

## ***Come Let Us Reason Together***

Prepared by the Commission on Faith and Reason

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**"Come now and let us reason together."  
Isaiah 1:18**

**Introduction:**  
**A Reader's Guide to the Commission's Dialogue on Faith and Reason**

As it enters a new millennium, Augsburg College will be a school grounded deeply in the Christian faith and the liberal arts. As such, it will be a community that welcomes and values the dialogue between faith and reason. And yet the question posed to this Commission--What is the nature of the dialogue between faith and reason that can properly be pursued in every component of Augsburg's curriculum--might well provoke incredulity and even dismay.

After all, we might ask, does not Augsburg reflect in large measure the Babel of intellectual confusion that is typical of American higher education? Is there anything that can be pursued in **every** component of a college curriculum? Certainly Augsburg's tradition as a college of the Lutheran church would suggest that the ideas and concerns represented by "faith" and "reason" might be and remain at the core of its educational mission, but Augsburg is not impervious to the trends in higher education that challenge not only whether such dialogue is "proper," but also whether it is even possible.

Even if one does not discover Babel within the academy in general or Augsburg in particular, one may encounter it in the key terms of this Commission's question: faith and reason. At its initial meetings, members of the Commission quickly realized that they might as well have been speaking different languages in as much as "faith" and "reason" are susceptible to so many definitions, personal as well as public. A brief inventory of Commission members' definitions reveals the variety and range of possible understandings of the terms. Definitions of "faith" might include: spirituality; a "right-brained" approach to religion; the emotional and creative aspects of religion; truth achieved through revelation and authority; "how God gets to us"; relationship with God; anything one believes rather than knows; the convictions of the "heart"; an existential understanding of experience based on hope; and the doctrinal statements and creeds of a particular denomination. Definitions of reason likewise range broadly: logic; cognition; methodologies used to study the world, especially scientific method; critical thinking; the characteristic that differentiates angels and human beings from the rest of creation; the distinguishing mark of "God's image" in humans; the essential attribute of the human

soul; the faculty that enables humans to recognize truth and goodness; and secular learning.

Nor were other terms of the question entirely innocent. Does "dialogue" imply a shouting match or civil conversation? (The Commission chose the latter.) How much does a curriculum comprehend, any program or activity offered by a college or just credit-granting courses? (The Commission chose the former.)

Finally, though, it is imperative to recognize that the dialogue between faith and reason has a long pedigree in Judeo-Christian heritage and is a major theme of western thought. In defining its question, the Commission was compelled to turn to history, paying particular attention to Lutheran tradition, since it has been decisive in the life of this institution.

The history of the dialogue between faith and reason ultimately leads to the heart of the Commission's task: to construct an Augsburg model of education. In organizing this paper, the Commission first provides extended definitions of faith and reason, locating their critical point of intersection in Martin Luther's theology of vocation. The paper then describes this model, acknowledging the most important traditions that have shaped life, faith, and learning at Augsburg. The third section proceeds to specific recommendations that may help the College more fully realize this vision of a community devoted to both faith and learning. However, both the definition of an Augsburg model of education and the specific recommendations are based on and legitimized by the Commission's exploration of the current and past contexts of its question. Therefore Appendix I explores the history of the question, albeit in cursory fashion. Appendix II is devoted to Augsburg's traditions of faith and reason. And a final appendix outlines at least some of the themes that characterize the dialogue between faith and reason within the contemporary academy.

## I. Defining Faith and Reason: The Importance of Vocation

Even a brief survey of the historical context of the dialogue between faith and reason (see Appendix I) shows that the definitions of these terms and the nature of their relationship are capable of richly nuanced interpretation. But it is possible to identify some persistent definitions of reason within the tradition. The most dignified of these equates reason with the innate human capacity to achieve truth independently of revelation. "Right reason," as this understanding sometimes calls it, reflects God's image within human beings. It is God's "viceroys"<sup>1</sup> that should govern human choices.

More commonly, reason is related to study, and particularly to cognitive methods of approaching sacred or secular knowledge. At times western thought argues that reason is amenable to faith. Thus the medieval liberal arts, particularly logic, hope to confirm revealed truth and see their appropriate use in defining or defending Christian doctrine. The Enlightenment is confident that reason can detect God's order in creation. At other times, though, western thought regards faith and reason as foes. For example, some people—wrongly, we would submit—consider scientific methods to be subversive of faith.

Finally, reason defines a curriculum, the arenas proper to human study. Thus, while a Jerome and later medieval tradition might distrust secular studies (pagan literature, for instance), the humanist curriculum argues that no area of creation—sacred or profane—should be off limits to the Christian's study.

Definitions of faith within western tradition are less readily summarized. Sometimes it is understood in opposition to reason: that is, it is the sacred as opposed to the secular, revelation as opposed to reason, belief as opposed to empirical knowledge. But these pairs are not necessarily enemies; western thought is just as inclined to see them as complements. More consistently, faith involves the relationship between the creator and creation.

As a college grounded in the liberal arts, Augsburg inherits the complexities of western tradition. As a college of the Lutheran church, however, Augsburg also inherits

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<sup>1</sup> John Donne, "Holy Sonnet 14"

Martin Luther's understandings of faith and reason. These, finally, are crucial to the Commission's understandings of its question.

Despite the cries of inconsistency by his critics, Luther's basic understanding of reason is not difficult to fathom. In a sermon on Isaiah 60: 1-6 he reveals his basic outlook:

In temporal affairs and those which have to do with men, the rational man is self-sufficient: here he needs no other light than reason's. Therefore God does not teach us in the Scriptures how to build houses, make clothing, marry . . . But in godly affairs, that is, in those which have to do with God, where man must do what is acceptable with God and be saved thereby—here, however, nature is absolutely stone-blind, so that it cannot even catch a glimpse of what those things are. It is presumptuous enough to bluster and plunge into them, like a blind horse; but all its conclusions are utterly false, as surely God lives.<sup>2</sup>

In thinking about reason, Luther operates within the basic framework of his two kingdoms theory. The legitimate use of reason takes place in the *communia*, in family life, in various trades and occupations, and in governing: "She [reason] is the divine sun in whose light the affairs of this lie are to be administered."<sup>3</sup>

Reason becomes illegitimate when it pries into heavenly matters. Luther will grant that reason has the ability to know God exists, but this forms the outer limits of its competence in matters theological. It is utterly unable to know what God is. It is useless to defend the divine order by human reason (without faith) for "this would be like illuminating the sun with a feeble lantern or resting a rock upon a reed. Human reason can only stumble along, like a man on stilts."<sup>4</sup>

A third possibility for reason, besides its proper role in worldly affairs and its tendency toward arrogance in the heavenly realm, should be highlighted. This is reason *post fidem* or as Gerrish describes it, "regenerated reason." Following faith's illumination, reason works with a new set of presuppositions. Instead of taking its cues from worldly affairs, it is now linked wholly to the Scriptures. As Luther puts it: "Without faith, reason is of no use and can do nothing . . . but, when illuminated, reason

<sup>2</sup> Martin Luther as quoted in Brian Gerrish, *Faith and Reason: A Study in the Theology of Martin Luther*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1962) p. 12.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 17.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., p. 18.

takes all its thoughts from the Word.”<sup>5</sup> In its regenerated state, reason has validity in the theological realm, not in an autonomus sense, but as an ally in the interpretation of the Bible.

Thus Luther can view reason as a “divine endowment” within its proper sphere. But when *ratio* trespasses on faith’s domain (in an autonomous sense), it takes on a much different meaning for Luther. In the latter sense he no longer sees it as the capacity for understanding and the ability to draw inferences. Rather the whole concept becomes tainted because of reason’s persistent habit of making an inference that is wildly off the mark in the heavenly realm.

Reason’s false inference can be summed up thusly: it is the notion that “to live unto God you must keep the law” and that “the work of God in saving man depends on personal worth.”<sup>6</sup> Luther treats this theme repeatedly. Reason and law are so inextricably linked in our thinking, so imbedded in our nature, that Luther can refer to their union as an “unhappy *hexis*” that is completely unable to divorce itself from some notion of works-righteousness.<sup>7</sup>

The consequences of this unholy alliance of law and reason are serious. First of all, sin tends to be minimized because reason, believing in works, must pretend that the burden of sin is lighter than it really is. Second, the miracle of divine forgiveness becomes incomprehensible: “Reason would like acceptance by God to be strictly on the basis of the *quid pro quo*, for it cannot understand how so inestimable a treasure should be given for nothing.” Third, reason’s false inference about God leads to false religion. Thinking that only one who keeps the law can draw near to God, reason attempts to keep God in debt by performing good works.<sup>8</sup>

In summary, it is important to note that Luther has no objection to reason, strictly defined, as the capacity to make judgments and logical arguments. This notion of reason has a highly esteemed place in the world, and it also has a role in theology, provided that it takes its premises from the Word.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. p. 23.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid., p. 85.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., p. 86.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 101.

The "reason" that is the object of Luther's vitriol is not the formal ability to think, but a **way of thinking** that is caught in a web of legalism. The presuppositions of the "world"—that a good and righteous God can love only those who are good and righteous—are simply false in the heavenly realm. As Brian Gerrish notes: "The opinion of the world is that the unrequited lover is not merely a tragic figure but a fool . . . and Luther fully accepted this consequence, gladly admitting the folly of God's love. To be God is to return good for evil: that is God's glory. What God requires of men is that they give him his glory. Reason cannot, because it is blinded by legalism. Only faith gives God his glory; for faith is the correlative of grace, and God's grace is his glory."<sup>9</sup>

Luther's definition of faith might seem simpler: it is basic trust and confidence in God. It is not something created by ourselves, but rather something that God creates in us. In matters of faith, we are passive while God is active. How is God active? Through the Word, preached, written, and sacramental. God uses these means to give us his promises, which, in turn, engender trust and confidence. Note that faith for Luther is not merely belief. That would intellectualize faith and relegate it to the realm of the cognitive. Rather, for Luther faith is much more profound and rich. It fills the whole self and redirects it to its early tasks of caring for creation and neighbor. Any definition that emphasizes something we do—our response, our duty to belief, etc.—betrays Luther's fundamental insight about faith as a gift of God.

We must introduce yet a third term into this discussion: vocation. Faith and reason, the Commission would submit, find their most important point of intersection in Martin Luther's concept of vocation (see Appendix I for full discussion). Vocation assumes a context in which God is publicly worshipped, acknowledged, and studied. As understood within the Judeo-Christian tradition, God is the one who made all things and continues to sustain creation. God's will for humankind is unsurpassably revealed in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth.

Christians understand their vocation or "calling" from God in a twofold sense. First, they see themselves as being acted upon by God in Christ through the Holy Spirit. God has declared them righteous and free because of Christ's work on the cross. Second, this freedom secured by the cross is to be expressed in service to God's world. In other

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., p. 101

words, Christians are given "callings" or vocations whereby they bring all resources available in order to benefit the neighbor and advance the public good. This "is consistent with a long tradition in Judeo-Christian theology: a cosmic 'Hey you! What will you do with your life?'"<sup>10</sup>

The role of reason is thus clarified. It does not seek autonomously to divine the will of God (though informed by faith it will inquire into the ways of God). Its proper role is on this earth where it is an indispensable tool for investigating and celebrating God's creation, probing the mysteries of the human condition, and furthering the well-being of society.

<sup>10</sup> Mark Engbretson, "Church Connections at Augsburg: Past, Present, and Future, etc p.13.

## II. The Augsburg Model of Faith and Learning

The dialogue of faith and reason, we have concluded, is most productive in the context of vocation.<sup>11</sup> The importance of vocation—in its fullest sense—is what differentiates a Lutheran college from other models of higher education. At one end of the spectrum is the secular university. There religion may be understood to be an important part of human experience. Because it is difficult to comprehend a culture without an awareness of its religious traditions, some secular universities (but not all) include departments of “Religious Studies” that engage in the investigation and scholarly appreciation of religion without giving favor to any specific faith.

The secular university welcomes private expressions of religious faith. Weekly services often are available in the Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, and Muslim traditions, but are strictly voluntary. On occasions when religious sentiments are expressed (blessing at commencement, etc.) care will be taken that such statements are interdenominational and intercreedal, keeping in mind the diversity of the community.

The Bible School model falls on the other end of the spectrum. The Bible College would claim that all aspects of life are governed by the proposition that Jesus Christ is Lord. This confession is an integral and explicit part of the entire curriculum. The Bible College student receives in-depth training in the Scriptures and learns direct application of those insights in fields such as biology, psychology, and political science. Secular culture and science, however, are excluded if and when they contradict the particular sectarian religious and cultural views that such a college may hold. Here faith engulfs reason and will not allow it independent existence. Such a college’s primary purpose is to train students for future work in congregations and to teach in Christian schools. It also prepares students for work in mission fields overseas. This model requires daily attendance at chapel. Students also are asked to participate in a weekly Bible study group (to be formed at orientation) and to attend services at a local congregation.

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<sup>11</sup> Two texts are particularly helpful in understanding Luther’s theology of vocation and the paper has significantly relied on them: Donald Heiges, *The Christian’s Calling* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) and Gustaf Wingren, *Luther on Vocation*, trans. Carl C. Rasmussen (Philadelphia: Muhlenberg, 1957).

Neither of these educational models is entirely satisfactory. A model that insists on reason alone (e.g. the secular university) can result in a species of individualism that is self-centered, too turned inward. A model that emphasizes faith at the expense of reason (e.g. the Bible college) risks devaluing the world and what God does in the world. Working together, however, faith and reason can lead to the wholeness of the individual and thus of the community.

The Augsburg model of education, then, has the following characteristics:

1. Augsburg will continue to embrace and nourish its identity as a college of the Lutheran Church. Therefore, the Augsburg model of education is grounded in Luther's conception of vocation (see above and Appendix I). As a college of the ELCA and indeed because of its own traditions (see Appendix II), Augsburg shares the ecumenical vision of its governing body. At the same time, however, it honors its roots in the Lutheran Free Church, acknowledging in particular the legacy that lingers in the Augsburg ethos and that may make Augsburg unique even among Lutheran colleges. This inheritance includes:
  - a. Its heritage of no strong outside church influence or formal structures to require conformity or obedience. Thus Augsburg can defend freedom of thought and academic inquiry.
  - b. Its particular emphasis on the priesthood of all believers and the concomitant emphasis on individual freedom in matters of religious belief. Although Augsburg ascribes to the central creeds of the Lutheran Church, it is committed to the paradox that such authority co-exists with the individual conscience. It endorses also the fuller understanding of "the priesthood of all believers" that sees each individual as a mediator between God and other people; thus the "priesthood of all believers" supports participation and responsibility in the community.
  - c. An explicit egalitarian and democratic ethos that welcomes diversity; this means that Augsburg actively welcomes faculty and students from outside the Lutheran tradition; people with dissenting views on a broad range of social, political, and religious issues; and students with a broad range of academic accomplishment and potential.

d. The tradition of pietism that stresses translating one's personal relationship with God into "*caritas*," which might better be translated as "caring for creation" than as "charity." Thus Augsburg tradition has promoted an education that enables works to spring from faith, emphasizing service in the community to an extent that is unusual even for a Lutheran college. This is the basis of its service learning programs and its motto, "Education for Service." Augsburg continues to stress that attention to personal ethics is an essential component of education. At the same time Augsburg recognizes that the climate of moral discourse has changed in the last few decades, and that the language of simple prohibition does not readily accommodate the complexities or needs of its present community. Nevertheless through its wellness programs, public forums on ethical issues, and other "extra-curricular" activities (campus ministry programs, prayer groups, etc.), Augsburg continues to encourage students to recognize both the personal and communal consequences of their moral choices and to reflect on how these choices reflect their understanding of their relationship with God.

