

# The Education of the Christian in Lutheran Legacy

By Theodore Hartwig

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There is growing concern over the state of Christian education in our Synod. Voices are heard asking whether the birthright received from our fathers is undergoing sale for a mess of Esau's pottage. An outcome of this concern is the agenda at this conference, a paper dealing with our legacy as disciples of the Lord Christ and another paper with our legacy as Lutheran educators.

My assignment is to review Luther's thoughts about education and show what is distinctively Lutheran in education. Taking the most direct route, our assignment might be managed in a few pages. The place to begin is with Ewald Plass's three volume *What Luther Says*. This fine reference work arranges all major topics about which Luther spoke in convenient alphabetical order with quotations and their sources in the various editions of Luther's published works. Simply by consulting under "Education," finding the sources, and reporting on them, we might think the job done and the victory won in less time than it takes for a hamburger and malt at McDonald's. There is another route, slower and more satisfying for spiritual digestion. Before we listen to Luther on education, we should begin with the man himself, take his pulse, see what makes him tick. Then only are we ready to hear what he spoke about education and, on the basis of Luther's legacy, to make some applications to our own times.

To consider the man Luther is to risk treading over long familiar ground. Yet I beg your indulgence in order to share some thoughts gained from having lived many years with Luther in his sermons, his letters, as well as a wide assortment of other writings. How Luther has been appraised through the years is an interesting history of its own. In the century after his death, called the age of orthodoxy, people saw Luther as the man who rediscovered pure doctrine. Then followed the age of pietism when he was seen as the hero of faith. During the age of the enlightenment men lauded Luther as the trailblazer in asserting the primacy of reason and debunking superstition. During the 1800's he was idealized as the prophet of a united Germany.<sup>1</sup> In our own century Luther has been heralded in democratic circles as the advocate of a free conscience, behind the iron curtain as an early, but traitorous, friend to the common working man. Because of Luther's powerful personality, each age in assessing the man caught only a part of him congenial to its time like a man who looks into a deep well and sees his own reflection in the water.<sup>2</sup>

We are interested in those facets of Luther's personality which may help us form a better understanding of his thoughts on education. We understand Luther best when we make our start with the heart and core of his life, the article of the forgiveness of sins, that man is made right with God alone through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. And there is no better place to hear Luther's estimate of this teaching than in his Smalcald Articles. There Luther writes: "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."<sup>3</sup> With this article of Christ and faith all other Scripture remains in right focus.

Harnessed with this truth, Luther became a free man. We might synopsise his life of Christian freedom around three Bible passages. The first is Gal. 5:1: "Stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage." The second passage is Rom. 14:14: "I know, and am persuaded by the Lord Jesus Christ, that there is nothing unclean of itself." The third passage is Phil. 4:8: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." These three passages throw light on the man Luther. They explain the large-mindedness with which Luther carried out his calling as teacher of the Holy Scriptures. They explain the joy with which Luther viewed the beauties of God's creation and things produced by human art for the edification and delight of man.

As the peerless interpreter of God's Word, Luther broke away from two systems which had stifled Biblical interpretation for hundreds of years, both systems a precarious gift from Esau. The first of these I shall label the fourfold sense of Scripture. It had been spooking in the church as early as the third century. By this

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<sup>1</sup> J. P. Koehler, *Kirchengeschichte* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1917), p. 389.

<sup>2</sup> The picture is from Albert Schweitzer's *Quest for the Historical Jesus*.

<sup>3</sup> Theodore Tappert (ed.), *The Book of Concord* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1959), p. 292.

system every book and chapter in the Bible was subjected to four meanings: first, the natural or literal sense; second, the ethical or moral sense; third, the sense I shall label eschatological, a meaning that relates to life after death; and fourth, the figurative or allegorical sense, and this fourth use became very popular because it allowed free use of the imagination. Thus one medieval commentator of the Bible asserted that all the sacraments of the church were prefigured in the book of Exodus. Another commentator offered a hidden meaning for the identity of Job's wife as well as Job's 7000 sheep, 3000 camels, 500 teams of oxen, and 500 she asses.<sup>4</sup> This kind of Bible interpretation taken over from the world won favor in the church as a handy solvent for words and events in the Bible that are distasteful to ill-informed piety, for instance, the story of Lot's daughters written in Genesis 19, or the conquest of Canaan and butchery of its inhabitants recorded in the book of Joshua. But I suspect a further, more subtle reason for the popularity of allegorizing the Bible. That lies in the proclivity of the human being, following his intellect, to deify the Scriptures and thus turn them into something different from what they are. I shall return to this topic at another place later in the paper.

