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The Gospel Accounts: Historical Fact or Narrative Fiction?

by John Warwick Montgomery¹

The New Testament is seen by more and more traditionally conservative evangelical scholars as the product of literary/dramatic construction, in line with stylistic characteristics found in classical (Greco-Roman) literature or ancient Jewish writing outside of the Bible. Examples of scholars employing this approach include evangelical Michael Licona and Lutheran James Voelz.

Licona:

There is somewhat of a consensus . . . that the Gospels belong to the genre of Greco-Roman biography (*bios*). . . . Because *bios* was a flexible genre, it is often difficult to determine where history ends and legend begins.²

I have noted above that that there is now somewhat of a consensus . . . that the Gospels belong to the genre of Greco-Roman biography (*bioi*) and that this genre offered biographers a great deal of flexibility to rearrange material [and] invent speeches to communicate the teachings . . . of the subject.²

[Cf. Lydia McGrew's comprehensive critique, *The Mirror or the Mask: Liberating the Gospels from Literary Devices* (Tampa, FL: DeWard, 2019).]

Voelz:

In excursus 3. "Literary Assumptions regarding Mark's Gospel," we introduced the notion that there are significant parallels between the contours of Mark's narrative and the story of the *Odyssey*, and we sought to demonstrate these parallels in relevant pericopes."⁴

[Even though Voelz does not expressly state that the alleged parallels in Homeric literature mean that Mark allowed fiction to colour Gospel fact, he does not disallow that possibility. If Mark was indeed saying (*mirabile dictu!*) that Jesus was greater than Odysseus, would it not be far better to conclude that the reason Jesus' history in fact surpassed Homer's story was that, in Jesus' case, the narrative represented *what actually occurred?*]

Is the literary methodology set forth by these New Testament scholars consistent with the evangelical and Reformation belief in the entire truth of the Holy Scriptures, as well as with the conviction underlying the Ecumenical Creeds of Christendom (Apostles', Nicene, Athanasian) that the New Testament conveys a reliable historical portrait of the earthly life of Our Lord?

We do not think so.

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Coronavirus and the Lord's Supper

Below is a paper Dr. John Wille, President of the South Wisconsin District, sent to SWD pastors when there were questions raised about administering the Sacrament during the quarantine.

Brothers in the Holy Ministry:

As I chat with pastors around SWD, the question has repeatedly come up about administration of the Lord's Supper. Questions upon questions have arisen as you might expect. What to do with the Sacrament? What is the proper way to administer the Sacrament in these extraordinary times? Do we even celebrate the Sacrament in these days? How?

There is no doubt that the Sacrament is a wonderful blessing for God's people especially in times like these. Because of that, it is essential that our practice in these special times be appropriate and respectful. For that reason my encouragement is that every pastor in every congregation maintain and display a proper respect for the Sacrament. This is the very Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus in, with and under the bread and wine for us Christians to eat and to drink.

Because of what the Sacrament is and because of the blessings which are bestowed on us through this Sacrament, in my opinion the Lord's Supper ought not to be treated akin to some drive-through fast food, comparable to what one might buy from McDonald's or Culvers. There are better ways.

The Lord's Supper is the precious and holy Body and Blood of our Lord Jesus in the Sacrament, and deserves to be treated with reverence, with respect and with due-honor; especially in these extraordinary times. The Lord's Supper deserves the reverence that we owe Christ Himself; because this Body and this Blood is Christ Himself here present. This is probably the reason it has been rightly called "the Holy of Holies" of our New Testament Church. (cf. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

A couple of insights regarding the administration of the Lord's Supper.

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Coronavirus and the Lord's Supper...
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1. Let's look at our Lord's very words of institution of His Sacrament. Paul writes

For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.¹

2. Notice how Jesus institutes the Sacrament. He takes the elements in the presence of his disciples, blesses them with the Words of Institution and then distributes the elements to his disciples.

