An Annotated Bibliography for Reflecting on the Nature and Practice of a Lutheran University

Compiled and annotated by

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What is the sumnum bonum ("greatest good") of a university education? The much lauded "liberal" approach of Aristotle, John Henry Cardinal Newman, and Mark William Roche proposes that education is for contemplating the truth—an intrinsic, joyous end in itself. This approach offers the benefits of pursuing truth, virtues, and intellectual habits, but it also carries with it the temptations of idealatry (or, worship of ideas) and homo incurvatus in se ("man turned inward on himself"). Christian universities can reform this approach to education, though, with Luther's theology of the cross, reorienting it through the crucified Christ toward the highest ends of life revealed in God's word: faith in God and love for the neighbor.


Drawing on Niebuhr's Christ and Culture, particularly the "Christ and culture in paradox" chapter, Benne suggests that Lutheran colleges should see a dialectic relationship between Christ and culture, with the worldly sphere having "tentative autonomy." The relationship between Christian revelation and cultural knowledge is marked by "creative tension" and "an unresolved but lively and fruitful dialogue." Lutheran colleges (should) differ from Classical Catholicism with its search for a "complete and settled synthesis of knowledge and morality" and Reformed humanism that seeks to convert all worldly knowledge into a Christian worldview.


In the wake of Mardsen’s The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Disbelief (1996) and Burtchaell’s The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches (1998), Benne surveys six church-related colleges and universities (including St. Olaf and Valparaiso) focusing on their vision and ethos for maintaining their religious traditions. He asks, do they have a theological vision that is comprehensive, unsurpassable, and central to the institution? Benne offers a useful typology of church-related colleges (orthodox, critical-mass, intentionally pluralist, accidental pluralist) and makes suggestions about administration, regents, chapel, percentage of students from the sponsoring tradition, etc. for keeping the "soul" of the university. He argues that church-related universities need a "critical mass" of faculty who identify strongly with the sponsoring tradition. His number, 33 percent, is arguably too low.


Beginning with a quote by Bernd Moeller, “Without humanism, no reformation,” Bruss highlights how Wittenberg humanism saw education as being useful for life (cf. Newman). It focused on great books—classical and biblical—in the primary languages in order to learn from
the past and apply this wisdom to the present and future. The education of Wittenberg aimed at ecclesial, social, and personal goods.


Burtchaell’s penetrating and extended analysis of seventeen prominent church-related colleges and universities shows how the religious identity of each institution died as they severed ties with their founding/sponsoring church body to pursue funding and secular accolades. He examines institutions from many Christian denominations, including Lutheran.


In light of the well-noted slide of church-related institutions losing their religious identity (see Burtchaell), Childers investigates how three ELCA colleges—Concordia College, Lenoir-Rhyne University, and Gettysburg College—have handled their religious identity since the 1960s. Childers asks three basic questions: Are ELCA colleges and universities preserving or diminishing their Lutheran identities? Do the status drivers of secularization, financial viability, and faculty professionalization impact Lutheran identity? If colleges and universities are seeking to preserve their Lutheran identities, why and how are they doing so? The study reveals three basic types of ELCA colleges and universities: those that clearly profess their religious identity, those that obscure them under ambiguous mission statements, and those that reject their identity.

*Faith Integration On-line Courses.* Council for Christian Colleges and Universities. (http://www.cccu.org/professional_development/Faith%20Integration%20On-line%20Courses)

Many evangelical/Reformed colleges and universities have been heavily invested in dialoguing about and maintaining their Christian identity. (Most publications about the Christian university today come from evangelicals/Reformed, who are deeply influenced by Holmes and the Kuyperian/Neo-Calvinist approach.) This new online resource, which is geared to developing faculty’s ability to integrate faith and learning, adds to this endeavor. Here is the description:

Developed in cooperation with Indiana Wesleyan University (IWU), the course offers CCCU institutions an interactive way for faculty to better understand how to integrate their faith into their teaching. In November of 2012, the Council launched the Faith and Learning Integration Channel, a peer-reviewed online video archive. It features CCCU faculty modeling classroom strategies for integrating faith and learning across the disciplines, providing both an opportunity for faculty development and a potential resource for instructional content. This new course offers a broad base of faith integration topics divided into four modules: the history and culture of Christian higher education, the academic vocation of the teacher-scholar, the integration of faith and learning, and moral development. Each module is divided into five sessions and includes a mixture of video, session summary readings, audio recordings of the summaries and questions for discussion. There is also a set of discussion blogs faculty can use to facilitate discussion.

