

# **A God who speaks and acts:**

theology for teachers  
in Lutheran schools

**Malcolm I Bartsch**

# A GOD WHO SPEAKS AND ACTS

Theology for teachers in Lutheran schools

MALCOLM I BARTSCH

© Lutheran Education Australia

All rights reserved. This book is copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purposes of private study, research, criticism or review as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced without written permission of the publisher.

Author      Malcolm I. Bartsch

Title        A God Who Speaks and Acts: Theology for teachers in Lutheran schools

ISBN        978 0987570604

Notes       Includes index.

Subjects    Lutheran Church--Education--Australia--History.  
Church schools--Australia--History.

Designed and printed in Australia by Openbook Howden, Adelaide.  
[www.openbookhowden.com.au](http://www.openbookhowden.com.au)

## Foreword

In July 2012, Malcolm Bartsch presented the inaugural Fritzsche Oration for the Australian Lutheran Institute for Theology and Ethics (ALITE), the newly established research centre for Australian Lutheran College. The topic of Bartsch's oration was *Fifty years of Lutheran schooling: achievements, opportunities (missed opportunities?) and challenges*, and in it, he outlined not only his own experiences and insights into the recent history of Australian Lutheran schooling, but was able to most effectively absorb and include the contributions of educators and theologians across the LCA to the history of Australian Lutheranism.

In this latest book from Bartsch, *A God who speaks and acts: theology for teachers in Lutheran schools*, he has been able to again capture and include not only his own wisdom and rich experience in Lutheran education, but has again intelligently and effectively included the thoughts of several significant Lutheran educators and theologians. People such as Zweck, Koch, Hauser, Hebart and Jennings – deep thinkers in the Australian Lutheran context – add to Bartsch's writings and provide a most worthwhile and thorough theological journey for teachers in Lutheran schools to venture into. Even more so, Martin Luther's writings on Lutheran education and theology are inexorably intertwined into Bartsch's well written dialogue. This enables the reader to be taken deep into Lutheran theology and in the case of the Lutheran teacher, to identify their own and their school's *raison d'être*.

This book contains the **theological essentials** for Lutheran educators and is written in a way which is not only understandable but can be applied in the daily challenges of school teaching, learning and planning. I strongly encourage chaplains, teachers and principals to read and consider these **theological essentials** to enhance their understandings, discussions and daily work.

In conclusion, the vital anchoring point for Lutheran schools is made clear by Bartsch when he states '[t]he values on which all Lutheran schools are based find their origin and support in the revelation of God in Scripture'. The reason the Lutheran church began and still operates Lutheran schools is to proclaim God's word. As Hebrews 1:1-3 says:

*Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he*

*appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word. [NRSV]*

I commend this book to all interested in Lutheran schools as they daily offer Lutheran education in their communities, as diverse as they may be. On behalf of all involved in the education and theology of Lutheran schools, past and present, I also wish to acknowledge Malcolm Bartsch as a key and distinguished contributor, thinker and leader of Lutheran education and theology. As God has blessed us through his writings, so Malcolm has been a blessing to the Lutheran Church of Australia through his service and leadership.

**Stephen Rudolph**

*Executive Director*

*Lutheran Education Australia*

# Table of Contents

Foreword . . . . .	iii
Acknowledgements . . . . .	xi
Abbreviations and copyright . . . . .	xiii
Introduction: Doing theology in the Lutheran school. . . . .	1
Why Lutheran schools?. . . . .	1
Changes and challenges . . . . .	4
What cannot change. . . . .	5
Doing theology in the school context . . . . .	6
Chapter 1: A God who speaks and acts . . . . .	11
Looking for god . . . . .	11
A God who finds us . . . . .	12
A God who speaks and acts . . . . .	13
God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the triune God . . . . .	15
God working through reason: the search for ‘truth’ . . . . .	19
Wisdom . . . . .	24
Chapter 2: Word of God: living, active and creative. . . . .	31
Word of God: living, active and creative . . . . .	31
‘Word of God’ . . . . .	32
The written word of God . . . . .	34
The Bible is fully divine and fully human . . . . .	35
The proclaimed word of God – the living voice of God’s word . . . . .	40
The interpretation of God’s word . . . . .	41
The central message of God’s word. . . . .	45
Theology and God’s word . . . . .	45
The Lutheran Confessions . . . . .	47
Chapter 3: God created and creates . . . . .	51
God created and creates . . . . .	51

Original creation [ <i>creatio ex nihilo</i> ]. . . . .	53
Human beings are God's special creation . . . . .	58
God's continuing creation [ <i>creatio continua</i> ']. . . . .	64
Vocation . . . . .	66
Jesus Christ and the new creation. . . . .	73
Chapter 4: Sin and God's response of grace . . . . .	75
The origin of sin . . . . .	75
God's response to sin . . . . .	85
God speaks through law and gospel . . . . .	90
Confession and absolution . . . . .	103
Chapter 5: God as a human being and theology of the cross . . . . .	107
Who is Jesus Christ? . . . . .	107
The person of Jesus Christ: God and a human being [ <i>christology</i> ] . . . . .	108
The work of Jesus Christ [ <i>soteriology</i> ] . . . . .	114
Theology of the cross: the God who suffers. . . . .	119
Chapter 6: God makes people holy: the work of the Holy Spirit. . .	129
God the Holy Spirit. . . . .	129
The Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith in the life of the Christian. . . . .	131
The Holy Spirit works through the word of God [ <i>means of grace</i> ] . . . . .	135
The Holy Spirit works through the sacraments . . . . .	135
Baptism. . . . .	138
Living in one's baptism . . . . .	141
Holy Communion . . . . .	144
The Holy Spirit makes Christians holy [ <i>sanctification</i> ] . . . . .	150
The gifts of the Holy Spirit . . . . .	153
The 'Spirit of truth' . . . . .	155

Chapter 7: New life in Christ . . . . .	157
Faith and ‘good works’ [the ‘new obedience’] . . . . .	158
The tension of saint and sinner [ <i>‘simul iustus et peccator’</i> ] . . . . .	160
Christian freedom: ‘freedom from’ and ‘freedom to’ . . . . .	164
The model of Christ – the law of love . . . . .	167
Discipleship [learning, serving and witnessing] . . . . .	172
Spiritual disciplines . . . . .	178
Ethical living. . . . .	180
Chapter 8: New life in Christ in church and society . . . . .	185
An ‘ambidextrous’ God . . . . .	185
The Lutheran school and the ‘two hands of God’ . . . . .	193
The Christian Church. . . . .	206
Chapter 9: Christian Worship . . . . .	221
What is Christian worship?. . . . .	221
The mystery of Christian worship and the triune God . . . . .	222
The dynamic of Christian worship: God’s action, human response . . . . .	223
The scope of Christian worship . . . . .	226
The form of Christian worship . . . . .	227
Aspects of a Lutheran approach to worship . . . . .	229
The life of worship . . . . .	232
Prayer . . . . .	233
Worship in the Lutheran school context . . . . .	237
Epilogue: Authentic Lutheran schooling . . . . .	245
Selected References . . . . .	249
Index . . . . .	257





## Acknowledgements

The writing of this book had its origin in discussions with the late Dr Adrienne Jericho who suggested that the earlier book, *Why a Lutheran School?* could be reworked with additional theological material. This additional material was necessary because it had not been part of the scope of the original doctoral thesis on which *Why a Lutheran School?* had been based.

This new book draws on insights shared, questions raised, and discussions and conversations held with many pre-service students and teachers in Lutheran schools who participated in workshops, seminars and courses. They provided the context in which the dialogue between theology and education occurs. They challenged theological understandings on the basis of their educational theory and practical experience in Lutheran schools. Many of the questions which they raised and the insights they shared, also in their assignments, have been woven into the text of this volume.

My teaching colleagues at Lutheran Teachers College, Luther Seminary and, more recently, Australian Lutheran College have provided stimulus and opportunities to reflect on and explore theology in general and in particular how it interacts with educational issues. This has led to valuable exchanges and perceptions which are reflected in this volume. I am greatly indebted to three colleagues in particular whose work has been a very valuable source in writing this volume. Because their work has not been published, I wish to acknowledge the value of their contributions and apologise for not being able to reference their work appropriately. In particular, I refer to the Study Guide prepared by Dr Jeffrey Silcock for *Theological Foundations*, to the Study Guide for *The Christian Faith* prepared by Dr Peter Lockwood, and to the Theological Notes prepared by Rev Andrew Jaensch for the *Theological Orientation Program for Staff* [TOPS] version 2. I had the opportunity to work on projects for Lutheran Education Australia with two respected colleagues, Anne Dohnt and Louise Mason. Presenting workshops with them provided particular insights into the context of teachers in Lutheran schools and ways of doing theology.

Three people agreed to undertake the task of reading the draft manuscript to provide feedback. The care in which they did this, and

the insight shown in their valued comments were much appreciated. My thanks to Dan Sawade, Louise Mason and Andrew Jaensch.

The transition from manuscript to published format has been skillfully guided through the office of Lutheran Education Australia by Joan Scriven and the office staff. The services of Openbook Howden, and Greg Hassold in particular, were greatly appreciated in producing the volume in its final form.

My family has been a great support during the time taken to complete this work. Their love, understanding, and encouragement were vital in concluding this task. Having grandchildren in the early years of schooling has been an added stimulus. My wife, Anne, has not only been a caring and loving companion in this venture but has also provided a very valuable role in proof reading and commenting on the text as it evolved. I owe her a great debt of gratitude for supporting me throughout this project.

While I am indebted to so many individuals in the preparation of this text and its final production, limitations and inaccuracies in this work are all my own.

My thanks to God who has acted and spoken in my life and has given me the opportunity to serve him through serving the teachers of our Lutheran schools.

## Abbreviations and copyright

ALC	Australian Lutheran College
BLEA	Board for Lutheran Education Australia Ltd
LCA	Lutheran Church of Australia
LEA	Lutheran Education Australia
LTC	Lutheran Teachers College / Lay Training Centre co-located with Luther Seminary in 1994 and incorporated into Australian Lutheran College in 2004
LW	Luther's Works [American edition]

## The Book of Concord

AC	Augsburg Confession
Ap	Apology of the Augsburg Confession
SA	Smalcald Articles
LC	Large Catechism
SC	Small Catechism
FC	Formula of Concord
Epit	Epitome of the Formula of Concord
SD	Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

---

“The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright, 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA. Used by permission. All rights reserved.”

Where other versions of the Bible are quoted, the version used is identified in the reference: eg NIV [New International Version]

---

Quotations: in direct quotations from other sources, the spelling and capitalisation of the original text is retained without further indication.



# INTRODUCTION

## Doing theology in the Lutheran school

---

### Why Lutheran schools?

Lutheran schools have been an integral part of the Lutheran church and its work in Australia since 1838. This was the case both in the early contact by Lutheran missionaries with the Indigenous population in the Adelaide area where they established schools using Indigenous languages, and also schools for their own children in the early villages of Lutheran settlements. Lutheran settlers placed a high value on schooling and the initial families who established themselves in South Australia stated their concern for the religious education of their children as one of the major factors in making the long sea voyage from Germany to Australia in 1838 (Zweck 1988:138). This emphasis on education was not surprising given the importance of schools in the German villages from which the early German settlers had come.

The village schools in Prussia provided the early model for Lutheran schools in Australia. From the time of the Reformation, Lutheran churches had been concerned with education and schooling. Luther himself had emphasised the necessity of education for both boys and girls for the benefit of the church and the state. While in his writings such as his 'Sermon on keeping children in school' (LW 46: 219-258) Luther argued that the prime responsibility for education lay with parents, he also insisted on the necessity for 'the temporal authority to compel its subjects to keep their children in school' (LW 46: 256). Luther was particularly concerned with the provision of religious education, which he saw as the responsibility of the civil authorities (LW 45: 347-378), and he argued for 'the establishment everywhere of

the very best schools for both boys and girls' so that 'good and capable men and women' could be prepared for their responsibilities in 'the world' (LW 45: 368). Rather than 'spend such large sums every year on guns, roads, bridges, dams and countless similar items to ensure the temporal peace and prosperity of a city', Luther urged the spending of 'much more' for the provision of adequate education for the young (LW 45: 350). This led to the provision in Prussia during the first decades of the nineteenth century of

*an effective scheme of compulsory schooling for the masses ... Each parish, however small, was required by law to maintain at least one elementary school whose internal affairs were closely supervised by the pastor and other ecclesiastical members of the local committee of management (Zweck 1988: 135).*

Luther's approach to education was influenced by his view of the society of his day as a 'Christian' society and its rulers as 'Christian' rulers. He never tired of stressing the importance of education, both religious and 'secular' for all people and particularly for children. In all this he was very ably assisted by Philip Melancthon, the so-called 'teacher of Germany'. The two catechisms (1529) and the instructions for their use which Luther wrote reinforced his concern that people be instructed in the fundamental doctrines of their faith. In the early development of Lutheran schools in Australia, Luther's writings provided the impetus for the establishment and development of these schools. Many times Luther's high estimation of the office of teacher was quoted, both in an effort to attract people to teaching and to urge reasonable payment for their services.

*If I could leave the preaching office and my other duties, or had to do so, there is no other office I would rather have than that of schoolmaster or teacher of boys; for I know that next to that of preaching, this is the best, greatest, and most useful office there is. Indeed, I scarcely know which of the two is the better. For it is hard to make old dogs obedient and old rascals pious; yet that is the work at which the preacher must labor, and often in vain. Young saplings are more easily bent and trained, even though some may break in the process. It surely has to be one of the supreme virtues on earth faithfully to train other people's children: for there are very few people, in fact almost none, who will do this for their own (LW 46: 253).*

The early Lutheran schools in South Australia were established through the determination and sacrifices not only of the parents but of the whole village. The school was often the first major construction in a village. The aim was to ensure that schooling continued as effectively as possible.

The major motivation for schooling was to ensure the nurture of the faith of the children of the village. The schools were looked upon as 'nurseries of the church' (Zweck 1973:15), and they were seen to support parents in their God-given responsibility of bringing up their children 'in the discipline and instruction of the Lord' (Eph 6:4).

The schools were also seen as a means for preserving the German language and culture. Even though the Lutherans clearly wished to be seen as loyal citizens of Australia (Hayes 1978: 192), very few spoke any English and many thought that the future of the Lutheran Church in Australia depended on the retention of the German language (Zweck 1973: 15). The Lutheran schools were seen as vital in ensuring that children were proficient in the German language even though more and more of the curriculum was taught in English. This retention of the German language led to suspicion of the Lutheran schools during World War 1 and their closing by an Act of Parliament in South Australia.

Related to this concern was the need to provide teachers and pastors for the congregations since the congregations could not rely on a continual supply from Germany. These needed to be able to work in both English and German. This was the impetus for the beginning of teacher and pastor preparation at Lobethal in 1842 by Pastor Fritzsche, the second Lutheran pastor to arrive in South Australia (Hauser 2009: 49-68).

Based on his theology of vocation, Luther emphasised the importance of preparing children through the schools for effective and productive lives in the community. Therefore the Lutheran schools were concerned with the provision of basic schooling for the total education of their students. Fritzsche stated his concern for the moulding of character, the development of ethics and morals in the students and 'informing and developing the mind and intellect' in order to produce 'good citizens' (Zweck 1988: 140). This was particularly important during the early years of European settlement when government schools were in short supply.



## Changes and challenges

From the initial beginnings in South Australia, Queensland and Victoria (Hauser 2009), Lutheran schools experienced times of growth and also of decline. At the end of the nineteenth century, there may have been as many as 90 Lutheran schools in Australia (Zweck:1971; Bartsch 2001: 16), although some of these may have functioned only intermittently. The major recent growth phase during the last decades of the twentieth century has led to the rapid expansion of Lutheran schools across Australia (Zweck 1988; Hauser 1991; Bartsch 2001).

Not only have Lutheran schools grown in number and size, but they have responded to challenges from the changed context in which they now operate. Lutheran schools are no longer typically small rural schools in a traditionally Lutheran cultural setting staffed by Lutheran teachers and catering for Lutheran students. The majority of Lutheran schools are now large urban schools with a minority of Lutheran teachers and students and with a significant number of students who have had no previous connection with Christianity. In a number of situations, Lutheran schools have been established where previously there had been no activity by a Lutheran congregation.

Changes can be seen in the way in which the aims and purposes of the schools have been expressed. The emphasis on nurture in the Christian faith and the provision of basic education has continued since the first Lutheran schools were established in Australia, but other terminology has emerged to identify the purpose of Lutheran schooling such as outreach, witness, pastoral care, partnership and service (Jennings 2007). There has also been an increasing emphasis on providing quality education as the fundamental purpose of any educational endeavour.

Lutheran schools are no longer totally dependent on the financial support of parents and congregational members, but since 1963 have become increasingly dependent on government financial support (Zweck 1971: 1973). Together with money from State governments, the increased availability of Commonwealth government money has allowed for rapid expansion of Lutheran schools, particularly in Queensland (Hauser 1990: 93). Concern has been raised at times that excessive dependence on government funding might compromise the independence of Lutheran schools (Bartsch 2001: 22). There have also been examples

of tensions developing between Lutheran schools and their supporting congregations and between school principals and pastors.

Lutheran schools have had to respond to challenges from changes in the Australian society. These range from changes in family structure and consequent additional demands on schools for services for which families were previously responsible to the rapidly developing technological changes which include the impact of mobile phones, 'Facebook', 'Twitter', cyber bullying and other forms of social networking. Schools are faced with such pressures as increased pluralism, the eroding of values, consumerism, concern for ecological issues, postmodernist relativism, individualism, and secularism.

Young people find themselves caught up in the pressure of accelerating change, insecurity, depression, and loss of self-worth which can lead to deviant, delinquent and self-destructive tendencies. On the other hand, it can lead them to an implicit search for something more in life, for some ultimate truth and reason for being.

## What cannot change

While Lutheran schools must be sensitive to challenges which come from changes in the context in which they operate and the changed circumstances of those involved in the life of the school, there are however some things which cannot change. These are the core beliefs and values which provide the fundamental basis for Lutheran schooling. While Lutheran schools must respond to the findings of disciplines such as educational philosophy, educational psychology, sociology, and pedagogy and be sensitive to insights from the history of education, all of these must be read in the light of the beliefs and values which define an authentic approach to Lutheran schooling.

It is important, too, that these defining beliefs and values are made explicit. Since education in its fullest sense involves the whole person for the whole of life, some world-view or philosophy of life arising out of a belief and value system is assumed, either implicitly or explicitly, in the educational process. What is happening in the Lutheran school and how it is done is determined by those beliefs and values which permeate all that the Lutheran school is and all that it does. These need to be the shared beliefs and values of the whole school community and

not merely those of the head of school, or any section of the school community. These are also the shared beliefs and values for all schools which see themselves as a part of the community of Lutheran schools. They lead to shared expectations, purposes and meanings. They determine how Lutheran schooling is done.

For Lutheran schools, these shared beliefs and values will not be provided simply by the examination of the current Australian educational and social context and the attempt to distil some common vision for education and schools from that context. The values on which Lutheran schools are based find their origin and support in the revelation of God in Scripture. What the Lutheran school is and what it does need to be viewed through what God is enabling and requiring the school to be and to do. The starting point, then, for a Lutheran approach to schooling is theological. As John Koch pointed out (1990: 53):

*With the rapid expansion of Lutheran schools comes the need to rethink and affirm relevant theological foundations. If this is not done, there is the danger that expediency and tradition will determine practice, rather than purposeful theological thinking.*

## Doing theology in the school context

If theology is to provide the foundation for Lutheran schooling, then the process of ‘doing theology in the Lutheran school’ is fundamental to maintaining an authentic approach to Lutheran schooling. For this to happen, there must be a continuing dialogue between theology and education. On the one hand, there are theological insights which need to be examined in the light of other areas of human thought and investigation such as philosophy, psychology, sociology, history, and anthropology in order to develop a coherent and relevant theoretical framework for Lutheran schooling. On the other hand, theologising about education will emerge from within the experience of the Lutheran school and its related congregations. This dialogue provides the theological and educational presuppositions for the nature and purpose of Lutheran school education.

### **The role of reason**

Although the starting point and ultimate authority for approaching Lutheran schooling is theological, reason [that is, the application of

rational thinking to insights gained from areas such as philosophy, psychology, educational theory, pedagogy, ethics and social and cultural perspectives] is also recognised as crucial in developing such an approach. As will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, reason is seen as a good and necessary gift of God to be used in exploring God's creation and in exercising stewardship of it. This is despite the fact that because of sin we have to acknowledge that reason is limited and that we cannot know the truth entirely, that our eyes are blinded by sin, that our understanding of God and his creation and ourselves is only ever partial. However, reason helps us to interpret God's revelation as we 'do theology'. The insights of reason and the insights from revelation need to be seen in close relationship to each other in exploring issues related to education. We need to become involved in a dialogue between theology and education.

### **Theology and education in dialogue**

If a real dialogue is to be set up between theology and education as a basis for Lutheran schooling, then it is crucial that both theology and education are open to each other, are listening to the issues raised by the other, and are responding to each other from their own areas of insight. In engaging in this conversation, both theology and education need to ensure that they do not become defensive or closed. Lutheran theology creates space in which dialogue can occur by recognising the roles in the discussion of both human reason and God's revelation, and by discriminating between the two ways in which God works in the world in respect to education, as God works with law and gospel. Lutheran theology affirms the use of human reason and research in its discussion with education while at the same time maintaining the distinctive authority of particular insights which come to the dialogue from revelation through God's word in the Bible. As this dialogue proceeds, both theology and education are challenged to remain open to the questions raised by the other, and to evaluate the insights presented by the other, while seeking to retain what is significant from past dialogues.

### **Theology engaging with education**

In engaging with education, theology is challenged by the insights and issues presented by education. As educators grapple with questions

such as the nature of human beings [anthropology], the nature of truth [epistemology], the relationship between science and religion, appropriate approaches to behaviour management, new approaches to pedagogy and similar issues, theology is challenged to engage in dialogue with education. If theology is to be relevant to educational concerns, then it needs to interact with education and respond to the questions which education poses. In this way new insights into theology can be acquired.

If theology is going to engage in this dialogue with education, then theology needs to be expressed in such a way that it can be understood and explored by educators. There are biblical insights and concepts which are fundamental to any approach to education which proceeds from a scriptural base. While from a Christian perspective these theological truths cannot change because they are based on the revelation of God through God's word in the Bible, the formulation of these theological expressions must communicate with the present educational scenario. This may mean taking well-used theological concepts, words and phrases, some of which may presently be appreciated as little more than rhetoric, and expressing them in terminology and images which may be more immediately accessible to current students, parents and teachers. It may also require the abandoning of some of the classical, technical language of theology and engaging in a demanding and possibly hazardous activity of restating theological truths in new forms of language, images, phrases and symbols which are more accessible to the educational community. Even if there may be a danger of being misunderstood in such an activity, language which is misunderstood will still promote dialogue whereas dialogue will soon grind to a halt if theological concepts are not understood at all and the language and terminology used becomes a barrier to communication.

Carl Braaten argues as follows (1-2)

*Christian theology is always a human attempt to understand the Christian faith in light of our knowledge of its historical origins and the challenges of the contemporary period ... The old content of faith – the same yesterday, today, and forevermore – is always received under the conditions of a new context of life; both content and context are taken up into the process of theological reflection.*

However, theology must be careful not to claim particular insights relating to education where these have not been given through God's revelation or are not consistent with that revelation. While the Bible provides many important insights relating to education, it is not a textbook of education.

Theology can also assist education to see itself as part of God's continuing creation in the world and as one of God's good gifts for all people whether or not they respond in faith to God.

### **Education engaging with Lutheran theology**

On the other hand, as education engages with theology, it must ensure that it is open sufficiently to hearing the questions addressed to it by theology. Theology needs to be analysing, interpreting and responding to issues which arise in the current educational scene. Theology has critical questions to address to education, and in a pluralist society, this is also valid from within a particular theological tradition such as the Lutheran tradition. This leads to the process of 'doing theology' as it relates to education, allowing people to reflect about their professional work in the light of theology. In doing this educators need to develop confidence in engaging with theology and sufficient time needs to be provided for this dialogue to develop.

As education seeks to come to terms with its current context, theology provides important insights for educational issues such as understanding the human individual, epistemology, methodology, pedagogy, curriculum content and behaviour management. Theology attempts to show the limits of human reason so that reason remains true to God's revelation and is bound by that revelation while at the same time being free to explore fully and creatively within the freedom provided by that revelation. Theology needs to examine the rhetoric of education and to challenge educational concepts and ideas to ensure that theological insights are included in educational discussion and that decisions in relation to Lutheran schooling are therefore made with adequate theological reflection.

---

*As the dialogue of theology and education proceeds in a Lutheran school, both theology and education need to address how the dialogue relates to the practical day-to-day life of the school.*

*Questions such as, ‘What does this look like in the Lutheran school classroom?’ and ‘What does this mean for the student, the teacher, the principal, the parents, the Lutheran school community and the community as a whole?’ need to be considered. Both the education and the theology have their input into what happens in practice in the school.*

---

The aim of the rest of this book is to examine what this dialogue between theology and education means. How do we access God’s revelation and how can we try to understand what God is saying to us about the vision and purpose for Lutheran schools? What insights does God’s revelation provide not only for understanding the education process but also for the day to day operation and routines in Lutheran schools? It requires a process of unpacking, exploring or unfolding the core of Lutheran schooling to determine what holds it all together and how Lutheran schooling is ‘done’ in the light of God’s revelation.

After teaching the people and his disciples using parables, Jesus concluded with this short picture (Mt 13:52): ‘Every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like the master of a household who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’ This is the process of doing theology in the Lutheran school: bringing out into the light new insights for the school situation together with those valuable and core insights from the past which together provide the theological and educational framework for an authentic Lutheran school.

# CHAPTER 1

## A God who speaks and acts

---

### Looking for god

By nature human beings look for 'god'. They may not know exactly for what they are searching, but it is something in which they find 'identity, meaning and security' (Kolb: 8). Individuals need someone or something on which they can rely and in which they can trust. In an individualistic, materialistic world, many people find their 'god' in their possessions or their power and influence, or ultimately in themselves. Others look to various powers and influences outside of themselves in nature or in various forms of religion. Martin Luther in his explanation of the first commandment emphasises this aspect of trust (LC 1,2; Kolb and Wengert: 386):

*A "god" is the term for that to which we look for all good and in which we are to find refuge in all need. Therefore, to have a god is nothing else than to trust and believe in that one with your whole heart. As I have often said, it is the trust and the faith of the heart alone that make both God and an idol. If your faith and trust are right, then your God is the true one. Conversely, where your trust is false and wrong, there you do not have the true God. For these two belong together, faith and God. Anything on which your heart relies and depends, I say, that is really your God.*

While there are certainly more and more individuals who deny that they need a god and that the material world is all that exists, many people may look for a 'god' by trying to see god in various ways which are characterised as 'natural revelation'. They are searching for something outside of themselves. For example, some people respond to the beauty of nature and the complexities of creation by suggesting that there must



be a creator or designer behind the created world, and that creation is moving towards some predetermined goal [the so-called ‘cosmological proof’ and ‘teleological proof’ for god and current interest in ‘intelligent design’]. However, when tsunamis, earthquakes, floods and fires destroy nature, people question the existence of god or see their god as capricious or vindictive. Other people may argue that god’s direction can be seen in history [particularly in the history of their own particular nation or group], or that there must be a god because human beings operate with a conscience and a sense of morality which must come from outside of themselves. There is also the so-called ‘ontological proof’ for god which argues that it is simply logical or reasonable to have a god because there must be someone or something which is greater than everything else that exists. This being is much superior and more powerful than human beings and has an impact on their lives that can engender a feeling of awe and wonder, creating a response of worship or respect.

While these attempts to ‘find god’ do provide people with something or somebody in which they can find a sense of ‘identity, meaning and security’ in which they can trust, and which gives them a sense of wonder and awe, life experiences show that these approaches are unsatisfactory and often very disappointing. Individuals may catch ‘glimpses’ of God but it is one of confusion and ambiguity and a construction of their own making. However, even though human beings may wish to go their own way and be masters of their own life and fate, they do not seem to be able to do without God. St Augustine expressed this deep human desire for God in his famous prayer: ‘You have made us for yourself, Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.’

## A God who finds us

In the Book of Acts (Acts 17:16-34) we see a fascinating account of St Paul in Athens. Here Paul was in a culture which had a pantheon of gods. But in spite of this multiplicity and complexity of gods, there was in the city an altar ‘to an unknown god’ (Acts 17:23). The Athenians were not confident that they had all bases covered and that there might still be another more powerful or important god who could not be overlooked or ignored or who might prove to be helpful in particular circumstances or situations. This provided Paul with the starting point to proclaim to the Athenian philosophers the God who was not the result of human

thinking and searching, but the God who reveals himself in speaking and acting. This God has not left individuals to work out for themselves who God is, how God feels about them, what God has done for them and what God expects from them in return. God has spoken, and continues to speak to them individually and as community, revealing himself to them. This is a God who finds us. He is a God who makes himself known through his self-revelation so that he can have a relationship with us and we can have fellowship with him. As Jesus taught in the parable of the lost sheep (Lk 15:3-7), it is God who looks for those who are not in relationship with him, and seeks them until he finds them and by his grace restores that relationship.

In contrast to ‘general’ or ‘natural revelation’ which we considered above as the way in which people try to find God by themselves, God reveals himself through his ‘special’ or ‘specific’ revelation, particularly through his words and actions. While some people may come to the conclusion through their own searching *that* God exists, they cannot come to a conclusion about *who* God is and *how* God relates to human beings. Only through God’s speaking and acting can we come to know that. Only God’s special revelation in Jesus Christ can reveal a God of grace who is loving, kind, merciful and forgiving. Without this special revelation in Jesus Christ, Martin Luther speaks about God as ‘the hidden God’ [*deus absconditus*] who works within creation but who is not fully revealed in that creation: the true nature of God as a loving and forgiving God can be seen only in God’s human face in the person of Jesus Christ (Braaten: 90).

Once people come to know God through his revelation of himself, then those traces and indications of God in nature, history, through our reason and emotions, take on a different perspective. This becomes a seeing in faith such as we see when the psalmist sings (Ps 19:1): ‘The heavens are telling the glory of God; and the firmament proclaims his handiwork.’

## A God who speaks and acts

Christians experience God as the one who speaks and acts. God isn’t the result of their thinking or speculation, but God reveals himself in his word and in his work. God is not an impersonal divine force but reveals himself as ‘person’ with whom we have a relationship. As will

be discussed more fully later, Christians recognise this revelation as the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives, bringing them into a faith relationship with God through what God reveals to them as God speaks and acts, and through what God does in their lives.

God began this speaking and acting by speaking creation into existence. God spoke, and it happened (Gen 1). God's word does what it says. It does not return to God empty; it achieves the purpose for which God sent it (Is 55:11). God's word is 'performative' [it makes happen what it says].

God began a relationship with human beings when he called them into being and took care of them. God began 'his story', a history which is also part of our history. Christians see the story of God with his people as their own story. Through the Old Testament people of God and into the New Testament, God is speaking and acting, working out his plan of salvation despite all of the changes and hindrances along the way. The call of Abraham, the rescue from slavery in Egypt, the entry into the Promised Land and the problems with the inhabitants, the readiness of the people of God to turn their backs on God and go their own way, the problems with good and bad kings and exile in foreign lands, were just part of this history which finally finds its centre in the coming of Jesus Christ. As the opening words of the Book of Hebrews remind us (Heb 1:1-3):

*Long ago God spoke to our ancestors in many and various ways by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom he also created the worlds. He is the reflection of God's glory and the exact imprint of God's very being, and he sustains all things by his powerful word.*

Through his teaching and preaching, his miracles, and as he lived and worked together with his disciples, Jesus Christ continued to reveal God through his speaking and acting. But most powerfully, clearly and profoundly Jesus Christ revealed God in his suffering, death and resurrection.

Christians recognise that, through God-given faith, God speaks and works in the life of each believer. For many Christians this relationship begins as God incorporates the individual into his family in baptism.

As we continue to explore how God has revealed himself through his speaking and acting, two things are evident. Firstly, God continues to show his love and care for his creation and his deep desire for a

relationship with all people based on his grace, mercy and forgiveness in Jesus Christ. There can be no doubt about this. Secondly, however, God remains a mystery whom we cannot fully understand or define even though there is no doubt about his attitude towards us. Even Moses' attempt to learn God's name ends in an enigma. At the burning bush in the desert when Moses asked God for a name he could use when speaking to the people (Ex 3:13-14), 'God said to Moses, "I AM WHO I AM". He said further, "Thus you shall say to the Israelites, 'I AM has sent me to you.'" This 'name' which can also be translated, 'I am what I am', or 'I will be what I will be', does not describe or define God but points to the way God reveals who he is through what he does and what he will do. The human mind cannot fully comprehend God but can see God and learn about him in his actions and in his speaking. We can only speak about God as he has revealed himself to us and as he works on us and in us especially in Jesus Christ.

## God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit – the triune God

Through his revelation, Christians come to know God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit; one God in three persons. This deep mystery of the Christian faith cannot be explained: it can only be believed because of God's revelation of himself and the way in which God works in the world and in human lives as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. On the basis of Scripture (eg Mt 28:18-20; 2 Cor 13:13; Eph 4:4-6), Christians confess God as triune; three in one and one in three. This trinitarian nature of God is summarised in the three creeds which are shared by Christian churches; the Nicene, Apostles and Athanasian Creeds. While the Creeds speak about 'one God', they do not emphasise the unity of God at the expense of the trinitarian nature of God. Nor do they lose the unity of God through an overemphasis on the 'three persons'.

This confession of God is a truth of faith, not a truth of reason. It is a way to speak about the mutual interrelationship, an internal, eternal conversation that exists between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. In representing this mystery of the trinity, the Nicene Creed confesses that:

*We believe in one God, the Father Almighty ... and in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, begotten from the Father before all ages ... and in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-giver, who proceeds from the*

*Father and the Son, and who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified. (Kolb and Wengert: 22-23).*

In exploring the relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the trinity, C S Lewis (147) speaks about the ‘dynamic activity of love [which] has been going on in God forever and has created everything else’. He continues (148), ‘that in Christianity God is not a static thing ... but a dynamic, pulsating activity, a life, almost a kind of drama. Almost ... a kind of dance.’

When God speaks and acts, he draws people into this eternal, dynamic relationship of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Christians not only relate to the three persons of God individually but are caught up within the inter-trinitarian relationship and conversation. While this always remains a mystery, Christians recognise how through the work of the Holy Spirit they come to know Jesus Christ as Son of God and their Lord and saviour, and through the Son they experience the love and forgiveness of the Father. They experience how Jesus continues to be their advocate (1 Jn 2:1) representing them to the Father and continually interceding for them (Heb 7:25), just as the Holy Spirit helps Christians to pray according to the will of God and intercedes for them when they are unsure how to pray or are unable to pray for themselves (Rom 8:26,27).

People have suggested different ways of illustrating the mystery of the trinity: for example, the triangle, the three states of water [water, ice, steam] the clover leaf, electricity which produces light, heat and movement. There are also ways of speaking about the trinity to emphasise different aspects of the work of God such as God over us [the Father], God among us [the Son] and God in us [the Holy Spirit]; God as creator, redeemer, sanctifier; God as creator/preserver, saviour/reconciler, helper/life giver. However, none of these can fully grasp the mystery of the triune God.

Christians recognise that when they speak about God, even if they are referring to work which is related more closely to one of the persons of the trinity, all three persons are involved. This will be examined more fully in later chapters. However, for example, while the work of creation is often associated more closely with God the Father, John 1:10 tells us that ‘the world came into being’ through the Word, Jesus Christ, and in the Nicene Creed we confess that the Holy Spirit is the ‘Lord and Life-giver’.

## **God as 'person'**

Christians believe that God reveals himself as 'person' (Ex 3:14) with whom they have a relationship. He is not just some impersonal divine power or force. God created human beings in order to have a relationship with them. He desires to have this relationship with all people although he does not coerce them into that relationship. Human beings were created as persons in the 'image of God' (Gen 1:27) capable of harmonious interaction with God until the advent of sin. The Bible ascribes to God various attributes which reflect his 'personal nature', such as loving, caring, and forgiving. God speaks to human beings in various ways and interacts with them in justice and mercy.

In Jesus Christ, God enters creation as a human being. Here the personal relationship of God with his people is most clearly demonstrated. This will be explored more fully in chapter 5.

## **God the Father**

'Father' is a name given in revelation for God (Eph 3:14,15). It is not just a metaphor or image to describe God. We should not attempt to understand the fatherhood of God by analogy with an earthly father; bad experiences of human fathers [negligence, indifference, abuse, etc] should not be projected onto God but earthly fathers should model themselves on the fatherhood of God.

Some people object to the biblical teaching that God is our Father. They claim that such a name for God is patriarchal and oppressive to women. In Lutheran schools there are a number of students who have not experienced a positive relationship with their father, may have been abused by their father, or may not have experienced a significant male relationship in their lives. This presents a particular challenge in the pastoral care of such students. However, these considerations cannot lead to changing the name of God since to change the name 'Father' is in biblical thinking to change the person of God, because to change a name is to change the person. It is also important to recognise that the God of the Bible is neither male nor female. God has no gender. Both masculine and feminine images are attributed to God who can love and care like a mother. One of the difficulties of the English language is that masculine pronouns [he/him/his] are usually used for God as other options [eg 'Godself'] can become clumsy.

It is important to note that ‘Father’ is the name which Jesus used and which he gave to his followers to use in the Lord’s Prayer (‘Our Father’). To be invited to address God as ‘Father’ is something which God’s Old Testament people did not dare to do since it was far too intimate. And Jesus went even further: he invited believers to use the very personal name ‘Abba’ [‘daddy’] in expressing their relationship to God in prayer through the power of the Holy Spirit (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15b-17a; cf Mk 14:36).

Luther beautifully captured this emphasis on the fatherhood of God in his explanation of the words, ‘Our Father who art in heaven’, in his Small Catechism (Kolb and Wengert: 356):

*With these words God wants to entice us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father.*

### **God the Son**

Jesus Christ did not become the Son of God when he was born a human being. He is the Son of God ‘from eternity’, as is confessed in the Nicene Creed (Kolb and Wengert: 23). That means that there has never been a time when Jesus did not exist as Son of God. He is the second person of the triune God whom John in his gospel identifies as the eternal Word [‘Logos’], who became a human being in Jesus Christ (Jn 1:1-3,14).

God the Father testified that Jesus is the Son of God at the baptism of Jesus (Mt 3:17) and again at his transfiguration (Mt 17:5). When Jesus was challenged in his trial by the high priest, “I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.” Jesus said to him, “You have said so.” (Mt 26:63,64).

When questions arose during the ministry of Jesus about who he was, Jesus asked his disciples at Caesarea Philippi (Mt 16:15-17),

*“But who do you say that I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father in heaven.”*

This question which Jesus addressed to his disciples is the most crucial question for every person. Either Jesus is who he and the Father claim

him to be, or he is a fraud. Christians believe that how this question is answered determines not only how they live in this life, but where they will spend eternity. All of this is explored more fully in chapter 5 where the person and work of Jesus Christ is considered.

### **God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because people often think of the Holy Spirit as ‘spirit’ or ‘power’ or ‘life-giving force’, the Holy Spirit is often referred to as ‘it’ rather than a person with his own identity in the triune God together with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit is often the ‘forgotten’ member of the trinity and has sometimes been referred to as ‘the shy member of the trinity’. This is not because the work of the Holy Spirit is somehow less significant than that of the Father or the Son. The Holy Spirit is centrally involved in all of the mighty works of God [creating, renewing, making holy]. However, much of the work of the Spirit is to point people to Christ as their saviour and to continue the ministry of Christ in the world. In this way the Spirit points away from himself to Jesus and the Father. Jesus emphasised in his discussion with Nicodemus (Jn 3:8) that the work of the Spirit is essential for the Christian but that, like the effect of the wind, the work of the Spirit is seen by its impact and its results in the life of the Christian. All of this is developed more fully in chapter 6.

### **God working through reason: the search for ‘truth’**

Although it has been argued earlier in this chapter that people can come to know God only as God reveals himself as he speaks and acts, we have already seen in the previous chapter that God also operates in his world through the gift of reason. Although the advent of sin means that the gift of reason has been distorted, nevertheless it is still one of the great gifts God has given to human beings and one which plays an essential role in education.

#### **The gift of reason**

Reason is a good and necessary gift of God which has been given to human beings to explore God’s creation and to exercise stewardship of it. Human beings have been given the responsibility to understand creation, to use it wisely and take care of it (Gen 1:26; 2:15). This means



that all aspects of creation are open to exploration by human beings. Through reason people have developed cultures, literature, science, the arts, laws, and other examples of human inventiveness. Through reason human beings are able to make decisions, to judge situations, to order and administer earthly matters. In these areas, theology acknowledges the validity of reason and recognises it as a gift of God.

---

*All of this is important as we consider the content of the curriculum in Lutheran schools. Lutheran schools must make use of the best avenues to provide as broad an introduction as possible into those areas of human thinking which are the product of the valid use of human reason. An economic rationalist approach to education (utilitarianism) which sees education primarily as a means to paid employment can, for example, introduce a narrow focus in the curriculum at an early stage and deprive children of experiencing the breadth of human exploration and thinking. Perhaps we need to hear again Luther's challenge:*

*“Now if ... there were no souls, and there were no need at all of schools and languages for the sake of the Scriptures and of God, this one consideration alone would be sufficient to justify the establishment everywhere of the very best schools for both boys and girls, namely, that in order to maintain its temporal estate outwardly the world must have good and capable men and women. ... Now such men must come from our boys, and such women from our girls. Therefore, it is a matter of properly educating and training our boys and girls to that end. ...*

*Now since the young must always be hopping and skipping, or at least doing something that they enjoy ... why then should we not set up such schools for them and introduce them to such studies? By the grace of God it is now possible for children to study with pleasure and in play languages, or other arts, or history. ... For my part, if I had children and could manage it, I would have them study not only languages and history, but also singing and music together with the whole of mathematics. For what is all this but mere child's play?” (LW 45: 368-370)*

*Lutheran schools have to ensure that they do not try to make the Bible a textbook in areas which lie outside of its area of authority. The Bible cannot be used to try to determine matters of biology, history or science. These are the legitimate areas of reason. While there may be valid insights, for example, for the understanding of history in the writings of the Bible, these insights are also subject to the judgement of reason.*

---

The gift of reason plays another important role. For Christians involved in ‘doing theology’, reason aids in examining the structure of theology and in understanding and explaining the teachings of Scripture (Schwarz: 52). However, reason cannot determine the content of faith. The content of faith is based on revelation.

### **The limitation of reason**

As has been indicated earlier, God’s good gift of reason has been distorted by the advent of sin. This places important limitations on the role of reason (Schwarz: 50-52). There are areas in which reason may ask questions, but cannot provide the answers. While reason may, for example, legitimately ask questions about the origin of the universe and the beginning of life, it cannot go beyond that knowledge and understanding to determine the role of God in creation or history. If scientists or historians wish to make statements in these areas, they are moving from the area of reason and understanding to the area of faith. Reason must leave open questions which lie beyond its limitations.

Reason limited by sin can lead to other problems as human beings live in society. While people can make good use of reason in everyday life, they can also use reason for their own sinful ends. Trusting in their own abilities and accomplishments, they can boast in their achievements and take advantage of those whom they should be serving. Christians are certainly not free from this temptation.

Reason may lead people to trust so fully in their rational explanation for all things that they eliminate totally the place of God. It is only as the Holy Spirit leads an individual beyond this trust in their reason into the recognition that reason is limited, that faith in God is possible.

### **Truth: the dynamic relationship of reason and revelation**

Lutheran schools are concerned with a search for truth through an educational program of excellence. Epistemology is a critical area for education. In spite of a tendency in recent approaches such as postmodernism to suggest that all truth is relative and personal, educators in Lutheran schools recognise that there is truth which is absolute and that the search for truth is crucial for the process of education and has a vital impact on pedagogy. Education in the Lutheran school context involves both revelation and reason and both play their respective roles in the dynamic dialogue between them.

It is recognised that, despite the objections raised in some educational circles that the search for truth cannot involve revelation since accepting revelation presupposes a faith context, education always happens in a faith context, even if that context is faith in reason alone.

The search for truth in the Lutheran school context begins with revelation in the absolute claim of Jesus Christ, 'I am the truth' (Jn 14:6). Here is truth which makes a special claim on individuals because this truth is a person, Jesus Christ. And this truth involves believers in a relationship with him through which they learn the truth about God, the truth about themselves, and the truth about the world. Jesus promised, 'When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth' (Jn 16:13). This truth reveals who God is, who we are, who God is, how we relate to God, to ourselves, to our world, and to others.

Jesus also told his disciples, 'You will know the truth and the truth will set you free' (Jn 8:32). Once individuals know whose they are and how they relate to God, they are free to be who they are, the redeemed people of God. They no longer need to construct their own reality, they are free from illusion, fantasy, lies and distortion, they are free to encounter truth and reality outside of themselves. They are free for relationship with God and the world, free to be the persons God created them to be, serving with the gifts and abilities God has given to them, free to be 'incarnations' of God's grace for those in their communities.

This truth in revelation never misleads individuals as to their relationship with God. But as we seek to understand this revelation, we make use of the gift of reason God has given to us.