- a. The Formula of Concord Solid Declaration states:

121] 10 Likewise, when it is taught that not only the Word and omnipotence of Christ, but faith, renders the body of Christ present in the Supper; on this account the words of institution in the administration of the Supper are omitted by some. For although the papistic consecration is justly rebuked and rejected, in which the power to produce a sacrament is ascribed to the speaking as the work of the priest, yet *the words of institution can or should in no way be omitted in the administration of the Supper, as is shown in the preceding declaration.*²

- b. Article XIV: Of Ecclesiastical Order, the Apology of the Augsburg states:

24] The Fourteenth Article, in which we say that in the Church the administration of the Sacraments and Word ought to be *allowed no one unless he be rightly called,*...³

An old Lutheran norm has always been that we adhere closely to the original administration of the Sacrament:

Again, citations from the Confessions.

1. Smalcald Articles. The Second Part. Article II, Of the Mass, 8-9:

8] But if any one should advance the pretext that as an act of devotion he wishes to administer the Sacrament, or Communion, to himself, he is not in earnest [he would commit a great mistake, and would not be speaking seriously and sincerely]. For if he wishes to commune in sincerity, the surest and best way for him is in the Sacrament administered according to Christ's institution. But that one administer communion to himself is a human notion, uncertain, unnecessary, yea, even prohibited. And he does not know what he is doing, because without the Word of God he obeys a false human opinion and invention. **9]** So, too, it is not right (even though the matter were otherwise correct) for one to use the common Sacrament of [belonging to] the Church according to his own private devotion, and without God's Word and apart from the communion of the Church to trifle therewith.⁴

2. Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article VII.

85] [Let us now come also to the second point, of which mention was made a little before.] To preserve this true Christian doctrine concerning the Holy Supper, and to avoid and abolish manifold idolatrous abuses and pervers-

**Thank You Concordia Board of Regents
Welcome Rev. Dr. Daniel Preus**

A June 2, 2020, news release of the Concordia Seminary Board of Regents announced the appointment of the Rev. Dr. Daniel Preus as Acting President effective July 1, 2020. Rev. Dr. Preus will serve in that capacity until a new president is called and takes office. That action is very positive for Concordia Seminary and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod given his lengthy and broad service to Synod and the Seminary. Rev. Dr. Preus certainly knows the Seminary well for he just completed nine years of service on its Board of Regents. In addition, the Concordia Historical Institute, where he served as Executive Director 1995-2001, is located in the heart of the Seminary campus.



Rev. Dr. Preus lived on the Concordia campus for several years, since his father, Rev. Dr. Robert Preus, was long a very faithful professor there before accepting the call to be president at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, IL. Rev. Dr. Preus has also served Synod as first, third, fourth and fifth vice president as well as serving congregations of the Synod and as Director of Luther Academy.

At its meeting, the Board of Regents also issued a new call for candidates for office of the president of the Seminary. That was a wise action by the Board of Regents for it is likely some months will pass before a new president is called and installed. That can make a transition to a new president much easier as evidenced by the superlative performance of Rev. Dr. William Weinrich at Concordia Theological Seminary, Ft. Wayne, IN, as Acting President before Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenhe was called and installed as president there. This writer can testify to that from first hand knowledge for he served on the Ft. Wayne Seminary Board 1995-2007. Dr. Wenhe has also freely recognized the fine service of Dr. William Weinrich as Acting President.

Lutheran Concerns Association gratefully commends the Board of Regents for its actions, joyfully welcomes Dr. Daniel Preus as Acting President and urges all congregants and members of the Synod to pray for the Board of Regents and Acting President Dr. Daniel Preus as the call process moves forward.

Mr. Walter Dissen, Esq.
Chesapeake, VA

sions of this testament, the following useful rule and standard has been derived from the words of institution: *Nihil habet rationem sacramenti extra usum a Christo institutum* ("Nothing has the nature of a sacrament apart from the use instituted by Christ") or *extra actionem divinitus institutam* ("apart from the action divinely instituted"). That is: If the institution of Christ be not observed as He appointed it, there is no sacrament. This is by no means to be rejected, but can and should be urged and maintained with profit in the Church of God.⁵

3. An additional quote from Martin Luther, as cited by CFW Walther.

In the same way we hear the command and institution of Him who says, 'This do in remembrance of Me,' not as spoken in the name of the pastor, but we hear Christ Himself speaking and commanding us by the mouth of the pastor to receive the bread and wine by His Word ('This is My body'), and in accordance with His command

to eat and drink, we receive in them His body and blood. We must believe and be sure that Baptism is not ours but Christ's, that the ministry is not ours but Christ's, that the Sacrament is not ours but Christ's, that the keys for remitting or retaining sins are not ours but Christ's. In short, the offices and sacraments are not ours but Christ's, for He has instituted and left them to the church that they all might be administered and used till the end of the world. He does not lie or deceive us, therefore, we dare not change them into anything else but must obey His command and keep it. But if we change or emend it, then we void it. Then Christ is no longer present nor His institution.⁶

Bottom line, as confessional Lutherans we have a confessional standard when it comes to the administration of the Sacrament; a confessional standard that we should maintain especially in these extraordinary times when we strive to provide hope and confidence to the people of God. It is the least that we owe to our Lord and to His people.