Luther broke away from the system of the four senses of Scripture and stressed the simple grammatical historical interpretation. He did not throw out the other senses completely but operated with them as a free man instead of a slave. In his sermons, he occasionally took liberty to add a figurative or allegorical meaning of the text; he would do it, *wenn es Christum treibt*, when Christ was thereby honored. Luther's strong advocacy for the grammatical-historical sense of the Bible text has had large implications for Lutheranism. It explains the emphasis on learning all the languages with which the church has spoken through the ages, chiefly the mother languages of Holy Scripture, the Hebrew and Greek; and to these we may, in the spirit of Luther, confidently add Latin, German and English. Luther's concern for the correct sense of Scripture explains also his high regard for history. Through these two instruments, the languages and history, a student of the Bible is best served to uncover what the text means.

Luther also broke away from the system of Bible interpretation underpinned by Aristotelianism. Aristotle, the premier scientific philosopher of ancient Greece, was revered in the Middle Ages as "the master of them that know." His popularity rose during the 1000's because his logical books supplied medieval teachers with useful rules and tools for correct thinking. Then this logical apparatus was found useful for resolving what seemed to be conflicts in the Bible text or in the writings of great teachers from the past. By the 1200's Aristotle had become the universal guide for correct presentation of Scriptural doctrine. His technical terms supplied the professors with a theological vocabulary deemed necessary for expounding the Bible. Eventually, medieval reverence for Aristotle went so far that the professors not only ploughed with the heifer of his logical apparatus but culled from his scientific, religious, and moral treatises as fountains of almost inspired truth. Aristotle reigned in the schools. His books dominated the course offerings and determined the instructional methodology. When a doctor of the Holy Scripture walked into the classroom to lecture or sat down in his cell to write a book, he donned Aristotelian glasses. He saw Scripture through the prism of Aristotle. All questions were resolved through Aristotle and without Aristotle was not anything resolved that was resolved.

From this almost universal pattern in the schools of Europe before the Reformation Luther separated himself and, in place of Aristotle, looked to languages and history for unfolding the correct sense of the Scriptural text. This is one of the great revolutions in the history of Biblical interpretation. We must know of this in order to appreciate Luther's unrelenting campaign against Aristotle. In our own day when the Greek philosopher has gone into eclipse, Luther would probably speak differently. Yet vestiges of Aristotelianism, or whatever other name one gives it, continue to insinuate themselves into Biblical interpretation so that Scripture is shaped along scientific canons which are foreign to the nature and purpose of God's inspired Word.

Luther's freedom of movement in the Scriptures is truly amazing. No less amazing is his freedom in making use of the works of this world fashioned by the art of man. Luther was no iconoclast; works of church art, old works of pagan secular art, if properly used, did not have to be smashed. The old order of worship

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<sup>4</sup> The first commentator is treated in Henry Osborn Taylor, *The Mediaeval Mind*, II (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1966), p. 73. The second commentator is Pope Gregory the Great in his commentary on Job entitled *Moralia*.

grown up in the church through hundreds of years required some surgery but not demolition. On the other hand, Luther did not oppose the new. What mattered was that Christ be glorified. What mattered was that Christians be edified. What mattered was that Scripture be made available in a language the people understand. Everyone knows of Luther's love for music, both sacred and secular. He also esteemed secular literature, the works of the pagan Latin and Greek poets he studied in his student days from which he often quoted from memory.

Luther treated secular culture as a free man who walked in the spirit of Rom. 14:14 and Phil. 4:8. Freely and uninhibitedly, he read and lived with the works produced by the art of man: music, poetry, history, literature, painting, sculpture, drama, both tragedy and comedy, without raising scruples about propriety. Luther was questioned at one time about the propriety of staging plays by the Roman comic poet Terence in a Christian school. Luther responded with a yes, if the students had reached a mature age. He defended his stance with the argument that such plays give opportunity for the youth to become acquainted with various people, various customs, various personalities. Thus, the plays serve as a teacher for ordering one's own life and for mirroring the ways of the wicked. Luther also thought that these plays might serve the youth as an impetus to marriage, when they saw on stage the bawdiness and debauchery of the unmarried life. As for the vulgar words and situations which now and then occur in these plays, this need not constrain Christians to avoid them. Anyway, Luther adds, we find this in the Bible also. He shows the same freedom toward the mystery, miracle, and morality plays of the Middle Ages. These were often based on Bible themes and often took liberties with the Bible text to evoke humor. Where others were quick to take offense at these plays, Luther was willing to allow them as instruments by which truth might be imparted.<sup>5</sup> While Luther lived, the way was open for free pursuit of the arts and sciences, and not until the next century did trends appear in Lutheran education to curtail that freedom.

