that when we speak of a college or university, we can be speaking of two different realities. On the one hand, there lies what I will call the "imagined college." I mean by this something parallel to the "imagined communities" about which Benedict Anderson writes in his book with that title. Anderson argues that a nation is "an imagined political community." People must imagine their nations, he says, because there is no way any person could know or experience all the land or all the people that make up one's nation. America as a land exists between the Atlantic and the Pacific Oceans; America as a nation exists in our imaginations. Anderson's distinction is useful for us as well. I suggest that the college which educates is the "imagined college" and includes the coming together of the courses into a curriculum and the entire process of communal life into the education of the whole person. Anderson notes that the nation is *imagined* as a community because "regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (7). One could argue that a similar sense of community prevails on a campus. As much as the hundreds of pages we produce every ten years for our regional accrediting agencies might suggest to the contrary, I want to posit that this concatenation of realities exists essentially -- though not entirely -- as something real but created in the spirits and minds of the college community. It is this imagined college

which really matters to us; *this* college is the alma mater. *This* is the college where faculty perform their transformative art. In this realm the college as college may be thought of as free.

On the other hand we have the “real” college. This is the college of electric and fuel bills, federal financial aid reconciliations, deferred maintenance, computer systems, and contribution raising. If we put this into Luther’s two kingdoms” terms, the real college resides solely in the kingdom on the left just like any other business. The real college is not a person, and the real college is not free. I hope you will understand that these terms “imagined” and “real” are in no sense intended to contain evaluative judgments. “Real” does not mean “true”; and “imagined,” “false.” Because of Anderson’s use of the concept “imagined communities,” I simply thought them useful in making a critical distinction.

The concept of academic freedom in its pure form provides a good illustration of the difference between the two colleges. A faculty member’s right to say whatever is necessary to push toward the truth as he or she sees it is protected, even encouraged. To apply Professor Christenson’s words, “It is a freedom to see the truth and tell it.” So valued and valuable is this concept that higher education has developed an elaborate system, bolstered by bookfuls of legal precedent, to support and protect it. Those of us who spend most of our time in the college where college relations, public relations, marketing, recruiting, and fund raising take place do not have such academic freedom. As the preceding list of functions reveals, this is the realm where for the most part our interaction with those outside the campus community takes place.

Here I can think of no better illustration than Socrates, both the historical person and the character in Plato’s *Apology*. It appears to be the case that Socrates’ execution resulted more from the threat which the incipient institution of the academy posed to the traditional values of Athenian society than from anything else. In the *Apology* Plato creates a Socrates who assumes the freedom to tell the-truth-as-he-sees-it in such a way as to offend those who judge him and to exacerbate the threat to them, virtually ensuring his martyrdom. Because of this reckless disregard for his life over against the freedom to say what he believes, Socrates has become a symbol of the committed academic truth seeker. Now I know I do not need to tell you this, but for the sake of rounding out my

point, I will. Very few if any college presidents are likely to pursue the presentation of their particular versions of the truth about their college to the hemlock cup in the manner of Socrates. Yet, if they did, while they might appear heroic, they would not be true to their vocation. Whatever it may have been in the past or is remembered in legend as being, the current role of the college president is to advance the college in the realm of the “real college,” to do everything possible to ensure its continued existence and its growth and the successful accomplishment of its mission in this realm.

The Association of Governing Boards (AGB), the professional organization for Boards of Trustees of Colleges and Universities, designates the selection and evaluation of the college’s president as one of a board’s major functions. As part of its assistance to boards, AGB suggests assessment criteria for presidential evaluations. In support of my earlier observations, I note that a majority of the criteria concern such things as public relations, fund and friend raising, and budget management. Recent articles and letters in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* also indicate that presidential effectiveness is rated and that many presidents will rise or fall on their ability to gain access to major gifts. What I mean to suggest here is that what most constituents see as primary functions of some college staff persons – those whom I have described as operating in the so-called “real college” – are functions that in many ways preclude freedom.

Let me offer an example. In his essay Tom Christenson states that Christians are “freed to serve the world by being skeptical of and challenging all worldly claims to ultimacy. We are called, in other words, to recognize idols when we see them. . . . Certainly materialism in all its modes is one such idol in our society.” Then he quotes David Orr in *Earth in Mind* saying, “The plain fact is that the planet does not need more successful people.” Dr. Christenson concludes that too many of our students “are convinced that education serves only to get a job. . . . A Christian college/university informed by Luther’s interpretation is free to challenge this [success myth] and other pervasive ‘ultimacies’.” Now I agree wholeheartedly with everything Professor Christenson says here. In fact, it was at this point that I thought most intently of accusing him of plagiarizing my essay from the early 1980s.

Yet, despite this statement of agreement, I want you to imagine me in my role as the president of a Lutheran college. In this case, picture me trying to fulfill the

expectations of how I ought to best do the part of my job involved with raising funds so that we can continue to accomplish our mission. In this fictional vignette, I am meeting with a potential donor to the college, a multi-millionaire manufacturing entrepreneur who happens to be Lutheran and has an interest in the college. As far as any of us knows, this potential donor has earned every one of his millions of dollars by honest hard work. He has never mistreated his employees or been accused of any immorality or illegality. As I go about cultivating this potential donor, do I have the freedom to tell him that the mission of my college is to convince students that materialism is one of the idols of our time? Shall I say that we do not need another successful person because success is a false ultimacy? In a very real sense I do not think I have that freedom, and the college does not have this freedom. How many of our potential large supporters were not successes in our materialistic world? Few. How many are not very proud of their success and do not want current students to follow their example? Fewer still. In the realm of raising funds, paying bills, defending against litigation there exist restrictions on the freedom of a Christian college.

George Marsden in his voluminous work *The Soul of the American University* offers a stern warning for colleges like ours, which he sees on the slippery slope sliding toward secularization in the historical tradition of Harvard and Yale. His Calvinist-inspired vision is arguable for Lutherans who do not set up the same dichotomies between the kingdoms of Christ and of the world, as Tom Christenson and others have pointed out. At the same time, I suggest that whether we slip into secularism or not, we at some time – perhaps in our very beginnings – became firmly entrenched in the “commodity economy” where the “real college” lost its freedom. Many in academe dislike using the terminology of business to describe part of our reality. Be that as it may, there is no way around the fact that we offer a service which people purchase or do not. This statement does not imply that everything we do is for sale or could be purchased or that whatever amount a student pays in tuition could ever buy an education. Yet, especially those of us who are essentially traditional, residential liberal arts colleges have created a kind of education that demands buildings, residence halls, food service, heat, light, libraries, counselors, and now computers. All of this costs money, and most of it we cannot do without. Did our sister college Upsala fail because its mission was unworthy or its faculty and staff failed to be properly dedicated or work sufficiently hard?

I think not. It failed because it did not enroll enough students who paid enough tuition to pay its bills.

I do not think this kind of talk demeans us at all. Of course, it does not touch what is most significant, most uplifting, most beautiful and certainly not what is most enjoyable about our institutions. However, insofar as we do have a business side to our work, we had best realize we are not free. So what is my point in bringing these mundane considerations into what we all would rather think and talk about in the most uplifting and ideal of terms? In essence, I am calling for our insisting on a *sense of complexity* as we seek to define the vocation of a Lutheran college or university. Doing so may help ensure that we do not remain solely in the realm of the imagined college, making our definition truncated and thus not really useful to us as we reflect upon the day-to-day aspects of being a college of the Church. It is this consideration I wish to graft onto those of Tom Christenson.