There are wonderful examples of South Wisconsin District pastors caring for God's people in accord with what is mentioned above. I thank you each for your faithfulness! It is an honor and humbling to serve you in this time.

May our Lord bless us as we do so! May He keep each of us in good health! To His glory! RJW

Rev. Dr. John C. Wille

President, South Wisconsin District LCMS

- 1 The Holy Bible: English Standard Version. (2016). (1 Co 11:23–26). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.
- 2 *Concordia Triglotta—English: The Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*. (1996). page 1013. Northwestern Publishing House, MKE.
- 3 Ibid. Page 315.
- 4 Ibid. Page 465.
- 5 Ibid. pp. 1001–1003.
- 6 Walther, C. F. W. (1987). *Church and ministry: witness of the Evangelical Lutheran Church on the question of the church and the ministry*, page 256, Concordia Publishing House.

[Editorial comment: In addition to what Dr. Wille writes above, please refer to “A Report of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod May 1983” at <https://www.lcms.org/about/leadership/commission-on-theology-and-church-relations/documents/lutheran-doctrine-and-practice>. Go to <https://swd.lcms.org/covid-19/> for the article above and all SWD resources on coronavirus.]

The Lutheran Clarion—12 Years!

In September 2019, we started our 12th year of publishing the *Clarion*. We strive to present and uphold the truth of God's Holy Word. We could use your help.

If you can help with our costs, there's an enclosed envelope to mail your check to Lutheran Concerns Association, 149 Glenview Drive, New Kensington, PA 15068-4921. Do it now. **Thank you!!**



The Gospel Accounts...

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First, a logical point—to be followed by an analogy, and, ultimately, a warning.

Aside from the serious failings in the employment of literary argument, as analyzed in detail by Lydia McGrew, one must ask: Is it reasonable to begin with literary devices employed by writers other than an author, and conclude—against the author's own express statements (e.g., Luke 1; 2 Peter 1:16; 1 John 1:1)—that he must be using the same literary devices as some other writers employed during the same cultural era?

Whatever happened to the inductive principle that an author must be taken to be doing what he says he is doing, and that he has every right NOT to be using literary devices that his contemporaries choose to employ? Forcing an author into the Procrustian bed of what other writers were doing violates the logical principle that to understand something or someone, one must move from the specific to the general, not start with the general and force the specific to accord with it. One must respect an author's stated position, as found in what he says and how he presents his material—as Aristotle well argued in his *Poetics*.

And now, an analogy. Sir Walter Scott, in his 19th-century novel *Ivanhoe*, presents the classic literary image of the heroic knight. His novel exemplifies elements of the Romance genre: the quest with chivalric setting; the overthrow of a corrupt social order; the achievement of millennial time of joy.⁵ This Romantic-hero motif has powerfully influenced western literature to the present day (Tolkien, et al.).

Suppose, therefore, a hundred years from now a literary scholar argues that the story of Charles de Gaulle's leadership to free France from the Nazi occupation is a literary creation. After all, it has all the essential elements: a fairly low-level military officer reaches England,⁶ is virtually ignored by the American and English leadership,⁷ but becomes the greatest hero of the French nation in the 20th century. Indeed, almost every village in France today has an *Avenue Charles de Gaulle*.

So, even though the historians claim that their story of De Gaulle is factual history, the literary interpreter can argue that they must have been influenced, consciously or unconsciously, by the Romantic tradition in penning their accounts. Their affirmations of historical truth can be trumped by the application of sophisticated literary analysis.

If we rightly reject such an approach in general, we must surely reject it when applied to the New Testament records.

