

Chapter 9

What's Lutheran About Lutheran Teaching?

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This chapter sets out several features of the Lutheran tradition that make its teaching by DCEs, teachers, pastors, and professors a distinct and lively ministry to and for the whole church.

What do you mean, you're a Lutheran teacher? Or professor? Or DCE? Christendom covers time and space beyond the dotted lines of the Lutheran tradition, and few of us wish to say that Lutherans have a monopoly on the Christian faith. Yet we maintain that the Lutheran heritage is more than merely a family inheritance or the inertia of our institutions. We remind ourselves that something distinctive characterizes our spiritual tradition, something that yields a great blessing both for Lutherans and for others, Christian and non-Christian, who become acquainted with it.

We can frame this distinctiveness as “distinct from” or as “distinct for.” One way to understand (or promote) a tradition is to contrast it with other traditions—such as, in this case, Calvinist Reformed, Roman Catholic, or Wesleyan—and show why this tradition is different. Another way is to highlight how a tradition shares some common features with other traditions and has aspects and additional features that may inform or enhance other traditions.

What exactly is this distinction that makes our efforts as teachers of the church both different and helpful enough to justify our persistence? What do we have to offer that makes the effort worthwhile for all the church catholic? This article argues that Lutheranism has much to offer all inquirers, including those who have no coherent tradition at all, but that Lutheran educators must be well versed in their own tradition to make that offering in an engaging and winsome way.

Ten features of Lutheranism give it the contours and landscape of a province in Christendom well worth living in or visiting, a province that contributes much to the Christian commonwealth.¹ The centerpiece of this article is a summary of ten key insights about the Gospel that emerged from the Wittenberg Reformation and that constitute our Lutheran heritage. By surveying all of them at once, we can gain a sharpened appreciation of what makes our teaching distinctive and worthwhile and what we have to contribute to the spiritual lives of all who may study with us.

Reasons to Read On

Before conducting that survey, however, we have reasons why this review is important. Given our common fallen predicament, some of these reasons have to do with our falling short of who God calls us to be. This, of course, is in part why teaching is necessary (cf. Jer. 31:34). But by and large a survey of our Lutheran distinctions is very positive and inclusive in the large and eternal sense of that word. Here are four reasons for reviewing a list of our Lutheran distinctions.

First, much like the church's first century when Paul sought out Gentiles in each city's marketplace, our world today is a bazaar of spiritualities. Perhaps the most telling example of spiritual diversity and fragmentation is the Oprah Winfrey Show, but spiritual alternatives are now everywhere. People are spiritual beings and now, as always, they are seeking some orientation to the eternal (cf. Eccl. 3:11).

But amid the diversity, people find very few orientations that have a coherent tradition of convictions hammered out through years of careful

¹ This territory image deserves critique. The role of Lutheranism has been an important debate since the diet of Augsburg and the Augsburg Confession in 1530. Should we understand Lutheranism as a movement, a denomination, an ecumenical servant of orthodoxy to all church bodies, or in yet some other way?

study of the Scriptures, and fewer still that locate their spiritual well being in God's promises rather than in their self-justifying spiritual projects and personal efforts.²

Lutheranism gives us such a tradition. It gives all of us a defined base line from which to start and then explore a spiritual orientation. It gives Christians and non-Christians a worked-out set of convictions about life, God, and the world He loves. It is no small service to provide all interested parties with such a tradition against which they can estimate their own and other (and often less coherent) views. What's more, our presentation of our tradition will perforce include the Gospel itself and its power to create faith in Christ and transform lives.

Second, Christianity always has its elements of folk religion. "Plaque Christianity" hangs in homes and classrooms everywhere: "When God closes a door, He opens a window," and "Who I am is God's gift to me; who I become is my gift to God." The point here is not to rant about pious and frequently misleading religious platitudes. These will always be with us. The point is that a fresh, informed, and congenial integration of the Reformation's insights about the Gospel in our teaching can prompt our students beyond any folk religion they may embrace.