Just as Luther posits our lives as Christian persons in two kingdoms, the heavenly one and the secular one, and posits also our ability to serve and to operate with righteousness in both, so I think we can profitably posit that our colleges operate in two realms. I am aligned with Luther’s position on this. As Richard Solberg has noted, “Luther’s philosophy of education grew directly out of his concept of two kingdoms. He placed education squarely within the ‘orders of creation,’ or God’s ‘secular realm’” (76). At the same time, I am suggesting that the “imagined college,” made up as it is mostly of Christian persons, has some existence in the spiritual kingdom through the Church. This idea of our operation in two realms, if lived rightly and thought through with the proper appreciation for complexity and ambiguity, can prove valuable. It can give us an idea of how a Lutheran college can be said to be distinctive and can fulfill its vocation while surviving and prospering in a world where secular measures of role and purpose judge quality.

There are many ways in which our colleges live in this challenge of doubleness, and there are many times we are called to live there. Mark Schwehn, the Dean of Valparaiso’s Christ College, has written of the kinds of double demands I mean. Schwehn discusses, for example, “the deep ambivalence that many Christian parents entertain about the kind of school they want their children to attend. In brief, many Christian parents want their sons and daughters to attend colleges and universities that are sufficiently counter-cultural to protect their youngsters

from some of the uglier onslaughts of modernity” he says, “but that are enough in accord with modern culture so that their sons and daughters will prosper upon graduation by attaining wealth, power, influence, social standing, promotion, advancement, etc., within the secular world” (2-3).

Similarly, it is my experience that Lutheran colleges and universities often receive double messages from our churches. On the one hand, the church and members of the churches and synods decry what they view as a small number of Lutheran students on our campuses, the presence of the evils of the larger culture among our students such as promiscuous sexuality and alcohol and drug abuse, too few required religion courses, or small attendance at chapel services. On the other hand, when budget apportionment and support are considered, the colleges are often seen to be self-supporting business ventures which have a source of income and should be able to support themselves if they manage things properly. When do the pages of church publications report on colleges? It is almost entirely when one of us receives a very large gift or is honored by *U. S. News and World Report* rankings as one of the best. Am I accusing parents and the church of being hypocritical, disingenuous or ignorant? Perhaps one could argue any of those descriptors as true at times. My point, rather, is that they, like us, are vacillating in an either/or approach to the vocation of a Lutheran college when a both/and approach can be more useful. In terms of vocation, we are mistakenly compared to the Church proper and seen to be failures when our ministry, evangelism, values, and worship life do not approach the standards set by the Gospels and tradition for the Church. In fact, we share a different kind of ministry: one having more in common with Lutheran outdoor ministries, hospitals, or services for the aging.

In his work *The Gift: Imagination and the Erotic Life of Property*, author Lewis Hyde constructs a valuable distinction between the “gift” and the “commodity” economies in which human cultures operate. In the gift economy, people give something to another with no expectation that something of value will be given directly in return but with an expectation that the recipient will give a gift, perhaps the same gift, to someone else. “The gift perishes for the person who gives it away . . . A gift is consumed when it moves from one hand to another with no assurance of anything in return,” (9) explains Hyde. This cycle of giving with no assurance of return but an

expectation of continued giving by the receiver creates growth in resources and enhancement of community. Hyde summarizes the growth this way:

A circulation of gifts nourishes those parts of our spirit that are not entirely personal, parts that derive from nature, the group, the race or the gods. Furthermore, although these wider spirits are part of us, they are not “ours”; they are endowments bestowed upon us. To feed them by giving away the increase they have brought us is to accept that our participation in them brings with it an obligation to preserve their vitality. (38)

On the other side exists the “commodity economy” in which exchange is made on the basis of equivalent value. I give you a thing or service and expect that you will give me something, in kind or in money, of approximately equal value. “When anyone . . . sets out to make money in the marketplace,” explains Hyde, “he reckons his actions by the calculus of comparative value and allows that value, rather than the home life of his clients and friends, to guide him” (104). This is our normal manner of operating, especially with strangers. From this exchange no community is built. If my sink becomes clogged, I seek the name of a plumbing service in the telephone directory. Someone comes to my home to perform the service; I pay the plumber and expect – in fact, hope – never to see the plumber again. No relationship has been built by our exchange of money for service. On the other hand, when I move into a new neighborhood, the next door neighbor on my right whom I have not met before brings me a loaf of banana bread and a welcome to the neighborhood. Later, the house on my left gains a new owner. On their moving day, my wife and I invite the new owners and our neighbors on the right to a barbecue in our yard. The gift moves on; a circle of giving, a neighborhood community, is created.

Hyde explores this dichotomous sense of human economy with two ends in mind. He uses it both to examine some of the dangers arising in a society which moves almost entirely into the commodity economy and loses the community-building functions of the gift economy, and he uses it to build the foundation for a study of the role of the artist in society. While he does not mention higher education specifically, I think his work provides some valuable insights for investigating my contention that Lutheran colleges and universities operate simultaneously in two realms. Hyde notes our cultural distinction between “masculine work” and “feminine work.” “In a modern,

industrial nation, the ability to act without relationship is still a mark of the masculine gender; boys can still become men and men become more manly, by entering into the marketplace and dealing in commodities. A woman can do the same thing if she wants to, of course, but it will not make her feminine" (105). "What we take to be the female professions," explains Hyde, "-- child care, social work, nursing, the creation and care of culture, the ministry, teaching . . . all contain a greater admixture of gift labor than male professions -- banking, law, management, sales, and so on" (106). Those in the so-called female professions are paid less than those in the male professions. While this reflects in large part our culture's stratified approach to gender, men in these professions are also paid less than men in the male professions.

Because teaching contains a large component of gift labor, it requires a strong commitment of the teacher's emotional and spiritual energy. In speaking of the compensation received by such persons as teachers and artists, we shall have to recognize, Hyde argues, that "the pay they receive has not been 'made' the way fortunes are made in the market, that it is a gift bestowed by the group" (107). Anyone who has been in teaching and seen it as a vocation knows that the amount of labor expended is out of proportion to the compensation; but teachers do not see their labor as being purchased but as being given as a gift. A professor gives of the self and that self is not for sale. We also know that many of our students grasp the value of the gift they receive and do, in fact, pass on the gift in pursuing their own vocations and in the gifts they give to the community.

The prevalence of this kind of relationship with students and of the appreciation of the gift bestowed appears to have entered a state of decline, however, as an attitude of "consumerism" has risen in our society. Consumerism is an attitude relevant to the commodity economy, its major function being to ensure that the consumer receives a product or service commensurate with the value of what is given in exchange, usually money. In our day, however, consumerism has infected everything, including and perhaps now especially the vocations and services which have traditionally stood primarily in the gift economy. Health care has come under the scrutiny of consumerism with many results. Among the results is a purported cost control but also a growing dissatisfaction with the state of the affective aspects of health care like time for nurturing care from nurses or the opportunity to be consistently treated by and build a relationship with the same physician.

In education, consumerism has pushed many students and parents toward a relationship built on the phrase "I pay so much for this education you had better give me what I want" and reinforced by threat of litigation.