Once we grasp this freedom and largemindedness of Luther, we can understand the great gulf which yawned between the reformation in Saxony and the reformation in Switzerland. The Swiss reformers strove to purify the church and to offer God a more pleasing spiritual sacrifice by downgrading the physical and corporeal. We meet this in their disparagement of the outward written word in the Bible. We meet it more notoriously in their eviction of pictures, organs, bells, liturgy, and poetry from Christian churches and Christian life. On the surface, the Swiss reformation appears as the extreme antithesis to the papacy. But the Swiss attitude toward the creature, whether bread, or wine, or the written word, or the liturgy, stamps them as of the same cloth with the papacy; both falsely regarded creaturely things in and of themselves as base. The papacy tried to remove the baseness by deifying creaturely things, as happens in their doctrine of baptism, their doctrine of transubstantiation, their notions about consecration. The Swiss reformers took the opposite course and banished them. In both cases we have examples of legalism, of subservience to the law instead of freedom under the Gospel.<sup>6</sup> Luther stands alone in clearly seeing that human achievements and human affairs must be appraised not in bleak isolation but in the context of the Gospel. He is the man who more than any other since the times of the apostles understood and lived in the freedom of the Gospel.

We must be acquainted with Luther in the round before we attempt to understand one facet of his thought, that about education. To my knowledge, Luther's formal statements in behalf of education boil down to just a few writings. Those I consulted include the *Address to the German Nobility*, published in 1520; the *Letter to the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Should Establish and Maintain Christian Schools*, published in 1524; the *Instruction for the Visitation of Parish Pastors in Electoral Saxony*, published with the collaboration of Melanchthon in 1528, and the *Sermon on Keeping Children in School*, published in 1530. Besides these writings there are scattered through many other treatises and letters recommendations and convictions about education. Typical in the latter category is the letter which Luther wrote to Elector George, Duke of Brandenburg, on July 18, 1529. I quote the pertinent sections of this letter right now because it captures the essence of all Luther thought necessary for a well rounded higher education.

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<sup>5</sup> Julius Köstlin u. Gustav Kawerau, *Martin Luther, Sein Leben and Seine Schriften* (Berlin: 1903), p. 504.

<sup>6</sup> Koehler, 395, e.

It would be good if in your Grace's principality your Grace would establish one or two universities, where not only the Holy Scriptures, but law and all the sciences would be taught. From these schools learned men could be got as preachers, pastors, secretaries, councilors, etc., for the whole principality. To this purpose the income of the monasteries and foundations could be applied so that scholars could be maintained in the schools at proper salaries, viz., two theologians, two jurists, one professor of medicine, one mathematician, and for logic, rhetoric, etc., four or five men.

For, if studying is to be good you must have not empty cloisters and deserted monasteries and endowed churches, but a city, in which many people come together and practice on one another and stir each other up and drive each other on. Solitary studies do not accomplish this, but common studies do, for where many are together one gives another incentive and example.

In the third place, it is well that in all towns and villages good primary schools should be established out of which could be picked and chosen those who were fit for the, universities, out of which the men can then be taken who are to serve your land and people. If the towns or their citizens cannot do this, then it would be well to establish new stipends for the support of a few bright fellows in the deserted monasteries, so that every town might have one or two students. In the course of time, when the common people see that their sons can become pastors and preachers, and get other offices, many of those who now think that a scholar cannot get a living will again keep their sons in school.

If some of the scholars who are trained in these schools take service and hold office in the dominions of other princes, and the objection is made that you are training people for other lords, it must be remembered that this does no harm, for, beyond a doubt, these men will promote the founding and endowment of schools in the lands of other princes and peoples, etc.

This the advice that, in my little wisdom, I have desired to give your Grace. God grant your Grace His Holy Spirit to improve on all this, and in all things perfectly to do His will. Amen.

Your Grace's obedient servant,          Martin Luther.<sup>7</sup>

Ten years earlier in his career Luther wrote a letter that throws light on his educational ideals in an interesting roundabout way. On August 25, 1518, Luther's lifelong friend and colleague, Philip Melancthon, arrived at Wittenberg as professor of Greek. He was twenty-one years old. Four days after his arrival this young man, according to the custom in European universities, delivered his inaugural address before the assembled faculty. The subject on which he spoke dealt with the improvement of the university curriculum. The address made a deep impression on Luther. Two days later, Luther wrote to his college chum Spalatin serving at the court of Luther's prince. He commented on Melancthon as follows:

He delivered an extremely learned and absolutely faultless address.... We very quickly turned our minds and eyes from his appearance and person to the man himself. We congratulate ourselves in having this man and marvel at what he has in him.... I certainly do not want to have a different Greek instructor as long as he is alive.<sup>8</sup>

We can discover the reason for Luther's admiration by looking into Melancthon's address for ourselves. In it, the new professor commiserates the improper use of Aristotle in the school for the past three hundred years. Because of this, "the knowledge of Greek was lost, and the bad was being taught, instead of the good." This state of affairs was made worse by the preoccupation with secondhand and third-hand

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<sup>7</sup> Preserved Smith and Charles Jacobs (tr.), *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: 1918), p. 487-488.