Third, and related to folk Christianity, those distinctive Reformation insights of the Gospel help prevent the Christian's slide into excessive pietism and subjectivity. We Christians, and Lutherans in particular, always deal with the tension between the objective truth of God's revelation of himself in history through Jesus Christ, and our own personal, subjective (and important) experience of that truth. This tension was the source of many of the ancient heresies that continues with us in various forms today. A tradition of worked-out and examined convictions about the Gospel help people both new and seasoned in the faith to avoid construing God's

² In its richest connotation, tradition is not a wooden, static set of behaviors enacted out of mindless habit, but a set of beliefs, arguments, convictions, and practices thoughtfully worked out as a meaningful worldview by a community over time. When Tevya in "Fiddler on the Roof" sings about "Tradition!" he sings about the denotation of tradition in certain customs in his community rather than the tradition itself. Alasdair MacIntyre (1981, p. 207) has written extensively on tradition as a community's narrative history and identity.

work among us as merely God's work in me.³

Fourth, the Lutheran tradition - this set of insights about the Gospel that has given Lutherans their distinctive heritage - serves as a blessing to the whole church by helping to distinguish the Gospel as good news. The devil, the world, and the sinful self are all engaged in spirituality campaigns, but they all conduct them by enlisting us as the captains of our own campaigns. Their hymn is not "Lift High the Cross" but lift high yourself. And institutions of education are notorious for teaching their unsuspecting students the many human merit systems, be they academic, social, or athletic. The Lutheran Reformation developed these insights and applications of the Gospel to our human institutions to make our sharing the Gospel lively and formative, and keep it as God's intervention rather than our spiritual invention.

The Three Solas

The three Reformation solas are a good introduction to the Lutheran insights and serve as sure referents for exploring and examining them.⁴ Each of the insights described later in the article is an extension of these solas, just as our ministry of Lutheran education is an extension of the insights. Together these provide a helpful way to understand the integrity of our tradition in the Gospel that we share with fellow sinners. That's the purpose of this article: to recall what distinguishes this Lutheran heritage as a Christian tradition that genuinely serves the church and the world that God so loves.

Sola Gratia - Latin for grace alone - is the heart of the Reformation. Luther's breakthrough to the Gospel - that is, when the Holy Spirit broke through to him with the Gospel - came through Rom. 1:16-17: "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith, as it is written,

³ A related problem is reducing faith to rigid, dry dogmatism. A living faith tradition as we are discussing it here offsets such wooden orthodoxy by sustaining dialog across and within the generations of believers, and with inquirers. This Spirited exchange keeps faith active in love.

⁴ Nafzger's (1994) brief treatment of the Solas is helpful here. That section is posted on line at <http://www.lcms.org/nafzger2.HTM>, "What Do Lutherans Believe?" This Introduction is also a reminder that these solas and the Gospel insights of the Lutheran Reformation are worked out thoroughly in the Lutheran Confessions as found in the Book of Concord.

‘He who through faith is righteous shall live.’” Luther realized that the required righteousness Paul describes in Romans is not God’s righteousness of judging and punishing sinners, nor our active but impossible righteousness of obeying the Law. It is God’s active righteousness accomplished in us and on our behalf not through the Law but by a different Word of God that became flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth. Hence, God’s active righteousness in Christ becomes our passive righteousness as a gift (*gratia*):

I realized it was to be understood in this way: the righteousness of God is revealed through the Gospel, namely the so-called “passive” righteousness we receive, through which God justifies us by faith through grace and mercy.... Now I felt as if I had been born again. The gates of heaven had opened and I had entered paradise itself (Oberman, 1992, p. 165).

Among the many implications of grace alone is the assurance that God’s Yes (2 Cor. 1:18ff) is to all people of all times and all places. While “Lutheranism” may to some sound parochial in the worst sense (and has at times been practiced that way), the Lutheran tradition gives us both a compassion and a set of convictions for sharing, teaching, and dialog that reaches out with God’s love to everyone.

One helpful way the Reformers kept faith as a *sola* rather than a duet of God and man was by emphasizing faith as trust. The phrase they used was *fiducia cordis*, “trust in [or of] the heart.” Since it is the nature of promise to create trust, and God alone can make the promises of the Gospel (*sola gratia*), then faith also is God’s work alone - and this secures our faith which alone can embrace God’s promises. Early on, Luther had thought that faith was a virtue or trait imputed by the Holy Spirit which we then put to work to lay hold of grace, much as we use the virtue of honesty to work rightly with truth. But as his reading of Scripture clarified the Gospel, he understood faith as the Holy Spirit’s changing the heart by means of God’s Word and creating our very thirst and desire for God’s grace.