And to claim that the literary interpretive methodology is “just a matter of hermeneutics,” having no impact on the doctrine of biblical inspiration and authority, is patent nonsense. A generation ago, a seminal article was published with the title, “Hermeneutics As a Cloak for the Denial of Scripture,”⁸ and the point of that article remains exactly the same today: any interpretive method that dehistoricis-

es the Bible destroys its claim to truth and thus its divine authority.

In discussing “the pragmatic status of narrative fiction,” French specialist Jean-Marie Schaeffer notes: “The conditions for satisfying the criteria of factual narrative are semantic: a factual narrative is either true or false. Even if it is willfully false (as is the case if it is a lie), what determines its truth or its untruth is not its (hidden) pragmatic intention, but that which is in fact the case.”⁹ Gospel narratives, therefore, if they are essentially literary constructions and not representative of historical fact, can be neither true nor false—and are thus incapable of being regarded as constituting truth—much less infallible or inerrant divine revelation.

In terms of what we have argued here, it should not appear strange that we conclude with a most serious warning—especially as to how one evaluates contemporary New Testament scholarship. Do not believe, just because an evangelical or a Lutheran teaches at a distinguished institution that has historically stood for a strong view of Scripture, that he or she necessarily holds to biblical factuality or to a meaningful view of scriptural inerrancy. Princeton Theological Seminary was allowed by its sponsoring church body to depart radically from the classical Reformed view of Holy Scripture because no one could believe that this might occur at the faculty of theology where B. B. Warfield had once taught.

Santayana’s adage still applies: “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

John Warwick Montgomery¹

- 1 Professor-at-Large, The 1517 Legacy Project, CA.; Professor Emeritus of Law and Humanities, University of Bedfordshire, England; Pastor Emeritus, LCMS; Director, International Academy of Apologetics, Evangelism and Human Rights, Strasbourg, France; Ph.D. (Chicago), D.Théol. (Strasbourg, France), LL.D. (Cardiff, Wales, U.K.). Member of the California, D.C., Virginia, Washington State and U.S. Supreme Court bars; Barrister-at-Law, England and Wales; Avocat à la Cour, Paris. Websites: www.jwm.christendom.co.uk; www.apologeticsacademy.eu; www.globaljournalct.com.
- 2 Michael Licona, *The Resurrection of Jesus: A New Historiographical Approach* (Downer’s Grover: IVP Academic, 2010), p. 34.
- 3 Ibid., p. 593.
- 4 James W. Voelz and Christopher W. Mitchell, *Mark 8:27-16:20* (“Concordia Commentary”; St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2019), p. 597.
- 5 Cf. Kenneth M. Sroka, “The Function of Form: Ivanhoe As Romance,” *Studies in English Literature (Rice)*, 19/4 [Autumn, 1979], 645-661.
- 6 In the little office to which he had been relegated, De Gaulle said to an incredulous René Cassin: “Cassin, we are France.”
- 7 Churchill’s remark is well-known: “My hardest cross to bear was the Cross of Lorraine.”
- 8 J. Barton Payne, “Hermeneutics as a Cloak for the Denial of Scripture,” *Bulletin of the Evangelical Theological Society* 3/4 (Fall 1960), 93-100.
- 9 Jean-Marie Schaeffer, “Fictional vs. Factual Narration,” sec. 3:3, *Living Handbook of Narratology*: <http://www.lhn.uni-hamburg.de/node/56.html> Cf. also Schaeffer’s *Pourquoi la fiction?* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1999) [also in English translation].

Living with Grief Bound by Sorrow, Wrapped in Comfort

Book Review: Kristian Kincaid, CPH, Saint Louis, 2020, Item #124590 at www.cph.org. \$12.99; bulk discounts available. Call CPH at 800-325-0191.

This is a heart-felt composition written in a Christ-centered way by a Pastor who knows that the only comfort for our grief is found in Jesus Christ. The book is loaded with references from Holy Scripture that strongly affirm that we will be with Him after death. Not only has the author been a comforter to others in their grief but he has a lot of first-hand experience with tragedy in his own family.

As a young pastor, Rev. Dr. Kincaid sought advice from an older pastor on how to help a member of his congregation who just lost a spouse. The response from the older pastor was rather flippant and rang hollow with Dr. Kincaid. He sought a better way.

