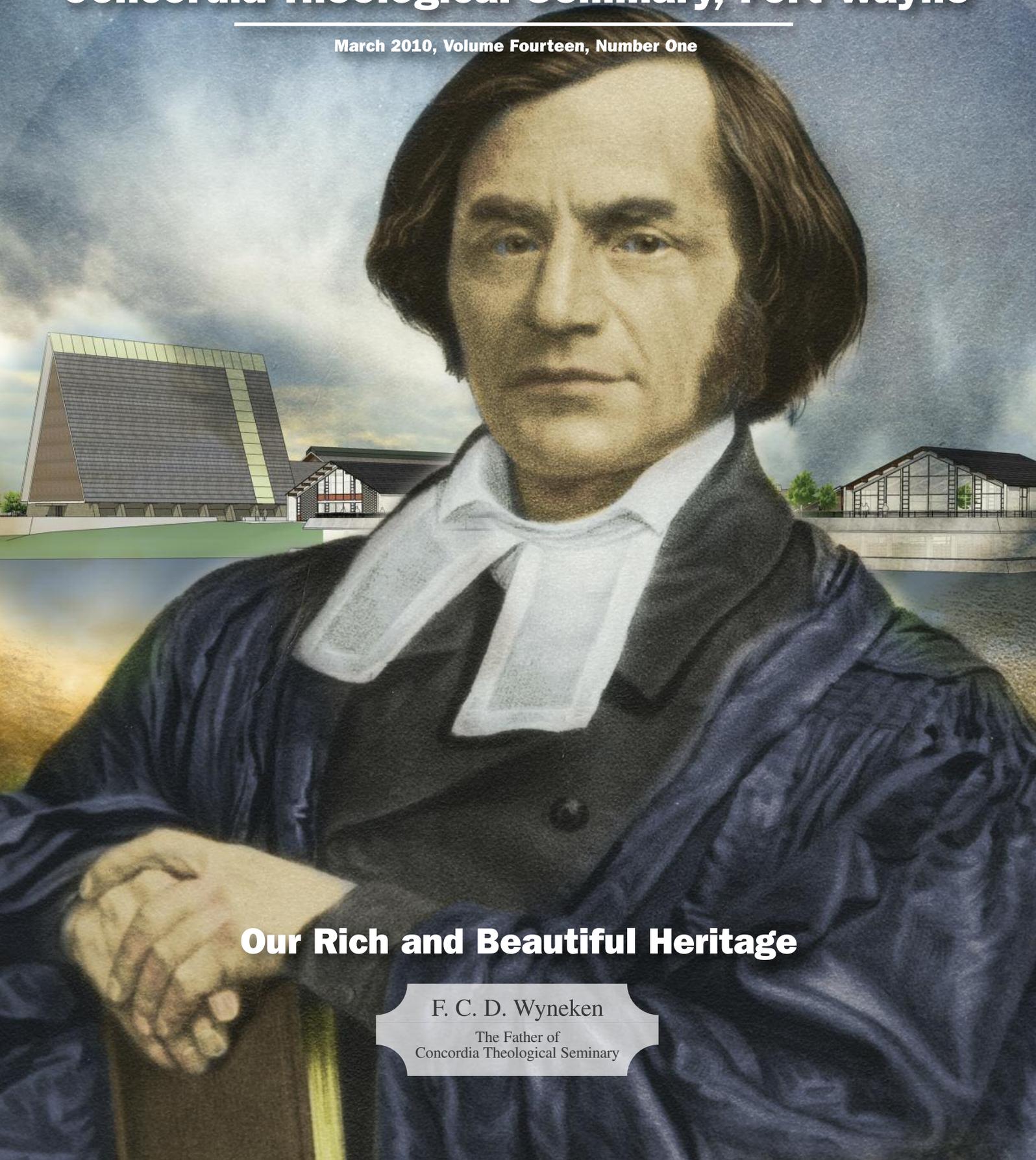


# For the **Life of the World**

## **Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne**

March 2010, Volume Fourteen, Number One



**Our Rich and Beautiful Heritage**

F. C. D. Wyneken

The Father of  
Concordia Theological Seminary

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This calendar year we recall the 200th anniversary of one of our seminary’s founders, Friedrich Conrad Dietrich Wyneken (1810–1876). In the demanding context of 2010, Concordia Theological Seminary remains faithful to Wyneken’s founding vision, even while recognizing the rapidity of change that theological education is presently experiencing. In these circumstances, Wyneken’s vision continues to inspire our seminary as it carries out its mission.