3. In its strictly academic function as well as in its role as a college of the church, Augsburg is committed to the search for truth. Augsburg will not insist that individual students (and staff and faculty) be Lutherans or even Christians. But it will insist that what a person chooses to believe matters. Both faith and reason obligate us to make choices, to sort out what is patently false from what may be true:

The capacity for reverence is the bedrock of our honor of God and of our respect for human excellence. Without reverence, we could not sustain the human observation of the irresolvable difference between God and us. Nor could we long sustain the ancient and continuing need to distinguish the noble from the base; the higher from the lower; the better from the worse. This prompt drove the morally acute long before the birth, death and resurrection of Christ--and it drove Luther, too--to cultivate the faculty for discrimination and--more than that--to accept the call (implicit in the gift of life) to embellish the reputation of the noble, the higher and the better--not in the hope of closing the yawning chasm between

God and Man, but to bring human life as close to its potential as deep thinking, civil deliberation and careful practice can accomplish.<sup>12</sup>

And:

... if any one hallmark can be used to describe an educated person, it is the ability to draw helpful distinctions. Those who wish to argue that making no distinctions in any matter is ethically preferable will, if consistent, also have difficulty in defending the Liberal Arts against vocational education, or no education at all.<sup>13</sup>

Because it is a Lutheran college, the pursuit of truth at Augsburg is tempered by a certain intellectual modesty. Lutheran theology and its understanding of the fallen human condition foil all attempts to claim the ultimate truth of a particular position.<sup>14</sup> But the revelation that we are saved solely by Christ underscores the fragility of humanity and suggests that absolute claims of truth in the human realm are inappropriate. Therefore, Lutheran scholarship must be accompanied by humility: "The unrelenting attack of Lutheran theology upon human arrogance . . . supplies the critical condition of an education both liberal and practical, for it opens us to the fact that we can do nothing, including learn, by ourselves."<sup>15</sup> Scholars trained in the Lutheran tradition must make their best claims about truth, but then concede that they haven't fully captured it.

4. Therefore, Augsburg is dedicated to freedom of academic inquiry. Academic freedom requires responsibility (reason); but **because of its "Lutheranness,"** (perhaps paradoxically) Augsburg does not invoke its "Lutheranness" to silence controversial voices.
5. Augsburg will remain committed to "intentional diversity." This does not mean that Augsburg will weaken its religious ties. In fact "Augsburg's stance of

<sup>12</sup> William Frame, "The Augsburg Convocation: Then and Now." Address given at the 1997-1998 Convocation at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN., September 3, 1997.

<sup>13</sup> Engbretson., p 12.

<sup>14</sup> Indeed, there are gradations of modesty within the Lutheran tradition. For instance, the understanding of Scripture has been a source of tension between the Missouri Synod and the ELCA. Missouri will claim that a proper understanding of the Gospel necessarily includes claims about the inerrancy of the Bible—certainly not a modest theological assertion! The ELCA stresses that Christ is at the heart of the Scriptures, thus freeing the church to admit to minor human errors in the transmission of God's Word.

<sup>15</sup> William Frame, "On the Centennial Anniversary of the Lutheran Free Church." Speech given at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN. on September 20, 1997.

inclusivity is . . . rooted precisely in the Gospel of Jesus Christ . . . God's love extends to all."<sup>16</sup>

Augsburg's commitment to diversity is a function not only of the Gospel, but also of Luther's notion of vocation. If vocation urges "special attention to those pushed to the fringes of society,"<sup>17</sup> then Augsburg is acting consistently with its Lutheran heritage by providing special programs (e.g. Academic Enrichment, CLASS) for people who require them to fulfill their individual vocations.

Moreover, Augsburg remains faithful to its own history by deliberately seeking to educate students having a broad range of academic backgrounds and interests: not only the top 20% of high school graduates, but also those who may not yet have fully realized their academic potential; not only the students who will enter the professions, but also those who will be "the farmer," "the worker," and "the businessman."<sup>18</sup> Its curriculum will be shaped by Luther's notion that education should "cultivate the arts and sciences required for the management of this all-too-human world."<sup>19</sup>

Finally, Augsburg, perhaps paradoxically, can strengthen its devotion to faith--and to the dialogue between faith and reason--by deliberately recruiting some faculty, staff, and students who are not Lutherans, or even Christians. As our colleagues Curt Paulsen and Catherine Paulsen argue:

A homogeneous environment, where everyone subscribes to similar, comparable or the same beliefs, suffers the strong probability of sterile agreement, a deadening homeostasis that can lack the energy or motivation necessary for creativity. There is little to push against; variety is needed.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Engebretson, p. 12.

<sup>17</sup> See Appendix III.

<sup>18</sup> See Section Augsburg College: Tradition and Heritage, p. 6.

<sup>19</sup> William Frame, "Augsburg: The Once and Future College." Inaugural Address, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN. October 11, 1997.

<sup>20</sup> Curt Paulsen and Catherine Paulsen, "The Church-Affiliated College: A Context for Advancing Pluralism, Multiculturalism, and Diversity." Presented at the conference "The Church College's Postmodern Opportunity," Rhodes College, Memphis, TN., May 2-4, 1997, p. 6.

Indeed, Paulsen and Paulsen contend, the church-related college that fosters dialectical<sup>21</sup> conversations between opposing viewpoints (especially the sacred and secular) can create unique opportunities for learning:

This dialectic is manifest in a community that is tolerant, without compromise on either side; has conviction, yet maintains openness, caring, and fairness beyond simple tolerance; and recognizes that the reality of pluralism, multiculturalism, and diversity is only as strong as commitment to a faith that offers the necessary cohesiveness for an energized, spirited community where possibilities for learning are unlimited.<sup>22</sup>

6. To insure that such dialogue can take place, however, Augsburg must maintain a community that is committed to engaging in such dialogue. This does not necessarily mean the installation of a "Lutheran litmus test" in hiring faculty and staff or in recruiting students, but it may require maintaining on campus a "critical mass" of Lutherans and people openly engaged by matters of Christian faith.<sup>23</sup> Implicit in this point is the Commission's comprehensive definition of "curriculum." Of course the curriculum includes formal classes, but in keeping with the college's emphasis on "the whole student," it is inclusive as possible of all areas of campus life.

<sup>21</sup> Paulsen and Paulsen define "dialectic" as opposites that create wholeness: "The created order consists of pairs of opposites where both elements need to exist for either element to perpetuate. Examples: life/death, female/male, night/day, land/sea, sleep/awake, etc." Ibid., p. 2

<sup>22</sup> Ibid. p. 7.

<sup>23</sup> Specific recommendations follow. Here the Commission wishes to call attention to several articles by Augsburg faculty: Bruce Reichenbach, "Education Shaped by Faith and Values of the Christian Church." Paper presented at The Meaning of Church Connections forum at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN, October 10, 1996. Also Bruce Reichenbach, "Mission and Hiring Policies in the Christian College," *Intersections* Summer 1997, pp.13-19. Also Paulsen and Paulsen, p. 6

### III. Recommendations<sup>24</sup>

The following recommendations are related to campus climate, and can be implemented in part through individual and group actions, and in part through administrative decisions:

1. We believe that Augsburg's leaders can and should make clear to faculty and staff that it is appropriate to provide time and opportunity for reasoned dialogue on matters of faith, reason, and ethics as they relate to many and/or all matters of academic and personal interest.

We stress that this dialogue can and should take place beyond the confines of a Religion class or a chapel period. The 1996 Augsburg Self Study document prepared for the North Central Association accreditation review noted that this institution can provide the opportunity "for the community to wrestle with issues of faith and values through supporting a classroom environment which makes possible regular questioning, referencing, and reinforcing theological issues in non-Religion classes (since it is possible at a Christian college to unhesitatingly introduce religious themes where appropriate) and which enables student to provide volunteer service opportunities to the community."<sup>25</sup>

Faculty in particular may have the opportunity to devote at least some classroom time to content or curricular issues which students may perceive to challenge faith or values (e.g. creationism vs. evolution). This may not be possible or ideal in all courses: we acknowledge the tension between adequately preparing students for mastery of course-related material and addressing "important" issues not closely related to such courses. However, as discussed in Appendix III, we believe that faculty should be encouraged to "profess," not just facilitate, and to be open to those "teachable moments" when they can, perhaps quickly or perhaps in grater detail, indicate that they are engaged not only in their disciplines but in their own dialogues with faith and reason, and that they

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<sup>24</sup> The Commission acknowledges and has based some of its recommendations on Bruce Reichenbach's "Education Shaped by Faith and Values of the Christian Church" and Lynne Lorenzen, "Church Connections: A Theological Perspective," also presented at The Meaning of Church Connections forum at Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN. on October 10, 1996.

<sup>25</sup> Self Study Report prepared for North Central Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Institutions of Higher Education, prepared by Augsburg College, Minneapolis, MN., August 1996, p. 38.

are amenable to discussing such issues outside of, if not in, the formal classroom environment.

Given the constraints of time of Weekend College and its students, individual grappling with such issues as part of course assignments may well remain the principal means of carrying out this dialogue in this area of Augsburg's curriculum. Even here, however, we recommend that the College find ways to explicitly encourage and even model such dialogue. Regular "sampler" or "issues" forums for Weekend College students, featuring both Augsburg faculty and staff and those from the wider community, might provide a welcome environment for such dialogue for many in Weekend College who would otherwise be unable to participate. Public discussion of Christianity and religious issues should be a regular feature of formal convocations, forums, and perhaps even debates for all Augsburg students, not only those in the day school. At present, the Christensen Symposium and Batalden Conference provide such opportunities. The Commission endorses the suggestion, made by Mert Strommen, that Augsburg add a Spiritual Awareness Week to its calendar of annual events.

But dialogue between faith and reason should occur not only in the classroom or in public, structured events, but also between students, faculty, and staff, even in the inner dialogue of the learner as he or she grapples with ideas presented in books, films, and increasingly through computer-based means. Although some students already have begun to address these issues by the time they enroll at Augsburg, many more will need more explicit guidance and encouragement in order to do so. An attitude and environment that encourages raising and discussing such issues must come from faculty and staff, and must involve "extracurricular time" as well as "academic time."

Chapel and campus ministry will continue to have vital roles in promoting and Preserving Christian identity and thus vocation. Regular chapel in a key dimension in Augsburg's religious life: "our chapel services, voluntary and regular, provide a permanent platform for daily prayer and the telling of the Good News, helping, thereby to keep the tension between faith and reason in balance for the several of our curricular programs which sponsor this dialogue."<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Frame, "The Augsburg Convocation: Then and Now."

But other areas of campus life should be involved as well. This is already happening, for example in athletic teams' prayer meetings. But the College should encourage and identify additional activities and organizations in which leaders can empower discussions of faith and reason led both by students and others. By encouraging devotions, Bible study, and guest speakers, "extracurricular" organizations can create and maintain an environment in which students can better understand their differences, discover opportunities to share faith experiences, and find support if they wish to learn or grow in their faith.

As faith is informed, challenged, and ultimately strengthened by exposure to and dialogue with other faiths and belief systems, we recommend that Augsburg provide for regularly scheduled convocations, parallel in structure to chapel, forums, and debates featuring speakers of non-Christian faiths. These would provide an arena for open and public exploration of the issues common to and distinct from Christianity.

Such presentations would contribute to an increased atmosphere of openness on campus, encouraging to those who feel marginalized or in the minority in terms of association, identity, or power. Augsburg needs to promote such an openness, for students, faculty, and staff, and should be willing to implement any programs or policies which would secure and encourage it.

2. Consistent with our view of faith as defined in Appendix I, cognizant of the many competing definitions of this word in contemporary culture, and aware of the College's excellent (but often unappreciated) record in this area, we urge the Augsburg community to present its Christianity heritage and faith with humility, not "imperialism." That is to say, we differentiate an attitude of deep gratitude for God's gift of love and grace through Jesus and the consequent wish to share it freely because of its great value from the attitude of those who wish all others to be as they are, and to see the world and act within it as they do, at least in all major respects.

3. We encourage Augsburg's academic administrators, as well as faculty, to support and develop cross-disciplinary dialogue and courses in which issues relevant to faith and reason can be studied and discussed.

4. Several intellectual historians have suggested that the tendency to specialization and the increasing professionalism of the academy from the eighteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries has led, despite clear gains in specialized knowledge, to a loss of intellectual community among academics—a practiced inability to achieve the kind of dialogue we have discussed above. Although this centrifugal, controversial trend continues in some parts of academia in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (witness the well-publicized splits between various factions of anthropologists on several university campuses), some parts of the academy, perhaps even led, ironically, by the very natural sciences that served as the model of intellectual specialization, have in recent years moved significantly toward intellectual cooperation across disciplines.

5. We hope the College can respond creatively in its academic structures and offerings to this issue. As relatively minor steps, we suggest encouraging the experiments already underway (sporadically for at least 30 years, but with little or no ongoing or college-wide support) to pair courses across departments and team-teach courses that cross disciplinary boundaries. We further suggest scrutiny of the liberal arts orthodoxy that students become well-rounded by enrolling in a large number of disconnected courses in various disciplines. As at least an optional alternative to this cafeteria approach, we suggest consideration of a program that develops a deeper level of discussion of selected areas, perhaps complementary (not similar) to those of a student's major and minor concentrations.

6. We recommend revision of current practices of hiring faculty and staff to ensure that ability and interest beyond one's specialty or discipline, in the Christian faith, be taken significantly into account.

This does not mean that membership in a Lutheran congregation is required or even sufficient for the kind of people whom the College seeks to have work with its students. What is needed, instead, is a commitment to the development of the whole person, including engagement with Christian faith and the employee's sense of vocation.

One possible implementation of this, used at some other institutions, is to establish a faculty interview committee which meets with every on-campus candidate. Use of such a committee as part of the hiring process can also provide candidates with a broader perspective on the College's mission than at least some departments may be able

to provide. Regardless of the organizational structure, however, the key issue is that those making hiring decisions be broadened to include members of the larger college community, so that more than mere departmental concerns can be addressed.

In addition to alterations in hiring practices, we urge the establishment of a regular, ongoing program of faculty and staff development that will both encourage and educate the Augsburg community to carry out the dialogue between faith and reason inside and outside the classroom. In particular, those efforts involving faculty members might become an additional and important focus of Augsburg's faculty development program. Such a program can begin for new faculty and staff with orientation programs that present and interpret (even critically) the College's mission in more than cursory fashion.