Dr. Kincaid begins by talking about “Death, Our Enemy and Christ, Our Victor (p.21).” Death is our enemy and it is a sure thing and we will “...never be the victor. No resolve, no ingenuity, no technological gains can stave off the fiend named death. There will always be an obituary column to read, and one day, our names will appear (p.21).” However, Christ conquered death with His sacrifice on the cross and His sure resurrection, just as He promised since the tragedy in the Garden of Eden, which is the cause of death: “Sin infects and affects the whole creation with death (p.47).”

Dr. Kincaid describes how Holy Scripture defines physical death (p.21); it is an “unnatural event that exists due to sin (p.22).” In the face of this we have God’s sure gift of our Baptism: “The water has long since dried from our brow, but the daily blessings of our Baptism remain (p.23).” Dr. Kincaid debunks the worldly ways in which people try to deal with death: “stages, tasks, assessments, attachments, and inventories (p.50).” “The sole focus is on the grieving ones and what they must do, not on the Risen One and what He does. Jesus wipes away our tears... (p.50).”

Dr. Kincaid devotes an entire chapter to the funeral industry where he explains that death has now been “institutionalized and sanitized, taking place most often in hospitals or care facilities... (p.97).” Gone are the days when death was “hands-on and up-front (p.97).” Do you remember when people died in their homes and the family took care of the body, displayed it and buried it themselves? My own father died in 1995 and after the service at the cemetery our family waited and waited for the grave to be filled with dirt. Finally, we asked the undertaker and he said they don’t do that anymore because it is too traumatic for the family. We insisted and we saw the last shovel of dirt laid on our father’s grave. We knew, as Dr. Kincaid, writes: “All that matters is Christ, whose love goes much deeper than six feet (p.104).”

In Chapters 6 and 7, Dr. Kincaid warns about dangers among us. He cautions us against seeking “comfort in comfortless places. We erringly turn away from God’s

Holy Word and turn to misleading writings, various ‘signs,’ psychics, mediums, and other detrimental and dark means the devil uses to lure us away from Christ (p.107).” Under the heading of “Prosperity Gospel,” Dr. Kincaid warns that “Thieves and robbers of the soul request your money and make you labor to receive God’s blessings (p.122).” Contrast this with Paul in 2 Corinthians 11:24-27 where “Paul will boast in his weakness and all the more in the strong love of Christ (p.124).”

You don’t have to wait until you experience grief to benefit from this book. The book is excellent for both laity and Pastors. There is no difficult theology here; just the simple and clear easy-to-read words from Holy Scripture. At the end of each chapter are reflection questions to ponder, all based on Holy Scripture. The book would be a great congregation Bible study.

In his introduction, Dr. Kincaid said the book was “extremely painful to write (p.6).” I can verify that at times it was also painful and tearful to read. But again and again the book returns to the words and promises of Christ. I strongly recommend Dr. Kincaid’s book and I am thankful that he wrote it. After you read the book don’t forget to write a review at www.cph.org. The Lutheran Concerns Association is proud to have Dr. Kincaid as a member of its Board of Directors. He is the senior pastor at Our Redeemer Lutheran Church, Dubuque, Iowa.

Mrs. Ginny Valleau
Independence, MO

Lutheran Higher Education Today

Below is the final part of the presentation that Mr. Mark Stern, Esq., gave on January 20, 2020, at the Lutheran Concerns Conference in Fort Wayne, IN. The entire presentation (one document) is posted at the Lutheran Clarion web site at <http://www.lutheranclarion.org>.

The Unsustainable will not be Sustained

Agree or disagree with the foregoing; the fact is that in the mid to long term, the CUS is unlikely to continue in its current form because of external factors beyond the control of the CUS, the Synod, and the schools themselves. Regardless of good intentions, the combined demands of a primarily non-Lutheran audience and the higher education climate will continue inexorably to pull the schools away from the Church unless they choose to make some changes.

First, the economics of higher education will force change. It has been said, “you can’t save the world if you can’t pay the rent.” The fiscal challenges facing all of the CUS schools, like most other similarly situated private colleges, are limited resources, plus spiraling costs, plus a tuition-driven model requiring a “gerbil wheel” of continued growth and expansion, despite the nationwide decline in available students. Most CUS schools are under some level of financial stress as a result of this equation. Various studies indicate that a shake-out has already begun for U.S. higher education, with estimates that many col-

leges will close their doors in the next decade.^V In the past decade, the CUS itself has seen one school close and another merge.