### 8 **Luther’s Legacy** By Dr. Cameron A. MacKenzie

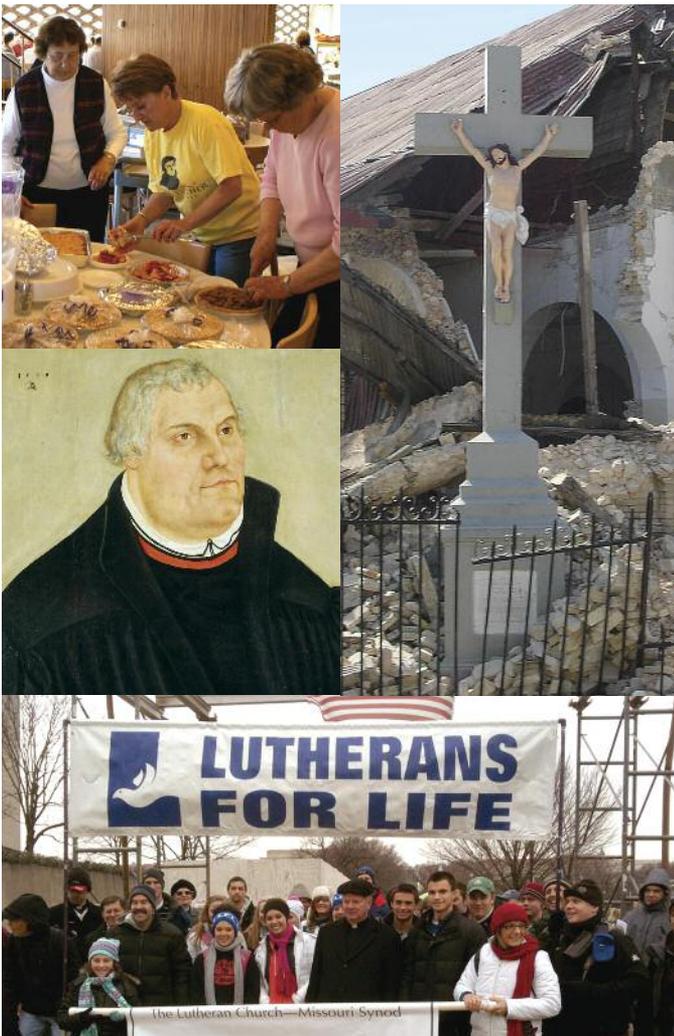
There’s *lots* that separates Luther’s world from ours besides time and miles! So what then is his “legacy” to *our* world? Does Luther have anything to say to people alive now? Perhaps, surprisingly, the answer is a resounding yes! For in spite of all the obvious differences, there are even more important similarities—indeed, constants—that we see in Luther’s world and our own.

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I am thankful for my forefathers who kept pointing me to Scripture and Christ with an eye to the Christian Church and taught me how to journey through death to life everlasting. I also realized that I had now become a part of the faithful witnesses and the son who would pass on the saving words of Christ. Through stories, sermons, devotions, writings and preaching, my congregation would hear and learn from Martin Luther, Martin Chemnitz, C.F.W. Walther, Philipp Melancthon and others who shared similar faith struggles as we did.