The second *sola*, then, is *sola fide* - faith alone. While God’s gifts of forgiveness, deliverance from death and the devil, and life everlasting are for everyone, this grace, conveyed to us through Word and sacraments,

comes only through faith in Christ. This “faith alone,” without our effort, contribution, cooperation, reason, or strength, keeps the Gospel as truly good news. It reminds us that our right relationship with God does not rely on anything we do - which as sinners we might do wrongly - but on what God alone does for us. In terms of *sola fide*, what God the Holy Spirit does is create our faith in Christ.

Teaching in the Lutheran tradition, then, is quite distinct from (though not necessarily hostile to) teaching as moral development or character education, which would seek to inculcate the proper virtues of intellect, conscience, and emotion. Valuable as these virtues may be, they are not the basis for education - though they may be related in some ways to the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22) which is the outcome from our training in a righteousness that comes by grace alone.

The third *sola*, Scripture alone (*sola scriptura*), forms a triad with the first two solas. Samuel Nafzger (1994) writes, “Luther’s insight that salvation comes by grace alone through faith alone cannot be divorced from ‘on the basis of Scripture alone.’ For it was directly as a result of his commitment to Scripture that Luther came to rediscover justification by grace alone through faith alone” (p. 5). This rediscovery came as Luther pursued his vocation of teaching. Teaching by its nature is concerned with content as well as personhood and always has a *telos* or ultimate aim in mind (Fenstermacher & Soltis, 1986, p. 8). In the Lutheran tradition, Scripture alone serves as our source and norm for assessing the spiritual nature and direction of our teaching ministry. How directly we relate this source and norm, and our ultimate aim, to curriculum is one of our on-going discussions, and in our tradition it should be. It has been since Wittenberg. However we may address this issue locally and specifically today, the three Reformation solas suggest at least ten implications that relate the Gospel to the Christian life and inform our discussions. Together these create a living tradition that shapes the scope and purpose of our educational ministry in powerful ways at all levels.

Ten Lutheran Distinctions

What follows next is a digest of these ten insights. Other students of the Lutheran tradition may list them and summarize them differently.⁵ The point here is to present them, however briefly, so that we can continue to ask and seek to answer, “What’s Lutheran about Lutheran teaching, anyway?” (Standard references are noted for each distinction and are cited at the end of this chapter.)

1. The spiritual is in relation to the material.

Different from the misleading notion that the spiritual and the material are isolated from each other and even hostile to each other, Lutherans recognize God’s divine work and blessing in “things visible and invisible” (Nicene Creed). God’s work, while mysterious, is nevertheless plain to us in the physical world not only in creation but also through Jesus’ incarnation and resurrection, and in the sacraments. When Paul writes in Col. 1:16, “For in him all things were created in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible...all things were created through him and for him; he is before all things and in him all things hold together,” Paul is not endorsing pantheism but is saying all things have their being and reason in God. If a parable is an earthly story with a heavenly meaning, then all of life is a parable with a spiritual meaning implicit in it. As Lutheran educators, we are surrounded by spiritually loaded incidents and events every day. We can help students learn to see the spiritual intersecting with the secular by addressing selected events. We can be especially helpful by teaching others to distinguish folk religion and reverent superstitions (*deisidaimonia*)⁶ from ways of divine intervention confirmed by Scripture. (See Kolb, 1993, p. 16.)

5 These insights are not all exclusively Lutheran, and other theological traditions share many of them. Some prefer to consider these insights as “authentically Lutheran” rather than “distinctly Lutheran.” Readers may also note the conspicuous absence of several important themes such as the priesthood of all believers, *ecclesia semper reformanda* (the church is always reforming), and others. Please note such omissions as you talk with others about what is Lutheran about Lutheran teaching.

6 The Greek word *deisidaimonia*, as found for example in Acts 17:22 and 25:19, can be translated as religion or as superstition. It literally means “fear of the demon-gods” and was used to indicate recognition of God or the gods mingled more with fear than with trust; superstitious though not in a wicked sense; and attributing to God that which is not truly characteristic of God or authentic about His actions.