Holmes’ book is a classic for Neo-Calvinist (influenced) Christian colleges and universities. It takes an “integration of faith and learning” approach to unify all knowledge into a Christian worldview (since “all truth is God’s truth”). It emphasizes the Kuyperian “cultural mandate” to transform all of society for Christ. It nicely discusses the intrinsic and instrumental worth of the liberal arts, which Lutheran universities have historically cherished, and the nature of academic freedom in a Christian college.


Hughes wonders whether the Christian faith can sustain the life of the mind and intellectual inquiry (cf. the main question throughout the history of the Christian university has been how the arts and sciences can serve and sustain the Christian faith). To answer this question, Hughes surveys the main theological themes, strengths, and weaknesses of Reformed, Roman Catholic, Anabaptist/Mennonite, Lutheran, and Baptist models.


Kimball’s magisterial book takes a descriptive approach to “liberal education”—its underpinnings and programs—from ancient Greece through the medieval and reformation eras up to modern America. Kimball divides the history of “liberal education” into two sometimes intertwining camps: the Greek philosophical (or, “liberal-free”) tradition and the Roman oratorical (or, “artes liberales”) tradition. This is an important book for understanding liberal education, especially since Lutheran universities have historically been deeply engaged in the liberal arts to prepare students for their various vocations in life.


Korckok’s book focuses on American Lutheran elementary education, but deals directly with key elements of Luther’s, Melanchthon’s, and Bugenhagen’s theology and educational philosophy that (re)formed Lutheran education: the liberal arts, baptism, and vocation. He argues that the Saxon Lutheran immigrated to America was for securing the freedom to give children a confessional education. He shows that the liberal arts remained a foundation of confessional Lutheran education even as it was slightly adapted to serving American civic life and the church.


Kretzmann’s inaugural address as president of Valparaiso sets forth “a two-fold task” for the Christian university: “the search for Truth and the transmission of Truth.” The quality of education/graduates matters more than quantity. There should be a deep commitment to the reality of God, the individual’s responsibility to God, and the atonement in re-establishing an intimate relationship with God. Educational greatness is defined in terms of freedom under God, keeping and communicating the Truth, and intelligently and faithfully applying it to the great questions/problems of our time. Christian universities need to 1) constantly and intelligently interpret the mission/message of the university to the church and 2) build a strong faculty who influence the life and thought of the students.

Kretzmann delineates a philosophy of Christian education and asserts that the “perennial task” of the church is education and mission. Neither can be neglected without disastrous effects. “If Christian education is forgotten, the Church becomes shallow and rootless. . . . Christian education provides depth in the life of the Church, assures continuity of thought, and furnishes an open channel of constant return to the rock from which we were hewn.” Through education the church can be assured that young men and women are prepared in all areas of life and the church can influence a “chaotic society.”


Reflecting on his inaugural address two decades earlier, Kretzmann asserts that the creation, redemption, and sanctification of mankind are the first elements of a university. Jesus Christ is central to the university. The freedom of the gospel guarantees the freedom to pursue the truth where it leads. Divine wisdom (*sapientia*) and human knowledge (*scientia*) both belong in the Christian university. Both need to be examined lest “When bad theology and bad intellectualism meet, the air is filled with dismaying irrelevancies and flying strawmen. The Evil One is the only one who has been edified.”


Lotz deftly describes how “the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms . . . affords a supple, serviceable, and sophisticated theological foundation for higher education in the church-related college and university.” His thesis is that Lutheran education exists to answer “the respective needs and concerns of the two kingdoms which God has established for the order, conservation, and redemption of his creation.” Education is “for citizenship in the worldly kingdom and in Christ’s kingdom.” The university belongs in the earthly kingdom where reason is supreme. Reason, an unqualified good, “directly serves the heavenly kingdom no less than the earthly.” The arts and sciences, though, are limited in that they cannot affect true liberation—only the Word of God can.


This article describes how one church-related university is losing its religious identity. Catholic universities are, by papal decree, to have at least 50 percent of the faculty be Catholic, but Loyola Marymount University has fallen below that line with notable consequences (cf. Benne’s “critical mass” recommendation). “The percentage of Catholics on the faculty here has fallen well below 50 percent, according to university officials’ estimates. Students said there were few reminders that they attended a Catholic university at all, aside from the glistening white church at the center of campus or the occasional cross on a classroom wall.”

Luther’s disputation is not focused on education, but it has direct connections. In pitting a theology of glory against a theology of the cross, Luther puts before readers in an educational context the question of which theology drives their educational philosophy and practice. Luther lambasts Aristotle’s philosophy as being against a theology of the cross because his philosophy solely seeks its own good through the pursuit/works of wisdom, knowledge, etc. (cf. the liberal education approach of Newman and Roche). Instead, a theology of the cross looks to bestow good on others because it is aroused by the saving works of Christ, who lives in us by faith.