The following recommendations have measurable outcomes. Put briefly, we challenge Augsburg and its supporters to commit economic resources to the scholarship of faith and reason. Various government agencies and foundations support academic ventures related to their own agendas, and these have achieved tremendous impact on Augsburg's campus not least because of their economic power. If the Augsburg community believes in the importance of the dialogue between faith and reason for its life and mission, it follows that this belief should also be reflected in its economic commitments. In particular, we suggest the following four steps/actions:

1. Provide time and economic support for faculty scholarship (research, writing, and course development) in areas related to the dialogue between faith and reason.
2. Provide more regular opportunities for both Day School and Weekend College students to participate in this dialogue outside of their classes, by means of special and/or ongoing forums and both public and small-group gatherings, at either no or minimal cost to participants.
3. Stimulate the intellectual environment on campus through the establishment of visiting professorships in one or more areas in which faith and reason interact. These might be, for example, in areas related to Augsburg's curricular strengths such as urban studies, global justice, community service, science and ethics, and

various business-related issues, or in areas not as well represented among current faculty and staff.

4. Create an Institute for Faith and Learning analogous to the Institute for Youth and Family Ministry. Such an institute might provide an organizational home for some of the items above (the visiting professorships, public events and forums, and support for faculty scholarship), but would in addition provide focus and intellectual continuity to the College's efforts in this area. Minimally, such an Institute would have a director and one or more staff members, and funds to bring together scholars and/or presenters from other academic institutions and from government, business, and scientific, charitable, and religious institutions.

Such an institute can serve both the local Augsburg community, including students, staff, and faculty, and the wider community, including local, regional, national, and international participants in the worldwide dialogue between faith and reason. A highly visible Institute for Faith and Learning could lift up the core of Augsburg's mission to the wider community, and by so doing could augment the College's ability to sustain that mission.

## Appendix I

### The Dialogue between Faith and Reason: The Historical Context

The "dialogue" between faith and reason might suggest that the two are diametrically opposed. Certainly reason sometimes can be contemptuous of faith. And within Christian tradition, faith frequently has felt threatened by reason. Thus a Jerome, en route to Jerusalem on a pilgrimage, has a vision in which he is "caught up in the spirit and dragged before the judgment seat of the Judge." Here he is called to account for his love of secular learning, the classics: "Thou art a follower of Cicero," he is told, "and not of Christ."<sup>27</sup> These days, Jerome more likely would be accused of following Darwin rather than Genesis; therefore we want to address at some length what popular understanding sees as the competing claims of faith and science.

The example of Jerome, however, can be countered by the example of Origen of Alexandria (185-254), an early defender of academic freedom (albeit with some cautions). According to his student Gregory Thaumaturgus,

He [Origen] required us to study philosophy by reading all the existing writings of the ancients, both philosophers and religious poets, taking every care not to put aside or reject any . . . , apart from the writings of atheists . . . He selected everything that was useful and true in each philosopher and set it before us, but condemned what was false . . . For us there was nothing forbidden, nothing hidden, nothing inaccessible. We were allowed to learn every doctrine, non-Greek and Greek, both spiritual and secular, both divine and human; with the utmost freedom we went into everything and examined it thoroughly, taking our fill of and enjoying the pleasures of the soul.<sup>28</sup>

In the following section, we will take up the history of our question in western thought, readily acknowledging that our efforts are much too brief to do that history justice. Since we will insist on the essential compatibility of faith and reason, we will particularly attend to the traditions that support that claim. We will also identify and address some tensions between faith and reason within the tradition, the most important

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<sup>27</sup> Jerome, in *Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Vol VI, trans. W.H.Fremantle (New York: Christian Literature Co., 1893), pp. 35-36.

<sup>28</sup> David C. Lindberg, "Science and the Early Church," in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*, ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), p. 24.

being the challenges that many people believe the sciences present to the friendship of faith and reason.

#### **A. Biblical Traditions: The Old Testament**

The Old Testament heritage of Christianity asserts that nature itself is not divine, (it was created by God), and that the world of time and matter is good. God's promise and blessings come through history, and God leads us and all people in time and space. Human work is important, and civilizations are of real value. Humans are to have dominion over the earth as stewards--as accountable to God. These points, although firmly rooted in the Hebrew scriptures, have not always been clearly appreciated within Christianity, much less outside of it.

1. The Biblical view of the material world does not denigrate or make light of human life. In the Judeo-Christian tradition, actual historical life is taken seriously. It is not supposed that "spiritual life" or the "life of the mind" takes place in any other circumstance than in the human being's actual historical life. It does not happen a step above or a step removed from actual life.

Although other religious traditions also encourage the faithful to care for others, this care in many cases extends only to the extent of concern that the others share the same religious viewpoint as the believers. George Cornell, an AP writer, was quoted as stating:

Complaints often are made that Christmas has become too materialistic. But that's basically what it's all about -- the highest exaltation of matter, of human flesh. ...As the late theologian -- United Church of Christ leader, the Rev. Dr. Truman Douglass often stressed, 'Christianity is the most materialistic of all religions.' It is the only faith that asserts the incarnation -- the manifestation of God's will and way for humanity in a human being, the man Jesus, in the blood and sinews that compose all peoples. . . . Unlike Oriental faiths that abjure the flesh and physical existence as a corrupting prison and seek release from it into a spirit realm, Christianity regards the world, its material makeup and biological life, as basic components and a springboard to the perfecting of it and consummate fulfilling reality. . . . This is the materialistic bent that impels Christianity in its worldly works, in its far-flung operations for the poor and homeless, in its running of medical clinics and hospitals, in its maintenance of schools and universities, in its activist efforts for fuller justice, better ways, in its provision of shelter, food and clothing for those in need. 'As

you have done it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you have done it to me,' Jesus said<sup>29</sup>.

2. Further, in the Biblical tradition, and not least with respect to the doctrine of creation, God is distinct from creation. If God, or the evidence of God and God's activity, may be seen in the created order, God is not in the creation. The Biblical tradition does not include pantheism. In consequence of the fact that God and nature are distinct, human beings may investigate and study whatever "is" without being afraid of "injuring" God. That gives a fundamental and important freedom in the study of nature, the world and the universe.
3. It is also true that there are changes in the way Biblical texts have been understood and interpreted. In the Genesis account of creation, for example, when God declared the creation to be good the declaration was understood to refer to a point in time when the creation was pristine and innocent. In the present time, one of the ways of understanding the goodness of creation is to see the creation as intelligible, as responding to the questions which human beings put to it. Moreover, when the same questions are put to creation, the answers that are received are not radically different or disjointed. There is a regularity to creation. The goodness of creation is seen in its being available for investigation and understanding.
4. There is in the Biblical tradition a deep and abiding interest in and respect for the past. The descendants of Jacob are encouraged to remember "the pit from which they were digged and the rock from which they were hewn." It is worth noting that when the Biblical writers recount the past they do not idealize it; rather than making "plaster saints," they are remarkable about recording the human flaws of even the important persons in their past.
5. There is also a concern for passing on the tradition. In the Passover tradition, for example, the Passover meal was intended to recall the deliverance from Egypt. When the oldest son asked his father what the meal was about, the father would explain what the exodus meant to the children of Israel.
6. Finally, there is a deep and abiding interest, illustrated not least in the Book of Proverbs, in passing on to subsequent generations information gleaned from experience about how to live successfully in the world. If it is true that the wise man could observe that "of the making of many books there is no end and much study is a weariness to the flesh," that did not prevent either the writing of books or the diligent reading and study of them.

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*Minneapolis Star*. December 24, 1977.

## **B. Plato and Classical Tradition**

Like the Jews, and in contrast to all other neighboring cultures, Greek philosophers did not view nature as divine, or humanity as subject to the whims of myriad major and minor deities. In contrast to the Jews, however, the Greeks were very curious about nature, and pioneered the concept of a "natural explanation." Over a period of several centuries Greek philosophers developed what are now known as "Western" ideas of reason, logic, and truth. They also applied numbers to nature in their quest to understand it, and developed volumes of what we would now call scientific (natural) explanations. Notably, however, by the time of Plato and Aristotle, no one attempted to apply Greek philosophy and science to help society; it was rather a means of training the minds of the elite. For example, steam engines were used for toys, not technology. The Romans, conversely, were practical people. Very few were curious; they mostly accepted what the Greeks wrote, and it is notable that their impressive technological accomplishments owed little to the Greek philosophers.

## **C. Biblical Traditions: The New Testament**

We do not have space here for more than a few glimpses of ideas relevant to our theme. One most important realization is that even more than in the Old Testament, much of the world view of its authors is not written, but assumed to be understood from within the culture of the period. Especially within the Gospels we see not so much those aspects of the culture which are affirmed, but those which are challenged or transcended.

1. Jesus himself led to the secularization of our understanding of history with his words "The rain falls on the just and the unjust," and "Do you think that when the tower of Siloam fell, those who died were greater sinners?" Jesus' answer of "no" offended those who wished to find divine approval and meaning in every natural occurrence, and to influence events by moral effort. But Jesus continued: "...but unless you repent you will all likewise perish." The focus was radically different. Although Jesus is noted for his teaching, and many non-Christians respect his moral teachings, Christians look to the person/event of Jesus as totally affecting human life.
2. Paul was educated in both Jewish and Greek cultures; he was well aware of competing world views, including Stoicism, Epicureanism, and Cynicism as well

as Judaism and the officially sanctioned worship of the Roman Emperor.<sup>30</sup> From his letters we also have the sense that he was familiar with the claims of the many "mystery religions" that were sweeping the Roman world in his day. The cities of the Mediterranean world in Paul's time were in many ways similar to today's Southern California, with a variegated assortment of peoples and passions, and a plethora of spiritual quests and offerings.

Pauline Christianity deals with the diversity of the urban world; he is aware of social issues and polarities: political power and the lack of it; slaves and slave owners; Jews and Gentiles; men and women. To Paul, all of these are less important than being "in Christ"--in fact, from Paul's revolutionary perspective, these polarities dissolve for those who are in Christ.

Although Paul was at times a moralist, that was not his main point; his outlook did not base morality on religion. For Paul, religion is a human contribution relative to God. Christianity, on the other hand, stresses God's reaching out to humans. For Paul the Christ event has social (hence moral) implications, but they are overshadowed by the coming end of the age. He does not expect moral perfection in this world, yet at the same time he is not world-denying as were many of the competing religious movements of his day. He encouraged neither utopians nor hermits.

Paul did not have words exactly corresponding to our words "faith" and "reason" at his disposal, but his Jewish background would have affirmed the world of human activity and his use of the best of Rabbinical methods to interpret scripture indicates the depth of his scholarship.

#### **D. The Early Church**

Christianity grew and spread in a Roman world deeply influenced by Greek culture, and this culture also made its mark on the Christian movement. It inherited a positive view of nature from both the Old Testament and from the Greeks and Romans. But philosophy and science (and most of Greek scholarship) were a low priority for three closely related reasons: 1. the priority for Christians was to love their neighbors and spread the Gospel, not satisfy one's curiosity; 2. Christ was coming soon, very soon, and hence Christians must be urgently engaged in the Gospel; and 3. science, as propagated in their world, did not contribute at all to Christian service. As noted in the introduction, we have evidence that Greek philosophy and science were studied approvingly in the

<sup>30</sup>

Philip Quanbeck II, Ph.D. Thesis; Luther Theological Seminary, 1998.

Christian schools in Alexandria, but were rejected in some other centers.<sup>31</sup> To Tertullian's rhetorical question, "What has Athens to do with Jerusalem?" at least some Christians then would say "Not much." Christians in later centuries would revisit this question, and provide more often than not a positive answer, but not before the societal and intellectual context had been transformed during the Middle Ages.

### E. The Middle Ages

Few eras suffer from a worse reputation than the Middle Ages. In our culture medieval has become synonymous with "backward" and "primitive." Many see it as a time when an unyielding ecclesiastical hierarchy dominated intellectual life and allowed no dissent. In this supposed "age of faith," learning was pedantic, passive, and sterile.

However, this caricature of the Middle Ages quickly crumbles when subjected to serious historical inquiry. To be sure, the period began with the fall of Rome, and was deeply influenced by the economic and social as well as military decline of Roman civilization. However, the Middle Ages were marked by enormous social and cultural change, and by a significant rebuilding of not only intellectual foundations but of politics, law, technology, and science. Although monastic communities, in particular, helped preserve the Christian writings and worldview by retreating from a rapidly collapsing secular world, over the centuries they also developed agricultural innovations and technologies such as the mechanical clock. Although it is true that during the early Middle Ages nature was notably absent from works of art, monks such as Francis of Assisi led the way to a restored sense of the goodness of nature (and even to realistic backgrounds in paintings!).

The concomitant reintroduction of the idea of Law, from both Jewish (Biblical) and Roman sources, led to a renewed interest in all forms of knowledge, both in the Book of Revelation and in the Book of Nature, which were both assumed to reveal the truth about God's world. Reason was applied to both scripture and revelation, often with the explicit goal of informing (and even encouraging) faith. Developments in the convents and monasteries eventually led to a significantly more positive view of the importance of nature and the secular world: even though most monks continued to live in their monasteries, and many continued to regard their callings as superior to those of ordinary

<sup>31</sup> David C. Lindberg, "Science and the Early Church." *God & Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Christianity and Science*. Ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers. (University of California Press, 1986).

mortals, their changed/restored picture of the world in turn influenced a gradually transformed secular society.

The impression of a sterile intellectual period is particularly erroneous in regard to the High Middle Ages (1000-1300), when western European Christians were forced to respond to the flood of new ideas that were streaming in from the East. This "new learning" consisted of works by Greek authors both pagan (Aristotle) and Christian (the church fathers), Muslim writers such as Avicenna and Averroes, and Jewish thinkers like Moses Maimonides. The contact between these ideas and Christianity in the West proved to be combustible. A highly creative period in the church's history was the result and it continues to provide insights on the proper relationship between faith and reason. It goes far beyond the scope of this paper to give a detailed analysis of specific issues the church faced. However, it might be helpful to outline the method used by universities to resolve academic questions.

As noted above, the Middle Ages faced the problem of how to relate different cultures and thought worlds, namely those of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. While Christianity was dominant, it still had to wrestle with the questions posed by these other traditions. Controverted issues were dealt with by debates that were guided and structured by the universities. Participation in the debates was normally limited to educated people with competence in philosophy and theology. This tended to mean the discussions were of high quality as well as being historically aware. The fact that universities were under ecclesiastical control undoubtedly skewed the conversations but the range of issues discussed was nevertheless significant.

Furthermore, participants in these discussions were kept accountable by means of public disputation. Debates by their very nature had to be kept open, since opposing views had to be heard and responded to. Truth could be achieved, it was maintained, only by dialectical inquiry conducted publicly within a community of scholarship.

Finally, these discussions took place within a liberal arts context, which helped ensure that faith and reason were taken seriously. The search for truth dominated the agenda rather than the utility of an idea. The lesson for our times is that when the faith-reason discussion is removed from the liberal arts arena the results are troubling. Faith tends to be discarded as irrelevant because it fails to promote vocational skills while reason is denigrated to being merely a "practical" skill driven by bourgeois interests.