As indicated in the previous section, that although we recognise reason as one of God's good gifts to us we know that because of sin we are forced to acknowledge that reason is limited and that we cannot know the truth entirely, that our eyes are blinded by sin, that our understanding of God and his creation and ourselves is only ever partial. However, that does not negate God's truth nor the recognition of Christ who is himself the truth.

---

*What does the use of reason mean in the search for truth through the program of education in Lutheran schools? It means that once we recognise God's truth we are free to examine all other truth claims recognising that they are truth claims which are continually under review. For example in science we recognise provisional truth based on a method which looks for evidence which modifies or even refutes the current theory. We recognise the different approaches to truth in the various disciplines we teach, such as literature, history, biology, music, physical education, art, languages, and so on. However, in doing this, it is important that we guard against a tendency in some situations to make the Bible into a textbook in areas outside of its authority.*

*Lutheran schools are therefore involved in maintaining the dynamic balance between the affirmation of the truth and academic freedom and open inquiry, between confidence in Lutheran identity and being open to religious diversity, academic integrity and religious freedom. Open inquiry is both a privilege and a mandate – any new truth discovered is yet another truth about what God has done.*

*This search for truth in the dynamic relationship between revelation and reason also provides the opportunity for students in Lutheran schools to begin to develop a Christian world view; a set of assumptions and presuppositions about the nature of reality. This world view seeks to integrate what is learned through revelation and that which is learned through reason, drawing on relevant insights from various sources, including other cultures, faiths and world views. It provides a holistic view of the world when the norm in society is often fragmentation. It is supported by a pedagogy which critiques what is current but is able to open up what is possible*

*to show not only what society is, but also what it might become. A Christian world view can create a vision of hope, recognising that ‘in Christ all things hold together’ (Col 1:17). It is continually developing and expanding as it relates to new experiences and insights, providing the basis and motivation for living. Through the Lutheran school even those who do not identify with the Christian faith can experience a consistent Christian world view which they can reject but which may open them up to the work of the Holy Spirit to bring them to faith.*

---

## Wisdom

While an examination of reason and truth leads to important insights in the area of education, the Bible provides an even more profound perspective. This is contained in the so-called ‘wisdom literature’ of the Bible, especially in the books of Proverbs, Job, Ecclesiastes, and Psalms. In these texts the most consciously educational material in the Bible is found. It helps to answer the question posed by Job (28:12): ‘But where shall wisdom be found? And where is the place of understanding?’

### **Wisdom has its origin in God**

Even though Scripture recognises that human reason can achieve great things, Proverbs (9:10) clearly reminds its readers: ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight’.

Wisdom seen from its biblical perspective has its origin in God. This is so because it is God who created order out of chaos to bring the world into being and it is God who still sustains that creation. It is God who has provided the framework in which creation operates and God’s plans direct and control that creation.

Obtaining wisdom, becoming wise, begins, then, with the fear of the Lord. Respect for God, confidence in God, worship of God and respectful submission to God are the attitudes which lead to wisdom, because these attitudes enable a person to be in tune with God. This is what Proverbs means by ‘fear of the Lord’. These attitudes create a listening heart, open to God, through which God can provide the insights that lead to wisdom. Only as human beings recognise God’s order in creation and support that order of creation, do they receive

wisdom from God. Knowledge of God, and the knowledge which God gives, provide the context in which wisdom develops: ‘the Lord gives wisdom; and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding’ (Prov 2:6). And only ‘the fool’ claims that there is no God (Ps 14:1; 53:1).

Being wise therefore means to live in harmony with God and God’s creation using that creation as servants of the God of creation. It means fitting into the cosmic order and also into the social orders, such as family, which God has created. Fearing God means placing oneself in reverent humility and trust under the instruction of God and so living under God’s will for creation.

### **Human wisdom always remains only partial**

This attitude to God’s creation means, as we have already seen, that no matter how much information we may accumulate about the world, no matter how confident we may be of our understanding of the nature of creation, our knowledge always remains only partial. Human beings can do no more than merely begin to understand that God’s world is created for a purpose, according to a plan, and that all that happens is related to God’s purposes. Much of God’s intention, however, remains a mystery. This means, on the one hand, that we can enjoy God’s creation, and utilise all human ingenuity and expertise in investigating it, understanding it, explaining it and helping to recognise God’s plan in it. But on the other hand, as we explore creation, we are led to wonder at God’s mystery and respond in praise, wonder and gratitude. The best of human understanding of creation must always remain only partial.

---

*Such a view of reality challenges directly any educational approach which fails to see that truth relating to the created order finally lies outside of human reach. There is a level of mystery which must always be respected, but which must not be equated with ignorance. Lutheran school education can nurture students in a reverent searching for ‘truth’, recognising the interrelatedness of life. Rather than dealing with disconnected data and individual fragments of information, Lutheran school education needs to provide an integrated approach to all subjects. How soon should schools permit students to begin to specialise, leaving behind important areas of knowledge which are necessary to provide a*

*rounded approach to life? God and his underlying wisdom provide the unifying framework of reality that prevents overemphasis on any one section of human knowledge. Here is an important role for the teaching of Christian Studies in Lutheran schools – to help to provide such an integrating framework. Lutheran schools can help students learn to see and learn to wonder and to celebrate. And Lutheran schools can help students develop patience to realise that not everything can be known immediately and that mystery is an essential aspect of reality.*

---

### **Human wisdom develops from the accumulated experience of people**

But even though wisdom has its origin in the fear of the Lord, it is not seen as being restricted to those who believe in God. Wisdom develops out of the accumulation of the experience of all people. It is not an individual possession. In fact, Old Testament wisdom literature draws on insights from the wisdom of other nations such as the Egyptians and the Babylonians. Wisdom grows out of experience of the world and interaction with the created order. The ‘wise person’ does not have to re-invent the wheel but builds on the insights and knowledge of others. Wisdom attempts to provide an understanding of the order, meaning and purpose of experience in the world, and to relate the accumulated experience of the community and the immediate experience of the individual. One generation passes on to the next those things that have been learned through trial and error also in the area of morality and good judgement. There are important implications here for pedagogy, especially as a counter to individualistic approaches.

---

*For Lutheran school education, what does this imply? It means that in spite of the impression often given to the contrary, there is wisdom in the experience of past generations. There is a tradition of experience that the teacher represents with which the student can dialogue in order to examine the student’s immediate experience. It is not only what is new which has relevance. This means a valuing of the past and engaging with the wisdom and experience of all time, as well as a fascination with the present. It suggests the importance for Lutheran schools of the cultural heritage provided*

*by the humanities as well as the discoveries of the sciences and the new developments in technology.*

*There is also the recognition that together, teachers and students continue to interact with creation in order to build on the store of wisdom which has been passed on to this generation. This has important implications for the pedagogy employed in the classroom. It implies both a dynamic investigation of the secrets of creation while at the same time maintaining a patient respect for the truth. Just as a flower opens slowly from its bud to reveal its full beauty, and any attempt to force open the bud destroys the flower, so truth is revealed by careful listening ‘in the fear of the Lord’.*

*In this current era of the rapid explosion of information through various technological means, and the deluge of data to which students can be subjected, Lutheran schools can help students learn to evaluate and filter information in order to assist them to become individuals who are as fully rounded as possible with a coherent framework into which to integrate their life experiences so that they are ready to serve in community and church.*

---

### **Human wisdom, apart from Jesus Christ, is ‘foolishness’**

In spite of the best efforts of the greatest of human minds, the judgement of Ecclesiastes (8:17) is clear: ‘However much they may toil in seeking [wisdom], they will not find it out; even though those who are wise claim to know, they cannot find it out.’ This is because, as we have seen earlier, the impact of sin must be considered. Sin has corrupted all of God’s good creation, including the search for wisdom. The fruit of the tree in the middle of the Garden of Eden was fruit ‘desired to make one wise’ (Gen 3:6). But eating it resulted not in wisdom, but in death. As with everything else ruined by human sin, human wisdom has become the opposite of what it should be. Separated from God’s ultimate revelation in Jesus Christ, human wisdom is judged as foolishness. And it is ultimately tragic foolishness because it exchanges God’s revelation of himself for human attempts to reach God (cf Rom 1-2). Human wisdom may help to provide some insights into the human condition, but it cannot provide a solution to the basic problem of human beings of a broken relationship with God because of sin.



God's wisdom is revealed in Jesus Christ who reveals himself, as will be developed more fully later in the discussion of 'theology of the cross', in suffering and service. 'The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mt 20:28). But Jesus Christ is also 'the truth' (Jn 14:6). In Jesus Christ we see God as he has revealed himself, ourselves as we are, and the world as God would have it to be.

---

*Frequently Lutheran schools characterise themselves as 'Christ-centred'. But that can mean many different things. At worst, it may simply suggest that Jesus Christ provides some sort of veneer of respectability or morality for the school. Jesus Christ stands at the centre of the school as no more than an example to follow. But if a Lutheran school education is to help its students develop an integrated world-view with its origin in the fear of the Lord, then it has to challenge a number of presuppositions of current education. It has to present anthropology different from that of secular humanism which has been the basis of so much educational theory. It has to find a way of demonstrating the 'mind of Christ' (Phil 2:1-11) which is shown in servant-hood and which opposes the motivation of success, competition and individualism which permeates so much of current education. Lutheran schools need to develop methodologies of cooperation, collaboration and mutual support which challenge students to use their God-given gifts and abilities as fully as possible in the service of school, church and community. This aspect will be developed further in relation to theology of vocation [chapter 3] and theology of the cross [chapter 5].*

---

### **True wisdom is revealed through the work of the Holy Spirit**

Wisdom which has God as its origin and which recognises Jesus Christ as God's true wisdom is not a wisdom which comes through human discovery and insight, but wisdom which comes through revelation. Human wisdom may stand in the service of the Holy Spirit, but true wisdom is revealed by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:6-16).

Through the work of the Holy Spirit, Christians can begin to comprehend the wisdom of God, as shown in God's dealings with his

people through history, but particularly as revealed in the cross of Jesus Christ. Through the Spirit, the gift of faith which rests ‘not on human wisdom but on the power of God’ (1 Cor 2:5) is received. Through faith believers begin to gain some understanding of God’s wisdom contained in his secret plan (Eph 1) for the salvation of the world. As the Spirit reveals Christ, Christ reveals the Father.

---

*This means that Lutheran school education grows out of the work of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace – through word and sacrament. Only in this way will students and staff be able to get beyond examination of human wisdom and share in the wisdom of God which leads to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ (2 Tim 3:15). And having come to faith through the work of the Holy Spirit, students and staff can live as ‘imitators of God’ (Eph 5:1), walking as ‘wise’ (5:15), rather than as ‘foolish’ (5:17), understanding ‘the will of God’ (5:17). Being ‘filled with the Spirit’ (5:18) they can then ‘be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ’ (5:21), ‘giving thanks to God the Father at all times and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ’ (5:20).*

*St James characterises this wisdom as follows (Jas 3:17-18):*

*“The wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without a trace of partiality or hypocrisy. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace for those who make peace.”*

---



# CHAPTER 2

## Word of God: living, active and creative

---

### Word of God: living, active and creative

The Christian God is a God who speaks and acts. The way he speaks and acts is through his word. People often think first of the Bible when they hear the term ‘word of God’, and so the word of God for them is the written text which gives information about God. This written text in the Bible is, of course, essential for Christians. However, in the first instance, the ‘word of God’ is God’s communication with people through what he says and what he does. It is the way in which the triune God draws people into the eternal conversation between Father, Son and Holy Spirit within the trinity, and communicates his love and care for them. Through the ‘word of God’, God graciously interacts with human beings, revealing himself so that they can honour, love and trust him as their God.

The word of God is dynamic. It is living, active and creative. God speaks, and things happen. Isaiah puts it this way (55:10-11):

*For as the rain and snow come down from heaven,  
and do not return there until they have watered the earth,  
making it bring forth and sprout,  
giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater,  
so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth;  
it shall not return to me empty,  
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose,  
and succeed in the thing for which I sent it.*

God’s living, active and creative word was clearly there at the beginning of creation. God spoke the world into being. ‘God said, “Let there be

light”; and there was light’ (Gen 1:3). God’s word has the power to do what it says; it is ‘performative’, making happen what God says. The history of God with his people in the Old Testament repeatedly shows the effect of God’s word as he deals with his people and the nations around them.

God’s living, active and creative word came to full disclosure in the incarnate, living Word, Jesus Christ (Jn 1:14). Through Jesus ‘the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them’ (Lk 7:22). Through his life, death and resurrection, the forgiveness of God is declared to believers and they receive the gift of eternal life. And through the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit, God’s word continues to work in the life of people, bringing them to faith and then building them up in that faith.

God’s word continues in our context as living, active and creative word. It is not only to be read and studied: it is to be proclaimed as good news to all creation (Mk 16:15; Mt 28:19-20; Acts 1:8). Jesus’ promise accompanies his commission: ‘Whoever listens to you listens to me’ (Lk 10:16). The Holy Spirit does his work through that word: the Spirit gives the word its power so that the gospel is ‘the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith’ (Rom 1:16).

God’s word is a living word since it is contemporary and speaks to all people today as it has spoken to, and been contemporary for all people throughout history. God’s word draws the past and also the future into the present. ‘Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever’ (Heb 13:8). While the message of forgiveness through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ remains the same, the word needs to be reinterpreted and reapplied to address a variety of conditions and specific cultures. This is the challenge in Lutheran schools as they bring the students and the word of God together so that through the word the Holy Spirit can do the Spirit’s work.

## ‘Word of God’

As is apparent in what has already been said, the term ‘Word of God’ can refer to different things both in the Bible itself and in theological writings. It is therefore necessary to distinguish how the term is being used and understood.

- In the first instance, and most importantly, the word of God refers to Jesus Christ, the living Word, who became a human being (Jn 1:14). In Jesus Christ, God has made known his will, purpose and nature. Although God has spoken ‘in many and various ways’ (Heb 1:1) throughout history through various people and situations, his final and definitive revelation is in Jesus Christ (Heb 1:2-3). He is the culmination of God’s revelation.
- Secondly, ‘word of God’ refers to the written word of the Old and New Testaments. This written word bears witness to Jesus Christ, who is the living and incarnate word (Jn 5:39) and the centre of Scripture. [Often in this usage, ‘word of God’ is simply equated with ‘the Bible’. However, the written word of God is also designated ‘the Scriptures’ or ‘Scripture’ in order to avoid confusion with the broader use of ‘word of God’.]
- ‘Word of God’ also refers to the gospel of Christ, the message about what God has done in and through the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our salvation. This form of God’s word is the living voice of the gospel through the proclaimed [preached] word, the spoken word, the word of Christian witness, the word of forgiveness [absolution], the word of comfort and care in the name of Jesus.

The ‘word of God’ comes to us in our situation in three basic forms:

- through the written word in the Bible [Scriptures]
- through the proclaimed word, as God’s word is preached and people witness to one another.

Luther speaks in this regard that ‘God is extravagantly rich in his grace: first through the spoken word, in which forgiveness of sins is preached to the whole world (which is the proper function of the gospel); ... through the power of the keys [confession and absolution] and also through the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters’ (SA 3,4; Kolb and Wengert: 319).

In the first generation of the church, Jesus’ followers [apostles, evangelists, prophets] proclaimed the word of God as they had learnt it from Jesus and as they were led by ‘the Spirit of truth’ (Jn 14:26; 16:13). Today this proclaimed word is based on the written word and on the witness of believers as the Holy Spirit continues to work through that word.

- through the sacramental word, as the word of God is combined with the physical elements in the sacraments. For Lutherans these are the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper [see chapter 6].

---

*Within the Lutheran school, the Word of God will be spoken in many different ways. An obvious one is the use of the Bible in worship, devotional activities, Christian Studies lessons and public functions such as beginning of school year celebrations and valedictory services. It is important that students are introduced to the actual text of the Bible so that they become familiar with it and do not simply learn about it.*

*Biblical material will be important in pastoral care and counselling, restorative justice practices, confession and absolution, and other issues in the school relating to interpersonal relationships. However, sensitivity to the faith of individuals will be important here. Christian staff and students will also 'speak' through their actions based on their Christian faith. Actions can sometimes speak much louder than words! However, as Peter writes to Christians in the early Church, Christians also need to be ready to give an account of the hope which they have with gentleness and reverence (1Pet 3:15-16).*

---

## The written word of God

So that we have a record of what God has revealed through his history with his people, through the prophets of the Old Testament and the writers of the New Testament, and particularly through Jesus Christ as God's clearest revelation of his love and grace, God has provided his written word in the Bible ['the Scriptures']. The Bible is a collection of literary documents, poetry, hymns, historical documents, letters, etc which are accepted by Christians as the written word of God, written in human words by human beings.

## The Bible is fully divine and fully human

Christians believe that just as Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine, so the Bible is both fully human and fully divine. It is a human writing because God used people to write it down and the personality and style of each writer is apparent [for example, the language, literary methods, knowledge of nature, history, science and philosophy]. Significant sections of the Bible existed initially as oral tradition, passed on from generation to generation orally. In reading the Bible, readers need to be conscious of this human dimension. In this respect, the Bible is different from some other sacred scriptures, for example the Koran which Muslims believe is purely divine, or the Book of Mormon which Mormons believe 'fell from heaven'.

However, Christians believe that the Bible is fully divine as God is its author and the various writers were 'inspired' by the Holy Spirit (2 Tim 3:16; 2 Pet 1:21). This is why the Bible is seen as a dynamic, living book through which God continues to address those who hear it or read it. How the Holy Spirit 'inspired' the writers is not explained. Just as Jesus Christ is both fully human and fully divine, so too the Bible is human and divine in all its parts. This cannot be explained rationally, but is accepted by Christians in faith and as they experience the impact of the Bible in their own faith and life.

### **The authority of the Bible**

Christians accept the authority of the Bible, but they may understand this in very different ways.

Some Christians believe that the Bible is 'true' in all details because God is the author. They believe that the words themselves are divine [some would even say they are 'dictated' by God] and that therefore the Bible is true in every detail – also scientifically, historically, geologically, etc. In an extreme form, this view of the Bible can obscure the message of the Bible through its concern for the fundamental accuracy of every word of the text. Some Christians may teach that the Bible is the only source of God's word and is therefore the centre of faith and that there is no 'word of God' outside of the Bible.

Some Christians believe that the Bible simply 'contains' the word of God and that there are parts of the Bible which are not really God's word for



them and can therefore be ignored. They can determine for themselves what really is God's word. This can help them to deal with passages which they find difficult to understand or accept. Some people may see may view the Bible as primarily an historical document and do not accept the authority of the Bible as a whole. Some Pentecostal groups see the Bible as being potentially God's word: only if the Holy Spirit breathes life into it does the Bible become more than lifeless words.

Because the Bible is word of God, it is true, and is the ultimate authority for what Christians believe and teach and how they should live. The Lutheran Confessions state 'that God's Word alone ought to be and remain the only guiding principle and rule of all teaching and that no person's writing can be put on a par with it, but that everything must be totally subject to God's Word' (SD 9; Kolb and Wengert: 528-529). Luther said: 'the Word of God - and no one else, not even an angel - should establish articles of faith' (SA II,15; Kolb and Wengert: 304).

---

*'A Framework for Lutheran Schools' states that Lutheran schools believe that 'the Bible is the supreme authority for Christian faith and life' and that Lutheran schools value as core 'the Bible as the authority informing what we do and teach'.*

*It is important, however, to recognise that this authority relates in the first instance to God's revelation of grace in the plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. This authority guides Christian faith and life through the work of the Holy Spirit. While the Bible will be a crucial guide for what we do and teach in Lutheran schools, it cannot be seen as the final authority in many aspects of educational decision making and planning. That is not the purpose for which God has given his word to us.*

---

### **Jesus Christ is the centre of the Bible**

Lutherans hold to the view that just as Jesus Christ is the centre of God's revelation of himself to human beings, so the centre of the Bible is Jesus Christ. The Bible is *Christocentric*. The Bible is, therefore, God's word 'as a whole and in all its parts' (LCA Constitution II.1) through which God speaks particularly through Jesus Christ. Jesus challenged his hearers to recognise that the Scriptures testify to him (Jn 5:39). In Luke

24:13-27, Jesus carefully interpreted the Scriptures to the two disciples on their way to Emmaus showing how the Scriptures point to him as the one who fulfils those Scriptures. Although Jesus was speaking here about the Old Testament writings, his words apply equally to the New Testament which reveals Jesus and his work of salvation fully.

Martin Luther continually stressed that if Scripture is not seen in the light of Christ, then the Bible becomes just an ordinary book and its teachings will be misinterpreted. This view of the Bible emphasises the dynamic nature of the word of God through which God can bring people to faith and through which God addresses the individual believer in terms of law and gospel.

However, the history of the Lutheran Church of Australia has seen considerable debate as to how to understand the authority of the Bible, and this debate continues to surface from time to time. Two positions have been defined and are sometimes seen in conflict with each other. These are:

1. The 'formal principle': this sees the authority of Scripture based on its divine authorship – it is divinely inspired and its ultimate author is God.
2. The 'material principle': this sees the authority of Scripture based on the fact that it testifies to Christ, the Lord of Scripture – Christ is the one who speaks through Scripture.

These two principles should not be played off against each other. To stress only the 'formal principle' ends in fundamentalism where the Bible is put above Christ. To stress only the 'material principle' ends in liberalism, where Christ is played off against the Bible, and then passages not speaking directly about Christ are ignored. This can lead to some people arguing that the law of God no longer has any relevance for them as Christians.

In Lutheran theology, following Luther, major emphasis is given to the material principle, so that in the final analysis the authority of Scripture is to be found in Christ, to whom it testifies (Jn 5:39). In other words, Scripture's ultimate authority is located in its gospel content. Luther taught believers to look for Christ wrapped in the swaddling cloths of the Old Testament, for he is already present there in veiled form, for the Old Testament contains nothing else than Christ as he is preached in the gospel.

### **The Bible is inspired**

The Bible is the inspired ('God-breathed') word of God (2 Tim 3:16). The Scriptures are Spirit-filled and breathe the Holy Spirit as they testify to Jesus Christ (Jn 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-14). Human beings spoke and wrote as they were moved to do so by the Holy Spirit. This is a statement of faith which is simply assumed in the Bible (2 Pet 1:21) without any further explanation. It is pointless to speculate on how this inspiration occurred, just as it is futile to try to demonstrate the 'truth' of the Bible by historical or rational means.

Christians also believe that it was the Holy Spirit who guided the selection of the writings which make up Scripture (the 'canon' of Scripture) to the exclusion of other contemporary writings. The 'canon of Scripture' consists of those inspired books which, by consensus, the early church identified as authoritative.

- The determination of the Old Testament canon probably began after the exile and was finally settled by the second century AD. There were differences in the Hebrew and Greek versions. The Greek translation [known as the 'Septuagint'] was probably made during the last two centuries before the birth of Christ and contained additional books which are commonly referred to now as the 'Apocrypha'. There are also some other variations between the Greek and the Hebrew versions. The New Testament writers seem to have quoted from both the Hebrew and Greek versions. Both versions were used in the early church but at the time of the Reformation the reformers rejected the Apocrypha whereas the Roman Catholic Church retained it. The apocryphal books of the Old Testament are still retained in Roman Catholic Bibles today.
- The New Testament canon was not settled until the end of the fourth century. The 4 gospels and the 13 epistles attributed to Paul were accepted by the middle of the second century. Doubts were expressed about the books of Hebrews, James, Jude, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John and Revelation. Other contemporary writings were accepted as canonical by churches in some areas. However, through the guiding of the Holy Spirit, consensus was gained in regard to the New Testament canon.

### **The Bible is infallible**

When Christians say that the Bible is the infallible or inerrant word of God, they are confessing that it is truthful in its content and that it says what God intended it to say. It is completely trustworthy in all matters which relate to a person's salvation. It does not mislead people in their relationship with God. This is a statement of faith: when the Holy Spirit leads a person to faith, he also gives that individual confidence in the Scriptures as God's word.

While Christians believe that the Bible is infallible in relation to all matters of salvation, this does not mean that it is infallible in matters such as history and science. Nor does it mean that there are no inconsistencies or that it is necessary to try to harmonise various accounts which are recorded from different perspectives [for example: the creation stories, or the dating of the crucifixion]. These features are a reminder that God condescended to give his divine words in servant-form by using the weak, frail words of human beings. This is another example of theology of the cross – that God's power is concealed behind human weakness.

### **The purpose of the Scriptures**

In the Bible God makes known his marvellous plan for saving the fallen world ('salvation history'). It provides the story of God's dealings with his people. God called Abraham and gave him the promise that he would be the father of God's chosen people through whom God would bless all people (Gen 17:1-8). God rescued his people Israel from slavery in Egypt and made his gracious covenant with them at Mount Sinai (Ex 20:1-2). Israel was not faithful to God, yet God remained gracious to them and preserved a 'remnant' from whom the promised Savior would come (Is 11:1-9).

God's saving plan reached its climax in the coming to earth of his Son, Jesus Christ, to live, die and rise again as the saviour of all people. Jesus is the focal point of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. The Bible's chief purpose is to lead people to Christ, to give them 'the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith in Christ Jesus' (2 Tim 3:15 TEV). As the Holy Spirit works through the word of God in the Bible, so people are brought to faith and grow in their faith.

*It is important that students in Lutheran schools become familiar with the whole of Scripture. There is a danger that students are introduced only to parts of Scripture (eg the early chapters of Genesis, the stories in the gospels) and that the story of God's dealings with his people in Old Testament times, and the historical and cultural background to the whole Bible is not sufficiently developed. There is a danger that 'salvation history' jumps from creation and fall to the life and death of Jesus Christ, without addressing what happens between these events. The significance of Jesus' life, work, death, and resurrection can be fully understood only against the totality of revelation in the whole of Scripture.*

*While Christian Studies may focus on particular themes or key ideas, and worship may follow its own patterns, students need to be introduced during their time in Lutheran schools to the wonder of God's total plan of salvation. Only when they have some concept of this total plan of salvation can the individual parts be seen in the context of the whole.*

---

## The proclaimed word of God – the living voice of God's word

The word of God is dynamic. It is not only to be read and studied: it is to be proclaimed as good news to all creation (Acts 1:8). This happens through the preaching of God's word, through confession and absolution, through 'mutual conversation and consolation' (SA 3,4: Kolb and Wengert: 319) of Christians with each other as they speak God's word to each other, and through witness to the gospel to those who have not yet come to faith.

It is important, however, to retain the close connection between the written and the proclaimed word of God. The written word remains the ultimate authority for the church in determining doctrine and is the basis for the proclaimed word.

In preaching the word, the preacher relates the written word to people's hearts and lives. Jesus said, 'Whoever listens to you listens to me' (Lk 10:16). One of the main reasons for coming together for worship is to hear God's word read and proclaimed. Lutheran theology stresses the

importance of proclamation in order to emphasise that the church does not assemble around a book but around the proclaimed word of God which is, however, based on, and must be faithful to, the written word of the Bible.

The proclaimed word of God (as with the written word of God) is not simply conveying information. It has power to do what it says, both as law and as gospel (Is 55:11). It is a performative word. As law it confronts the sinner and accuses and judges. As gospel it forgives and frees and rescues believers from the wrath and judgement of God. This is much more than simply speaking about law and gospel: it is proclaiming law and gospel, the living voice of God's word.

God's word is also a living word since it is contemporary and speaks to all people today as it has spoken to, and been contemporary for, all people throughout history. While the message remains the same, the word needs to be reinterpreted and reapplied to address a variety of conditions and specific cultures. The proclaimed word needs to connect with those who hear it through language, concepts, insights and examples which relate to their context.

---

*In proclaiming the word of God in the Lutheran school context there is the challenge to relate the word of God to the various age levels and levels of biblical understanding which may be present in the school. This is particularly the situation in whole school worship. However, care is needed to ensure that biblical language, concepts and images are appropriately handled in any situation, such as classroom worship, so that the participants hear God's word as living and active and addressing their situation.*

---

## The interpretation of God's word

The interpretation of Scripture (called 'hermeneutics') is the process of trying to understand God's word in the Bible and to apply it to the current context. This is not simply an academic exercise. While the Bible can be read simply as literature, trying to interpret the Bible is dealing with the word of God and so is a spiritual exercise. Any study of the Bible in this way should always be accompanied by prayer for

guidance and help from the Holy Spirit who first inspired the text and as the chief interpreter of the Bible, can open up its truth for the reader.

As indicated earlier, the Bible is both human and divine. Because it is a human book, it makes use of various literary forms in order to present God's word to people from differing generations, cultures, historical backgrounds, etc. For example, there are narratives, parables, pictures, visions, poetry and symbols. Some things are meant to be taken literally, other things are obviously figurative. Interpretation of Scripture begins by trying to understand what the text *says* within its historical and cultural context. For this purpose, appropriate techniques and processes of analysis are used. Interpretation then proceeds to try to determine what the text *means* for the current context. This is not always easy.

In the process of interpretation, the Christian interpreter always stands *under* the biblical text, not *over* it. The first step, therefore, is to listen to the text to try to hear what it says and to try to bracket out any preconceived ideas or cultural presuppositions. It is difficult for even the most faithful interpreter to exclude personal agendas, and so 'the whole life of the interpreter of the Scriptures must be a life of repentance' (Kolb: 203).

Since the time of Luther and the reformation, there are a number of principles which are applied to the interpretation of Scripture by Lutheran interpreters.

### **Scripture is clear, sufficient and powerful**

Scripture is clear in its message of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The Bible does not use any secret or mysterious language. However, this does not mean that all passages of Scripture are immediately clear and comprehensible. God's wisdom is 'unsearchable' and his ways are 'inscrutable' (Rom 11:33). Peter complains that some of Paul's writing was 'hard to understand' (2 Pet 3:16). Some passages (for example, in Revelation) will always remain a puzzle. We cannot ever claim mastery over Scripture, but the Holy Spirit always brings to us from Scripture the clear message of all we need to know for our salvation.

Because Scripture tells us all we *need to know* for our salvation (Jn 20:30-31), it is 'sufficient'. The Bible may not tell us all we *want to know*, about God and his creation, but that is not the purpose of Scripture. We have

no need for further writings to supplement the Bible [as for example the Mormons do with the Book of Mormon].

Scripture is powerful (Jer 23:29; Heb 4:12) because it is the living, active and creative word of God. Through it the Holy Spirit brings people to faith and strengthens them in their faith and Christian life.

### **Scripture interprets scripture – the unity of scripture**

A key principle of interpretation is that ‘Scripture interprets Scripture’. The assumption behind this is that, in spite of the rich diversity in scripture, there is an overarching unity of Scripture. A particular passage should not be interpreted in such a way that it is in contradiction with what the Bible teaches as a whole. This means that, viewed from the perspective of faith, there is unity between the Old and New Testaments.

This principle means that where a passage is seen to be obscure, it is understood in the light of clear passages. Clear Scripture is used to help interpret more difficult passages. This leads to the use of study resources such as commentaries, concordances, word studies, parallel passages, and to the working with similes, metaphors or images to help understand particular passages or concepts.

Where there is a passage which is difficult to explain, it is the Lutheran approach not to base a major teaching or practice on the text. While every effort is made to understand what God may be saying to us, this approach frees us from having to try to find an explanation to everything which is said in the Bible.

### **Scripture is ‘christocentric’ (centred on Christ)**

As indicated earlier, since Christ is the centre of Scripture, all passages must finally be interpreted in the light of Christ and the gospel. No interpretation can be in conflict with the gospel. This is central for Lutheran hermeneutics. It guards against Scripture being misunderstood as a book of teachings, wise sayings, or religious knowledge which are unrelated to Christ. While all Scripture is authoritative word of God, not all statements in the Bible are of equal value and importance. For example, while Old Testament dietary laws or family tree details have their place in the total message of the Bible, they do not have the same importance and value for us as does the witness to Jesus’ resurrection. This principal will be examined further when dealing with the central message of God’s word.



### **Scripture is interpreted within the context of the church**

The Bible does not belong to an individual. There is a history of interpretation of the Bible within the Christian church. It is the task of the whole church, through the office of public ministry, to teach people how to read and interpret Scripture. To ignore the tradition of interpretation, places one in danger of ending up in error.

The interpretation of God's word is therefore done within an ecumenical context. This means that no one Christian denomination can claim to have a unique claim on the truth. While different denominations may place an emphasis on specific teachings of God's word, to claim to be the only source of truth, or to uphold teachings which are at odds with mainstream Christian theology, is sectarian. This is why there is ongoing theological dialogue between the various Christian denominations with the aim of achieving a common confession of faith and a sharing in ministry and worship. The unity of the Christian church is a gift which has been given by Christ the head of the church to the church. It is also a task and responsibility for the various denominations to undertake.

---

*Because there are teachers, parents and students from many different Christian backgrounds in the Lutheran school, it will be important to respect the different interpretations of Scripture which may emerge in dialogue within the school. While, as will be discussed further below, the Lutheran school has the responsibility to clearly present a Lutheran understanding of key teachings in the Bible, this should not preclude a sensitive treatment of different interpretations of Scripture. Nor does it accept attempts by individuals or pressure groups to make Lutheran schools adopt particular interpretations of God's word which these individuals or groups may hold. An example of this could be a particular interpretation of the early chapters of the Book of Genesis. Another example could be the need for particular 'spiritual gifts' as a sign of genuine Christian faith.*

*Teachers need to be careful to clearly identify the particular theological presuppositions from which they are operating. They need to be aware of the process of 'owning and grounding' their own particular personal beliefs when dealing with sensitive issues.*

*Expressions such as ‘Christians believe’, ‘Lutherans believe’ or ‘I believe’ can be employed so that students who may think or believe differently are not alienated by inclusive language. While there is, as indicated above, considerable agreement amongst the mainline Christian churches on the interpretation of the Bible, yet there are significant differences which need to be recognised. An example would be the validity of infant baptism.*

---

## The central message of God’s word

As has already been indicated, the central message of God’s word is God’s saving work through Jesus Christ. In Lutheran theological language, this is the doctrine of ‘justification’: that people are made right with God by grace, through faith, on account of Christ. There are really only two possible answers to the question, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ (Acts 16:30). Either God accepts the person because of what the person does, or else God accepts the person, despite who that person is, because of what God does for that person. The Bible allows only the second answer: God accepts the sinner because of what God has done in Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21-26; 2 Cor 5:17-19). Therefore, as will be further developed later, ‘justification’ and ‘theology of the cross’ are critical in understanding the central message of God’s word.

In order to keep this focus on Christ and justification by grace through faith for the sake of Christ, Lutherans see that it is critical to recognise that God speaks in his word in two ways, as law and as gospel. The proper distinction of law and gospel is necessary to ensure that the focus always remains on what God in Jesus Christ has done for us. This will be examined more fully in chapter 4.

## Theology and God’s word

As we have seen, God speaks through the written word in the Bible as the Holy Spirit works in and through that word. The Bible therefore becomes the basis for ‘doing theology’. Theology begins with God speaking to us and our listening to God’s self-revelation. Religion, on the other hand, begins with human speculation about God.

Theology is reflecting on and responding to the revelation of the triune God. In doing this, Christians recognise that although they have their own individual experiences of God in their lives, they are also part of the whole people of God and so share in doing theology together as they try to make sense of human life within the created world, leading them to praise and glorify God in worship and in daily life.

Theology is something which is ‘done’. ‘Doing theology’ may not be the way we initially think of theology. Theology is often seen more as an area of study. It can involve academic study, but doing theology is also the way in which we grow in our relationship with God as the Holy Spirit works in us. Theology is seen as having two interrelated parts which must be kept in balance. One is spirituality which includes worship, prayer, study of the Bible, discipleship and living out one’s faith in vocation. The other part is academics, critically engaging the teachings and practices of the church and entering into debate with such areas as philosophy, ideology, and world views, through the use of reason in a communal, collegial and ecumenical context.

In doing theology, people need to be aware of the presuppositions which they bring to that process. Factors which can be important here are the tradition of theology from which the interpreter comes, the experiences of the interpreter, and the cultural context into which the theology speaks. These factors can have an impact on the language and concepts which are being used to express theology.

---

*In ‘doing theology’ in the Lutheran school context, consideration will need to be given to the language, symbols and concepts which are appropriate in that context. This will also be the case in communicating to parents and others associated with the school. Sensitivity to different age levels, commitment to the Christian faith and developmental stages will be important. This is why teachers need to become aware of their own theological assumptions, experiences and ways of thinking so that they are conscious of these when communicating theological insights to others.*

---

## The Lutheran Confessions

Although God reveals himself through the Bible as the Holy Spirit challenges each person to respond to that living Word of God, there is a long history of the interpretation of the Bible within the Christian church. Many churches have 'confessional statements' which confess or acknowledge or declare what the particular church believes on the basis of God's revelation [for example 'The Thirty Nine Articles' or 'The Westminster Confession']. Many of these confessional statements have arisen as a result of particular historical situations. The Nicene Creed, the Apostles Creed, and the Athanasian Creed [the three 'ecumenical creeds'], have arisen in this way and are shared by Christian churches as summaries of the key teachings of the Bible.

While confessional statements are useful summaries of the main teachings of the Bible, they are not on the same level as the Bible. The Bible is God's Word: the confessional statements summarise what a particular group of Christians believes about God's Word. They must be continually tested against the teaching of the Bible. They also need to be understood in relation to the concerns which they were addressing at the time they were written.

The Lutheran Confessions themselves clearly emphasise this (Epit 7-8 Kolb and Wengert: 487):

*Holy Scripture alone remains the only judge, rule, and guiding principle, according to which, as the only touchstone, all teachings should be and must be recognized and judged, whether they are good or evil, correct or incorrect. ... [all other writings and confessions] are not judges, as is Holy Scripture, but they are only witnesses and explanations of the faith, which show how Holy Scripture has at various times been understood and interpreted in the church of God by those who lived at the time in regard to articles of faith under dispute and how teachings contrary to the Scripture were rejected and condemned.*

The Lutheran Church is a 'confessional church' and has a number of confessional statements which arose at the time of the Reformation in order to clearly state the essential teachings of the Bible which were under debate at that time [especially the teaching of 'justification by grace through faith on account of Christ']. These statements were collected in 1580 into what is called 'The Book of Concord'. The

Lutheran Confessions see themselves as continuing to teach what the church has always taught and confessed. They begin with the three ecumenical creeds. They continue to guide people as they interpret Scripture. They define what it means to be 'Lutheran'. For this reason, when pastors in the Lutheran church are ordained, they promise to teach publicly according to the Lutheran Confessions.

---

*The Lutheran Confessions are basic to all that is taught and done in Lutheran schools if those schools wish to remain authentic Lutheran schools. While the Bible always remains the source of truth and determines theological understanding, the Lutheran Confessions provide the theological framework for the vision, purpose and practice in Lutheran schools.*

*When teachers are installed as teachers in a Lutheran school, they are asked to promise to teach according to the 'Lutheran Confessions'. If this promise is to carry meaning, teachers will need to be familiar with the content of those confessions. This is why Lutheran schools have a process of accreditation for Lutheran teachers so that they are introduced to the central teachings of the Lutheran church. Ongoing professional development in this area is also necessary. It is not assumed that all teachers will thereby become committed 'Lutherans'. However, if Lutheran schools are to continue to be 'Lutheran', all teachers in those schools will need to be able to articulate what that means and to teach according to the vision and purpose of Lutheran schools and the mission and ministry of the Lutheran Church of Australia.*

*It is important that students are introduced to at least the Small Catechism of Martin Luther as one of the Lutheran Confessions. This can be done in numerous ways within the worship program, the Christian Studies lessons and other opportunities within the school day and school rites and rituals. Frequent use may lead to memorisation of sections of the Small Catechism. Again, the purpose here is not 'indoctrination' but becoming familiar with the theological centre of the Lutheran school.*

---

### **Lutheran confessional theology**

Lutheran confessional theology operates with the principals of interpretation of the Bible which were discussed earlier. In doing so, Lutheran confessional theology recognises that the Lutheran Confessions represent a true summary of the essential faith of the Christian church based on the Bible. Fundamental to Lutheran confessional theology is the central doctrine of justification by grace through faith on account of Christ. This keeps the focus on the person and work of Jesus Christ ('christocentric') and the gospel as the living, powerful and transforming word of God for faith and life.

Key doctrines of Lutheran confessional theology are expressed in the form of dialectic or paradox. This is in order to express the relationship between two theological concepts or insights which may seem to be in tension or in contradiction with each other. They are in a dynamic relationship with each other, or in dialectical tension. Such a dynamic relationship is immediately apparent in theological formulations such as law and gospel, saint and sinner, human and divine, left and right hand kingdoms, reason and revelation, transcendent and immanent, hidden and revealed, power and weakness, joy and suffering, faith and works, and so on. Lutheran theology finds strength, richness, energy and vitality in this inherent paradoxical tension.

In fact Lutheran theology finds its starting point in the profound paradox of God as absolute, unlimited and holy and human beings as finite, limited and sinful. This was the tension in which Luther wrestled to find a merciful God when he felt that his relationship with God depended on what he could offer to God rather than what God in Christ offered to him. This led to the central formulation of Lutheran theology of justification by grace through faith on account of Christ. Maintaining the dialectic tension in Lutheran theology seeks to ensure that this theological insight remains clear and central, also for the Lutheran school.

The paradoxical nature of Lutheran theology is at the same time both its strength and its weakness. The strength lies, as we shall see as we explore these areas of theology in the following chapters, in maintaining the dynamic dialectic tension of the paradox. The danger is that one of the pair of theological concepts is emphasised at the expense of the other. In effect the two things which belong together are separated and

the dynamic relationship is broken. The implication of this will be considered as we look at the various doctrines which are expressed in this dialectic tension.

---

*Another area which needs to be explored in Lutheran schools is the dynamic tension between 'ecumenical' and 'confessional'. On the one hand teachers in Lutheran schools need to be open to the traditions of other denominations and religions which relate to their schools and help staff and students to explore them. However, at the same time, they need to recognise the importance of commitment to their own confessional heritage in healthy, lively, respectful dialogue.*

---

# CHAPTER 3

## God created and creates

---

### God created and creates

Belief in a creator is not unique to the biblical material and is seen in different ways in many religions. Paul indicated this, for example, in his speech to the philosophers in Athens (Acts 17: 22-28). Some form of creator is also common to Australian Indigenous spirituality. However, the biblical material emphasises that all life and all existence begin with God who created and creates. Creation is the result of the will of God, the ever-living creator, and emphasises that we are completely dependent on God for our existence. 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth' (Gen 1:1). While creation is most often related to God the Father, the Bible speaks of all three persons of the trinity being involved in creation: all things were created through the Son (Jn 1:1-4, 10) and the Holy Spirit is confessed as the life-giver through whom creation came into existence.

However, creation is not simply God's action in the past. God continues to create. Luther captured this continuing creation of God in his explanation to the first article of the creed (SC Creed 2: Kolb and Wengert: 354-355):

*I believe that God has created me together with all that exists. God has given me and still preserves my body and soul: eyes, ears, and all limbs and senses; reason and all mental faculties. In addition, God daily and abundantly provides shoes and clothing, food and drink, house and farm, spouse and children, fields, livestock, and all property – along with all the necessities and nourishment for this body and life. God protects me against all danger and shields and preserves me from all evil. And all this is done*



*out of pure, fatherly, and divine goodness and mercy, without any merit or worthiness of mine at all! For all of this I owe it to God to thank and praise, serve and obey him. This is most certainly true.*

God's continuing creation therefore assures us that every individual life has meaning and purpose.

Creation theology therefore reflects these two different aspects, original creation and continuing creation. Often these are represented in theological writing by two Latin tags:

- *creatio ex nihilo* (creation out of nothing) refers to the beginning of creation as, for example, in Genesis 1 and 2, Psalm 104, or Job 38. It corresponds to original creation.
- *creatio continua* (continuing creation) refers to God's ongoing work of creation in preserving the world and everything that lives in it.

These two aspects of creation theology are complementary ways of describing God's work of creation and should not be seen in any way in conflict with each other. Ultimately the doctrine of creation does not have its focus on origins as such but on faith in the creator and his ongoing relationship with what he has created as Luther reflected in the explanation of the Creed given above.

Creation theology also involves a future dimension in which believers already share. This is the 'new creation' which has been initiated through the saving work of Jesus Christ. In this way creation and redemption [the saving work of Jesus Christ] belong together, and redemption is really the renewal of creation. This 'new creation' will be fully revealed at the end of time when there will be a new heaven and a new earth, created by God who in Christ makes all things new (Rev 21:1,5).

### **Biblical sources**

Consideration of creation theology often concentrates on the accounts in Genesis 1 and 2. While these are important sources, they are not the only ones and probably not the earliest ones in the oral tradition behind the biblical material. For example, the Psalms contain numerous references to creation, particularly Psalm 104, but also Psalms 8:3-9; 19:1-6; 33:6-9; 95:1-7a; 136:1-9; 139:13-16. Proverbs speaks about the creation of the world through 'wisdom' (Prov 8:22-31). Job 38-41 provides another perspective on original creation. The prophets refer to

creation, for example Isa 44:24-28; 45:9-13; Jer 27:5; 32:17 as they urge the people of Israel to remain faithful to God their maker.