This treatise is also not focused on education, but has direct applications. It sets forth the proposition that because of Christ “A Christian is a perfectly free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian is a perfectly dutiful servant of all, subject to all.” This, as Luther says, is “the whole of Christian life in a brief form.” As such, it also applies to Christian education. Luther makes the case the Christians are both the “freest of kings” and freest of servants. This has implications for academic freedom at a Christian university—both for Christian professors and students—and, more fundamentally, the basis, vision, and operation of the Christian university. The text is abundantly rich, so an extended quote, which applies to education, is warranted here.

God has given me in Christ all the riches of righteousness and salvation without any merit on my part, out of pure, free mercy, so that from now on I need nothing except faith which believes that this is true. Why should I not therefore freely, joyfully, with all my heart, and with an eager will do all things which I know are pleasing and acceptable to such a Father who has overwhelmed me with his inestimable gifts? I will therefore give myself as a Christ to my neighbor, just as Christ offered himself to me; I will do nothing in this life except what I see is necessary, profitable, and salutary to my neighbor, since through faith I have an abundance of all good things in Christ. . . . The works of all colleges, monasteries, and priests should be of this nature.

Luther, Martin. “To the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany that They Should Establish and Maintain Christian Schools” (1524). AE 45:347-78.

This well-known work by Luther lambasts the “carnal-minded masses” for rejecting and diminishing education for the sake of coin and, in so doing, doing the devil’s work by destroying both God’s state and church. “A city’s best and greatest welfare, safety, and strength consist rather in having many able, learned, wise, honorable, and well-educated citizens.” Education, which is centered on the liberal arts and then professional studies, is vital for training young men and women to take up vocations that maintain the peace of temporal government. It is also essential for them properly to understand, defend, and proclaim Scripture/the gospel. By giving students a robust liberal education they can “set before themselves as in a mirror the character, life, counsels, and purposes—successful and unsuccessful—of the whole world from the beginning; on the basis of which they could then draw proper inferences and in the fear of God take their own place in the stream of human events.”

This well-known work lambasts parents for falling to the devil’s temptation to “despise the word of God and the schools.” The idol of Mammon lures people away from giving their children an education in anything but being a merchant, even though any “great city” must have many vocations filled, which requires education. Both the spiritual and worldly estates need tending to, which only comes by way of education. If parents cherish and benefit from the temporal peace they enjoy in society and eternal peace of the gospel, they should thank God by giving their children an education so that they can assume the vocations in society and church that will preserve and advance these good gifts of God. In emphasizing the goodness of worldly vocations (jurist, physician, teacher, etc.), Luther states that, “Every occupation has its own honor before God. . . . All the estates and works of God are to be praised as highly as they can be, and none despised in favor of the other. . . . for God is a great lord and has many kinds of servants.”


Melanchthon’s inaugural address at Wittenberg set forth an educational program rooted in the liberal arts and sciences. He challenges students to “dare to know” and charges them to “seek the truth.” A solid liberal arts education, including the reading of great books, is necessary “in order to excel . . . in sacred things or the marketplace.” The liberal arts help students understand Christ and divine wisdom. He concludes his oration with the observation and admonition that “what is beautiful may be difficult” but “industry conquers difficulty.”


Melanchthon acknowledges that the “higher disciplines” (i.e., professional studies like law, theology, and medicine) are obviously useful, but encourages students not to neglect the “lower arts” (i.e., the foundation of liberal arts and sciences). Students who are bent on ambition and gain, judge the lower arts to be “useless for life,” and so rush into the higher arts set themselves up for ill-developed educational outcomes. The lower and higher disciplines, in that order, work together in harmony to good effects. Separating them is like trying to speak with just vowels or consonants. Education is to serve the state and the church, so a whole education is needed.


Melanchthon claims that schools and churches have always been and need to be joined. Education is needed to teach people how to read, interpret, proclaim, and defend the Word of God. “[T]he light of the Gospel is extinguished without erudition.” Education is also necessary for civil order.


Mobley’s essay examines the thought and educational program of Luther and Melanchthon. She shows the tight connection between the reformation of education and the church. The doctrine of the priesthood of all believers encourages education for boys and girls. The liberal arts and sciences were seen as “handmaidens” to theology and the church. Education was meant to
prepare students for competent service to the church and state, with an emphasis on understanding God’s word and spreading God’s gospel.


