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Lutheran Education and Philosophy

By PAUL M. BRETSCHER

THIS study conceives of Lutheran education as an activity in which our entire church with all its homes and parishes is engaged. It has in mind all levels, all currently employed agencies, and all subject areas of modern education. To be concrete: our homes, corporate worship, schools and Sunday schools, Bible classes, Bible institutes, catechumen classes, high schools, colleges, seminaries, university, institutions for the physically handicapped, and all our other educational efforts are within the purview of this study. Furthermore, this study proceeds on the premise that Lutheran education is an inevitable outgrowth of the basic beliefs of the Lutheran Church, for the major concern of Lutheran education is to impart, explicate, implement, and apply Lutheran teachings and principles. Stated conversely: our church employs education as a means of transmitting its teachings to future generations and of making these teachings the controlling influence in the lives of those who will constitute the membership of our church tomorrow. As Lutherans we believe that men are reborn only by the Spirit of God through Word and Sacrament. We believe it is God's will that the church prepare and educate men who will dedicate their lives to the proclamation of the Word and the administration of the Sacraments. But as Lutherans we also believe that the Word of God, from which Lutheran teachings are derived, must be taught, studied, and integrated with the experiences of those whom Lutheran education reaches. As Lutherans we believe that the Word of God, since it is divine truth, should guide and motivate Christian life in all its manifestations.

This study has a twofold aim. It wishes (1) to help crystallize the relation of philosophy to Lutheran education. In view of this aim we shall attempt to clarify current usages of the term "philosophy," to sketch Luther's attitude to philosophy, to note in broad outline how philosophy in the post-Reformation centuries affected Lutheran education, and to illustrate how philosophy viewed as critical analysis can be helpful to the products of Lutheran education. This study will (2) develop three essential

features which must be present in a Lutheran philosophy of education: Lutheran education must be Christ-oriented; Lutheran education must be governed by Luther's directive: "Above all things the Holy Scriptures should be the principal and most common lesson in the higher and lower schools";¹ Lutheran education must expose and warn against philosophic views which are not in harmony with Scriptural truth.

I

THE RELATION OF PHILOSOPHY TO LUTHERAN EDUCATION

It is customary in our day to describe philosophy as synthesis or analysis. When it is viewed as synthesis, the student of philosophy is chiefly interested in becoming acquainted with a variety of world views as these have been systematized and expressed by great thinkers since the days of the Greeks, and in achieving, as a result of such an investigation, a world view satisfactory to himself. When philosophy is viewed as analysis, the student of philosophy studies, as Professor Mead says, "the nature of thought, the laws of logic and consistence, the relations between our ideas and reality, the nature of truth, and the validity of the various methods we employ in attaining 'truth' or 'fact' or 'knowledge.' The student is therefore most interested in comparing and evaluating the methods of science, of religion, of art, of intuition, and of common sense."² The student who studies philosophy as synthesis may be said to be primarily an observer, a bored or enthusiastic spectator, perhaps even an ardent fan who expects one world view for which he has a natural predilection to surpass all others and to come closest to reality. The student who studies philosophy as analysis frequently regards his task to be that of a thorough diagnostician, a merciless critic, and a coldhearted research worker who is primarily interested in dissecting thought, in determining the cash value of words, in discovering missing links, doubtful premises, and *non sequiturs*. But in either case, whether he pursues philosophy as synthesis or as analysis, the

¹ "An den christlichen Adel," *Weimar Ausgabe* 6, 461, 11 and 12, hereafter referred to as W. The *Erlangen Edition* will be referred to as E.

² Hunter Mead, *Types and Problems of Philosophy* (New York: Henry Holt and Co., c. 1953), pp. 12—14.

intellectually curious student cannot escape the impact which either approach to philosophy has on his further thinking habits and on the methodology of his efforts to solve problems. When C. F. W. Walther and his collaborators in 1839 advertised in the *Anzeiger des Westens* that in their "Institution of Instruction and Education" courses would be offered also in elements of philosophy ("Anfangsgründe der Philosophie"),³ they no doubt conceived of these elements as consisting both of synthesis and of analysis. This is to say they had in mind not only to acquaint their students with systems of philosophic thought but also to develop their power of discernment and logical analysis.

In this study, which aims to determine the relation of philosophy to Lutheran education, it is necessary to examine briefly Luther's attitude to philosophy, since his views have played a most significant part in the history of Lutheran education.⁴ Luther was not opposed to critical analysis such as Aristotelian logic seeks to achieve. In fact, his own great powers of discernment and argumentation no doubt were sharpened by his study of Aristotelian dialectics. Furthermore, Luther did not object to all areas of Aristotle's philosophic synthesis. Heartily he approved of Aristotle's rhetoric and poetics. On occasion he could speak kindly even of Aristotle's ethics. He wrote: "I should be glad to see Aristotle's books on logic, rhetoric, and poetics retained or used in an abridged form as textbooks for the profitable training of young people in speaking and preaching."⁵ "Logic is a useful and notable art which, like arithmetic and mathematics, one should study industriously and learn. All shrewdness counts for nothing if it is not construed dialectically. Therefore dialectic is not to be lacking in school or in council, in law court or in church management. It is most necessary in all these fields" (E 42, 301 ff.). "Aristotle is the best teacher in the philosophy of morals; how one should lead a fine modest earthly life" (E 42, 212).

Nevertheless, in various periods of his life and in reference to

³ W. G. Polack, *The Story of C. F. W. Walther* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1947), pp. 48 f.

⁴ This involved subject has been thoroughly investigated. My chief source was F. Bahlow, *Luthers Stellung zur Philosophie* (Berlin: Gustav Schade, 1891).