2. The Freedom and Bondage of the Will

Christians often speak imprecisely about “free will” as if we all have a will freed from sin and its damage. Lutherans are careful to recognize that the human will apart from the restoring work of the Holy Spirit is tainted by sin and that “The mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God’s law, indeed it cannot, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God” (Rom. 7:8). A freeing of the will comes only through a trusting relationship with God, empowered by the Holy Spirit. This freeing comes with faith and is completed at our resurrection. Apart from this freedom, we have only a limited will. We can choose a brand of clothing, a marriage partner, or to make a charity donation, but we cannot choose for the goodness and righteousness of God in our lives and actions. Our students of all ages often confuse this real freedom with claims about free choice in a world that is diverse in every way. Our choice of expressions and instruction about the freedom and bondage of the will can help them sort out this confusion. (See Dillenberger, 1962, p. 166)

3. Two Chief Words: Law and Gospel

Law and Gospel, of course, apply to everything about the Christian life and about sharing our Christian faith and life with others. (See Walther, 1986.) One important application of the distinction between Law and Gospel is the difference between legalism and antinomianism. Legalism is the belief and use of God’s Law as though laws, rules, regulations, and consequences can solve sin, motivate good behavior, and create Christian community. This amounts to an idolatry of the Law. Antinomianism (Latin for “against rules”) is the belief that because God has forgiven us and freed us from the curse of the Law’s punishment, we no longer need the Law. This amounts to cheap grace. Christians, whatever their age, often seek refuge in these two errors. We can help them avoid these errors by how we express and apply our rules and consequences in the classroom, how we instruct for life together in Christian community, and where we direct them for genuine refuge from all the ways in which the Law and its demand for righteousness threatens us: “I have another righteousness and life above this life which is Christ the Son of God who knows no sin or death but is my righteousness and life eternal, by whom I shall be raised up and delivered from the bondage of the Law and sin.” (Luther, Com-

mentary on Galatians, in Dillenberger, 1962, p. 106)

4. *Simul Iustus et Peccator*

This Latin translates as “at the same time justified and sinful” and captures one of the great Biblical paradoxes that characterize the entire Christian life. The catechism applies it in the ideas of “old Adam” and “new you.” As Christians we continue to live with our sinful nature and experience its influence until we die. But we simultaneously live as new creations of God despite this continued sinful condition. So Paul confesses, “I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do” (Rom. 7:19), yet declares, “Anyone who is in Christ is a new creation, the old has passed away, behold the new has come” (2 Cor. 5:17). Paul denatures the paradox only in Christ (see Rom. 6) and resolves that, despite our sin, “You must consider yourself dead to sin and alive in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 6:11). Our students, young and old, often think in only one category or the other. We can help them recognize the simul paradox by responding to their inquiries about our life together with that practical theological question: “Why do you want to know?” In other words, who wants to know about this issue - the old Adam or the new you? We need to articulate and practice community so that the certainty of the Gospel enables sinners to live together in an uncertain world as the saints of God. (See Dillenberger, 1962, p. 99.)

5. Two Kinds of Righteousness

All Christians possess two kinds of righteousness, one that is not their own and one that is. All Christians need help with distinguishing while sustaining both of them. (See Dillenberger, 1962, p. 159.) Lutherans recognize a righteousness that makes our life and relationship with God right, good, and fulfilled. This rightness comes to us as a gift from God and not through any efforts or ideas of our own. Luther called it an alien righteousness coming down from God through Christ in a vertical relationship. We also recognize another righteousness that makes our relationship with other people right, good, and worth living. In this horizontal relationship with others, our rightness consists in loving our neighbors as ourselves through our works and actions. This second righteousness is a kind of “donated” righteousness, as we use the gift of alien righteousness

and extend it to others in our words and deeds. The Lutheran tradition educates people to clearly acknowledge, distinguish, and foster both kinds of righteousness - the first through God's Word and promises, the second as fruits of faith in Christ through stirring one another up to love and good works (Hebr. 10:23-25).