Moulds’ essay focuses on the nature and use of God’s two kingdoms in education. The two kingdoms (the left-hand strategy of creating temporal law, peace, and justice and the right-hand strategy of redemption and restoration in Christ) are neither to be compartmentalized such that the they do not connect or work together nor collapsed such that the right-hand strategy “transform[s] the left-hand kingdom into the kingdom of Christ.” Rather, God’s “two kingdoms [are] distinct yet related” with the left-hand kingdom ultimately serving the right-hand kingdom. This applies to education as well. “The Lutheran teaching ministry . . . uses education in and for the left-hand kingdom but does so in order to feature and advance the right-hand kingdom.”


Newman’s discourses (especially V, VI, and VII) are hailed by many, like Jaroslav Pelikan, as the best vision of university education ever. Newman himself drinks deeply from the well of Aristotle (who argued that contemplation—not justice, mercy, or service—is man’s highest end and happiness in life, making people immortal like the gods) in seeing education as either being liberal or commercial, that is, the intrinsic end of pursuing a systematic knowledge of all truth for its own sake and the happiness of the individual or being an instrumental end for pursuing knowledge in order to serve other ends, like people, in jobs. Newman extols the Aristotelian vision of a liberal education as the highest end of education while admitting that it can be very useful to vocations of service others. Newman also (Discourse II) argues that theology is central branch of knowledge connecting to all others, hence should be included in university’s holistic education. As Lutheran universities are historically rooted in a rich engagement with the liberal arts and theology, Newman’s call to pursue truth (in all areas including theology) and his vivid descriptions of the intellectual habits and virtues developed in the liberal arts will be useful.


Roche’s book won the Association of American Colleges and Universities’ 2012 Frederick W. Ness Book Award. Roche, like Newman, drinks deeply from Aristotle. He argues that rational contemplation is the highest end of life, which is, then, the primary purpose of a university. The value of the liberal arts directly connects to this end. Roche also argues that a liberal arts education is useful for employment and various callings in life as it cultivates valuable intellectual skills and intellectual virtues. Again, as Lutheran universities are rooted in the liberal arts, Roche provides many useful descriptions of and arguments for their value today.


Simmons’ slim book offers an overview of the history of Lutheran education and key theological themes related to education (justification by faith, doctrine of incarnation, law and gospel, vocation, saint and sinner, etc.). He adumbrates the directions of, differences between, and drawbacks of Reformed, Mennonite, Lutheran, and Catholic models of education. He discusses,
based on two-kingdom theology, a Lutheran approach to faith and learning as being about interaction, not integration.


Solberg explains a Lutheran approach to education. It avoids Christianizing society with an imposed “Christian worldview,” and, instead, seeks a debate/dialog between faith and learning. He describes key theological themes for Lutheran education: saint and sinner, Christian liberty, two kingdoms, priesthood of all believers, and vocation. He concludes with the assessment that Lutheran higher education has not lived up to the educational riches and challenges inherent in its own theology. He challenges Lutheran universities to live out their theology because this is what they can best contribute to Christian higher education in America; no one else will.


Veith’s essays critique both the utilitarian occupationalism prevalent today (i.e., going to college just to get a [high paying] job) and the Aristotelian (cf. Newman and Roche) liberal education approach that denigrates vocations as menial and servile. Veith lays out Luther’s doctrine of vocation, incorporating Wingren’s analysis, to explain this doctrine and apply it to education. Veith’s project offers a Lutheran alternative: university education (including offices like “career counseling”) is directly connected to preparing students for their many vocations in the three/four estates of life. True liberal education, under Christian liberty won by Christ, frees and equips students for independent thinking and loving/serving the neighbor in their vocations.


At the laying of the cornerstone of the St. Louis seminary, Walther professed that “the church has . . . ever confessed that art and scholarship are not the goal of the human destiny itself,” “they are not the end, but the means to an end.” The church is a “friend and promoter of art and scholarship” because it is demanded “by the task and vocation which it has.” Scholarship and art are God’s good gifts, which are pleasurable, but should “never become the idol with which one builds altars, but only the means by which the church builds . . . on the foundation of the apostles and prophets” and “promotes true enlightenment and well-being” in the world.

Walther contends against the charge that the LCMS has a closed mind that shows contempt for scholarship. Walther responds that, “We are keenly aware of the incomparable importance (except for the Word of God) of learning, not only for the temporal welfare of mankind, but also for the eternal welfare of the world.” All branches of knowledge are cherished as they can be of service to sacred theology. He states that, “As long as and wherever the Christian church flourished, it always and everywhere proved itself to be a friend and cultivator of all good arts and sciences, gave its future servants a scholarly preparatory training . . . to be trained by the standard products of even pagan art and science.” He cautions that while each secular discipline has its own integrity and sphere, and can serve Scripture, they are not to impose upon Scripture. There can be no real contradiction between Christian theology and true science.