⁵ "An den christlichen Adel" W 6, 458, 26 and 27.

different things, Luther appraised Aristotle differently. He did hurl such sizzling epithets at Aristotle as *calumniosissimus calumniator*, "the damned heathen beast," "the archliar and devil," "a personified devil but for the fact that he had flesh and blood," and others. But the same Luther could also speak in moderate terms about Aristotle, as he does in his forty theses on the nature of man. But regarding one point Luther never wavered. He refused to tolerate the intrusion into theology of Aristotle's metaphysics. Nor could he approve of Aristotle's high regard for human reason. Luther regarded Aristotle's metaphysics to be, at best, incomplete, for no revelation of God had come to Aristotle. On September 4, 1517, Luther had one of his students defend the theses: "It is false to say that without Aristotle one cannot become a theologian. The opposite is true. No one comes to be a theologian unless it be without Aristotle, for the whole of Aristotle is related to theology as darkness is to light, and his ethics is the worst enemy of grace."⁶ "In temporal things," Luther writes, "reason is a fair light; in divine things it is stone-blind, boorish, and is unable to indicate a hairbreadth of what these matters really are or how one may please God and be saved."⁷

In Luther's forty theses *De natura hominis* of 1536 (W 30, I, 174—177) we find one of Luther's most comprehensive and discerning statements on the limitations of human reason and the relation of philosophic thought to Holy Scripture. Luther agrees with Aristotle that "reason is the discoverer and governor of all arts, of medicine, of law, and of whatever else in this life man possesses of wisdom, power, virtue, and honor." Man's reason, he continues, is a *sol et numen quoddam* which enables him to control and govern the things of this life. Reason is the mistress through which God executes His command to man to rule over the earth, birds, fishes, and animals. Luther says that even after the Fall, God did not deprive reason of this glory but rather confirmed it in the possession of this blessing. Therefore reason surpasses all things. It is the best of all things. It is an *optimum et divinum quiddam*. This is not to say that Luther regarded man's reason as a divine spark, as do many pantheists. What Luther obviously

⁶ W 1, 226, Theses 43, 44, and 50.

⁷ E 7, 336 (Luther's sermon on Is. 60:1-6).

meant to say is that reason owes its origin to God. Because man is endowed with reason, man can, so Luther argues, mold the world about him, create a culture, develop science, the arts, law, the ministry of mercy, subdue the powers of nature, shape history and politics, and order civic and social life. Because he is endowed with reason, man has the capacity to have some knowledge of himself, assume responsibility, develop his personality, pursue virtues. Even though man is a fallen creature, he still possesses power to do what is morally good. Thus philosophic-scholastic anthropology, with its humanitarianism, its serious morality, its sense of responsibility, found in Luther a strong and positive affirmation. In other words, Luther took the human side of man most seriously.

Nevertheless, in these same forty theses Luther rejects completely Aristotle's metaphysical views regarding God and the true nature of man. At the same time he devaluates the competence of man's reason to such a degree that he regards it as man's most dangerous enemy. Because Aristotle does not have, so Luther writes, true knowledge of the efficient cause and the final cause, his knowledge of man is inadequate, fragmentary, deceptive, and too materialistic. A true and full understanding of himself man has only if he sees himself in relation to God. "There is no hope that man can know what he is until he has seen himself in the source itself (*in fonte ipso*), which is God" (Thesis 17). But man discovers that source only in Scripture. It is only here that man sees himself in his true dimension.

This knowledge of God includes a knowledge of the crisis of death. It means for the person who has gained this knowledge that all philosophic-scholastic anthropology is only tentative, partial, relative, and abstract, and that it has relevance for this life only. For Luther everything depends on the truth that man has his being in God, that God is his Creator, and that, therefore, man, because he is indebted to God for his life, should also live in the presence of God (*coram Deo*) and for God. Man becomes man when he becomes a man of God. Man's reason, personality, freedom, capacity for decision, and other such gifts are essential components of man's nature. But these gifts, so Luther insists, are only formal structures regarding which it is possible to speak

in abstract and philosophic terms. Whether man truly knows God, whether he truly lives for God, whether his life eventuates in true love of God—these are the questions the answers to which determine man's present and eternal destiny. But man becomes a man of God only by faith in God's Son, who became man for man. Jesus Christ is the inaugurator of a new humanity because He Himself, as the Son of God, fulfilled God's will and executed, for the benefit of man, God's plan of redemption. Only he who believes in the saving merit of the incarnate Christ achieves the final cause of his existence.

Because Luther discovered in Scripture what man truly is in the sight of God and how, since the Fall, man's reason is corrupted by original sin, Luther always suspected the pretensions of human reason and the optimistic belief that man can do whatever he wills to do. Luther had discovered in Scripture that man's righteousness, however idealistically projected and persistently pursued by man, can never satisfy the demands of God's righteousness. To become righteous in the sight of God, to become a man of God, meant for Luther to appropriate by faith the righteousness of Christ, who achieved this righteousness for man.

Wilhelm Link titled his monumental book *Das Ringen Luthers um die Freiheit der Theologie von der Philosophie*.⁸ It is true, to extricate himself and Biblical theology from the tentacles of scholastic philosophy was for Luther a *Ring*, a struggle in which he was engaged throughout his life. In this struggle Luther was not victorious in the sense that he defined once for all and in a neat system of categories and *loci* the precise sphere, function, and methodology of philosophy, as well as the precise sphere, function, and methodology of theology. He was not a maker of systems. But Luther did know, by God's grace, that the mysteries revealed by the Spirit of God in Holy Scripture can be perceived only by a faith which the Spirit of God Himself creates, and that this faith enables the Christian to have the certain hope that he will fully understand in the life to come what the most brilliant philosophic mind cannot know and discover by itself. Luther's *Ring* was, therefore, not a purposeless *Ring*. It was not an academic joust between himself and Aristotle and the latter's medieval disciples.