6. The Hidden God and the Revealed God

Through the centuries, many observers have noticed that people are incurably religious, having endless ideas about God and what he is like. All cultures and societies have devised forms for both worshipping and denying God or gods they vaguely sense exist or at least wonder about. Lutherans also have noticed that people constantly speculate about "the hidden God." Typically this speculation, based on guesses and inferences from nature, imagines a God who is majestic, glorious - and threatening, i.e., the "hidden God of the Law only," says Luther. (See Dillenberger, 1953, p. 101.) The God revealed to us through Jesus' life, ministry, death, and resurrection discloses a different picture. In Jesus, we see God in weakness, humility, and mercy. While it is true that in Jesus we catch an occasional glimpse of kingdom, power, and glory, we mainly see "crib, cross, and crypt" in the Gospel accounts. (See Kolb, 1993, p. 20.) This is "the revealed God" in the God-man, Jesus Christ. Our teaching and practice within a living community of humility, service, and compassion are part of God's project to reveal himself to us in Jesus through external and accessible Word and sacrament, not through our speculation and guess work about what remains hidden (Dt. 29:29, Hebr. 2:8-9).

7. Theology of the Cross and Theology of Glory

Rather than seeing God hidden in suffering and crucifixion, many Christians seek God in the majesty of his creation (Rom. 1:20), in the power of nature (Ps. 8:3), or the glory and terror of his Second Coming and judgment (Rev. 6:15). While these are certainly Biblical themes, none of them as such can help the sinner damned under the Law and wrath of this mighty, majestic, and glorious God. Therefore, Luther followed Paul in regarding these themes as secondary to all God was doing through the humiliation and death of Jesus: "For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). Not nature and

creation, not miraculous events in history or individual lives, not judgment and the close of the age, not any manifestation of power, but the cross and broken body resurrected - that's the emblem of our theology and our image of God now. Our theology of the cross locates God and glory where for all the world's imaginations there can be nothing divine. As Hebrews puts it, "But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone" (Hebr. 2:9). Our students, like our culture in general, are often looking for God in all the wrong places. We need a coarse, splintered, bloodstained cross in every quad and courtyard to which each of our lessons and policies can be nailed. (See Kolb, 1993, p. 20ff. See also McGrath, 1985, p. 148.)

8. Christian Liberty

Early in the Reformation, Luther composed a maxim within which he sought to locate all Christian decisions. His couplet has kept thoughtful Christians busy for centuries working out its implications. He began his treatise on "The Freedom of a Christian" (see Dillenberger, 1962, p. 42) this way:

The Christian is free lord of all, subject to none.
The Christian is servant of all, subject to all.

Since the Gospel is true that God's grace actually covers all our sin and that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ (Rom 8:39), then the Christian has perfect liberty to choose and act in any way she or he believes is in keeping with God's Word and coming kingdom. Abraham was prepared to slay his own son. With great distress, Ezra ordered the divorce of Jews who had married non-Jews. John the Baptist recklessly engaged in moral criticism of Herod. Luther questioned but quietly sanctioned the bigamy of one of Germany's princes. Bonhoeffer joined in the effort to assassinate Hitler. The Gospel frees us to make difficult decisions because no action or choice, however wise or wrong-headed, can cancel the saving power of the Gospel. Paradoxically, that same Christian is also the most humble servant or *doulos* (Greek for slave) to every neighbor. That Christian must make choices and take actions that

serve others both temporally and eternally. This Christian liberty, then, is the liberty both to take action and to serve. The Christian is empowered and emboldened to enact this servant liberty by the absolute promise of the Gospel that no work of ours can jeopardize what God has already done for us in Christ. Therefore, Luther declares, “Sin boldly—but believe more boldly still.” This is not an ethic of rules or simplistic means-and-ends principles. Rather, we need curriculum and policy for education that informs inquirers and equips students with a sound understanding of servanthood, a growing knowledge of God’s Word, and a bold trust in His promises.⁷

9. The Two Kingdoms

Since the fall there are, in fact, two kingdoms or realms of God, not just one. This is a linch-pin doctrine of the Reformation. The right-handed kingdom, as Luther called it, is God’s kingdom of grace that is ruled by the grace of Christ in which the Holy Spirit by the power of the Gospel makes Christians and forms disciples. The left-handed kingdom is God’s secular kingdom of the world that is ruled through law by people in various stations of temporal authority to preserve order in a fallen, sinful creation. God has established both kingdoms. Only the Gospel can prevail in the right-handed kingdom, not the Law. The Law is the primary authority in the left-handed kingdom, sustaining order in a fallen creation so that the Gospel can be proclaimed (cf. Mt. 24:14). Christians in their vocations are called to live simultaneously in both kingdoms. This is not easy to do. Lutheran educators must exist and conduct their ministry in both kingdoms. This is not easy to do. The teaching ministry inducts students into this two-kingdom living. This is not easy to do. We have the difficult task of instructing both through curriculum and policy so that all of us learn to rightly distinguish and not confuse the two kingdoms even as we must learn to live effectively for God in both. The two-kingdom doctrine gives us our basis for participation in politics, the sciences, the arts, business, and all other human activities in the left-handed kingdom. Because these are our activities and works in the temporal realm of the world, our