In summary, the High Middle Ages successfully used the method of public disputation to advance learning and understanding in pursuit of the truth. The public nature of the debate helped to ensure that opposing points of view were taken seriously and that a wide range of opinions was considered. In addition, the liberal arts atmosphere

made a high level of discussion possible because it meant participants shared a background and vocabulary that was grounded in subjects such as philosophy, rhetoric, logic and theology.

#### F. Luther

In 1537, Martin Luther was on his deathbed—or thought he was. In his fifty-four years, he had witnessed dramatic changes in late medieval culture and religion. A significant portion of the altered landscape can be attributed to his own labors. But stress and work had taken their toll. We do not know the precise nature of his illness but the catalogue of Luther's symptoms is alarming: gout, constipation, ringing in ears, headaches, fainting spells and chest pains.

In this context, he penned a document known as the Smalcald Articles, in all probability thinking that it would be his final theological testament. The treatise was also political; it was written at the request of his prince in order that the Lutherans might have a basic outline of their teachings in preparation for negotiations with Rome. Thus the Smalcald Articles have been seen by many scholars as reflective of the reformer's heartfelt convictions.

Not surprisingly, the center of this document is the teaching on justification by grace through faith. As Luther says:

The first and chief article is this, that Jesus Christ, our God and Lord, "was put to death for our trespasses and raised again for our justification" (Romans 4:25)...Nothing in this article can be given up or compromised, even if heaven and earth and things temporal should be destroyed...On this article rests all that we teach and practice against the pope, the devil, and the world. Therefore we must be quite certain and have no doubts about it."<sup>32</sup>

But what does Luther mean by justification by grace through faith? Why is this doctrine so important? What are the implications of this teaching for how one lives and works in the world? It is to these questions that we now turn.

Most people view human merit as essential to achieving a proper relationship with God. This was true in the late medieval world in which Martin Luther came of age. The

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<sup>32</sup> *Smalcald Articles II, I, 1-5.*

schemes of salvation varied but all insisted that humans must do something to make themselves right with God.

Note that this does not mean that our good works alone were sufficient. Grace was also underlined as necessary and important; a church that had called Pelagius a heretic some one thousand years before could hardly say otherwise.

Illustrative of late medieval theology is the teaching of the fourteenth century British thinker, William of Ockham. Ockham is of special interest to those interested in Luther because the young German was schooled by devotees of Ockham's theology. In essence, Ockham taught that a proper relationship with God began with a good effort on the part of humanity. He said that one must "do what is in one" (*facere quod in se est*) in order to qualify for supernatural grace. Once grace enters your life your character is "transformed" and then you do good works which lead to your justification before God. Ockham's theology formed the intellectual underpinning for much of late medieval church practice. It was assumed that "good works" (i.e., indulgences) were a *sine qua non* for salvation.

As Luther steeped himself in the world of the Bible during his time in the monastery, he became convinced that this way of conceiving our relationship to God was false. Relying heavily on Paul, he began to believe that one is justified not by works but by faith, and faith alone. Ockham's paradigm and all others that left room for human works or efforts inevitably jeopardized the certainty of salvation. How does one know when one has done enough? Can one ever be sure that one's works have been sufficient to merit the grace necessary for justification?

Luther found great comfort in the God revealed on the cross of Jesus Christ. This was a God who entered deeply into the human condition, even to the point of becoming "sin" (2 Corinthians 5:21) and knowing the desolation and darkness of death, so that men and women might be liberated to serve their neighbors and care for creation. For Luther the God revealed on the cross freed humanity from their anxious quest for meaning, hope, and salvation. Now the basis for that relationship was faith, understood primarily as trust. Even faith itself was understood as a gift, bestowed upon a doubting and despairing humanity through God's gracious word and sacraments.

It is a grave misunderstanding of Luther to think that his views on justification were simply abstract matters of theology with little relevance for earthly life. Luther's rediscovery of a gracious God was not merely an intellectual exercise. Its reverberations would be felt in the homes, villages and town squares of much of Europe.

In the early sixteenth century there were essentially two classes of Christians--- those who withdrew from life such as the monk or nun and the vast majority who continued to live in the "world." The former had vocations or "callings." It was believed that they performed a higher duty or service and thus were able to gain merit for themselves and for those who remained in the world. The latter, such as the farmer in the field or the lawyer in his study, sustained earthly life with their labors. Though only few were capable of the demands of monastic life, most believed that a life of intentional self-denial (poverty and chastity) provided the surest and most certain route to heaven.

Luther's revolutionary understanding of God demolished that system. As he says of Christ in one of his sermons for the season of Advent, "This is what is meant by 'Thy King Cometh.' You do not seek him but he seeks you. You do not find him, he finds you. The preachers come from him, not from you; their sermons come from him, not from you; everything that faith works in you comes from him and not from you."

If we are saved by grace through faith and not works, then the world becomes an entirely different place. It is no longer the realm where we try to placate a demanding God. Moreover, "vocations" are not limited to a special class of Christians who by the supposed holiness of their lives have placed themselves closer to their Creator. Instead the world is now the network of relationships where Christians become instruments or vessels of the love that God has bestowed upon them. Thus all Christians have callings or vocations whereby they live out their lives in the world.

Let us draw attention to some of the implications of this teaching:

1. Vocation includes the whole life of a person and is not simply his or her occupation. All Christians are always "called" (worker, student, neighbor, parent, friend, etc.) because vocation involves all of life's relationships.
2. The purpose of vocation is to live for the sake of others--for their spiritual, physical, moral, and cultural well being. God upholds creation and keeps order by means of vocation. Again, the focus is on the neighbor and the needs of this

world. As Luther said, he doesn't want a cobbler who puts crosses on shoes. He wants a cobbler who makes good, reliable footwear.

3. All ways of fulfilling vocations rank the same with God. As already noted, there are no "higher" or "lower" callings. In the human realm distinctions will be made and the value of work performed will be categorized. But in God's eyes the manager and the worker are both needed to preserve creation.
4. Vocation cannot be boiled down to "ethics." Crucial to preserving a healthy understanding of vocation is the knowledge that one's identity and future have been secured by God's death on the cross. If that essential link is severed, then there is the overwhelming temptation to find "salvation" in one's calling. The result is a life lived in service of self rather than service of neighbor.
5. Vocation is made possible by crucifixion. God entered the human story by becoming vulnerable. Christ knew pain, suffering and death. He became an outcast in order to reconcile the world. The means by which God enables vocation is highly significant. It suggests that the understanding of "calling" includes a special sensitivity to those pushed to the fringes and margins of life. It does not mandate a specific program of action (see #7). It does mean, however, that the poor and others on the borders of life will not be demeaned or ignored and that their needs will receive special attention.
6. Vocation properly locates the role of reason in the Christian faith. Reason cannot be used to comprehend a God who would die on a cross. As Paul says, this is foolishness to the world. However, once one has come to faith, reason must be used in service of neighbor and culture. The worlds of science, literature, arts and commerce are the proper realms of reason. (It is no accident that some of the world's greatest universities grew up on Lutheran soil--Berlin, Gottingen, Erlangen, etc.)
7. This understanding of vocation also properly locates the role of religion and faith in the public realm. Luther's teaching on the two kingdoms (which hovers over this entire discussion) makes clear that faith cannot be quiet in matters political. The political realm is simply another arena where the neighbor is served, albeit in a larger and more abstract sense. Perhaps unique to Christianity, Lutherans (at

their best!) claim no specific Christian agenda for the world. This would be to claim too much; we simply do not know, for example, what God's will is for Middle East or for our relations with Cuba. But we will argue on a human level, marshaling all the powers of reason, for a specific program or approach. However, we dare not "baptize" our particular views as being clear mandates from God.

### **G. Humanism**

In celebrating human potential, humanism sometimes has been accused of dethroning faith in favor of reason. In its more exuberant manifestations, this may be true, but Renaissance and 17th century humanism in particular see faith and reason as quite companionable.

For humanists, reason is not simply the sometimes-mechanical method that Erasmus and Milton would deplore in scholastic logic. Instead, in rediscovering the classics, humanists also revived Plato's definition of reason. It is the divine spark that draws humans to the eternal. Christianized, reason is not the antonym of faith; it is akin to the soul, the imperishable part of humanity that is made in God's image. Reason enables human beings to know the eternal, to detect what is true and good. Thus, wrote John Donne (Holy Sonnet 14), Reason is God's "viceroy in me." Reason, or "erected wit," wrote Sir Philip Sidney (Defense of Poesy), "maketh us know what perfection is," even though our "infected will" may prevent us from "reaching unto it."

Of course reason cannot replace revelation or faith. But it can come close. When Christians arrive in More's imaginary island of Utopia, they discover that reason has enabled the Utopians to arrive at some truths--monotheism, belief in an afterlife, even particulars like penance--that Christians have achieved through the Bible and the authority of Church tradition.

In cultivating reason (which is to be differentiated from reasoning or logic, although it may employ these methods), study becomes a religious and certainly moral enterprise. In "Of Education," a classic of humanist thought, John Milton proclaims:

The end then of learning is to repair the ruins of our first parents by regaining to know God aright, and out of that knowledge to love him, to imitate him, to be like him, as we may the nearest by possessing our souls

of true virtue, which being united to the heavenly grace of faith, makes up the highest perfection.

Sir Philip Sidney concurs. The goal of learning, he writes, is Virtue, knowledge of the true and good.

Virtue necessitates action. For Sidney, learning has "the end of well-doing and not of well-knowing only." And Milton suggests:

I call therefore a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously all the offices, both private and public, of peace and war.

For the humanist, not only should Luther's cobbler make a sturdy pair of shoes, but their wearer should walk in some noble cause.

For this reason, humanists emphasize the *vita activa*-- active engagement in the world. Medieval practitioners of faith might withdraw to the monastery in pursuit of the "*vita contemplativa*." They might reject the "city of man" for the "city of God." But the humanist maintains that the ethical life is spent in public service. A Thomas More becomes Lord Chancellor of England; Sidney dies engaged in military service; Milton joins Oliver Cromwell's cabinet.

The *vita activa* is perhaps more Platonic than Christian, rooted as it is in the *Republic*. But it is certainly capable of explicit Christianization. Sir Thomas More could dream of a utopia based on Christian (faith) and classical (Reason) ideals, even though his medieval Catholicism persuaded him that "utopia" ought to be defined as "nowhere." But other Christians, especially some Protestant reformers, could imagine the triumph of faith and reason in an actual state. Thus the seventeenth century Puritan Revolution in England executed a king to attempt a Christian commonwealth. In the middle of a wilderness, which Puritans experienced as much metaphorically as literally, John Winthrop ("A Model of Christian Charity") told his followers, "For we must consider that we shall be as a city upon a hill."

And reason, cultivated through education, is essential to transforming government to conform with faith. Therefore, some reformers--the younger John Milton among them--thought that faith and reason together can regain Paradise. This idea lingers in the Reform model of higher education described by Richard Hughes.

What should the humanist study? The medieval Liberal Arts were in some ways analogous to the skills component of Augsburg's General Education requirements. The trivium--grammar, rhetoric, and logic--comprehended Augsburg's writing, speaking, and critical thinking requirements. The quadrivium--arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and music--corresponded to the quantitative thinking skill. Of course, the Middle Ages

firmly placed these skills in the service of faith. It is a commonplace to observe that medieval scholarship emphasized deduction, using the liberal arts skills that cultivated reason to demonstrate what revelation and authority already had deemed true.

Humanists revise the curriculum. The other world, they'd agree, is best approached through revelation, faith. But insofar as humanists value action in this world, then Nature--God's created order, though fallen--becomes the proper subject of study. Milton's ideal curriculum would naturally retain the study of the Bible, but also include languages, literature, history, agriculture, economics, natural philosophy, and even gym class--in short, the subjects that constitute the curriculum of today's liberal arts colleges. Humanist methods of study also must interest us. An emphasis on induction is sometimes credited to humanists (e.g., Francis Bacon).

More important, humanists' rediscovery of classical texts was accompanied by a historical consciousness that saw these texts as belonging to a different time and place. The meaning of a text, they saw, can be affected by its temporal and geographical context, and by language. This has implications for the work of reason in later Biblical scholarship. It also suggests that translators of the Bible, whether a Luther or Erasmus, might take note of the limitations of language; unlike the "seventy translators" of the Septuagint,<sup>33</sup> their work might depend on reason as well as faith.

After the seventeenth century, humanism joined forces with the Enlightenment and sometimes becomes more secular. This species of humanism, most apparent these days, perhaps, in the social and applied natural sciences, tends to shed faith, but maintains a strong ethical commitment to improving human life.

But Christianity continues to value humanism as well, particularly its agenda for education. Thus the Reformed tradition as described by Richard Hughes gets along well with humanism, particularly in its zeal to impose the kingdom of God on the kingdom of man. Catholics too can embrace humanism. A John Henry Cardinal Newman ("The Idea of the University"), for example, argues the worth of a liberal arts education in almost classical humanist terms. Robert Benne suggests that humanism's "synthesis of knowledge and morality" is well attested in Catholic tradition and can be detected in more recent Catholic "syntheses with Marxism (liberation theology) or with integral humanism (the recent popes.)"

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<sup>33</sup> According to the "Letter of Aristeas, the seventy (or more accurately 72) translators of the Hebrew Old Testament arrived at identical translations of that document into Greek through the help of the Holy Spirit.

Almost from its beginnings, Augsburg adopted a humanist curriculum.<sup>34</sup> But is there a Lutheran understanding of this curriculum? Is there a "Lutheran humanism" that we ought to be attending to? Both Martin Marty ("Simul") and Robert Benne ("Lutheran Vision/Version of Christian Humanism") suggest that there is. Its distinctive mark might be its attention to paradox.<sup>35</sup>

The paradox begins in the idea of the two kingdoms. So while a classical or Reformed humanism argues that education is for service that potentially might transform the world, Lutheran humanism might claim that education is for service that enables one to fulfill one's vocation. Similarly the study of this world is worthwhile; its conclusions about the world are not to be feared; but such study cannot hope to unlock the mysteries of God's kingdom. Human beings are worthwhile and this life is one of God's blessings, but both are still fallen. Lutheran education, in short, says Benne, "is most promising in holding Christian revelation and cultural knowledge in creative tension, not allowing Christianity to proceed without humanism nor humanism without Christianity."<sup>36</sup> Its "dialectical tendencies" are likely to make the Lutheran college a very lively place indeed.

## H. The Scientific Revolution

Before the Scientific Revolution of the 16th and 17th centuries, people in Western Europe had the sense that all of life's mysteries were pretty much known--especially known by church people. All knowledge was God's knowledge, and, in their view, God had revealed it (or as much as humans needed to know, anyway) through the Book of Nature and the Book of Revelation. The ordered cosmos, inherited nearly intact from the ancient world (and described masterfully by Aristotle), put Earth and humans at the center of the world. Despite disputes on significant matters, the larger fabric of the created universe was an orderly, secure whole. Different rules applied in heaven and on earth, both in physical and in spiritual matters; what else would one expect?