Second, governmental and societal pressures will pose an ever greater threat. All CUS schools are tuition driven, relying upon federal and state aid and loan programs. We have already seen efforts to prohibit colleges that uphold orthodox Christian teaching on issues of human sexuality from receiving state aid for their students, as well as threats from school districts where student teachers are placed. Loss of student aid eligibility and/or tax exemptions would be a death sentence for most if not all the CUS schools as presently constituted. Non-government actors, such as accrediting bodies, may intervene in opposition to our religious liberty.^{VI} The “cancel culture” will pressure businesses not to deal with our schools when they uphold Biblical principles. Attacks will continue upon board members and administrators.

In my view, within this decade it will become increasingly untenable, even impossible, for the CUS schools in their present form to operate while maintaining doctrinal fidelity. They are at a fork in the road; each will need to decide its own path.

The Path Less Traveled

I submit that the Synod would be better off with a smaller and more manageable higher education footprint. The successful CUS school of the future (I’ll call it “CUS-U”) will choose to serve the Church by becoming more focused, more faithful, and likely smaller.

The CUS schools that stay will be those that, freely and without reservation, bind themselves even more closely to the Church: structurally, financially, and philosophically. Experience tells us that schools that don’t do this (e.g., Concordia Edmonton) usually pull away from their religious identity entirely, by design or by default. The process of once-religious colleges losing their faith has been chronicled in *The Dying of the Light: The Disengagement of Colleges and Universities from Their Christian Churches*, by James Tunstead Burtchaell.^{VII}

The Synod must also prepare for the loss of government funding. Hillsdale College, Grove City College, and others have established proof of concept. This would be a major undertaking, but we need to begin planning for the possibility. Right-sizing the system reduces the resources needed for such a project.

Lutheran Identity. The model CUS-U will be proud of its Lutheran identity, giving a clear and prominent Lutheran confession. It will not seek to be a watered-down “church related,” “faith based,” or “Global Christian” school. The religious identity of the University of Notre Dame may be a syncretism of cafeteria Catholicism and sports, but no one visiting that campus can miss it. Confessional Lutheran identity at CUS-U should suffuse the campus just as distinctively, in all academic departments and activities, including campus spiritual life and orthodox chapel worship. It cannot be cloistered in the theology department alone.

Yogi Berra said if you don't know where you're going, you might not get there. Read the mission statements of each of our CUS schools. In academia the mission statement informs what an institution believes it does and why it exists; it is the foundational document for accreditation and other purposes. Three years ago, when I initially researched this issue, there were nine CUS schools. Of these, five referenced being Lutheran in their mission – four did not. Since then, one has added a Lutheran reference – but one has deleted it. What does this mean?

I commend Jocelyn Benson's article in the January 2020 *Lutheran Clarion*, entitled "Lutheran schools in America today: Ripe or rotten?" Mrs. Benson writes, "If today Lutheran schools are comfortable taking Lutheran out of their school name so as to attract those offended by 'Lutheran,' what capitulation might tomorrow's marketing bring?" Members of congregations with largely non-Lutheran student populations in schools know what she's talking about. Parents, or students, paying for "private" education at any level – from age 3 to PhD – bring with them a fee-for-service mentality, not a thirst for pure doctrine. They are customers and expect to be catered to as such. Over the past several decades, the biggest growth in Lutheran education has been the upward trajectory in the number of preschools within the Synod (now over 1,100), yet we see a downward trajectory in the number of child baptisms. Evangelism is harder within a purely transactional relationship.

Lutheran Students. CUS-U should have a majority of LCMS students. It will prepare all students with a solid grounding in the Western tradition and liberal arts canon for non-church vocations (we need well-educated laymen). It will train church workers, even and especially those who may find themselves in need of tent-making skills as they serve in the post-Christian world. CUS-U will also welcome students who are not of our confession, *provided* that they accept who we are and what we confess, and want to learn from us on our terms.