Wengert’s essay argues that education at Wittenberg had five integral and interrelated impulses: the study of great literature, reading them in the original languages, serving the neighbor in love (vocation), purity in doctrine with concord, and the good relationship of secular learning and theology (God’s two kingdoms), e.g., the humanities opening up the way to understand Scripture.


This collection of essays responds to the 1990 Apostolic Constitution issued by Pope John Paul II called Ex Corde Ecclesiae. It examines Catholic identity in various aspects of the university by addressing questions like these: What is meant by a “Catholic” university? What are the duties of the board of trustees? How is mission integrated into the institution? How should hiring faculty connect to the mission? What is academic freedom at a Catholic university? What kind of a curriculum does a Catholic university require? What is Catholic student life?


This is the only book on Lutheran higher education that addresses the foundations and focus of the Lutheran university while also addressing major aspects of the modern American university from university vocations to the interaction of faith and learning to university life. Each chapter does so using distinctive of Lutheran theology: two kingdoms, law and gospel, vocation, Christian freedom, simul iustus et peccator, priesthood of all believers, the interaction of faith and learning, etc. Quite aside from the Lutheran lens, this is the only book that paints a holistic portrait of the modern Christian university.

The Idea and Practice of a Christian University: A Lutheran Approach

I. Foundations for Lutheran Higher Education:
   1. The Purpose of a Christian University: A Lutheran Vision
Rev. Scott Ashmon, Ph.D. (Hebrew Union College), Associate Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew, Director of Core Curriculum at CUI

2. The Genealogy of Lutheran Higher Education  
Russ Dawn, D.Phil. (Oxford), Assistant Professor of History at CUI, and  
Jeff Mallinson, D.Phil. (Oxford), Associate Professor of Theology at CUI

3. Distinctives of Lutheran Theology for Higher Education  
Rev. Steven P. Mueller, Ph.D. (Durham), Professor of Theology, Dean of Christ College at Concordia University Irvine (CUI)

II. University Vocations:  
4. The Vocation of a Student  
Korey Maas, D.Phil. (Oxford), Assistant Professor of History at Hillsdale College

5. The Vocation of a Professor: Tensions and Tightropes between Two Kingdoms  
Bret Taylor, Ph.D. (Curtin), Professor of Mathematics at CUI

6. One Voice of Administration at a Lutheran Christian University  
Mary Scott, Ed.D. (Pepperdine), Professor of Exercise Sports Science, Provost at CUI

7. Fulfilling Bylaws and Advancing the Mission: The Vocation of the Board of Regents  
Cindy Steinbeck, M.A. (Concordia University Irvine), Regent at CUI

III. The Interaction of Faith and Learning:  
8. Lutheran Theology and Philosophy: Faith and Reason  
Rev. Jim Bachman, Ph.D. (Florida State), Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at CUI

9. Cultural Anthropology and Theology: Defining Their Limits and Interaction  
Jack M. Schulz, Ph.D. (Oklahoma), Professor of Anthropology at CUI

10. Methodological Cohesion in the Biological Sciences and Lutheran Theology  
Roderick B. Soper, Ph.D. (Curtin), Associate Professor of Biology at CUI, and  
Michael E. Young, Ph.D. (Washington University), Associate Professor of Natural Science at Concordia University Wisconsin

11. Luther on Trade and Commerce  
Christopher “Kit” Nagel, M.I.M. (American Graduate School of International Management), Associate Professor of Business at CUI

12. Mirror, Imagination, and Creation: A Lutheran Approach to Literature
13. The Artist’s Vocation: Lutheran Higher Education, the Arts, and Theatre
   Peter Senkbeil, Ph.D. (Northwestern), Professor of Theatre, Associate Provost at CUI

IV. University Life in a Lutheran Context:
   14. From Church to Campus to World: Lutheran Theology and Campus Ministry
       Jonathan Ruehs, M.A. (Biola), Residential Coordinator of Spiritual Life at CUI

   15. Toward a Lutheran View of Student Affairs: Developing Learned Piety in Community under the Cross
       Scott Keith, Ph.D. candidate (Graduate Theological Foundation—Foundation House Oxford), Associate Dean of Residential Education and Housing Services at CUI, and Gilbert Fugitt, Ed.D. (Pepperdine), Dean of Students at CUI

   16. The Role of Athletics at a Lutheran University
       Tim Preuss, Ph.D. (Nebraska), Professor of Exercise Sports Science, Dean of Arts and Sciences at CUI