During the 16th century increasing numbers of observers and experimenters such as Tartaglia and Galileo showed that the accepted, common-sense view of how things move on earth was wrong, and others (Brahe, Kepler, and again Galileo) showed that things in the sky were even more in violation of the old understandings. According to the

<sup>34</sup> See Section III.

<sup>35</sup> We note that attention to the idea of "paradox" in Luther's thought has been noted by quite a few writers, among them H.R. Niebuhr and Richard Hughes.

<sup>36</sup> Robert Benne, "A Lutheran Vision/Version of Christian Humanism." *Lutheran Forum* 31: No. 3, Fall 1997, p. 44.

then recently developed theories of Copernicus, it was simpler to assume that the sun was the center of the universe, not the earth. Galileo and others insisted that the Earth *really* did move around the sun. To Galileo's considerable surprise, the ensuing reception of his ideas was in most cases decidedly hostile.

The attempted toppling of old scientific ideas aroused strenuous objections, and not primarily on purely physical or astronomical grounds. In part because of its timing, somewhat after the Protestant Reformation and roughly simultaneous with the Catholic Counterreformation and the hardening of positions between the two groups, the new ideas aroused fear and uncertainty. The desire for knowledge was too deeply entangled in the quest for security.<sup>37</sup>

For believers who were certain that God knows everything, it would follow that those who saw themselves as "God's representatives" might suppose that they should know everything, too -- or at least be knowledgeable on all matters of human importance. Now, relatively suddenly, much of what had been assumed to be true about Nature was shown clearly to be false. What else would happen to disappoint people? What could one trust?<sup>38</sup>

Not surprisingly, some people used the occasion to start publicly doubting almost anything the organized Church taught, particularly because the Catholic Church, at least, had just recently made official some of the newly-outmoded science as part of the Counter-Reformation.

Stephen Toulmin comments:

In retrospect ... we might argue that many Christian theologians had brought the resulting discredit on themselves. They incautiously chose to stake their religious teachings and reputations too completely on cosmological doctrines that were quite peripheral to matters of genuine theological concern, and so were unable to disown those doctrines when the need arose. Once the older cosmology had been undercut, it was therefore necessary for Christians to reconsider the whole connection between scientific and theological issues in the study of nature.<sup>39</sup>

So -- how hard did they reconsider? Apparently, not hard enough. Most simply assumed the connection between science and theology was essential, and they started

<sup>37</sup> Stephen Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), pp. 81-82.

<sup>38</sup> See, for example, the reaction of the young Rene Descartes, as described in *Cosmopolis: The Hidden Agenda of Modernity*, by Stephen Toulmin, Free Press, 1990.

<sup>39</sup> Toulmin, p. 231.

over with the newer scientific ideas but with only slightly modified philosophical expectations of certainty and guaranteed success.

Many of the most active scientific writers of the next two centuries were devout Protestants who saw their work for science as contributing equally to true religion. In their view, God's Hand had written the Book of Nature as surely as it had the Book of Scripture; and humans could "read God's Mind" in the one as surely as in the other. Many scientists thus attempted to rebuild a unified religious-scientific worldview (but we'll get it right this time!), based on Newton's new Universal Laws.

One central focus was on God's sovereignty. But instead of focusing on how God's sovereignty related to people, especially through grace and forgiveness, Newton and others focused on God's sovereignty in regard to stars and planets. The result was an impersonal God, who was sovereign mostly over matter, and, after a while, sovereign only over those things that scientific creativity had not yet found a way to ascribe to matter itself.

Toulmin continues:

This proved an unfortunate decision. Having burned their fingers once by embracing one excessively specific and detailed "natural philosophy" as orthodoxy, theologians might have learned their lesson and found some way of putting distance between themselves and science. But habit was too strong for them. In their enthusiastic desire to "read God's Mind in the Works of Nature," Newton and his associates set themselves to the work with a vengeance and quickly ran up a dozen lines of theological credit that they could better have done without. Scientific investigation soon brought to light natural causes and origins for one after another of those features of nature that the seventeenth-century enthusiasts had identified as specific marks of divine choice and supernatural wisdom.<sup>40</sup>

The ensuing successes of science led to a discrediting of the broader religious enterprise, perhaps not so much because the conclusions of this "natural theology" were demonstrably wrong as because they were no longer necessary. And so Laplace's celebrated reply to Napoleon: "God? I have no need of that hypothesis."<sup>41</sup>

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p. 232.

<sup>41</sup> Roger Hahn, "Laplace and the Mechanistic Universe" in *God and Nature: Historical Essays on the Encounter between Religion and Science*. Ed. David C. Lindberg and Ronald L. Numbers. (University of California Press, 1986), p. 256.

## I. The Enlightenment

In 1733, Alexander Pope embarked upon a singularly "modest" task: "to vindicate the ways of God to man." The result, "Essay on Man," rounds up many of the "usual suspects" of western thought: the nature of order and disorder in the universe; the place of humans in creation; the origin of evil and human suffering; the definition of human nature; the origins of society and the principles that ought to govern human relationships; and the definition of virtue.

"Essay on Man" deliberately recalls another poem published roughly sixty years earlier: *Paradise Lost*, in which John Milton set out "to justify the ways of God to men." But while the two poems deal with similar questions, the poets approach them much differently. Milton's poem combines revelation and reason, retelling Genesis 1-3 from the poet's humanist perspective. Pope, on the other hand, dispenses with revelation and confronts these daunting questions with reason alone.

Pope was Roman Catholic. But we cannot detect this in his poetry. When Pope introduces God into public discourse, God is primarily a philosophical and ethical principle: the first cause of cosmic order, the architect of natural law. This is typical of Enlightenment thinkers. Reason is less treacherous than faith. Weary of the religious warfare of the previous century, Enlightenment thinkers turn to the common language of reason as much with relief as with optimism about what Reason can accomplish.

Pope is clear about Reason's limitations. Humans cannot hope to see the entirety of God's order. Faith must trust that "whatever IS, is RIGHT." But Reason can apprehend Nature, God's created order. If the laws of nature, knowable through reason, are the laws of God, then reason might detect the divine hand at work in the physical world.

Thus a Sor Juana Inez de la Cruz, laboring in her seventeenth century monastic kitchen, anticipates the Enlightenment attitude toward study. Deprived of her books by church authorities, Sor Juana uses the monastery's pantry to satisfy her famished intellect. She conducts scientific experiments on the nuns' breakfast, determining, for instance, that eggs fried in syrup disintegrate while those fried in oil cohere. She sprinkles flour on a board, borrows a child's top, and spins the toy over the flour to ascertain whether the top spins in perfect circles. What does this suggest to Sor Juana? "Me fecit Deus! [God made me]."

God, thought Sor Juana, can be detected in his creation. One can approach the study of creation with the confidence of finding order. This is the basis of the Enlightenment's conviction that truth is unified and objective. Its standards are absolute.

Each academic discipline is but part of the whole; the task of the scholar is to infer the whole from the parts: thus the encyclopedic urges of eighteenth century philosophes. It is also the basis of the Enlightenment's confidence that Revelation and Reason cooperate.

Sor Juana's cooking experiments suggest one more theme of the Enlightenment: its confidence in method, especially scientific method (e.g. Descartes) and its preference for empiricism (e.g. Locke). Scientific methodology, of course, is very much a product of the Enlightenment, and so dominates the academy that it deserves a section of its own.

Generally, the Enlightenment prefers the study of creation to that of the creator. "Know then thyself, presume not God to scan," writes Pope. "The proper study of mankind is Man." And so the Age of Reason turns its attention to the humanist curriculum, to literature, philosophy, language, natural science, and especially, social matters. If faith had produced warring monologues a century earlier, Reason hoped for harmonious dialogue that might heal and improve society: Much better to study Man than God.

Like the humanists, Enlightenment thinkers hold human potential in high regard. Human nature, they maintain, is essentially rational. It naturally craves the happiness and virtue that results from living in accordance with nature, God's intended order, physical and social.

Human reason, then, can lead to a better understanding not only of the natural world, but also of the social cosmos. And so the John Lockes, the Montesquieus, and the Adam Smiths try to determine the natural laws governing political systems and the economy.

Convinced that reason can discover the principles that result in human happiness, Enlightenment thinkers inherited humanists' interest in utopia. Enlightenment thought typically hopes to perfect, or at least improve, human life by perfecting human institutions. The state in particular is intended to secure human happiness. Reason leads the Enlightenment to democratic modes of government; and since democracy and freedom depend on the use of reason, such states must value the education of their citizens and value the individual.

Enlightenment optimism proclaims the possibility of progress. In that it is oriented toward the future. But it is also conservative. Because it considers truth objective and timeless, the Enlightenment looks to the past, particularly to the classical world, to discover abiding truths. Reason thus reaffirms the best thought of the past; the canon is essentially an Enlightenment notion.

The Age of Reason, as mentioned earlier, did not disavow faith. But it was aware that faith can be socially disruptive, and wished to banish faith from public life: thus the

separation of church and state. The Enlightenment urged religious tolerance, but it clearly was not always comfortable with mystery or with the role that emotion might play in the life of faith. The Enlightenment impulse was to reduce faith to ethics: Deism was the natural result of Enlightenment thinking, the creator of a clockwork universe its theological legacy.

The Enlightenment, then, contributed several themes to a discussion of faith and reason:

1. It affirmed the value of studying the humanist liberal arts (and for that matter, the medieval ones).
2. It supported the freedom of academic inquiry. Scholarship need not fear contradicting faith as long as it is conducted according to rigorous rational methods. That's because nature (in its fullest sense) is essentially orderly; God is the author of natural order.
3. It supported "education for service" insofar as understanding the world will help us to improve it. (However, a Lutheran college may wish to define "service" differently.)
4. It supported the ethical purposes of education (e.g. reason leads to happiness, living in accordance with nature).
5. However, it was a bit suspicious of faith's ability to disrupt social order, or at least social civility. God is fine as an ethical, philosophical principle. The academic study of religion is fine. But if religious institutions make powerful political claims, the Enlightened sensibility becomes uncomfortable: it remembers the seventeenth century wars of faith.
6. Finally, the Enlightenment's emphasis on science and scientific methods argue that science and faith need not contradict each other, in spite of the fact the some may see them as foes.

## **J. Science and Religion**

At this point we must return to a tension briefly touched on in the opening paragraphs of this section: the opposition between Christian and secular learning. Throughout the Middle Ages, the challenge was represented primarily by the classics. Thus, a Jerome could imagine a divine judge who would rebuke him for his love of Cicero. For this reason, a Gregory Thaumaturgus would take special note of his teacher Origen's liberality in allowing the study of "every doctrine, non-Greek and Greek, both spiritual and secular, both divine and human."

Christians who distrust secular learning today, however, are most likely to identify the sciences as the major challenger of faith. For this reason, we would like to devote a section of this paper to a discussion of science and religion. Although the discussion focuses on the sciences, the points made about the sciences may well apply to other disciplines as well.

The common usage of the words "faith" and "reason" often leads to a too-quick identification of the first with religion and religious traditions and the second with the methods and tools of science or "scientific" scholarship. Although such usage -- a kind of linguistic shorthand--may help readers understand one of the major polarities that lies at the focus of this question, we believe such a stance does justice to neither reason nor faith, and reveals a cursory, outdated, and even naive view of the human enterprises involved.

The scholars of the history of ideas tell us that in the late twentieth century we no longer live in the "modern" world, with its vision and agenda rooted in the Enlightenment, but in a "postmodern" world. Much (but certainly not all) of what a century ago was often described as the "warfare between science and religion"<sup>42</sup> comes from a mistaken idea of what science produces, and of how scientists work.

Science does **not** produce truth, at least not absolute truth (contrary to centuries of belief that it did or does), and there is no such thing as scientific proof, except in courtroom dramas and some newspaper articles. Science "changes its mind" -- and on fundamental things -- from time to time. Thomas Kuhn wrote of "paradigm shifts," in which scientists' views of the world change at times discontinuously between incompatible visions.<sup>43</sup> This nature of science is neither good nor bad, unless we misunderstand or misuse the way science works.

How does science work? Cambridge Physicist John Ziman suggests that a scientist (1) Explores reality, (2) Creates (invents) knowledge, explanations, and/or theories (not TRUTH), and (3) Shares that knowledge with other scientists for discussion, debate, further testing, and possible acceptance (for the moment, anyway).<sup>44</sup> Ziman's definition of how scientists work meshes well with the constructivist ideas of scientific activity contained in the new education guidelines published by the National Academy of Sciences, shows its deep affinities to many other forms of scholarship, and contains the

<sup>42</sup> A.D. White, *History of the Warfare of Science with Theology in Christendom*. (Amsterdam: New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1896), p. 18.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962)

<sup>44</sup> John Ziman, *Public Knowledge*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

important insight that scientific ideas are developed and disseminated by consensus of those involved.

Before Galileo, science was thought to rely on "demonstrable proof." Galileo was himself confident he could "prove" to his conservative opponents that the Earth orbited around the sun, but he didn't succeed. (From our perspective, his opponents didn't succeed in proving that the Earth was the immovable center of the universe, either!) Galileo himself exemplified the modern "hypothetico-deductive" method of "jumping to conclusions" and then trying to justify or confirm them. Testing a theory involves predicting its consequences, and then comparing them with reality. One disconfirmation, in principle, is sufficient to kill a theory. This brings scientists back to step 2 or even 1. Each confirmation allows it to survive until the next test, but can never, even in principle, "prove" the theory. Disconfirmation of the "best" theories may take hundreds of years, but we can never be certain that any given theory will withstand all tests.

Philosophers call this current view of science's activity critical realism. It recognizes that the aim of science is to depict reality, but also admits the fallibility of any given scientific description. Critical realism describes well the implicit working philosophy of most scientists, although few articulate this in a formal way.

The implications of this change in the methods of science, and in the imputed certainty of scientific ideas, took centuries to develop. Over 100 years after Galileo's discoveries, and 40 years after Isaac Newton's ideas were first published, the poet Alexander Pope could write "Nature and Nature's Laws lay hid in night; God said 'Let Newton be,' and there was light!" God had revealed His secrets, and to an Englishman! Throughout the Enlightenment and into the nineteenth and early twentieth century most still held the idea that Newton and those who followed in his methodological footsteps were finding the Truth about the world.

Several challenges to these Enlightenment assumptions have come forth, especially in the twentieth century. First, instead of working with a mechanistic or mechanical universe, all made of simple parts, scientists in our century have found that even small things are mysterious -- and the smallest don't obey mechanistic laws.

Second, instead of the Enlightenment's belief that every event can be explained by knowable natural causes, one now finds that "chance" is a better model than causality at the level of not only the atom, but of the gene. Instead of the ideal of the scientific bystander, for whom careful observations and experiments lead to objective knowledge, current scientific practice asserts that all observations necessarily involve the observer, and that all knowledge is partly subjective.