⁷ A related theme that deserves attention is *adiaphora*, that area of Christian conduct that is neither commanded nor forbidden by God’s Word. For an extended study of this important topic see Graebner (1953).

participation—right, wrong, or otherwise—cannot alter what God has done for us in his realm of grace apart from our works. (See Paul's powerful statement in Rom. 8:31-39.) Understanding the two realms is Luther's key for us in doing education that preserves the Gospel yet enables us to explore any and all human claims about truth, beauty, and a life well lived. (See Dillenbereger, 1962, p. 363 and Braaten, 1983, p. 123.)

10. Vocation

“God gets up every morning and milks the cows.” With this peculiar claim, Luther sets out another linch-pin doctrine of the Reformation that complements all the others: the doctrine of vocation (1 Cor. 7:17ff). When the farmer milks his cows, he is doing God's work every bit as much as any monk or priest (or Lutheran teacher or pastor). By milking those cows, the farmer provides sustenance for people either to continue their own lives for another day as God's people in service to others or to live another day and have the opportunity to hear the Gospel and come to faith. So Lutherans insist that every Christian has a vocation, or a calling to faith and Christian living, and that no one vocation is more pleasing to God than any other. Lutheran Christians honor God by honoring all people in all stations of life that provide service, work, care, and respect for others. The smallest child learning her ABCs and the oldest retiree providing care for that child have vocations from God. Lutheran education does more than pay occasional lip service to vocation. It designs to help students link the call of the Gospel to productive human activity as ways to share God's goodness, especially his great goodness in Christ. (See Veith, 1999, p. 71.)

Conclusion

Some have suggested that the most effective way to offer Christian education today is to emphasize that our education is Christian and de-emphasize that it is Lutheran. This point has merit in the sense that 1) Lutheran education has at times been exclusive and ethnocentric, and 2) most people are no longer much interested in denominational boundaries. A constructive take on this view is that we highlight the Christ of Christian education and avoid denominational triumphalism. The danger, however, is that we may end up marketing a store-brand Christianity that

conveys little substance for shaping a Christian life. This strategy may be ineffectively casuistic and misleading, especially in secondary and higher education.

By contrast, a Lutheran education that deliberately communicates the Biblical, Lutheran tradition and ethos will do students a world of good, both for this world and the world to come. Non-Lutherans, believers and unbelievers alike, will receive a distinct, historically extended, community-embodied worldview located in sources they can access and evaluate as grounds for standards, judgments, authority, the good, and meaning and purpose. What's more, these sources and ideas are *sola gratia, sola fide, and sola scriptura* in nature. In these times of spiritual diversity, no one needs just one more bland, vapid, church-affiliated education. We do others a great disservice by veiling in merely generic education the goodness of God who has revealed Himself in Jesus Christ. Instead, we have a heritage and the resources to present to them an identity and a community they can consider seriously and against which they can compare other claims.

Meanwhile, Lutherans will receive an account and induction into their own community that does not isolate and inoculate them from the world, but prepares them to understand the world and bring to it that Word of life for today and eternity.⁸ The Reformation insights into the Gospel are not intended to return us to the sixteenth century any more than the Reformers' study of the early church fathers sought to recreate the world of the Roman Empire. The Gospel is God's message of reconciliation for all people of all times. These insights of the Lutheran tradition gives Lutheran education a distinctively Gospel-oriented substance and structure. Being distinctive in this evangelical way is not sectarian provincialism. Rather it makes us a province with open and inviting borders for all who might glimpse, desire, and receive with joy that abundant life in Christ.

⁸ Much has been written in recent years about the relationship of the church to the modern and post-modern world. See Hauerwas and Willimon (1989) for one effort to consider how the church can remain distinctively in the world but not of the world. Also Menuge, 1999, presents an engaging assortment of essays on the church in the world.