For many of us the response to consumerism and, whether we articulate it in this way or not, our response to our loss of place in the gift economy has been simply consternation. Internally we have bemoaned the loss of the "good old days" and condemned the loss of traditional academic values. Most troubling of our responses has been a tendency to assign blame internally. Externally we have been silent or simply noted the problem and lived through it or accommodated to it. Ironically, as we have moved further from the gift economy we have often claimed to be becoming more "service oriented." Of course, in this context "service" means not the giving of a gift of service but customer or consumer service.

What I am suggesting as a more productive response lies in a recognition of our functioning in two realms, two economies for different purposes and for different parts of fulfilling our vocations. The "imagined college" functions in the gift economy where mostly faculty but also administration can create a true community of exchange and, indeed, love. The "real college" functions in the commodity economy where mostly administrators but also faculty work to ensure that the buildings are built and repaired, the bills are paid, and the technology works so that the project of teaching can be carried out.

How might this double view of our vocation be valuable to us and what might its effects look like? First, as I have discussed in detail, this approach can give us a more complex and thus more useful definition of our vocations as colleges of the Lutheran Church. Such a definition could help us find a way to position ourselves in a world that is much more complex than the world in which our colleges were founded and the one in which most of our growth occurred. Second, it can have significant value related to the functioning of our internal communities. As the Pew Higher Education Roundtable's *Policy Perspectives* argued in its Spring, 1996 special issue, one of the critical issues in survival of colleges and universities will be to mend the breach between faculty and administration. "What is needed," the members of the roundtable say, "is an ability to move from a negotiated culture to an environment in which administrators and faculty each acknowledge the expertise of the other and work together to benefit the institution The answer, we believe, lies

in the ability of the academy to stay the course – to hold in purposeful juxtaposition the often contrary perspectives of faculty and administration. . . .” (10). The double view I am suggesting could be the answer to Rodney King’s oft-repeated question: “Can’t we just get along?” If both faculty and administration are seen as having absolutely essential, valuable, and worthy tasks to perform, tasks without which the vocation of the college cannot be fulfilled, the chances are better that we will value each other more.

Further, this approach might give us the wherewithal to combat consumerism and its deleterious effects on our communities. Students who come to campus believing that colleges are “gouging” them, as a recent *Time* magazine cover insisted, are unlikely to enter into the relationship of gift and giver that is essential to the growth in intellect and spirit that our kind of college is called and dedicated to enable. We need a more useful way of talking to the public and our students about what happens at our colleges that distinguishes them from the non-Church college, the large public university, the technical college, even the virtual university on-line. These distinctive qualities exist in the imagined college. It is appropriate for students and parents and we ourselves to use consumerist vocabulary in speaking about the functions of such things as food service, computer lab, bookstore, and the business office; it is not appropriate to use such terms related to the teaching relationship. We do not now make a distinction about where such language is appropriate because, in part, we have not been able or have not wanted to make an argument about what separates our various areas of operation. Some have feared that in granting admission to the vocabulary of business we would contaminate what I have called the gift portion of our life.

Finally, I want to suggest that such an approach might give us a sense of our educational program as being a subversive activity. Some colleges, perhaps in an effort to protect the concept of a liberal arts college from recent and dangerous attacks, have redoubled efforts to insist upon the value of learning for its own sake and upon the inherent value of a liberal arts education as opposed to its practical value. As I have noted, that was exactly the approach of my paper from the early 1980s, “How Liberating are the Liberal Arts.” But something else is needed now. To bolster my argument I bring someone with impeccable credentials in the liberal arts, Jacques Barzun. Recognizing what he calls the “bleak” condition of the liberal arts in American education, Barzun says :

It is all very well to gather at conferences with batches of people who are . . . ‘dedicated to’ the liberal arts, but, when these people leave the . . . conference center, the state of affairs has not been changed one iota. . . . This has gone on for nearly a hundred years, ever since William James and Woodrow Wilson spoke out against what they saw as the start of erosion in the liberal arts within American colleges. (74)

Barzun proposes, “There will be no future for the liberal arts unless those who profess to be concerned make their case on the grounds that have so far been totally neglected, namely, that a course of liberal studies is intensely practical,” and, he maintains, “[the liberal arts] are practical because they develop general intelligence” (74). Whether we can agree on Barzun’s position or not, I want to use his approach to elucidate what I mean by being subversive. Recognizing that the “real college” functions there, we can, I believe, find a way perhaps to speak in the marketplace. We can be faithful to our values but speak in a language that resonates there. We can be confident in the belief that if we can attract students to become part of the college they will graduate with a full education that has subversively changed their lives *and* prepared them for a career. An education imparted by a faculty of persons free to explore the meaning of human freedom.

Perhaps Martin Luther was thinking of something like this when in the treatise “On the Freedom of a Christian” he discussed how St. Paul circumcised Timothy “not because circumcision was necessary for his righteousness, but that he might not offend or despise those Jews who were weak in the faith and could not yet grasp the liberty of faith.... He chose a middle way, sparing the weak for a time, but always withstanding the stubborn, that he might convert all to the liberty of faith” (306).

I am by nature an optimist, yet in my most sober moments I sense a real danger of our losing the precious gift our colleges have to give. There is no shame in imparting that gift while living in the midst of an alien and hostile environment and giving it even furtively to those who would not wittingly reach out to receive it. In his essay “Childhood and Poetry,” Chilean poet Pablo Neruda recounts an incident from the frontier town where he lived in poverty as a small child. One day he discovers a hole in a fence board behind his house.

“I looked through that hole and saw a landscape . . . uncared for and wild. . . . All of a sudden a hand

appeared – a tiny hand of a boy about my own age. By the time I came close again, the hand was gone, and in its place there was a marvelous white toy sheep. . . . I went into the house and brought out a treasure of my own: a pine cone, opened, full of odor and resin, which I adored. I set it down in the same spot and went off with the sheep. I never saw either the hand or the boy again.” (Hyde, 281)

Commenting on this incident at another time, Neruda explains “that exchange brought home to me for the first time a precious idea: that all humanity is somehow together It won’t surprise you then that I have attempted to give something resinous, earthlike, and fragrant in exchange for human brotherhood. . . . Maybe this small and mysterious exchange of gifts remained inside me also, deep and indestructible, giving my poetry light” (Hyde, 281-282). If our colleges must be that tiny hand which offers its gift quietly and hidden through a hole in the fence of a wild landscape, then so be it; for the gift is precious and enlightening nonetheless.

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Finding the Words: The Challenge of Being California Lutheran University

Pamela M. Jolicoeur

The last time I was in this part of the country, I was participating in a major gathering of faculty and administrators from Lutheran Colleges and Seminaries at the Sittler Symposium at Capitol University. My most vivid memory of that conference was of a discussion I was facilitating in one of the breakout groups. I asked the group, which consisted of at least half seminary or theology professors, about their religious identity. Each one had no hesitation in defining himself as Lutheran (there were only two females in the group, and we were both raised Catholic), but many went on to add a particular modifier to that statement. For the most part, these referred to one of the smaller, ethnic church bodies that eventually merged their way into the ELCA. So one was a Danish Lutheran; another identified himself with the Augustana Synod. It has taken me years to learn that this is a typical characteristic of clergy from the Augustana Synod. It's akin to alumni from Santa Clara University, my alma mater, or Gonzaga, or Marquette saying that they graduated from a Jesuit University. That's the relevant piece of information. Catholic comes after that.