The New Testament provides frequent references to theology of creation. Again the triune God is presented as the one who creates and cares for all things: Acts 4:24; 14:15; 17:24; Eph 3:9; Mt 6:25-34; 10:29-31; Heb 11:3; Rev 4:11 There are numerous references to the relationship between Jesus Christ and creation (John 1:1-4, 10; Col 1:15-16), especially between the saving work of Jesus Christ and the 'new creation' (Rom 8:18-25; Eph 1:9-10; Col 1:15-20).

## Original creation [*creatio ex nihilo*']

As we have already indicated, creation theology is concerned with the beginnings of the universe. It is not hard to believe that some supreme power created all things. The beauty and order of the universe can lead to that conclusion. But even the most advanced study of the universe cannot tell us **who** its creator is or **why** the universe has been created. The creator can be known only because he has made himself known to us in his word — especially through the Word who became a human being, God's Son, Jesus Christ.

The Bible tells us that the creator of the universe is not some impersonal force, but God, the wise and loving heavenly Father. What makes Christian teaching about creation different from any other is that Christians view the creation of the universe with the eyes of faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit working through the biblical witness reveals to us that Jesus is the focus also of the creation story (Jn 1:2, Col 1:15-17, Heb 1:2).

The Bible does not answer all questions about the creation of the universe. That is not its purpose. It is the legitimate domain of science to investigate questions of origin. The Bible is more concerned to lead people to know the creator and the relationship between the creator and his creation than it is to teach them to know everything about the creation.

### Major emphases of the bible concerning original creation

- God created the universe out of nothing (*ex nihilo*). The universe is not eternal, matter is not eternal (Heb 11:3). In order to explain sin, suffering and natural disasters, some people have taught that God

created the world out of pre-existing material which was flawed. However, on the basis of the Bible, the church has concluded that God made the world out of nothing. Evil, as will be discussed in the next chapter, has a different origin.

- Creation is the result of God's deliberate decision and action. Creation is a free act of God's will. In a number of religions and philosophies, for example the Babylonian creation myths, creation is seen as a struggle between a 'good god' and an 'evil god'. The ancient Greeks thought of the creation of the cosmos as the activity of an inferior god, a *demiurge*, and they thought that the immortal soul was imprisoned in a frail and faulty body, awaiting release from this bondage by death. The biblical teaching counters such views. There is no dualism: God is the creator of all things.
- God is not part of his creation nor is creation an extension of God [as in *pantheism*]. A clear distinction is made between God the creator and creation. While God may be revealed in creation (eg Ps 19:1), God is never one with, nor part of his creation, except when God deliberately became part of creation in Jesus Christ. This means that any worship of creation is idolatry, worshipping the creation rather than the creator (Rom 1:25).
- God created all things by his word. He spoke creation into existence through his powerful, performative, and creative word (Ps 33:6-9). 'God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light' (Gen 1:3). The Bible does not offer scientific explanations of the 'how' of creation; it simply tells us that God is the creator. The universe is God's (Ps 24:1-2).
- God created in an orderly way. Genesis 1 brings out the 'rhythm' and orderliness of God's creative work as God created order out of chaos. In each stage of creation, God speaks, another stage of creation is completed, and God sees that his creation is good.
- God's creation is good. There was perfect harmony in God's creation. When God looked at all he had created, everything was just the way he intended it to be (Gen 1:31). God is not responsible for the disharmony, disorder and evil we observe and experience now. However, even after sin marred what God originally created, it is still 'good'. Certainly God's good creation can be abused and perverted

and we see the effects of sin, for example, in the destructive fury of nature, but faith in God still allows believers to see the goodness of creation and the gifts God gives in creation. It is important not to develop dualistic thinking which sees creation as totally corrupt and no longer the means through which God continues to care for all which he created and through which people can enjoy the gifts of creation. God invites us to share in the joy and wonder of creation (Ps 8, 104, 136:1-9). However, just as in the beginning everything was precisely as God had planned it, so believers look forward to the end of time when all things will be restored to their original perfection in the new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1,5).

---

*Students in Lutheran schools need to be encouraged to look beyond the impact of sin on God's good creation and celebrate and enjoy that creation using the gifts and opportunities which they are given. Students need to be stimulated to proclaim their response to God's good creation through drama, music, painting, dance, poetry, photography, creative writing, and any other creative and artistic means of expression. Schools need to ensure that such avenues are not reduced by other pressures within the total school curriculum.*

*One aspect of God's good creation which may need special and careful treatment in Lutheran schools is the area of human sexuality. Sexuality is one of God's good gifts and needs to be seen as such in its God-given function and not misused, denigrated or 'worshipped' as often happens in society. Too often students develop their attitudes to sexuality from the media and internet and are subject to peer pressure through the social media. Parents may appreciate opportunities through the school to discuss ways to handle education in appropriate sexual attitudes.*

---

- God looks after the universe he created. God set up the laws of nature (day and night, the seasons, the laws of physics, etc) by which the universe continues to exist in an orderly way. God is not limited by these laws, however. God continues to work within his creation and he may use his power to bring about 'supernatural', miraculous events. This understanding of God's involvement in creation differs

from that of *deism* which sees God as a kind of ‘clockmaker’ who created the world, set it in motion according to particular laws, but now remains aloof from creation, observing it only at a distance. It also differs from the view that God is simply there to fill in the gaps [the ‘God of the gaps’] which our reason and science cannot fill. The danger with this view is that as our understanding of creation expands, God is pushed further and further into the background. He is no longer seen as involved actively in it.

---

*Students and staff in Lutheran schools will be challenged by a number of differing views about creation and the origin of the universe. It is critical here that the temptation to try to read the Bible as a text of biology, geology, palaeontology, genetics, or any other of the disciplines of science is avoided. The long running debate between evolution and creation continues to have an impact in some Lutheran schools. More recently Lutheran schools have been influenced by issues such as ‘creationism’ [reading the Bible, especially the first 2 chapters of Genesis as a scientific document and asserting that creation happened at about 4000 BC] and ‘intelligent design’ [that the existence of God can be ‘proved’ on the basis of the intricate design of the universe and the intricate web of life].*

*The doctrine of original creation opens up the study of that creation for the Lutheran school curriculum. Recognising creation as the work of the creator God encourages and requires Lutheran schools to wonder at, celebrate and enjoy that creation and to explore it and examine the pattern, design and causality within God’s creation. At the same time Lutheran schools must guard against trying to use archaeology, biology, genetics astronomy and other disciplines of science to try to ‘prove’ the historical accuracy of the Bible. The truth of the Bible is not open to that type of ‘proof’ since its truth rests on faith.*

*Some comments on creation and the theory of evolution:*

- *since both theology and natural science seek to explore the truth in relation to the origin of the universe, and since both*

*seek to take reality seriously, ultimately they need not be in conflict: this can only happen, however, if both theology and science remain open to the insights gained by the other; this will not occur if either theology or science take an absolute view whereby one is considered right and the other wrong.*

- *science is a gift of God which works with physical, measurable data: to use science to discredit God or usurp the place of God, is false science. However, it is important here to distinguish between the areas of faith and reason.*
- *in relation to the origin of the universe, revelation concentrates on the questions of ‘who’ and ‘why’ whereas science operates with the questions of ‘what’, ‘how’ and ‘when’.*
- *in relation to the theory of evolution, it is important to recognise that there are in fact numerous theories: for example, ‘theistic evolution’ holds that things did develop from a previous state or form, but that this process is under the impetus and guidance of God: ‘atheistic evolution’ claims that this process is entirely due to random forces without the need for any God, while ‘special creation’, on the other hand, posits that everything was suddenly and directly created by God.*
- *on the basis of revelation, Christians may hold views such as ‘theistic evolution’ or ‘special creation’: however this will mean affirming the scriptural teachings of God as the creator of all life, that human beings are a special creation of God made in the ‘image of God’ and that the fall into sin is an episode in history.*
- *‘creation science’ takes an absolute and literalist view of Genesis 1; it therefore turns the creation account into scientific ‘fact’. This is inconsistent with a Lutheran approach to the interpretation of Scripture: it shifts the focus of Scripture from the person and work of Jesus Christ to scientific theory.*
- *the debate about creation and evolution can place the emphasis of creation theology on ‘original creation’ at the expense of ‘continuing creation’.*

- *evolutionary theology can be incorrectly applied to other areas such as politics and social theory. This can lead to dangerous views which see people who are regarded as physically, mentally, racially or economically ‘inferior’ as being expendable. These views can have an impact in discussions about abortion, euthanasia, genetic engineering or ethnic cleansing.*
  - *a misapplication of evolutionary theory in some circles can lead to the notion that human society is continually evolving and improving towards some state of ‘utopia’. However, despite such ‘improvements’ in technological development, improved medical conditions, rising standards of living, a realistic assessment of the state of the world could lead to a very different conclusion.*
- 

## Human beings are God’s special creation

Whatever understanding we may have of the process of creation, the Bible emphasises that human beings are a special creation of God (Ps 8:4-6). In fact, they are seen as the climax or crown of God’s creative work (Gen 1:26-30), the result of a specific decision by the creator God. Even though God cares for all of creation, including the sparrows (Mt 10:29), human beings are unique and different from all other living things which God created. Genesis 2:7 speaks about the special creation of human beings: God formed the person from the dust of the ground and breathed God’s breath [in Hebrew the word ‘*ruach*’ can be translated as ‘breath’, ‘spirit’ or ‘wind’] into the person who became a living person. Therefore a human being is both dust [at one with the earth from which the person was taken, which is shared with all creation, and to which the person will one day return] and God’s breath [spirit]. This means that human beings have a ‘vertical’ relationship with God, and a ‘horizontal’ relationship with the rest of creation. God is the author of human life. The gift of life rests with God who gives life and takes life.

While the Bible speaks of the human being as ‘dust’ and ‘breath/spirit’, the Bible emphasises the unity of the individual persons. When the New Testament speaks of body, soul, and spirit, it is not implying that human beings are made of three parts. [Greek philosophical thinking,

which influenced some early Christian thinking, tended to draw a sharp distinction between ‘body’ and ‘soul’ with the ‘soul’ imprisoned in the ‘body’.] Rather body, soul, and spirit are three different ways of looking at human beings. Instead of saying we *have* a body, we *have* a soul, or we *have* a spirit, it is better to say that we *are* body, we *are* soul, or we *are* spirit (1 Thess 5:23). It is important that we recognise that the body is part of God’s ‘good’ creation (Gen 1:31) and should be respected and treated as such. The body is the ‘temple of the Holy Spirit’ and St Paul urges Christians to ‘glorify God in your body’ (1 Cor 6: 19-20). The body will rise again at the end of time (Phil 3:20-21; 1 Cor 15:35-57).

Because human beings contain the spirit/breath of God, they are spiritual beings. The life of every human being is sacred, and God demands that we value every human life as he does. This affects the way we consider all stages of human life, from conception to death.

---

*Understanding human beings as the special creation of God provides important insights in a number of issues and situations which arise in the Lutheran school. For example, seeing human beings as dust and breath links individuals closely with all of creation and provides a vital link between the welfare of human beings and the welfare of the rest of creation. [The close link between human beings and the land in aboriginal spirituality is an important insight here.] Seeing life as the breath of God in human beings emphasises the spiritual dimension in each individual and the recognition that an individual is not simply a ‘biological accident’. It stresses the sanctity of life which needs to be considered when dealing with ethical issues such as euthanasia, abortion, and stem cell research.*

*The biblical emphasis on the importance of the body needs emphasis when dealing with matters of sexuality, obesity, alcohol and drug abuse, self-harm and body image. Students need support and guidance to see themselves as body, soul and spirit. Pedagogy needs to allow students to understand themselves as whole individuals integrating mind, emotions, attitudes, skills and behaviour.*

---



### **Created in the ‘image of God’**

Genesis 1:26-28 emphasises the uniqueness of human beings in another way. Male and female human beings were created ‘in the image of God’ (Gen 1:27). While there is considerable debate amongst biblical scholars about how to interpret these words, there is general agreement that it does not mean that humans look like God [who is spirit] nor that it is seen in capacities such as reason, speech, or intelligence which can be seen to distinguish humans from the animal world.

From a biblical perspective, ‘image of God’ indicates that human beings are created for fellowship with God, to be able to relate to God and live in conscious relationship with him. They are able to know God, believe in God, love and obey God. Human beings are really only fully human when they are in fellowship with God as God created them to be. Even though Christians recognise that through the advent of sin the image of God is now deeply fractured and the original sinlessness, goodness and holiness has been lost, Christians understand that the image of God is gradually being restored in them by the power of the Holy Spirit as they grow in holiness (Eph 4:22-24; Col 3:9-10).

The question is sometimes asked whether the advent of sin has led to the total loss of ‘the image of God’. Clearly sin has had an impact on the relationship between human beings and God. However, the Bible still refers to the image of God in human beings (Gen 9:6; Jas 3:9). The New Testament speaks of Jesus Christ as the perfect image of God (2 Cor 4:4; Col 1:15-16; Heb 1:3). And it says that those who are in Christ are being transformed by the Spirit from one degree of glory to another (Rom 8:29; 2 Cor 3:18), until such time as the transformation is complete (1 Cor 15:49), and believers conform totally to God’s perfect image in the new heaven and the new earth.

The ‘image of God’ is recognised in the responsibility which God has placed on human beings to be his representatives [‘stewards’] on earth to take care of creation on his behalf (Gen 1:28). In doing this they are accountable to God for the way in which they represent God and manage the earth. They are to take care of creation (Gen 2:15) and not to exploit, misuse or abuse it. Human beings also have the power to procreate, becoming partners with God in the creation of new life.

*This role of stewardship and responsibility for creation on behalf of God is a critical area for Lutheran schools. It provides a focus which will be developed further as other aspects of theology are considered. It challenges Lutheran schools to provide a perspective of creation which goes beyond an individualistic, materialistic, consumerist approach to the gifts, opportunities and responsibilities within creation. It offers important insights for an appreciation of the inter-relatedness of human beings with the whole of creation and the development of sensitivity to ecological considerations.*

*Being created in the 'image of God' emphasises God's mandate that human beings are to be careful and responsible stewards of all that God has created. Lutheran schools should therefore be leaders in learning and teaching about such issues as ecology, care for the environment, social justice, global perspectives, distribution of wealth, and similar concerns. It is relevant to all members of the Lutheran school community whether or not they recognise God as creator. All human beings, as part of the human family, are responsible for the care and protection of the environment and its resources and for meeting the needs of all people. Learning and teaching in this area should go beyond simply an awareness of these matters. It should promote lively participation in activities which develop responsible stewardship in the local and global community as is seen in the current emphasis in Lutheran schools on 'service learning'. In all of these situations the focus must remain on God's actions and purposes and not simply on human intentions.*

---

The 'image of God' can also be seen in the human conscience (Rom 2:14-15): people being aware of what is right and what is wrong, and recognising the voice of their conscience as they respond to various circumstances. The impact of the 'image of God' is apparent when people, however vaguely, are aware of the existence and presence of a 'god' to whom they are in some sense answerable (Acts 17: 27-28). Consequences of this were considered in chapter 1.

### **Created as unique individuals**

Theology of creation teaches that each person is created as a unique individual with distinctive characteristics, gifts and abilities, strengths and weaknesses (cf Luther's explanation to the first article of the Apostles Creed). No two human beings are identical. Each person, therefore, has individual worth and value in the eyes of God. They are valued for who they are, and not because of 'their utility' (Christenson: 70). Human worth is not diminished by illness, handicap, age, or failure of any kind; nor does it have anything to do with race, colour, gender, distinctive characteristics and abilities, or anything else that distinguishes one human being from another. All people are of equal worth because 'God does not show favouritism' (Acts 10:34 NIV). Since God sees each individual with worth and dignity, each person can develop realistic self-awareness, self-identity and self-acceptance through interaction with others.

This value of the individual rests not only on God's creative work but also on the fact that Jesus has died for each person and that the Holy Spirit offers faith to each individual and lives within each believer.

---

*Recognition of the individuality and uniqueness of each individual within the Lutheran school context provides an important perspective for much of what happens in the school. It must be reflected throughout the policy, pedagogy, relationships and everything which the school does. All persons within the Lutheran school community need to be affirmed of their value in the eyes of God and of the school community. This will apply to students with 'special needs' and those who experience bullying or other forms of exclusion within the school context. It has much to say about how particularly 'gifted' students are treated.*

*Recognising the uniqueness and individual worth and dignity of all students, staff, parents and anyone else associated with the school community provides the basic motivation for fostering and developing caring relationships for all individuals. This reflects the Christian belief that all people are precious and loved by God. Even though individuals differ greatly and within a school context there will be those who may seem difficult, frustrating and disruptive*

*at times, care must be taken so that personal reactions and judgements do not preclude certain individuals from appropriate caring relationships. All within the Lutheran school context need consideration, affirmation, guidance and attention.*

*These theological insights have significant implications for the pedagogy practised within the school so that it addresses individual student needs and recognises the various learning styles and the so-called different ‘intelligences’. These insights need careful consideration in the construction and implementation of an inclusive total school curriculum recognising the range of opportunities within the school community. The school enrolment policy needs to be viewed in this inclusive light.*

*Students in Lutheran schools will require guidance in learning how to deal with pressures which come from peers, parents, schools, churches, the media, advertising, and other external influences. The impact of social media and the extent to which they are part of the school environment and pedagogy will require careful analysis when considering the worth and value of individuals and the interpersonal relationships which are considered in the next subsection.*

---

### **Created for relationship**

While theology of creation emphasises the importance of each person, it stresses that individuals are created for inter-dependence rather than for independence.

As has been discussed earlier, God exists in relationship. While we cannot understand the mystery of the trinity, it reveals to us that God is three persons who are in constant relationship with each other. Father, Son and Holy Spirit work together in love, because God is love and love comes from God (1 Jn 4:7-12). Because God exists in relationship, human beings who were created in the image of God (Gen 1:26) are created for relationship.

The story of creation (Gen 2:14b-25) shows how highly God values relationships. God is concerned that Adam should not be alone but have a companion, ‘a helper as his partner’ (Gen 2:18). God goes to great lengths to ensure Adam finally has another person with whom

to share in relationship. Paradise is represented as the place of perfect relationships between God and human beings, human beings and the whole of the created world, and human beings with each other and within themselves. Before the advent of sin to distort and destroy those relationships, nothing disturbed them.

Human beings relate to each other at various levels. Each person is related to every other member of the human family, but God has placed us in a closer relationship with some people than with others. Relationships also change: for example parent/child relationships, friendships, work relationships. The closer the relationship, the greater the mutual benefits, but also the responsibilities.

---

*The fostering of positive relationships between all individuals in the Lutheran school is fundamental to establishing and maintaining the school as a caring, supporting community. This provides the basis for pastoral care and for dealing with situations where relationships break down between individuals or within the community. This will be explored more fully in chapter 4.*

*This aspect of interdependence raises again the question of appropriate pedagogies in Lutheran schools. How is competition handled in the classroom? Can those students who are differently gifted interact appropriately in the classroom? Are there subtle, or not so subtle, examples of victimisation or even bullying in the classroom?*

---

## God's continuing creation [*creatio continua*']

The Bible emphasises that God has not withdrawn from creation. He continues to work in it and preserve it also using human beings as his agents. The theology of creation does not see God as a clockmaker ['deism'] who set the world into motion and now allows it to run by itself. Continuing creation recognises how God continues to provide for, sustain, and take care of his creation.

God cares for all people, not only those who believe in him. All people are his children since he has created them. He makes his sun rise on the evil as well as the good, and sends the rain on the just and the unjust

(Mt 5:45). Jesus says that God knows even the number of hairs on our head (Mt 10:30). This care of God is extended to all of his creation (Ps 104: 27-30; 145: 15-16). God even looks after the sparrows and the wild flowers in the field, and so Jesus urges his followers to trust in his care, and not to be concerned or to worry about anything (Mt 6:25-34).

Although God can intervene in his creation in a miraculous or supernatural way to carry out his purposes in the world (Ex 16: 4; Jn 2:1-11) and can work through the ministry of angels (Ps 91: 11-12; 34:7; Mt 18:10; Heb 1:14) in taking care of his creation, God works through various avenues which he has incorporated into his creation. Thus God works through the laws of nature whereby the seasons come and go and he sustains life through the earth, the air and the oceans which provide food, water, clothing, energy, and other necessities of life. God works through means such as medical science and the advances of technology which human beings develop through their God-given gift of reason. He works through the structures and the customs, traditions, legislation and law enforcement procedures within society which enable people to live together happily, peacefully, safely and productively. Here God also operates with the law written on human hearts to which conscience bears witness (Rom 2:15).

As has been mentioned previously, God has made human beings the caretakers of creation (Gen 2:15). They work on his behalf through the structures in society which are known as the 'orders of creation'. There are basically four such structures in which human beings participate in society: the home [marriage and the family], the work place [which may or may not be paid employment], community life [including the formal relationships of the political and social structures or the more informal relationships of neighbourly contact and associations for specific purposes] and the congregation (Kolb: 77-78). The implications of this responsibility on behalf of God will be more fully explored in the next section on 'vocation'.

The theology of continuing creation recognises that God is present in disasters and tragedy. When evil seems to triumph, it looks as if God is no longer in control, even though God assures us that he can use even evil for his own purposes (Is 45:7). This is an important aspect of theology which will be explored in the next chapter when dealing with the impact of sin in the world.

## Vocation

An important extension of the teaching of ‘continuing creation’ is the doctrine of ‘vocation’. This was one of the important theological insights which received special attention at the time of the reformation and one which Luther and the other reformers saw as vital for the church in their day. To some extent the doctrine of vocation slid into the background until more recently when it has been recognised again as central to the understanding of the way God works in the world. It is crucial for an understanding of the purpose and role of Lutheran schools.

### Luther’s theological insights

Luther reacted to the medieval concept of ‘vocation’ which he regarded as too narrow. At this time in the church ‘vocation’ [which comes from the Latin word ‘*vocatio*’ meaning ‘to call’] was used primarily to refer to full-time vocations in the church such as priests, monks and nuns. These were regarded as having a superior status over people engaged in all other forms of work or employment which were regarded as ‘secular’. Luther removed this distinction and saw all people as doing God’s work as a calling from God to serve the needs of others (Christenson: 49-50). He saw God as operating through people in both the world and the church and could therefore say:

*when a maid milks the cows or a hired man hoes the field – provided that they are believers, namely that they conclude that this kind of life is pleasing to God and was instituted by God – they serve God more than all the monks and nuns, who cannot be sure about their kind of life. (LW 3:321)*

Vocation relates to God’s continuing creation and preservation of the world as he uses human beings as stewards within creation to carry out his purposes. It provides a way of looking at the total life of a person and is much broader than ‘occupation’ or ‘profession’. God carries out his purposes through all people, but only some see this as a response to God’s calling (1 Cor 1:26-27; Eph 4:1). It is seeing service to God through the serving of others in the roles into which we have been placed. From this perspective, only someone who recognises the call of God in their life sees their life as ‘vocation’.

Luther developed the term ‘masks of God’ (LW 7:184) to refer to the way God works through people to carry out his work in the world (Veith:

91-96). Luther draws here on the practice in the ancient Greek theatre where actors portrayed characters by using various masks [male actors could even represent women in this way since all actors were male]. The actor was in effect operating through the mask projecting the character to the audience while he remained hidden behind the mask. In the same way God works behind the scenes in caring for the creation. Human beings, God's 'masks', become the hands and feet of God. God could provide food by dropping it from heaven as he did with manna in the desert (Ex 16:35), but he chooses to use farmers, fishermen, bakers and fruit growers as his masks to provide food: he protects people and their property through judges and the police: he maintains peace and good order through the government: he heals people through doctors, nurses and pharmacists. Luther could go so far as to say: 'God Himself is milking the cows through the vocation of the milkmaid' (Veith 94). The Christian recognises God behind the mask, but the unbeliever sees only the mask.

### **The 'orders of creation'**

Individuals find themselves living and operating within the 'orders of creation' [home, work place, community life and congregation] as God works through these structures. [Luther referred to these 'orders' with the German word '*Stand*' which is often translated as 'station' or 'estate'.] Contrary to the thinking at the time of Luther, no 'station' is higher or lower, more important or less important, than any other because all have as their goal to serve the other 'stations'. Together they are all necessary for human life. Luther said, 'For a good building we need not only hewn facings but also backing stones' (LW 46: 231).

These 'orders of creation' or 'stations' are the areas of responsibility in which people carry out their 'calling' [Luther used the term '*Beruf*']. Thus a person may at the same time have responsibilities as a husband or wife, a mother or father, a son or daughter, a sister or brother, an employee or employer, a member of a sporting club, a participant in a social club, a church youth group leader, a member of a congregational committee, and so on. These responsibilities may be paid employment or volunteer service and they will change from time to time. Seen in this light, even times when a person is unemployed or has been made redundant are still situations in which a person is 'in vocation' as they serve in their various relationships. Everyone, therefore, has a number



of areas of responsibility in which they carry out their ‘vocation’. These areas will change as a person goes through life and as situations in which they find themselves change and new opportunities present themselves. Luther expressed it in this way (LW 46:250):

*It is not God’s will that only those who are born kings, princes, lords, and nobles should exercise rule and lordship. He wills to have beggars among them also, lest they think it is nobility of birth rather than God alone who makes lords and rulers. (LW 46:250).*

---

*The use of the term ‘vocation’ can sometimes mean little more than ‘occupation’ when it is used in Lutheran schools in terms such as ‘vocational guidance’. The impression is often given that students are preparing for their vocation through their schooling and that their ‘vocation’ is some time in the future. Students need to be helped to see that they are living in vocation during their school years. They have responsibilities in their families and homes as sons or daughters, sisters or brothers: they have responsibilities as participants in various social groups, clubs or sporting teams. Above all, being a good student, playing their role in the school community and serving in that community while developing their gifts is an essential part of their vocation. In this regard, students may require assistance to develop a healthy balance between the many responsibilities which they may have also in out-of-school activities and which can rob them of ‘down time’ for simply relaxation and recuperation. Homework and school extra-curricular activities many need to be monitored.*

*Lutheran schools need to be aware of promoting a hierarchy of professions and making judgements on the value of individuals according to their professions. This is where expressions such as ‘she is **just** a mother at home’, or ‘he is **just** a cleaner’, devalue the important responsibilities which these people have and ignore all of the other areas of responsibility in which a particular person carries out their vocation. Schools need to help students prepare for periods of unemployment, or delays in finding regularly paid work, recognising the value of volunteerism as they prepare students for life as lifelong learners.*

*Developing an understanding of the theology of vocation is critical in pre-service and in-service programs for teachers. Teachers need to reflect on their own understanding of 'vocation' and how this relates to their various areas of responsibility*

*One of the difficulties of living in vocation is to maintain a balance between the various areas of responsibility which an individual has. In Lutheran schools it is important that the demands of the school do not place undue pressure on the other areas of responsibility which a teacher fulfils. Teachers may need help to avoid becoming 'workaholics' or losing the joy in vocation by seeing their responsibilities only from the perspective of 'a sense of duty'. A healthy life-work balance is vital and may be a concern for pastoral care.*

---

### **Vocation as service to others**

God's purpose in vocation is to serve the needs of his creation through his 'masks'. Christians recognise that because God in Christ has served them, they are called by God to give glory to him by living out their vocation for the benefit of others. In this way Christians see that they are 'bearing good fruit' or 'doing good works' for the benefit of others (Eph 2:10). Vocation in this way links faith with daily life and carries worship out from the church and into the community (Rom 12:1-8).

In doing this, Christians recognise that God has given them gifts and abilities for service. These gifts are not simply for their own benefit or enjoyment, or to amass wealth and power for themselves, but for service to others. The recognition of these gifts and abilities, and the development of them, provide options for service to others. Luther saw it as particularly important that parents should assist their children to prepare for service in the world. 'Because it is God's will', said Luther, 'parents should send their children to school, and prepare them for the Lord God so that he may use them for the service of others' (LW 40: 314).

The parable of the 'talents' (Mt 25:14-30) provides a salutary warning against individuals devaluing, despising or failing to use the gifts and abilities God has given to them. Whether individuals feel that they have been entrusted by God with much or with little, the critical response is to be trustworthy and faithful with what one has been given. Greater

talents require greater responsibility. Another helpful parable follows on from the parable of the ‘talents’ (Mt 25:31-46), the parable of the last judgement. Here the emphasis is on service [or lack of service] to others as service [or lack of service] to Jesus Christ himself (Mt 23:40), even though the people involved are unaware that this is actually what is happening. Service to God is through service to others, especially those in need.

Sometimes individuals can make inappropriate decisions in identifying areas of responsibility for which they believe God has particularly gifted them and into which he has called them to serve. This can happen when they have unrealistic perceptions of their gifts, abilities and skills. It can be a stressful situation which needs to be addressed (Veith 103-108).

While the primary responsibility of vocation is to function as God’s masks in the world, vocation provides an opportunity for Christians to witness to their faith and its impact on their lives in their various areas of service. Thus, for example, in the *Small Catechism*, Luther placed the responsibility for the teaching of the Christian faith on ‘the head of the house’. (Kolb and Wengert: 351).

Vocation as service to others shows itself in the practice of prayer. In certain circumstances, prayer may be the only option to serve another person, but it is a very powerful and effective one. Christians recognise that when bringing someone and their needs to God in prayer, they are working together with Jesus Christ who intercedes on their behalf (1 Jn 2:1; Heb 4:14-16; 7:25) and with the Holy Spirit who prays for them even when they are uncertain or unable to pray themselves (Rom 8:26-27).

---

*Vocation as service to others with the abilities and opportunities God has given presents a challenge for students and teachers in a consumerist, materialistic and acquisitive society. The attitude of ‘me first’ is difficult to counter, especially when some parents select Lutheran schools in the hope that they will assist their children to ‘get ahead’ in the world at the expense of others.*

*Students will need guidance in realistically assessing their gifts and talents so that they will make realistic decisions about possible avenues of service. Some may need to recognise that ‘from everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required’ (Lk 12: 48b).*

*Teachers may need to evaluate their own approach to service and to accept challenges to other avenues which may present themselves in the school context or even question whether teaching is a place of responsibility in which they have been called to serve. The institution of Lutheran school requires critique to ensure that it is serving the people in its community and not its own ends as an institution (Christenson: 129).*

*The current emphasis on ‘service learning’ in Lutheran schools provides important opportunities for exploring vocation as service to others. This material provided on the LEA website includes material for those who see themselves as serving God through serving others as well as those who may see other motivation for acts of service. However, God can carry out his purposes through all people, whether they recognise him or not.*

*Viewing the educational process from the perspective of vocation provides important insights into the connection between learning and service.*

*‘Inquiry, knowing and learning continually shaped by the question, “How does this serve the needs of the world?” will be appreciatively different from knowing not accompanied by such a question. ... Learning shaped by the idea of vocation will be closely connected to service. Theory must be critiqued by a doing that serves’ (Christenson: 126-129).*

---

### **Vocation as a response to salvation**

Christians see their service in vocation as a response to God’s greatest act of service – salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a response to salvation and does not earn or contribute to it. Salvation is by grace. It is a free gift given through faith in Jesus Christ. However, while justification has nothing to do with ‘good works’, vocation certainly involves ‘good works’ which God has prepared for people to do (Eph 2:8-10). Christians see vocation as doing God’s work because God is working through them. In the *Augsburg Confession* we read (AC 7,1-2; Kolb and Wengert: 41):

*this faith is bound to yield good fruits and ... it ought to do good works commanded by God on account of God's will and not that we trust in these works to merit justification before God. For forgiveness of sins and justification are taken hold of by faith, as the saying of Christ also testifies [Luke 17:10]: "When you have done all [things] ... say, 'We are worthless slaves.'" [see also AC 20; Kolb and Wengert: 53-57].*

---

*While the relationship between faith and good works will be considered in relation to a number of areas of theology, it will be important to try to help students see the response of service to others as a result of God's grace and not as a way to try to earn God's favour. 'We love because he first loved us' (1 Jn 4:19). Care will be required in trying to motivate students appropriately in 'service learning' so that students do not consider completing some service project as gaining credit with God. The motivation for service of students who do not share in the Christian faith becomes an issue here. However, discussion about service may become an opportunity for helping such students to gain insight into a Christian approach to service as well as encouraging them to serve their fellow human beings on the basis of their own motivation.*

---

### **'Carrying the cross' in vocation**

The areas of responsibility in which we carry out our vocation are the arenas in which Christians are called to 'carry the cross' (Mt 16:24; 1 Pet 2:21). It is just in these areas of responsibility, our 'stations' in life, where we experience difficulties, frustrations, conflicts, disappointments and even tragedies. This is where Christians can experience their greatest temptations and struggles with sin and with failure to do what they believe God is asking them to do (Veith: 111-114). This can affect all areas of their vocation, in the home, the workplace, the congregation, in social contexts. Difficulties in vocation can lead people to the temptation to abandon their vocation as marriages break up, children rebel against their parents, conflict arises in the workplace, individuals lose confidence in their God-given talents, tensions arise between pastor and congregational members. We may struggle at times to love and serve the neighbour God has placed there for us to serve following the example of the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25-37).

‘Carrying the cross’ in our vocation is not to look for, or to glorify, suffering, or seek human approval for what we are doing. Nor can it be used in any way to justify abuse or inflicting suffering on others. Christians can see suffering as helping to deal with sin in their lives and to become more fruitful in their service to God in their vocation (Jn 15:2). It helps them to grow in hope and certainty in their faith. These difficulties urge Christians to pray for help, support and guidance as they deal with these ‘crosses’. Further development of this aspect of vocation is provided in considering ‘discipleship’ in chapter 7.

---

*While Lutheran schools strive to be examples of caring and supportive environments demonstrating loving concern for all in the community and being active in service to one another, students, teachers and staff will certainly experience times of ‘carrying the cross’ in the school community. This is where a sensitive and comprehensive pastoral care program is vital. It is important that ‘while all must carry their own loads’ (Gal 6:5) Christians are called to ‘bear one another’s burdens, and in this way fulfil the law of Christ’ (Gal 6:2).*

---

## Jesus Christ and the new creation

God Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all involved in original creation. This creation was ‘good’ the way God intended it to be. However, sin came into the picture and destroyed that original harmony between God and all of his creation.

Because of the broken relationships brought about by sin, Jesus Christ through ‘whom all things were made’ (Nicene Creed: cf Jn 1:2 ) became part of his own creation and suffered with humanity and with the whole of creation: ‘the Word became a human being’ (Jn 1:14). Through his miracles, Jesus demonstrated his creative power over creation in stilling the storm, raising the dead, healing the sick, the lame, the blind and those possessed by evil spirits. Jesus provides redemption for all broken relationships and in him a new creation has become a reality (Col 1: 15-20). In Christ, as God’s new creation (2 Cor 5:17), Christians are empowered by the Holy Spirit to live as God’s people in the world

(Eph 2:10). Through his death and resurrection, Christ initiated a new kingdom which is a foretaste of the end of time when there will be a new heaven and new earth (Rev 21:1-4). Through faith in Christ, sins are forgiven and finally God's people will be reunited with God in heaven. However, the Bible teaches that until the end of this age all creation will 'groan' under the weight of the problems caused by sin (Rom 8:19-25) including human abuse and misuse of creation. But in Christ, Christians look forward to the new creation. In the intervening time between the resurrection of Jesus Christ and his return at the end of time, Christians recognise their responsibility to care for and protect the creation while they already anticipate the peace, joy and freedom of the new heaven and new earth (Rom 8:37-39; Col 3:1-4). The story of God and his creation looks both forwards and backwards. It begins with God's 'good' creation, and ends with the new creation. All of history is under the sovereign purpose of God as revealed in Jesus Christ, the creator and redeemer, who is 'the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end' (Rev 22:13; 1:8; 1:17).

---

*While Lutheran schools remain realistic to the impact of sin in the world, they should be communities of hope. Celebrating the victory of Jesus Christ over sin, death and the devil, gives Lutheran schools the responsibility to help students see beyond the cynicism and pessimism which are often apparent in society and work towards being a positive influence in the world. 'The object of human work is not perfection, but modest accomplishment. Perfectionism and cynicism are closely related' (Christenson: 132).*

*From this perspective, Lutheran schools can help students develop a conscience for society which helps them to react appropriately to issues of social justice locally and globally.*

---

# CHAPTER 4

## Sin and God's response of grace

---

Christians believe that human beings are a special creation of God. Originally they were created without sin. However, sin has destroyed the original harmony of God's creation. All relationships have been affected by sin. This understanding of the condition of human beings is fundamental to a Lutheran approach to schooling.

There are various words and expressions in the Bible to describe sin; for example, transgression, rebellion, revolt, iniquity, missing the mark. However, sin is more profound than that: it is the total breakdown of the relationship between God and human beings. It is not simply wrong actions, thoughts, words or feelings: it is above all a condition, a disease that infects every human being (Rom 5:12; Jn 3:6).

### The origin of sin

The first story in the Bible is about creation; the second is about sin. The first story speaks of all creation as 'good'; the second is about rebellion and alienation. However, no explanation is given for the origin of sin. The Bible simply confronts us with the reality of evil already in the Garden of Eden where the snake becomes an instrument of evil and deception.

When God created human beings, he did not create robots or puppets. Adam and Eve had free will to choose to obey God or to disobey him. This meant they could choose to sin. God put one restriction on Adam and Eve's life in the garden: they were not to eat the fruit of one tree (Gen 2:15-17). The devil (Rev 12:9) tempted them to question why there should be any restrictions at all. Why shouldn't human beings be on the same level as God? The first sin set the pattern for every sin — human



beings wanting to be like God, doing what they wish instead of what God has commanded.

### **The impact of sin**

The Bible teaches that the impact of sin in the world is profound. It has brought into the world guilt, disharmony, suffering and death – spiritual, physical and eternal death. It has resulted in the fracturing of all relationships – with God, with other people, with the whole of creation and even within ourselves as individuals.

The impact of sin in the Garden of Eden was immediate. For the first time, Adam and Eve were afraid of God and ashamed of their nakedness. Human beings would now have to work and sweat and suffer as they cared for the earth which was now cursed with thorns and thistles rather than blessed (Gen 3:17-18). The human race would continue through the pain of childbirth (Gen 3:16). As God had warned (Gen 2:17), sin brought death into the world. Human beings were now mortal (Gen 3:19). God in his mercy did not immediately destroy Adam and Eve. In fact, he clothed them in skins and blessed them with children. However, they would now one day return to the dust from which they had been created (Gen 3:19).

The book of Genesis then records the way sin multiplies. The first murder happened (Gen 4:1-16). Humanity became so evil that God destroyed all but the family of Noah in the great flood. However, behind all this were already glimpses of how God was working in grace and mercy to provide a means of restoring the relationship between himself and his creation. The promised saviour would come.

Sin has broken our relationship with God (Gen 3:7-10), and there is nothing we can do to restore that relationship. In fact, by nature, human beings now try to put themselves into the place of God and be like God (idolatry). Sin leads to internal turmoil within individuals (Rom 7:19), as they deal with guilt, bad conscience, fear, insecurity, despair and other results of the broken relationship with God.

Sin has its profound effect on human relationships with all of creation. Nature now tends to work against human beings (Gen 3:17-19), and can unleash massive destruction on human beings. Human beings also abuse their mandate to take care of and preserve creation.

The Bible teaches that as far as the natural relationship with God is concerned, all people are dead in sin (Eph 2:1-3; Col 2:13) until God rescues them and gives them new life through Jesus Christ. By choosing to disobey God, human beings lost their free will in spiritual matters. While we are free to choose in the sphere of everyday things (what to buy, where to go, whom to marry, and so on), we have no choice in spiritual matters. Human beings are unable to choose God and turn freely to him. By nature, because of original sin, they rebel against God. Luther, in his explanation of the third article in the *Small Catechism* puts it this way (SC 6; Kolb and Wengert: 355): 'I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel'. We cannot choose God – it is God, in his mercy, who chooses us.

### **'Original sin'**

The first sin contaminated the whole human race; it corrupted human nature completely (Eph 2:1-3). The Bible teaches that each person from conception and birth is in a state of sin (Ps 51:5). Jesus indicates that evil comes from within a person, from the heart (Mt 15:10-20 cf Gen 6:5). The sinful nature we inherit from our parents is not just neutral towards God; it is actively opposed to God (Rom 8:7). No one can ever live up to the standard of goodness God expects: perfect love for God and for all people. As history and experience teach, any human being is capable of the greatest wickedness (Mt 7:17).

The *Augsburg Confession* (AC 2,1-2; Kolb and Wengert: 36-38) summarises the biblical teaching on original sin as follows:

*It is taught among us that since the fall of Adam, all human beings who are born in the natural way are conceived and born in sin. This means that from birth they are full of evil lust and inclination and cannot by nature possess true fear of God and true faith in God. Moreover, this same innate disease and original [hereditary] sin is truly sin and condemns to God's eternal wrath all who are not in turn born anew through baptism and the Holy Spirit.*

Some people regard 'original sin' simply as a flaw in the human character which creates a propensity to sin. This means that the relationship between God and an individual is broken only when that persons 'sins'. The Biblical teaching, however, places the emphasis on the condition or state in which each individual is conceived and born – 'a radical

break with God' (Hebart 23). This is 'a deep-seated, evil, horrible, bottomless, unfathomable, and indescribable corruption of the entire human nature and all of its powers, particularly of the highest, most important powers of the soul, in mind, heart, and will'. This means that the 'fallen heart is by nature diametrically opposed to God and his highest commandments. Indeed, it is hostile to God, particularly in regard to divine, spiritual matters' (SD 1,11; Kolb and Wengert: 534). Original sin recognises that God cannot, and does not, ignore sin, and so, by nature, all human beings stand under the judgement of God. 'The wages of sin is death' (Rom 6:23).

The corruption of original sin is so 'deep,' says Luther (SA 1,3; Kolb and Wengert: 311), 'that reason does not comprehend it; rather it must be believed on the basis of the revelation in the Scriptures (Ps. 51[:5] and Rom. 5[:12]; Exod. 33[:20]; Gen. 3[:6ff]).' The recognition of original sin is by faith, not by reason.

While Lutheran theology insists on the reality of original sin, it does not attempt to explain how it is transmitted. It is part of belonging to the human race. The *Formula of Concord* (SD 1,2; Kolb and Wengert: 532) states:

*God is not a creator, author, or cause of sin. Instead, by the instigation of the devil, "through one human being, sin" (which is the work of the devil) "came into the world" (Rom.5[:12]; 1 John 3[:8]). To this day and in this state of corruption, God does not create and make sin in us, but along with human nature, which God still in this day and age creates in human beings, original sin is transmitted.*

What the doctrine of original sin asserts is that no person (except Jesus Christ) has been born without being in the state of sin. It is part of our fallen humanity.

According to the Bible, sin is what I **am**, and not simply what I **do** (Mt 15:19; Gen 8:21; 6:5). Jesus speaks of human beings as 'slaves to sin' (Jn 8:34). It is a condition which exists, whether or not a person commits 'sins' (Epit 1,21; Kolb and Wengert: 490). Luther describes it as being 'curved in on oneself', making ourselves rather than God the centre of our lives. However, because of what we **are**, this determines what we **do**. Our state of sin leads us to actual sins of thought, word and deed. These are the symptoms of original sin which has affected our whole being.

**Each person is a creation of God and a sinner at the same time**

Each person is a creation of God. Each person is also a sinner. This view of human beings as both a special creation of God and a sinner at the same time contains an internal paradox. However, it is important to make a clear distinction between human nature and original sin. Even after the advent of sin, human nature is still the creation of God. 'Scripture testifies not only that God created human nature before the fall but that even after the fall it remains the creature and work of God (Deut. 32[:6]; Isa. 45[:11]: 54[:5]; 64[:8]; Acts 17[:25,26]: Rev. 4[:11])' (SD 1,34; Kolb and Wengert: 537). On the other hand, original sin asserts that every human being is also a sinner and 'that there is nothing sound or uncorrupted left in the human body or soul, in its internal or external powers' (Epit 1,8; Kolb and Wengert: 488).

While this distinction is carefully made,

*only God alone can separate human nature and the corruption of this nature from each other. This separation will take place completely through death, at the resurrection, when the nature which we now have will rise and live eternally, without original sin (Epit 1,10; Kolb and Wengert: 489).*

The doctrine of original sin is sometimes misunderstood as devaluing the human individual. It can be the case that some people, including pastors and teachers, stress human sinfulness almost to the exclusion of everything else. Such a preoccupation with sin easily leads to low self-esteem and a negative view of the value of human beings as God's special creation still fulfilling God's purposes in their vocation. It can lead people to undervalue the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of people and to detract from the joy of salvation.

On the other hand, there is an increasing tendency to stress sin less than was done in the past. Some people are offended by the discussion of sin and see it as inappropriate and belonging to a previous era. Some Christian groups have abandoned the teaching of 'original sin' and that it makes people culpable before God. This is seen to be unfair and inconsistent with a loving God. There is a desire to present a much more positive view of human beings and their control over their own destinies.

However, the Scriptural doctrine of original sin can be seen as a very positive and affirming teaching. It emphasises the impossibility of trying to reach some level of perfection in this life (Rom 7:14-25; 1

Tim 1:15) and so keeps the focus on the central place of Jesus Christ in the lives of Christians. This frees them to recognise their place as sinners in the eyes of God (Lk 18:9-14) and relieves guilt and anxiety in attempting to please God to earn God's forgiveness. It means that they can be realistic about themselves and other people since all people share in original sin and can therefore be open and honest about their struggles with sin.