<sup>8</sup> *Luther's Works*: Volume 48, Letters, I (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1963), p. 78.

commentators of the Holy Scriptures. This destroyed not only the study of languages but also of the sciences. And thus a wholesale loss of real knowledge set in, together with a decline in Christian morals and liberal studies. Old piety turned into rote ceremonies. Human traditions, human decisions, human policies, regulations, and interpretations took over everything.

To remedy the deterioration Melancthon urges the return to the sources, most important, the original languages of the Bible. "All the dry marginal notes, concordances, disconcordances, and the like," he says, "are only hindrances for the spirit. But if we put our minds to the sources, we will begin to understand Christ rightly."<sup>9</sup>

Melancthon's manifesto of "Back to the Sources" coincided with Luther's ideals for well rounded Christian education. In his *Address to the Christian Nobility* Luther urges expulsion of Aristotle from the courses in theology. He does this on the basis of personal experience. "I know my Aristotle as well as you do," he writes. "I have lectured on him and lived with him and understand him better than St. Thomas and Duns Scotus did."<sup>10</sup> He is not opposed to the whole Aristotle. Get rid of his ethics and his book on the soul, but keep his works on logic, rhetoric, and poetics. Next, Luther advocates concentration on the languages, the sciences, and history. In legal studies he recommends the imperial law but is suspicious of canon law, that vast body of legislation which determined the policies and practices of the papacy. "These days," he writes, "canon law is not what is written in books of law but whatever the pope and his flatterers want." Instead of consulting the law books, the pope had reserved the right to issue a decree on the basis of consultation with what was technically called his *scrinium pectoris*, i.e. the chambers of his heart; to which Luther ironically comments: "So what we need today is not professors of the canon law but professors of the chambers of the pope's heart."<sup>11</sup>

Luther winds up his program for education with a plea that Bible study occupy the center of the curriculum. He concludes the discourse with the often quoted statement: "I would advise no one to send his child where the Holy Scriptures are not supreme. Unless they teach the Holy Scriptures I fear the universities are wide gates to hell."<sup>12</sup>

Luther's most famous educational treatise is the *Letter to the Councilmen of all the Cities in Germany*.<sup>13</sup> This enlarges on the sketchy thoughts in his *Appeal*. Writing to the mayors, Luther urges the study of languages on the ground that the Gospel came through this medium and therefore the Gospel cannot be preserved without it. If there are no experts in Greek and Hebrew, then novices will commit blunders in trying to defend truth with proof texts that do not apply with the result that "Christians are put to shame and the adversaries grow more stubborn in their error."<sup>14</sup> Therefore let the languages be cultivated; "as sunshine is to shadow, so is the language itself compared to all the marginal notes of the fathers."<sup>15</sup> Then Luther comes to literature and history. These are vital for the curriculum. "How I regret now," he writes, "that I did not read more poets and historians, and that no one taught me them. I was obliged to read at great cost, toil, and detriment to myself, that devil's dung the philosophers and sophists, from which I have all I can do to purge myself."<sup>16</sup>

The letter to the mayors concludes with an interesting statement on the kind of books which belong to a library. The Bible should be there in four languages, Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and German. With the Bible, books that teach the languages. The best are the great poets and orators of antiquity, pagans and Christians. There must be books on the liberal arts and all the other arts, the sciences, the humanities, and the manual arts. Also, books on law and medicine. Most important; a large collection of chronicles and histories, whatever one can lay hands

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<sup>9</sup> Hans Hillerbrand, *The Reformation* (New York: Harper and Row, 1964), p. 58-60.

<sup>10</sup> *Luther's Works*: Volume 44, p. 201.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 202.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 207.

<sup>13</sup> *Luther's Works*: 45, 347 ff.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 362.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 364.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 370.

on, and in any language available.<sup>17</sup> Now is the time for library building, he says at the end of the letter. “Now that God has so graciously bestowed upon us an abundance of arts, scholars, and books, it is time to reap and gather in the best as well as we can, and lay up treasure in order to preserve for the future something from these years of jubilee.”<sup>18</sup>

The treatises from which I have quoted provide a sufficient overview for Luther’s chief thoughts on education. Education meant training the man of God. Therefore an education without the Gospel was inconceivable to him; and since he belongs to his time and not to ours, it would be useless to speculate how he might react to the supposedly secular education in America. It would be useless to speculate what Luther would tell Christian parents who send their children to public schools. Our separation of church and state was a foreign notion to him.