⁸ (München: Christian Kaiser, 1940). This is by far the most thorough and comprehensive analysis of the problem.

Nor did his *Ringens* terminate in a draw, in a deadlock, in a truce. On the contrary, Luther's *Ringens* culminated in a triumph of faith over reason and philosophy, a triumph grounded wholly in the *solus Christus, sola gratia, sola fide, and sola Scriptura*.

Luther's break with Aristotelian metaphysics, his emphasis on faith as opposed to reason, his discovery that Holy Scripture is indeed God's supreme revelation to man—as well as his recognition that philosophic subjects such as logic, rhetoric, and poetics have a legitimate place in the life of the Christian man—had a decisive influence on the university of Wittenberg and soon after on Lutheran education in general. On May 18, 1517, Luther wrote: "Our theology and St. Augustine are continuing to prosper and reign in our university through the hand of God. Aristotle is declining daily and is inclining toward a fall which will end him forever. It is remarkable how lectures on the *Sentences* are despised; no one can hope to get an audience unless he proposes to lecture on this theology: that is, the Bible, St. Augustine, or some doctor of ecclesiastical authority."⁹ Within a few years the curriculum at Wittenberg underwent further significant changes. Ernest G. Schwiebert (p. 18) says: "In 1520 the university curriculum was again revised by authority of the Elector. Now Aristotle's physics, metaphysics, and ethics were dropped, but his logic, rhetoric, and poetry, so useful to the eloquence of future clergymen, were to be retained. . . . By 1523 the divinity student was to be well trained in the classics; and Latin, Greek, and Hebrew were to be taught with great thoroughness. All theological training was to be based exclusively on the Bible."

It is not within the scope of this study to tell of the reorganization of schools in the northern lands of Germany by Johannes Bugenhagen and of the organization of humanistic schools in the Saxon lands by Melanchthon. But attention should be called to the subject matter taught in these reorganized and newly organized schools. Again we quote Schwiebert (p. 29): "In organization and technique these schools differed little from the schools which Luther attended as a boy, but in the subject matter taught there was wide variance. The new Gospel teaching dominated the whole educational system. New textbooks were written, many by

⁹ Quoted by Ernest G. Schwiebert in his "The Reformation from a New Perspective," *Church History*, XVII (March 1948), 17. See W-Br 1, 98 f.

Melanchthon, and special emphasis was placed on the study of the Catechism. The new Lutheran school system provided education for all classes in society from the 'cradle to the grave.' Without its educational system, the German Reformation would not have enjoyed such phenomenal growth."

This study does not purpose to trace the further development of Lutheran education from the days of Luther to our own day. Nor is it the intention of this study to point up the place which philosophy occupied in the curricula of Lutheran schools since the rise of the humanistic schools in Germany. But it may be said that in a general way the findings of Jaroslav Pelikan,¹⁰ who traced the relation of philosophy to theology in the age of Orthodoxy, in the age of Rationalism, and in the nineteenth century, are applicable to the relationship of philosophy to Lutheran education throughout these centuries. Depending on the degree in which Lutheran confessional consciousness asserted itself in the past four centuries, Lutheran education took a hesitant, skeptical, indifferent, or kindly attitude to philosophy. When Lutheran theology permitted reason to become the criterion and judge in matters dealing with the Christian faith and the truth of Holy Scripture, as happened in the age of Rationalism, then not only Lutheran theology but also Lutheran education suffered a shameful defeat.

In this brief overview of the history of Lutheran education and philosophy's place in Lutheran education it seems necessary to note a number of factors which made the *Ringen* on the part of Lutheran educators to keep Lutheran theology free from the incursions of metaphysical thought most difficult. We merely list some of these factors. There was the apologetic effort of Lutheran theologians in the era of Orthodoxy to defend Lutheran teaching against the errors of both Roman Catholic and Calvinistic doctrine. In this effort the defenders found it necessary to resort to philosophic terminology that had been used in the scholastic period and to meet the opponent with carefully thought-out counter-arguments. There is also the consideration that both philosophy and theology dealt with some of the same basic questions regarding God, man, and the universe. Though each discipline dealt with these questions on the basis of different premises and different

¹⁰ *From Luther to Kierkegaard: A Study in the History of Theology* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950).

objectives, they did deal largely with the same subject areas. We note, furthermore, that philosophy, which is largely the stratification of philosophic curiosity, is at the same time, when it is taught and studied, a challenge to philosophize, that is, to be intellectually curious. And it makes little difference which areas of philosophic thought are involved, whether logic, metaphysics, aesthetics, ethics, or some other phase of philosophy. For these stratified areas of thought, since they themselves are the result of philosophic inquiry, compel the serious and thoughtful student to philosophize. To the extent that Lutheran education had in its curricula philosophic studies it encouraged and abetted philosophic inquiry.

Furthermore, it was possible, as it is now, to keep the two disciplines, theology and philosophy, separate and distinct in the pulpit and in Lutheran theological schools, where Lutheran teachers with a strong Lutheran consciousness taught Lutheran theology to Lutheran students preparing to enter the Lutheran ministry or to become Lutheran teachers. But what happened then, and what does happen now, to students who, though they received a sound Lutheran education and learned to know the place of reason and the place of faith in Christian life, are, as a result of their secular vocation, thrust into the tempests of life where they face day by day the most diversified forms of metaphysical speculation? Again, one must not overlook the powerful impact made not only on philosophic and scientific but also on theological thought by the implications of the Newtonian world view, the Darwinian theory of evolution, and the contemporary picture of the physical universe. Furthermore, one must take into account the rising interest in education itself within the last two centuries as an area of inconceivably challenging dimensions involving not merely objectives and curricula but also the conclusions of the sociological and psychological sciences. Education itself has become an area of intelligent curiosity. It suggests endless questions of a theological, scientific, and of a metaphysical character. Finally, Lutheran education in our Church must carry on a continuous warfare against all systems of education which elevate reason above divine truth and make the "natural light of reason" the god who alone can give guidance and help to man in this bewildering age. The moment we forget that God enlightened the