---

*Lutheran theology recognises the reality of sin, and we can expect the effects of sin to be obvious in the Lutheran school context. The expectation of some parents that 'these things shouldn't happen in a Lutheran school', is unrealistic. On the other hand, we need to ensure that within the Lutheran school community people feel safe and protected and that bullying and harassment and other forms of inappropriate behaviour are confronted and addressed. The attitude that 'I should be free to behave as I like' is not in fact an expression of freedom, but the response of an individual who is caught up in their own self-centredness. Based on the doctrine of 'original sin', Lutheran anthropology gives a very realistic and liberating approach to dealing with behaviour problems as it allows the behaviour to be addressed rather than judging the person. It recognises that all people who make up the Lutheran school community struggle with sin: each one is a sinner. The individual who has committed some breach of the accepted code of behaviour in the school can be loved and supported while the inappropriate action is dealt with.*

*In dealing with the results of sin in the Lutheran school, it may be helpful to recognise that although all sins show the breakdown of our relationship with God and in this sense all sins are 'equal' before God, some sins may be more dangerous spiritually for a particular individual than others and may therefore require particular attention in pastoral care of an individual. This is a pastoral issue rather than a theological one. Kolb (98-100) provides a helpful classification of actual sins which may be useful for pastoral care. These include sins of commission and omission, habitual sins and occasional sins, individual sins and communal sins.*

*The doctrine of original sin leads to a counter-cultural view of the human individual and therefore has a basic impact on the approach to dealing with students and staff in the Lutheran school. As schools attempt to respond to views of human beings on the basis of perspectives such as humanism, consumerism, new age philosophies, individualism, psychologies of 'self-actualisation' and moral autonomy, they will present a much more realistic and helpful perspective on the human condition.*

*Because the language of 'sin' is currently seen in such a negative light, it may be necessary to help parents understand how the Lutheran school deals with and speaks about the reality of sin. While the issue is not to be avoided, sensitivity in dealing with it will be necessary.*

---

### **'Theodicy' – innocent suffering and the justice of God**

The problem of evil has perplexed human beings throughout history. Various answers have been attempted from suggesting that there are two gods, one evil and one good, to arguing that evil is simply an illusion [the response of 'Christian Science']. Some people believe that we can control evil through processes such as meditation, while some contend that there is no good and loving god at all.

The 'theodicy' question is usually stated in this way: 'If God is truly good and completely powerful how can evil exist?' Many attempts have been made to answer this question, but no logical answer has been forthcoming. Kolb (80-85) provides a helpful analysis of some of these attempts.

The Bible is clear that evil exists but that God is in control (Is 45:7). The devil is not all powerful as is clearly shown, for example, in the story of Job and in the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11). When the disciples questioned Jesus about the man born blind (Jn 9:1-3) to try to determine whose sin had caused the blindness, Jesus' response does not correlate with the Jewish thinking of the time that suffering was somehow directly connected to a particular instance of sin. Jesus' response, 'He was born blind so that God's works might be revealed in him' indicates that God was working in this situation for God's own purposes.

Where is God in suffering? God is with people in their suffering. He suffers with them. He hears the suffering of creation and suffers with it (Rom 8:22-23). While the Bible does not give us all of the answers we would like to have about sin and evil in the world, the Bible has as its central message that God not only suffers *with* his creation but *for* his creation. [This emphasis will be explored more fully under ‘theology of the cross’ in the next chapter.]

There are some partial responses to the theodicy question which may be helpful particularly in the pastoral care of individuals. These are not responses which we gain through reason, but through faith on the basis of God’s revelation.

- God may *permit* evil but he is not the *cause* of evil. God opposes evil. However, God can and does use evil to serve his own good purposes (Gen 50:20). This is difficult to see when we are in a situation of suffering or adversity. It is therefore not helpful to suggest to someone who is suffering that ‘God is doing this for your good’. However, it is sometimes possible for people to recognise some positive outcomes some time after the crisis has passed. An extreme example of this is the response of Job, ‘The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord’ (Job 1:21).
- The Bible gives frequent examples of people who in their suffering cry out bitterly to God and complain vigorously against God. In fact the book of Psalms gives us a large number of so-called ‘complaint psalms’ where the individual is protesting bitterly to God (eg Ps 22; 43; 44; 74; 102). These complaints are not only protests against God and what is happening, but contain an expression of faith in God, despite the circumstances, and the recognition that God is a source of help and comfort. The book of Job in its entirety deals with this situation and the whole theodicy question.
- God does not use suffering as a form of punishment. People in the situation of grief or adversity can sometimes feel that God is angry with them or punishing them for some particular sin or problem. This was a common attitude in biblical times but as mentioned above, when Jesus’ disciples asked who had sinned in relation to the man born blind, Jesus clearly indicated that this was not the reason for his blindness, but so that God’s glory could be shown in him

(Jn 9:1-3). [Note, however, that some suffering may be a result of some self-inflicted behaviour such as alcoholism, drug addiction, or gambling, or the result of making poor, ill-informed choices.]

- While God does not use suffering to punish, he can use it to shape and discipline the lives of Christians (Heb 12:5-11). Suffering can help to develop Christian character (Rom 5:3-4) and to grow in hope and the certainty of faith (1 Pet 1:6-8). However, this does not mean that Christians should seek out suffering, or employ self-inflicted suffering as a way to attempt to gain some spiritual merit or enlightenment. We are saved by the innocent suffering of Jesus Christ, not by our own suffering.
- Suffering may be a situation in which an individual realises their mortality and need for God. In a situation of suffering a person may be more open to the work of the Holy Spirit than in times of success and prosperity. The willingness of people to turn to prayer in times of tragedy, illness and distress may be the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to create faith in an individual or strengthen growing or uncertain faith (Jn 11:4).
- Christians may be called on to suffer as they share in the suffering of others. Paul reminds Christians that they are called to 'carry one another's burdens' (Gal 6:2). In doing this they join Jesus as he too suffers with those who are suffering. Responding in a supportive role to someone who is suffering shows love and care in a particular way for that person.
- In dealing with the problem of suffering, St Paul warns against the dangers of sin and evil which can threaten the lives of Christians and through inappropriate behaviour lead them into situations of trouble and distress which may threaten to overwhelm them. In this situation, Paul says to the Christians in Corinth (1 Cor 10:12-13):

*If you think you are standing, watch out that you do not fall. No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.*

In the middle of suffering, this promise of God may be all that Christians have on which to cling. God is with them in that situation.



- Christians believe that God's ultimate way of dealing with sin and suffering is through the innocent suffering and death of his Son Jesus Christ. He certainly did not suffer for his own sin, but for the sins of the whole world. Because of this suffering of Jesus Christ for them, when God seems to be hidden or when God seems no longer to love, care and provide for them, or when it appears that God is powerless in the face of evil, then Christians need to hear again the gospel promises which are theirs through the suffering of Jesus Christ. Though everything seems to be against them, nevertheless God is on their side (Hab 3:17-19).

---

*We can anticipate that the effects of sin will be apparent in the lives of the people in the Lutheran school community and will be evident in times of adversity, suffering and even tragedy. In helping people to deal with these challenges, there are insights in the Bible which can help us. However, pastoral care needs to be taken in using these insights in particular situations so that we do not appear to be giving simplistic comfort or be seeming to minimise or trivialise the reality of human suffering and end up with religious 'answers' which are premature and shallow at best. We need to guard against creating confusion or a sense of guilt in a person who cannot share in the particular biblical insights. Sometimes we may simply have to listen to the anger or frustration which is being expressed without attempting any explanation or inappropriate words of comfort. Listening to and praying for the individual, may be the most powerful support we can give.*

*Within the Lutheran school community there may be situations where students and/or staff suffer because of their Christian faith. Anecdotal evidence from students suggests that this may be more common than might be expected. The words of Peter to Christians suffering persecution may be helpful here. He comforts and encourages those suffering for their faith by suggesting that suffering can both help to strengthen faith and be a witness through which others may be brought to faith by the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Pet 3:14-17; 4:12-16).*

---

## God's response to sin

God has two ways of dealing with the power of sin and the reality of evil in the world. Because God is holy, just, and loving, he cannot simply ignore human sin. Sin has its consequences.

One way God responds is by keeping sin and evil in check through the law. This is the realm of **justice**. God works through the law to ensure that his creation functions in the way it was created to function. God operates through human reason and custom, using coercion, reward and punishment. In this way God tries to preserve his creation and have people live together in peace and justice. However, sin still has its devastating impact.

God's second way of dealing with sin and evil was to send Jesus Christ so that the power of evil could be broken and sin could be forgiven. This is the realm of **mercy**. Through Jesus' death and resurrection, God has provided the only way for human beings to once again be in the state of harmony and fellowship which God had intended, a state of harmony with God, themselves, other people and the whole of creation.

### **Justification: the central focus of Lutheran theology**

While all Christian groups focus on how people are made right with God ['justification'] through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, Lutheran theology emphasises that justification is totally a gift of God's grace. It is entirely the work of God. The *Augsburg Confession* states it in this way (AC 4,1-2; Kolb and Wengert: 38-40):

*Furthermore, it is taught that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God through our merit, work, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God out of grace for Christ's sake through faith when we believe that Christ has suffered for us and that for his sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness in his sight, as St Paul says in Romans 3[:21-26] and 4[:5].*

The teaching of justification by grace, through faith, on account of Christ is the central emphasis of Lutheran theology. Luther himself was quite clear about this. In his commentary on Galatians (1535) he wrote (LW 26: 283): 'As I often warn, therefore, the doctrine of justification must be learned diligently. For in it are included all the other doctrines

of our faith; and if it is sound, all the others are sound as well.’ He also insisted (SA 2,5; Kolb and Wengert: 301), ‘Nothing in this article [that faith alone justifies us] can be conceded or given up.’

The reason that Lutheran theology stresses this teaching of justification is because by nature human thinking works predominantly with concepts of reward and punishment. Through life experiences people are accustomed to think conditionally. It is difficult for human beings to accept that they cannot contribute in any way to earning some merit in the eyes of God towards their salvation. Lutheran theology asserts that there are really only two possible answers to the question, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ (Acts 16:30). Either God accepts the person because of what the person does, or else God accepts the person, despite who that person is, because of what God does for that person. Lutheran theology, reflecting biblical teaching, allows only for the second answer: God accepts the sinner because of what God has done in Jesus Christ. God declares that sinners are righteous in his sight through their faith in Christ Jesus. And because God’s word does what it says [it is ‘performative’] what God declares, happens (Is 55: 10-11). His promises are certain.

### **By grace**

The way in which God responds in mercy to sin is a gift of sheer grace. Forgiveness which is offered in Jesus Christ is given by God completely without conditions, freely, with no strings attached (Hebart: 34-42). God forgives sinners and accepts them as his children not because of anything which they can do but because of what Jesus has already done for them. St Paul is very clear when he says that ‘while we still were sinners’ (Rom 5:8) and regarded as ‘ungodly’ (Rom 4:5; 5:6), ‘Christ died for us’. We are saved by grace through faith because of Jesus Christ (Rom 3:24).

Human beings find it difficult to accept the grace of God. God’s grace does not depend on any prior action or attitude on their part, nor does God look for ‘good qualities’ or the potential for change in their lives before he is ready to forgive. However, people want to contribute something to their own salvation. They feel that they need to take the first step towards God through their own ‘free will’ and ‘make a decision for Christ’. However, because of its understanding of original sin, Lutheran theology concludes (SD 2,18; Kolb and Wengert: 547)

*that on the basis of its own natural powers free will not only cannot effect anything or cooperate in any way in its own conversion or in the attaining of righteousness and salvation: it cannot follow the Holy Spirit (who offers grace and salvation through the gospel), believe in him, or give him its "yes". Quite the contrary, on the basis of its inborn, evil, rebellious character the will defiantly resists God and God's will if not enlightened and ruled by God's Spirit.*

God's offer of forgiveness can be received by an individual only through the work of the Holy Spirit. It is all God's doing. The only 'freedom' which an individual exercises in relation to salvation, is the freedom to reject the grace of God. However, since it is God's will that all people come to faith and that no one is rejected (1 Tim 2:4; 2 Pet 3:9), God continually offers the gift of faith to all. The starting point for faith lies with God's call in his grace through the word of God and the sacraments, through which the Holy Spirit works to awaken saving faith, and then to strengthen it (Phil 2:13) despite all difficulties and threats (Hebart: 28-33).

The parable of the labourers in the vineyard (Mt 20:1-16) illustrates something of the mystery of God's unconditional grace. All those who worked in the vineyard received the same wage, whether they had worked the whole day or only for one hour. It can sometimes be difficult for people to accept the overwhelming generosity of God in bringing people into his kingdom. This may be particularly so for those who feel that they have somehow earned some 'status' in God's kingdom through their great piety or great 'good works', that is the good things which they do.

---

*While the centrality of the theology of grace needs to be emphasised continually in the Lutheran school, it is important to be sensitive pastorally to students who say that they 'have made a decision for Christ'. This is the way they understand what has happened: they did not believe, but now they do, and they feel that this is due to their decision. However, while their coming to faith is to be celebrated, they will need careful and sensitive guidance to see the role of the Holy Spirit in their 'decision' so that their confidence rests on the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives and not on their own decision or action. There is a difference here in looking at 'coming to faith' psychologically, pastorally, and theologically.*

---

### Through faith alone

The offer of forgiveness and salvation comes by the grace of God. It is received by faith alone (Rom 3:21-28). Faith is (SD 3,10; Kolb and Wengert: 564)

*the only means through which we lay hold of them [forgiveness and salvation], accept them, apply them to ourselves, and appropriate them. Faith itself is a gift of God, through which we acknowledge Christ our redeemer in the Word of the gospel and trust in him. Only because of his [Christ's] obedience does God the Father forgive our sins by grace, regard us as upright and righteous, and give us eternal salvation.*

Faith is given by God. It is not some human achievement but the good gift of the Holy Spirit which takes hold of the promise of the gospel and accepts what Jesus Christ has done. It is not therefore some 'good work' on the part of the believer but simply receiving what God offers. Luther in his explanation of the Third Article in the *Small Catechism* puts it this way (Kolb and Wengert: 355-356):

*I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith.*

Lutheran theology stresses that it is faith alone which receives the grace of God. However, the term 'faith' can be understood in various ways.

- 'Faith' can mean a summary of the Christian teaching [*fides quae*']. Used in this way it refers to the content of faith – the things which Christians believe as, for example, confessed in the Nicene Creed. Anyone can know the content of the Christian faith whether or not they believe it. Nobody is saved simply by knowing what the church teaches.
- 'Faith' can refer not only to knowing what the Bible teaches, but also to giving assent to it. Such a person may agree with what is taught but does not commit to those teachings so that they become part of their whole being.
- The 'faith' which receives the grace of God is given by the Holy Spirit. It is the faith by which a person is saved [*fides qua*']. This faith leads the

individual to trust and have confidence and certainty in a transforming personal relationship with God. It recognises that what the Bible teaches about God in the past is part of the reality of the individual now and for eternity. It is faith which clings to the promises of God. In his teaching in 'the beatitudes' (Mt 5:3-11), Jesus affirms this faith in those who, through the work of the Holy Spirit, are 'poor in spirit', who 'hunger and thirst for righteousness, who are 'meek', and 'pure in heart', open towards God so that he can fill them with his grace.

Some Christians say that they have been 'saved by faith'. Speaking in this way can give the impression that their forgiveness is based on their faith as a 'good work' on their part. They see their faith as a precondition for receiving the gift of forgiveness. It seems that they have by their own decision put their faith in Jesus Christ. However, faith and forgiveness are both the gift of grace given through the Holy Spirit. Lutheran theology speaks very precisely: 'We are saved **by** grace **through** faith **on account of** Christ'.

The comfort in all of this for Christians is that their life with Christ is not dependent on the ebb and flow of their faith, but on the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Their God-given faith allows them to hang on to the promises of God just as a drowning person clings onto a rope thrown to him from a boat. The hand can only trust in the rope and receive the rescue it offers.

While our concern in this chapter is on God's response to sin, God not only declares people righteous by grace through faith but, as will be developed further when considering the work of the Holy Spirit, God works through the Spirit to transform believers (Rom 12:2) so that they can produce the fruit of faith (Col 3:12-17; Gal 5:6b; 22-23) and do the 'good works' God has prepared for them to do (Eph 2:10).

### **On account of Christ**

As has been already stated above, salvation for sinful human beings is possible only because of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Lutheran theology stresses (SD 3,9: Kolb and Wengert: 563)

*that poor sinful people are justified before God ... on the basis of sheer grace, because of the sole merit, the entire obedience, and the bitter suffering, death, and resurrection of our Lord Christ alone, whose obedience is reckoned to us as righteousness.*

Through Christ alone salvation is possible. He alone is ‘the way, and the truth, and the life’ (Jn 14:6). No-one comes to the Father except through him. [The implications of this will be explored more fully in the next chapter].

---

*As will be explored more fully later, Lutheran schools need to be vigilant that the teaching of justification by grace through faith on account of Christ remains central in the life and teaching of the school. Because of the diverse nature of the Lutheran school community, there will be different attitudes towards the need for conditions in addition to ‘faith alone’ to ensure salvation. Some people may look for acceptance of certain biblical teachings, or for particular emotional experiences or spiritual gifts or visible signs of ‘blessing’. Others may insist on evidence of ‘gospel values’, or confuse the message of justification with particular expressions or practices of the Christian faith and life such as specific views on morality or ethics. Care will be needed with statements such as ‘the Lutheran school is gospel-centred’ to ensure that the real message of the gospel is not obscured and that the gospel is not presented merely as information or a list of moralistic rules and regulations rather than a call by the Holy Spirit to a relationship with Jesus Christ. The gospel is, and always will be, a free gift from God for all.*

---

## God speaks through law and gospel

As indicated above, God responds to sin in two ways, with justice or with mercy. This is shown clearly in the way God’s speaks in his word and is active in the world. He does this through law and gospel. God is seen as operating with the law, through which he maintains and preserves the world, but also particularly exposes sin. And God operates with the gospel, through which he reveals salvation, and through which he declares the forgiveness of sins. God’s revelation in his word and his actions addresses the individual both as law and as gospel, as demand and as promise, as condemnation and as forgiveness, as death and as life.

The proper distinction of law and gospel provides a basic hermeneutic for the interpretation of God’s word and the study of theology from a

Lutheran perspective. It ensures that a clear focus is maintained on justification by grace through faith on account of Christ and it ensures that the dialectic tension between law and gospel is preserved.

### **The law**

The Lutheran Confessions speak of the law 'in its strict sense' as (SD 5,17; Kolb and Wengert: 584):

*a divine teaching in which the righteous, unchanging will of God revealed how human beings were created in their nature, thoughts, words, and deeds to be pleasing and acceptable to God. This law also threatens those who transgress it with God's wrath and temporal and eternal punishments.*

Lutheran theology has defined three purposes or uses for which God's law has been given; the political (or civil) use of the law, the theological use of the law and the so-called 'third use' of the law. In its political use, the law is seen to operate like a fence or a curb keeping God's creation functioning as he intended. The theological use sees the law functioning as a mirror which reveals to human beings their sinful state. The 'third use' of the law is perceived as a guidebook in which the law acts as a signpost to show Christians how they can live their lives by the power of the Holy Spirit.

### **The political use of the law**

The political use of the law is a gift of God for the whole world whether people recognise it or not. Its purpose is to provide order, peace and harmony for everyone's benefit. It has been given by God to try to ensure that God's creation functions in the way it was created to function.

God's law operates within creation itself through the laws of nature which determine, for example, gravity, seasons and tides. God works through the law to keep sin and evil in check. It is God's 'instruction book' to describe how God has intended people to live and work together in peace, harmony and justice in the world. Through the law, God protects what is important for human life and happiness in the world. God preserves such structures of society as marriage and family, government and social order. For example, in the ten commandments, God protects family relationships, life, sexual relationships, property, and a person's reputation. To do all of this, God operates through human reason and custom, through the government and other agencies.



However, because of sin, this includes the use, as necessary, of coercion, reward and punishment.

While human beings are capable of what the Lutheran Confessions call 'civil righteousness' by trying to obey the civil law and by living in peace and harmony with one another and attempting to ensure justice, security and happiness for all, such behaviour does not earn any merit with God. Living by the law with fellow human beings on the 'horizontal level' does not change the relationship between human beings and God on the 'vertical level'.

---

*An understanding of the political use of the law is crucial for establishing and maintaining a climate in the Lutheran school conducive to the process of education. Since the purpose of the law in this sense is seen as providing a safe and structured environment to promote human interaction and to allow the processes of society to function, the Lutheran school need not apologise for requiring appropriate conduct within its community. This expectation of appropriate conduct applies equally to all members of the school community, whether they recognise this as the political use of God's law, or simply as 'common sense' for the effective functioning of the school community. In applying the political function of the law in this way, teachers are able to carry out their vocation as teachers, and students can pursue their vocation as students. Both students and teachers benefit from the practical application of this function of the law.*

*However, seeing God's law as a way to maintain peace and good order in the school in no way excuses inappropriate forms of discipline, especially any approach which is humiliating or damaging to the student. It is important that creating a sense of guilt is not used in order to try to modify behaviour.*

*The recognition that the political use of the law functions in this way, does not determine the process for establishing appropriate guidelines for the Lutheran school environment nor the consequences for students or staff of actions which transgress these guidelines. In developing a behaviour management policy, Lutheran schools are free to investigate approaches developed from the results of research*

*and writing in this area by examining them in the light of theology, particularly biblical anthropology. Whatever process is employed to determine a behaviour management policy in the Lutheran school, the Lutheran understanding of the political function of the law does not provide an excuse for inappropriate approaches to discipline, but rather the application of sanctified common sense.*

*The Lutheran understanding of the political function of the law will guard against treating each discipline problem as an automatic situation for the application of law in its theological function. There has been a tendency at times in Lutheran schools to treat all offences, no matter how minor, as situations for confession and absolution. This can lead to students seeing God in terms of the ultimate disciplinarian in the school to be feared and avoided, rather than the God who loves, accepts and forgives. Students become plagued with guilty consciences about rather trivial matters if every breach of discipline is regarded as a sin against God and an attack on the teacher as God's representative. While all breaches of discipline show the underlying sinful nature of human beings, some offenses can simply be dealt with as offenses against good order, a lack of common sense, or just thoughtlessness. However, other situations which may place the community at risk include flagrant challenges to authority, deliberate disobedience, serious breaches of morality or complete disrespect for what is seen as holy in the work and life of the school. These latter situations will probably lead to dealing with the theological function of God's law.*

*There may also be issues relating to staff or other members of the school community which need careful consideration in respect to the appropriate use of the law.*

---

### **The theological use of the law**

Lutheran theology sees the main function of the law as exposing sin and its consequences. Like a mirror, the law in its theological use shows human beings that they are unable to live up to the demands of God's law and convicts them of sin and brings them face to face with God as judge (Rom 3:19-10; 5:13). The law, carrying out its theological

function, ‘always accuses us; it always shows that God is angry’ (Ap 4,128; Kolb and Wengert: 141). It shows human beings that they are powerless to save themselves by keeping God’s law and that God must therefore intervene. The law provides an excellent diagnosis of the human condition, but offers no cure. That comes only through the gospel (Rom 6:23).

Luther in The Smalcald Articles (SA 3,2; Kolb and Wengert: 311-312) suggests that there are three responses which the law evokes in people – rebellion, self-righteous hypocrisy and despair.

The law can lead people to rebel against the law. As St Paul argues in Romans (7:7-12), human beings can deliberately do what they know the law forbids. Knowing that something is forbidden can make it much more attractive. Others may rebel simply because they take pleasure in doing so.

A second response to the theological use of the law relates to the struggles Jesus had in his own day with the Pharisees. They felt that they were able to keep God’s law perfectly and despised those who did not. Jesus exposed their self-righteous hypocrisy in the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector (Lk 18:9-14; see also Mt 23:1-16). It can be easy for some Christians to fall into this trap when they look at God’s law in terms of a clearly prescribed catalogue of rules and regulations. They judge that they are doing very well in living by these laws and criticise others whom they judge to be doing so less successfully. They can be in danger of believing that their ‘good works’ merit God’s favour.

The major purpose and function of the theological use of the law is to reveal to human beings their broken relationship with God as a result of original sin. The law exposes that they do not follow God’s law and live as God intended and that they need to turn to God for forgiveness as the only way out of their sinful rebellion (Gal 3:24). People are bound in their state of sin until God frees them through his forgiveness and gives them peace through faith in Jesus Christ.

Lutheran theology (SA 3,2; Kolb and Wengert: 312) summaries this teaching as follows:

*The foremost office or power of the law, is that it reveals inherited sin and its fruits. It shows human beings into what utter depths their nature has fallen and how completely corrupt it is. The law must say to them that they*

*neither have nor respect any god or that they worship foreign gods. This is something that they would not have believed before without the law. Thus they are terrified, humbled, despondent and despairing. They anxiously desire help but do not know where to find it; they start to become enemies of God, to murmur, etc. This is what is meant by Romans [4:15]: "The law brings wrath," and Romans 5 [:20], "Sin becomes greater through the law."*

This despair which the law produces when people recognise their sin does not in itself lead to forgiveness. Without the gospel, it cannot lead to God's grace and forgiveness.

*For it is most certain that in the preaching of repentance, the proclamation of the law, which only terrorizes and condemns consciences, is not enough. It is also necessary to add the gospel, namely, that sins are freely remitted on account of Christ and that we receive the forgiveness of sins by faith (Ap 4,257; Kolb and Wengert 160).*

In this way, the law in its theological function prepares the way for the gospel. The Lutheran Confessions refer to this as 'an alien work of God to terrify, because the proper work of God is to make alive and console' (Ap 12,51; Kolb and Wengert 195; Epi 5,10; Kolb and Wengert: 501). God helps people realise their condition of sin and their need for a saviour [his 'alien work' of judgment] before they are ready to receive his message of mercy and forgiveness [his 'proper work', of grace and forgiveness]. [In Lutheran theology, God's 'alien work' is also known as his 'strange work' or his 'other work' and his 'proper work' is also called his 'real work'.]

---

*The theological use of the law is fundamental if a Lutheran school wishes to maintain a strong gospel focus. There is the need to take sin seriously in order that the freeing power of the gospel is experienced in the school. It is important that sin is seen as a spiritual issue and not simply explained away as some human failing or moral aberration or the result of unfortunate child-rearing practices or other developmental experiences. On the one hand, the theological function of the law must be heard by those who are not yet committed Christians in the school community so that the Holy Spirit can bring them, too, to receive the forgiveness of the gospel. There will, unfortunately, be those who reject this*

*offer of the Spirit. On the other hand, those who profess their faith in Jesus Christ need to be reminded of those things in their lives which may lead them away from God and the confidence they have in God's love and grace. The gospel is 'good news' for those who know their need for forgiveness.*

*The theological use of the law is critical in the process of contrition, forgiveness, repentance and restoration and the practice of confession and absolution in the Lutheran school [see 'confession and absolution' later in this chapter].*

*In using the theological function of God's law it is important that the process does not simply build up guilt in the person, for example by telling them to 'try harder'. The outcome must be the freeing message of the gospel. Students need to see the difference between forgiveness and the consequences of their actions which may still follow with the aim of encouraging more appropriate behaviour in the future.*

*There may be situations in the school community where it will be important to distinguish between what is legal in society and what is moral according to God's revelation. There may be issues here where the understanding in the student's home is different from that in the school.*

---

### **The so-called 'third use of the law' – its pedagogical or teaching function**

Lutheran theology recognises that for the Christian, the law of God can fulfil another function, the so-called 'third use of the law' (Epit 6; SD 6; Kolb and Wengert: 502-503; 587-591). This sees God's law as a guide or signpost for Christians to help them to live a Christian life by the power of the Holy Spirit. It serves a pedagogical, didactic, or teaching function. It shows Christians how they are now free to live as Christians.

*When people are born again through the Spirit of God and set free from the law (that is, liberated from its driving powers and driven by the Spirit of Christ), they live according to the unchanging will of God, as comprehended in the law, and do everything, insofar as they are reborn, from a free and merry spirit. Works of this kind are not, properly speaking, works of the*

*law but works and fruits of the Spirit, or, as Paul calls them, “the law of the mind” and “the law of Christ.” For such people are “no longer under law but under grace,” as St. Paul says in Romans 8 [7:23; 6:14]. (SD 6,17; Kolb and Wengert: 590).*

Some Christians believe that since they are motivated by the Holy Spirit, they no longer need the guidance of God's law. They have been freed from the demands of the law and like a healthy tree they produce good fruit: the Spirit produces the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-25). However, as will be developed further when looking in chapter seven at the tension of 'saint and sinner', in this life Christians continue to struggle with their inherent sinful nature and so need guidance to try to keep that nature in check and live in keeping with the will of God.

*The Holy Spirit uses the law to instruct the reborn and to show and demonstrate to them in the Ten Commandments what is the “acceptable will of God” (Rom. 12[:2]) and in which good works, “which God prepared beforehand,” they are “supposed to walk” (Eph. 2[:10]) (SD 6,12; Kolb and Wengert: 589).*

One of the difficulties of speaking about the law in this way as a guide or norm for Christian life is that it can so easily slide into the theological use of the law. What is intended as a guide is heard instead as the accusing voice of the law. For this reason, some theologians prefer to avoid the terminology 'third use of the law' and speak in terms such as 'living the Christian life by the power of the Holy Spirit' or 'doing the will of God with the help of the Spirit'.

---

*There will be various situations in a Lutheran school, for example in class devotions, where both Christians and non-Christians are being addressed simultaneously. It will therefore be crucial to deal with the law of God as appropriate and relevant for these different participants.*

*As indicated above, the 'third use of the law' is appropriate only for those who profess to be Christians and therefore look to the help of the Holy Spirit to live their lives as Christians. It is crucial that such members of the Lutheran school community hear God's word as encouraging them to continue in their growth as Christians and not as placing new burdens on them. They have been freed by*

*Christ to live their lives of love to God and love to others. There may be times when as Christians they need to hear the theological use of the law expose the effect of sin in their lives so that they can experience again the comfort and joy of forgiveness. This is where confession and absolution are appropriate. However, this is not the function of the law in its pedagogical or didactic function.*

*There needs to be care and sensitivity in the pastoral care of students in situations where behavioural problems arise. While all members of the Lutheran school community will be expected to operate under the political use of the law for the safety and well-being of the whole school community, the appeal to 'live the life of a Christian' is appropriate only for those who profess to be Christians. The practice of 'restorative justice' which is proving to be very helpful in a number of Lutheran schools is certainly appropriate for all members of the school community, both students and staff, but incorporating confession and absolution will be appropriate only when individuals respect how God is working in this rite.*

---

### **The gospel: God's declaration of forgiveness – God's 'proper work'**

The word 'gospel' ['good news'] is used in two main ways both in the Scriptures themselves and in theological writing.

- In its broader use, as for example, when speaking of 'the gospel of Jesus Christ' (Mk 1:1), the word 'gospel' refers to all of the teaching of Jesus Christ in his public ministry on earth and in the New Testament. In this case, the term includes Jesus' teaching about the law as well as his proclamation of God's mercy and grace.
- In the strict sense, especially when speaking about 'law and gospel' (Epit 5,7: Kolb and Wengert: 501):

*the gospel is ...strictly speaking, nothing else than a proclamation of comfort and a joyous message which does not rebuke nor terrify but comforts consciences against the terror of the law, directs them solely to Christ's merit, and lifts them up again through the delightful proclamation of the grace and favour of God, won through Christ's merit.*

Through the gospel, God declares that sins are forgiven and that the relationship with God is restored. Through faith, given as a gift by the

Holy Spirit, people are freed from their sin and can live at peace with God, themselves, their fellow human beings and the whole of creation. God's grace given in Jesus Christ is totally undeserved and free. Jesus takes each person's sin on himself on the cross and gives them in exchange his holiness (Rom 5:8-11).

Thus, as has been expressed in an earlier chapter, it is the gospel which gives Scripture its centre and heart. However, the gospel is not simply teaching **about** Jesus Christ nor a system of dogmatic truths. It is a call to each individual person to receive through faith what God has done in Jesus Christ. At the same time, as will be explored more fully in the next chapter, salvation in Christ has occurred through the historical event of the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. However, it is only when a person sees that Christ died for him or for her, that the gospel has its effect in the life of that person.

---

*Lutheran schools have sometimes designated themselves as gospel-centred schools. Lutheran schools need to reflect carefully on how the gospel is heard within the school. While the language of 'gospel' may be present, are the members of the school community hearing clearly the call to faith in the saving work of Christ or are other factors clouding the clear message of the gospel?*

- *Is Jesus being presented as an example of godly living rather than as saviour and Lord?*
- *Is there an emphasis on teaching **about** Jesus and the gospel without calling people to a relationship with him?*
- *Is there an attitude that the gospel means automatic forgiveness without any consequences?*
- *Is the language of 'gospel values' being used which equates the gospel with right living [the law]?*
- *Is the gospel being seen in terms of social justice principles and practice?*
- *Is the gospel being confused with particular cultural ['Lutheran'] expressions of the Christian faith and life?*



*What understanding of ‘gospel’ is intended in the document ‘The Lutheran Church of Australia and its schools’ when it states that the Lutheran school provides ‘a formal education in which the gospel of Jesus Christ informs all learning and teaching, all human relationships, and all activities in the school’?*

---

### **The necessity for the proper distinction of law and gospel**

While the law and the gospel can be clearly defined, the danger of confusing law and gospel is a very real and present one. Lutheran theology stresses that law and gospel are to be carefully and constantly taught. They must be clearly distinguished, but not separated from each other. This distinction of law and gospel is so critical because any mingling, confusion or tangling together of the teaching of law and gospel always impinges negatively on the clear message of the gospel.

Crucial here is the recognition that whenever law and gospel are confused, it is the gospel which suffers and loses its impact. The tendency is inevitably to diminish the radical nature of the promise of the gospel and to add various conditions which need to be fulfilled before the benefits of the gospel can be obtained. As will be argued below when dealing with various forms of the misuse of the law such as legalism and moralism, such conditions obscure the gospel under a cloud of human intentions and activities. There is the danger that the gospel will be heard in terms of law and the joy and comfort of the gospel will be lost.

There are problems, too, if law and gospel are separated. If people are confronted with God’s law without the message of the gospel, the law can lead to pride and arrogance, rebellion, or despair as mentioned above under the theological use of the law. Unless a person knows the grace of God, Satan can turn this despair into despair of God and a feeling that nothing can restore a relationship with God because the person is so unworthy.

Without the law, the radical nature of the gospel is lost. People have to become aware through the law of their need of the gospel. Without this, the gospel falls on deaf ears, becomes anaemic and loses its power. Without the diagnosis of sin, the gospel is not heard as ‘good news’ (Mt 9:12).

In speaking about law and gospel it is important to recognise that law and gospel are not on the same level. Earlier they were designated as God's 'alien work' (the law) and God's 'proper work' (the gospel). The law serves the gospel, which is God's final and definitive revelation in Jesus Christ (Heb 1:1), by leading to the gospel. St. Paul says (Gal 3:24-25), 'The law was our disciplinarian until Christ came, so that we might be justified by faith. But now that faith has come, we are no longer subject to a disciplinarian, for in Christ Jesus you are children of God through faith.' The law serves the gospel and is subordinate to it.

---

*In working with law and gospel in the Lutheran school it is important to recognise that the same word of the Bible can be heard as law by one person and as gospel by another. The Holy Spirit leads the individual to hear the word as is appropriate for them. Even a phrase like 'Jesus died for you' can be heard as law by a person who feels that they are not 'good enough' to be included in Jesus' love and grace. Sensitivity is needed in trying to recognise how an individual is hearing the word of God in a classroom situation or in individual pastoral counselling.*

---

### **Misuse of the law**

Human beings have a natural tendency to try to use the law as a rational way to try to please God and earn forgiveness. It can be difficult to accept the radical nature of God's grace and leave their relationship with God entirely in God's hands. However, as indicated above, these attempts lead them to losing the comfort and freedom which they have in the gospel. The following are some of the ways this can happen:

- dogmatism: when people give the impression that their relationship with God depends on their knowledge and understanding of theology and on accepting 'correct' doctrinal formulations ['right understanding and knowledge'];
- moralism: trying to earn God's favour through correct moral patterns of behaviour or trying to follow the example of Jesus as a 'good teacher' ['right behaviour'];
- legalism: giving the impression that one can earn God's approval through obeying the law – using the law as motivation, especially

through the use of rewards and punishment [‘right will and intentions’];

- emotionalism: relying on particular types of religious experience or having the ‘right feelings’ about God as necessary for fellowship with God. This can influence approaches to worship [‘right feelings’]

---

*In themselves, being concerned as Christians about our understanding of the faith, our behaviour as a Christian, our will and intentions and our emotions and feelings are an important part of living as a Christian. The problems begin when it is considered that somehow these things will earn favour with God and contribute to salvation. The freedom of the gospel is turned into law.*

*An issue which can lead to considerable discussion in a Lutheran school is the use of suspension and expulsion for repeated serious offences. This can often lead to some confusion between law and gospel. While the school will wish to keep the focus on the gospel in dealing with offending students or staff, the gospel cannot become an excuse for ignoring inappropriate behaviour. God does not simply ignore sin. It cost the life and death of Jesus Christ.*

*The following are factors which need to be considered carefully:*

- *In the case of repeated offences, can prior instances which have resulted in a process leading to forgiveness be taken into consideration in dealing with a new instance of the same offence? Can there be an increasing level of penalty for dealing with such situations especially if counselling and advice has been given to the student? Is an approach of ‘three strikes and you are out’ or a demerit point system consistent with appropriate use of law and gospel?*
- *If suspension and expulsion are applied, is the school simply recognising that the student has rejected the school and all for which it stands, and formalising that situation?*
- *What is the responsibility of the school towards a student who has been suspended or expelled? As Jesus indicates in Matthew 18: 6-35, it can be necessary to exclude an individual from a*

*community for the good of the individual so that the person becomes the focus of care like the lost sheep of the parable. This is the way Jesus treated Gentiles and tax collectors (Mt 18:17 cf Zacchaeus, Lk 19:1-10). Should there be a rite of restoration for a student who has been suspended and who is again taking his or her place in the school community?*

*In all these situations, how can a Lutheran school keep a focus on God's forgiveness and love and care for the individual while maintaining a proper distinction between law and gospel?*

---

## Confession and absolution

Individuals who have offended against another person or have harmed them in any way may look for reconciliation with that person by confessing their wrong-doing and asking for forgiveness and reconciliation. This is the basis of 'restorative justice' which is practised in some Lutheran schools.

Christians recognise that when they offend against another person, they also offend against God. They acknowledge that they sin against God, not only in what they do, but also in what they think and say. Confession and absolution is the means provided by God for Christians to confess their sin and to receive forgiveness from God. In doing this, Christians admit their sinfulness, confess their faith in the forgiveness God gives through Jesus Christ and resolve with the help of the Holy Spirit to live a life of repentance by trying to live as God intends ['third use of the law'].

The practice of confession and absolution is sometimes referred to as the 'office of the keys'. This relates to the authority Christ has given to his followers to forgive sins or not to forgive sins (Mt 16:19; 18:18; Jn 20:22-23). Christ has authorised his church to use two 'keys' on his behalf: the key to 'loose' sins, forgiving those who repent of their sins, and the key to 'bind' sins, declaring not forgiven the sins of those who do not repent. For much of his ministry, Luther regarded confession and absolution as a third sacrament because it conveyed in a very direct way the forgiveness of God.

### **Public and private confession and absolution**

Pastors are responsible on the basis of their ordination to exercise the office of the keys publicly. Public confession and absolution is normally part of the worship service of a Lutheran congregation. The people confess their sins publicly, and God forgives them through the words of the pastor who speaks on behalf of God.

However, any Christian may hear the confession of any other individual who wishes to confess their sin to God through private confession and give them absolution and assure them that God in Christ has forgiven their sins (Mt 18:15-18).

Private confession and absolution occurs when Christians go to their pastor or to another Christian in private to confess their sins and receive absolution. This can be a very powerful practice when people are troubled by particular sins in their life. They hear words of forgiveness related directly to those things which are heavy on their consciences. This goes far beyond counselling [although it may arise within it], because it is letting God deal with their sin rather than trying to ignore it, cover it over, or deal with it themselves.

### **Confession**

When individuals confess their sins publicly or privately, they acknowledge what God has already said in his word – that all people are sinners who have sinned against God and their fellow human beings (Ps 51:4-5). Confessing their sins is something which Christians do, but it is not a ‘good work’ which ‘scores points’ with God. They are confessing so that they can receive God’s sin-destroying and life-giving words of forgiveness.

In the Small Catechism (SC 4,15-29; Kolb and Wengert: 360-362), Luther teaches that before God believers need to confess all of their sins, even those of which they are not aware. However, in private confession, they should confess only those sins of which they are aware and which trouble their conscience. Here Luther suggests that individuals use the ten commandments as a mirror to show them the particular sins in their lives.

## Absolution

Absolution is the heart and centre of confession and absolution. Individuals confess and so receive forgiveness. Through the pastor, or through a fellow Christian, they hear God himself pronounce forgiveness. Jesus says, 'Whoever listens to you, listens to me.' (Lk 10:16).

*[Note: It is very important in public worship that when there has been confession of sins, the words of absolution are clearly proclaimed. God's word does what it says: God forgives through the words of absolution. Sometimes the absolution may be missing, or it is expressed as a wish or prayer ('May God have mercy and forgive your sins') rather than as a declaration of God's forgiveness ('For Christ's sake, God forgives your sins'.)]*

Although the words of absolution are spoken, forgiveness is received only by faith. This presupposes a life of repentance [see chapter 7]. In this way, Christians live in their baptism. Daily through 'contrition and repentance' the sinful nature is 'drowned' and the 'new person ... come[s] forth and rise[s] up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever' (SA 4,12 Kolb and Wengert: 360).

Christ has also given the authority not to forgive sins but to bind them to the conscience of the impenitent person. When this very serious step is taken, it is always with pastoral care and concern and the prayer that through this very solemn act the sinner will realise the severity of their situation, confess their sins and receive absolution. The final aim is always for the freeing message of the gospel to be heard and received.

---

*The practice of confession and absolution needs careful handling in the Lutheran school context because it is relevant only for those who have faith in Jesus Christ and his saving forgiveness. There is a danger of mockery of the forgiveness of God if individuals see it simply as a way of pleasing authorities in the school and avoiding consequences for their actions. Confession and absolution is a powerful demonstration of the theological use of the law and the declaration of forgiveness. It is allowing God to deal with sin rather than ignoring it or trying to justify it or explain it away. It can be a crucial final step in the practice of 'restorative justice' in the school.*

*It may also be the outcome of a process of pastoral counselling in dealing with particular situations which trouble individuals. Students who do not regard themselves as Christians but who see confession and absolution in action may be led by the Holy Spirit to seek this comfort in their own lives.*

---

# CHAPTER 5

## God as a human being and theology of the cross

---

Christians experience God as a God who speaks and acts. God's clearest speaking and most profound action is in Jesus Christ, God as a human being (Heb 1:1-4). Jesus Christ shows to human beings the real heart of God – a heart of love, compassion, grace and forgiveness.

### Who is Jesus Christ?

The most important question for any person to answer is this, 'Who is Jesus Christ?'. Jesus addressed this question to his disciples at Caesarea Philippi after people had been expressing conflicting views about who he was (Mt 16:13-15): 'But who do you say that I am?'. Peter replied, 'You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God' (Mt 16:16).

At Jesus' trial before the high priest, the high priest said to Jesus, 'I put you under oath before the living God, tell us if you are the Messiah, the Son of God.' Jesus said to him, 'You have said so.' (Mt 26:63-64).

Either Jesus Christ is who he claims to be, or he is a disillusioned fraud. Christians believe that how this question is answered determines not only how they live in this life, but where they spend eternity. Not only do they have the testimony of Jesus himself, the confession of Peter and also that of Thomas (Jn 20:28-29), but the four gospels and the rest of the New Testament have been written with the conviction that Jesus is indeed the Christ, the Son of God, who came as the savior of the world. The purpose of this biblical witness is to lead people to make the confession, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that 'Jesus is Lord' (1 Cor 12:3) and to come into a personal relationship with Jesus and accept his claim on their lives.



Theology has looked at this question from two interrelated perspectives. One perspective looks at the person of Jesus Christ as both divine and human. In theological terminology, this is referred to as ‘christology’. The other perspective, called ‘soteriology’ [the doctrine of salvation], focuses on the work of Jesus Christ. However, who Jesus is and what Jesus does are incorporated inseparably into God’s work of redemption.

## The person of Jesus Christ: God and a human being [*‘christology’*]

### **True God**

Christians believe that Jesus is true God. In order that Jesus could carry out the work of redemption, he had to be God. To take all the sin of all human beings on himself and earn forgiveness for all, Jesus had to be sinless. Only God is without sin. It is God himself who is the saviour.

This is what makes Jesus unique. He is more than a great teacher, wonderful model and inspiring spiritual leader. He is the Son of God ‘from eternity’. That means, there has never been a time when Jesus did not exist as God’s Son [‘the Word’ (Jn 1:1-3)]. Jesus is ‘God incarnate’, that is ‘God in the flesh’ (Jn 1:14). Jesus shows human beings what God is like (Jn 14:9). He demonstrates the power, glory, and wisdom of God, and especially the love of God (Jn 1:17,18). The New Testament clearly and repeatedly testifies to Jesus as the Son of God (Mt 2:15; 3:17; 4:3,6; Jn 3:16-18).