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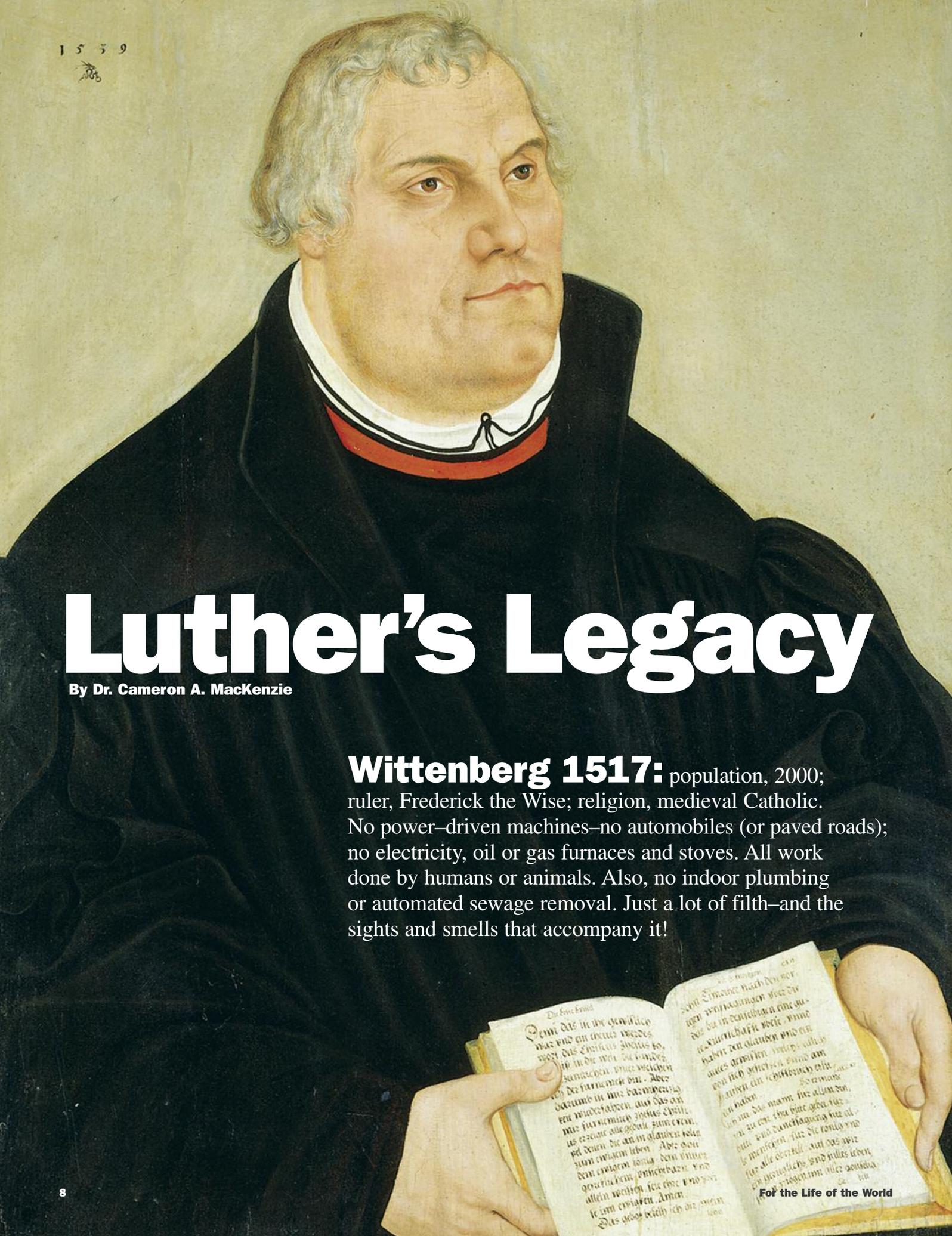
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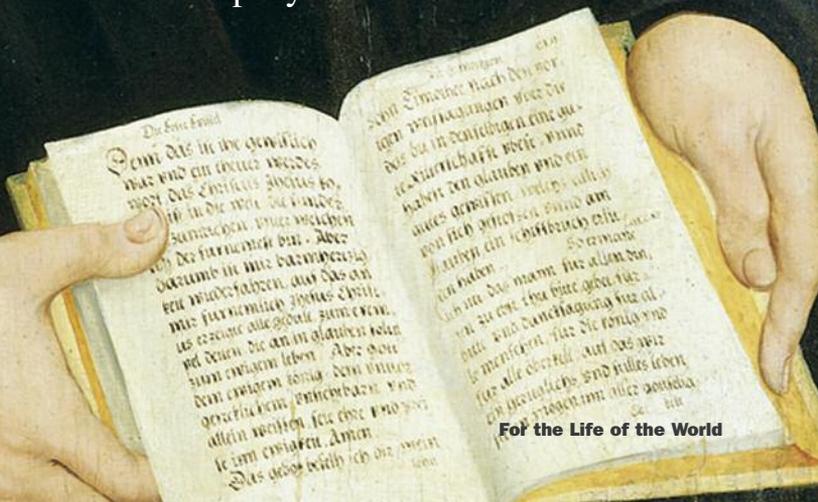
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# Luther's Legacy