world through the incarnation, the life, the death, and the resurrection of Christ and by that act exposed the darkness inherent in human reason; furthermore, when we forget that the brilliant light of the Gospel shone into the darkened world in the sixteenth century as a result in particular of the discovery of the Gospel by Martin Luther; finally, when we forget that the pure Gospel is the greatest treasure of Lutheranism and therefore also of Lutheran education—when we forget all this, we, too, are in danger of gradually substituting for that light the “natural light of reason.” It is but a small step from Lutheran education, with its emphasis on the Gospel, to rationalism, humanism, and secularism.

From the above observations it should be clear that Lutheran educators must regard it as their major objective to make the light of the Gospel as well as all Scriptural truth regnant in their private and professional life. They must seek also to teach in such a way that the intellectual curiosity of their pupils and students will submit in obedient faith to the Gospel and to all divinely revealed truth. Our pupils and students, moreover, should be so thoroughly grounded in their faith that they will be able to discern the difference between divine truth and approximations of truth arrived at by human effort, as well as bald metaphysical speculation and idle curiosity. In short, Lutheran educators should concern themselves with developing critical analysis, above all, for the purpose of helping the products of their schools to differentiate between what is right and wrong in the sight of God and to arrive at God-pleasing decisions. Two illustrations may prove helpful:

In the Atomic Energy Museum in Oak Ridge, Tenn., the visiting tourist is profoundly impressed by the displays of modern physics. As he listens to fascinating lectures and moves about from exhibit room to exhibit room, his attention is arrested by a poster which reads:

The atom is the building block of matter.

All things are made of atoms,

All things living and dead . . .

The sun, the moon, and the stars,

The letters on which this is written,

A piece of uranium,

Yes, YOU, yourself . . .

ALL are made of atoms.

Will the Christian who is a product of Lutheran education, as he reads this poster, detect in it a grievous error? Will he say to himself: My "self," my soul, my life, has not been proved by science to consist of atoms? Will he be able to discern the materialistic accent in this account of the atom?

Another illustration. In an article titled "Antitheses in Education" Professor Cornelius van Til suggests that "since man is a self-conscious and active being, his most characteristic human traits will manifest themselves more fully in the movement of time, that is, in history, than in the immovable atmosphere of space."¹¹ From this observation he draws the conclusion: "*Since the more definitely temporal facts lie closer to the center of the glory of God [italics ours], we should connect the spatial facts with the temporal facts and use the latter as media of transmission of the glory of the spatial facts to God.*" On reading this statement, the Christian who is a product of Lutheran education should ask himself: Do the more definitely temporal facts lie closer to the center of the glory of God than the spatial facts? If he is aware of what Lutheran education tried to teach him, he will say to himself: "Isn't the spatial fact involved in the incarnation of Christ as close to the center of the glory of God as the temporal fact?" On further reflection he will tell himself: The miracle of the birth of Christ lies not only in the fact that Christ was born in the fullness of the time but also in the fact that He was born at all, that He became incarnate, that the *infinitus* took on the *finitum*, that the Creator became creature. And he will add: The Incarnation is indeed a miracle of time, but it is equally a miracle of space. And if he knows Luther's great Christmas hymn "Gelobet seist du, Jesu Christ," he may recall the stanza:

Den aller Welt Kreis nie beschlosz,
Der liegt in Marien Schosz;
Er ist ein Kindlein worden klein,
Der alle Ding' erhält allein.

Professor van Til meant to be theological, but, unfortunately, his metaphysical views outsmarted his theological views.

¹¹ The article appeared in *Fundamentals in Christian Education* (Grand Rapids, Mich: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1953), p. 453.

We shall now summarize our answer to the question: What should be the relation of philosophy to Lutheran education? Our answer is the following: Lutheran education need not attempt to escape from philosophy viewed either as synthesis or as analysis. Philosophy, too, belongs into the category of "all things" regarding which Paul writes: "All things are yours" (1 Cor. 3:21) and: "Test everything; hold fast what is good" (1 Thess. 5:21).¹² Lutheran education should recognize philosophy as a subject area which because of its content and its disciplinary value has a legitimate place in Lutheran education. But Lutheran education may not allow philosophy undue rights and privileges. It must be concerned that human reason, which is the determining principle in all philosophic enterprise, is never allowed to enter the sanctuary of the Christian faith and to dictate to Lutheran theology what must be accepted wholly on the ground of faith. Finally, Lutheran education must realize that Christian faith is more than assent to truth, that it is essentially a laying hold of, and a clinging to, Jesus Christ, the Savior of the world, and that this faith assures the sinner of God's pardon, creates in him a new life, fills his trembling heart with the certain hope in a glory to be revealed, and that it is an unfailing dynamo which motivates the Christian to live day by day *coram Deo*, to perform God-pleasing works, and to remain steadfast in all trials and temptations.

But granted that there is a legitimate place for philosophy in Lutheran education, the question arises: Can there be a Lutheran philosophy of education? Much depends on how one interprets the term "philosophy." For many philosophers the term is suspect. The Logical Positivists in particular do not like it. For Logical Positivism is a kind of revolt of philosophers against philosophy. It is an antiphilosophical philosophy which even tries to remove the historical name "philosophy" and to replace it with "Unified Science." According to Logical Positivists, the only business left to philosophy is that of clarifying the concepts and statements of science by means of logical and semantic analysis. Nevertheless, the term "philosophy" is still a respectable term. We may even speak of a "Lutheran philosophy" of education.