Third, as the radical developments in the natural and cognitive sciences and in mathematics in the twentieth century have made clear, the connection between our ideas, concepts, and perceptions and an inherent reality is much less direct than had been assumed in the so-called modern western synthesis. The inductive methods of Francis Bacon, which were once viewed as the highly effective marching orders behind the successes of Modern Science, are found to have hidden the central role played by creativity in all but the lowest level of scientific activity, and are now seen to provide no special access to ultimate truth. Further, scientific methods, even in the so-called hard sciences, involve assumptions, creativity, and the development of models which, although testable (potentially falsifiable) are fundamentally unprovable. Mathematics itself has discovered the limits of proof, and even the arbitrariness of the choice of logic with which to frame such proofs.

Fourth, the older view of value-free and objective natural science has broken down, and the research program of increasing scientific specialization has begun to be radically revised worldwide (though by no means repealed). In the mid-1970s, theoretical physicist John Wheeler was taking on the role of standard-bearer for a participatory view of humans' place in the natural world, much as Laplace had done for the detached onlooker's view much earlier on.<sup>45</sup> As an example of this profound re-evaluation of the power of scientific methods, one need only review the names used to label major scientific ideas: laws and theories. Whereas Isaac Newton's ideas about motion were, and still are, called Laws, consistent with the view at the time that Newton had discovered God's own "Laws of Nature," these ideas have been superseded by the more modestly titled Theory of Relativity developed by Albert Einstein. Newton's Laws of Motion are still taught in high school and college physics classes. They're a good approximation, but the assumptions on which they rest are now considered fundamentally wrong, and they simply don't work for objects that are very small, or that move at very high speeds. Einstein's Theory of Relativity has "repealed" Newton's Laws, at least in the minds of all practicing physicists. In general, any theory accepted by a group of scientific professionals (e.g., physicists) before about 1850 was called a law, and is called such whether it is still accepted or not, and any theory accepted after 1900 is simply called a theory.<sup>46</sup> Albert Einstein himself described the level of "truth" which he believed characterized the products of even the best scientific efforts:

<sup>45</sup> Stephen Toulmin, *The Return to Cosmology*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 13.

<sup>46</sup> In modern scientific usage, on the contrary, laws are simply statements describing regularities, or summaries of what has been observed. They are perhaps better called "empirical laws."

Physical concepts are free creations of the human mind, and are not, however it may seem, uniquely determined by the external world. In our endeavor to understand reality we are somewhat like a man trying to understand the mechanism of a closed watch. He sees the face and the moving hands, even hears its ticking, but he has no way of opening the case. If he is ingenious he may form some picture of a mechanism which could be responsible for all the things he observes, but he may never be quite sure his picture is the only one which could explain his observations. He will never be able to compare his picture with the real mechanism and he cannot even imagine the possibility of the meaning of such a comparison.<sup>47</sup>

We can state this in different words by noting that the view of science from the time of Aristotle until about 1900, that the world can be (and is) understood through reason and science, has been grudgingly revised to the view that scientific knowledge is only an approximation, and is changeable, too. Although the knowledge science produces is useful, it cannot easily, or perhaps at all, be identified with Truth.

Old ideas die hard, however. Although much of the above has been known within the research community for nearly three quarters of a century, the acceptance and assimilation of the idea that both in practical and in theoretical ways science has its limits has only in recent decades begun to permeate either the community of scholars or the wider public.

One outcome among scientists has been a renewal of intellectual humility, and of a willingness to listen. Many have come to the realization, perhaps forced by the ethical dilemmas introduced to human civilization in the twentieth century by its use and misuse of science and technology, that humanity requires wisdom as well as scientific knowledge --and that at least some of that must come from outside of the scientific community. Many practicing scientists today stand ready to listen, and to participate in dialogue. In the words of Jacob Bronowski, as he stood at the pond near the Auschwitz prison camp, "Science is a very human form of knowledge. We are always at the brink of the known, we always feel forward for what is to be hoped. Every judgment in science stands on the edge of error, and is personal. Science is a tribute to what we can know

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Theories explain laws by proposing a mechanism that accounts for that regularity. Both laws and theories are subject to revision in the light of new evidence.

See George Kneller, *Science as a Human Endeavor* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1978), p. 137.

<sup>47</sup> Quoted in Gary Zukav, *The Dancing Wu Li Masters* (New York: Bantam 1979), p. 8.

although we are fallible. In the end the words were said by Oliver Cromwell: "I beseech you, in the bowels of Christ, think it possible you may be mistaken."<sup>48</sup>

It is still common, of course, to find some for whom a scientific idea such as the biological theory of evolution has been elevated into a "scientific mythology," to use Stephen Toulmin's phrase, and made effectively into a substitute religion.<sup>49</sup>

"When we begin to look to the scientist for a tidy, a simple, and especially an all-purpose picture of the world; when we treat his tentative and carefully-qualified conclusions as universal certainties; or when we inflate some discovery having a definite, bounded scope into the Mainspring of the Universe, and try to read in the scientist's palm the solutions of difficult problems in other fields--ethics, aesthetics, politics, or philosophy; then we are asking of him things he is in no position to give; and converting his connections into myths."<sup>50</sup> The Lutheran perspective may allow us to clearly see such "scientific mythology" for what it is, but it will certainly not be alone in helping to challenge the assumptions on which it is based.

This returns us to our original larger topic. Is there an antithesis, an irreconcilable conflict, between Augsburg's self-understanding as a Christian College and its educational task? Is there an unbearable tension in a college such as Augsburg, between a commitment to the Christian faith on the one hand and unimpeded teaching and learning--wherever it might lead--on the other?

In the history of the Christian Church there have certainly been times when the church has found itself to be in opposition to the views put forward, for example, in the scientific and/or the academic community. There have been times when some Christians have been persuaded that views put forward about the age of the earth or the emergence of human beings have been in direct opposition to what they believe the Bible teaches about these matters. There are some who understand the Biblical text as providing "infallible" scientific information. The tension was clear and explicit in the years following the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species*. And even today, there are Christians who are persuaded that "evolution" and "creation" stand in absolute opposition to each other.

This tension which exists even today has been viewed by some as symbolic of the tension between the educational task as understood and undertaken by the Christian college and the educational task as understood and undertaken by the secular or uncommitted college. It is symbolic of the tension between "faith and reason."

<sup>48</sup> Jacob Bronowski, *The Ascent of Man* p. 187.

<sup>49</sup> Toulmin, pp. 19-85.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., p. 82.

We present the following understandings of the Biblical witness, following the Lutheran tradition of unmediated personal access to scripture, as a prologue to our response to the above rhetorical questions:

1. The writers of the Bible, whenever they wrote, wrote using the tools of writing, the language, the vocabulary, the structure of grammar, the knowledge and concepts available to them in the time in which they lived. Just as we cannot write with the knowledge that will be available one hundred or two hundred years from now, so also the Biblical writers could not write with the knowledge available to us in our time.
2. Moreover, it is important to recognize that knowledge is historical, and in particular that scientific knowledge is historical. While we often think of and sometimes refer to the "assured results" of scientific investigation or the "assured results" of Biblical study it is reasonably clear that these "assured results" often change in the light of increased knowledge, better instruments, and more sustained investigation.

It is also appropriate at this point to remind ourselves that there is no specifically Lutheran view toward science. At various times, Lutherans (and Christians in general) individually or in groups have assimilated current scientific ideas; rejected or fought them as threats; ignored them as irrelevant; or seen them as complementary, with limited overlap and connections; and engaged in dialog about issues of mutual concern. Each of these may be appropriate at times in the future; it may well not be clear which of these approaches is best in any given situation, and we would do well to give each of them a respectful hearing. Further, although it might be nice if current scientific ideas support one's understanding of the Christian faith, from a Lutheran perspective one's faith does not depend on that support. It was not only at the time of Copernicus and Galileo that some Christians linked their faith too closely to current scientific ideas, and were later embarrassed when the science changed.

Perhaps there's a human tendency to want to have all the answers, and to try to integrate all of science into some structure congenial to one's current religious view. That's a reasonable goal, but it seems to be dangerous to try to lean on the best current science in order to shore up or even promote one's religion. One key insight from the history of science is that Science changes its mind, and does so drastically, and at unexpected moments. The information gained from a scientific examination of the world is not static but dynamic. So, instead of trying to build and carry all that excess baggage, which seems to change anyway, one might better consider the Lutheran position, outlined

above, which we might in this context characterize as the injunction to "travel light!" A reasonable understanding of the contributions and limitations of science reminds us that we don't have to pretend to have all the answers—and indeed that we cannot.

### K. The Revolt Against Reason: Romantic Revivals & Postmodernism

In his recent essay "Back from Chaos,"<sup>51</sup> Edward O. Wilson laments the "fragmentation of knowledge and the resulting chaos in philosophy"<sup>52</sup> that he believes characterizes the modern academy. He is not alone in his belief; the Commission itself would agree that the "loss of university" and overspecialization potentially undermine the contemporary conversations between faith and reason.

Wilson would argue that "the dream of intellectual unity," which he defines as "a vision of secular knowledge in the service of human rights and human progress," was essentially "a product of the Enlightenment" and in fact was "the West's greatest contribution to civilization."<sup>53</sup> The dream, we might add, was not only secular. The Enlightenment held onto the possibility that knowledge could be unified because the object of knowledge—the universe—reflects the orderly design of a creator.

What challenges the dream? Wilson traces the history of its demise to the French Revolution and Romantic movement. The "ultimate antithesis"<sup>54</sup> of the Enlightenment, he contends, are the academic movements or ideologies that flock under the term "postmodernism." Among these he includes "Afrocentrism, constructivist social anthropology, 'critical' (that is socialist) science, deep ecology, ecofeminism, Lacanian Psychoanalysis, Latourian sociology of science, and neo-Marxism--to which must be added all the bewildering varieties of deconstructionism and New Age holism swirling around about and through them."<sup>55</sup>

Appropriately, perhaps, postmodernism cannot be pinned down to easy definitions—the very diversity of its ideologies discourages that. Partly, though, postmodernism can be defined by what it rejects: especially "modernity" and its claims that it represents "the norm for human society toward which all history has been aiming and into which all societies should be ushered—forcibly if necessary."<sup>56</sup> It rejects—or at

<sup>51</sup> Edward O. Wilson, "Back from Chaos," *The Atlantic Monthly* Vol. 281, # 4, March 1998, pp. 41-62.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid., p. 41.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p. 42.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., p. 58.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

<sup>56</sup> David Ray Griffin, "Introduction" in *Sacred Intrconnections: Postmodern Spirituality, Political Economy, and Art*, ed. David Ray Griffin. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1990), p.ix.

least urges cautious consideration—of views that present themselves as universal when, in fact, they are historically conditioned. In its most extreme versions, postmodernism rejects the possibility of objective truth or, at least the possibility that reason can arrive there. Edward O. Wilson, admittedly no friend to postmodernism, defines it this way:

Reality, the radicals among them propose, is a state constructed by the mind. In the exaggerated version of this constructivism one can discern no "real" reality, no objective truths external to mental activity, only prevailing versions disseminated by ruling social groups. Nor can ethics be firmly grounded, given that each society creates its own codes for the benefit of equivalent oppressive forces.<sup>57</sup>

Reality is thus no more than a social construct. The a priori principles that tradition--western tradition in particular--has held absolute may be no more than the propaganda of the powerful.

In its neo-Romanticist manifestations, postmodernism proclaims the individual as the source of all truth, all moral judgments. As Milton's prescient Satan put it several centuries ago, "The mind is its own place, and in itself/Can make a heav'n of hell, a hell of heav'n."<sup>58</sup>

Ironically, of course, postmodernism can produce its own orthodoxies. But it can be and has been intellectually invigorating as well. In undermining tradition, it also is capable of furnishing rich insight into and even rescuing works and ideas that might otherwise be dismissed as "dated." It enables the critical evaluation and, if necessary, revision of orthodox assumptions. Even Plato, who can easily be imagined to be the arch-foe of many postmodernist ideologies, might appreciate the point that the quest for truth can be, perhaps must be, subversive of orthodoxies. It wasn't for nothing that his teacher, Socrates, was accused of being a corrupter of youth. In exposing merely "transient world views," postmodernism can "be an excellent tool to analyze Christianity. It can separate the ideology from that which is timeless."<sup>59</sup> Still, postmodernism might threaten the dialogue between faith and reason simply by denying that such a dialogue can have any real importance. It might have some uses for faith (provided that faith is more concerned with subjective than objective truths.) But it is capable of dismissing reason altogether.

In many ways, postmodernism, at least in some of its manifestations, simply revives the Romantic movement. What we might call a "neo-Romanticism," dating back

<sup>57</sup> Wilson, p. 58.

<sup>58</sup> *Paradise Lost*

<sup>59</sup> Keith Dyrud, Unpublished e-mail letter to Mark Engebretson. 17 May 1998.

to the '60s or even '50s, likewise challenges and invigorates the dialogue between faith and reason.

In making Prometheus its "icon," as it were, Romanticism idealized rebellion against authority, not only the authority of the government, but also the authority of the church.<sup>60</sup> In taking on "the establishment," the counter-culture also questioned the "relevance" of mainline churches and their traditions; as mentioned earlier, this is the generation that drifted away from church.<sup>61</sup>

It's not that this generation lacked a religious sensibility. But in preferring passion to reason, a neo-Romanticist might resist the academic study of religion and be impatient with those structures—creeds, catechisms, and liturgies—which formalize religious belief and expression. Like the Romantic hero young Werther, '60s and '70s young people were apt to make "sincerity" the determining criterion of truth. Of course passion and sincerity would lead some to seek religious experience in drugs and cults—another Romantic theme. The Romantic fascination with mystery and the supernatural—(Romanticism invented the Gothic novel, for instance)—is replayed a century later in the "supernatural thrills" of, for instance, Tarot cards, astrology, or Satanism.

The flower children suggest yet another theme of Romanticism—its love of nature, especially untamed nature, and its concomitant pantheism. In claiming the essential innocence of "the state of nature," the Romantics and their twentieth century descendents may well resist orthodox Christianity's doctrine of original sin. In trying to undo social corruption, the neo-Romanticist might turn inward, often to competing ideologies. Just as the "Noble Savage" is in some ways a Romantic ideal, idealization of things pagan—revivals of Celtic mythology or interest in American Indian spirituality—characterizes the New Age sensibility in contemporary culture. Christian faith certainly can be nourished by these tendencies—Luther, after all, is credited with introducing the essentially pagan Christmas tree into Christian celebration; and the genius of the medieval church (arguably) lay in its alliances with pagan cultures. But they at least introduce complexities into reason's discourse with faith.

Finally, Romanticism's love of individualism and freedom reinforces the moral relativism of some postmodern ideologies. Milton's Satan, an archetype of the Romantic hero, proclaims that "the mind is its own place" and thereby claims that the individual is the source of all values. Much of *Paradise Lost* argues that the exercise of "right reason"

<sup>60</sup> For instance, consider the French Revolution or the poetry of William Blake.

<sup>61</sup> Romanticism questions not only the authority of the church, but also the authority of science. Prometheus is one of its favorite icons—Victor Frankenstein is another.

implies obedience to God's law. By subjecting his or her own will to God's will, the individual is led to serve both God and the community. But Milton's Satan sees all service as servitude.<sup>62</sup> Thus the Satan who cries "Better to reign in hell, than serve in heav'n" (*Paradise Lost* I:262) anticipates all rebels whose only causes are themselves.