In Luther’s education thought, the Gospel achieved two goals. First, it kept the man of God healthy in his relationship to God. Second, it harnessed the man of God for this world; it furnished him with that wholesome outlook on this world so well described in Phil. 4:8. This views all the works of God’s natural creation with childlike wonder and gratitude and finds them all worthy of study. It perceives all the good things produced by the art and invention of man, whether pagan or Christian, as gifts from the hand of the lavish Creator for the enjoyment and well-being of man. It recognizes that human works, because human, are pitted with imperfection and evil, and it uses both the good and the bad to grow more knowledgeable about the realities of life.

These attitudes lie at the source of Luther’s program for a well-rounded education. The Gospel must stand at the center, but the Gospel does not rule out the search into the purely human. “The highly honored liberal arts which were discovered and brought to light by excellent and intelligent people, though they were heathen, serve an important and useful function in life,” Luther insists.<sup>19</sup> If these heathen were still alive, Luther would have enjoyed sitting at their feet as a pupil of their specialty, not of heavenly wisdom but of earthly wisdom, nor would he have denied his students the same privilege.

Luther clearly understood the gulf between earthly and heavenly wisdom. In another place he writes: “It is most certainly true that human wisdom, the liberal arts, and other works of man, are noble gifts of God good and useful in many ways so that one cannot get along in this life without them. However, they will never properly teach us of sin and righteousness and how we get right with God. This requires a divine wisdom, not to be found among the wise and learned of the world but only in the Bible.”<sup>20</sup> Luther understood that a Christian lives in two worlds and that he neither can nor should run out of the one world in attempting to live in the other.

When applying Luther’s educational thought to our own times and circumstances we must guard against making him a man of the twentieth century and using his quotations as an automatic solvent for current problems. To be sure, Esau’s personality has not changed; his worldly spirit and goals are no different now from what they were in the 1500’s, though he has broken into the intimacy of the Christian home and family as never before. And there may be good reason for concern about a decline in the quality of Christian education perceivable less in charts and statistics of test results than in a falling away from dedication to teaching; in a darkening vision of what Christian education is and of our responsibilities as teachers and guides of the youth in all walks of life. Though the outward tools and facilities of Christian education are more impressive than ever before, though the outreach in Christian education is broader than ever before, this same growth of opportunity in every dimension heightens the danger of selling out our birthright.

This birthright, as our Lutheran legacy, persuades us that education, to be worthy of the name, can be nothing less than training the whole man of God. It persuades us that such training must be concentrated on imparting wisdom, nourishing soundness of body and mind, and cultivating largeness of spirit. It persuades us that these goals are unattainable without the continuing presence of God’s Word. It persuades us that there must

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 376.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 377.

<sup>19</sup> *Luthers Sämmtliche Schriften, Vol. IX* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1910), 1769.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 1790.



be discipline in the school schedule to permit students time for honest work toward the goals and not distract them with overmany school-sponsored activities to give pleasure for the moment.

First, education aims at imparting wisdom for this life and for eternity, and the Gospel alone equips the child of God for both. This is not to say that the Gospel is all we use for every kind of wisdom. Rather, the Gospel alone imparts heavenly wisdom and harnesses a person for proper employment and enjoyment of the wisdom stored up in human experience and the works of man. For the latter, Christian teachers may and must serve themselves and their students with whatever human works their Christian judgment finds most profitable to suit the age level and the special needs of their learners: significant works of man in the field of literature, science, and the arts.

Second, education aims at nourishing soundness of body and mind, and this depends no less on the Gospel which alone can teach the basics of our responsibility to the human body and which alone gives true health to the mind. But here, too, Christian teachers must reach into many other directions for serving students in the exercise of body and mind. Physical education belongs here. So do the sciences, especially mathematics. So does literature, as well as the arts.

Third, education aims at cultivating largeness of the spirit, the kind of largeness we found in Luther, the kind of largeness enunciated in Rom. 14:14 and Phil. 2:8. The Gospel alone reveals what God-pleasing largemindedness can be. And it invites Christian teachers to practice this largemindedness in themselves and to train their students in this virtue by testing things produced by the art of man and by helping the youth discern between the noble and the base, the good and the evil, the wheat and the chaff; and if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, to think on these things and thank God the giver of all that is good.

