

# For the **Life of the World**

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

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**The Seminary Library:  
A Servant of Christ and His People** By Dr. Dean O. Wenthe

**Forming Servants into the Future** By Rev. Brian M. Mosemann

**Reaching Out Via Technology** By Rev. William S. Johnson



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## For the Life of the World

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The rapid cultural change that comes with the dynamic nature of technology can present significant challenges to the Church, but it can offer us exciting opportunities as well. The message of the Cross is as relevant today as it has always been. By faithfully using new technologies to communicate our timeless message to address eternal needs, we can continue to reflect the light of Christ to a world in search of hope.

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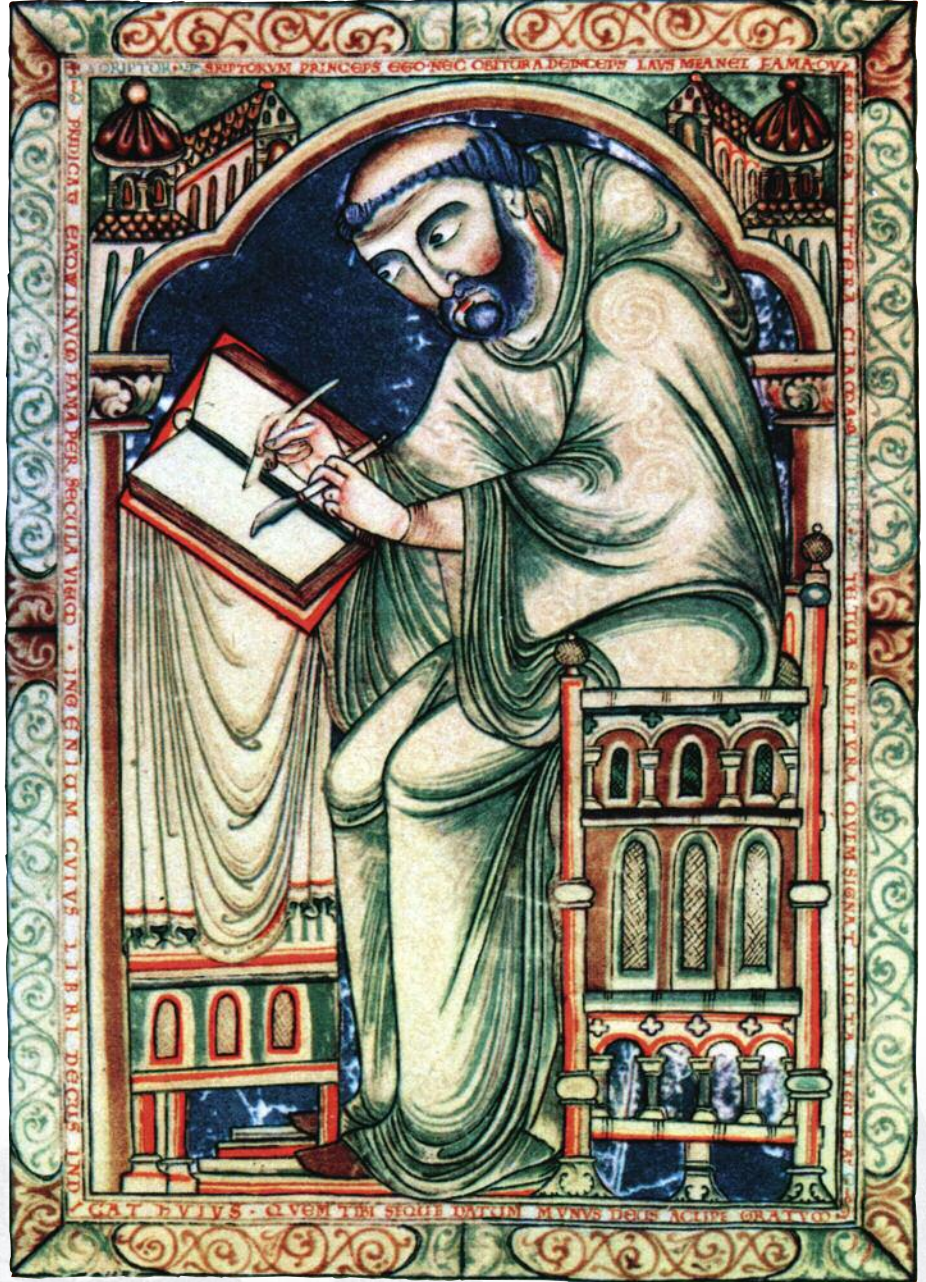


# The Seminary Library: A Servant of Christ and His People

By Dr. Dean O. Wenthe

Imagine a world without the literary masterpieces of Greece, without Plato and Aristotle, without the Roman authors Cicero and Virgil. Even more destructive to the human family would be the loss of Sacred Scripture and early Christian literature.