Today's college students come from an anti-Christian environment. It is challenging to sustain a Lutheran ethos where the majority of students, on every CUS campus, are non-LCMS. This has led to non-hypothetical cases at various CUS schools such as LGBT student clubs, diversity deans, a proposed "interfaith" prayer room, and worship services led by non-Lutherans. The CUS should not shy away from engaging academia and making our programs available to all of good will who wish to benefit from them. However, if financial viability requires marketing to students who want nothing more than a secular education, perhaps with a veneer of "spirituality", our Lutheran identity will remain at risk.

Lutheran Faculty. CUS-U should have a substantial majority of LCMS faculty; those who are not LCMS will be committed to support our doctrinal positions. CUS-U will limit its academic programs to those that it can reasonably support with the LCMS faculty base that exists; it will also work to develop its own faculty by encouraging promising candidates to obtain advanced degrees for service in

The 2021 LCA Conference: January 18, 2021

The LCA Board of Directors is busy planning for the LCA Conference that will be held Monday, January 18, 2021, at the Ramada Inn, Fort Wayne, IN. The theme will be the changing and challenging environment of church work with an eye to the next ten years. The speakers we have so far:

- **Rev. Christopher S. Esget**, 5th Vice-President, LCMS. Pastor at Immanuel Lutheran Church, Alexandria, VA. Rev. Esget will address Pastoral Care in the Parish.
- **Rev. Dr. John Wille**, Milwaukee, WI. President, South Wisconsin District. He will speak about the web publication "Lutheran Mission Matters."
- **Dr. Gerhard Munding**, MD, Michigan City, IN. Chairman of the LCMS Board for University Education. Dr. Munding will talk about LCMS Higher Education.
- **Rev. Kevin D. Robson**, Saint Louis, MO, Chief Mission Officer, LCMS. Rev. Robson will address LCMS Missions.

We plan to have a registration form ready for the September 2020 *Clarion* along with the exact conference location.

We will again have banquets on Sunday and Monday evenings so that speakers and guests can get to know each other. The banquets proved to be very popular at the 2020 conference.

higher education.

Faculty from secular backgrounds who aren't fully instructed in our doctrine may even be doing harm; in a recent article in *The Federalist*, "Don't Assume Because a College is Christian It's a Safe Place for Your Kid,"^{viii} David Talcott warns, "Christian higher education, like many other parts of Christian culture and church life, follows broader cultural trends. Unless institutions take extremely strong steps to maintain fidelity to core intellectual and religious commitments, they will eventually follow the trends. Just as students come from the culture of their home churches, so also the faculty and staff come through years (often many years) of higher education. In very left-leaning environments, people will drift leftwards unless they position themselves as a resistant minority."

The Path More Traveled

Not all CUS schools will want to pursue the path I suggest. This should not be surprising; for the reasons outlined above not all of them would even be able to do so. The Synod has already seen RSO entities leave, for reasons of government regulation. In the business realm, a financial services organization that used to have the word "Lutherans" in its name no longer does – it wanted to grow its market. Regrettable as this may be, an honest parting is better than forced unity under false premises.

"Shut them down" is a facile answer. Orderly closure of a college requires a "teach out" for current students. Those costs, other legal requirements, and the limited utility of much of the CUS schools' properties, means that there is no pot of gold from closure; quite the opposite. Forcing closure or divestiture is not likely to lead to positive outcomes.

CUS administrators, boards, and Synod must come to the table as adults and determine what is best for each

school and for the Synod at large. Some schools may consolidate; this proved successful for Ann Arbor and Wisconsin. Others may choose to spin off non-core programs. Some may convert to RSO status, which retains links to the Church but would allow changes to governance that some schools say they need. Some may seek outright independence.

Let those who choose to leave, go in peace, and be allowed to do so upon reasonable terms. Where CUS schools believe they cannot, or do not wish to, walk together within the letter and the spirit of Synod's governance – flawed as any human structure may be – the honest answer is to work for an orderly and voluntary process to change their relationship with Synod, consistent with the bylaws and the rights of the Synod and its congregations.

Mark O. Stern, Esq.
Chicago, IL

Mr. Stern currently serves as Secretary of the Board of Regents of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. This article represents his views and does not speak on behalf of Concordia Seminary.