¹² All Bible passages in this article are cited from the RSV.

In the following we are employing the term "Lutheran philosophy" as meaning a reasonably comprehensive statement of what is theologically most essential in any statement which attempts to define the character of Lutheran education. The term "philosophy" also allows for digressions into philosophic thought which such current terms as "bases" and "fundamentals" do not readily permit.

II

A LUTHERAN PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

As we have noted in the introduction of this study, *Lutheran philosophy must be Christ-oriented*. What does this mean? Every philosophy of education is oriented to a professed or nonprofessed ultimate reality. Atheistic existentialists like Paul Sartre do not share this observation. For Paul Sartre there is no ultimate reality. For him man is dependent entirely on himself for interpreting experience. But Sartre seems not to be aware that even in his analysis there exists an object which the subject, man, constantly takes into account. This object is man. For Sartre, therefore, man is both the independent unit existing by himself and at the same time the frame of reference and the point of orientation to which this independent unit relates itself.

The fact of the matter is that we seem never to be able to expel from our minds the consideration that somehow and in some mysterious way every datum of experience and every apparently independent phenomenon is related somehow to some other reality. For idealists that final frame of reference is Mind, Reason, the Hegelian Absolute, the Spencerian Unknowable. For naturalists of every classification it is a reality within the limits of sense experience. It might be physical atoms, or some other physical substance, or energy written in upper or lower case. We contend that every educational process is oriented toward something beyond it, to some kind of reality, true or imaginary, which gives direction to its theory and practice. From the Lutheran point of view, that ultimate point of orientation, which is at the same time the goal of education, is the God who became incarnate in His Son Jesus Christ. Lutherans believe that despairingly little can be known of God apart from God's own revelation in His incarnate Son, of whom the Holy Scriptures bear witness.

This God-in-Christ is the ultimate reality and frame of reference of all Christian thought and therefore also of Lutheran education. His place in the universe and in the church is frequently and clearly described in the writings of the New Testament, but in a most comprehensive manner in Paul's epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians. We note in particular Col. 1:13-20:

He [the Father] has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation; for in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the first-born from the dead, that in everything He might be pre-eminent. For in Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile in Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross.

From this passage we bring to the surface only a number of basic thoughts. Paul reminds the Colossians—and it is quite possible that the Colossians were assailed by greater dangers to their faith as a result of prevailing Gnostic and Stoic heresies than we are by the prevailing heresies of our day—that the focal center of all reality is Christ. He is the image of the invisible God. He is therefore not a logical construct, not a metaphysical concept, but a reflection of the very being of God. "In Him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell."

Through Christ the whole universe came into being. But this universe, so Paul suggests to the Colossians, is more than a three-story universe with heaven above, earth in the center, and hell beneath. It is a universe which includes all such invisible powerful creatures as thrones, dominions, principalities, and authorities; therefore all those realities in the vast expanse of the world which the lenses of the most powerful telescopes and the bombardments of the hugest cyclotrons are not able to detect.

All things were also created *for* Christ. The entire universe exists for His honor, glory, and praise. The universe is not an

aimless and purposeless entity. On the contrary, it has teleological significance. Again, "In Him all things hold together," that is, in Him all things cohere. He is, as it were, the hub of the wheel, the gravitational force which attracts all realities to Himself, the inexhaustible energy which unceasingly to the end of time keeps the huge wheels of this universe moving and which supplies and governs the life of the most minute creatures.

"He is the head of the body, the church . . . that in everything He might be pre-eminent." He founded the church. He purchased it with His own blood. He rules and sustains it. He fills it with His life and His Spirit. To Him therefore the church offers praise and honor and thanks. And He will lead His church to eternal glory and bliss. Through Him God reconciled "in Himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of His cross." By His redemption He reconciled to God both Jews and Gentiles and merited for both forgiveness. By His death on the cross He removed the curse that because of man's sin rested on all creation. Therefore He is pre-eminent in everything. This means that Lutheran education, too, must seek to glorify Him in all its endeavors. Christ must be pre-eminent in Lutheran education in the sense that all Lutheran educational theory and practice acknowledges Him as its Lord and is intent on relating itself to Him as the ultimate and foremost frame of reference.

To the extent that Lutheran education is Christ-oriented, it recognizes also in its fullest sense the true relation of man to this Christ. Man, too, is a creature and is included in that sweeping statement, "In Him all things were created." And it remains a fact that, among all creatures, man is still the foremost. We do not share the pessimism to which Karl Heim calls attention in the words:

Since Luther the situation has fundamentally changed. In his day Man occupied the centre of the universe. Today Man is an infinitesimal grain of sand in midst of an immeasurable sandy waste. For this speck of dust to suppose that it is at the centre of the cosmos, and that its eternal future is the main preoccupation of the Creator of the universe, is quite as ridiculous, from the purely scientific point of view, as for a colony of aphids, clustering on the leaf of a tree in the forest, to imagine in a fit of megalomania that not merely the whole leaf but the whole

earth exists solely for their sake and that the destruction of the leaf on which they have settled would mean the end of the world.¹³

It is true that man is only a speck of dust in this vast universe. But the wonder of it is that it was for man that the Son of God became incarnate. Again, however much one may wish to define the nature of man biologically, sociologically, and psychologically, the Lutheran educator will always remember that the God-in-Christ made man and saved man.

Man therefore is not the final product of an evolutionary force which at some point in past time caused life to appear and through countless ages and by some mechanical principle of natural selection ultimately produced that living organism known as "man." In the face of all opposition the Lutheran educator believes, teaches, and confesses that man was created by a special act of God and that he was "fearfully and wonderfully made."