Jesus showed by what he said and by what he did that he was God. When he spoke, people recognised that he taught and spoke with authority (Mk 1:21-22; Mt 5:17-18). Even the unclean spirits recognised Jesus as ‘the Holy One of God’ (Mk 1:24). Jesus showed his power and authority over the wind and waves (Mk 4:35-41; 6:47-52), by feeding the people in the wilderness (Mk 6:30-34; 8:1-10), by healing the sick and demon possessed (Mk 1:29-34; 40-45; 5:1-15). Jesus demonstrated his authority over life and death by raising the dead to life (Mk 5:21-24; 35-43; Lk 7:11-17; Jn 11:38-44). Peter, James and John were given a brief glimpse of the glory of Jesus Christ as true God in the transfiguration (Mk 9:2-8).

Jesus’ resurrection is the final demonstration that he is truly God. In raising Jesus from death God showed that he had accepted Jesus’

perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world, and that death can no longer hurt human beings as the punishment for sin.

Various titles are used in the New Testament to indicate that Jesus is God.

**Christ.** Jesus is referred to as Jesus Christ. Strictly speaking, ‘Christ’ is not a name but a title [‘Jesus the Christ’]. ‘Christ’ is the Greek form of the Hebrew word “Messiah”, ‘the anointed one’ who was to fulfil all of the promises which God had given to the Old Testament people of God. Jesus himself was careful not to use this title (Mk 8:29-30) as by the time of Jesus it had become politically loaded with people looking for someone who would set up an earthly kingdom of peace in Jerusalem. That was not Jesus’ mission!

**Son of God.** As discussed previously [chapter 1], this title relates to Jesus as one of the persons of the trinity. Jesus is ‘the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God’ (Nicene Creed). And because he is the Son of God, Christians are called ‘children of God’ [by adoption] who have been invited by Jesus to pray to God as ‘Abba Father’, an intimate and familial form of address only possible because of Jesus’ saving work (Rom 8:15-17; Gal 4:6-7).

**Lord.** One of the earliest Christian confessions of faith was ‘Jesus is Lord’ (Rom 10:9; 1 Cor 12:3). This distinguished Christians from those who confessed Caesar as lord. The title ‘Lord’ links back directly to the Hebrew name for God (Ex 3:13-15) and therefore gives Jesus the same honour and dignity as the one true God of Israel. This is the title which Thomas used in his confession to the risen Jesus as ‘My Lord and my God’ (Jn 20:28) and which Peter used in his sermon at Pentecost when he declared that through raising Jesus from the dead, ‘God has made him both Lord and Messiah’ (Acts 2:36) (Kolb 124-125). Jesus is the Lord who has rescued people from sin and given to them his gift of salvation.

**Saviour.** Jesus is the one ‘who will save his people from their sins’ (Mt 1:21). That is why he was given the name ‘Jesus’. At his birth, the angels proclaimed to the shepherds that Jesus is the ‘Saviour, who is the Messiah [Christ], the Lord’ (Lk 2:11). Because he is God, Jesus can be the saviour, for only God can forgive sins (Mk 2:1-12).

## **A real human being**

Christians believe that Jesus is not only true God, but also a real human being. Jesus was not some half-god, half human being as can be found in some mythologies. He is truly God and truly a human being. He was God as a human being ['incarnation' – God in 'flesh'].

---

*Exploring how students understand Jesus as a real human being will be important not only in Christian Studies but in other areas of the curriculum, for example, respect for the human body and seeing human beings as whole persons, body, mind and spirit.*

---

Jesus lived a truly human life. He was born as a truly human baby (but without sin) from his human mother, Mary, as part of a human family (Mk 6:3). He developed physically and mentally (Lk 2:40). He went through normal human experiences. He got tired, he was hungry and thirsty, happy and sad, pleased and angry. The one difference was that his life was perfect; he obeyed his Father in absolutely every respect, even though he knew that this would mean sacrificing his innocent life to pay for the guilt of the whole human race.

Jesus was also tempted, but without sinning (Mt 4:1-11). This temptation was real and intense since he was a real human being as well as being truly divine. The book of Hebrews says that Jesus was tested [or tempted] as all human beings are, but without sin (Heb 4:15; 5:7-9). This is a statement of faith and is essential for Jesus to be able to take the sin of the whole world upon himself.

Jesus' suffering and death were real. In Gethsemane he was 'deeply grieved' (Mk 14:34) and prayed that the Father might take the cup of suffering away from him (Mk 14:36): he felt the shame of the soldiers' mockery and the pain of their scourging, the weight of the cross, the agony of crucifixion and the torture of feeling forsaken by his Father (Mk 15:34).

---

*Jesus has fully experienced human suffering and continues to share in the trials and suffering of human beings, also in the suffering of members of the school community. Sharing this aspect of Jesus' full*

*humanity provides a crucial basis for pastoral counseling in the Lutheran school.*

---

Christians believe that Jesus' resurrection was real. The same human body that suffered, died and was buried became alive again but in an 'exalted' state (Phil 2:9). More than 500 eyewitnesses said they saw the risen Jesus. In the forty days after Jesus' resurrection his followers saw how Jesus' body was no longer restricted by the physical laws of time and space (Jn 20:19).

Christians believe that still today Jesus is God as a human being. As a human being Jesus is forever at God's right hand, the advocate who intercedes for all human beings, and the Lord who rules all things for their benefit. Christians believe that they follow him through suffering, death and resurrection to live forever with bodies that will be glorified like his (Phil 3:20-21; 1 Jn 3:1-3).

### **God and a real human being**

The teaching of the Bible that Jesus is both God and a human being is a wonderful mystery which cannot be fully understood and can only be accepted through faith. The mystery is expressed in the Latin phrase: *finitum capax infiniti*, the finite can contain the infinite. This is also the basis for believing and accepting how Jesus comes to human beings through the word of God and the sacraments [as will be considered more fully in chapter six].

Various attempts have been made to deal with the miracle of the incarnation [Jesus as God (the 'Word') 'in the flesh' (Jn 1:14)]. It took the early church until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 to settle controversies about the two natures of Jesus Christ. Attempts to 'understand' the incarnation led to people denying either the full divinity of Jesus Christ or his full humanity. The extended section in the Nicene Creed dealing with Jesus Christ, grew out of this dispute.

A number of heresies emerged in the early church (Kolb 128-134; McGrath 273-281). These still arise from time to time in current thinking about Jesus Christ to try to give some rational explanation for the mystery of the incarnation. However, only if Jesus Christ is truly God and truly a human being, can he be the saviour of the world.

Some people denied the true humanity of Jesus. They said that he only ‘seemed to be human’ [*docetism*]. John tackled this problem already in his letter in the New Testament when he speaks about ‘testing the spirits’ [evaluating the teaching of the teachers in the church] (1 Jn 4:1). He lays down a fundamental criterion to distinguish truth from error: ‘Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus [has come in the flesh] is not from God’ (1 Jn 4:2-3). Another heresy which denies the humanity of Jesus is ‘*gnosticism*’. This heresy teaches that the material world is inferior to the spiritual world. This rejects the goodness of God’s creation and teaches that the human body has no value for Jesus or for Christians. It was considered as a prison of the soul. St Paul already had to deal with this when the teaching of the resurrection of the body offended gnostics as scandalous (Acts 17:32; 1 Cor 15: 35-58).

Other heresies arose from those who denied the true divinity of Jesus and simply saw him as some special human being. Some people taught that Jesus was simply a human being who kept God’s law so perfectly that God adopted him as his special Son at his baptism by John (Mk 1:9-11). This heresy is known as ‘*adoptionism*’. A variation of this position is seen in some groups today who see Jesus as an example to live by rather than as their saviour.

Another heresy which diminishes the divinity of Jesus Christ is ‘*subordinationism*’. This view grew up early in the Christian church, particularly through followers of Arius a priest who taught that Jesus was not God but a creation of God with a status somewhere between God and human beings (McGrath 274-277). Arius taught that Jesus was created sometime before the world was created, but he was not pre-existent as God. The Arian controversy threatened to split the early church until the matter was settled at the Council of Nicea [325] which spelt out in the Nicene Creed that Jesus is ‘eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God’. There are still groups today who reject the divinity of Christ, including Unitarians and Jehovah’s Witnesses.

Jesus is the savior because he is both God and a human being. This will be explored further as we consider the work of Jesus Christ and also as we plumb the depths of theology of the cross in the next major section.

*The question, ‘Who is Jesus Christ?’ is critical in the Lutheran school community. There will be very different responses to that question by individuals within the Lutheran school. It will be important to provide opportunities for students to share their own understanding of ‘who Jesus is’ in an open and safe environment. These perceptions of students need to be addressed sensitively and respectfully recognising that they may also be representing the attitudes of their parents.*

*Not all members of the school community will be able to answer the question ‘Who is Jesus Christ?’ with the faith response ‘Jesus Christ is Lord!’, even though believers in the school hope for and pray for that faith response in all who live and work within school community. What Christians believe about Jesus Christ permeates all areas of the Lutheran school curriculum [particularly, of course, the Christian Studies curriculum] and the life and work of the Lutheran school.*

*It is therefore vital that during their time in a Lutheran school, students become familiar with the life and work of Jesus Christ as found in the New Testament. This needs to be much more than simply some of the more familiar stories. However, this introduction to Jesus Christ needs to go beyond meeting Jesus simply as a historical person. Through the work of the Holy Spirit all members of the Lutheran school community can encounter Jesus as a real, living person who wants to establish and continue to develop a relationship with each one of them. While pursuing an educational program of excellence, the Lutheran school prays that through the work of the Holy Spirit, students, staff and all others connected to the school community will meet and be met by Jesus Christ or that they will grow in their already existing relationship with him.*

*The worship life of the school is central in fostering the encounter with Jesus Christ. It is important that who Jesus Christ is and the claims he makes on peoples’ lives comes through strongly. In this regard, Lutheran schools need to ensure that their celebration of Christmas and Easter keep the focus on the theological significance of these celebrations and the essential link between the birth of Jesus and his*

*suffering, death and resurrection. It is important that presentations by students to the school community at Christmas and Easter are more than simply sentimental performances. While Christmas and Easter fall outside of Australian school terms, it is important to create ways to celebrate them in the school in spite of this.*

---

## The work of Jesus Christ [‘soteriology’]

The work Jesus Christ came to do on earth was clearly indicated already before he was born. The angel said to Joseph (Mt 1:21), ‘Mary will bear a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins’. And when he was born, the angels proclaimed to the shepherds the birth of the ‘Saviour, who is the Messiah, the Lord’ (Lk 2:11). Only because Jesus is fully human and fully divine can he be the saviour of the world. The work of Jesus Christ is connected inseparably with his person. We only know who Jesus Christ is by what Jesus Christ does.

There are a number of ways in which Christian theology has considered the work of Jesus Christ (Kolb 136-155). One way, represented by ‘theology of the cross’ will be examined in the next major section. There is a long tradition which sees the work of Jesus Christ under three ‘offices’: prophet, priest and king.

### **Prophet (‘revealer’)**

The Old Testament prophets spoke on behalf of God. Jesus claimed this status for himself: ‘No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son, who is close to the Father’s heart, who has made him known’ (Jn 1:18). People who heard Jesus recognised that he spoke with a special authority (Mt 7:29; Jn 7:46). Jesus taught regarding our relationship with God and our relationship with one another – both the ‘vertical’ and the ‘horizontal’ relationships.

When Jesus began his ministry, he announced that the kingdom of God was here. In his person the loving, saving rule of God had come to human beings. In parables about the kingdom he told people what it is like when God rules with his grace. Jesus’ miracles were ‘signs of the kingdom’. God’s loving rule was in action when Jesus healed the sick, raised the dead, forgave sinners and ate with outcasts.

Jesus' clearest and most profound revelation of the love of God came through who he was and what he did. Through Christ, God revealed his love for the world in his death on the cross to bring all people back into a right relationship with God (2 Cor 5:19-21; Rom 5:8). But this revelation of God in Christ is seen by human reason as 'foolishness' and 'weakness' (1 Cor 1:18-30). Christians believe that only in Jesus Christ do they have hope – his revelation shows the impossibility of any attempts they may make to try to put themselves right with God.

While he lived on earth as a human being in his humiliation (Phil 2:5-8), Jesus proclaimed God's word directly through his teaching and life: now in his exaltation sitting at the right hand of God (Phil 2:9-11), he continues this 'prophet office' through those who believe in him and proclaim his message of love through what they do and what they say.

### **Priest ('substitute and victim')**

Jesus Christ is the priest who offered himself as a sacrifice for his people (Heb 9:26), but who also remains forever the mediator between God and his people (1 Tim 2:5).

Christians believe that Jesus Christ has taken their place (is their substitute) in the face of all that threatens and accuses them. He came to serve and give his life as a ransom (victim) for sinners (Mk 10:45). Jesus Christ is the 'suffering servant' (Is 52:13-53:12), the one who humbled himself to death on the cross (Phil 2:8). Christians believe that Jesus has freed them from the curse of the law (Gal 3:10-14). He has paid the penalty for their sin and has turned away the wrath of God which was the result of their sin (1 Jn 2:2; Rom 3:25a). Jesus frees people from their sin and guilt through the forgiveness of sin (2 Cor 5:21).

Christians believe that because Jesus is now 'at the right hand of the Father' he continues his priestly role as their advocate (1 Jn 2:1), who mediates for them, representing them to God, and God to them. Because he is both God and a human being, Jesus Christ is their high priest, continually interceding for them (Heb 7:25). Because he has suffered temptation, believers can approach the throne of grace, trusting in God's mercy and help (Heb 4:14-16).

In speaking about the work of Jesus Christ, it is important not to play one person of the trinity against the other as though Christ buys off God's anger through his self-sacrifice. It is not that God was formerly



angry and has now become loving because of his Son's innocent death on the cross. God has never been anything but love. And it was his love that drove him to send his Son to the cross, just as it was the Son who out of love willingly obeyed his Father's will in the Spirit for the salvation of all people. This is a profound mystery that we will never understand. Faith simply accepts it with gratitude and gives glory to the triune God.

### **King ('victor' and 'ruler')**

Jesus is the king who has won the victory over sin, death and Satan. Through his death on the cross, Jesus has finally defeated these enemies and has also broken the power of the law over those who believe. This victory is clearly demonstrated in Christ's resurrection when God raised Jesus from the dead. Christians believe, that in their baptism, they have been united with the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Rom 6:3-11) so that they now share in his victory.

As will be developed more fully below, Jesus is the king who is also a servant. His throne was his cross and his crown was made of thorns. He rules in the church through his love and mercy, demonstrating his love in washing his disciples' feet (Jn 13:1-20) and commanding his followers to love one another (Jn 13:34-35).

Christians confess that Jesus rules as king now at 'the right hand of the Father' although his kingdom is not visible on earth. Christ's ascension is his 'enthronement', and enables him to be everywhere at all times and no longer confined in time and space. Jesus ascended, not to remove himself from the world but in order to send the Holy Spirit (Jn 14:18-20; 16:7) and to return as king at the end of time (Col 3:1-4) and judge the living and the dead (Mt 24:27-44; 25:31-46). Jesus will then reign forever in glory with the saints.

### **The 'joyous exchange'**

Luther spoke of the work of Jesus Christ as the 'joyous exchange' of Christ's innocence for the sinner's guilt and sin. Kolb (154-155) summarises Luther's position as follows:

*In his passion and death Christ absorbed into himself all the evil that clings to his people. Substituting himself for sinners, he gathered onto his own back all the sin and guilt that condemn them to death. He took the entire*

*evil of each individual with him into his tomb and deposited it there. This tomb is the only place in God's creation into which the Father does not look. Having assumed our suffering and death upon his own person, Christ trades them for life itself. In his resurrection triumph he won for all sinners the gift of life, as it had been fashioned for God's human creatures in Eden. His Easter victory claimed true human life in God's sight for humanity once again. He restores true life by incorporating sinners into Christ's death and resurrection through Baptism (Rom. 6:3-11; Col. 2:11-15).*

### **The uniqueness of Jesus Christ**

As Australian society becomes more multicultural and hence more multi-religious, Jesus Christ is seen by many as simply another religious leader. Christians confess Jesus Christ as unique: the only one who is truly God and truly a human being. He is the only one through whom human beings have access to the forgiveness of God. The gospel of grace is therefore inclusive in its call to faith for all people based on the work of Christ for all (Jn 14:6; 1 Tim 2:3-5; Acts 4:12; 1 Cor 15:22; Col 1:19-20; Eph 1:5-6). However, there are those who do not accept the offer of faith.

In his treatment of christology, Carl Braaten (111-112) speaks of the 'utterly exclusive way' in which the New Testament presents the person and work of Jesus Christ. Braaten summaries as follows:

*Jesus is uniquely unique. ... This concrete person, Jesus of Nazareth, is unique because of his unequalled universal significance. The point of his uniqueness underlines his universality. If Jesus is the Lord and Savior, he is the universal Lord and Savior, not merely my personal Lord and Savior. Because Jesus is the unique and universal Savior, there is a large hope for salvation, not only for me and others with the proper credentials of believing and belonging to the church, but for all people whenever or wherever they might have lived and no matter how religious or irreligious they may have proved themselves to be.*

For Christians, to believe in Jesus means more than just acknowledging that what the Bible says about Jesus is true. It means recognising Jesus as the one who reveals God, particularly his love for all human beings; it means seeing Jesus as the king who serves; it means trusting Jesus as the only hope of being rescued from a guilty condition and from the punishment which is therefore deserved. More than that, for Christians

it means living and dying with the confidence that because of Jesus, God is always for them and nothing can separate them from God's love (Rom 8:31-39). Jesus Christ is both universal and unique. He is the only saviour for all people. This includes all members of the Lutheran school community. He loves all people and offers them forgiveness which some tragically ignore or reject.

---

*In speaking to students about the person and work of Jesus, teachers will need to be aware of the presuppositions about Jesus which students bring with them into the school context. When teachers witness to their own faith in Jesus Christ, they need to be careful not to use presumptive language which suggests that all members of the school community share in this faith. As Lutheran schools enrol students from religious backgrounds other than Christianity, sensitivity, but not defensiveness, will be required in dealing with the uniqueness of Jesus Christ.*

*Some people see the life of Christ simply as a model for human living. While the life of Christ can certainly be seen as a model which we can try to imitate (1 Pet 2:21-25), this misses the unique aspects of the saving work of Jesus Christ. There is a danger that we see our own efforts as contributing to our salvation. It is very easy to slip into legalism or moralism which puts the emphasis on our efforts rather than on the saving work of Jesus Christ. Care needs to be taken when dealing with moral issues as not only can this take the focus off the saving work of Jesus, but it can suggest that we know the mind of Christ and how he would act in such situations.*

*In planning worship for the classroom or whole school, attention needs to be given to what understanding of the person and work of Jesus comes through in the worship, particularly in songs which are used. These can at times simply present a rather sentimental view of Jesus which overlooks the real significance of Jesus' saving work.*

---

## Theology of the cross: the God who suffers

‘Theology of the cross’ is theology of revelation, revealed through faith by the Holy Spirit. It is a distinctive way of understanding theology; it provides a lens or filter through which all theology is viewed. Theology of the cross recognises that true theology can only be known through God’s revelation of himself in Jesus Christ which is seen most clearly in the death of Christ on the cross. Theology of the cross puts the cross of Christ at the centre of theology as Paul does when he says to the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 2:20), ‘I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and him crucified’.

### **God reveals himself by hiding**

The challenge of theology of the cross is that it seems to work in contradictions or deep paradox: it cannot be grasped by reason. It insists that God comes to human beings in unexpected ways which seem disappointing, inappropriate and unrecognisable. It speaks about seeing God where he is hidden: God revealing himself by concealing himself: God being hidden under the opposite of what is expected. This is why Paul speaks of the cross of Christ as a ‘stumbling block’ [literally ‘a scandal’] or as ‘foolishness’ (1 Cor 1:5 - 2:16). According to St Paul, God’s power is revealed in God’s weakness (2 Cor 12:9), and God’s wisdom appears to be foolishness (1 Cor 1:25). Only when people are ‘taught by the Spirit’ (1 Cor 2:10-16), says Paul, are they able to understand something of God’s secret wisdom. Where human beings see only brokenness, suffering and pain, the Spirit reveals forgiveness, freedom and love. Seen from this perspective, theology of the cross is a judgement on any human attempt to understand God through reason and philosophical speculation. Lutheran theology holds that God is known only in his revelation, and particularly in his revelation through suffering. The ultimate revelation of God is through the ‘scandal’ of the cross which seems offensive to human reason (1 Cor 1:23).

This revelation of God is sometimes referred to as ‘concealed revelation’. God is hidden in his revelation and may not be immediately recognised as God. For example, when God came as the baby at Bethlehem he wanted to reveal himself to the world as the saviour, but at the same time he came ‘hidden’ as a human baby. This mystery is beautifully presented in the ‘Christ hymn’ in Paul’s letter to the Philippians (Phil

2:6-11) where God in Christ is seen to ‘empty himself’ and ‘take the form of a slave’. He ‘humbled himself’, ‘obedient’ to the point of ‘death on a cross’. The second part of the hymn then proclaims how God has ‘highly exalted him’ so that those who believe in him now confess that ‘Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’. The inevitable end of the incarnation is the death on the cross.

### **Seeing with the eyes of faith**

Only with the eyes of faith given by the Holy Spirit is it possible to begin to see God ‘hidden under the opposite’. God shows himself and his love for all people most clearly in his humanity. He was not born in a palace, but in a stable; he walked the earth as a humble teacher with no place he called his home (Mt 8:20); he associated with those who were outcasts in his society (Lk 15:2). Throughout his ministry, already immediately following his baptism when he was tested by Satan in the wilderness (Mt 4:1-11), Jesus had to withstand the temptation to abandon this path of service and suffering. Rather than assume the role of the Messiah as a popular military and political figure which the Jews had expected, Jesus came as the ‘suffering servant’ (Is 52:13 - 53:12) ‘not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many’ (Mt 20:28). While his disciples disputed about who was the greatest and most important (Mk 9:33-37), Jesus washed their feet (Jn 13:1-20).

The clearest revelation of the true heart of God is on the cross. In spite of the appearance of defeat, the cross is rather the place of victory. St John links together Jesus’ suffering, death and resurrection and speaks of it as his ‘glorification’ (Jn 7:39; 12:16; 12:23-33; 13:31; 17:1). Jesus’ cross is his throne. Where God seems most vulnerable, where God the creator of life dies, there God’s power is shown most fully. Jesus’ cry on the cross, ‘My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?’ (Mt 27:46) is the cry of one who has identified with the alienation, the vulnerability, the pain and the suffering of God’s creation and of every individual in that creation. However, his declaration, ‘It is finished!’ (Jn 19:30) is the proclamation that he had completed what he came to do and had conquered sin and death and Satan. And all this was confirmed when God raised Jesus from the dead. The paradox of the cross is that defeat is victory (Phil 2:6-11). This can only be seen with the eyes of faith.

### **‘Theology of glory’ – the opposite of ‘theology of the cross’**

In contrast to God hidden in his revelation, there is a natural tendency for human beings to look for God in a ‘theology of glory’. Lutheran theology recognises that theology of glory tries to get to know God from creation, to look at the world and speculate on the kind of God who is behind the creation. It looks for God through human experiences of spirituality, the supernatural and the miraculous. It looks for examples of power and success in the lives of believers. However, in doing so it creates its own understanding of God with the danger that people create God in their own image and determine how God should reveal himself to them in their situation if he is really God. The reality of original sin means that reason alone can no longer lead to a true understanding of God.

Theology of glory finds difficult the idea of suffering and weakness as seen in the suffering and crucified Jesus Christ but concentrates rather on examples of the power of God. It is a theology which places a wrong emphasis on visible signs of the power of God at work in miracles, special gifts of the Spirit, and experiences of the power of God in one’s life. It therefore tends to see suffering, anxiety or sickness as a result of insufficient faith or prayer. Theology of glory tries to identify visible signs of growth and success in the church, rather than depend on the promises of God that God’s word does what he intends (Is 55: 11). Theology of glory can also lead people to rely on their own ‘good works’ to contribute to their status with God rather than relying wholly on the grace of God. Theology of glory places an emphasis on the law rather than the gospel.

### **Theology of the cross calls each disciple of Christ to a response of service**

Martin Luther summarised his understanding of the person and work of Jesus Christ in his profound but simply stated explanation to the second article of the Apostles’ Creed in his Small Catechism. Here Luther becomes particularly personal (Kolb and Wengert: 355):

*I believe that Jesus Christ, true God, begotten of the Father in eternity, and also a true human being, born of the Virgin Mary, is my Lord. He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned human being. He has purchased and freed me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent*

*suffering and death. He has done all this in order that I may belong to him, live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in eternal righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as he is risen from the dead and lives and rules eternally. This is most certainly true.*

This passage relates theology of the cross directly to the life of believers. Faith, given through the working of the Holy Spirit, recognises Jesus Christ as God hidden in the incarnation and in the cross. Faith accepts what Jesus Christ has done in his life, death and resurrection. Faith confesses Jesus Christ as Lord. And because Jesus is Lord, Lutheran theology stresses that his disciples are called to live in service to him through service to others. Each disciple is challenged with living for others [‘theology of the cross’] rather than living for self [‘theology of glory’].

As already indicated when dealing with the theology of vocation in chapter 3, living a life of service to others is a response to the saving work of Christ. It is not a form of work-righteousness. Theology of the cross sees each disciple of Christ identifying with the suffering of Christ. ‘We love because he first loved us’ (1 Jn 4:19).

In his article on Luther’s theology of the cross, theologian Regin Prenter expands this insight as follows (225-226):

*when faith in the cross of Christ no longer involves the willingness to carry one’s own cross, then the Crucifixion is no longer taken seriously as that event by which Christ bore the punishment for our sins. For if I do not want to acknowledge my own sins and God’s judgment over them in that I accept the cross and suffering which is laid upon me in my life without bitterness and in a spirit of faith, as something which I have justly earned, how, then, can I acknowledge Jesus Christ as he who took upon himself the punishment for these very sins of mine and thereby has become my one and only claim to righteousness before God?*

This cross, this suffering for the sake of Christ, is not something which the Christian chooses for himself or herself: it is something which is placed onto the disciple by God who continues to be revealed through suffering. It is a cross which disciples of Christ ‘take up’ as they follow Christ (Mt 16:24). While the death of Christ on the cross was a unique historical event, never to be repeated (Heb 9:25-28; 10:14), the Lutheran Confessions affirm that the disciple of Christ shares in the suffering which Christ still continues to bear wherever there is suffering.

Theology of the cross means, then, that the disciple of Christ identifies with the suffering Christ in the world and participates in the struggle against evil and sin in whatever form that may occur. The Christian life is not seen in terms of a theology of glory as all conquering and triumphant living, but its glory is lived under the cross, hidden under the opposite, in situations of suffering, humility, grief, and pain, all for the sake of Christ.

---

*Because of the influence of theology of glory, some people assume that the Christian life is an ‘easy life’ free from suffering, trials and worries of any kind and that ‘sufficient faith’ will eliminate all of this from the life of a Christian. This attitude may be represented by students and staff in a Lutheran school and requires careful and sensitive treatment. Christians do experience these testing situations but recognise that Christ is sharing in their circumstances. They may also experience levels of persecution because of their faith. Theology of the cross therefore presents both challenges and opportunities in the Lutheran school.*

### ***A response of service***

*Some aspects of service have already been considered in the section on theology of vocation in chapter 3. Viewed from the perspective of theology of the cross, the Lutheran school aims to prepare its students for service in the world, and, for those who are Christians, in the church – for service in both the left and right hand ‘kingdoms’. However, this attitude of service, appropriate for all students in Lutheran schools, and consistent with the Lutheran understanding of theology of the cross, is not easy to develop and maintain in a current social climate which tends to stress individualism, self-sufficiency, and material success, rather than social consciousness, peace and justice, and concern for the marginalized and suffering in society.*

*The role of teachers in promoting an attitude of service is crucial in Lutheran schools. If teachers intend to inspire an attitude of service in their students, then teachers need to demonstrate an attitude of service to their students. Janetzki (49) emphasises the importance*



of ‘incarnational teaching – doing on the level of reality what we are saying in words’. This requires teachers to be able to integrate their own personal faith with their teaching and other activities within the school and so provide an important role model for their students.

### **Focus on ‘success’**

Theology of the cross challenges the way in which some Lutheran schools promote themselves on the basis of their ‘success’. This happens, for example, as Lutheran schools compete with other private schools for enrolments. Lutheran schools may be promoted on the basis of perceived ‘success’ in their academic results, as well as various programs, including the sport program, music program, extracurricular program, technology program, and even the pastoral care program. Promotional materials for some Lutheran schools seem to reflect a theology of glory, rather than theology of the cross.

Related to this is the recognition of ‘success’ within the school program. For example, what does the Lutheran school celebrate? In school assemblies, school publications, end of year functions and other public occasions, which students are singled out for special recognition and what does this say about the values of the school? If the school gives awards or prizes to students, for what are they given? Often it may appear that it is students who are particularly gifted in the academic, sporting and artistic fields who receive affirmation while others are overlooked even though they may be making greater efforts to use the gifts which they have. Teachers need to guard against this danger of focus on ‘success’ in the classroom and be aware of all students, especially any who may not normally be recognised.

There can be confusion if schools combine worship with school assembly. Whereas worship may focus on the grace and love of God, a student assembly following directly after the worship may switch the focus immediately onto the success of students. Care is required so that the worship of God is not immediately replaced with ‘worship’ of human activities.

*Schools often provide some recognition for service to the school and the community, but there can be an interesting difference between those chosen by the school for recognition in this way and those who would be chosen by the students themselves. It may also be relevant in this context to observe what impression is given of the Lutheran school to the visitor sitting in the school reception area. The position of trophy cabinets or honour rolls and the information they contain may be significant in giving an indication of what the Lutheran school values in its community.*

*Another issue for consideration in respect to a ‘success’ orientation is the student’s report. This is a significant communication with parents and students, and reflects what the Lutheran school sees as important for the student. What things are reported, and the manner in which they are reported, need to be consistent with theology of the cross, rather than promote a theology of glory. For example, do student reports show that the student is appreciated as an individual in the school community, and that examples of care and service are recognised in the Lutheran school?*

### ***Inclusive practices***

*Theology of the cross has implications for the enrolment policy of a Lutheran school. Enrolment policy and practice need to be, and be seen to be, inclusive. This means that Lutheran schools are open for groups such as the educationally disadvantaged, the socially marginalised, and the financially poor. How this relates to practices such as the awarding of academic, sporting, music, and other types of scholarships to attract the so-called ‘gifted’ students, needs careful justification. While there may be some policy of fee reduction for ‘needy’ families, such families may not even apply to the schools because of financial concerns. These concerns apply not only to the school fees themselves, but the additional costs for uniforms, excursions, extra-curricular activities and the like.*

### ***Sensitivity to suffering and social justice concerns***

*A school climate consistent with theology of the cross will foster pedagogy which encourages cooperation and participation and*

which values each individual. Critical reflection can help to develop social consciousness and nurture creative imagination about possible changes in society and address social justice concerns such as racism, sexism, and other forms of intolerance, prejudice, and denial of human rights. Lutheran schools need to be seen as somewhat counter-cultural. This includes developing an awareness of and sensitivity to suffering within the school community and beyond. Braaten (1966) suggests that ‘the church must establish in its schools centers of research in order to pioneer social awareness of new forms of oppression and to put the spotlight of compassion on the invisible victims’.

From the perspective of theology of the cross, the poor, the hurt, the broken, whether through their own actions, or as a result of other individuals, or because of the political and economic systems under which they live, are the people with whom Christ suffers and with whom he calls his followers to suffer. Lutheran theology knows of no easy solutions for this suffering, and care will be necessary when dealing with situations of suffering, not to minimize or even trivialize the actuality of human suffering, and so end up with religious ‘answers’ which are premature and shallow and which may place further burdens on those who are suffering.

### **Striving for ‘excellence’**

Striving for ‘excellence’ in education could be seen as implying a theology of glory rather than theology of the cross. However, theology of the cross requires a Lutheran school to strive for excellence in all that it does. This applies not only to academic areas but to the total development of the whole person through a process of transformative learning. To do less than this, is to misuse the gifts placed by God at the disposal of all who make up the community of the Lutheran school. It also means that the school is falling short in its purpose of equipping students for the various areas of responsibility in which they carry out their vocation while at school and when they graduate.

*The reason why the Lutheran school strives for excellence is crucial here. If the school is doing it for selfish, self-glorifying reasons, producing selfish, self-centred, self-glorifying graduates, then it is working from a wrong perspective - a theology of glory. However, if the Lutheran school is helping students to develop as fully as possible the gifts and abilities which God has given them with the purpose of serving Christ through serving the people whom God has created and for whom Christ has died, then the school is engendering a spirit of love and service from the perspective of theology of the cross.*

*It is also crucial to recognise that while the Lutheran school will strive for excellence, this will mean different things for different people. The varying abilities of students in the school community are critical. Excellence will therefore be seen in terms of 'the best of which an individual is capable'. Individual differences are to be respected and all students affirmed within the Lutheran school community. In this regard, aspects of theology of the cross such as identifying with the strugglers, showing compassion for the suffering, supporting the weak, are all vital. Lutheran schools need to be concerned not only for the 'average' student, not only for the 'gifted and talented', but particularly also for the disadvantaged and the 'battler'.*

---



# CHAPTER 6

## God makes people holy: the work of the Holy Spirit

---

### God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the triune God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Because people often think of the Holy Spirit as ‘spirit’ or ‘power’ or ‘life-giving force’, the Holy Spirit is often referred to as ‘it’ rather than a person with his own identity in the triune God together with the Father and the Son. The Holy Spirit has sometimes been referred to as ‘the shy member’ or ‘the neglected member’ of the trinity. This is not because the work of the Holy Spirit is less significant than that of the Father or the Son. The Holy Spirit is centrally involved in all of the mighty works of God. However, much of the work of the Spirit is to point people to Christ as their saviour and to continue the ministry of Christ in the world. In this way the Spirit points away from himself to Jesus and the Father.

Another difficulty in speaking about the Holy Spirit results from the multiple meanings for the word which is used for ‘spirit’ in both Hebrew and Greek. Not only does it mean ‘spirit’ but also ‘breath’ and ‘wind’. Jesus used a word-play on the various meanings in his discussion with Nicodemus (Jn 3:1-10). Just as the wind cannot be seen but its presence is seen and felt in the swaying tree branches or the swirling dust, so the work of the Spirit is seen by its impact and results in the life of the Christian. As well as speaking of the Holy Spirit as ‘wind’, the Spirit is depicted in the Bible as ‘fire’ (Acts 2:3) and a ‘dove’ (Mt 3:16).

These various ways of speaking about the Holy Spirit emphasise the lively activity and free movement of the Spirit as the Spirit does his work. This is seen clearly in the special outpouring of the Holy Spirit at

Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4) in the sound of a rushing wind, in the dancing flames of fire spreading out over the disciples, and in the subsequent excited and bewildering babble of numerous languages which enabled people to hear the message of the gospel proclaimed in their own languages by people who did not even know those languages.

### **The Holy Spirit participates in all of the mighty works of God**

As one of the three persons of the triune God, the Holy Spirit is active wherever God is speaking or acting. He is active with the Father and the Son in creation (Gen 1:2). He is the life-giving breath of God (Gen 2:7; Ps 33:6; 104:27-30) through whom all things were created and continue to be preserved. Human beings were created from the dust of the ground and the breath [Spirit] of God (Gen 2:7). In the great creation psalm the ongoing creative activity of the Spirit in the world is celebrated: 'When you send forth your Spirit [your creatures] are created; and you renew the face of the earth' (Ps 104:30). In the Nicene Creed the church confesses the Holy Spirit as 'the Lord and giver of life'.

---

*The Lutheran school provides a context in which to celebrate the 'creator Spirit', appreciating the wonders of creation in different aspects of the curriculum and working together with God as stewards of that creation. The Spirit challenges individuals to use their gifts of reason and research to uncover more of their complexity as human beings and the intricacy of the whole of creation. He provides opportunities for people to expand their minds and emotions through such creative gifts as art, music, dance, literature and poetry and in this way to catch glimpses of the majesty and wonder of God and to celebrate these in the ordinary and every day experiences of life.*

---

The Bible reveals how the Spirit was active among the Old Testament people of God, showing his divine power particularly through people like the judges and kings (eg Judg 3:10; 6:34; 1 Sam 10:6; 16:13) who spoke and acted by the power of the Spirit. The Spirit worked through the prophets (Is 61:1; Mic 3:8) who revealed the word of God to the people through their preaching and actions. The prophets also looked forward to the time when God would send the Holy Spirit to his people

in a full and special way (Joel 2:28,29), anticipating the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-12).

The work of the Holy Spirit is linked closely with the life and work of Jesus Christ. Jesus was conceived in Mary's womb by the power of the Holy Spirit (Lk 1:35). At his baptism by John the Baptist, the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus in the form of a dove and anointed him for his ministry in the power of the Spirit (Mk 1:9-11). The Spirit then 'immediately drove Jesus out into the wilderness' (Mk 1:12-13) where he was tempted by the devil. The close tie between the work of Jesus and the work of the Spirit is most clearly developed in the parting words of Jesus to his disciples (Jn 14-16) where Jesus promised to send them the Holy Spirit [the 'Paraclete': the counsellor, helper, guide, comforter, advocate]. The Holy Spirit would teach them and remind them of all Jesus has said (Jn 14:26), would 'testify' on behalf of Jesus (Jn 15:26) and guide the disciples 'into all the truth' (Jn 16:13-15).

Following his resurrection, Jesus 'breathed' the Holy Spirit on his disciples (Jn 20:19-23) giving them his authority to forgive, or not to forgive, sins on his behalf. After his ascension, Jesus kept his promise on the day of Pentecost by pouring out the Holy Spirit on all people (Acts 2:16-21) in a clear demonstration of divine power (Acts 2:1-12). The sound of the mighty wind and the tongues like fire were signs of the Spirit's powerful presence and operation. The Spirit transformed Jesus' disciples from doubting, fearful followers into people of strong faith who boldly witnessed to the truth about Jesus as the promised Messiah. Through the powerful, Spirit-filled preaching of the disciples, the Spirit changed the hearts and lives of thousands of people as they confessed their sins and were baptised in the name of Jesus whom they acknowledged as their only saviour (Acts 2:37-42).

## The Holy Spirit creates and sustains faith in the life of the Christian

Martin Luther in his explanation of the Third Article in the Small Catechism says this about the work of the Holy Spirit [Kolb and Wengert: 355-356]:

*I believe that by my own understanding or strength I cannot believe in Jesus Christ my Lord or come to him, but instead the Holy Spirit has called*



*me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, made me holy and kept me in the true faith, just as he calls, gathers, enlightens, and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one common, true faith. Daily in this Christian church the Holy Spirit abundantly forgives all sins – mine and those of all believers. On the Last Day the Holy Spirit will raise me and all the dead and will give to me and all believers in Christ eternal life. This is most certainly true.*

Luther here concentrates on the major work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian; bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ and then sustaining them in that faith.

As already indicated when considering original sin and grace in chapter 4, by nature every human being is spiritually dead towards God (Jn 3:5-6; Eph 2:1; 1 Cor 2:14). There is nothing which people can do to make themselves ready for God's grace, and there is nothing that they can do to accept God's grace. Martin Luther speaks about this condition of human beings as the 'bondage of the will'. While human beings have free will to make decisions in all kinds of areas in life, sin binds their will in matters pertaining to faith in God, repentance for sin, and producing the fruit of the Spirit. The work of the Holy Spirit in bringing people to faith in Jesus Christ is so radical that the Bible speaks about it as a 'new birth' (Jn 3:3-8; Tit 3:5,6). The Holy Spirit leads people to recognise their sinfulness and spiritual helplessness and to repent and believe in Christ. No-one can come to faith without the Spirit's powerful work (1 Cor 12:3). And once the Spirit has created faith in an individual, he continues to grow and sustain that faith.

However, this does not mean that once individuals have been brought to faith by the Holy Spirit they will not experience questions and doubts about their faith. Wrestling with such doubts is a natural part of growing in the faith and does not mean rejection of the faith.

Jesus Christ died for all people because all are sinners. Therefore, God's grace is for all people because God wants everyone to be saved (Jn 3:16; Tit 2:11; 2 Pet 3:9; Mt 28:19). This means that the Holy Spirit offers the gift of faith to all people. However, he does not force this on anyone and individuals can resist the work of the Spirit and reject the gift of faith. Whereas human beings can come to faith only through the work of the Spirit within them, they do have the freedom to reject this offer of the

Spirit. This rejection of the work of the Spirit relates to Jesus' words about a sin against the Holy Spirit which cannot be forgiven (Mk 3:28-29; Mt 12:31-32; Lk 12:10). Rejecting the work of the Spirit means that a person refuses the gift of faith through which sin is forgiven.

---

*Members of the Lutheran school community may experience times of doubts and questioning and wonder whether they have lost their faith. Sensitivity is needed to help individuals work through such testing times and help them to see how God may be leading them to grow in their faith. However, it is important not to deal in such situations with simplistic or pietistic responses but recognise the depth to which such experiences can lead individuals.*

*Because of Jesus' words about the 'sin against the Holy Spirit which cannot be forgiven' (sometimes referred to as 'the unforgivable sin') questions about this may arise for some people in the school. If individuals are anxious about this, they can be assured that their concern indicates that they are still open to the Holy Spirit and have not therefore finally rejected his offer of faith and forgiveness. However, because Jesus gave no details about this 'sin' there are some questions which must simply be left open.*

---

For many Christians the work of the Holy Spirit begins through the sacrament of baptism. The Holy Spirit works through the word of God and the sacraments which are therefore sometimes designated 'the means of grace'. The Holy Spirit brings each believer into the church as the body of Christ in which the Spirit continues his work in their lives through the ministry of word and sacrament.

The gift of the Holy Spirit is portrayed by St Paul as a 'down payment', 'first installment' or 'deposit' because the Spirit is a guarantee of what is to come (2 Cor 1:21,22; 5:5; Eph 1:13,14). Since the Holy Spirit continues the work of Christ, he guarantees that the life believers now enjoy in Christ will be brought to a joyful completion when Christ returns.

*The Lutheran school is a community in which the Holy Spirit is active. While it is first and foremost a community of learning and teaching, all people who choose to become part of a Lutheran school need to be aware that because they [or their parents] choose to do so, they will meet the Holy Spirit in that community. The word of God through which the Holy Spirit works is central to the life and work of the school and creates the space and freedom for the Spirit to do his work. The Lutheran school provides a context in which the word of God and the individual can be brought together so that the Holy Spirit can do the Spirit's work in and for that individual. This working of the Spirit through the word of God is encountered not only in worship and Christian Studies but in various parts of the curriculum, in school rituals and in the witness of those who share faith in Jesus Christ, and in the Christian love and care which are shared in the school.*

*As the Holy Spirit works in the Lutheran school there will be situations where the spark of faith is kindled within a person. This is a critical time for such beginning faith to be supported and encouraged by peers or teachers and leaders in the school. It is also something to be celebrated appropriately at a suitable time.*

*The Lutheran school has within it a 'community of faith' created by the Holy Spirit through those who have come to faith in Jesus Christ because the Holy Spirit lives and works in them. Not all members of the Lutheran school community will be part of that 'community of faith'. However, the fostering of this 'community of faith' is crucial in providing people through whom the Spirit can work as they witness to their faith and pray that others may be brought to faith and strengthened in their faith. They can demonstrate in their own lives how faith integrates life experiences and a Christian world view. These are the people who are 'called to give an account of the hope which is in [them] ... with gentleness and reverence (1 Pet 3:15-16), and to live the love and grace of God visibly in the daily life of the school.*

*Because the Holy Spirit works through the word of God to create faith and nurture faith, the word must be central in the life of*

*the Lutheran school. This is the written word of the Bible, the proclaimed word, the sung word, the prayed word, the shared word of witness, of care, of compassion, the word of confession, absolution and restoration. This is the word which always points to Jesus Christ as ‘the Word made flesh’ (Jn 1:14). In some Lutheran schools there is also the sacramental word – the word with the water in baptism and the word in, with and under the bread and wine in holy communion. The Lutheran school is centred on God’s word so that the Spirit can do the Spirit’s work.*

---

## The Holy Spirit works through the word of God [‘means of grace’]

The Holy Spirit brings people to faith and helps them grow in their faith through the word of God. God’s word has three main forms through which the Spirit works: the written word of the Bible, the spoken word proclaimed through preaching, shared through teaching and witness, and the sacramental word. Lutheran theology refers to these as the ‘means of grace’ – the ways in which God brings his grace to people.

Some Christians believe that the Holy Spirit speaks to them and works in them directly without these ‘means of grace’. However, God has given his promise to work through these means so that people can be certain that in this way they receive the Holy Spirit and the blessings which the Spirit gives.

Lutherans can sometimes use the phrase ‘word and sacrament’ in a way which suggests that God’s word [read, preached, taught and witnessed] is somehow different from the word of God which is combined with the elements in the sacraments. However, it is the very same word of God [the word of gospel or promise] which comes to individuals as written word, preached word and sacramental word [‘visible word’].

## The Holy Spirit works through the sacraments

Chapter 2 has already considered the written word of God as it comes in the Bible and through which the Holy Spirit works. We will now explore the sacramental word of God through which the Holy Spirit creates faith and strengthens faith.