This brings us to the crux of the matter for preserving our birthright: Christian education requires the service of teachers dedicated to Christ and appreciative of the legacy from Luther. Dedication is the gift of the Holy Spirit. It shows itself less in outward, often self-conscious, faith testimonials in the classroom than the natural and consistent bearing of a humble child of God. It lives the teaching ministry as a full-time vocation. It walks the extra mile to serve the Lord and His church. It does not become enmeshed in the worries of the world, the grist of the daily newspaper, the babel of the sports page. Current events and athletics are for education and recreation, not far dedication. Christian teachers have higher priorities. Dedication expresses itself in living and speaking our vocation: the ministry of teaching, the subjects I teach, the challenges of teaching, the rewards of teaching, the pursuit of knowledge and excellence and whatever new methods may help make a better teacher.

Christian dedication shows itself in continuing sensitivity to what is noble and good and against what is evil and base, and it does not hesitate to voice that sensitivity when occasion demands. Christian dedication is less swayed by pressures from the constituency for what ought to be taught and not be taught, and it pays more earnest heed to the underlying principles and needs of the sound education for life. For the preservation of this dedication there must be dedicated teachers who have been called into the ministry through the orderly instrumentality of the church. They must be teachers devoted to their work as a calling from the Lord, teachers never satisfied with themselves and never using their office as a sinecure.

They must be teachers who continue the quest for knowledge and wisdom and understanding wherever Christian stewardship, Christian freedom, and their own capabilities lead them, whether to the graduate schools of the world who honor work accomplished with certificates of achievement or to the privacy of their own study or the study club with colleagues. The Gospel lays down no laws in these matters. God called the rude fisherman into His service but He also prepared His chosen vessels with graduate programs of masters' degrees, Ph.D's and all. One of the Lord's men was taught in all the wisdom of the Egyptians; another in the wisdom of Judaism, rabbinism, and Hellenism; another in all the Aristotelian scholastic training which in the judgment of the papacy qualified a person for the doctorate in theology. We do not rate ministers of God by the outward honors achieved, but we do measure them, with the honors or without the honors, according to the strength of the inner man, by their dedication to the divine call, and by their continuing quest for self-improvement. In stewards of Christ it is necessary that a person be found faithful.

Besides the called teachers, we should consider the other instruments for Christian education: the curriculum, the books, and whatever other resources are useful. To begin with Holy Scripture, we must be sure

to make available the very best course of study possible, the thorough examination of God's promises in the Old Testament and of their fulfillment in the New Testament. Both testaments must be given their due, concentrating both on the history and the doctrine and always letting the Bible serve as the basic text. If, according to the need of the school, a course in church history rounds out religious study, it should be a bona fide church history which highlights the important events through the Whole span of the Christian church and gives special consideration to the Reformation, the Lutheran catechisms, and the hymns of Luther. This course of study would be true to the Lutheran legacy. On the other hand, to spend precious classroom time for even a half-semester of requiring students to learn, much less commit to memory, the structure and organization of the Wisconsin Synod, together with the names of the various boards, commissions, and their current chairmen, I regard an outrageous travesty.

Around the Bible core of our education wheel, the Lutheran legacy wraps the gamut of knowledge discovered by man and works produced by the art of man. First place goes to language study, English for all and other languages according to the chosen profession; and where the resources are available, we should aim to master foreign languages through much speaking or much reading of literature. On the same level with languages our legacy puts history, literature, mathematics, the sciences, and the arts. The scope of study in these subjects will vary according to the needs of the school, but they should all be treasured as vital for educating the whole man of God. The choice of literature read in class and assigned for home reading depends on the age level of the students and must be determined by the good Christian judgment of the teachers.

The principle is not to be lost: Christian freedom does not deny the Christian teacher the privilege to choose world literature, prose, poetry, and drama, to teach Christian students, at first hand and from the sources, the spirit of the world in which man lives, the beautiful in contrast to the base, the noble opposed to the ugly, the true against the false. Nor does Christian freedom deny a Christian school the privilege to call on people from the outside, specialists in their profession, for gaining knowledge, stimulating the intellect, and enlarging the learning. We must guard against confusing intellectual stimulation with worship. Though learning is also a real act of worship for Christians, the getting of knowledge need not put the Christian student in spiritual fellowship with the source of that knowledge.