After that lively exchange, I then asked them what they thought their children, who were mostly young adults, would say if I asked them the same question. After a couple of seconds elapsed, the responses tumbled out in words and gestures. The basic theme: "I don't have a clue." If they did, what they thought their children would say wasn't necessarily "Lutheran." It was more likely to be "Christian" or to indicate their status as seekers, open to many different forms of religious expression. Now I don't know how representative this little sample was, but the exercise did leave me wondering how the Lutheran Church was going to sustain itself if there is that kind of erosion of identification from a generation who has been centrally involved in the life and work of the Church to their own offspring.

How will the Lutheran Church retain its identity as an institution? Is the post-modern world also post-

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denominational? If the church itself is facing this kind of a challenge, which appears to me to be unprecedented in its history, what will the fate of its colleges be?

That subject has, within this decade, become a hot topic in the church-related higher education community. With the publication of Burtchaell's "The Decline and Fall of the Christian College" and George Marsden's *The Soul of the American University*, many within the mainline Protestant traditions have been left wondering if there is a viable alternative path for our colleges between the "slippery slope of secularization," clearly the fate of many Methodist, Congregational, and Presbyterian institutions, to name a few, and becoming a "Christian" college—that is, one in which a "Christian worldview" predominates and all learning is subordinated to it. Or, we are wondering what that middle ground looks like and how to market it.

This question of how religious institutions maintain their identity has both academic and professional significance for me. I have lived my entire life except for a brief stint in graduate school within some kind of religious educational community (first Catholic, then Lutheran) and one of my fields of specialization is the sociology of religion. But this issue became dramatically more personal for me when I moved from being a sociology professor to academic vice president at CLU. And it was ratcheted up yet another notch when I acquired the title of provost not quite two years ago and, with it, responsibility for admissions—for creating and implementing a plan to attract students to California Lutheran University.

Who are those prospective students? Some come with a strong Lutheran identity. Many of them are our student leaders—the ones most active in helping us live out the vocation of a Lutheran college—but they are declining in numbers. Others are Lutheran by ancestry, but their ties to the church at the moment are rather tenuous. A significant percentage are Catholic; and another large chunk, to the extent that they are religious at all, are part of the amorphous Southern California religious culture in which the core elements are religious experience and community, not theology (confessional or otherwise). The key modifier or identifier they use is "Christian," as in, "Are you a

Christian?" "Is this a Christian college?" I *have* to think about how we will market California Lutheran University to this group. That challenge is big enough. But it is enormously complicated by the fact that:

- having been channeled by their teachers, high school counselors and peers into California's extensive public higher education system, we cannot assume that they or their parents (including Lutherans) understand and value—let alone are willing to pay for—*private* higher education.
- we cannot assume that, in their overwhelming concern about career preparation, they or their parents understand or value *liberal arts* education.
- and we most certainly cannot assume that they know what is essential or distinctive (or pretty much anything else) about a *Lutheran* college.

Unlike most of you whose founders had the wisdom to name you after the town in which you are located or to give you a name that's an ambiguous Lutheran code word, like Augsburg or Concordia, we don't have much flexibility in marketing ourselves. We're stuck. We cannot avoid having to explain what it means to be a Lutheran university because it's our middle name. We *have to* know what makes us distinctive and we have to communicate it to an audience that is relatively clueless. This is more than just a matter of marketing. I am convinced that we will survive and thrive to the extent that we know who we are, that we can tell our story in a compelling way, and that we live it out in our day-to-day encounters with students and with each other.

To make this even more personal, I have to be able to explain CLU's "Lutheran-ness" not only to prospective students and parents but also to prospective faculty who must understand and preserve the tradition if we are to maintain our identity. I don't have to do this nearly as often as presidents do; and, consequently, I haven't had as much practice. But I'm highly motivated, and I'm not altogether lacking in resources. I had a decent theological education myself. In my formative years, I was a member of a Benedictine-affiliated religious community, and in recent years I chose to become a member of the Lutheran church for largely theological reasons which I can articulate. I have also had some excellent tutors along the way, some of whom are here in this room.

But, I have to tell you, when it comes right down to it, I often have trouble finding the words. The crunch for me, the most challenging situation, is in conversations with prospective faculty.

Picture the setting. I've never met this person before, and I have at most 45 minutes to cover an array of subjects and to get a feel for how good a fit he or she will be. It's a virtual certainty that no one else they've talked to so far has brought up the subject of CLU's Lutheran identity, except possibly to assure them that it won't intrude on their academic freedom.

So I grab whatever I get for an opening. I'm really working at it, but if I'm not careful, I find myself defaulting to explanatory formulas that are seductively accessible, but pretty lame. More or less in order of frequency, I find myself using:

Definition by analogy:

- We're not like "Christian colleges" (Pepperdine, Azusa Pacific) who have strict behavioral codes and require their faculty to sign statements of belief or pledges of practice.
- We're kind of like Catholic colleges. All students receive theological education and worship is part of our community life, but there also is a strong intellectual atmosphere . . .

Or the ethnic approach:

- We're an ethnic church, just like the Catholics. American Lutheranism is the product of the immigration of Germans and Scandinavians. Our heritage is primarily Scandinavian.

For the public radio crowd, there is a variation on the ethnic approach which relies on Garrison Keillor's *Prairie Home Companion*:

- Our property was donated to us by a Norwegian bachelor farmer.

Finally, there's the last resort, assurance by innuendo:

- After all, the Lutheran church was founded in a university by a rebellious professor making a statement of academic and religious freedom. . .

So when I saw the question posed by our keynote speaker as “What is this thing ‘Lutheran-ness’...?” with a promise of an answer that was “communicatable, learnable, something that a sensitive, perceptive, and concerned person can catch whether or not it is literally their tradition,” I thought, “Yes, I’ll get something useful out of this conference.” I’ll finally get the script—the words that have eluded me.

What I got from Tom Christenson’s presentation both did and did not meet my expectations. On the one hand, he offered a fresh take on the core ideas that define the Lutheran tradition. The fresh part for me was the focus on the Lutheran vision of the educational task that we are all engaged in versus the theological principles themselves. The paper reinforced in me the profound sense of gratitude for being part of this tradition that had been rekindled a few weeks earlier at a conference at Notre Dame University which examined how the faith traditions of several different denominations were embodied in their institutions of higher education. We are fortunate as faculty and administrators in Lutheran colleges and universities to have a religious tradition whose core ideas and values are so well suited to the business of higher education—that require no compromise on the part of either faith or reason.

But what I did not get, or at least didn’t think I got, from the presentation were the words and expressions that I could actually imagine myself using in conversations with prospective students or faculty. I still had work to do. Maybe that is exactly what one wants from a keynote presentation, but for a moment I felt like a disappointed student who has just discovered that the questions on the exam couldn’t be answered by simply regurgitating the class notes. I then thought, “What can I make out of this paper?”

As a start, I came up with a way to identify or at least recognize what *would* be useful to me. The core ideas, and their expression, had to pass what I’ll call the “alumni magazine test,” not to be confused with the “college viewbook test.” This notion came to me as I was reflecting on my last year of college, which was spent at Santa Clara University. This was the fifth Catholic college I had attended, and the one that, from my point of view as a student, had the clearest sense of identity. It seemed to me that practically every student and faculty member there knew what a “Jesuit” education was. It meant intellectual rigor, which included a sophisticated understanding of theology and philosophy; openness to new ideas and

artistic expressions; a generally lusty appreciation for secular culture; and a strong commitment to service and justice.