But the Lutheran educator also wants his pupils and students to know that man of his own choice became a fallen creature enslaved by sin, an enemy of his Creator, a citizen of the kingdom of darkness and Satan, and that man is utterly unable to re-establish his former blissful relation to God. It gives the Lutheran educator special joy and satisfaction to be able to spell out to the youth entrusted to him that Christ reconciled man to God and that everyone who in faith accepts this reconciliation has forgiveness, is a beloved child of God, and a member of Christ's body, and an heir of heaven. A Lutheran philosophy of education therefore views man in every sense of his being as being related to the God-in-Christ as his Creator, Reconciler, and Redeemer.

"The proper study of mankind is man" is a cliché which has for more than a century guided the thinking and determined the efforts of many of the world's most famous scientists, anthropologists, sociologists, and psychologists. These efforts have brought many blessings to man. A Lutheran philosophy of education takes into account the collective findings of researches dealing with the nature of man and is grateful to God for whatever these researches have contributed to a better understanding of man. A Lutheran

¹³ *Faith and Natural Science* (New York: Harper & Brothers, c. 1953), pp. 13, 14.

philosophy of education will therefore incorporate into its program of education whatever light these researches shed on the structure of the human body and on the behavior which man as a living organism manifests. But Lutheran education always bears in mind that man will never be able to discover what his true nature is in the sight of God, that he will never understand the mysteries involved in "life" and psychosomatic relationships, and that man will never become "god" in the sense that he, too, can by his word create worlds "so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear" (Heb. 11:3). Lutheran educators are especially mindful that because man is God's creature, he remains indebted and accountable to God, that he is living either under divine judgment or under divine grace, and that salvation is his only when in faith he walks the narrow path which leads via the cross and the grave to the throne of the Lamb.

A Lutheran philosophy of education must be Christ-oriented. But as was indicated in the introduction of this study, *it must also be governed by Luther's directive: "Above all things the Holy Scriptures should be the principal and most common lesson in the higher and lower schools."* If we therefore ask: How can a Lutheran philosophy of education achieve its objective? How can Lutheran education become truly Christ-oriented? How can it justify its existence in the face of competing systems of education? How can it so mold the thinking of its products that these will acquit themselves as Christian men and women in the stern battles of life? The answer to these questions lies in Luther's directive.

For what was it that gave Luther a faith which enabled him to be victorious in his many trials and difficulties? Luther revered and loved the Holy Scriptures long before he became the Reformer. But when he discovered, as a result of his study of the Scriptures, that in these sacred writings God revealed His righteousness "through faith for faith," Holy Scripture took on for him a new meaning. Now he read and studied its precious content and meditated on it as he had never done before. Now he realized that its true purpose is to lead man to a living faith in Jesus Christ. Now he knew that God, who once spoke to the prophets and to the apostles, is still speaking in their words to those who attentively and prayerfully read and ponder them. And as he continued his

study of Holy Scripture, he began to see more and more clearly what an inexhaustible treasure it is. He began to see that it is truly a light that enlightens man's darkened mind, a lamp which lights up man's path through the nebulous valleys and up the craggy mountainsides of life. For these reasons Luther believed that the study of Holy Scripture should occupy the most prominent place in Christian education.

Lutheran education always is in danger of compromising Luther's directive. It must be careful, on the one hand, not to permit instruction about Holy Scripture to become a substitute for the study of Scripture itself. It must, on the other hand, guard against the fallacy that it has fully followed Luther's directive when it provides a systematic presentation of Biblical truth on the basis of the Catechism or some other summary of Biblical teaching. However valuable these approaches to the study of Scripture are, they are only approaches which lead into the vestibule, but not necessarily into the holy of holies of the Scriptures themselves.

We therefore conclude that a Lutheran philosophy of education becomes truly functional only insofar as in all our agencies of education the living Word of the living God as recorded in the Scriptures is read, studied, communicated, and expounded. To develop in our pupils and students a mind which is at all times oriented to Christ and which is competent to check its experiences against the unerring truth of God's Word necessitates undiminishing engagement with this Word of the living God. This God spoke to man through the Word of the prophets. He spoke to man in His Son. He spoke to man through the Word of the apostles. He still speaks to man in these prophetic and apostolic writings. Obviously this Word of Scripture must be the most basic study in the entire process of Lutheran education. To the extent that the study of this Word does not receive its full due in all agencies of Lutheran education, to that extent the aim and purpose of Lutheran education is not realized. Through the Word of God the Holy Spirit makes Christians who concern themselves with orienting all their experiences to Christ. Through that same Word the Holy Spirit nourishes and preserves Christian faith. As a result of the influence of the Word of God on their minds and hearts, the products of our system of schools acquire more and more the

competence to distinguish between divine truth and scientific approximations of truth or "assured" results of science, and speculative philosophy. We repeat Luther's directive: "Above all things the Holy Scripture should be the principal and most common lesson in the higher and lower schools."

A Lutheran philosophy of education must finally, as was suggested in the introduction of this study, *expose and warn against philosophic views which are not in harmony with Scriptural truth*. Such views are discoverable in all areas of thought on which philosophy attempts to speak. The Lutheran educator should therefore be in a position to detect these views and, as occasion demands, expose them and caution against them. In this study we shall point up, merely by way of example, false philosophic views in the areas of epistemology, ontology, ethics, and axiology.

Lutheran education, too, is genuinely interested and involved in questions pertaining to epistemology, which is the theory of knowledge. It is much concerned about the nature, origin, extent, and certainty of knowledge. It recognizes sense experience, rational inference, and intuition to be legitimate sources of knowledge which man should employ for the purpose of understanding and making this universe subservient to himself (Gen. 1:28). But the Lutheran educator must always be mindful that man's knowledge of the universe will always be restricted, that in spite of the almost incredible progress of modern science man never will be able to fathom the mysteries which everywhere surround him, and that his conclusions always will be based on only a limited number of sense data. He will remember, too, that, as a result of the Fall, all of man's capacities to know are affected by sin and that all his discoveries of "laws" operating in the universe are only aspects of higher principles governing all creation.