Postmodernism and "Neo-Romanticism," then, anticipate the appendix on the contexts of higher education. Their challenges to reason might be every bit as serious as the challenges that some people think the sciences pose to faith.

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<sup>62</sup> Christopher Hill, among others, would claim that *Paradise Lost* is as much about politics as it is about religion. Certainly Milton's Satan "talks the talk" of democracy (although he manipulates both rhetoric and processes for his own ends). One might suggest that Milton's Satan remains as attractive for present-day students as he was for many Romantic poets because he represents some ideals that have become orthodox American political ideals—individualism, freedom, etc. It is thus tempting to see an Augsburg education that emphasizes faith and reason within the context of Luther's notion of vocation—with its implications regarding service—as being subversive of widely shared American political ideas.

## Appendix II Augsburg's Lutheran Heritage

### A. The Lutheran Free Church

Augsburg's identity as a College of the Church is clearly not limited to its connection to a particular historical body, the ELCA. In this regard Augsburg has changed significantly. Although the College's early history was associated more with individual leaders than with any one of the still-tiny Lutheran organizations formed by immigrants, by 1900 it was the "crown jewel" of a small Lutheran denomination, the Lutheran Free Church. It can even be said that the institution of Augsburg (College and Seminary) was the *raison d'être* for the LFC -- witness the group's first name, the "Friends of Augsburg."

The Lutheran Free Church, wrote Bernhard Christensen, "was born out of a specific historical situation in the development of the great American Northwest. It embodies within itself a unique combination of elements, namely a doctrinal basis deriving from the heritage of the Lutheran Reformation, and a form of church polity most clearly developed and strongly advocated in early American and British Congregationalism, with both doctrine and polity serving the interests of a conception of personal spiritual experience which derives from the great Haugean awakening in Norway" in the early nineteenth century.<sup>63</sup>

The distinctiveness of the Lutheran Free Church was in its political stance; that is, in its vision of an organized church body as being an organized fellowship of essentially sovereign congregations.. One can sense also a freedom from many of the ecclesiastical and clergy-dominated structures associated with the State Church of Norway; hence the stress on the liberty of Christian individuals and congregations and the political primacy of the local congregation. Yet, these were not considered "free" from institutional religion. They were always outspokenly Lutheran and adhered to the central Lutheran confessions (Luther's Small Catechism and the Unaltered Augsburg Confession).

<sup>63</sup> Bernhard Christensen, "The Idea of the Lutheran Free Church," in *Freedom and Christian Education*, ed. John Houkorn (Minneapolis: Board of Trustees, Augsburg College

Former Augsburg History professor Paul Sonnack listed three characteristics of the people of the "old Augsburg" and of the Lutheran Free Church.<sup>64</sup> First, they were Lutheran (although he noted that there were always some other Lutherans who had their doubts about Augsburg's "Lutheranness"). Second, they were also pietists -- they placed great emphasis upon the need for personal religious experience and manifested great concern for the subsequent living out of the Christian life. Although the "Lutheran stress upon the priority of the community to the individual" did not always fit well into this more individualistic framework, the combination of the two fed into the well-attested development of the "enormous charitable enterprise which the Lutheran churches launched in this country." Third, they were suspicious of the enslaving power of formal structures. This worked its way out in somewhat of an aversion to formal worship, formal theologies, and even formal power structures. (Could it be that some of the curmudgeonly character of our faculty owes a little to the College's heritage in this way?) The LFC was in some aspects separatist, but in others precociously ecumenical: Bernhard Christensen, former President of Augsburg, addressed LFC pastors in 1944 in this way: "The Lutheran Free Church is but one small part of the whole Lutheran household of faith, and relatively an even smaller part of the entire Body of Christ."<sup>65</sup>

As Mark Engebretson notes, "the LFC in some senses had the appearance of 'Lutheran Quakers;' their strength and distinctiveness was in their beliefs and in the quality of their persons, not in their institutional size (either as College or as denomination). They lived among many other religious groups, often working together with them in common pursuits, yet retaining their own identity and sense of giftedness from God. Augsburg's tradition includes a heritage of no strong outside church influence to require conformity or obedience, and the doctrine of the priesthood of all believers, which means that each individual has the right of direct access to and from God, without

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and Seminary, 1945) pp 33-46

<sup>64</sup> Paul Sonnack, "Winnowing a Heritage." Address at Founder's Day Convocation, Augsburg College, Minneapolis, Minnesota, November 9, 1977.

<sup>65</sup> Bernhard Christensen, "The Idea of the Lutheran Free Church," in *Freedom and Christian Education*, ed. John Houkom (Minneapolis: Board of Trustees, Augsburg College and Seminary, 1945) pp. 33-46.

the need of an intermediary. This was a radical idea nearly five centuries ago when Martin Luther articulated it, and one with which most of us are still uncomfortable."<sup>66</sup> However, as we shall note later, it has considerable implications for the dialogue between faith and learning.

Particular historical events led to the merger of most of the LFC in 1963 with a larger Lutheran body with much of the same Norwegian Lutheran constituency (including the institutional descendents of the rival "Friends of St. Olaf"). Following another, larger merger of Lutherans over a decade later, Augsburg is now one of a set of over 20 colleges affiliated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).

Before 1963, members of the parent denomination showed strong loyalty to Augsburg but they were limited in number. Since 1963, Augsburg has enjoyed affiliation with a much larger denomination, but most of its members have had little or no connection to Augsburg. In fact, a fraction of the LFC, many of whom were Augsburg alumni, chose to remain separate, hence the population of committed Augsburg supporters within the affiliated church body was diminished.

## **B. The Church and Augsburg's Educational Mission**

Augsburg's early leaders, Georg Sverdrup and Sven Oftedal, were heirs in Norway of both the mid-nineteenth century emphasis on religious conversion and the renewed values of Nordic egalitarian government. Their building of Augsburg College was an effort to incorporate these values and make them available to Norwegian immigrants in the New World. Stressed, on one hand, was having a living faith in Jesus Christ and forming free living congregations; on the other hand, in a specially designed educational program, was stressed Old Norse and Greek (not Latin), history (more than classical literature), practical living and civic responsibility (rather than theory and elitism). The purpose was to train pastors who knew their place beside their people, and lay people in congregations who carried their Christian calling into society.<sup>67</sup>

Almost immediately, however, Augsburg realized that its curriculum could not be too specialized. On one hand, it needed a developmental curriculum. And on the other, it recognized the need for vocational training: "It soon became evident that in order to

<sup>66</sup> Mark Engebretson, etc.

<sup>67</sup> Gene Skibbe, "Questions and Answers about the Humanities," Presented to the Augsburg College Humanities Division, 1981.

get students who were adequately prepared for theological study a college department was needed.”<sup>68</sup>

Thus in 1874, five years after Augsburg’s founding, the faculty approved a long-range plan which made the following provisions:

As soon as the progress of the building, the strength of the teaching staff, and the attendance of students permit, Augsburg Seminary will be established in such a manner that, in addition to the theological seminary with a three-year course, it will in the future include 1) a five-year preparatory school for theological studies and 2) a five-year 'realskole' (science department), which prepares for teacher training and the practical life, moreover, in such a way that the instruction for these two departments of the school will be in common, the first year in all subjects and later, as much as the material and the strength of the faculty permit.

The school will be composed of:

- 1) Common Division (1 year)
- 2) Greek Division (4 years)
- 3) Science Division (4 years)
- 4) The Theological Course (3 years)<sup>69</sup>

The “teaching subjects” combined the liberal arts and a specialized theological curriculum with practical courses. Thus students in the Common Division studied penmanship. Students enrolled in the Greek Division and Theological Course studied bookkeeping. The curriculum clearly was not only about “faith;” it was focused on two kingdoms.

The same document emphasizes Augsburg’s commitment to what we might now call “comprehensive” education:

As surely as Augsburg Seminary shall become as we with God's help hope to make it, an intellectual center for the Norwegians in America, then it would lack a necessary link in this its task, if it did not have its science division resting on the same Christian principles as the Seminary itself, and with this aim to educate capable liberal-minded, practical men on the same foundation. . . . We must be able to come to the farmer, to the worker and to the businessman. And the subjects of instruction must be calculated to be a practical general education.<sup>70</sup>

Unfortunately, primarily because of a lack of funds, the Science Division was never implemented.

<sup>68</sup> Catalogue of Augsburg College, 1962-1963, p. 15.

<sup>69</sup> From a document adopted by the Augsburg Faculty September 1874. English translation and document obtained via Gene Skibbe, 1984.

George Sverdrup himself was committed to an education that included both kingdoms. Bernhard Christensen, in describing him, said: "In this connection we may think, for example, of the strong influences emanating from the teaching of President George Sverdrup during the many years that he was the thought-leader, as well as the President, of Augsburg. He was, of course, thoroughly Christian in all his thinking, and yet that thinking was characterized by a broad humanism of the finest kind. Nothing human was foreign to him. He always reacted negatively toward any teachings, which too sharply differentiated between the things of God and the things of man. He rightly insisted that the Gospel must have its application to every phase of man's life. ... Even so, it is no doubt true that this phase of Christian truth has never come into its full right within our church body, as it has not within American Lutheranism as a whole. I have included this reference to it, however, because I believe that logically, as well as to some extent historically, it belongs to the heritage and idea which is embodied in the Lutheran Free Church."<sup>71</sup>

And a century after the college was founded, a description of Augsburg written in 1981, as part of a successful proposal to the Bush Foundation for Augsburg's second Faculty Development Grant, points out several factors relevant to Augsburg's mission and vision:

Augsburg College until 1963 was the only college of the Lutheran Free Church. It saw itself acting in the service of young people with an enormous range of capabilities, yet sharing with the faculty and the College's constituency a common concern for values and a religious tradition. The fact that this tradition was explicitly egalitarian and democratic made it possible to accept average as well as outstanding students without any expectation of equivalent educational outcomes. All students would be challenged on their own terms, yet each found a place at Augsburg and in the church constituency. Augsburg's ethos also made possible the welcoming of faculty and students from outside the sponsoring religious body, as well as persons with dissenting views on a broad range of social, political, and religious issues. Out of this affirmed breadth came a style of teaching and learning that accepted and cherished diversity and welcomed innovation.<sup>72</sup>

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Ibid.

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Back to the Houkom piece.

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The Role of Teaching at Augsburg College, Section V, p. 1

Despite the College's transition in denominational affiliation, this has not led to major changes in the College's ethos. The ELCA has moved in recent years toward more official recognition of other Christian bodies, but in a sense this simply endorses what Augsburg has done informally for years -- and a firm policy regarding denominational affiliation for staff and faculty has probably never existed. Augsburg continues to "embrace a wide range of religious expression and participation," to quote Augsburg's 1996 North Central Self Study document. Its stance in relation to Christianity and issues of religious concern -- that is, the publicly expressed self-understanding of the College's leaders, as opposed to its stance in relation to the institutional church -- also appears to have changed very little over the decades during and since that transition. Augsburg's Presidents were and are clearly aligned with the affiliated denomination, but a significant fraction of its officers and faculty members from Dean on down were and are non-LFC and/or non-Lutheran.

Some significant changes have taken place, however. Since 1963 the perceived importance of hiring those attuned to Augsburg's religiously-based intellectual tradition has been given little emphasis by some departments, with the result that an increasing number of faculty may have little exposure to, much less interest in, this aspect of the College's life and mission. The proposal's summary continues "The growth of the College during the 1960s and 1970s, leading to rapid swelling of faculty ranks, the addition of new majors and departments, and the admission of a student body more diverse in ethnic and religious background, has changed the academic setting at Augsburg. Traditional values and commitments which were predominant in the past are no longer as widely shared among Augsburg faculty." (p. 1) Although this statement referred explicitly only to faculty, we might want to change this statement to now include the entire Augsburg community. How this development is addressed will have a major impact on Augsburg's church connections, and its very nature, in the future.

### C. Present Understandings of Augsburg's Church Connections

Augsburg's present understandings of its relationship to the church are best reflected in its explicit statements on the subject in institutional documents.<sup>73</sup>

The revised Articles of Incorporation of Augsburg College state the College's purpose in this way: "The general purpose and plan of the [college] shall be to maintain a Christian College of Liberal Arts offering higher education opportunities to all qualified persons. Such opportunities shall include regular instruction in the Christian religion, preparing leaders who are committed to truth, excellence and ethical values, both in the Christian Church and the larger community."<sup>74</sup>

The importance of education "shaped by the faith and values of the Christian church" is also clearly reflected in Augsburg's Strategic Plan: "to be a college of the ELCA accepting as a basis for its educational program the doctrines of the Christian faith as revealed in Scripture and the creeds affirmed in the Lutheran Church, affirming that all students should reflect upon Christian scriptures, theological concepts, and ethical values as part of becoming educated."<sup>75</sup> Note the language used: "instruction," "reflection," -- not "indoctrination" (which some may fear, but which reveals an unfamiliarity with the College's ethos as described above).

We here come to a paradox at least as interesting as any in Quantum Physics: A deep appreciation of Christian freedom is part of Augsburg's tradition, and yet that freedom is clearly within a community that ascribes to specific creedal statements as an expression of its relation to God.

How can this be?

Albert Anderson of Lenoir Rhyne College, a sister institution, noted in 1980 that "... when committees to clarify Lutheran college aims are formed, they find it easier to agree on what the tradition is not than on what it is."<sup>76</sup> This somewhat negative comment exemplifies, in a sense, the considerable freedom inherent in the Lutheran academic and theological tradition, to those who already understand it. However, the

<sup>73</sup> Much of rest of this section is identical to Mark Engebretson's "Church Connections at Augsburg College, pp. 9-11.

<sup>74</sup> Augsburg Faculty Handbook (date) p. 16.2.1.

<sup>75</sup> p. 32

lack of a clear statement of Augsburg's religious ethos may in fact have led many in the community, including staff, faculty, and students, to assume that Augsburg has much more narrow, sectarian aims than it in fact has, and to a significant misunderstanding of Augsburg's high valuation of open inquiry.

Anderson goes on to provide his interpretation of the intellectual climate at a Lutheran College, and in so doing works out the academic implications of the principle of the priesthood of all believers:

The intellectual climate encouraged by the Lutheran tension between faith and reflection suggests a model of life-long dialogue between decisiveness and openness. To support it there is the traditional Lutheran principle that Scriptures are their own interpreters; where the context fails to be clear, nothing more concerning the work and will of God is certain. ... For liberal learning this means that a Lutheran can engage openly in the clarification and comparison of religious and ethical claims with matters of all sorts, without undue offense to stances taken by the church. Nor need the Lutheran be indecisive or uncommitted in the process, only right or wrong, either of which possibility he boldly acknowledges."<sup>77</sup>

He sums up:

Avoiding both conformity and indifference, the Lutheran academic tradition seeks to strike a balance between decisiveness and openness throughout the educational process: acknowledging forthrightly its confessional roots, it presumes no single stance for morality, art, or science which answers all questions. Rather, it preserves and encourages the integrity of differences, but in the spirit of wholeness insists on the right and responsibility to engage them in the interests of clarity and understanding.<sup>78</sup>

The above statement seems to be reflected well in Augsburg's 1996 North Central Self Study: "Augsburg understands and maintains that the Christian faith illuminates intellectual tasks and provides a foundation for investigation and study in all areas of human existence."<sup>79</sup> In a later section dealing with the College's mission, the Self Study continues "Associated with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, Augsburg affirms the truth and relevance of the Christian faith and sees it as a context for the College as a whole -- a context which says that God is the creator, redeemer, and ultimate

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<sup>76</sup> Dialog, 19, 115, 1980.