And the reason I think this wasn’t just a hazy recollection which I have embellished over the years is that you can still see these themes expressed in the “letters to the editor” section of the alumni magazine as the writers take on alumni authors, or each other, over whether this or that idea “belongs” in a Jesuit University. They don’t agree on the logical implications of or on what is an appropriate expression of a Jesuit education, but they frame their arguments around the same core set of concepts. I thought, “Why couldn’t we achieve that for Lutheran higher education?” We’ve got about the same number of institutions that the Jesuits do and an equally rich theological heritage.

What would our core “alumni magazine” concepts be? We’d be limited to three, since that’s all anyone could retain, and they would have to be ideas that faculty and students of whatever religious persuasion could easily claim and articulate to each other. So I made my “short list” from my growing collection of pieces on Lutheran higher education. I rejected paradox and the two kingdoms at one end for being too esoteric and therefore inaccessible to the particular audiences I needed to address and academic excellence, the liberal arts and music at the other end for being not exclusive enough. I think we express the religious heritage of our colleges most tangibly in worship and the many rituals which often include prayer that are at the center of our community life. But this doesn’t strike me as distinctively Lutheran either. What I ended up with were freedom, gift and vocation—the three themes in our keynote paper. I decided they *were* useful.

While the last two were easy choices, it is the first—freedom—that I found most challenging. For me, the central idea in Lutheran theology is that we are justified by grace alone—which is God’s gift freely given to us, an expression of love wholly unearned on our part. The notion that our worth as human beings, children of God, is not determined by anything we *do* is tremendously liberating—especially for academics like ourselves who are constitutionally achievement oriented—but it is not so obviously related to what we do for a living.

In his paper Professor Christenson points out one of the relevant consequences: that is, that faculty and students in Lutheran colleges are free to investigate any aspect of

knowledge or creation with openness and integrity. While faculty who apply to teach at CLU probably just assume this is the case, this concept of intellectual and religious freedom could be tremendously useful in explaining “Lutheran-ness” to them. The idea that in a Lutheran college, there are no assumptions, ideas, or claims to ultimacy that cannot be questioned, that education is valuable in itself, that it is a worthy endeavor to learn about, discuss, and debate everything in God’s creation, helps place us within a continuum of church-affiliated colleges. We are midway between those who either deny parts of culture or who use education to “Christianize” or transform it—Calvin College, Wheaton, Pepperdine, for example—and those for whom faith and reason exist in entirely separate spheres and never need encounter each other.

The idea that it is appropriate to challenge all claims to ultimacy is also helpful. It requires a stance of humility on our part and the recognition that, given the vastness of the unknown, even the sophisticated scholar can be wrong. I think it is easier for academics to accept critiques of the ultimacy of materialism or any aspect of culture—most of us are pretty good at it, actually—than it is for us to critique our own overt and subtle orthodoxies. At the conference I attended at Notre Dame this summer, I was struck by the comments from a Lutheran woman who was a faculty member at Wheaton College. She said she had never felt as “free” as she did at Wheaton College. What I think she meant was that, despite the fact that at Wheaton she does not have full academic freedom, she feels freer to express her conservative, evangelical brand of Christianity there than in other academic settings where it isn’t “correct.”

The concept of freedom could also be useful in encounters with students who are taken aback by their religion professor’s critical approach to Biblical literature or with the cranky pastor who says “how can you call yourself a Lutheran (or Christian) college when you (fill in the blank: host a woman’s forum on campus by Planned Parenthood, hold an event that appears to condone homosexuality, etc.)? It is useful to be able to explain that it is not the *absence* of religion or the *absence* of Christianity that allows us to do those things, but rather our particular expression of Christian freedom. Now I’m a bit worried about that modifier “Christian” because it can so easily be misunderstood, and it is candidly not one that would roll off my tongue, but I also think that we should not completely abdicate our claim to it to more conservative

Christian groups.

Maybe this is a bigger deal in California than elsewhere. Let me offer two examples. I’m often asked why we don’t belong to the California Christian College group, why I don’t attend their Dean’s meetings, or why we don’t appear in the magazine mailer they sponsor that is sent to thousands of college-going high school students each year. That’s when I give my “we’re not like those colleges” speech. Does that mean we are not a Christian college?

A more significant instance of the “Christian” problem occurred a couple of years ago. In the course of adopting our new mission statement, we found ourselves in the middle of an unexpected and passionate debate on the floor of our annual Convocators meeting. Some vocal representatives of our constituent church bodies were not content to have CLU’s heritage described as just Lutheran. They felt that the word Christian needed to be in the mission statement to make a stronger, clearer statement. Ironically, while Southern California pastors didn’t think Lutheran was good enough on its own (these people understand firsthand the marketing challenge), the faculty, especially non-Christians, were equally as adamant that Christian should not be in there. They had come to understand what Lutheran meant and to affirm it, but they were exceedingly leery about the connotations Christian would have. We ended up compromising on “rooted in the Lutheran tradition of Christian faith . . .”

While the concept of freedom helps us understand why the intellectual climate on Lutheran college campuses can be both intellectually open and stimulating and perfectly Christian, I think it is the twin concepts of gift and vocation that speak most directly to our *distinctive* calling as Lutheran colleges.

It is useful for those of us who are faculty and academic administrators at Lutheran colleges to think of our job as helping our students recognize the gifts they have and to nurture them. As faculty, we do this relatively effortlessly for the students whose gifts are obvious because it is so rewarding for us to do that. I think we also do rather well with the students whose gifts are not apparent at all. At CLU we identify them in advance because they have been admitted by a special committee, and both faculty and academic support staff work hard to figure out what gifts there are to work with in each one and to make something out of them. These students provide some of our best success stories.

But it's the vast majority of our students in the middle that are the challenge—especially given that the academic setting is so “works-oriented.” I still cringe when I recall an encounter I had a year or so ago with a former student who confessed to me at the end of the reception we were attending that she was embarrassed to come up and talk to me because she had been such an undistinguished student as an undergraduate. She was in a Ph.D. program in psychology, and she needed some assistance in finding internships in California. She obviously had gifts. But, for that moment, her consciousness of them evaporated as she looked at me and saw herself reflected back as a “C student.”

There are faculty—I can name them on my campus—who find a way to help many students recognize their gifts, and they do it without giving students grades they don't deserve. They are the “mentors” who make all the difference at a critical point in a student's life and whom students remember for the rest of their lives. We had them; we can name them. For most of us, though, it requires constant effort to maintain that kind of consciousness and to do the hard one-on-one work that noticing and nurturing gifts requires. We could foster that consciousness by claiming it as part of our Lutheran heritage.

The clearest connection between our heritage and our occupation, however, is the concept of vocation—that we are called to use our freedom and our gifts to serve God and our neighbor. I've heard Mark Edwards quoted as saying that “Lutheran colleges should be vocational schools . . . in the sense of being a place where students discover that life has a calling.”

I think that Lutheran colleges should be vocational schools in *both* senses of the word. On the one hand, we must prepare students for meaningful work and not eschew that effort as something that is beneath us, as liberal arts colleges, or is someone else's job. In fact, the study of the liberal arts offers the best preparation for all careers, but we must ensure that we actually instill those habits of mind in all, or nearly all, of our students and that we help them make connections between the disciplines we teach and the world of work.

More importantly, though, Lutheran colleges should instill in students a sense that their lives have meaning beyond the work they do and that they have an obligation to make a meaningful contribution to the world around them. I think faculty at small liberal arts colleges intuitively grasp

the concept of vocation, whether they use the word or not. It's what motivates them to give so much of themselves to their students. But it is also a concept that is distinctively Lutheran.