Many a great original thought conceived in the mind of man, and many a fine artistic expression formulated by the genius in man, has come from people far removed from the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Though such human works fail to plumb the divine verities of creation and the destiny of man, they nevertheless stand as significant expressions of the highest reach of the human soul unaided by the insights of faith. As such, these works deserve the attention of Christian learners who also live in this world.. But there are pious, well meaning Christians who, secure in the knowledge that God reigns over all, show no interest in, and deny any significance to, the deep thoughts and expressions of natural man. So they fail to see how many important human ideas and developments do have a bearing on church life. And the result is that their judgment in the large issues of faith and life hits mostly wide of the mark. Having never confronted the issue face to face, having never exerted themselves at making a decently thorough search into the sources for themselves, such people with their superficial knowledge—the most dangerous kind of knowledge there is—fall victim to every wind of opinion, which they cull from their busy reading of the periodicals and the newspapers.<sup>21</sup>

We need to be warned against what happens when Christian teachers set their face against the works of the world and seek only after what has been produced within their own narrow circle, or through the years has won the sanction of tradition. The career of Pope Gregory the Great furnishes a good object lesson. With many other men of the church in his age—a time when Christianity was replacing paganism in the dying Roman Empire—Gregory urged Christian teachers to put away classical learning, to put away those great works of pagan Latin and Greek literature which Luther regarded so highly, and to restrict their studies to the Bible and the biographies of great men and women of the church. To help encourage this educational program Gregory himself penned a collection of biographies. I have selected Gregory because of his vast influence in shaping the thought of the future. Here is a sample from his biographies for approved reading:

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<sup>21</sup> These thoughts have been adapted from Koehler, *op. cit.*, p. iv-v.

There was a nun of Portus who lived a chaste life, but was given to foolish talking. When she died she was buried within the church, and the same night the sacristan, “by revelation,” beheld her body cut in two, and half of it burnt before the high altar. The next morning signs of the burning were discovered on the marble pavement. So again, when a certain defensor of the Milanese Church, named Valentinus, “a very shifty person, and addicted to every kind of levity,” was buried in the Church of St. Syrus at Genoa, the sacristans beheld him dragged screaming from the building by two most frightful spirits. Next day the body was discovered in another tomb outside the sacred precincts.

A pious Roman shoemaker named Deusdedit worked hard all the week, and on Saturdays used to distribute to the poor at St. Peter’s Church all that he had saved over and above his necessary expenses. A friend saw in a vision a house in heaven being built for this good man, but those who were building it worked on no day save Saturday.

Theodore, sacristan of St. Peter’s at Rome, got up very early one morning to attend to the lamps that hung by the door. As he stood on a ladder pouring oil into the lamps, he saw beneath on the pavement the Prince of the Apostles himself, who said to him, “My fellow-freedman, why have you risen so early?” and then vanished. The unfortunate sacristan was so shaken by his fright that he had to keep his bed for many days after.<sup>22</sup>

So much for this dreary reading. It is a lesson to be learned from history about what happens when people of the church crawl into a shell; when they attempt to separate Christian education from the works of man in the world; when they are guided by a kind of hot house horticulture mentality in vainly attempting to shelter Christian students from the snares of the world instead of confronting those snares in the educational process itself.

With literature, history, and the arts our Lutheran legacy is fostered by study of mathematics and the sciences. It is doubly fostered when we educate as Christian teachers of science rather than as teachers of Christianized science; when we keep a sharp eye against letting Aristotle creep into a part of the curriculum where this wise pagan has no right to be. I am referring to a science taught to support the Scriptures instead of to learn and marvel at the natural works of God. As well-intentioned as such teaching may be, science, to my mind, hath no concord with Scripture, and the more quickly we forget about trying to harmonize the two or to show that science proves Scripture, proves the Flood or disproves the ice age, the sooner we shall return to the spirit of Luther and the Lutheran legacy. Science also belongs to the arts of man. As such a human art, science also partakes of the limitations of man.. Scripture, on the other hand, is unique. It is a word written by man, yet inspired by God. It is a human word taken into the service of God.

Christian education in the Lutheran legacy includes training the youth toward a professional vocation and providing the youth with outlets for wholesome exercise and recreation. In this connection, the warning is in place that our Christian schools exercise diligence and vigilance at keeping whatever is called extracurricular in that sphere. These activities ought not dominate the school. When that happens, we lose our birthright. Extracurriculars render important service in school life and Christian education. They contribute to the physical, mental, and emotional health of students and teachers. They help keep the youth in balance. They also win the widest public attention, and we do not quarrel with that either. But in our education wheel, these activities must be kept at the rim. And that is best achieved when those who administer the extracurriculars, the coaches, advisers, and directors, discipline themselves and their students in the virtues of moderation.

The buck always stops at the faculty and its leadership. If we are to preserve our Lutheran legacy in Christian education, we must have dedicated, knowledgeable people in the classroom who are apt to teach. They must be imbued with the Gospel. They ought to know and appreciate our Lutheran heritage. They must

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<sup>22</sup> Frederick H. Dudden. *Gregory the Great*, Vol. I (New York: Russell and Russell, 1967), p. 327-328.

stand by the principle that education is training the man of God and that it is a training for life, not momentary diversions. They must be people not swayed by every will-o-the-wisp wind of statistics.