### **What is a sacrament?**

The sacraments are central in the worship life of the Lutheran church. Together with other 'sacramental churches' such as the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Anglican churches, Lutherans celebrate the sacraments in worship as the word of God in visible form (water, bread, wine) and visible action. Lutherans believe that Jesus commanded his followers to celebrate baptism and holy communion as special means through which the Holy Spirit works in a believer's life. Through these sacraments Lutherans believe that they come into a close personal encounter with God as the Holy Spirit works in them and Jesus Christ shares his body and blood with them in the bread and wine of holy communion. They emphasise both the sense of awe and mystery in worship, but also the intimate way in which God comes to his people in worship.

The Bible does not give a definition of a 'sacrament'. According to Lutheran understanding, a sacrament is a sacred act or rite that has the following three components:

- a physical element or elements (water, bread, wine)
- the command of Christ (Mt 28:19 - baptism; Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24; Lk 22:19-20 - holy communion)
- a promise attached to the command (Mk 16:16 - baptism; 1 Cor 11:24-25 - holy communion)

Lutheran theology recognises two sacraments, baptism and holy communion. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox churches, using a different understanding of some aspects of sacraments, include confirmation, marriage, penance, ordination and blessing of the dying ['extreme unction'] as sacraments. Sometimes in the Lutheran tradition absolution [the declaration of the forgiveness of sins] was also considered to be a sacrament, even though it lacked a physical element [apart from the human voice and the laying on of hands in private confession and absolution]. However, it has been instituted by Christ and has his promise (Jn 20:22-23).

While baptism and holy communion have things in common, they are also different. For example, baptism is performed only once in a person's life, while Christians celebrate holy communion repeatedly.

*Because the members of Lutheran school communities come from various church or non-church backgrounds, the concept of 'sacrament' and the language relating to the sacraments of baptism and holy communion will mean different things [and possibly nothing at all] to various students. Care will be needed by teachers not to assume familiarity with the way terms are used in the Lutheran context and time needs to be given to help students explore different perceptions which they may hold.*

---

### **What makes the sacraments valid?**

The sacraments are valid only because of the command of Christ and the word of God which is embraced by the elements. Without the word of God, there is simply water, bread and wine. The sacrament remains valid even if it is wrongly received or used, or if faith is lacking, because the validity 'is not bound to our faith but to the Word' (LC 4,53; Kolb and Wengert: 463). The validity of the sacrament also does not depend on the faith of the person leading the celebration of the sacrament because it is God who is acting through that person in the sacrament.

The sacraments are an objective means of bridging the gap between the death of Christ on the cross and our own time. Each person receiving the sacrament is made contemporaneous with Christ: he baptises the individual and he offers himself to each person in the bread and wine, as he did to his disciples in the upper room during the last supper. The sacraments therefore give believers certainty that God is really at work in their lives. Christ establishes and maintains an individual relationship with each believer while at the same time incorporating and keeping them in the fellowship (*koinonia*) of the church, the body of Christ (1 Cor 10:16-17).

### **What makes the sacraments effective?**

The benefits of the sacraments are received by faith. Faith does not make the sacrament valid, but it trusts in and draws on the blessings which the sacrament offers. The sacraments do not operate automatically or magically: they become effective in the life of the Christian by faith. This faith is the gift of God. God gives faith in baptism and this faith receives the blessings of baptism and the benefits of holy communion.

### **Incarnation and the sacraments: linking creation and redemption**

Christians believe that in the incarnation, God became a human being. The creator became part of his own creation. Creation and the work of redemption are linked. This mystery continues through the sacraments where earthly, created elements take on special significance, bearing the gifts of salvation. Here again we see theology of the cross – Christ hidden in, with and under the elements of water, bread and wine.

## **Baptism**

Luther's small and large catechisms (SC 4,1-14; Kolb and Wengert: 359-360; LC 4,1-86; Kolb and Wengert: 456-467) most clearly set out the Lutheran understanding of baptism and its benefits. However, some specific aspects can be highlighted.

### **God is the one who baptises**

Baptism is the action of God: however, God uses human hands to perform baptism. Because it is God who performs the baptism, Christian churches recognise the validity of each others' baptisms, providing water is used [either sprinkling or immersion] in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This follows the command of Christ in instituting baptism. Some denominations, however, particularly those who do not practise infant baptism, see baptism as something which individuals decide to do as a public declaration of their faith. According to this understanding, baptism is simply a sign of faith and the emphasis falls on what the person does rather than on what God does. However, God still works through such a baptism if it is performed according to Christ's command but the individual may place their trust in their own decision rather than the act of God in baptism.

### **The gifts of baptism**

For Lutherans, baptism is a means of grace through which God claims the baptised person as his own and gives them all the benefits of God's saving work in Jesus Christ: the gifts of forgiveness of sins, redemption from death and the devil, and eternal life and salvation. The Bible speaks about these gifts and blessings of baptism in a number of ways (Kolb: 215-220).

- **rescued from the devil, sin and death**

Because of original sin, all people deserve the punishment of sin, which is death (Rom 6:23). However, in Christ, God has set people free and ‘has rescued us from the power of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of his beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins’ (Col 1:13-14). Baptism marks the transition from the kingdom of Satan, sin and death to the kingdom of Christ.

- **being washed clean**

Baptism is designated as a washing which removes the effects of sin. This was demonstrated by Christ when he washed the disciples’ feet (Jn 13:3-10). St Paul expressed it in this way (Tit 3:5), ‘God saved us, not because of any works of righteousness that we had done, but according to his mercy, through the water [‘washing’] of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit’.

- **changed into forgiven children of God**

Baptism transforms the individual into a forgiven child of God. In his conversation with Nicodemus (Jn 3:5-9), Jesus spoke about this as ‘being born again’ or ‘being born from above’ [the word Jesus used here can be understood in both of these ways]. Baptism is therefore to be understood both as a heavenly birth [from above] and as a new birth by the power of the Spirit into God’s family as one of his beloved children. St John expresses it in this way (1 Jn 3:1-2): ‘See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and that is what we are ... we are God’s children now.’ St Paul says (Rom 8:14): ‘For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God.’

- **being members of Christ’s body**

Believers in Christ are spoken of as ‘the body of Christ’ of which Christ himself is the head (Eph 1:22; Col 1:18). This incorporation into the body of Christ is the work of the Holy Spirit through baptism as St Paul writes (1 Cor 12:13): ‘For in the one Spirit we were all baptised into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and we were all made to drink of one Spirit’. [This image will be explored more fully when speaking about the church in chapter 8.]



- **dying and rising with Christ**

St Paul developed this crucial understanding of baptism as dying and rising with Christ in Romans 6:1-14. Paul states (Rom 6:4) that those who have been baptised ‘have been buried with him [Christ] by baptism into death’. The ‘old sinful self was crucified with him [Christ] so that the body of sin might be destroyed, and [those who are baptised] might no longer be enslaved to sin’ (Rom 6:6). Sin as master over those who have been baptised has therefore died with Christ, even though believers will still be challenged by temptations. But ‘just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, so [those who have been baptised] too might walk in newness of life’ (Rom 6:4). This ‘new life’ challenges believers to live a life in keeping with their status as those who have risen with Christ to live out their life in this world [see chapter 7].

In the Small Catechism, Luther expresses this insight from St Paul as follows (SC 4,12; Kolb and Wengert: 360):

*Baptism signifies that the old creature in us [the old sinful nature which is the result of original sin] with all sins and evil desires is to be drowned and die through daily contrition and repentance, and on the other hand that daily a new person is to come forth and rise up to live before God in righteousness and purity forever.*

- **being made citizens of heaven**

Baptism means that those who have been baptised are not only people who live in this world, but they also have citizenship in heaven (Phil 3:20; Col 3:1-4). This gives a profound new meaning to life on earth and orients the baptised person towards praise of the Father in heaven and to living this life in praise of God and service to their neighbour.

---

*A discussion of the gifts of baptism in the classroom may identify a common view of baptism as providing a ‘passport to heaven’. Baptism is seen as a ‘magical act’. This view separates the act of baptism from the faith which receives that gift of God and makes it effective in the life of the individual. Baptism is not simply an ‘insurance policy’ for entry into heaven which has no impact and outcome in the life of the Christian. The following section develops the concept of the ‘life of baptism’.*

---

## Living in one's baptism

In the Large Catechism, Luther expresses the life of the Christian in this way (Hebart trans: 184):

*So you can see what a great and excellent thing Baptism is. It snatches us from the devil's jaws, makes us God's own, and stifles sin and takes it away. Then it strengthens the new person each day, and always keeps on working, and lasts until we pass from this misery to eternal glory. So each person should look on Baptism as his daily clothing which he is to wear all the time. He should keep on practising faith and its fruits so as to stifle the old person and to grow up in the new. For if we want to be Christians, we have to practice those deeds that make us Christians. If anyone falls away, he should return. Just as Christ, the mercy seat, doesn't leave us, or prevent us from returning to him, even though we sin, so all his treasures and gifts last. Just as we have once had our sins forgiven in Baptism, so forgiveness keeps on being available each day as long as we live, that is, as long as we drag the old person around with us.*

For Christians, then, baptism is an ever present event in their lives. While it may have occurred some time in the past, even when they were small infants, it has a daily impact on their lives as they live in the power of their baptism, confessing their sins and receiving forgiveness and claiming as their own the victory of Christ over sin, death and Satan.

Baptism provides an objective reality of the action of God in the life of a Christian. If believers begin to doubt their fluctuating faith, or when faith is challenged by the experiences of life, the baptised person can point back to the reality of baptism in their life and the blessings of faith and forgiveness which were given in the sacrament. When faith becomes weak, and Christians are in danger of falling into fear and despair, God's action in baptism reminds them of the total trustworthiness of God who has acted in their life through baptism.

### **Infant baptism**

Infant baptism arises as an issue in Lutheran schools because of the different teachings of the various Christian denominations. This is partly due to the fact that, as the Lutheran church recognises, there is no clear directive in the Bible to baptise infants. However, it is equally true that Scripture says nothing to prohibit the baptism of infants. Luther in his Large Catechism (Hebart trans: 176-180) provides a strong case for infant baptism.

While the Bible does not command nor prohibit the baptism of infants, it does offer the blessings of baptism to ‘all nations’ (Mt 28:19). Including infants in these blessings is consistent with Jesus’ command to let the little children come to him, because the kingdom of heaven belongs to them (Mt 19:14) and the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:39) that the promise of the gospel is ‘for you, for your children, and for all who are far away, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to him’. The Bible speaks of the baptism of the households of Lydia (Acts 16:15) and the jailer in Philippi (Acts 16:33): it is highly likely that infants and small children were included in these households.

The theological understanding of baptism is consistent with the practice of infant baptism. The promises of the gospel cannot be denied to anyone on the basis of age. Just as infants share in the universality of original sin, they are included in the universality of God’s grace. God who gives the gift of faith can give that gift also to an infant. As indicated above, it is God who is active in baptism, giving the blessing of baptism and the faith which receives those blessings.

There are also historical arguments from the tradition of the church for the practice of infant baptism. There is no evidence in the history of the early church of any controversy over infant baptism. The introduction of a new practice, such as infant baptism, would have raised some level of discussion in the early church. From the earliest documents relating to the church it is indicated that infant baptism was practiced at least as early as the second century. God has preserved his church through history through the practice of infant baptism.

### **Baptism in the holy spirit**

The separation of so-called ‘water baptism’ and ‘spirit baptism’ is a recent development in some churches. However, the New Testament does not make this separation, even though some passages are sometimes read as indicating such a separation. While a person may receive the Holy Spirit apart from baptism, those who are baptised have received the Holy Spirit. The New Testament sees ‘water baptism’ and ‘spirit baptism’ as one and the same (1 Cor 12:13). Baptism is carried out in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Thus the Spirit is present and active in baptism. According to the New Testament, the certainty that a person has received the Holy Spirit is the confession that ‘Jesus is Lord’ (1 Cor 12:3)

*Teachers in a Lutheran school will wish to emphasise the importance of baptism in the life of a Christian. In some Lutheran primary schools, students have been encouraged to observe their baptismal 'birthday' in their class. While stressing the importance of baptism, Lutheran schools are in the situation where a considerable number of students will not have been baptised or who may have received baptism simply as some sort of rite of passage for social or family reasons. There is a real challenge here to retain a stress on the importance of baptism while not creating offence for those who have not been baptised. It will be crucial not to give an impression that those who do confess their faith in Jesus Christ but who have not yet been baptised are some kind of 'second rate' Christian, or an impression that baptism is irrelevant for those who have come to faith. Pastoral sensitivity and care is needed.*

*Parents who enrol their students in a Lutheran school will need to understand that if their children have not been baptised, a request may come for baptism from their children because of the teaching which will happen in the school. If a child requests baptism, this is where the school pastor or local congregational pastor will need to become involved. While in an emergency any Christian can perform the rite of baptism for another person, the normal context of baptism is within the church, the body of Christ.*

*This raises the question of the appropriateness of celebrating the sacrament of baptism within the Lutheran school context where there is a community of faith as a witness to the baptism and as a support for the newly baptised person and their family. A baptism within the context of worship in the school can be a powerful witness to the significance of baptism and also provide an excellent opportunity for teaching about baptism through all levels of the school, including the staff. If baptism is conducted in the school, representatives from any local congregation/s could provide further demonstration of the communal nature of baptism within the body of Christ while focussing on the very personal blessings for the person being baptised.*

---

## Holy Communion

This sacrament is known by a number of names each of which emphasises aspects of the sacrament and its blessings. Christian denominations tend to vary in their use of language relating to this sacrament.

- **The Lord's Supper.** This name emphasises that this meal is the Lord's meal: he is the one who prepares and offers the meal as he did for his disciples on the night before he was betrayed. Christians now participate in this meal. The Lord **is** also the supper – his body and blood are given 'in, with and under' the bread and wine (SC 5,1-2; Kolb and Wengert: 362).
- **The Sacrament of the Altar.** This name signifies the way in which this sacrament is celebrated at the altar in the church. There may also be reflections here of the way the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for the sins of the world has replaced the many sacrifices required of the Old Testament people of God on the various altars built for that purpose (Heb 7:27; 1 Cor 5:7b).
- **Holy Communion.** This name can be seen as emphasising three aspects of the sacrament. Firstly, there is a 'sharing' [literally '*koinonia*' which can be translated as 'share', 'fellowship', ] in the body of Christ through the bread, and a 'sharing' in the blood of Christ through the wine (1 Cor 10:16). Secondly, there is a union of Christ with his people as he gives them his body and blood as he did for the first disciples (Mt 26:26-28). Thirdly, this sacramental meal unites Christ's people with one another and demonstrates the unity of believers in the body of Christ (1 Cor 10:17).
- **The Eucharist.** This word is the Greek word for 'thanksgiving'. It emphasises an important response to the sacrament. Jesus gives himself to his people in the sacrament and through it the forgiveness of sins (Mt 26:28). Experiencing the greatness of this undeserved gift and the peace it gives leads to celebration, joy, and clear consciences which result in praise and thanksgiving to God and renewed zeal to serve God in vocation.

### What is the sacrament of holy communion?

In the Small Catechism, Martin Luther answers this questions as follows (SC 5,1-4; Kolb and Wengert: 362).

*It is the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ under the bread and wine, instituted by Christ himself for us Christians to eat and drink.*

*Where is this written? Answer:*

*The holy evangelists, Matthew, Mark and Luke, and St. Paul write thus: "Our Lord Jesus Christ, on the night in which he was betrayed, took the bread, gave thanks, and broke it and gave it to his disciples and said, 'Take; eat; this is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.'*

*In the same way he also took the cup after the supper, gave thanks, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, and drink of it, all of you. This cup is the New Testament in my blood, which is shed for you for the forgiveness of sins. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.'"*

[In this answer, Luther has combined biblical texts from 1 Cor 11:23-25; Mt 26:26-28; Mk 14:22-24 and Lk 22:19-20.]

The important emphasis here is on what Jesus Christ is doing in the sacrament. While he uses pastors to say the words and perform the rite of holy communion, it is Christ himself who is working through the words and the bread and wine to give his body and blood to the congregation. Christ is present as the crucified, risen and ascended Lord who is truly God and truly human. This is a great mystery (LC, Hebart trans: 187-190).

### **Lutheran understanding of Christ's presence in the bread and wine**

Lutherans believe that in the sacrament of holy communion Christ gives his 'true body and blood' 'in, with, and under' the bread and wine. Christ is truly present in the consecrated elements. Those who receive the sacrament, whether or not they believe, receive the body and blood of Christ. This is a mystery which is based on the words of Scripture (Jn 6:51-58; 1 Cor 10:16-17). Lutherans do not try to explain how this happens, but accept that it does on the basis of Christ's word and promise. Lutherans reject that Christ is only symbolically, or figuratively, or spiritually present in the sacrament. They also understand holy communion as more than a 'memorial meal', remembering what Jesus has done for us (Kolb 233-235). Since Jesus commanded 'do this in remembrance of me' (1 Cor 11:23-26), Lutherans believe that they participate in the body and blood of Christ because Christ himself is present as he has promised, sharing himself with them in the celebration of the sacrament.

This mystery of Christ's presence in the sacrament is directly related to the mystery of the relationship between the divine and human natures of Christ [see chapter 5]. Just as Christ is fully human and fully divine, so the bread and wine remain bread and wine but at the same time, when taken together with the word of God, they are also the true body and blood of Christ. Knowing this gives great comfort and assurance to those who receive the sacrament as believers.

### **What blessings are received in holy communion?**

Luther answers as follows (SC 5,5-8; Kolb and Wengert: 362-363):

*The words “given for you” and “shed for you for the forgiveness of sins” show us that forgiveness of sin, life and salvation are given to us in the sacrament through these words, because where there is forgiveness of sin, there is also life and salvation.*

*How can bodily eating and drinking do such a great thing? Answer:*

*Eating and drinking certainly do not do it, but rather the words that are recorded: “given for you” and “shed for you for the forgiveness of sins”. These words, when accompanied by the physical eating and drinking, are the essential thing in the sacrament, and whoever believes these very words has what they declare and state, namely, “forgiveness of sins”.*

Luther expands on this answer in the Large Catechism (Hebart trans: 190-193), and there are a number of biblical images which further illustrate aspects of these blessings of this sacrament.

- **table fellowship with sinners**

During his earthly ministry Jesus regularly shared table fellowship with those who were regarded by others as particular ‘sinners’ such as tax collectors and prostitutes. People, particularly the religious leaders, took offence at this and accused Jesus of welcoming sinners and eating with them (Lk 15:2; 5:30; Mk 2:16). Jesus welcomed all to his table where they felt accepted and forgiven and could therefore partake of the meal with great joy (Lk 7:36-50). In the same way, the Lord invites sinners, who by baptism have become saints, to his table to share in the joy of the sacramental meal. All members of God's family partake, irrespective of gender, age, nationality or standing in the community.

- **Christ 'our Passover lamb' (1 Cor 5:7b)**

Even today Jews celebrate the Passover to commemorate the way in which God rescued them from slavery in Egypt (Ex 12). The homes of the Israelites were spared through the blood of the Passover lamb which marked the doors of their houses. St John links Jesus to this Passover imagery when he designates Jesus as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world' (Jn 1:29; 36) and links his death at the time of the Passover with the death of the Passover lambs. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb ensured the freedom of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt, so the blood of the Lamb of God frees humankind from the slavery of sin, death and the devil. In the sacrament of holy communion, people share in this body and blood of Jesus Christ.

In the Book of Revelation St John develops this imagery even further when he records the heavenly worship of 'the Lamb that was slaughtered' who now receives 'power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing' (Rev 5: 6-14).

- **a foretaste of the heavenly marriage feast of the Lamb**

This sacrament is like a sustaining meal for pilgrims travelling through this life until they reach the eternal joy of the heavenly marriage feast of the Lamb (Rev 19:9). [Jesus used this context of the marriage feast in a number of his parables (Mt 22:2-14; 25:1-13; Lk 14:17-24).] The body and blood of Christ sustains the faith of Christians through life until they reach the full joy of the life to come. But already now, in the sacrament, they participate in preliminary festivities looking forward to what is to come.

- **the sign of the new covenant**

After rescuing them from Egypt, God made a covenant with the people of Israel, sealed through the blood of animals, that he would be their God (Ex 20:2) and they would be his special people (Ex 19:5). In instituting the sacrament, Jesus spoke of the cup as 'the new covenant in my blood' (1 Cor 11:25; Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24; Lk 22:20). Through shedding his blood for humankind on the cross, Jesus Christ has created this new covenant between God and his people.



- **a meal of remembrance**

When sharing the bread and wine with his disciples, Jesus said to them, ‘Do this in remembrance of me’ (Lk 22:19; 1 Cor 11: 24-25). This is not to be simply some mental exercise calling to mind what happened long ago. In Jewish thinking, to ‘remember’ means to bring the past into the present. When Jews celebrate the Passover, they celebrate it as though what happened in the first Passover is happening again and they are part of it. This is what happens as people share in holy communion. Jesus Christ is present as he was with his disciples in the upper room on the night before he was betrayed. Jesus Christ is truly present in the bread and wine, giving himself to those who are participating in the sacrament.

### **Being ‘worthy’**

The close link in previous Lutheran practice of confirmation and first communion has often led to the perception that readiness for communion and ‘being worthy’ is related to an intellectual understanding of the sacrament. This has been based on a particular understanding of Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians (11:27-34) which speak about ‘examining’ oneself before partaking of the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament. However, what Paul is concerned about in this passage is rather that individuals recognise that the consecrated bread and wine is more than ordinary food and that the body and blood of Christ are present with the bread and wine. He was attempting to deal with a problem where discrimination had developed in the Corinthian congregation between the wealthy members and the poorer members. This lack of love between the members of the congregation [the church as the body of Christ] created a danger to sharing in the body and blood of Christ in the sacrament.

Luther stressed that the real concern is not the ability to somehow ‘understand’ what is happening in the sacrament, because that always remains a mystery, but simply to trust what Christ is saying, when he says, this is my body ‘given for you’ and this is my blood ‘shed for you for the forgiveness of sins’ (LC 5,9-10; Kolb and Wengert: 363). True ‘worthiness’ is the recognition of our own ‘unworthiness’ and the need for repentance. What makes people ‘worthy’ to share in the sacrament is nothing in themselves, but simply Christ’s invitation to come and receive his gifts.

In his Large Catechism (Hebart trans: 193-205) Luther gives excellent pastoral advice about participation in the sacrament of holy communion. For example he speaks to people who do not sense a need for the sacrament, pointing out that Christ knows their needs better than they do. On the other hand he counsels those who feel so overwhelmed by their sin and guilt that they could never be ‘worthy’ to partake in the sacrament: Christ’s invitation and promise is there particularly for such people. He also writes about helping young people to come to appreciate the blessings of the sacrament. He is concerned that no-one doubts their need for the grace given in the sacrament and so excludes themselves from the blessings Christ offers through his body and blood received in the sacrament.

---

*As with baptism, care and sensitivity is needed in dealing with the sacrament of holy communion in the Lutheran school context. It is important that the discussion of this sacrament does not become a divisive issue within the school community leading to judgemental attitudes towards those who do not participate in celebrating the sacrament, or who have not yet been admitted to receiving the sacrament, or who may have different beliefs about what is happening in the sacrament. This has been made more complex by the opportunity extended now to children above the age of 10 to receive the sacrament. [The possibility of infant communion is currently under discussion in the LCA with strong support from sections of the church for encouraging this practice in the LCA.] Lutheran schools have often provided the program leading up to first communion in conjunction with local congregations or the celebration of holy communion within the school worship program.*

*While the regular context for the celebration of holy communion has been the public worship of word and sacrament in a Christian congregation, it can be celebrated in Lutheran schools to meet the needs of the school community. This may be part of the worship life of a congregation within the school or congregations closely related to the school, or it may be part of the school worship program. As will be developed more fully in the chapter on worship, in celebrating the sacrament as part of school worship it will be important on the one hand to maintain respect and a sense of the sacred, divine*

*and holy in the celebration, and on the other hand not to offend the consciences of those who feel they cannot participate. Ritual aspects of the celebration will also need careful explanation so that they carry appropriate content for those who are participating.*

*In order to uphold the Lutheran understanding of holy communion, this celebration is led by the school pastor, a pastor from a local Lutheran congregation, or a visiting Lutheran pastor.*

---

## The Holy Spirit makes Christians holy [‘sanctification’]

When the Spirit works in the lives of people, he not only brings them to faith in Jesus Christ which restores their relationship with God through the forgiveness of sin [‘justification’], but the Spirit continues to work within them to transform their lives [‘sanctification’]. He makes people holy, not only in their status before God but also in their living. Justification and sanctification are inseparable aspects of the work of the Holy Spirit in the individual Christian. While in this life Christians are always sinners, yet by the Spirit’s power they grow in holiness (Eph 4:22-24; Rom 12:1,2) becoming more and more ‘Christ-like’ in their words and behaviour. This is not their own doing, but the Holy Spirit working within them, forming their life of discipleship (Gal 2:20). The Spirit supports believers in living the life of repentance giving them the necessary strength to be sorry for the wrong which they have done or the good which was not done and the faith to trust in the promises of God.

Because salvation by grace through faith [‘justification’] is the central theme of the Bible, there can be a tendency to separate justification from sanctification. Some people feel that because they are saved by grace, there is no need for them to try to live as God intended and do ‘good works’ (Rom 6:1-4; Eph 2:8-10; Jas 3:13-18). They misinterpret the grace of God as a pillow on which to rest, without any further responsibilities (Hebart 49-50). However, the work of the Spirit continues in the life of the believer empowering them to do ‘good works’.

The Augsburg Confession links faith and the ‘new obedience’ [‘good works’] as follows (AC 6,1-2; Kolb and Wengert: 40):

*It is also taught that such faith [produced by the Holy Spirit] should yield good fruit and good works and that a person must do such good works as God has commanded for God's sake but not place trust in them as if thereby to earn grace before God. For we receive forgiveness of sin and righteousness through faith in Christ, as Christ himself says [Luke 17:10]: "When you have done all [things], ... say, 'We are worthless slaves.'"*

The Spirit produces these 'good fruit and good works' in the life of the believer. While Christians are seen as 'saints' in the eyes of God because of forgiveness in Christ (Rom 1:7; 1Cor 1:2) yet in this life they remain sinners, doing the things they do not wish to do as St Paul confesses in writing to the Romans (7:14-25): 'I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very things I hate.' In this life, the Christian continues to live in the 'saint/sinner' tension. However, once the Holy Spirit has created faith, he continues through his transforming power to nurture that faith and bring out in the life of the Christian the 'fruit of the Spirit': 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control' (Gal 5:22-23). These are the gifts which believers can celebrate and encourage in one another through the daily 'fellowship of the Holy Spirit' (2 Cor 13:13 NIV).

---

*The role of the 'community of faith' in the Lutheran school is vital in witnessing to the work of the Spirit through the 'fruit of the Spirit' in the life of the school. While believers will always remain both saints and sinners in this life, they have the freedom of the Spirit to cultivate the 'fruit of the Spirit' so that they can demonstrate what it means to live by the Spirit. In doing so, they will draw on the forgiveness of God for times when their love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness or self-control fall short. The support and encouragement of fellow believers is critical here so that the impact of the 'community of faith' is evident throughout the school.*

*In dealing with 'holiness' in the Lutheran school context it is important to guard against any tendency towards legalism or moralism. An individual is made 'holy' by the work of the Spirit, not because of any 'good works' on their part. While an individual may wish to develop a particular form of piety for themselves,*

*for example, observing a certain practice of meditation on Bible passages and time for prayer, this is not something they can demand of others. In pastoral care in the school community it will be important not to make judgements about the faith of an individual on the basis of some inappropriate behaviour. However, disrespect for what the school regards as 'holy' requires caring but serious attention.*

---

Christians are assured in God's word that 'all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God' (Rom 8:14). One of the important roles of the Spirit is to help Christians to pray according to the will of God. It is by the power of the Holy Spirit that, as children of God, believers dare to come to God with the cry 'Abba Father' (Rom 8:15; Gal 4:6). This intimate way of speaking to God emphasises the closeness of the relationship which the Spirit creates so that Christians can speak to the Father in the words used by Jesus Christ himself in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mk 14:36). The Spirit also intercedes for them when they are unsure how to pray or are unable to pray for themselves. When believers are too tired, too distressed, too confused, or too afraid to pray, the Spirit

*helps [them] in [their] weakness; for [they] do not know how to pray as [they] ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. And God who searches the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for saints according to the will of God (Rom 8:26-27).*

The Spirit knows the needs of believers better than they may know them themselves.

---

*Fostering a practice of prayer within the 'community of faith' of the Lutheran school is vital, not only for the individuals involved, but also for the mission and ministry of the school and the whole educational program for all within the school. Prayer for the free movement of the Holy Spirit amongst all members of the school community and for openness to the Spirit's work of bringing people to faith and then strengthening them in that faith, is a powerful means of creating opportunities for witness to those who have not yet accepted the work of the Spirit in their lives. In praying in this*

*way, individuals will find themselves as co-workers with the Holy Spirit as the Spirit does the Spirit's work. The recognition that the Spirit prays with and for those who may not know how to pray for themselves may be a particular comfort for staff or students experiencing difficulties or tragedies in their lives.*

---

## The gifts of the Holy Spirit

As well as producing 'the fruit of the Spirit' in the life of Christians, the Holy Spirit distributes 'the gifts of the Spirit' to them for the purpose of ministry. There are three main passages which speak about these gifts: Eph 4:11 [which lists various roles or functions in the church] and Rom 12:6-8 and 1 Cor 12:8-10, 28-30 [which speak about various gifts for ministry in the congregation as well as various roles and functions].

While 'the fruit of the Spirit' is generated in the lives of all Christians so that all Christians can demonstrate love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control (Gal 5:22-23) in their lives, the situation is different for 'the gifts of the Spirit'. Misunderstanding about these 'gifts' led to problems in the congregations already in the early church. St Paul devoted a major section of his first letter to the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 12-14) to try to deal with issues which had arisen about these 'gifts' and which were destroying harmony within the congregation.

Paul emphasised that various gifts are given to individual believers for the edification and growth of the whole church (1 Cor 12:7) and not for the personal benefit of individuals. No one person has all of the gifts for ministry which the Spirit gives: the Spirit 'allots to each one individually just as the Spirit chooses' (1 Cor 12:11). This means that for the work of the Spirit to flourish, all of the gifts of the Spirit 'activated by one and the same Spirit' (1 Cor 12:12) need to work together through the various individuals to which they have been given. It means people may need to help each other to identify the Spirit's gifts which they have been given and may need support and encouragement to further develop those gifts for the benefit of all.

Paul had to deal with members of the congregation in Corinth who tried to construct a hierarchy of gifts, valuing some more highly than

others. Here Paul used the image of the human body working together to stress the value of each gift (1 Cor 12:12-30; Rom 12:3-8), ultimately identifying the gift of love, which all believers are challenged to develop, as the greatest gift of the Spirit for believers (1 Cor 13).

Again in the church today there are those who emphasise the more ‘spectacular’ gifts such as speaking in tongues, working miracles, or prophecy. These groups are often designated as ‘charismatics’ from the Greek word ‘*charismata*’. This word means ‘gifts of grace’ based on the Greek word ‘*charis*’ which is the New Testament word for ‘grace’. Strictly speaking, all Christians are ‘charismatics’ because all receive those ‘gifts of grace’ which the Spirit gives to them for the benefit of all. However, some teach that unless an individual can demonstrate one of these gifts of tongues, miracles or prophecy, they may be lacking ‘sufficient faith’ or may not have received the ‘the full gift of the Spirit’. Paul allows only one criterion which ensures the work of the Spirit in an individual: the ability to confess ‘Jesus is Lord’ (1 Cor 12: 3). This confession of faith, possible only through the gift of faith given by the Spirit, demonstrates the work of the Spirit in the life of the individual.

For the welfare of the church, some of the other gifts of the Spirit, such as helping, administrating, showing mercy, giving generously, leading, showing compassion, cheerfulness and hospitality may be even more important in building up the church than the more ‘spectacular’ ones (Rom 12:6-13).

The gifts of the Spirit for ministry mentioned in the New Testament are certainly not an exhaustive list. The Spirit continues to equip people for their service in the church and in the world. As indicated already when discussing vocation, it is important for Christians to learn to recognise their own gifts and also the gifts of others so that working together the church is built up to the glory of its head, Jesus Christ and people can use their gifts for the benefit of all in the areas of their responsibility.

---

*The need to help students to address the identification and development of their gifts has been discussed already in relation to the theology of vocation. However, for those who belong to the ‘community of faith’ within the school, the challenge to see their ‘gifts of the Spirit’ in relation to service in the church needs emphasis.*

*People such as pastors, teachers, assistants in the congregation, aged care nurses and carers, child care workers, administrators, office staff, volunteers of various kinds are needed to help support ministry through churches and their service arms.*

*There will probably be both students and staff in a Lutheran school community who are or have been part of a 'charismatic community' which has emphasised the necessity of particular 'gifts of the Spirit' such as speaking in tongues or prophecy. Sensitivity and care will be needed to foster understanding of the Spirit's gifts and to deal with any judgemental attitudes between individuals with different views on particular gifts. It will be important to recognise, as the New Testament does, that gifts such as speaking in tongues and prophecy, when understood and used correctly, 'decently and in order' (1 Cor 14:40), are valuable gifts in the church (1 Cor 14:34).*

---

## The 'Spirit of truth'

The Holy Spirit is 'the Spirit of truth' (Jn 14:17; 16:13). The central revelation of truth which the Spirit brings is that Jesus Christ is 'the truth' (Jn 14:6). The Spirit witnesses to 'the truth' by pointing beyond himself to Jesus Christ (Jn 14:26; 16:12-15). Jesus Christ makes a special claim on individuals because this truth is a person who shows them the truth about themselves and their relationship with God and the truth about their relationship with other people and with the whole of creation. This is not a truth which is recognised and accepted by all in the Lutheran school community, even though the Spirit of truth desires to give it to all so that they are free to be the people God created them to be. The Spirit wants them to be free to live a life of obedience to God, and to be free to encounter truth and reality in the created world around them through the God-given gift of reason.

---

*The search for truth ['epistemology'] is central for the educational process in Lutheran schools. This has been addressed already in chapter 1. The essential difference between the absolute claim of revelation by the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ is 'the truth' must be distinguished from all other truth claims which rely on human*



*reason and research. However, Lutheran schools are free to work in academic freedom and in open enquiry as they search for truth in the best educational experience the school can provide in the various disciplines which make up the school curriculum and which search for truth according to their own paradigms.*

---

# CHAPTER 7

## New life in Christ

---

When St Paul speaks of the life of a Christian, he speaks of it as ‘the new life in Christ’.

*We know that a person is justified not by the works of the law, but through faith in Jesus Christ. And we have come to believe in Christ Jesus, so that we might be justified by faith in Christ, and not by doing the works of the law. ... I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but it is Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me (Gal 2:16; 19-20).*

Paul also writes:

*As you therefore have received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live your lives in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith (Col 2:6).*

*So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away; see, everything has become new! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ (2 Cor 5:17-18).*

*Clothe yourselves with the new self, created according to the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness (Eph 4:24; cf Col 3:10).*

---

*This chapter deals specifically with living the new life in Christ. It therefore addresses in particular those members of the Lutheran school community who consider themselves as believing Christians. They can be designated as the ‘community of faith’ within the Lutheran school context. In dealing with these issues in the school it will be important to ensure a positive and non-judgemental attitude towards students and staff who may not yet share faith in Jesus*

*Christ or who may have an incipient faith or be grappling with coming to faith. Care will be needed to avoid statements which do not recognise the different backgrounds and beliefs of the members of the school community wherever they are on their individual faith journeys. At the same time, however, the biblical teachings of new life in Christ need to be heard clearly in the Lutheran school even though some members of the community may not regard them as immediately relevant to their own personal lives but who may still find value for themselves in what is being said.*

---

## Faith and ‘good works’ [the ‘new obedience’]

Lutheran theology recognises that, having been justified through Jesus Christ, the Christian experiences the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit. It is this power of the Holy Spirit which makes possible a life of ‘good works’ or ‘new obedience’ which is the necessary outcome of faith. However, it is not what is done, but the relationship of the person to God which is critical here.

In expanding on the role of faith in its relationship to good works in the new life in Christ, Luther wrote in his *Preface to the Epistle of St Paul to the Romans* (LW 35:370-371):

*Faith is a divine work in us which changes us and makes us to be born anew of God [John 1:12-13]. It kills the old ‘Adam’ and makes us altogether different people, in heart and spirit and mind and all powers; and it brings with it the Holy Spirit. O, it is a living, busy, active, mighty thing, this faith. It is impossible for it not to be doing good works incessantly. It does not ask whether good works are to be done, but before the question is asked, it has already done them and is constantly doing them. . . . Faith is a living, daring confidence in God’s grace, so sure and certain that the believer would stake life itself on it a thousand times. This knowledge of and confidence in God’s grace makes people glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and with all creatures. And this is the work which the Holy Spirit performs in faith. Because of it, without compulsion, a person is ready and glad to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, out of love and praise to God, who has shown this grace. Thus, it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire (SD 4,10-12; Kolb and Wengert: 576).*

As the Christian leads the life of new obedience, the law of God (the ‘third use of the law’) provides the guide for the Christian.

*For the law [the ‘third use of the law’] indeed says that it is God’s will and command that we walk in new life. However, it does not give the power and ability to begin or to carry out this command. Instead, the Holy Spirit, who is given and received not through the law but through the proclamation of the gospel (Gal. 3[:2,14]), renews the heart. Thereafter the Holy Spirit uses the law to instruct the reborn and to show and demonstrate to them in the Ten Commandments what is the “acceptable will of God” (Rom. 12:[2]), and in which good works, “which God has prepared beforehand”, they are “supposed to walk” (Eph. 2:[10]) (SD 6,11-12; Kolb and Wengert: 589).*

### **People living by faith are regarded by God as ‘saints’**

When, through the work of the Holy Spirit, a person accepts in faith the forgiveness of God in Christ, then, in the sight of God, such a person is seen as a ‘saint’. St. Paul uses this term frequently in his letters when he addresses those who have been called to faith and into the fellowship of the church (eg Rom 1:7; 8:27; 15:25,26,31; 16:2,15). Their relationship with God has been restored. The whole person is seen as having been made right with God through the sacrifice of Christ.

Luther explains this as follows (SA 13,1-3; Kolb and Wengert: 325):

*that “through faith” (as St. Peter says [Acts 15:9]) we receive a different, new clean heart and that, for the sake of Christ our mediator, God will and does regard us as completely righteous and holy. Although sin in the flesh is still not completely gone or dead, God will nevertheless not count it or consider it.*

*Good works follow such faith, renewal, and forgiveness of sin, and whatever in these works is still sinful or imperfect should not even be counted as sin or imperfection, precisely for the sake of this same Christ. Instead, the human creature should be called and should be completely righteous and holy – according to both the person and his or her works – by the pure grace and mercy that have been poured and spread over us in Christ. Therefore we cannot boast about the great merit of our works, where they are viewed apart from grace and mercy. Rather, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord” [1 Cor. 1:31; 2 Cor. 10:17]. That is, if one has a gracious God, then everything is good.*

## The tension of saint and sinner [*simul iustus et peccator*']

While through faith a Christian lives the new life in Christ as a 'saint' doing 'good works', this is always a life lived in tension as not only a 'saint' but also a 'sinner', simultaneously saved and sinful. Even though by the grace of God Christians are made right with God through the forgiveness of sin, Christians always also remain sinners. Before God, Christians are both sinners under the law and saints [forgiven sinners] under the gospel. While they live in the freedom of the gospel, knowing that their sin is forgiven, that they are in a right relationship with God, and that the Holy Spirit is working in their lives to help them produce the 'fruit of the Spirit', yet they still experience the presence of sin in their lives. The Lutheran understanding of baptism is an important comfort and strength in this situation as Christians know that God has made them his own through baptism.

### **Every christian continues to struggle with sin daily**

Even though the Christian is 'hidden with Christ in God' (Col 3:3), so that when God looks at the 'sinner' God sees the 'saint', this does not remove the daily struggle with sin for the Christian (Gal 5:16-18). As indicated in the discussion on original sin [chapter 4], the effects of sin are too deeply embedded in the human nature. St Paul portrays his own struggle with sin in his letter to the Romans (7:14-25). Here Paul depicts the inner struggle in his life as a Christian between what he wants to do and what he actually does. He does not understand his own actions (7:15). He can 'will what is right, but [he] cannot do it' (7:18). He recognises the power of 'sin that dwells within [him]' (7:17;20). He sees his life as a 'war' (7:23) between 'good' and 'evil' (7:21), between his 'delight in the law of God' (7:22) and 'the law of sin' that still lives within him (7:23). 'So then', Paul concludes (7:25), 'with my mind I am a slave to the law of God, but with my flesh I am a slave to the law of sin.'

### **Every christian continues to live under the umbrella of God's forgiveness**

Because of the ever present influence of sin in their lives, Christians need continual assurance of the forgiveness of God. Working through the word of God, the Holy Spirit operates with the law [the 'theological use'] to remind individuals of their need for forgiveness but through

the gospel assures them of that forgiveness. The gospel is God's 'proper work' for only the gospel preaches grace, comforts and makes alive. Only under the umbrella of the forgiveness of God can the Christian live as 'saint'.

Mackintosh (1961: 133) provides the following illustration from Luther of the constancy of God's forgiveness:

*Just as the sun shines and enlightens none the less brightly when I close my eyes, so this throne of grace, this forgiveness of sins, is always there, even though I fall. Just as I see the sun again when I open my eyes, so I have forgiveness and the sense of it once more when I look up and return to Christ. We are not to measure forgiveness as narrowly as fools dream.*

### **The daily life of repentance**

The daily life of the Christian as saint and sinner is also viewed from the perspective of repentance. The *Augsburg Confession* (Kolb and Wengert: 44) speaks of 'true repentance' as

*nothing else than to have contrition and sorrow, or terror about sin, and yet at the same time to believe in the gospel and absolution that sin is forgiven and grace is obtained through Christ. Such faith, in turn, comforts the heart and puts it at peace. Then improvement should also follow, and a person should refrain from sins. For these should be the fruits of repentance, as John says in Matthew 3[:8]; "Bear fruit worthy of repentance".*

Repentance provides a positive response to the tension of saint and sinner. It indicates turning back to God when sin has taken a person in the opposite direction away from God. It implies recognising that one is walking away from God, and with the Holy Spirit's help, turns and walks back towards God.

Repentance, strictly, is not just *feeling sorry* for sin but *being sorry* for sin which is doing something about it. If feeling sorry was the requirement for repentance, people could never be certain if they were sorry enough. This could lead them not to be sure about their relationship with God. Repentance means that individuals are sorry for the evil which they have done and the good which they have failed to do. This brings them to the point of doing something. They confess their sins of commission and omission and say sorry to God. This leads them to the most important part of repentance: faith that believes God's promise that he forgives them because of Christ.

Jesus gives a classic example of repentance in the parable of the lost son and the waiting father (Lk 15:11-32). The son had walked away from his father in very rebellious circumstances. His serious change of fortune led him to recognise what he had done and to resolve to return to his father. He was sorry for his rebellion and prepared his speech of confession. But all of this was cut short by the welcoming arms of the waiting father. The important thing for the father was that his son had returned. He was not interested in raking over the past. What was central was the joy of celebration of the return of the son, a joy which the older brother was tragically unable to share.

---

*When dealing with the life of repentance in the Lutheran school it is important to help students distinguish between ‘breaking schools rules’ and being sorry for the sin of which they are guilty before God. Breaking school rules may be simply a matter of thoughtlessness or ‘high spirits’ for which the students can anticipate the appropriate consequences. However, if that same behaviour is a matter of defiance against authority or deliberate flouting of authority, it moves into a different category for students who live the life of repentance. It may result ultimately in confession and absolution or the practice of restorative justice.*

---

Repentance is closely linked with the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. On the basis of Romans 6: 4, Luther stressed that

*a Christian life is nothing else than a daily Baptism. Baptism once had a beginning, and we always continue in it. For we can never stop cleaning out what comes from old Adam [the life of sin]; and whatever belongs to the new person [the ‘saint’] has to keep on breaking through (LC 4,65; Hebart tr: 181)*

The Christian life of repentance is not only a return to baptism but also an approach to receiving holy communion, for, says Luther, ‘If you are weighed down and feel how weak you are, go to the Sacrament gladly, and be refreshed, comforted and strengthened’ (LC 5,72; Hebart tr: 202). Luther continues:

*it’s right to call it [holy communion] food for the soul; it nourishes and strengthens the new person. Through Baptism we are first born as new*

*people. But, as we said, our old skin stays with us all the same, as flesh and blood together with the new person. There are so many obstacles and attacks on the part of the devil and the world that we often get tired and listless, and sometimes even stumble. The Sacrament of the Altar is given us as daily food and refreshment so that our faith can revive and renew its strength, and not fall back in this struggle, but keep on getting stronger and stronger. For the new life should be one that constantly grows and develops (LC 5,23-25; Hebart tr: 191).*

### **The tension of saint and sinner continues to the end of time**

In this life, Christians never escape the tension of being simultaneously 'saint' and 'sinner'. The Holy Spirit continues to work in their lives strengthening their faith and helping them to be what God intends them to be as his redeemed children. The tension of saint and sinner remains, then, until the end of time.