These three concepts—freedom, gift, vocation—clearly do not fully define Lutheran higher education or the vocation of a Lutheran college. The theological tradition itself is so rich and complex and our colleges so varied that no single list can tell the whole story. The ideas themselves may not even be uniquely Lutheran. In fact, each can be expressed without any religious referent at all. But they're ours and we should not only claim them, but use them.

We may not necessarily use these themes to market ourselves. The “viewbook test” is a different test, and our colleges are positioned differently in different markets. And they do not suffice as a mission statement. But they do offer a way for us to explain ourselves to prospective students and parents and, perhaps most importantly, to ourselves. At least they work for me.

It strikes me as very Lutheran that we seem to be constantly talking about and writing about what it means to be a Lutheran college without ever quite arriving at a definitive conclusion. There is also something very Jesuit about the high degree of self-consciousness in their institutions. But if we are going to retain our identity, we've got to be able to say *something* and to say it clearly enough for it to permeate faculty and student consciousness and to make a difference for those who choose to study at our institutions.

Even in the Lutheran hinterlands, you can talk about freedom, gifts, and vocation. The formulations will vary with the audience, but I could imagine myself telling prospective parents, students, and even faculty that *as a Lutheran university*, CLU is a place:

- where spirituality is considered an important part of a complete life and religion is viewed as a liberating, not a confining, reality;
- where we seek to free students from ignorance, fear, and from inhabiting too small a world to become all that they can be;
- where we help students discover their gifts and their worth;

- and where we encourage them to use their gifts wisely and consciously to build a more humane and compassionate world.

If we tell students that this is what they can expect from a CLU education, and if our faculty and administrators really make these things happen, then, in the process, we will be both strengthening our identity and fulfilling our vocation as a Lutheran college.

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Otherwise

David Wee

Opening Convocation, St. Olaf College
September 3, 1997

Last Saturday morning I drove from Northfield to the Minneapolis airport, and on the way, especially out on highway 19, passed dozens of cars bringing you first-year students to campus. It was wonderful. Car after car, van after van, stuffed to the ceiling with clothes, wicker baskets, plants, small furniture, the occasional carpet roll sticking out the side window. Best of all were the faces: Mom and Dad with mixtures of pride and sadness; you students, eyes wide with anticipation, excitement, sometimes fear; a few of you snoring away in the passenger seat. I loved it -- at last you were coming.

I remembered the first day of college for my three children, and the outpouring of good advice with which I wanted to shower them on the drive to college. My own father had given me sage advice when he took me to college, and when our oldest child Rebecca was ready to go, so was I, with the accumulated wisdom of my years of teaching, well rehearsed and ready to deliver. She was coming to St. Olaf

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and we lived only two minutes away, so I had the advice reduced to a few precious pearls. She must have known. At the last minute she announced that her boyfriend was taking her and her stuff to college, and he did.

Four years later it was Jonathan's turn, and he picked Luther College. I thought, Yes! A three-hour drive! I could unlock my word-hoard, embellish each point with literary allusions, humorous anecdotes, quotations from Oscar Wilde and Yogi Berra. Jonathan, too, must have known. Shortly before college began he bought a motorcycle, and Karen and I drove down to Decorah in a car filled with his stuff, Jonathan on his motorcycle in the rear-view mirror, grinning like Peter Fonda.

Allison, our youngest, bless her, understood. By the time she was ready to enter St. Olaf we had moved closer to campus, only 90 seconds away by car. She let me drive, and she let me speak. If she hadn't you would all be hearing that speech tonight. But this is a different time, and a different audience, and I have other things to say.

Several years ago, after I thanked a colleague, now retired (but here tonight), for his Opening Convocation address, he said, "Well, it's an assignment that ruins your summer." This assignment hasn't exactly ruined my summer, but it

has made it more interesting as I have mentally drafted several different addresses. I'm only going to deliver one of them. It isn't the talk that I thought I would give, but it is the one I am compelled to give.

Forty years ago this week I arrived on this campus as what we used to call a freshman. And, of course, I wish that I had known then what I know now. I thought I knew quite a bit, and I had a substantial amount of naive but short-lived self confidence. I remember one of my first evenings on campus, dressed smartly in my new cream-colored corduroy slacks, my new charcoal-gray crew-neck sweater, and my new white bucks. I was walking from my room in Ytterboe to meet my advisor, Professor Ditmanson, at his home on Lincoln Lane. As I crossed the football practice fields in the gathering dusk, feeling very Joe College and suave, I fell face-first into a shallow and muddy construction pit, considerably damaging my illusions of grandeur.

But now it's forty years later, and I'm still here. Some of you in this audience had already been here a long time when I arrived, and you're still here, too. Such longevity may sound frightening to you students, as it would have to me had I thought of it when I was your age, but it is less surprising the longer one comes to know and understand and love this place.

One surprising thing that's still here tonight is Ytterboe Hall. When I lived in Ytterboe back in the middle ages we all complained about its decrepit condition, and we envied the senior men who had chosen to live in the comparative luxury of a spanking new dormitory called Kildahl. When I wrote home to complain about Ytterboe's conditions I got no sympathy; Dad reported that he and his classmates thought it was in bad shape when he lived there in 1925. But there it stands, like old Emily Grierson house in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily": "lifting its stubborn coquettish decay" above the campus greensward. Perhaps for the moment it stands as an emblem of one of those stereotypes of our Nordic ancestors: silent, unmoved, without heat or power -- but still dangerous.

One title I considered for tonight was this: "Why Are We Here, and Why Do We Do These Things?" By *here* I mean not only here in Boe Chapel tonight, but also here in the enterprise of higher education, and in particular here at St. Olaf College. By *we* I mean the various groups of this audience: students, faculty, administration, staff, emeriti, and friends of the college. And by *these things* I mean

ceremonial parade events like Opening Convocation, Commencement, and Honors Day, and other important St. Olaf events like daily chapel, the Christmas Festival, Alumni Day, Homecoming -- and oh yes, the classes that start tomorrow morning.

Why are we here tonight, at Opening Convocation? I can't speak for all of us as individuals. In fact, the only person out there whose motivation I think I know for sure is my mother. Many students are not here, perhaps understandably for this is your last evening of summer vacation, your last night without academic responsibilities. Most faculty are here, but not because we feel natural and comfortably in these arguably absurd garments, but for more profound reasons. And students, look around: you see here many people who don't have to be here, but who are here because they love this place, they believe in this enterprise we call higher education, and they fervently hope that we all will conduct ourselves to make St. Olaf a stronger place, and that we will prepare and commit ourselves to nothing less than saving the world. We mustn't disappoint them.

Two years ago American poet Jane Kenyon died of leukemia. My title is taken from the title poem of a recent collection of her work. Listen to her poem:

Otherwise

I got out of bed
on two strong legs.
It might have been
otherwise. I ate
cereal, sweet
milk, ripe, flawless
peach. It might
have been otherwise.
I took the dog uphill
to the birch wood.
All morning I did
the work I love.
At noon I lay down
with my mate. It might
have been otherwise.
We ate dinner together
at a table with silver
candlesticks. It might
have been otherwise.
I slept in a bed

in a room with paintings
on the walls, and
planned another day
just like this day.
But one day, I know,
it will be otherwise.

