

one of the Concordias, I can say that they have navigated these challenges better than most church colleges. But a number of our schools have been closing.

Some of the new leaders in the Concordias seem to recognize the problems and are working hard to recover the Christian educational distinctives and to build up their institutions' Lutheran identity. That is a hard task. It is worth doing, but it will take a while to accomplish. We should pray for their success.

In the meantime, Luther Classical College is building a new institution with a distinct identity and a unique niche: both the faculty and the student body will be confessional Lutherans, ensuring a comprehensive Christian and Lutheran ethos. The curriculum will recover the Lutheran educational tradition—that is, the classical liberal arts, in all of their liberating, mind-expanding, and civilization-forming power, combined with robust theological catechesis. The school will focus on preparing church workers, grounding future seminarians in the Biblical languages and preparing teachers for the burgeoning classical education movement in our parochial schools. It will also prepare lay people for all vocations by giving them a solid educational foundation and then connecting them to the professional training they need.

This is very close to what the classical Reformation universities did. Luther Classical College is highly innovative in higher education today, but it also has the advantage of being time-tested. May God continue to bless its founding. ✨

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BUILDING IN THE MIDST OF A COLLAPSE

BY DR. GENE E. VEITH

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TODAY OUR MAJOR UNIVERSITIES ARE REVEALING themselves to be hotbeds of leftist propaganda, with their students often graduating with enormous debt without the knowledge and the skills that they and their employers need. It has gotten so bad that much of the public is turning against the higher education establishment, with many employers realizing that they don't need to require a college education after all.

Meanwhile, colleges—small so-called liberal arts schools, many of them church-related—are closing right and left. Reportedly, an American college is closing every week. As much as they try, they can't compete with better-known schools. Their enrollment declines as expenses soar until they have to shut down.

Surely, this is not the time to start another college, is it? Actually, it is the best time.

Today's crises make clear both the failure of current approaches to higher education and the urgent need for a better approach. And because it is easier to start a new institution than to reform an old one, the time is right for a school like Luther Classical College.

Today's universities are in thrall to postmodernism, the dogma that truth is relative, that truth claims are nothing more than the construction of those in power and are thus acts of oppression, and that the business of education is to "de-construct" those truth claims as a way to liberate oppressed groups (namely, women, homosexuals, the transgendered, racial minorities, and Islamic terrorists).

Naturally, such a climate will be actively hostile to learning. It will require subjecting students to intense propaganda and indoctrination. This will include discrediting the legacy of the past, punishing ideological dissent, and pressuring students to discard not only their religion but also their belief in objective reality.

Students who succumbed to this indoctrination are bringing such thinking to elementary schools, government bureaucracies, and corporate offices. Many students, to their credit, do not take the "woke" ideology seriously. And many professors dissent from the party line, though they lay low lest they jeopardize their careers.

No wonder academic achievement is in decline! How could it be otherwise? But "Queers for Palestine" demonstrations, "woke" workplace seminars, and the madness of transgenderism are turning much of the public against the higher education establishment. This is good news. This kind of education needs to collapse.

Small liberal arts colleges have provided a valuable alternative to the big research universities, prioritizing teaching rather than research and emphasizing the liberal arts, a term deriving from the Latin word for "free" (liber), meaning the kind of education designed to form a free citizen.

Christian liberal arts colleges, hundreds of which were founded by churches in the 19th century, have been especially valuable in transmitting the Christian intellectual tradition in the face of the scientific materialism that was dominant in modernist universities, as well as the relativism and leftist politics dominant in today's postmodernist universities.

Sadly, though, many liberal arts colleges, wanting to emulate the more prestigious schools, have turned themselves into mini-research universities, multiplying their programs, reducing the liberal arts into specialized humanities courses rather than a broad-ranging cultivation of the mind, and buying in to the modernist or postmodernist ideology of the universities.

The problem is that small private colleges lack the resources of taxpayer-supported state universities or the huge endowments of the prestigious private universities. Most small liberal arts colleges depend on students' tuition for most of their income. As costs rise, they must attract more and more students. And yet they must charge them tuition that far exceeds that of most state schools, which usually have much better laboratories and other facilities.

That financial model will be hard to sustain, unless a small college can somehow develop a strong reputation, either through the quality of a program or some distinct ethos that makes the school stand out from the crowd.



Darius issues Cyrus's decree to rebuild house of God. Author unknown.

More tragic is what has happened to many church colleges. Many Christian colleges have responded to these financial challenges by toning down their Christian identity. Sometimes this is not intentional.

Successful marketing brings in students from other churches or even non-believers. In adding new programs to attract new students, colleges often cannot find new faculty with the needed expertise among their church members so new teachers are brought in from outside. Often, church members become a minority, both in the student body and on the faculty. Of course the church identity, even the Christian identity, will be weakened. Some colleges go further, jettisoning their theological commitments altogether, eventually adopting the same ideology as the rest of the higher education establishment.

The conformist strategy generally leads to school closings. In this climate, only colleges that are distinctive from all of the others, that fill a particular niche, have a good chance of surviving.

I am not condemning the Lutheran colleges in the Concordia University system, though they have had to struggle with all of these syndromes. Speaking as a long-time professor and administrator at