Luther in the *Large Catechism* portrays the life of the Christian in this way (LC 3,57-58; Hebart tr: 123):

*since holiness has already started in the Christian community and is growing every day, we are waiting for our human nature to be put to death and buried with all its filth. Only then will it emerge in all its radiance, and rise from death, to complete and utter holiness in a new life which lasts for ever. For the time being, we are only half clean and holy. So the Holy Spirit has to keep on working at us through God's word and to hand out forgiveness every day. He goes on doing this until that life starts where there will be no forgiveness anymore; instead, there will be people who are completely clean and holy, utterly good and perfect in God's eyes and free of sin, death, and all trouble, with new, radiant bodies which can never die.*

In spite of appearances to the contrary at times, God is at work in the Christian through the Holy Spirit. Theology of the cross recognises that God's work can be hidden behind experiences of failure, frustration, doubt, apathy, pride and hypocrisy. St Paul reminds his readers that their new life as a Christian is 'hidden with Christ in God' (Col 3:1-4). The Holy Spirit is carrying out his work in the life of the Christian, helping the Christian to grow in faith and in the fruit of the spirit (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 4:22-24). While Christians live in this tension of saint and sinner, they know that Christ has already won the victory for them on the cross and that they will one day share in the new creation where sin and suffering is no more (Rev 21:1-4).



*The theology of saint and sinner provides a well-defined anthropology [that is, an understanding of human beings and human nature] with which the Lutheran school can operate. It must be remembered, of course, that not all members of the Lutheran school community are believing Christians and that they cannot therefore share in the same motivation as the Christian person who is trying to live as a 'saint' under the power of the Holy Spirit. However, the saint/sinner anthropology provides the theological basis for interaction within the Lutheran school.*

*The saint/sinner perspective helps to guard against legalistic and moralistic approaches which place unrealistic expectations on people. Examples of the behaviour of the 'sinner' will occur in the Lutheran school community, as students and staff fail to live according to God's will and demonstrate behaviour which breaks relationships within the school or which leads to concerns in respect to justice and morality. While these reactions can be expected, they cannot be condoned or excused, but can be handled through appropriate processes which include the sensitive use of law and gospel. At the same time, Christian students and staff are encouraged to develop their lives as 'saints' through the help of the Holy Spirit, living a life of repentance.*

*Recognising the tension between the individual as 'sinner' and the individual as 'saint' requires sensitive discussion, particularly as students or staff try to deal with the challenges which this causes in their lives and when examples of failure occur in the Lutheran school community.*

---

## Christian freedom: 'freedom from' and 'freedom to'

The new life in Christ is a life of Christian freedom. It can be characterised as both 'freedom from' and as 'freedom to'.

Christians, through the grace of God in Jesus Christ, are **free from** the law since Jesus has fulfilled the law for them (Gal 3:23-29). 'For freedom Christ has set us free' (Gal 5:1). They no longer have to try to keep God's

law in order to be free from the punishment of the law. Christ has taken that punishment for them as their substitute.

Although they are free from the law, this does not give Christians the licence to please themselves how they then live. Since they are free from the law, they are now *free to* serve Christ instead. St Paul speaks about no longer being 'slaves to sin' but 'slaves of righteousness' (Rom 6:17-19). God's law now takes on an entirely different function [as 'the third use of the law']. It becomes a guide for Christians showing how they can live by the power of the Holy Spirit. They are free to live the commandment to love God and to love their fellow human beings (Rom 13:8). And living as Jesus' disciples they can be confident that whenever they fall short, they live under the umbrella of God's forgiveness which they have by grace through Jesus Christ.

### **Free to serve**

In his classic *'The freedom of the Christian'*, Martin Luther combines these two statements which seem to contradict each other: (Schubert: 9)

1. Christians have complete freedom and power over everything, and are under no obligation to anyone.
2. Christians are servants of all, and are under complete obligation to everyone.

Luther goes on to explain:

*Although these statements seem to contradict each other, we'll see how they fit together. Both statements come from the apostle Paul. He says in 1 Corinthians 9:19, 'I am a free man, nobody's slave; but I make myself everybody's slave' (TEV). He also says in Romans 13:8, 'Be under obligation to no one – the only obligation you have is to love one another' (TEV). Love by its very nature is ready to serve and to do whatever the loved one wants. Christ himself, though Lord over everything, was 'born of a woman, born under the law' (Galatians 4:4 NRSV). He was therefore at the same time a free man and a servant, 'in the form of God' and 'the form of a slave' (Philippians 2:6,7 NRSV).*

Since Christians are made right with God by grace through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, they are no longer under the obligation of the law. They are free from trying to earn their salvation through keeping the law. However, on the other hand, because they have received

forgiveness and live in that forgiveness, they are free to live out their love for God in love and service for others. Here we see theology of the cross in its practical outcome in the life of the Christian.

Luther continues his explanation of the freedom of the Christian as follows: (Schubert: 25):

*If we recognise the great treasures that God has given us, our hearts will be filled with love by the Holy Spirit, as St Paul says in Romans 5:5. And this love will make us free, joyful, almighty workers and conquerors of all troubles. We will be servants to our neighbours, and yet have complete freedom and power over everything. But for those who don't recognise all that they have been given through Christ, Christ has been born in vain. They carry on with their good deeds and all the while never come to taste or feel that joy and freedom.*

*... [W]e were in need before God and required God's mercy and generosity. Our heavenly Father freely came to help us in Christ; so we ought freely to help our neighbour through what we do physically. Each of us should become a Christ to the other, so that Christ may be in all of us, in other words so that we may be truly Christians.*

*... Surely we are named after Christ, not because he is absent from us, but because he lives in us – in other words, because we believe in him and are a Christ to one another and we act towards our neighbours as Christ acts towards us.*

---

*Some people have characterised Christian freedom as 'I believe in God so I can do what I like'. St Paul deals with a similar situation with the question, 'Because God forgives, should we keep on sinning so that God can continue to show his grace?' (Rom 6). These are not in fact expressions of freedom, but the response of individuals who are still caught up in their own self-centredness. Others may recognise that they do not take seriously enough the call to live as disciples of Christ. The distinction between 'freedom from' [the punishment of the law] and 'freedom to' [serve Christ as his disciple in the new life in Christ] needs sensitive and careful handling in the Lutheran school context, also because there are those in that context who do not yet share in the new life in Christ.*

*‘Service learning’ and the motivation for service in the Lutheran school is another area where care is needed as not all members of the school community can experience that motivation arising from serving as Christ has already served them. Other motivations can be identified as, for example, when individuals recognise themselves as fellow members of the human community responsible for each other in that community.*

*[The paraphrase of Luther’s ‘The freedom of the Christian’ by David Schubert would provide an excellent study document for use by staff or senior school students.]*

---

## The model of Christ – the law of love

It is important when speaking about Jesus as a ‘model’ not to slip into the approach of ‘moralism’ which sees Jesus principally as an example to be followed. This can give the impression that living as Jesus did will somehow earn credit, or even salvation, in the eyes of God. However, once Christians recognise in faith that Jesus has restored their relationship with God through his death and resurrection, they can see how Jesus showed his love and compassion for all people. Jesus healed the sick and suffering, raised the dead, fed the hungry. In the parable of the last judgement Jesus says to those on his right, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me’ (Mat 25:40).

---

*While Jesus as a ‘model’ can be helpful for students in a Lutheran school to think about their behaviour or responses in particular situations, it can easily lead into moralism or legalism. Since students, especially at younger ages, can be rather legalistic in their thinking and acting, Jesus can be seen as a new giver of rules, guidelines and regulations for appropriate behaviour rather than as a loving and forgiving saviour. Slogans such as ‘WWJD’ – ‘what would Jesus do’ – can reinforce this thinking.*

---

## Loving in response to Jesus' love

As Jesus spent his final meal with his disciples before going to his death on the cross, he first washed his disciples' feet. He then gave them his new commandment (Jn 13:34-35):

*'I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you should also love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another.'*

St John writes in his first letter (1 Jn 4:19), 'We love because he first loved us'. He affirms this on the basis of verses earlier in this chapter (1 Jn 4:7-12):

*Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God: everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God's love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins. Beloved, since God loved us so much, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God lives in us, and his love is made perfect in us.*

This love which is to be the mark of the new life in Christ is strong and active. It is not simply pious sentimentality but a love which 'gets its hands dirty' caring for the needs of others. It is a self-giving love ['agape'] which never gives up. For Christ it meant death on the cross for all people. St Paul says (Gal 6:2), 'Bear one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfil the law [of love] of Christ'. He provides the classic description of this love in his first letter to the Corinthian congregation (1 Cor 13:4-8a):

*Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.*

This is the standard of love to which Christians are called in the new life in Christ. By the power of the Holy Spirit they strive towards that ideal. The life of love was recognised in the way in which the early Christians cared for each other (Acts 2:43-47). It begins among those who are believers but extends beyond that circle to reach out into the world to love and serve all people God has created. Jesus' parable of the 'good Samaritan' provides an important model here (Lk 10:25-37).

This command of Christ ‘to love one another’, links closely with the theology of ‘vocation’ [see chapter 3]. Christians recognise that God uses people as his means to carry out his work in the world and to care for all of creation. The new life in Christ helps Christians to see the complexity of the caring relationships into which God has placed them as they are called to care in various areas of responsibility in their families, their places of work, in society, in their congregation. They are also called to care for themselves so that they are able to love and care for others.

---

*Pastoral care in the Lutheran school finds its basis and motivation in the law of love. The phrase ‘pastoral care’ derives from the Latin word ‘pastor’ which means ‘shepherd’. The image of the shepherd is a strong, frequently used biblical image which emphasises loving, caring, showing empathy and compassion, guiding, directing, protecting, feeding, and leading. Jesus says of himself: ‘I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. ... I know my own and my own know me’ (Jn 10:11-16). Pastoral care is caring for the needs of others at our own expense. It means being ready to serve and to sacrifice for others, recognising that when we share in the pain and suffering or the joys and successes of others, Jesus is identifying with us and with them.*

*Pastoral care is part of the total life of the Lutheran school. Pastoral care is a crucial part of the school community and involves everyone within that community. It is not simply for the school counsellor, the school pastor, or some designated ‘carers’. It is part of belonging to the community and even reaches out to those on the edges of that community. Every person in the Lutheran school is involved in pastoral care. It is part of the classroom environment. It includes the way in which all members of the school community relate to one another and it embraces all relationships within that community. It is evident in all curricular and extra-curricular activities. It involves all students and staff in a supportive and protective environment, and shows how every individual in the community is valued as a person created and loved by God. It seeks to affirm, guide, and show respect for each person in all situations within the school and the wider school community. All individuals receive and*

*give under the umbrella of pastoral care.*

*A particular situation of suffering in a Lutheran school creates a challenge for the community and an opportunity to demonstrate sensitive pastoral care. There are dramatic situations which the school community can face, such as accidental death of students or staff, severe sickness, suicide, arson, loss of employment. In all of these cases the support, care and compassion [‘suffering with’] of the community provides a concrete example of God’s love in action. People can see how a Christian community responds to suffering and from where it draws its strength and resources to cope in the circumstances. These experiences may be used by the Holy Spirit to touch lives with the healing message of the gospel.*

*It is important, too, in the Lutheran school community that people are sensitive to suffering which may be very personal and somewhat hidden in the community. People may be very reluctant to show that they are suffering and try to carry their situation themselves. It is important that members in the community listen carefully to what is happening without putting pressure on people to share what they are not yet ready to share with others. This is important with staff as well as with students. The effect of stress can be important to recognise in this context as well as situations of bullying or harassment.*

*Although pastoral care is an expression of the nature and ethos of the school, the way in which the school ‘works’, this does not mean that pastoral care simply ‘happens’. There need to be ways in which students and staff can develop and show care for each other. They may need to be informed about appropriate pastoral care approaches and issues. In the school this may mean specific structures such as vertical care groups, ‘buddy’ systems, house groups, and peer care groups. It may mean appointing particular ‘carers’ such as pastors, counsellors, and ministry teams.*

*It is critical how concerns or problems which are confronted within the school community are handled within the total program of pastoral care. In such situations, respect and honour need to be shown to individuals especially when there is a need to correct or*

*reprimand specific behaviour. Love will motivate any consequences or penalties in order to restore the individual back into the community. The goal of this aspect of pastoral care is to help an individual to develop positive attitudes, self-respect, consideration of others, and ultimately self-discipline in order to live free from external restraints.*

*Teaching in itself is an essential part of pastoral care. Where teachers see their teaching as ‘ministry’ rather than simply a ‘job’ or ‘career’, they see their teaching within a context of pastoral care. Teachers strive to teach well, to prepare as conscientiously as possible and to maintain their own professional development because they care for the students they are teaching. They want to be able to provide the best experience they can for their students. And this pastoral care will extend to caring for their students as whole persons. They will be concerned for the academic, physical, emotional and spiritual growth of their students. Even in the mundane tasks or the challenges of report writing and marking, teachers will be able to see their vocation as part of their pastoral care for their students.*

*A key component of pastoral care in Lutheran schools is the pastoral care of the staff. Within the school community staff experience various levels of stress related to their teaching or administrative and support responsibilities. There are also health matters and other personal issues and crises which spill over into the school situation. If staff do not feel cared for, supported, appreciated, encouraged and affirmed as they face such situations, low morale amongst the staff will quickly have an impact on the care which they can extend to the students.*

*Staff may need guidance in balancing the various areas of responsibility in which they carry out their vocation. The challenge will be to try to meet the demands of the school, home and family, social interaction, church activities, physical and mental relaxation, and so on. Staff may feel inadequate in meeting their own expectations in all of these areas of responsibility and experience stress and burn out in setting unrealistic expectations for themselves or in meeting those imposed on them by others.*



*Christians within the Lutheran school community have been given a special resource for pastoral care – the gift of prayer. Christian teachers have the wonderful privilege of bringing their students and their joys, needs, sorrows and hopes to God in prayer. Students can be encouraged to pray for each other and prayer can enfold all of the school activities and reach out to the needs of the community. In times of particular stress or tragedy in the school community, prayer can be a powerful witness to dependence on God for all things. And thanking God for success and achievements can shift the focus onto God from whom all good gifts come.*

---

## Discipleship [learning, serving and witnessing]

The new life in Christ is a life of discipleship. Christians are called to live as Christ's disciples. The writer to the Ephesian congregation says to his Christian readers (Eph 4:1), 'I ... beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called'. However, the weaknesses and failures of Jesus' own disciples during his life on earth are a reminder that disciples of Christ live only by God's grace and forgiveness. The more closely disciples follow their Lord, and the more they draw their life from him as branches in the vine, (Jn 15:1-5), the more they will be like their Father in heaven and show love, mercy and forgiveness to others (Mt 5:48; Eph 4:32; Col 3:12-17).

Jesus established a new approach to discipleship from the common practice in his day. At the time of Jesus, men who wanted to learn the law of Israel applied for admission into a rabbi's school. Jesus' disciples, however, did not choose him as their rabbi; Jesus took the initiative and chose his own disciples (Jn 15:16). His choice was not based on their merit, past performance, or future potential. He selected most unlikely people: nobodies from the backblocks of Palestine, uneducated fishermen, political agitators, and hated tax collectors (Mt 4:18-22; 9:9). In addition to the 12 disciples, with the 'inner circle' of Peter, James and John (Mk 9:2), there were many other disciples (Lk 6:17) who followed Jesus. In contrast to other Jewish rabbis at this time, Jesus had female disciples (Lk 8:1-3), for example, Martha and Mary, who 'sat at the Lord's feet listening to what he said' (Lk 10:38-42).

Christians called to follow Jesus as his disciples are still people who rely on Jesus' call rather than their own merit or potential. St Paul has to remind the Christians in Corinth that God often works in an 'upside down' way, using unlikely people for his purposes (1 Cor 1:26-32). Through the Holy Spirit God gives the gift of faith and the gifts of the Spirit so that people can follow Jesus and do what God intends. Here again is 'theology of the cross': 'for God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom, and God's weakness is stronger than human strength' (1 Cor 1:25).

### **The disciple as learner and follower**

The word 'disciple' means 'learner'. Jesus' disciples spent their time with him learning from him as their teacher [*rabbi*]. He revealed things to them, teaching them in parables (Mt 13:11; 11:25-27), by examples, and by direct teaching (Mt 5-7). At times, in love for them, Jesus had to correct them when they had misunderstood him and point out where they had not listened carefully or where they had not obeyed his teaching (Mt 17:19-21; Lk 24:25; Mt 16:23).

Disciples are also 'followers'. Jesus' disciples literally followed Jesus as he moved around the towns and countryside. They identified with him and the things he was doing and saying, even though they often misunderstood him. But by being with him (Mk 2:14), they learned to trust him and to obey his instructions. They grew to the point where, once Jesus had given them the gift of the Holy Spirit, they were ready to go out and make disciples of others.

---

*The Lutheran school is a context in which students and staff can develop their life as a disciple of Christ through learning from him and his teaching. This spiritual and theological development of all members of the school community is vital. Worship is important here and the Christian Studies program for the students but also theological professional development for the staff through accreditation and continuing study and theological reflection. Through these the Holy Spirit can work to make people into disciples of Christ, draw believers closer together to love and support one another and help them to grow in their faith so that they can be witnesses to others.*

---

### **Serving as a disciple of Christ**

On one occasion when Jesus' disciples were disputing amongst themselves which of them was the greatest, Jesus pointed out that he 'came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many' (Mk 10:45). He gave them a demonstration of this when he washed the disciples' feet on the night when he was betrayed (Jn 13:1-17). The challenge for all of Jesus' followers is to live this life of service to others and in this way to show their love for one another and demonstrate that they are his disciples (Jn 13:34-35).

This response of service as a disciple of Christ begins in the school and reaches out into the local and global community. It relates to all instances of human need wherever they are found. Jesus' words in the parable of the last judgement, 'Truly I tell you, just as you did it [did not do it] to one of the least of these members of my family, you did it [did not do it] to me' (Mt 25:40, 45) places a challenge in front of every disciple of Christ. Service as a disciple of Christ recognises, too, the responsibility to care for all of God's creation which is 'groaning in labor pains' (Rom 8:22) until the new creation is revealed.

---

*Here we see theology of the cross in action [chapter 5]. The theology of vocation [chapter 3] is also relevant here. All of this provides the basis for developing loving, caring and serving responses not only in the Lutheran school community but also out into the world beyond the school and to the whole of creation. The current emphasis in Lutheran schools on 'service learning' is important here. It is crucial that this service is built on establishing mutually caring relationships with those with whom we relate through these service activities. This is to try to counter any sense of superiority in helping those 'in need' without realising what we can in turn receive and learn from them. Service learning needs to be part of the total school approach and not simply part of a lesson or unit of study.*

---

## **Witnessing**

The Bible gives two accounts of Jesus' words of farewell and commission to his disciples before he returned to the Father. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus says:

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.*

St Luke records Jesus' final words as follows (Acts 1:8):

*you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you: and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*

Jesus makes it very clear that he is giving his disciples the responsibility to carry on his mission to the ends of the earth and to the end of time. This is the task of being witnesses to all which they had seen and heard from Jesus and in particular the good news of forgiveness through the death and resurrection of Jesus. They were to be the channels through which the Holy Spirit could work to bring others to faith in Jesus Christ. This responsibility of the original disciples is the mission of all Jesus' disciples, including those who believe in Him today.

After his resurrection Jesus said to his disciples (Jn 20:21), 'As the Father has sent me, so I send you.' And he breathed on them the Holy Spirit. As the Father sent the Son, and the Father and the Son sent the Holy Spirit to continue the ministry of Jesus (Jn 16:13-14), so this Spirit empowers believers to carry on Christ's mission and point people to Jesus, 'the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (Jn 1:29). Jesus' disciples today carry this same mission responsibility as they witness in their homes, communities and places of work as well as support the work of witnessing to 'all nations'. This is a responsibility which continues until the return of Christ.

As Jesus' disciples live and work in the community, they need to become aware of the many different ways in which they can witness to people in that community. In many instances this can begin through various avenues of service to those in the community. As caring, serving witnesses to their faith, Christians may be given the opportunity to

witness to ‘the hope which is in [them] ... with gentleness and respect’ (1 Pet 4:15c-16a).

---

*While the prime responsibility of a Lutheran school is its program of education, the school community is the context in which Christian members of that community witness to their faith in Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit within them to help them lead the new life in Christ. Lutheran schools in the past have at times been distracted by a false antithesis: is the purpose of Lutheran school education or outreach with the gospel? This matter will be addressed in the next chapter. However, the challenge by Christ for Christians to witness in all areas of their responsibility [their ‘vocation’], means that the Lutheran school community is a God-given context in which they are to witness. While this is an important function of discipleship, Christians need to be sensitive to, and respectful of, those in the Lutheran school community who may come from other religious traditions.*

*Some Lutheran schools have developed programs of care and support for members of their school and wider community to show their faith active in love (for example, providing breakfast for students at school, assisting aged or disabled persons in the community, providing educational resources for third world students, providing meals for a family in crisis, etc). These actions can provide opportunities to witness verbally to the faith which motivates them.*

---

### **The cost of discipleship**

Just as Jesus Christ came not to be served, but to serve (Mt 20:28), Christians are called to identify with Christ in serving others as they ‘take up their cross’ to follow Jesus (Mt 16:24).

To be a disciple of Jesus is not easy: it requires total commitment. When Jesus commanded ‘Follow me’, people had to leave everything: their professions, possessions and families (Mt 19:27-29). Disciples have to count the cost of following Jesus (Lk 14:25-33). Often the commitment Jesus demands of his followers seems harsh (Lk 9:57-62; Mt 10:37-39;

Jn 15:18-25), but because there is no real life apart from Jesus, nothing dare come between the disciple and Jesus. Following Jesus means saying no to one's self, being ready to give up all earthly security and even to suffer for the sake of the Lord (Mt 16:24-26). This is theology of the cross in action. Taking up the cross and following Jesus is not something which Christians have to seek out for themselves. It is part of their vocation as a Christian. As Christians, they will take up their cross in the various areas of responsibility in which they find themselves in their homes, their schools and other places of work, in society and in the organisation of the church. It is in these situations that the Christian is called to share in the suffering which Christ continues to bear wherever there is suffering. This is where they face the challenges of living a life of love and service to others – even with those who may be antagonistic to them. This may also be the arena in which they face suffering because of their faith in Jesus Christ and witnessing to that faith as Jesus predicted would happen for his followers, especially where the message of the gospel is in conflict with popular culture or other aspects of society (Mt 5:10-12; 10:16-23).

Disciples of Christ may have experienced circumstances which they have recognised as the work of the devil trying to undermine what God is wishing to achieve through their witness and service. They may be faced by failures, frustrations and conflicts. They may even begin to wonder if their opportunities for service are futile or worthless. On the other hand, they can be led to regard their vocation as an opportunity for developing their own success, pride and achievement rather than the challenge to serve and show love to others. Although these can be difficult situations, through these experiences God helps Christians to recognise their natural sinful human responses and to allow the Holy Spirit to grow the fruit of the Spirit in their lives.

---

*All Christian members of the Lutheran school community, staff as well as students, will be challenged by the cost of being a disciple of Christ. This will present situations where individuals or groups may need special understanding and support as they work through these circumstances. It will provide another avenue for sensitive pastoral care and the support of some of the spiritual disciplines reviewed in the next section.*

---

## Spiritual disciplines

Living the new life in Christ means that Christians draw on the various supports which the Holy Spirit gives to help them to grow in faith, love and service. Basic here are the ‘means of grace’ – the word of God as it is proclaimed, shared, taught and studied, and the word as it comes with the elements in the sacraments. These have been considered more fully in chapter 6.

Christians have developed various approaches to help them to draw more deeply on God’s word and through the power of the Holy Spirit to grow in their personal response to God as well as sharing their insights and responses with others. These ‘spiritual disciplines’ are not only for those who dedicate their life to contemplation or meditation and prayer. They are for people in their busy, everyday life as they go about their regular activities. While individual Christians will not find all of these ‘disciplines’ equally helpful, they are encouraged to explore them to help them to grow in their new life in Christ.

There are many ‘self-help’ books on spirituality. Many of these give the impression that growth in spirituality is a process which the individual follows often with specific steps or stages which depend on the successful effort of the individual themselves. They see spirituality as having its origin in human beings and their feelings and thoughts. These can often lead to a sense of failure and frustration as individuals fall short of the suggested goals. However, it is crucial to recognise that Christian spirituality begins with the action of God who gives individual Christians faith in Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit continues to give them spiritual gifts as they follow Jesus Christ and they learn to respond to the action of God in their lives. John Kleinig in his exploration of Lutheran spirituality refers to this as ‘receptive spirituality’ (7-26). He then goes on to explore this approach and the blessings of meditation and prayer in particular.

Various writers provide different listings of spiritual disciplines. Richard Foster has identified twelve central disciplines of spirituality which he explores with helpful practical examples and study materials. He divides these into three categories: the ‘inward disciplines’ of meditation, prayer, fasting and study; the ‘outward disciplines’ of simplicity, solitude, submission and service; the ‘corporate disciplines’

of confession, worship, guidance and celebration. Since many Christians through the ages have found these various spiritual disciplines of great benefit, even though they may not have participated in them as frequently or as fully as they had intended, Christians are encouraged to explore them to experience for themselves the blessings which the Holy Spirit can bring to them through these practices.

---

*Worship and prayer will be explored in chapter 9 as they are critical aspects of the daily life of a Lutheran school. However, prayer is also an important part of the pastoral care program of the Lutheran school. Members of the school community can be helped to appreciate the many different situations in which prayer can be an appropriate response. Here the psalms, the prayer book of the Old Testament people of God, and the prayer book of Jesus himself, can be particularly helpful. The psalms provide a wide range of prayers which are not only examples of prayer but are word of God themselves. As well as prayers of praise, thanksgiving, joy, celebration of the wonders of creation, confession, petition and intercession, there are prayers of complaint, desperation, or even of anger and frustration towards God. There are pleas to try to make some sense out of difficult and tragic situations or simply cries for support and strength. It may be like the cry of the father whose son Jesus' disciples were unable to heal: 'Lord I believe; help my unbelief' (Mk 9:24). At times individuals may come to realise that when they are unable to pray, God's Spirit is praying for them and with them (Rom 8:26-27) Ultimately their experience may be like that of St Paul which ends in complete confidence that nothing can separate them from the love of God (Rom 8:18-39).*

*The Lutheran school situation provides a context in which other spiritual disciplines can be explored, conscious of the fact that not all staff and students in the school will be able to participate fully since they are not open to the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. However, for such members of the community there may still be value in the experience for its own sake.*

*Two disciplines which could be explored and encouraged, for example, are silence and solitude [the freedom to be alone even*



*in the middle of a crowd of people]. While these disciplines might seem threatening to some people, they can be very valuable for all members of the school community. However, for the disciples of Christ they provide many potential blessings for seeking peace and quiet and learning to wait in silence for the blessing of God: ‘In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength’ (Is 30:15). Silence can be embraced as a gift and opportunity for prayer and meditation: ‘Be still, and know that I am God’ (Ps 46:10).*

*Staff need time to recharge their own spiritual resources. Christian teachers need to draw on the strength which the Holy Spirit provides through worship, prayer, meditation on the Bible and other spiritual disciplines. This will provide the personal resources they need to be able to continue to witness to their faith to their students and also to extend pastoral care to them.*

---

## Ethical living

As indicated previously in this chapter, since Christ has fulfilled the law, the new life in Christ is no longer lived in fear of the law but within the freedom of the gospel (Gal 5:1). The gospel provides the motivation and gives Christians a good conscience since they no longer need to fear the law as they live as children of God. In Christ they have forgiveness of sin, life and salvation. They live in ‘evangelical freedom’ [the freedom of the gospel]: a life of sanctification by the power of the Holy Spirit.

This freedom does not give Christians the licence to do whatever they wish. In that sense it is not absolute freedom, but the freedom to live as God intends, boldly and confidently, free from the curse of the law. While the gospel provides the motivation for the new life in Christ, it is the law which gives shape and form to that new life. And the Holy Spirit gives the power to live this new life in Christ.

Christians, however, continue to live this life in the tension of ‘saint and sinner’. The law of God, therefore, plays a dual role for individual Christians as they learn to live in evangelical freedom. On the one hand, because the law has been fulfilled by Christ, it provides a guide and sense of direction giving form and shape to the new life in Christ [‘third

use of the law’]. At the same time, because in this life Christians remain sinners, the law exposes sin [‘theological use of the law’] and brings the sinner back to the grace and forgiveness of God. Christians are not on a path of steady progress towards perfection, but a path of daily returning to repentance and forgiveness - a daily return to baptism - to be reclaimed and renewed by God’s mercy.

In respect to the law of God Christians are free to obey God’s commands because through them they are moulded by the Holy Spirit working through the means of grace to become more Christ-like in mind and heart, living according to the guidelines of Scripture. In this situation they are confronted by situations and circumstances which require them to make ethical decisions. Ethics is a process of reflecting on and distinguishing between good and evil, right and wrong, with regard to what a person thinks, says, feels, believes and does. Ethics involves applying these guidelines to concrete life situations and circumstances and involves thinking about and evaluating the consequences of particular actions and behaviours. Ethics is more than knowing what is right and wrong [ethical knowledge]: it is also doing what is right [ethical behaviour]. Ethical living must result in ethical actions.

It is also necessary to distinguish between what is legal and what is ethical or moral. Certain activities and practices may be legal, but some people would not regard them as ethical. Vigorous debate can occur when matters such as euthanasia and same sex marriage are viewed in terms of both their legal and their ethical perspectives.

Christian ethics exist in and grow out of the community of faith. Ethical decisions are made within the communal context and affect the community in which they are made. The resources of the community are utilised in the decision making as responses are formulated through prayer, discussion, striving for consensus, and particularly through accessing relevant biblical material. However, it is important to recognise that the Bible provides biblical principles for ethical decision making rather than specific answers for particular ethical situations. Disciples of Christ attempt to develop a distinctively Christian way of life as an influence and model for the whole of society of how God intends people to live in relationship.

On the other hand, individual Christians are responsible for their own ethical decisions. Christians may not always come to the same

conclusion about an ethical matter, but each person is responsible to God for their decision. Christians should be careful not to become judgemental of fellow Christians who may arrive at a different ethical decision. Another problem which can occur is to try to define the Christian life by developing a set of acceptable behaviours for Christians: to define Christians by what *they do*, rather than by what *they are*.

Christians need to be aware that their freedom may cause offence to others. St Paul deals with this situation in his Corinthian congregation where there was a concern about eating meat which had been offered to idols (1 Cor 8). He gives the following advice (1 Cor 8:9): ‘But take care that this liberty of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.’ Paul is concerned here about the faith of a fellow Christian who may not yet feel free to act in a particular way. However, there may be situations where such a witness to evangelical freedom is necessary to encourage individuals in their faith development. A Christian may need to show clearly that the freedom which the gospel gives from observing particular moral or ethical responses is part of learning to live as a disciple of Christ.

In living the ethical life, the focus for Christians must always remain on the gospel and not on human performance. Because God has made them holy, Christians live the holy life [the life of baptism], doing ‘good works’ which spring from faith active in love (Gal 5:6) and which are the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Jesus’ disciples are called to listen carefully to the word of God, so that, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they have ‘the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:16). St Paul urges Christians (Rom 12:1-2 NIV):

*in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – which is your spiritual worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*

### **Christian ethics in the world**

Although the Christian lives in the world, and may draw insights from sources such as sociological studies, science, opinion polls, and pressure groups, only the Bible understood in the light of the gospel provides the foundation for Christian ethics. Such ethics may include moral

imperatives which can claim to be universal, (eg sanctity of life) or insights in common with other ethical systems (eg respect for the individual).

However, Christian ethics apply only to Christians. It is inappropriate for Christians to try to impose specifically Christian ethical standards on society as a whole. To do so is, according to Lutheran theology, to misunderstand the implications of the teaching of the 'two hands of God' [see chapter 8]. However, Christians need to exert a positive influence on the moral standards of society through example and through individual Christians acting as responsible citizens in their society, being salt and light in the world (Mt 5:13-16).

---

*It is important that people in the school community are helped to develop a coherent view of life with supporting values so that they can work from this base in their ethical decision making. Within the school community there will be a wide range of religious perspectives and ethical frameworks which different members of the community will use. Through their interaction within the school community individuals will be challenged in their decision making and in evaluating the basis on which they make those decisions. Teachers need to become conscious of the ethical implications of their decisions and actions in the school context.*

*In the process of developing an ethical framework for themselves, students need to experience the process of ethical decision making. They need guidance to learn how to make choices and be responsible for their decisions whether they operate from a Christian ethical framework or not. While it is crucial to protect the vulnerability of children, they cannot be protected from human interaction and the consequent need to make choices on their own behalf. They require help to move from externally provided discipline to self-discipline.*

*As they learn to make choices, students will recognise that issues are often grey rather than black and white. They need experience in ethical decision making where the choice is between two 'good choices', between short term and long term gains, and between individual and group benefits. Teachers, too, become vulnerable as they make choices and reveal reasons for their choices and also because there is no guarantee what choices students will make.*

*In addition, students will need experience in constructing arguments and evaluating different views which may be presented in discussion and in learning to accept critical evaluation of their own positions. They need experience in analysing the reasons for their particular decisions.*

*Christian students will confront the saint/sinner tension in their lives as they struggle to conform their will to the will of God because that is their choice and not because they see their response in some legalistic sense. Christian students can be encouraged to engage confidently in ethical decision making knowing that, by faith, they think and act under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and within the context of God's grace and forgiveness. They can, therefore, dare to make decisions in difficult ethical issues. They need to be assisted in seeing they have a role in witnessing to society (being 'salt and light') on the basis of their ethical values, especially where there is a conflict of values with those of society.*

---

# CHAPTER 8

## New life in Christ in church and society

---

As indicated in chapter 3, God has not ended his creative activity but continues to work in creation, preserving it, sustaining it and taking care of it. However, because of the power of sin and the reality of evil in God's good creation, God who is holy, just and loving cannot simply ignore sin and its consequences for creation. He has responded in two ways, with justice and with mercy, with law and with gospel [chapter 4]. He can respond by keeping sin and evil in check and promoting peace, good order and the common good through the law [the realm of justice] or he can break the power of sin and evil through the gospel of Jesus Christ [the realm of mercy].

Christians live their new life in Christ in the world. They function within the structures of society as they carry out their vocation in the various areas of responsibility into which God has placed them. They are also members of the 'body of Christ', the Christian church, where they experience the forgiveness of God, grow in their faith, and witness their faith to the world. God takes care of his world through these two ways: through society in general and through the church. These two ways have sometimes been called God's 'general or universal care' [for the whole of creation] and his 'specific care' [for all Christians]. They have also been represented as 'the two hands of God'.

### An 'ambidextrous' God

One way to represent God's care for his creation and for all people who live in it is to speak about 'the two hands of God'. However, in using this extended metaphor to represent the two spheres of God's activity in the world, it is vital not to separate these two activities of God. They

must be kept in creative tension because God is an ‘ambidextrous God’.

*[Note: This theological teaching is often referred to as the ‘doctrine of the two kingdoms’. This designation can be confusing for two reasons. Firstly, the Bible speaks about ‘two kingdoms’ which are in continual opposition with each other in the world: the ‘kingdom of God’ or ‘kingdom of heaven’ [designations used by Jesus himself (Mt 5:3,10,19,20; Lk 18:16,17,24,25,29) and the ‘kingdom of Satan’. Although Christ through his life, death, resurrection and ascension has already defeated the power of Satan (Jn 12:31-32, 14:30, 16:11), this struggle continues to the end of time and Christians experience this in their lives under persecution (Jn 15:18-19) and in the tension of ‘saint and sinner’ [chapter 7]. Secondly, this terminology of ‘two kingdoms’ can be understood as suggesting that there are two different realms or areas in which God operates which are distinct from each other. This suggests a static scenario rather than the interactive relationship which exists between the ‘two kingdoms’. This can then lead to a tendency to speak about the ‘sacred’ and the ‘secular’ or the ‘spiritual’ and the ‘temporal’ and to see them as separate entities and even opposing entities as ‘church and state’. However, God works through both and Christians live in both at the same time and are responsible to both. As Jesus points out, Christians are to be both ‘in the world’ but not ‘of the world’ (Jn 17:6-19)].*

### **The two hands of God**

Martin Luther first developed this way of speaking about God’s activity in the world as ‘the two hands of God’ because he saw two dangers in his day. On the one hand there were those who said that Christians should withdraw from the world which was seen as evil and live in some ‘holy huddle’ apart from the world. Christians should not therefore participate in government, the legal profession, the army, or any other ‘secular’ activity. On the other hand there were those who said that Christians should take over the world and try to ‘christianise’ it so that it was in fact ruled by the church.

Luther however wanted to emphasise that God works in the world through all people. He works with his ‘left hand’ using people as his servants to maintain peace, good order and justice in the world with people working in all kinds of situations and circumstances [their ‘vocation’] whether or not they realise that they are serving God’s purposes. On the other hand, God works with his ‘right hand’ when he works in mercy, forgiving sins and bringing people to faith in Jesus

and working through them in his church. But it is important to realise that God is ambidextrous – he works with both hands at the same time. The *Augsburg Confession* in speaking about the ‘spiritual’ and ‘temporal’ powers urges ‘that for the sake of God’s command, everyone should honor and esteem with all reverence both authorities and powers as the two highest gifts of God on earth’ (AC 28,4; Kolb and Wengert: 92).

### **God operating with the ‘left hand’ – ‘general care’**

All people are included as God works with his ‘left hand’. Through the civil or political use of the law, God regulates the world for all people as they live as fallen human beings in a fallen world. Law and order are to be maintained to provide a safe and structured environment for human life and prosperity, sin is to be kept in check, peace, justice and goodness for all people and societies are to be promoted, and those who do evil and break the laws of society are to be restrained and punished. To do this, the civil authorities established by God (Rom 13:1-8) use reason, common sense, culture and custom [‘natural law’] to teach what is right and legislation, and if necessary, punishment [‘the sword’ – Rom 13:4], to enforce what is right. Operating with his ‘left hand’ God helps the world to function as he created it to function despite the advent of sin.

The *Augsburg Confession* speaks about God’s activity in the ‘left hand kingdom’ as follows (AC 16,1,2,5-7; Kolb and Wengert: 48-50):

*Concerning public order and secular government it is taught that all political authority, orderly government, laws, and good order in the world are created and instituted by God and that Christians may without sin exercise political authority; be princes and judges; pass sentences and administer justice according to imperial and other existing laws; punish evildoers with the sword; wage just wars; serve as soldiers; buy and sell; take required oaths; possess property; be married; etc.*

*... The Gospel does not overthrow secular government, public order, and marriage but instead intends that a person keep all this as a true order of God and demonstrate in these walks of life Christian love and true good works according to each person’s calling. Christians, therefore, are obliged to be subject to political authority and obey its commands and laws in all that may be done without sin. But if a command of the political authority cannot be followed without sin, one must obey God rather than any human beings (Acts 5[:29]).*



Wherever people are working for justice, peace, goodness, care for the world and the environment, God's care is at work. This can be through institutions such as the government (Rom 13:1-8; 1 Tim 2: 1-6; Titus 3:1-2; 1 Pet 2:13-17), the structures of marriage and family, through work and interaction within society and through religious practices. Christians see their responsibilities in these areas as part of their 'vocation' [chapter 3].

### **God operating with the 'right hand' – 'specific care'**

God works in the community of Christians with his 'right hand'. Under God's 'special care' Christians live in the forgiveness of God which they receive through their God-given faith in Jesus Christ. They are sustained by the word of God and the sacraments and they celebrate in worship. They are supported by the grace of God as they live out their life of loving service in the world as people who are forgiven but who still remain sinful and in need of forgiveness. God's 'right hand' is the hand of mercy and grace.

The *Augsburg Confession* points out that God's 'right hand' work through the church is done through 'the power and command of God to preach the gospel, to forgive or retain sin, and to administer and distribute the sacraments. ... It does not interfere at all with public order and secular authority (AC 28,5,10; Kolb and Wengert: 92)

*[Note: when the word 'church' is designated as the sphere in which God works with his 'right hand', this is to be understood as 'the community of believers' or 'the body of Christ' and not as the institution 'church'. As an institution the church with its structures, constitutions and other legal requirements operates under God's 'left hand'. This will be explored further in the section on the church.]*

### **Distinguishing the 'two hands' of God: not confused and not separated**

Everything in the world is under God's care and control. He operates with both his 'left and right hands', controlling sin and evil through his 'left hand' and showing mercy and forgiving sin through his 'right hand'. While the two modes of God's activity in the world through law and gospel can be identified and described, the understanding of the relationship between the 'two hands' has raised difficulties of interpretation.

*When considering the ‘two hands’ of God in the Lutheran schools context, it will be important to guard against any implications that students and staff who are not members of the community of faith in which God works through his ‘right hand’ are somehow ‘less’ a part of the way God is working in the world. God works with all people because he works with ‘both hands’.*

---

- **distinguished, and not confused**

The major concern of Lutheran theology is to avoid confusion between law and gospel because the message of the gospel must be heard as clearly as possible [chapter 4]. When law and gospel are confused this inevitably leads to a lack of clarity in, or even a negation of, the message of the gospel.

The ‘two hands of God’ are confused when Christians try to set up a ‘Christian society’ by trying to govern society by the teachings of Jesus [for example in the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5-7)]. In doing this, Jesus Christ is looked on as a new law-giver, providing a new set of commandments which Christians might try to impose on society as a whole. What happens here in Lutheran theological terms is that there is a confusion of the political use of the law [which applies to all people whether they recognise God or not] and the ‘third use of the law’. Instead of seeing that the law of God as taught by Christ in the New Testament can be used as a guide for living only for Christians who accept Jesus Christ as saviour and Lord [the ‘third use of the law’], the attempt is made to force the ethics of the Christian life onto all people, whether they accept its basis or not. The distinction between what is legal within society, and what is moral for Christians within that society becomes blurred, and the impression can be given that the church is concerned with nothing more than ethical issues.

Confusion of the ‘two hands of God’ occurs when Christians attempt to dominate the civil authorities by trying to impose religious authority on them as though Christians have a special revelation from Christ for current political and social conditions.

There are difficult distinctions which have to be made in this regard. On the one hand, the Lutheran church insists on non-interference

from the state in its work of preaching the gospel and administering the sacraments. However, the church does need to operate on the basis of the political use of the law when, for example, the government proposes legislation which devalues human life or discriminates against certain groups in society. The church needs to articulate what it regards as critical on the basis of the way God has structured creation. This can mean that the church has to speak out on social, ethical and justice issues which may lead to criticism by the church of the government and its legislation. However, the church cannot impose its authority on the political authorities. St Paul writing to Christians facing persecution in Rome (Rom 13:1-8) urges that it is the responsibility of Christians to support the governing authorities, ‘not only because of possible punishment but also because of conscience’ (Rom 13:5 NIV; cf. 1 Pet 2:13).

Confusion of the ‘two hands of God’ is also seen when the concerns of the church are influenced by, or reduced to, the norms of society. Christians are to be ‘in the world’, but not ‘of the world’ (Jn 17). They are to be ‘salt and ‘light’ for the world (Mt 5:13-16). But in doing this, they cannot confuse the concerns of the church and the concerns of society. Christians need to be involved in justice and social issues in the world and in their community but they must ensure that the message of the gospel is not simply equated with social justice issues.

- **distinguished, but not separated**

However, Lutheran theology is concerned that another equally important pitfall is avoided, that of separating ‘the two hands of God’ to such an extent that ‘hope for the poor and hope for sinners’ are seen as totally unrelated. ‘The poor clamor for justice and sinners cry for justification. It is intolerable for the church to separate these concerns’ (Braaten: 164).

Difficulties such as this are caused if the ‘two hands of God’ are seen as completely separated rather than as differentiated. This approach can lead to a dangerous dualistic thinking separating the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ aspects of life, separating the temporal and the eternal, and dividing church and state. In its more extreme form it can lead to Christians seeing the gospel as having no real implications for their life in this world but only for their private life and ultimately eternal life in heaven.

Another result of this separation is what has sometimes been called 'Lutheran quietism'. While individual Christians have been encouraged to demonstrate the practical working out of the gospel in areas of social concern, injustice and suffering, there has been a strong anxiety expressed by some that the clarity of the gospel message of salvation in Jesus Christ can be obscured by involvement of the church in matters of social reform or justice issues and that these should therefore be the responsibility of government and society. However, there is the danger that such an attitude can lead to a privatisation and individualisation of the gospel which prevents the church from being salt and light in the community and from speaking law and gospel into particular social situations. Strelan argues (1991: 131):

*There is no area of human existence or of this world's life in which the Word of God cannot be spoken. That word may be a word of rebuke or it may be a word of gospel. But it must be proclaimed in its fullness, and it is only the church who must and can proclaim it. We are not called to be moral guardians, but to suffer with those who suffer; the church is called not just to be prophetic, but to be the suffering prophet, the priest of God in the world.*

### **Christians find themselves in creative tension as they live the new life in Christ**

Because Christians are people whom God has created, they live and work under God's 'left hand' care. This means that as part of their vocation they use their God-given gifts and abilities and the opportunities which they have in their various areas of responsibility to serve the world and their fellow human beings to the best of their ability. In doing this they respect the various authorities which God has placed in the world.