That time of otherwise has come far too quickly for Jane Kenyon. But her poem remains to remind us to be grateful for what we have -- for the gifts of life, of health, of food, of place, of companionship, of beauty, of work that we love. For countless people in the world it *is* otherwise; we have been blessed and graced with this place, with this opportunity, and with each other. And for all of us it will one day be otherwise, as Jane Kenyon's poem reminds us. Knowing that, we must embrace this opportunity, this academic year, and throw ourselves into it with joy and thanksgiving that such a great gift deserves. One of my new first-year advisees said it perfectly in her essay of application to St. Olaf: "I believe in living as today was your last, but learning as if you had an eternity."

Why ceremonies like Opening Convocation? These past two years have been for me, as well as for many of you, filled with ceremonial events. *Funerals*: of my father, of an uncle, of a student, of a colleague, of a colleague's spouse. *Weddings and Commitment Ceremonies*: of my son, of my niece, of my godchild, of a former student, of a friend. Graduations. Ordinations. Confirmations. Baptisms. Retirements. Beginnings, conclusions, hellos, farewells, important passages and transitions. Tonight is one of those occasions for us.

As I have attended these moments I have been reminded over and over again why we do them, why we gather as we have this evening. We gather to celebrate, to encourage, to honor, to give strength, to express love. When two people commit their lives to one another in partnership, we are there to express support, and in the process most of us are moved to strengthen our own love relationship. When someone is buried we are there to give comfort, sympathy, and love to the bereaved, and in the process most of us are moved to re-examine our lives.

We're here tonight, at the beginning of another academic year, for similar reasons. We are here to renew our commitment to this enterprise, to this college, and to each other. We are here to give each other energy. We are here to show our respect for education. We faculty put on these

colorful costumes not to parade our degrees or to foster a sense of self-importance, but to honor what we are about to undertake together with you, our students. We know that the academic life at St. Olaf is a big deal, and these outfits are the best symbols of that we've got in our closets.

Most of you students are here at St. Olaf in large part because you have had good teachers who infected you with a zest for learning. I remember twelve years ago when Ernest Boyer, President of the Carnegie Foundation, spoke here as a part of President Mel George's inaugural celebration. Boyer remembered heading off to the first day of first grade and asking his mother, "When will I learn to read?" She said that perhaps by the end of first grade he would know how to read a little. But when his teacher addressed the class at the opening bell, she said to her little first-graders, "Children, *today* we will learn to read," and they did. He reported that the thrill that ran through him that day had served him constantly in a lifetime of education.

I was equally lucky. Miss Ellenburger, wherever you are, I thank you for *my* first year in school when you taught me to read, and for the support, encouragement, and inspiration that you gave me back in Madison, Wisconsin in 1945. When our family moved away during that first year, Miss Ellenburger gave me a Little Golden Book, *The Lively Little Rabbit*, inscribed with a loving message to me, and I have kept it as a reminder of the potential for good that we have as teachers.

I was lucky in college too. My wise advisers were Harold Ditmanson and Joe Shaw. I was blessed by the skills of Hildegard Stiehlow, who taught me German, and Leigh Jordahl, who taught me Greek. I learned to love literature through the teaching of Art Paulson, and Marie Malmin Meyer, and especially Haldor Hove, without whose passion for Victorian literature I wouldn't be here. I learned ancient history from Clarence Clausen, European history from Agnes Larson, American history from Tubby Jorstad. These and many others were inspirations to me; all of you in this room, I hope, have similar lists of inspiring teachers. My colleagues, it's up to us to be for our students what people like these have been for us.

Permit me one anecdote about one of these teachers. I'm told that early one morning, late in her career, a colleague met Agnes Larson at the top of the long flight of stairs from St. Olaf Avenue to the Library. Aggie was just beaming with

City, which he said was at that time evenly populated -- and sharply divided -- between Lutherans and Roman Catholics. He said that his family, like all Irish Catholic families, had an irascible Uncle Paddy who was always causing trouble or embarrassment. Finally at age 80 Paddy was dying in the hospital, and word came to the family that he had converted to Lutheranism! The family raced as one to the hospital, gathered around Paddy's bed, and asked, "Paddy! Is it true? Have you become a Lutheran?" "Yes," he responded, "I have." "But, why, Paddy, why?" "Well," he said, "I thought it would better to have one of them die than one of *us*!"

There is much of them and us in our world, even in a supposedly homogeneous place like this. And much of what matters in life depends upon how we relate to them, to the other. How faculty relate to students, and to the administration. How music majors relate to chemistry majors. How football players relate to computer nerds. How all of us relate to secretaries, and custodians, and the green army.

Like most of us, I have treated others as members of groups that I have stereotyped. And I have had major surprises. I think especially of Gus Eglas, a Latvian refugee who many years ago clerked in the campus bookstore and post office. Gus was built roughly like Kirby Puckett, looked and sounded hard and tough, and basically scared most people away. To me he was always kind, and after we discovered that we both collected stamps, he invited me to his home to see his collection. He ushered me into his collection room, which he had converted from a garage. It held 134 stamp albums of every sort, and countless other things: the statue he had received, Latvia's highest award for leadership in the Boy Scout movement; his many publications in postage stamp scholarship; drafts from the book he was writing with a Harvard ornithology professor, on all the postage stamps picturing birds catalogued by Linnaeus. He told me that when he had finally needed a garage again, he sold one of his stamp albums to finance it. I went home that night stunned and exhilarated, having discovered that gruff old Gus the refugee p.o. worker was one of this campus' most prolific scholars and published writers. I try not to forget the lesson I learned that night.

Some of you know about Randy Cox, retired government documents librarian, who spent his entire career padding around in the bowels of Rolvaag Library. Over the years perhaps few students have known that he is one of the most

prolific scholars on the campus, an international expert on the dime novel, on mystery fiction, and on Sherlock Holmes; that he owns and lives amidst the fourth largest library, public or private, in Northfield; and that he is an expert on everything to do with Batman.

The people who populate St. Olaf are special and precious and talented. Secretaries are artists, musicians, spouses of your professors and colleagues. Custodians are athletes, poets, parents of your classmates. Your classmate is fighting a serious disease, your teammate has just lost a parent. Your professor or colleague is looking desperately for a child's cure, or is mourning the death of a spouse.

Some of us wear these abilities or needs on your sleeves, while others are more private. In order for us to be *otherwise*-- to be wise about the others in our midst -- we need to be alert to each other, which means we need to treat one another not as types or as functionaries, but as *persons*. We must *connect* with the other, care about the other, especially those who are close at hand.

Much of the world's greatest literature is about the human need to be otherwise, and to relate to the other with understanding, with compassion, with love. Think of the tragic figures in literature who failed to understand and love the other, especially those close at hand. Othello. King Lear. Angel Clare of Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*. You can make your own list. But over and over again the artists of the world show us that in order to survive, the human spirit needs the connection with others, needs the love of others. Two of the great moments in American literature embody the truth that we must connect with the other: in Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn*, you recall that Huck and Jim have been traveling down the Mississippi on a raft, both to escape -- the 14-year-old Huck from his abusive father, the black slave Jim from his bondage to Miss Watson. They get separated, and then Huck discovers that Jim has been captured. Huck has been deeply ingrained with the religious and social moralities of his culture; he reasons that in helping Jim escape he has been wicked, for Jim is Miss Watson's property. Huck has been sinful by helping Jim toward freedom. Huck later realizes that unless he turns Jim in, he, Huck will go to hell. He writes the letter telling Miss Watson where Jim is, and immediately feels washed clean of sin. But then he begins to think of Jim *not* the black slave, but Jim the person, and the fact that Huck is now Jim's only friend. Huck picks up the letter, holds his breath, says, "All right, then, I'll go to hell," and tears up the letter. Everything he

has *learned* tells him that Jim is property; everything he knows tells him that Jim is a person needing love. Huck chooses love.