- v. See, e.g., "Will Half of All Colleges Really Close in the Next Decade?", Michael Horn, *Forbes*, December 13, 2018, available at <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelhorn/2018/12/13/will-half-of-all-colleges-really-close-in-the-next-decade/#7426774752e5>.
- vi. See, e.g., "Resist the Throttling of Religious Colleges," Adam Kissel, *Philanthropy*, Summer 2019, available at <https://www.philanthropyroundtable.org/philanthropy-magazine/article/7.-resist-the-throttling-of-religious-colleges>.
- vii. Eerdmans, 1998.
- viii. <https://thefederalist.com/2019/12/26/dont-assume-because-a-college-is-christian-its-a-safe-place-for-your-kid/>.

Concordia Theological Foundation—the Beginning

Concordia Theological Foundation Inc. was incorporated in California in February 1999. Concordia Theological Seminary (CTS), Fort Wayne, IN, was still in a tenuous position resulting from a CTS Board of Regents' meeting at Lincoln National Bank on July 27, 1989, honorably retiring President Dr. Robert Preus. That action was contested. Charges were filed against President Preus under the Synod's then adjudication procedure which could have led to his termination of membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (Synod) because the Indiana District Commission on Adjudication had issued a decision terminating his membership in the Synod. Ultimately an appeal went to the Synod's Commission on Appeals, which in a decision of May 31, 1992, unanimously reversed the Indiana District Commission on Adjudication. Eventually, Rev. Dr. David Schmiel became President of CTS in 1993 and retired at the end of 1995. The stability of CTS effectively was questioned in the exit audit following retirement of President Schmiel. The Board of Regents took strong exception to that exit audit.

The Rev. Dr. William Weinrich served as Acting President of CTS following the noted retirement. In 1996, Rev. Dr. Dean O. Wenthe was named and installed as presi-

dent. Thus at the end of 1995, CTS not only had financial troubles but faced actions by the accrediting agencies. Acting President Weinrich courageously and very capably addressed these and other problems. When Dr. Wenthe assumed the presidency, he put monumental effort into restoration of CTS as did the faculty, staff and students. They had the full support of the Board of Regents and Synodical President Al Barry, and by the grace of God CTS rebounded. It was against this background that Mr. Arnold Kemmerle, a prominent retired Certified Public Accountant of Santa Rosa, CA, having long headed a major national accounting firm in San Francisco, and also a long active supporter of CTS, came to President Wenthe and the Board of Regents in 1997 suggesting formation of a California public benefit charitable foundation that might serve as a financial resource to assure a vibrant and continuing CTS unswervingly committed to Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.

The theological position of the Foundation and the content of its articles of incorporation were warmly received by the CTS Class of 2002 which met with representatives of the Foundation and then established a book fund in perpetuity to assist CTS on-campus students with book costs. The Class of 2004 made its Class Gift to the same fund. Earnings from that fund continue to assist CTS on-campus students with book costs. Heart warming! Other people have also contributed.

The Foundation is a non-profit public benefit corporation organized under the California Non-profit Public Benefit Corporation Law. The Internal Revenue Service recognizes it as a 501 (c)(3) tax exempt organization. The specific and primary purpose of the Foundation is to engage in charitable and educational activities within said section of law and very importantly, to support the functions and purposes of CTS so long as CTS accepts and practices the doctrinal position set out in the Foundation's bylaws. While the model is that of Synod's confessional stance, the theological stance of the Foundation was also personally "walked" by sainted Professor Kurt Marquart and also then CTS President Wenthe.

The only people whose services the Foundation pays for are the accountant and auditor. Aside from gifts to CTS and its students, expenses are for insurance and mailings, typically once a year. Approximately \$0.94 of every dollar goes to CTS and its students. Since its incorporation in 1999, the Foundation has given approximately \$2 million to CTS and its students. Foundation assets at the end of 2019 were \$6,791,487.30.

The CT Foundation Board of Trustees: Mr. David Hawk, Esq.; Mr. Dennis Becker, Esq.; Dr. Bruce Schultz; Mr. Art Sommer; Mr. Robert VanGundy; Mr. Lloyd Wittenmeyer; and, Mr. Walter Dissen, Esq.

Your tax deductible contributions are most welcome and should be mailed to: **Concordia Theological Foundation Inc., 6041 Stellhorn Road, Box 15810, Fort Wayne, IN 46815.**

Mr. Walter Dissen, Esq.
Chesapeake, VA

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149 Glenview Drive
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