The Lutheran educator does not discount knowledge derived from the study of history. But on the basis of Scripture he believes that history is not a cycle but rather a line extending from creation to the final judgment, and that in this view of history the great climaxes are the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, the giving of the Law on Sinai, the judgments of God on His elect people, the incarnation, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus Christ, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, the establishment and

expansion of the church, and the catastrophic consummation of the universe culminating in the final judgment.

The Lutheran educator is truly interested also in the question of certainty. He approves all accepted methods which might yield greater certainty. He does not object to processes of validation except that he opposes the assertion that only what can be validated from experience is true. The Lutheran educator knows that absolute certainty regarding the true character of nature is not possible since man is a fallen creature. Just as there is for the Lutheran educator only one final reality to which all other realities stand in subordinate relation, so there is for him only one ultimate truth, Jesus Christ, in whom truth in all its fullness and finality became manifest. The Lutheran educator derives a maximum of joy from the consideration that he is able to tell his pupils and students that they may be certain of their salvation and that by clinging to Christ they may dismiss from their minds all anxious cares and doubts. The Lutheran educator has experienced in his own life that this certainty sustains the Christian as he falteringly gropes his way through the countless uncertainties of this present life. This certainty enables the Christian again and again to lift up his eyes to heaven, to the Captain of his salvation, who beckons, guides, supports, and leads him safely into the eternal haven.

Lutheran education is interested also in the act of knowing. It insists, in opposition to some philosophers, that objects exist entirely apart from our knowing or not knowing them. Only a realistic view of the act of knowing safeguards such basic Christian beliefs as these: that the body and blood of Christ are truly present in the Sacrament, that the resurrected Lord is truly present in His church to the end of time, that there is a hell and a heaven, and that there are hosts of angels and devils. The existence of all these realities is altogether independent of man's act of knowing.

Lutheran education can not escape questions arising in the area of metaphysics, questions involving such concepts as existence, matter, mind, space, and time. The Lutheran educator will not be a dogmatist with respect to some conclusions regarding the nature of existence though he will be on his guard regarding false inferences drawn from these conclusions. He is most emphatic in declaring that man is more than a state of mind and more than

a material substance. He asserts that man as God created him comprises both body and soul, that man as originally created by God bore the image of God, and that he was created in perfect righteousness and holiness.

The Lutheran educator allows for divergent views regarding the nature of space and time. He may agree with Whitehead that the doctrine of empty space has been eliminated by modern physics and replaced by the idea of a field of force, a field of incessant activity.¹⁴ He may even agree that matter is energy and that energy is sheer activity. Yet he will not become a dogmatist in this matter. With respect to the concept of time, the Lutheran educator will not object to the existentialist's interpretation though he will be mindful that this interpretation in no sense disposes of time as a continuum. He will remember that from God's point of view there is a χρόνος, that there are aeons, days, nights, and seasons, that there is a fulfillment of time, and that there is a καιρός granted by a merciful God to sinful mortals. The Lutheran educator is genuinely concerned in making his pupils and students aware of the fact that God views man's life as but a mathematical point, that even though God is our eternal refuge and dwelling place, with whom there is no time, man lives out his little life like the flower of the field; and that man should repent while the summons: "Today, when you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts" (Heb. 3:7), rings in his heart and ears.

The Lutheran educator is also aware of the immensity of space which this universe encompasses, of the fact that, though it is an orderly universe, it is nevertheless subject to flux, change, process, and to a final destruction or restoration. He knows that this mysterious universe proclaims the majesty of its Creator and that it "waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Rom. 8:19-21). Apart from these basic truths to which he is committed, the Lutheran educator grants man freedom of inquiry, the right of research, the

¹⁴ From Whitehead's lecture "Nature and Life," published in *The Age of Analysis* (New York: The New American Library, c. 1955), p. 86.

privilege to inquire fully into the nature of time and to investigate the height and depth, the length and breadth, of space.

With respect to issues in the area of ethics, the Lutheran educator, on the strength of divine revelation, believes and teaches that the truly good life on earth is possible only for those who have been reborn of water and the Spirit and that all deeds performed by men not as a product of faith in Christ and in recognition of God's boundless love merit no spiritual blessing. The Lutheran educator teaches that in all social relationships the Christian places himself voluntarily under the principle of Christian love, forbearance, and forgiveness. He does not proclaim the perfectibility of society and therefore rejects all illusions about a utopian golden age in which wars will cease and nations will convert their swords into ploughshares. He cautions against every kind of millennial hope. At the same time the Lutheran educator, moved by love for all humanity, makes it his concern to activate those whom he teaches to pray for, and to promote, national and international peace and to support the government in all its efforts to bring about peace throughout the world. But the Lutheran educator also instils in his pupils and students the truth that lasting peace between the peoples of the world can be achieved only to the extent that individuals have been touched by the love of Christ.