Christian education has been a challenge at all times. It remains so today as Esau comes crashing into the privacy of our living rooms or dens with his seductions, and obscenities. Satan does not let us sleep on davenports but compels us to balance on the razor's edge. There, we must keep awake. To this help us dear Father in heaven.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

The standard reference for the works of Martin Luther is the *Weimar Ausgabe* (indicated in footnotes as WA). This source is for scholars and specialists. Its publication was begun in 1883, and when it is finished it will run to over one hundred volumes. Among Lutheran churches in America a favorite collection of Luther's writings was the so-called St. Louis Edition in twenty three volumes. This was published between 1880 and 1910. Shorter collections in English translation have appeared from time to time since 1900. Of these, the newest and most comprehensive is the American Edition entitled *Luther's Works* and published by the Fortress Press in Philadelphia in fifty-five volumes. Of special help for capturing the spirit of the man and his thoughts on education are the volumes in the American Edition on "Church and Ministry" (39-41) and on "The Christian in Society" (44-47). Luther's treatise "On the Freedom of a Christian" (31) is unexcelled and should be read by every teacher in a Christian school. To understand the whole Luther one should also test his devotional writings (42-43) and his letters (48-50). Another fine collection of Luther's letters was published in two volumes by Preserved Smith and Charles Jacobs under the title of *Luther's Correspondence and Other Contemporary Letters* (Philadelphia: 1918). Ewald Plass's three volume *What Luther Says* (St. Louis: 1959) is a handy tool for quickly surveying Luther's thoughts on many topics and for leading the reader to the original sources of Luther's thoughts.

Biographies of Luther and studies of his thought are legion. One of the finest biographies, well written and beautifully illustrated, is Roland Bainton's *Here I Stand* (Abingdon-Cokesbury: 1950). In German, Julius Koestlin and Gustav Kawerau's two volume *Martin Luther: Sein Leben and Seine Schriften* (Berlin: 1903) is very thorough and gives many interesting sidelights. A good companion volume to Bainton is E. G. Schwiebert's *Luther and His Times* (St. Louis: 1950). This reference assembles much information on the University of Wittenberg and on Luther's role in shaping the curriculum away from Aristotle to study of the languages. There are fine original insights on Lutheranism and on the evangelical theology of Luther in the church history of J. P. Koehler entitled *Kirchengeschichte* (Milwaukee: 1917). Especially valuable for educational thought is the Preface of this work and the evaluation of the Reformation in paragraphs 188A & 188B, pages 388-400. Unfortunately for the American audience, this fine study is available in its entirety only in German.

For general works on the age of the Reformation, Harold Grimm's *The Reformation Era* (New York: 1954) is one of the best. Leopold van Ranke's two volume *History of the Reformation in Germany* (New York: 1966) is especially valuable for the political background of the time. Though an older work first published over a hundred years ago, it remains a classic by a premier German and Lutheran historian. A unique treatment of the Reformation era is offered in Hans Hillerbrand's *The Reformation* (New York: 1964). This work is a collection of quotations from the sources woven together into a continuous narrative related by contemporary participants. Among its excerpts is Melancthon's inaugural address at the University of Wittenberg in 1518.

For the larger appreciation of Luther's educational thought one should also gain some familiarity with the history of the church before the Reformation. Among the fathers of the church in the last centuries of the Roman Empire, the works of Tertullian (*The Prescription Against Heretics*), Lactantius (*Divine Institutes*), Augustine (*City of God*) and Gregory I (*Moralia* and letters) are instructive. A good study of Gregory is Frederick Cudden's two volume *Gregory the Great* (New York: 1905). The best study of Augustine is Peter Brown's *Augustine of Hippo* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: 1967). There are many good secondary works on early and later medieval church thought. Charles Norris Cochrane's, *Christianity and Classical Culture* (Oxford University: 1957) covers a wide sweep of time and is full of fresh insights. E. R. Rand's *Founders of the Middle Ages* (Dover: 1957) deals with the Latin church fathers, Ambrose, Jerome, Augustine, Gregory and others in fun-to-read bravura style. M. Laistner's *Thought and Letters in Western Europe* (Cornell: 1931) concentrates on the early Middle Ages (800's and 900's). Henry Osborn Taylor's two volume *The Mediaeval Mind* (Cambridge: 1966) is a remarkable study of its subject that no student of medieval thought can afford to miss.

This bibliography represents but a fraction of the references available for the topic of Luther and education. It merely reviews works with which the writer of this paper is familiar and which were consulted in carrying out the assignment.