One of the films that carried an interesting message in the 1960–70s was based on a book. The title was *Fahrenheit 451*, the temperature at which paper burns. The plot projected a future world where a totalitarian government sought to control the population by limiting access to ideas. Hence, this government decreed that all books be burned. The resistance movement had instituted a program whereby books were memorized by individuals. In forests and remote locations, these books were then passed on orally to younger people so that their message would be preserved.



The scribe Eadwine. From the Canterbury Psalter, ca. 1150. Ms. R. 17.1. Trinity College, Cambridge. Location: Ann Ronan Picture Library, London, Great Britain . Photo credit : HIP / Art Resource, NY

While this fictional world was a clear warning against the totalitarian inclinations of some governments (China, the Soviet Union), a real historical parallel is instructive.

After the sack and fall of Rome in the year 410, Europe descended into the Dark Ages. Various groups ravaged the continent and destroyed the cities with their libraries and centers of learning. In that context, Irish monks dedicated their lives “to copy all of Western literature—everything they could lay their hands on” (Thomas Cahill, *How the Irish Saved Civilization* [New York: Doubleday, 1995], 3).

Historians have noted that the whole of Western culture—both Christian texts and classical literature—was in danger of being lost. The remarkable contribution of these monastic libraries can hardly be overestimated.

In truth, the art of the scriptorium was virtually unknown in the indigenous monasteries of Italy and Gaul. Monastic manuscript art had traveled from the workshops of Syria and Egypt by way of Ireland and Britain and, at last, to the continent of Europe. But now, the depleted store of continental codices rose steadily. By the middle of the eighth century, Fulda, for instance, was employing forty full-time scribes. (Cahill, 206)

Imagine a world without the literary masterpieces of Greece, without Plato and Aristotle, without the Roman authors Cicero and Virgil. Even more destructive to the human family would be the loss of Sacred Scripture and early Christian literature.

Perhaps the most thorough examination of libraries in antiquity observes:

The rise and triumph of Christianity had a profound effect upon literature: it elevated religion into a predominant concern. To be sure, there were still other writers, in both Greek and Latin, who dealt with secular subjects, but they are minor compared with the great Christian authors, the likes of Basil or Eusebius in Greek, of Augustine or Jerome in Latin. There was an outpouring of studies of the text of the Bible, commentaries on passages and interpretations of them, discussions of the nature of the divine, diatribes against views held to be heretical, and so on. Such literature was out of place on the shelves of the libraries that existed; it required

its own libraries. These arose as part of Christian churches, monasteries, and the like and, spreading far and wide during the Middle Ages, were steps in the progression toward the libraries of today. (Lionel Carson, *Libraries in the Ancient World* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002], 136)

One need not reflect very long to embrace and to support the treasure of good, even God-given blessings that a seminary library generously provides for its students and also for the entire Church. From commentaries on Sacred Scripture to exposition of the creeds and confessions to the most practical and concrete guides for the Christian life, the seminary library is a priceless source of knowledge.

The most recent issue of *In Trust* (Spring 2010) contains a splendid article by Melody Layton McMahon, entitled “More Than a Study Hall.” This piece concisely challenges

some widespread assumptions that would suggest that theological libraries are nearing the end of their history. It also maps a future that includes prudent use of digitized texts and appropriate efficiencies.

A final issue is noteworthy. When one considers the content of so much that the Internet and other media conveys, Concordia

Theological Seminary seeks to share the beautiful, truthful and eternal grace of God in Jesus Christ with all the world. Our theological library is a key resource for disseminating texts and knowledge about the true and living God: the Blessed and Holy Trinity.

How delighted and grateful we are to be expanding the library so that our rich and specialized collection can serve our students, the Church and the public more fully!

Could it be that a future historian will look back upon the twenty-first century and credit theological libraries with preserving the beautiful, truthful and eternal Word of God that offers the grace and mercy of God in Jesus Christ? 🏰

*Dr. Dean O. Wenthe serves as President of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.*



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