<sup>77</sup> Ibid, p. 115.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid., p. 116

<sup>79</sup> North Central Self Study: Augsburg College, 1996, p. 3.

sustainer of the world, a world entrusted to humans for exploration and care. The College believes that its faith commitment is compatible with the best traditions of academic freedom, and finds in it a truth that unites and informs the entire educational process. Such a faith is expressed in the imprint on the Seal of the College: "Through Truth to Freedom."

Augsburg's purposes related to this part of its mission include "to generate an environment in which the faith and values of the Christian church are exemplified," and "to provide courses which have the goals of students gaining increased knowledge and understanding of the Christian tradition." This understanding also includes opportunity "for the community to wrestle with issues of faith and values through supporting a classroom environment which makes possible regular questioning, referencing, and reinforcing theological issues in non-Religion classes (since it is possible at a Christian college to unhesitatingly introduce religious themes where appropriate) and which enables students to provide volunteer service opportunities to the community..."<sup>80</sup>

Given its tradition and its understandings of its relationship to the church, Augsburg is uniquely positioned to offer an education that provides "a comprehensive education in both the liberal and professional arts, shaped by the interplay of faith and reason in a dynamic metropolitan setting."<sup>81</sup> The educational experience Augsburg offers students is unique in a number of ways: its location and size, connections to the church, its focus on education for service, and its diversity.

As a college in the city, Augsburg intentionally seeks a relationship with the urban community. As an integral part of its neighborhood, it reminds us that the early Christian church was a church of the city. And yet Augsburg also prides itself on being a "small-town campus" in a metropolitan setting. While located in the heart of the Minneapolis/Saint Paul metropolitan area, it is small campus, on which priority is given to relationships and connections between faculty, students, and staff. It seeks to remain a size and culture that continues to provide a supportive environment for all its citizens.

Given its place in the center of a major regional urban center, it offers many opportunities and experiences that are not available in smaller cities or college towns.

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<sup>80</sup> p. 38.

<sup>81</sup> Get reference from Margaret.

This setting provides a diversity of culture and ethnicity that contributes greatly to the growth and learning of Augsburg's student body. It "draws on the resources of the city as extensions of campus and classroom,"<sup>82</sup> which contributes to the wealth of service and experience-based programs available for Augsburg students.

"Education for Service" is manifested in a number of ways on the Augsburg campus. The college is a leader in experiential education, which enables students to learn while interacting with the community in which they live. The college's service-learning, internship, and cooperative education programs offer experience in real-life service situations that provide students an invaluable opportunity to observe and be involved in the challenges our society faces, as well as give them hands-on experience in the workplace.

Augsburg is also the home of the Center for Global Education, which offers the college community the chance to see the world from the perspective of traditionally unheard voices through international study programs for students and faculty/staff. Based in lesser-developed regions of the world, these programs offer cross-cultural exchanges that expose participants to the realities faced by the majority of the world's population. Augsburg also maintains an affiliation with The Higher Education Consortium on Urban Affairs. Through both international and domestic programs, students are introduced to issues of social change and cross-cultural issues in the context of an urban community.

Finally, Augsburg has sought to be a campus of ethnic and cultural diversity. Early in its history it placed priority on attracting a broader range of students, "ensuring educational opportunity for all people." College recruitment has been intentional in attracting a diverse and heterogeneous student body, in terms of culture, race, age, economic status, and religion. The Weekend College was an outgrowth of this value, appealing to non-traditional student populations. Currently Augsburg has wide representation of international students on campus, and each year celebrates Diversity and International Weeks on campus. This diversity adds richness to Augsburg's culture, makes it a place for learning and growing for all its citizens.

### Appendix III

#### The Context of the Question in Higher Education

In this section, the Commission will place its question in the context of the present-day college campus, noting some general conditions that affect the dialogue between faith and reason within the academy. While no two campuses are identical, and differences are widely dispersed across a broad spectrum of beliefs and philosophies, these trends can be found in most sectors of higher education and are shared, in varying degrees, by Augsburg.

Despite significant challenges from postmodernist ideologies, the attitude towards education in the closing years of the 20th century seems to be dominated by the rationalist values and "scientific" discipline of the Enlightenment. This model values intellectual critique over moral conviction<sup>83</sup> and is not given to inculcating values. This atmosphere is suspicious of any religious content or subjective elements in curriculum or dialogue. Even church-affiliated schools feel this ambivalence in how they approach faith matters in education,<sup>84</sup> and are reluctant to overtly use or even recognize a religious or faith-based component to education.

This is compounded by today's emphasis on specialization, even within one's discipline. "The loss of university" has left the academy compartmentalized and fragmented, and thus discourages campus-wide dialogue on issues which perhaps should concern the larger community. Faculty members may define their "profession" narrowly and may be reluctant to speak about matters outside their expertise. Some may separate what faith may lead them to profess (or confess) from the content of their classrooms.

Current political and pedagogical orthodoxies might further stifle any dialogue between faith and reason within the disciplinary curriculum. There is safety in objectivity and in sticking to the course content, or at least in invoking a sanctioned methodology or ideology in presenting course material. Ironically, the generation that began academic professions in the wake of the 60s often sees the classroom as an inappropriate forum in which to profess opinions irrelevant to their disciplines. In a competitive job market, fear

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<sup>83</sup> Dennis O'Brien, "The Disappearing Moral Curriculum." *The Key Reporter*, Supper 1997, p. 2.  
<sup>84</sup> Harry Jebson, "Hitting a Moving Target." *Intersections*, Summer 1997, p. 23.

of offending is no longer only a matter of civility, but also is related to tangible professional consequences (not receiving tenure, promotions, lawsuits, etc.) Efforts to improve teaching likewise can have the unintended effect of turning teaching into a technology rather than a moral art; certainly the "cult of personality" may be out of place in the classroom, but a model that often stresses teaching as facilitation rather than professing may effectively banish "the whole professor" from the classroom.

Present day curricula are also impacted, and in some cases, inhibited by the current focus on education as a commodity, bought and sold for the purpose of a profession or career, i.e. gaining a skill that is profitably employed in the job market. This economic and materialistic expediency has diminished the value of liberal arts education as a whole, which stresses skills such as critical thinking, analysis, and open dialogue. Church affiliated schools have been particularly affected by this trend, becoming more secularized due to the specialization of instruction and faculties that are less and less committed to the mission of the college.

Another key element to the atmosphere on college campuses today is the growing racial, ethnic, and religious diversity of the student body. This presents a special challenge to church affiliated schools. Any preference toward one faith or religion can be perceived as insensitive at the best, and at worst exclusionary. While trying to recognize and respect these differences, church colleges may in fact diminish the church culture of their campuses by striving for only "minimal standards" of conduct for their students.<sup>85</sup> Faith has come to mean many different things to many people, and some church related schools struggle with it, if they address the issue at all.

This generation of students, in addition to being more diverse, has less grounding in formal religious practice, and thus lacks a context for the faith-based part of campus life and instruction. Many baby boomers have raised children with little or no relationship with the church. Although families with young children may want their children involved in Sunday School, they lack the commitment to attend consistently. As these children grow up, the harder it is to get them involved. For many, going to church isn't "cool," and they are likely to disappear from the scene during their high school years. When they do return to church on occasions as young adults, they are unfamiliar

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<sup>85</sup>

Benne, p. 46.

with the service and many feel uncomfortable. Even those students who have regularly attended church may not have experienced the relationships, the affiliations, in church that would lead them to embrace the church as an essential community in their lives.

In addition, this generation has been subjected to greater peril in regards to broken families, drug and alcohol use, gang activity and cults.

For many students, such dislocation prompts spiritual yearning and the wish to become involved in more formal religious structures. As Commission member, Jack Osberg notes of Augsburg students, "I think there are many young people who enter college with a variety of backgrounds and commitments in regard to their faith. For those students who are not comfortable, learned or experienced in a church related background, there appears to be a growing interest in the discussion of faith -- what it's all about -- how does it work -- how does it affect me--what is its place in my life -- how can I get involved? Many of these students are very interested in service-related experiences and activities. They want to get involved . . . More and more I sense a need to share, to understand, to participate, to realize comfort, and to be a part of a group. Interest in prayer and Bible study has been increasing over the past few years."

At the same time, however, what might be described as a postmodernist popular culture might make students--and their parents-- more resistant to reason and formal structures especially when applied to religion. Thus competing ideologies (e.g. New Age spirituality, environmentalism, feminism, etc.) can complement yet at times rival traditional religious faith.

A culture that cultivates tolerance can likewise mute either dialogue or debate between faith and reason. Tolerance can easily become relativism or indifference, e.g., if everything is true for someone, why worry about truth at all? American political culture likewise doesn't eagerly advocate explicit religious debate on college campuses or the larger community. As Yale Law Professor Stephen Carter notes:

In our sensible zeal to keep religion from dominating our politics, we have created a political and legal culture that presses the religiously faithful to be other than themselves, to act publicly, and sometimes privately as well, as though their faith does not matter to them.

We often seem more comfortable with people whose religions consist of nothing but a few private sessions of worship and prayer, but who are too

secularized to let their faiths influence the rest of the week. This attitude exerts pressure to treat religion as a hobby . . ."<sup>86</sup>

Even church-related colleges have become increasingly reluctant to admit faith into an equal partnership with reason; they have become more inclined to give in to the larger academy's impulse to dismiss faith from the curriculum altogether, or at least to exile it to chapel or to religion courses that some students and even faculty see as superfluous to the primary intentions of education.

Augsburg College is also subject to these trends, even while it seeks to maintain its identity and rise above the more negative aspects of the academy. Augsburg has a strong history of upholding and teaching Christianity, and adhering to the distinctly Lutheran principles of service and vocation, rooted specifically in the Lutheran Free Church. Through tumultuous times and sometimes critical times, it has retained a connection to those roots, while opening itself up to new ideas and methods. It has operated in an atmosphere in which "key issues have been addressed and vehemently argued within their disciplines, in open, dialectic exchange."<sup>87</sup>

Augsburg continues to intentionally own its identity as a church-affiliated and Lutheran college, including in its degree requirements courses taken within the religion department. It has a lively and active chapel and campus ministry program, and continues the Lutheran tradition of practicing the fine arts in church-related activities. This commitment to its church roots is also reflected in the strong church ethos of Augsburg College alumni.

Despite this intentional identification as a church school, Augsburg has experienced some of the same ambivalence and uncertainty towards the connection that occurs in other church related schools, as well as the suspicion that exists in higher education in general. As the student body and faculty/staff have diversified, the identity of Augsburg as a church college has been challenged, and perhaps diminished to a degree. While in some quarters there is still a strong commitment to what it means to be a "church school," it is not a campus-wide ethos. Augsburg, like other colleges, is affected by economic expediency and changing student expectations. Some students balk at

<sup>86</sup> Stephen Carter, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion*. (Basic Books, 1993) p. (X).

<sup>87</sup> Philip Quanbeck, Lecture given for Commission on the Augsburg tradition.

taking even a minimum number of courses in the Christian faith; some faculty and staff are surprised, even threatened, by suggestions that they might even be expected to participate in such a dialogue. Other students and faculty, however, are disappointed that so little dialogue on issues on faith and learning takes place on this campus. Yet, because of, or in some cases in spite of, perceptions of campus-wide or departmental support or lack of it for this dialogue, many faculty, staff, and students are discussing these issues. But Augsburg exhibits the need and will to rise above the current trends in academia. While recognizing the realities of higher education in the closing years of the 20th Century, it remains intent on holding on to the values in which the college is rooted and at the same time being relevant and effective in providing an education that will serve students into the next millennium.

## Acknowledgements

We would also like to acknowledge the contributions of several people who were unable to complete their work on the Commission: Gene Skibbe (emeritus member of the Augsburg Religion Department) and Lisa Zeller (The Phaedrus Group--Augsburg alumna).

Finally, the death of Commission member Anita Hawthorne (Augsburg Pan-Afrikan Support Services) deprived the Commission of one of its liveliest and freshest voices.

### I. The following persons made invited presentations:

Philip Quanbeck II (Augsburg Religion Department): "The Apostle Paul on the Issues of Faith and Reason"

Markus Fuehrer (Augsburg Philosophy Department): "Some Thoughts on the Faith/Reason Dialogue in the Middle Ages and its Implications for Augsburg College"

### II. The Commission reviewed the following papers:

Three Articles in *Intersections*, No. 3., June 1997:

Bruce Reichenbach, "Mission and Hiring in the Christian College," p.13.

Wendy J. McCredie, "A Call for Creative Education," p. 20

Harry Jebson, "Hitting a Moving Target," p. 22

Curt Paulsen and Catherine Paulsen, "The Church-Affiliated College: A Context for Advancing Pluralism, Multiculturalism, and Diversity," presented at the Rhodes Conference *The Church College's Postmodern Opportunity*, Rhodes College, Memphis, TN, May 2-4, 1997.

Three Position Papers on Church Connections written for Augsburg College, October 1997:

Mark Engebretson, "Church Connections at Augsburg College: Past, Present, and Future"

Lynne Lorenzen, "Church Connections: A Theological Perspective"

Bruce Reichenbach, "Education Shaped by the Faith and Values of the Christian Church"

Robert Benne, "A Lutheran Vision/Version of Christian Humanism," *Lutheran Forum*, Vol 31, No. 3, Fall, 1997, p. 40

Martin Marty, "Simul: A Lutheran Reclamation Project in the Humanities," *The Cresset*, December 1981, p. 7

Three Articles in *From Mission to Marketplace: Papers and Proceedings of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Annual Meeting*. Lutheran Educational Conference of North America, 1997:  
Richard T. Hughes, "How the Lutheran Worldview Can Sustain the Life of the Mind," p. 8  
George C. Heider, "Response," p. 18  
Ryan A. LaHurd, "Response," p. 20.

Three Articles by William V. Frame, President of Augsburg College:  
"The Augsburg Convocation: Then and Now," September 3, 1997  
"On the Centennial Anniversary of the Lutheran Free Church,"  
September 20, 1997  
"Augsburg: The Once and Future College," October 11, 1997

Walter Sundberg, "The Church and the Church College." *Lutheran Quarterly*,  
Vol. Xi, 1977, p. 353.

We would also like to thank all of the people who took the time to read and comment on the first draft of this paper. We were able to incorporate many of your suggestions into this draft of the paper. In other cases, time constraints prevented us from doing justice to your ideas. Nevertheless, as members of a community that values both faith and learning, we hope—indeed expect—that there will be future opportunities for us to continue the conversations begun by this document.