In Flannery O'Connor's short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find," a young family traveling by car with a selfish and self-righteous grandmother have an accident and are discovered in a remote rural ditch by an escaped convict named "The Misfit." Because the grandmother recognizes The Misfit as a fugitive, he is obliged to kill the whole family one by one. Finally only the grandmother is left, desperately searching for a way to save her life. She invokes Jesus, causing the murderer to say, "Jesus was the only One that ever raised the dead. . . and He shouldn't have done it. He thrown everything off balance. If he did what he said, then it's nothing for you to do but throw away everything and follow Him, and if He didn't, then it's nothing for you to do but enjoy the few minutes you got left the best you can by killing somebody or burning down his house or doing some other meanness to him." The Misfit, a pure empiricist apparently without the benefit of a good liberal arts education, doesn't know for a fact whether Jesus raised the dead. He says, "I wisht I had of been there. . . It ain't right I wasn't there because if I had been there. . . I would of known and I wouldn't be like I am now," and his suffering and humanity suddenly became obvious to the grandmother. Instinctively she says, "Why you're one of my babies. You're one of my own children," she reaches out and touches him. Read the story to find out what happens next.

The story might more correctly be named, "A Good Woman is Hard to Find," for Flannery O'Connor makes clear that the grandmother is not good until she unselfishly and kindly reaches out to touch the man who has killed her family, until she has acknowledged the bond of humanity between them. The theological wisdom in the story comes from the most unexpected source, The Misfit. He rightly understands that "Jesus thrown everything off balance," not only in his world, but in yours and mine. Only when we reach out to the other in an act of love and compassion, as Huck does for Jim, as the grandmother does for The Misfit, and as you and I must do for each other; only when we respond to each other not as types but as persons; only then are we living in the Gospel of grace and under the divine injunction that we love not only learning, not only teaching, not only St. Olaf, but that in the process we love the other, we love each other.

This summer Tim Lull, President of one of our Lutheran

seminaries, said that if he were to visit a Lutheran college campus he would expect to find three things:

1. contentment
2. courage
3. cheerfulness

By *contentment* he did not mean complacency, or self-satisfaction, but rather the acceptance and gratitude of who we are as a college of the Church, a desire to be here rather than elsewhere, a love of this endeavor to which we have committed ourselves. By *courage* he meant the strength of mind and heart to ask the tough questions, to push beyond the easy answers, to go for truth rather than for victory or approval. He meant the dauntless quest of which we are about to sing. And by *cheerfulness* he meant the joy of which we have sung, a generosity of spirit, a sense of humor, a life of the possible, a sense of gratitude.

Would he find that contentment, and courage, and cheerfulness at St. Olaf? It should be our goal to assure it. At this place we understand that "Jesus thrown everything off balance," and it ought to be obvious that we live accordingly.

One of my family's loved ones has been fighting acute leukemia for the past six months, and six days ago received a bone marrow transplant that is his only hope for life. Two weeks ago the nurse who prepped him for the eight days of brutal radiation and chemotherapy that preceded the transplant said, "Michael, this is the first day of the rest of your life." Suddenly for me that phrase ceased to be trite. The nurse went on to say, "And the day of your bone marrow transplant will truly be your second birthday." I think of Jane Kenyon, and her profound gratitude for the gift of life. Her quiet joy for a day to do the work she loved.

Tomorrow, as the academic year begins, is the first day of the rest of our lives. It is the birthday of the people we are constantly becoming. Let us go into this new academic year with joy and thanksgiving for what we have been given, and for what we are doing here. Let us do this work that we love. Let us go into the year with renewed commitment to serve those for whom life is otherwise than we have it today. Let us go into this new year wiser about each other, alert to each other's gifts and potentials and needs. Let us be *good* to each other. In a word, let us love one another. It is the divine imperative. It is the central message of the Gospel in which we have rooted our mission. It is what matters.

Rituals for an Uninvented Religion

I.

In June, when the earth is properly soft, it is customary
to unearth the dead and extract their lead fillings
These you melt down into a cup,
and when you drink the sacrificial wine,
you inherit their strange sense of humor.

II.

Flowers are inappropriate to send to a dying man,
for, as we know, no one willingly courts death.
Instead, send him a mask carved with the face of evil man
already dead. His twin in hell will grow jealous
and order him to Heaven.

III.

In August, you must eat two fish of exactly the same type
and weight, especially those which are bottom feeders.
In this way you learn humility. One fish is for the man
you are now, and the other is for the man you hoped you'd be.

IV.

It is always inappropriate to carry coins in a sock
No one knows why. It just is.

V.

When making a grave marker, you must mold it from wax
and stick a wick in the top. If you journey to the grave yard
at night and find a flame, you must make an offering
of reading material, for the literacy of the dead.

VI.

If a child is born on leap day, he must be renamed
every four years, because technically he did not exist
for the previous three. Life is hard for the leap day child.

VII

On the day of judgment, no carnivals are allowed.

All animals must be freed to find their own heaven,
and leaders of all nations must provide alternative forms
of entertainment, preferably outdoors.

-Kevin Griffith

On the Recently Discovered Mass Grave of Mice

*While tending their flocks, shepherds in New Zealand
uncovered the skeletal remains of 300,000 mice.*

Explanations live and die that way.
The nameless little ones decide
to die in places so rock-strewn
and desolate, you'd bet it was sheer boredom
that did it. They gather together
among clover and good grass for flocks
until one common denominator is found:
a million million bones,
each light as a child's first question

Once, the world answered our prayers
We had a name for shepherds
and the like who saved us, who
stumbled upon our souls' last trace
and witnessed the dance that brought us
together, all fur and mammal heart,
our minds heavy with the unexplainable drive
toward the loneliest places.

But like it or not, we are all part
of that good flock, mouse or lamb.
Our graveyard rush is so common
that to ask why mice die together,
according to their own time,
is a question as plain as your name in stone,
as whole towns of name and stone.

-Kevin Griffith

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ELCA Colleges and Universities

Augsburg College
Minneapolis, Minnesota

Augustana College
Rock Island, Illinois

Augustana College
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Bethany College
Linsborg, Kansas

California Lutheran University
Thousand Oaks, California

Capital University
Columbus, Ohio

Carthage College
Kenosha, Wisconsin

Concordia College
Moorhead, Minnesota

Dana College
Blair, Nebraska

Gettysburg College
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

Grandview College
Des Moines, Iowa

Gustavus Adolphus College
St. Peter, Minnesota

Lenoir-Rhyne College
Hickory, North Carolina

Luther College
Decorah, Iowa

Midland Lutheran College
Fremont, Nebraska

Muhlenberg College
Allentown, Pennsylvania

Newberry College
Newberry, South Carolina

Pacific Lutheran University
Tacoma, Washington

Roanoke College
Salem, Virginia

St. Olaf College
Northfield, Minnesota

Suomi College
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Susquehanna University
Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania

Texas Lutheran College
Seguin, Texas

Thiel College
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Springfield, Ohio