By Dr. Cameron A. MacKenzie

**Wittenberg 1517:** population, 2000; ruler, Frederick the Wise; religion, medieval Catholic. No power-driven machines—no automobiles (or paved roads); no electricity, oil or gas furnaces and stoves. All work done by humans or animals. Also, no indoor plumbing or automated sewage removal. Just a lot of filth—and the sights and smells that accompany it!



For the Life of the World

The castle church in Wittenberg housed around 19,000 holy objects (relics). More than a thousand masses were sung each year; another 7,800 read. Their main purpose was to diminish the time and suffering that the faithful have to spend in purgatory.

Fort Wayne, Indiana, 2010: population, 250,000; government, democracy (part of the United States). Modern economy; sophisticated technology; Internet; Wi-Fi. Buses, automobiles, airplanes; Interstate Highway System; and even Amtrak (not too far away). Large malls; beautiful parks; and lovely homes.

Religion: lots of churches—all kinds of Christian denominations. About half of population is “churched.” Emphasis? Leading a decent life and helping people who are hurting.

You know what? There’s *lots* that separates Luther’s world from ours besides time and miles! So what then is his “legacy” to *our* world? Does Luther have anything to say to people alive now?

Perhaps, surprisingly, the answer is a resounding yes! For in spite of all the obvious differences, there are even more important similarities—indeed, constants—that we see in Luther’s world and our own. First of all, the contingency of human existence; and secondly, humanity’s fatal flaw.

In Luther’s day, *and* ours too, people died. Whatever distinguishes one person from another whether across time or right now, we all have this in common—we are going to die. As much as we don’t like to think about it, it remains true. And that means that every person has to come to terms with his own mortality. What does death mean and what happens next?

But that in turn raises the second issue—humanity’s flaw. As much as we might want to ignore this too or excuse it, every human being lives a self-centered life that all too often leads to injustice, vice or crime. In matters large and small, we find it very difficult—really impossible—to measure up to a standard that each of us understands instinctively—to treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves! We know it but don’t do it.

So if we put the two points together—our moral imperfection and our mortality—we arrive at the question that confronts everyone: how are we going to enter eternity? Although the living have never themselves experienced death, it is not unreasonable to assume that there may very well be a judgment for which every person must be ready. Since it is clear that we are not the cause of our own existence, there must be a Creator/God; and since He has made us all with an inborn sense of right and wrong, it seems very likely that He will hold us to account for moral (and immoral) choices we have made.

But this is where Luther still speaks—not because he himself was so wise but because he was a spokesman for God who opened Luther’s mind and heart to the Scriptures. And from this special book, the great Reformer spoke the Word of God’s grace in Jesus Christ. The judgment that all of us face has already been faced by Him. Through His perfect life and atoning death, our Lord Jesus Christ has “redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature; purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.”

These familiar words of Luther’s are not just the center of the *Small Catechism* but the heart of his entire theology—the message that animates his treatises as well as his hymns, his most sophisticated writings as well as his most down-to-earth sermons. We call it the Gospel.

And it is the Gospel that constitutes Luther’s legacy to our times—indeed, all times. When we look around and experience the passage of time, we are tempted to conclude that *everything* changes. But that’s not true. A lot *does* change; but not everything—not human nature and not humanity’s fate. But neither does God’s love in Jesus. Martin Luther knew this, so he spoke—and still speaks—to people who need to hear it—like us! 📖

*Dr. Cameron A. MacKenzie serves as Chariman of the Historical Theology Department and Ellis Professor of Historical Theology at Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.*



**Through His perfect life and atoning death, our Lord Jesus Christ has “redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature; purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil.” These familiar words of Luther’s are not just the center of the *Small Catechism* but the heart of his entire theology—the message that animates his treatises as well as his hymns, his most sophisticated writings as well as his most down-to-earth sermons. We call it the Gospel.**