Like Luther, the Lutheran educator recognizes the existence in this sinful world of many virtues exemplified by men not reborn by the Spirit of God, virtues ranging from chivalry to chastity. He knows that the Creator blesses these virtues in this life. But the Lutheran educator realizes the imperfection of these virtues, their selfish character, their largely blinding and seductive façade, and their unblushing partiality. In our day many secret fraternal societies are the prize example of groups parading a set of self-chosen virtues for the one purpose of exalting the nobility of their brotherhood. What Martin Luther wrote many years ago about the selfish love of the *Bruderschaften* of his day applies with equal force to many brotherhoods of our day. Luther writes: "There is another mean custom, a spiritual evil, and a false opinion in the brotherhoods. It is this that they think their brotherhood should benefit no one except themselves, whose names are recorded in the register and who pay their dues. In these brotherhoods mem-

bers learn to promote their own interest, to love themselves, to be true to themselves only, not to regard others, to think more of themselves than of others, and to expect that God will reward them more richly than others."¹⁵

In the area of axiology, the science of values, the Lutheran educator recognizes the existence of values which man should aspire after, cultivate, and seek to preserve. He knows that many values are inherent in the objects themselves. Such values Luther, in his interpretation of the First Article and the Fourth Petition, enumerates in the Small Catechism. The Lutheran educator realizes, too, that many objects derive their value from the consideration that man seeks to acquire them, oftentimes with a desire bordering on idolatry. But the Lutheran educator will at all costs maintain that the Father in heaven intended the universe, with all it contains, to have value for man. His chief concern will be to make his pupils and students realize that the greatest value, the *summum bonum*, Jesus Christ, does not become the highest good because of the wishes of sinful man, but because of the will of God, who from eternity destined Him to be the supreme value in heaven and on earth. He "made [Christ] our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). Christ is the pearl of great price whether men desire this pearl or not.

The Lutheran educator also asserts that God has placed an extraordinary value on every man's life. Jew or Gentile, man or woman, rich man, poor man, beggarman, thief—God purchased every human being with the lifeblood of His only Son. And the Lutheran educator will never fail to remind his pupils and students that eternal life is of more value for man than the costliest and choicest earthly treasures. Because of these convictions regarding value, the Lutheran educator will seek to place values in their proper perspective and relationship, will make all earthly and temporal values subordinate to eternal values, and in this way will lead his pupils and students to strive for and cultivate those values which abide to all eternity.

We have singled out some false views in philosophic thought which the Lutheran educator should be able to recognize and for

¹⁵ Quoted from W 2, 755, 24 ff., by Karl Holl in *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, I, 53, footnote.

which he should be able to supply correctives from Holy Scripture. This study is but a humble beginning of a major operation which should lead to a more comprehensive critical analysis of the vast complex of metaphysical thought to which the products of Lutheran education are exposed. For education is a wide term and embraces an area far more extensive than areas dealt with by the natural sciences, the social sciences, and other studies. It has to do with the explication and mediation of knowledge derived from all areas of human concern. If this is true, then Christian families, churches, and in particular individuals who are directly called to administer, dispense, and implement education in our church have a responsibility exceeded only by the chief concern of the church, the worldwide proclamation and application of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to sin-troubled souls. Lutheran education, insofar as its chief function is to implement and to integrate the Gospel and divine truth in general with all experiences of mankind, is in reality no more than the artillery following in the wake of the marines. The latter establish the beachhead; the former seek to establish it securely.

A concluding postscript seems in order. It is possible to have a most thoroughly articulated Lutheran philosophy of education and nevertheless to have an anemic, paralyzed, and truncated system of Lutheran education. If a choice were to be made, it would be far better not to have an articulated Lutheran philosophy of education but to have a system of Lutheran education in which every fiber and tissue of its total structure vibrates and trembles at the living Word of God. Some philosophies of education are hardly more than descriptions of existing systems of education and are in no sense a moving-picture or tape-recorded account of all that enters into the establishment, maintenance, and operation of a system of education. Other philosophies of education are projections of what a system of education should be, but for that very reason they have no exact counterpart in reality. And yet both philosophies are useful. Therefore also a Lutheran philosophy of education, when fully articulated, can be helpful. It can be a healthy catharsis of Lutheran educational thought and practice. It can also be a stimulus for improving our system of Lutheran education. In any sense Lutheran education in our church has

become, by God's grace, a phenomenon of such gigantic proportions that a thorough and comprehensive philosophy of our system of education appears to be an inflexible imperative.

St. Louis, Mo.

LUTHERAN UNITY CONFERENCES IN AUSTRALIA

Prior to the meeting of the two Lutheran churches in Australia, the ELCA and the UELCA, in the middle of August, for the discussion of church unity, at both of which President John W. Behnken of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was present, Dr. Hoopmann, as the *Australian Lutheran* (August 8) reports, addressed the pastors of his group as follows:

"This conference will probably be the largest conference of Lutheran pastors ever held in Australia. May God in His great mercy bless this conference more than any other ever held. What a blessing if we could come together on the basis of the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions of the Lutheran Church and could part, determined to remain together on this foundation.

"Whenever and wherever the church has been loyal to Scripture and the Confessions, the church has prospered. Whenever and wherever the church has departed from Scripture and the Confessions, the church has suffered. Compromises contrary to Scripture and the Confessions have never been a blessing to any church. If we wish to do the right thing, we must therefore ask God to guide us. 'We can expect great things,' a pastor wrote me today, 'if we go to Jindera and Walla with hundreds of praying congregations behind us.'"

Having asked all pastors to offer up a special intercession in their congregations before the conferences, President Hoopmann suggested the following prayer:

"Lord God, our heavenly Father, be merciful unto us and bless the conferences about to be held in the interest of Lutheran unity. Thou hast blessed our efforts in the past to bring about such unity. Continue to bless them also in future. Let Thy special blessing rest upon the pastors who will meet to give further consideration to this matter. Sanctify them through Thy truth, and grant them Thy Spirit in rich measure so that Thy will be done. Thou art able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. Thou art able to remove all obstacles that still remain. Remove them, we humbly beseech Thee, and hear our prayer for Jesus' sake. Amen."

Conferences conducted in this fine Christian spirit certainly cannot fail to promote the Lord's cause.

JOHN THEODORE MUELLER