

social sciences, this imperfection need not be. The structures of the world have caused oppression, but new structures would lead to a better, liberated world. This is at the heart of contemporary views that emphasize how racist or sexist Western civilization is.

Christian colleges should have a different vision. The structures of the world are imperfect because the world is soaked with sin and man is fallen. There is no way to rid the world of its imperfections. We should aim, instead, to understand the various ways that sin makes its way into our lives or into our society. Not every social ill is oppression. Christian sociologists or Christian psychologists are hard to find because at the root of these disciplines today is often a vision of human life inconsistent with the Christian idea of sin.

Free speech is not enough. Free inquiry is not enough. Christ crucified is the centerpiece of human life—and it must be the reality around which college education revolves. Scripture is the source of the most decisive knowledge about the world. It reveals a plan for a life well-lived and informs our learning about everything else. Christian colleges built on this foundation are the most needful thing today.

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HIGHER EDUCATION NEEDS MORE THAN FREE SPEECH

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CONSERVATIVES AND CHRISTIANS often feel under fire today. They often respond with the arguments that the American Left was using ten years ago. Nowhere is this truer than in higher education.

Today the Left is imposing a destructive orthodoxy on campuses in the name of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI). In return, conservatives and Christians beg to be tolerated in the name of real diversity (of opinions), and they ask the Left to respect the ideals of free speech or free inquiry when conservative speakers come to campus. Today the Left openly adopts systems of racial preferences in hiring and admissions, so conservatives plead for an end to racial discrimination.

By appealing to seemingly neutral principles and open-ended possibilities, conservatives ignore a fundamental truth: no matter what, colleges and universities will pursue an understanding of what education is. The Left is forthright about this. People on the Left actively pursue a political and moral agenda on campuses under the name DEI; their vision of an educated graduate is the social justice warrior, and they measure the success of universities by their ability to cultivate more and more of them.

Conservatives think the Left's vision will destroy the country by producing a

cadre of leftist activists who will impose “anti-racism” in the workplace, further dissolve the Christian family through their embrace of radical gender ideology, and continue to dishonor the Christian faith. True enough. When it comes to remedies, however, the Right responds weakly, claiming that universities should be guided by no vision of an educated human being. Conservatives have legitimate grievances, but they respond with impossibilities. As a result, the Left marches unopposed from one institutional conquest to another.

A more intelligent response would be guided by conservatives and Christians who forthrightly offer a vision of what an educated human being is and tailor educational institutions to achieve that vision. The Left’s vision of education must be met with a more compelling vision. The Left’s institutional conquest must be met with the building of new institutions or the reconquest of old institutions.

American conservatives have a lot to learn from when Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod conservatives reconquered Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (CSL). CSL had been slowly taken over by theologically liberal instructors who questioned, among other things, the historicity of Biblical events. The Synod under the leadership of Jacob Preus investigated the seminary and suspended its president, John Tietjen. Professors staged a walkout and the Synod proceeded to fire the whole bunch. The released professors formed a break-away seminary called “Concordia Seminary in Exile,” or “Seminex,” and eventually merged with what became the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, a mainline, liberal denomination. CSL, in contrast, hired a slew of pastors to train future pastors. It regained a reputation for LCMS theological orthodoxy.

The LCMS did not respond to the modernist takeover of its seminary with appeals to free speech or free inquiry. Jacob Preus did not seek tolerance for orthodox Lutheranism or respect for a diversity of ideas. Instead, the Synod recognized that seminary education is never neutral, that what the educators of pastors teach becomes the substance of future LCMS pastors and therefore future LCMS congregants.

The same sense of institutional mission must inform higher education today. Lutherans may not ask to be tolerated at their own universities nor may they appeal simply to free speech or free inquiry in the hopes that authentic Lutheranism can have a place at the table of their own institutions. The liberal thinking that conquered the St. Louis seminary fifty years ago still threatens universities today. Thank God we Lutherans have a heritage that teaches us how to reform. We must seize opportunities to do so.



There are also ample opportunities for building anew. Luther Classical College is setting out to build an institution with a clear and explicit vision for what an educated human being is. Faculty can be hired with an aim toward promulgating a vision of the world that is specifically Lutheran and Christian. A smaller college setting can be used to attract like-minded students who share the same vision of what an educated person should be. Programs can be designed and simplified to maintain a united vision for education. Other Christian denominations have already done this. Catholics have established Wyoming Catholic College, Thomas Aquinas College, Ave Maria, and others; Presbyterians have established New Saint Andrews College.

These faith-based, visionary institutions stand in stark contrast to the newly formed University of Austin, which has dedicated itself to open-ended inquiry and free speech. None of these supposedly open values are bad in themselves, but none of them can make for organizing principles for higher education. The University of Austin favors human flourishing, but it refuses to give an account of what human flourishing is.

Genuine college education is different. It offers a unified vision for human thriving. It offers an account of why human beings are dissatisfied with their present world and have a reasonable hope for the future world. It entertains alternatives but is not bewitched by them.

Let me offer a concrete example to show the Christian difference. The world around is imperfect. From the perspective of most academic disciplines in the