However, as Christians, they live and serve under God's 'right hand' care, working in and through the church as the people of God. As forgiven people of God, they have been set free from the power of sin and given the power of the gospel to live in the world as witnesses to the gospel and as loving servants to their fellow human beings.

Christians therefore live in a creative tension as they relate to the will of God in the world. On the one hand they are concerned with using the law of God ['political use' which applies to all people, whether they

believe in God or not], to promote social justice, peace and wholeness [‘shalom’] and uphold the fundamental dignity of all human beings using the law to protect and preserve God’s creation and to help it to work in the way in which God created it to function. On the other hand, as those who have faith in the saving work of Jesus Christ, they seek to spread the good news of forgiveness in Jesus Christ in their various areas of responsibility. Through the ministry of caring which grows out of the ‘right hand’ work of God in the church, Christians operate in partnership with institutions of the ‘left hand’ to bring care and compassion to those in need as a response to the gospel.

Because Christians know the will of God and the way God created this world to function according to his will, Christians have a particular responsibility and motivation to work for establishing and maintaining peace and justice in the world and to uphold the dignity of all human beings as people who have been created by God. This may mean playing a role as ‘conscience’ within society by pointing out specific sins of a society and nation, opposing inappropriate social trends and proposed legislation.

*Speak out for those who cannot speak,  
for the rights of all the destitute.  
Speak out, judge righteously,  
Defend the rights of the poor and needy. (Prov 31:8-9).*

Christians need to be aware of systemic evil entrenched in the systems and structures of society and there may be situations where this may mean opposing laws or practices which support or practice obvious injustice, as for example, Dietrich Bonhoeffer opposed evil policies and practices in Germany during the Nazi era. Christians may be called on ‘to obey God rather than human beings’ (Acts 4:19).

Individual Christians, therefore, find that they are always involved in both aspects of God’s activity in the world with both his ‘left hand’ and ‘right hand’. Christians can therefore see God’s work in the world from two perspectives. They view reality as believers in Jesus Christ and as members of his church and also as citizens of the state and members of a particular society. In this sense they are dual citizens in the world and there is the constant temptation for Christians to confuse the two loyalties. However, while working together with God in this world, Christians look forward to the new world which is to come.

## The Lutheran school and the ‘two hands of God’

‘The two hands of God’ is a critical area of theology for determining the role and purpose of Lutheran schools, how they operate, and the program which they provide for their students. Are these schools part of God’s ‘left hand’ work or his ‘right hand’ work – or both? What is the role of the church or the local congregation in the life of a Lutheran school? What is the implication of a Lutheran school accepting government funding? These are a few of the issues which relate to this key area of theology.

This area of theology means that a Lutheran approach to schooling may be different from that of some other church groups, for example those who see that their schools are established primarily for outreach into the community to bring people to faith. Other schools which may have begun as church related have now become simply ‘private schools’ with a veneer of Christianity.

In considering this ‘two hands of God’ perspective, the Lutheran school needs to distinguish clearly between the expectations which the church might have for the school and what the school is as an educational institution, serving both the church and the state.

### **Lutheran school education seen from the perspective of the ‘left hand’**

While Lutheran theology insists that ‘the left and right hands of God’ must be distinguished but not separated, in order to examine the Lutheran school in relation to this teaching, it will be helpful initially to consider each perspective separately.

- **education as part of the realm of reason**

Lutheran theology sees education, in the first instance, as being part of God’s ‘left hand’ care, the area of human reason. Martin Luther himself promoted this view because education arises with life itself as part of the created order. The gospel does not provide particular insights for the understanding of education. Neither can education of itself contribute in any way to the new life in Christ which only the gospel can bring.

Siegfried Hebart, a former principal of Luther Seminary [now Australian Lutheran College], expands on this (18):

*From the angle of the Gospel, secular education, like the Law of God, belongs to the area of the preliminary, the preparatory, the antecedent; this is the area of sin and secularism, of estrangement from God and the fellowman, of the resultant judgment of God. It is also the area of the gracious preservation of God by which He protects His creation against disintegration and chaos and anarchy. ... This, in short, means that education as such, belongs to the realm of the purely human. There is, therefore, no such thing as a specifically 'Christian' education.*

Seen from this perspective the Lutheran school is part of God's 'left hand' care which operates through the application of human reason and research.

- **the responsibility of parents for education**

Parents are seen as having the first responsibility for the education of their children. In the Large Catechism, Luther argued the importance of this God-given responsibility for parents (LC, 1,173-174; Hebart tr: 62):

*the reason he [God] has given us children and put them in our hands is that we bring them up and be in charge of them as he wants; otherwise he wouldn't need any fathers and mothers. Every person must know that it's his duty, at the risk of losing God's favour, to bring up his children above all to respect and know God, and, if they are gifted, to let them study and learn, so that they can make themselves useful wherever they are needed.*

This responsibility is part of the order of creation. It applies to all families whether they recognise this responsibility as given by God or not. This view is supported by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Appendix B: 2b) when it states in Article 26(3) that 'parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children'.

Parents are to be concerned about the education of their children because of their 'office' as parents within the 'orders of creation'. In this role,

*God has given a special position of honour to the estate ['office'] of father and mother, higher than all other estates under him. He doesn't tell us just to love our parents, but to honour them (LC 1,105; Hebart tr: 45). ... For God has put this estate right on top of all others; in fact, he has set it up to stand in for him here on earth (LC 1,126; Hebart tr: 51).*

- **the responsibility of the state in education**

Lutheran theology sees the role of the state in education as growing out of the responsibility of parents for education. Luther points out in the Large Catechism (LC 1,141-142; Hebart tr: 54) that

*all other authority springs and branches out from parental authority. If a father can't manage to bring up his child on his own, he gets a schoolmaster to teach him; if he is too weak, he gets his friends or neighbours to help him. ... So all those who are called superiors stand in for parents, and get their power and authority to be in control of them. That is why in the Scriptures they are all called fathers. They carry out the function of a father in the particular area under their control, and are meant to show a fatherly heart to those who are under them.*

According to this understanding, one of the responsibilities of the state is to support parents in the education of their children. In fact Luther argued that it is part of the God-given role of the state under God's 'left hand' to ensure that education is provided for all children, particularly where parents neglect their responsibility because they 'lack the goodness and decency to do it, even if they had the ability', they 'are wholly unfitted for this task' or they 'have neither the time nor the opportunity for it' (LW 45: 355). Luther concludes (LW 46: 256-257):

*If the government can compel such of its subjects as are fit for military service to carry pike and musket, man the ramparts, and do other kinds of work in time of war, how much more can it and should it compel its subjects to keep their children at schools.*

In arguing in this way, Luther was not 'promoting the secular, autonomous school, but rather a school that has a secular as well as a spiritual function' (Sturm 1983: 11). He was urging the temporal rulers to establish and support schools which were to promote strongly also the religious education of their students. For Luther, the word of God was to have the central place in these schools, but they were to be schools which used the best of contemporary pedagogy. Luther saw no contradiction in making these demands of the state authorities who, in supporting parents, were carrying out the will of God under his 'left hand' care, whether or not they recognised this.



The important role of the state in education relates to the necessity for the state to provide for its citizens the education required for them to develop as individuals and to take their place in society and fulfil their responsibilities within that society. In recognising this role of the state in education, Lutheran schools accept that such education must be relevant to the pluralistic nature of contemporary society, in spite of the difficulty of determining common values on which to base such education.

A Lutheran understanding of education upholds the legitimate place of the state in providing education while at the same time arguing the right of Christian parents to establish schools for their children which provide an education based on Christian beliefs and values. In establishing Lutheran schools, the Lutheran Church of Australia also sees itself as assisting the state in providing further educational opportunities for children, preparing citizens for life in a pluralistic society, aware of their social responsibility, informing and forming them to contribute to the common good.

Lutheran schools affirm that the state has a responsibility to ensure that in the various Christian schools an effective education is being provided and various regulations in respect to health, safety and good order are being met. In recognising that such schools are preparing responsible citizens for society, and in order for parents to be able to exercise their choice of schooling, the state makes financial support available to Christian schools. However, the Lutheran Church of Australia acknowledges that various conditions may be attached to such financial support and that it can therefore be accepted only as long as ‘the confessional position of the church is in no way or at any time compromised’ (‘The Lutheran Church of Australia and its schools’: 7:4 ).

---

*Seen from the perspective of God’s ‘left hand’ care, Lutheran schools must provide the best educational experience which they can for their students. This gives them the right to continue as schools and to accept the funding which comes from the government. They need to participate in the educational conversation which occurs within society and continually to evaluate their total educational program in the light of educational research and writing.*

*Working under God's 'left hand', teachers in Lutheran schools are to be the best educational practitioners they can be. This means excellent preparation as teachers and then continuing professional development to remain as well qualified and pedagogically skilled as possible to support the best learning experiences for their students. This they have in common with all teachers, but there is the added responsibility if they see their teaching as their God-given vocation.*

*In the learning and teaching situation the freedom of teachers as professionals and the needs of students for a well-rounded education should be respected. The formal education of students comes under God's 'left hand'. Lutheran schools recognise that the requirements of the government in relation to all aspects of schooling have to be met. Curriculum decisions need to be in keeping with the requirements of the state. Here the teacher in a Christian school is working as a servant of God in the area under the 'left hand' of God. The school is seen as serving the community, society and the world in general, and consequently God in particular.*

*Students need exposure to a wide range of topics which will promote their understanding of the world about them. Lutheran schools must be wary of developing a very narrow and pietistic approach to learning. At the same time, if the topic is controversial from a Christian perspective, due consideration and respect should be given to the Christian view. Depending on the age of the student, students should begin to grapple with different and even conflicting views. This is done, for example, through using teaching methods such as enquiry-based learning which is embedded in the Christian Studies Curriculum Framework and also now in the Australian Curriculum.*

*Since education in the first instance is the responsibility of parents or carers, Lutheran schools need to help them to recognise that the prime responsibility for education and socialisation of children rests with them. This is not something which can simply be handed over to schools. Schools can encourage parent and carer participation in the students' education, for example, in helping in classroom activities, especially in the early years, as well as working with them*

*at home. Schools need to maintain open channels of communication with parents and carers not only in face-to face interaction but also through digital means. Parent/teacher interviews can assist in helping parents establish realistic expectations of their children both in terms of the outcomes of their learning and their socialisation in the community. Schools are continually challenged to deal with situations which result from the dysfunctional home life of an increasing number of students. Discussion between the school and parents may provide an opportunity to help parents to establish strategies to assist the home situation.*

---

### **Lutheran school education seen from the perspective of the ‘right hand’**

When viewing the Lutheran school from the perspective of the ‘right hand’, Lutheran theology sees this as operating from within the ‘community of faith’. This perspective therefore involves Christian individuals and families within the school, and the church as the body of Christ [but not ‘church’ as an organisational structure, which as a social structure, is seen as part of the ‘left hand’ care of God].

- **the responsibility of Christian parents for education**

As presented above, Lutheran theology sees parents as having the prime responsibility for the education of their children viewed from the perspective of the ‘left hand’. However, viewed from the perspective of the ‘right hand’ or ‘special care’ of God, Christian parents also have the responsibility to ensure the nurture of their children in the faith. For those Christian denominations which practise infant baptism, parents are seen as having a baptismal responsibility for on-going Christian instruction. It was for such instruction, which Luther found very lacking in his day [see Luther’s prefaces to the Small Catechism and the Large Catechism (Kolb and Wengert: 347-351, 383-386)] that Luther wrote his two catechisms based on catechetical sermons which he had preached to his congregations.

While this responsibility of Christian parents for the nurture of their children in the Christian faith does not require the establishment of Lutheran schools as an agency for such instruction nor that Christian parents enrol their children in Christian schools, from the

arrival of the first Lutheran groups in Australia [see Introduction] the establishment of Lutheran schools was seen as an important way of helping Lutheran parents with the Christian nurture of their children. This means that the Lutheran school has a role in respect to the 'right hand' work of God.

- **the role of the church in education for its members**

The church has a teaching ministry given to it by Christ (Mt 28:19-20; Eph 4:11-13). This mandate to teach can be carried out through many different agencies within the home and the church. One of these is the Lutheran school through which Christian nurture can be integrated with the whole educational program of the school. The Lutheran school operating as an educational institution under the 'left hand' work of God provides a context in which the church as the people of God can carry out its 'right hand' responsibility to nurture the Christian faith in its members. Christian students and staff form a 'community of faith' within the school which carries out this role of Christian nurture. This 'community of faith' is involved in God's 'right hand' work while operating within the context of God's 'left hand' work, the whole educational program of the school.

While Lutheran schools were originally established by Lutheran parents and congregations for the Christian nurture of their children, Lutheran schools provide Christian parents of other denominations with an option of a Christian education for their children.

---

*The responsibility of the church for its educational ministry will be considered in the next section on the church because that responsibility belongs to the church and not the school. A congregation cannot assume that a Lutheran school is providing this nurture in the faith as a substitute for the ministry of the congregation. Neither can Christian parents expect the Lutheran school to be a substitute for their responsibility as parents. The Christian Studies program in the Lutheran school will provide some opportunities for Christian students to grow in their faith and life responses, but given the diverse nature of the Lutheran school community, this is not the major aim of Christian Studies. Expecting this of the Christian Studies program would be inappropriate for those who do not share the Christian faith.*

*What the Lutheran school can help to provide is a Christian worldview which assists students to see their life experiences and all of their learning in the various disciplines of study as part of a whole. This worldview includes relevant insights from the Christian faith and, through their participation in Christian Studies, provides students with an integrating framework through which to interpret their various perceptions of reality. Since this worldview relates to the way in which God created the world and continues to protect and preserve it [the ‘political use of the law’] it can be relevant for students who do not share the Christian faith.*

---

- **the role of the church in education for non-Christians in the Lutheran school**

With the rapid expansion of Lutheran schools in the last decades of the twentieth century, a discussion arose about the main purpose of Lutheran schools; nurture or outreach? Rather unhelpfully, the discussion tended to see these two functions of the school almost in competition rather than as complementary, and masked the development of other purposes for Lutheran schools such as caring for individuals, and service to the community and society in general. As more and more families without regular church connections became associated with Lutheran schools, some educational leaders in Australian Lutheran schools began to argue for a missionary role for Lutheran schools. This approach sees the church as operating through its schools as ‘a mission frontier of our church’ (Albinger 1990: 67). Lutheran schools are seen ‘as much a part of the work of the church as they are part of the order of creation’, and as serving ‘the God-given task of the church as well as the God-given responsibility of family or government’ (Albinger 1990: 66). While the Lutheran school is seen as being involved in both the ‘left and right hand’ work of God, there is a danger that the work of the ‘two hands’ of God can become confused, so that the Lutheran school is seen as the avenue through which the church carries out the function of evangelism and increases the membership of its congregations. The church as the supporting agency cannot neglect the general educational responsibility of the school in order to use the school in the first instance as an opportunity for teaching the

Christian faith. If it does so, it loses its right to be called 'school' and the conditions under which it accepts government funding would be compromised. However, Christian students and staff have the opportunity in a Lutheran school [as they are also able to do in state schools] to witness to their faith in Jesus Christ as part of their vocation as a student or a member of staff.

In considering the effect of Christian witness in a Lutheran school, emphasis needs to be given to the understanding that while the school may look for Christian faith and commitment from its students, the gift of faith and growth in the faith is the work of the Holy Spirit who 'produces faith, when and where he wills, in those who hear the gospel' (AC 5,2; Kolb and Wengert: 40). The response of rejection of the Christian message is to be anticipated as Christ repeatedly emphasised in his teaching [for example in the parable of the sower and the soils (Mt 13:3-9,18-23)].

---

*The challenge for the Lutheran school is to combine the best educational theory and practice with a sound understanding of Lutheran theology. It could be said that Lutheran schools strive for a 'dual excellence' – to prepare students to be well educated and well equipped citizens ready to serve their fellow human beings, and to prepare those who are Christian, to be committed and faithful Christians who serve in response to God's service of them on the basis of a developing Christian worldview.*

*Christian teachers see the Lutheran school as a place in which they can witness to their faith in Jesus Christ. This they are able to do not only through their teaching but as they live out their faith in the community of the school, as they show care and concern and as they serve and pray for all in the community. Here the teacher's spiritual as well as personal and professional beliefs, values and abilities provide an important witness to everyone in the school community. This is another aspect of their vocation as Christian teachers. However, Christian teachers also have a responsibility to identify, and if necessary to challenge, any educational regulations or practices which seem to require them to obey human beings rather than God (Acts 5:29).*

*While non-Christian staff will not play the same role, as part of their conditions of employment they have agreed to support the Christian ethos of the Lutheran school. The accreditation program for all teachers in Lutheran school plays a critical role in helping them to understand what this means in practice.*

*The enrolment interview process for non-Christian parents and students needs to be very 'up front' in informing them of what can be expected in attending a Lutheran school. Worship, the Christian Studies program and other aspects of the Christian context in which the school operates must be understood and accepted before students are enrolled so that everyone is clear about what to expect as a full educational experience for students in a Lutheran school. The Lutheran theology and heritage which provide the foundation for a Lutheran school need to be carefully presented so that the conscientious beliefs of students entering the Lutheran school are not compromised.*

---

- **the Lutheran school as a 'worshipping community'**

The place of worship in the Lutheran school will be examined more fully in chapter 9. This will include the discussion regarding compulsory attendance at school worship.

While worship is part of the life of a Lutheran school, the Lutheran school cannot be characterised as a 'worshipping community' since there are those in the school who do not share in the Christian faith which makes them members of that community. Instead, it is more accurate to speak of a 'worshipping community within the Lutheran school'.

One example of confusion between school and church [the 'left and right hands' of God] has been the use of the term 'school-church' to refer to a situation which has developed in a number of Lutheran schools, particularly at the primary school level. This designation attempts to recognise the situation that an increasing number of families in Lutheran schools are not regular members of any worshipping community but that they do participate in worship experiences within the school context. The question which has arisen is whether the school should attempt to become the worship

home of those families rather than try to redirect the families to some other worshipping group with which they may not have had any previous connection. In fact, requiring such families to move from the familiar context of the school to an unfamiliar congregation, may cause them to withdraw from worship altogether. While such families may become attached to the ‘worshipping community within the Lutheran school’, the school as such does not have the full nature, attributes and functions of ‘church’ and should not be designated as such.

Another factor which is crucial here is what happens with such families once their students complete their years at the Lutheran school. Some regular worshipping congregations have developed from such families and may use the school chapel for worship. However, this is a separate entity with its own life as ‘church’ and usually with its own called pastor.

Another description which is sometimes used in relation to Lutheran schools is ‘community of faith’. Again this cannot refer to the total school community since not all members share the Christian faith. Therefore sensitivity is required when considering approaches to educational issues which presuppose a faith commitment, or which are expressions of the faith tradition of the Lutheran church. As with the designation ‘worshipping community within the school’, it is more accurate in this instance to speak of the ‘community of faith within the school’ when wishing to refer to those within the school who profess the Christian faith.

- **the role of the church for state school education**

Can the church enter relevant dialogue with the state in the area of education without confusing the respective roles of church and state? Lutheran theology recognises that some useful discussion is possible. Siegfried Hebart suggests that the role of the church is (1970: 21):

*to cooperate in the work of education, also with non-Christians, so far as this is compatible with the Gospel. The Church must love, it must exhort, warn and counsel, help, watch, show pastoral concern, conduct a dialogue, and place its own insights and experience in the field of education at the disposal of those who are responsible for guiding and*



*formulating educational policies. This is a vicarious service; and part of this service is to share in the mistakes and their consequences in the field of education.*

Characterising the role of the church in education as that of ‘the good Samaritan in the nation’, Hebart (1970: 21) sees the church as ‘helping to re-establish values, guiding men and women through the complexities of rapid social change and the breakdown of traditional patterns of life.’ The role of the church should be as ‘the conscience of the nation, pointing to the Law of God as an expression of his gracious preservation and as judgment in a world subject to sin’. The church is not involved in this educational role ‘for the sake of influence and power, but simply as service to men and to the world’. Hebart sees the church in dialogue with education on the basis of ‘the rational principles which govern education’, but also as not hesitating ‘to inject into such dialogue the radical question of what man is, and what is his purpose’ (1970: 21).

---

*Lutheran educators have an important role in participating in the educational conversation in the community so that insights developed through Lutheran schooling can be heard in that conversation. Lutheran educators need to carefully analyse suggested trends and changes to see how they relate to the nature, purpose and practice of Lutheran schools and their underlying theology.*

---

### **Lutheran schools operating under ‘the two hands’ of God**

Participating under the ‘two hands’ of God places the Lutheran school in a position of creative tension. As God works with both his ‘left hand’ and his ‘right hand’, the Lutheran school is challenged to clearly identify its role in each of these areas of responsibility, recognising that in both they serve God. To maintain the appropriate balance between ‘left hand’ and ‘right hand’ is a continuing challenge: clearly distinguishing the two, but neither confusing them nor separating them.

---

*Who decides what happens in a Lutheran school, the church or the state? This question can arise in Lutheran schools particularly where it appears that there is conflict between the two.*

Many policies within Lutheran schools are written to meet the necessary requirements as set down by the government authority. Although they can be seen to reflect a Christian perspective, they are primarily formulated to promote good order and to ensure the effective and efficient running of the school. Christian beliefs give an additional insight which can inform policy making. For example, the understanding of people as sinners by nature will mean that a behaviour management policy may need to consider an approach such as restorative justice. However, this insight can be recognised by Christians and non-Christians alike, through their association with life in the world. Once again, we need to recognise that education exists under the 'left hand' of God and yet, the Lutheran school community is to be a place where that which comes under God's 'right hand' is also evident. The school setting therefore is to be a place where both law and gospel are seen in action.

Lutheran schools provide an important and necessary context for a dialogue of theology and education. As issues arise in Lutheran schools, insights from educational theory and practice are brought into dialogue with theological insights. Theology and education need to listen to each other and respond to each other if both theology and education are going to contribute to discussion and decision-making in Lutheran schools. This is a crucial approach to 'doing theology' in the school context which keeps in balance insights developed by individuals taking seriously both God's 'left and right hand' working in the world.

All people have a responsibility towards creation regardless of whether or not they are believers in God. Care for people and the environment should be a topic which is given priority in Lutheran schools as it can be addressed under both the 'left hand' and 'right hand' of God. Topics such as the environment, global warming, Indigenous issues, social justice questions, human dignity, and ethical living, can be seen as examples of the way in which God cares for the world with 'both hands'. Lutheran schools can be communities of hope, creating spaces of hope in culture and society.

---

## The Christian Church

The word ‘church’ can be used to refer to a number of things: a local congregation, a church building, a denomination, believers of all denominations, and even believers of all generations, past, present and future. However, when the Bible speaks about church it speaks about all who believe in Jesus Christ as their Lord and saviour. Luther says, ‘God be praised, a seven-year-old child knows what the church is: holy believers and “the little sheep who hear the voice of their shepherd”’ (SA 3,12; Kolb and Wengert: 324). The church is the community in which God operates with his ‘right hand’.

The Greek word for ‘church’ in the New Testament is ‘ekklesia’, which refers to an assembly of people ‘called out’ from their daily pursuits for a particular purpose in the community. In the New Testament it has the basic idea of a group of people who are ‘called out’ to form God’s special community, the church. In the Old Testament the people of Israel were God’s special people, set apart (‘holy’) from all other nations to receive God’s gracious blessing and to be a blessing to all nations. In the New Testament this privilege is given to Christians (1 Pet 2:9-10). The ‘ekklesia’ belongs to God because God has called it into being and works through it (Acts 20:28). The ‘ekklesia’ can be a specific community [or communities] of believers from a household (Rom 16:5; Col 4:15; Phlm 2), a city (1 Cor 1:2) or a province (Gal 1:2).

The New Testament uses a number of designations for the church to emphasise different aspects of the nature of the church: for example ‘saints’ (2 Cor 1:1), ‘believers’ (Acts 2:44), ‘servants/slaves’ (1 Cor 7:22), ‘people of God’ (Acts 18:10), ‘household’ or ‘family’ (Eph 2:19; 1 Tim 3:15), ‘bride of Christ’ (Eph 5:25), ‘body of Christ with Christ as the head’ (Rom 12:5; Eph 1:23; 1 Cor 12:12). Other pictures for the church include a living temple in which Jesus is the cornerstone and Christians are the bricks which support each other and which have been laid on the firm foundation of the apostles and prophets (Eph 2:20-22; 1 Pet 2:5), the vine and the branches (Jn 15: 1-7) and the shepherd and his sheep (Jn 10).

### **A community created and maintained by the Holy Spirit**

The church is created and maintained by the Holy Spirit working through the ‘means of grace’ – the word of God and the sacraments. The Augsburg Confession states that the church ‘is the assembly of

all believers among whom the gospel is purely preached and the holy sacraments are administered according to the gospel' (AC 7,1; Kolb and Wengert: 42). While the church has been called into being and is preserved by the Holy Spirit through the means of grace, the church is also the divinely appointed means by which Christ, through the Holy Spirit, continues to create his church.

The Augsburg Confession defines the church liturgically – as the people of God gathered for worship around the means of grace. It begins with God's action towards his people. The church is not simply a 'club' of like-minded people who get together, but as each person is brought to faith by the Holy Spirit, they are also brought into the family of the church. Luther in his Large Catechism speaks of the church in this way (LC 2,51; Hebart tr: 121-122):

*I believe that on earth there is a holy little group or community made up entirely of saints under one head, Christ. It has been called together by the Holy Spirit; it has one faith, mind and understanding; it has different kinds of gifts, but lives together in love and harmony; it has no sects or divisions. I'm part of this little group, too, and a member of it. As a full partner, I share all the good things it has. The Holy Spirit brought me there; and I became part of this body because I heard God's word, and still hear it – which is the first step in getting into this community. Before this happened, we were the devil's very own people; we knew nothing of God and Christ. But now the Holy Spirit stays with this holy community, the Christians, right until the Last Day. Through it he brings us together. He uses it to be his spokesman and to spread the Word. For this is the way the Spirit makes people holy, and helps them to become even holier. His aim is that we will grow every day, and become strong in faith and in faith's fruits, which he produces.*

### **The true church is hidden**

Christians confess, 'I believe in ... the holy, catholic church'. The church is always an object of faith because it can never be empirically verified. 'True believers' cannot be identified by any kind of test. However, Lutherans confess that where the Holy Spirit is active through the preaching of the word of God and the administration of the sacraments according to Christ's institution, there the church is present (AC 5, 1-2; Kolb and Wengert: 40). God has promised that his word does not return to him empty (Is 55:11). God's word and the sacraments are therefore recognised by Lutherans as the 'marks of the church': where these are present, the church is present.

However, the church as an institution includes non-Christians, hypocrites and even public sinners [those whose particular sin is known to the community but who do not intend to deal with their sin] (AC 8,1-2; Kolb and Wengert: 43). Only God knows who are the really true members of the church because only he can see into human hearts. Jesus uses the parables of the net in which both good and bad fish are caught (Mt 13:47-50) and the field of weeds among the wheat (Mt 13:24-30; 36-43) to indicate this situation and to warn against trying to separate these two groups. Only at the end of time will this judgement take place (Mt 25:31-46).

For this reason, the church is in the strict sense ‘hidden’ or ‘concealed’. While we can be confident that those who faithfully hear the word of God and receive the sacrament are members of the ‘true church’, it always remains hidden within the local congregation with all of its turmoil, pride and factionalism. It remains a confession of faith. This ‘hidden’ nature of the church is another example of ‘theology of the cross’ as God works through the church to carry out his purposes.

However, even though the true church is ‘hidden’, it is not to be ‘invisible’. Jesus calls on the church to be visible in the community through its service in that community (Mt 5:14-15) so that people ‘may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven (Mt 5:16).

### **The church spans all time**

The church spans all time, past, present and future. This is ‘the communion of saints’ confessed in the Apostles’ Creed. The Holy Spirit works in the church here on earth now. This is sometimes called ‘the church militant’, reflecting the struggle which the church still has with sin and evil in the world. However, there is also the church which is already praising God in heaven, celebrating the victory of Christ [‘the church triumphant’]. St John was given a glimpse of this, recorded in the book of Revelation (Rev 4-5).

### **Attributes of the church**

The Nicene Creed speaks of the church as ‘one, holy, catholic and apostolic’.

- **one**

The church is one because all believers are united in Christ (Eph 4:1-16). The New Testament speaks of the church as ‘the body of

Christ' with Christ as the head (Rom 12:4-5; 1 Cor 12:12; Col 1:18a) to stress this unity. Even though there is outward division and disunity within the church, there is only one 'communion of saints'. The church, the body of Christ, is one, just as Jesus and the Father are one (Jn 17:20-23). The unity of the church is a gift of God and does not depend on human efforts.

The church is also one across all time. It exists in time and also outside of time. It consists of all who have been, all who are, and all who will be members of the body of Christ. Worshippers catch a glimpse of this in the Lutheran liturgy of holy communion when they are invited to praise God 'with angels and archangels, and with the whole company of heaven'.

Although the church of Jesus Christ is one, various Christian denominations have arisen as human beings have disagreed in their interpretation and application of the word and will of God. Every denomination must constantly check its teachings and practice against what the Bible says to ensure that it is being true to God's revelation. At the same time every denomination must acknowledge that the good shepherd has his sheep not only in one denomination but wherever the shepherd's voice is heard (Jn 10:16). Here theology of the cross is again evident: despite the division and disunity, the church is still the bride of Christ (Rev 21:2,9).

---

*In the Lutheran school various Christian denominations are represented. It is an ecumenical community in which different Christian traditions will be present and may be represented in school or class devotions and other aspects of school life. Care and sensitivity will be necessary to ensure that individual consciences are not compromised but that Lutheran teachings and traditions are clearly represented in what is taught and done in the school.*

---

Because the church is one, all denominations should be prepared to engage in dialogue with each other on the basis of Scripture, with the prayer that the Holy Spirit will lead them to know and understand the truth of God more clearly (Jn 16:13) and so bring them into greater outward unity. While the unity of the church is a

gift of God, this does not absolve Christians from the task of trying to work towards the unity, mutual understanding and acceptance of the various denominations. This unity is therefore both a gift from God and a task to which he calls all Christians.

In striving towards this outward unity, it is important to focus on what is central and not on different practices and traditions which have developed in the individual denominations. The Augsburg Confession states (AC 7,2-3; Kolb and Wengert: 43):

*It is enough for the true unity of the church to agree concerning the teaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. It is not necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by human beings be alike everywhere.*

Church unity or church fellowship must therefore be based on agreement in the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Inter-church dialogue has as its goal consensus in doctrine and common worship.

- **holy**

The church as a human institution cannot be described as ‘holy’. However, the church as the body of Christ is holy because Christ is holy. Holiness means being set apart as God’s people, belonging to a holy God. This holiness is a gift of God, an article of faith, a theological fact. Through the working of the Holy Spirit those who make up the church are ‘saints’, even though they still remain sinners living by the grace of God until the day of resurrection. They are ‘saints’ through the work of Christ striving to be ‘saints’ by the power of the Holy Spirit.

There is the temptation by some Christians to try to ‘cleanse’ the church of those who are not showing the fruit of faith in their lives and to make the church ‘holy’. This exercise of ‘theology of glory’ tries to demonstrate the ‘holiness’ of the church as a visible reality rather than a reality in faith. As indicated earlier, the true church remains concealed. The task of sifting the wheat from the weeds (Mt 13:24-30), or separating the sheep from the goats (Mt 25:31-46) belongs to the Lord of the church, and he will do that on the last day when he returns to judge the living and the dead. Meanwhile Jesus warns believers not to try weeding out those whom they

think are not Christians in case they pull up the wheat with the weeds. Christians follow Christ in showing patience and love, just as the gardener gave the barren fig tree a second chance before even thinking about cutting it down (Lk 13:6-9).

Although the church must not try to make the church more 'holy', the church does have to exercise discipline where individuals remain unrepentant of obvious and open sin. The church follows the principles laid down by Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:15-18, but in doing so must be very careful not to become judgmental and spiritually proud. The last resort in this process is excommunication – refusing to allow the person to receive holy communion. The ultimate purpose of church discipline is to help the individual to acknowledge their sin and to seek forgiveness. This leads to restoring the person back into the community which is the goal of this 'church discipline': the 'lost sheep' is returned to the fold with great rejoicing (Mt 18:12-14).

---

*One of the challenges in the Lutheran school is to avoid moralism which gives students and staff the impression that the major concern of the church in the school is to help individuals to become more 'holy'. 'Holiness' is the gift of God through the Holy Spirit and cannot be gained by trying to earn favours from God. God is not some guardian of moral behaviour, but through the working of the Holy Spirit within individuals they can grow in living as God intends.*

---

- **catholic**

There has been some reluctance in Lutheran circles to use the word 'catholic' as an attribute of the church because of association with the Roman Catholic Church. The word 'universal' is sometimes used instead.

The designation 'catholic' emphasises that the church exists all over the world, wherever Christians gather around word and sacrament. Members of the holy, catholic, church are found in all Christian denominations and local communities (Eph 4:4). The church is 'catholic' in its commission to bring the gospel to the whole world (Mt 28:19). Its ministry is to the whole person, body, mind and



spirit (1 Thess 5:23) and is for all groups and classes of people (Gal 3:27-28). In Revelation (7:9) we see a vision of the universal and international character of the church.

The Lutheran church is sometimes described as a ‘confessional movement’ within the church catholic. Even though the reformers had to break with the institutional church of their day, they were insistent that their teaching was thoroughly ‘catholic’ because they taught what the church had always taught. They simply wished to correct what they saw as false teachings which had crept into the church. For this reason, the Book of Concord begins with the three ecumenical creeds [Apostles, Nicene and Athanasian] which have been confessed by the church through the ages.

- **apostolic**

An ‘apostle’ is a person who is sent by the risen Lord to proclaim the good news of forgiveness in Jesus Christ. The church is ‘apostolic’ because it is founded on the word of the apostles and it has the task of preaching and handing on the word to each new generation (Eph 2:19-22). The apostolic character of the church emphasises the historical roots of the church and the continuity between the church and Jesus Christ through the apostles whom he appointed. It stresses the ongoing mission of the church to preach the gospel to all nations (Mt 28: 19-20).

*[Denominations such as the Anglican and Roman Catholic churches speak about the ‘apostolic succession’ in a particular way. This relates to the ‘laying on of hands’ by a bishop in the rite of ordination which is seen as ensuring the historic continuity of the apostolic teaching through the ordained ministry of priests and bishops. Lutherans see the ‘apostolic succession’ through the teaching of the apostolic word.]*

## **Functions of the church**

Traditionally the functions of the church are listed as worship, witness, nurture, fellowship and service. Sometimes the function of preaching is identified separately.

- **worship**

Worship is the primary activity of the church: listening to God’s word, receiving God’s gifts, particularly the sacraments, praising the triune God, interceding for the church and the world, receiving

God's blessings. Worship is the central activity of the church as God's people respond to what God has done for them. From it flow the other activities of the church. [A more extensive treatment of worship is given in chapter 9.]

- **witness**

The church continues the mission which Christ began while on earth when he commissioned his followers to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:18-20). Just as the Father sent the Son, and the Father and Son sent the Holy Spirit to continue the ministry of Jesus, so Jesus sent his disciples (Jn 20:21) to evangelise the world. The mission is Christ's mission.

This is not an optional task. Christians are called to be witnesses to the gospel in their homes, schools, communities, and wherever they interact with others. They are called to do this through speaking the word of God, praying for others, and serving others in love as they live a life of witness in the world. Mission is the work of every Christian and every congregation both in the immediate community as well as globally. Only when Christ returns will the mission task of the church end.

---

*Within the Lutheran school community, the witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ is vital. While this is not the prime function of a school as an educational institution, it is the responsibility of Christians, as part of their vocation, while they live and work in the context of the school.*

---

- **nurture**

While the church does not have a responsibility for general education, it does have the task of nurturing its members in the Christian faith (Jn 21:15-17). This function, which is related to the sacrament of baptism (Mt 28:19-20), is sometimes called 'catechesis'. The church which baptises must also teach. Christians need to grow in their faith through the work of the Holy Spirit.

---

*This responsibility of nurture which is given to the church cannot simply be transferred to the Lutheran school as it has been in some*

*situations. However, the Lutheran school may be able to assist in the nurture ministry of the congregation, but this is not its prime function.*

*The Lutheran school, however, must strive to provide a safe and encouraging environment for Christian students. Although research needs to be done in this area, anecdotal evidence suggests that committed Christian students sometimes feel discriminated against and even ridiculed for their faith in some Lutheran school contexts. Some students have become disillusioned by the contrast between what the school claims to be as a Christian community and the reality which they have experienced.*

---

- **fellowship**

Human beings are created for relationship. When the Holy Spirit leads a person to faith, that individual is incorporated into the fellowship of the church. This is not a fellowship established by human beings for their purposes, but brought together by the Holy Spirit for God's purposes. Luther (SA 3,4; Kolb and Wengert: 319) speaks of this fellowship as 'the mutual conversation and consolation of brothers and sisters'. Within this fellowship, Christians support and encourage one another, particularly with the word of God. They help each other to identify their gifts and develop them for service in the fellowship and out into the local and global community.

The New Testament uses the term 'koinonia' to refer to the way the early Christians 'were together and had all things in common' (Acts 2:44), sharing in fellowship of the Holy Spirit (2 Cor 13:13). This 'sharing' includes sharing 'in Christ' (1 Cor 1:9), 'in the gospel' (1 Cor 9:23), and sacramental sharing 'in the body and blood of Christ' (1 Cor 10:14-17) as members of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-31).

- **service**

Just as Christ in his ministry was concerned to serve people in need, so the church as the 'body of Christ' has a responsibility to serve. The early church was sufficiently concerned with service ('diakonia') that seven deacons were appointed to attend to it (Acts 6:1-6). [This function of service is explored more fully in Chapter 5 under 'theology of the cross'].

### **Ministry in the church**

All Christians have the call to serve [‘minister to’] each other and all of God’s creation in their vocation [chapter 3]. However, they have a particular ministry within the church. St Peter describes Christians as ‘a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, in order that you may proclaim the mighty acts of him who called you out of darkness into his marvellous light (1 Pet 2:9) Lutheran theology refers to this as the ‘priesthood of all believers’. Christians have the responsibility to proclaim the word of God to each other and to witness to those not yet members of the body of Christ. They exercise the ministry of prayer for themselves, for other people and the world and serve in the church and in the world.

---

*Teachers, schools leaders and other staff in Lutheran schools see their involvement in the school as part of their vocation. They are working together with God whether or not they recognise it, and they strive to produce an education of excellence.*

*Christians working in the school context also see their involvement from the aspect of ‘ministry’ operating under the ‘right hand’ of God. They therefore seek to incorporate their faith into all which they teach and do, whether that is in the classroom, the office or the school grounds. They recognise that life and all that it includes is a gift from God, and because this is God’s world, their faith relates to every subject which is taught [and not simply Christian Studies] and to every activity in the school. They see the school as a context in which to witness to their faith by living out their faith. They need to test what is being done in the school against God’s word and the insights of Lutheran theology as well as seeing their role in trying to transform society to reflect the way God created it to be.*

---

- **the ordained ministry**

As well as this general ministry in the church, Christ has ‘instituted the office of preaching, giving the gospel and the sacraments’ (AC 5,1; Kolb and Wengert: 40). This is ‘the office of the public ministry’ or ‘the office of ordained ministry’ (2 Cor 3:5,6; Eph 4:11; Acts 20:28) which ensures that the gospel and the sacraments will be

brought to God's people, to lead them to faith in Jesus Christ and to nurture them in the faith.

The 'office of public ministry' is designated an 'office' in the same way as we speak about the office of the prime minister, the police commissioner, or the school principal. It shows that individuals have the role and responsibilities of a position of public trust. Such people are installed in their office and this installation authorises them to carry out the duties of that office and gives public recognition of their right to hold that office within the sphere of their authority.

In the church, the rite of ordination installs individuals in the 'office of the public ministry'. This ensures that an ordained person is properly authorised by the church to preach and teach the gospel and administer the sacraments. Ordination ensures that ordained persons are responsible to leaders and members of congregations for doing what is required of their office and ensures that they are recognised publicly as ministers of the gospel. It indicates that the ordained person exercises this ministry in and for the congregation on the authority of Christ.

The Augsburg Confession states that 'no one should publicly teach, preach, or administer the sacraments without a proper public call' (AC 14; Kolb and Wengert: 46). This 'call' usually begins when people sense the 'inner call' from the Holy Spirit and are supported in this by fellow believers. After a lengthy process of study and field education, the process culminates in a candidate being issued by the church with a call from a congregation to serve as their pastor [an 'outer call']. The rite of ordination then confers on the individual the office of public ministry.

Ordained pastors speak and act in the place of Jesus as they preach and teach the gospel (Mt 28:20), administer the sacraments (Mt 28:19, 1 Cor 11:23-26), absolve people of their sins, and retain people's sins (Mt 16:19; Jn 20:19-23). They may be called on to exclude a person from the worshipping community because of an openly wicked and godless life; this must be done with great pastoral care and sensitivity with the sole purpose of leading the person to repentance and restoration into the community (Mt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1,2; 1 Cor 5:3-5; 2 Cor 2:5-11). Pastors will also be involved in pastoral care and counselling, Christian instruction, and evangelism (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:7,17; 1 Pet 5:2).

While ordained pastors are to be seen as gifts of God to his church and respected as such, pastors need to be aware of the limits of their pastoral authority. They should not be tempted to try to exercise authority in areas which fall outside of the scope of their responsibilities. Neither should congregational members infringe in areas which are the responsibility of pastors.

---

*Teachers in Lutheran schools are installed into their office of teacher. This is a different office from the office of public ministry but teachers are given authority and responsibility in a position of trust within the Lutheran school. As part of this process, teachers taking up their role in a Lutheran school for the first time are required to undertake a process of accreditation to help them to understand and appreciate the position into which they are installed.*

*Lutheran schools have seen a number of unfortunate situations where individuals have infringed in an area of responsibility outside of the scope of their office. This has sometimes happened when tensions arise between a school principal and the school pastor or local congregational pastor. Guidelines have been developed to delineate the different responsibilities of pastor and principal. Where these are observed, a strong team ministry is established in the Lutheran school.*

*[The documents 'Relative Responsibilities of Pastor and School Principal in the Lutheran School' and 'The Role of the Pastor in the Lutheran School' can be accessed on the Lutheran Education Australia website.]*

---

### **History of the church**

The history of the church shows the church interacting with society through the ages. It shows how God is present with and for his people. But that history also shows the sinfulness of human beings and the way God preserves his church despite human failures. There are many examples of great faith but there are equally many examples of stories of human frailty and shortcomings. It is a miracle of God's grace that the church has survived in the face of countless threats from inside and

outside the church. As Christians today struggle to be God's faithful church and wonder about its future in an indifferent and hostile world, Jesus' promise remains sure: 'I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it' (Mt 16:18).

There have been many different phases in the history of the church. For the first three centuries, the Christian church experienced persecutions until the Emperor Constantine adopted Christianity as the official religion in 312. Since then, in the so-called 'Christian East and West', the church has been an important part of society. More recently, people have begun to speak of the 'post-Christian' era in the West with the decline of the church and its influence, while the church has become much more important in the continents of Africa, South America and to some extent Asia.

---

*In looking at the history of the church, students will be able to gain some insights into the complexity of the church and the various ways in which different groups have expressed their Christianity. It will allow the consideration of issues such as religious intolerance, the relationship between religion and learning, church/state relationships, and the impact of Christianity in such matters as slavery, religious wars, social justice concerns, and politics. Openness and honesty will be crucial to assist students to explore some of these issues and also to identify current examples of these concerns.*

---

### **The church in society and culture**

The church is a human organisation which operates within a cultural context. As such, it is influenced by that context, and, in turn, it influences that context. Hence the church and the way it works in the community can vary greatly from place to place. It can be difficult at times to separate the message of the church from the cultural accretions which may have developed around that message. The question can sometimes be asked: 'What is being handed on by members of the church: is it the message of the word of God, the culture of the church, or some mixture of both?'

While the church will try to develop culturally appropriate expressions of Christianity, there is always a degree of tension between the message of the church and the culture. In important ways the gospel is always counter-cultural. It challenges assumptions and values which are part of any culture, since all cultures reflect the nature of sinful human beings. As the church reaches out with its message of salvation in Jesus Christ, it needs to ensure that it is engaging the community in culturally appropriate ways even though the message of Christ crucified is 'a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ [is] the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor 1:23-24).

---

*The challenge for those who work in Lutheran schools is to ensure that when engaging theology in dialogue with education the witness of the Bible is clearly heard and not just some pious Lutheran tradition which has been shaped by a particular cultural context. It is important that heritage and tradition does not obscure the clear message of the gospel. This may happen, for example, when particular Lutheran language such as 'two kingdoms' or even 'law and gospel' is used in a context where this may be misunderstood or not understood at all.*

*It is also important to illustrate how the counter-cultural nature of the gospel challenges issues in the culture and society in which the Lutheran school works. This is part of helping to develop a Christian worldview in the school to which students and staff can respond.*

---





# CHAPTER 9

## Christian Worship

---

### What is Christian worship?

Christian worship is the primary activity of the Christian church. Worship begins in God's action towards his people. In worship God comes to his people and serves them by what he says [in the word] and by what he does [in the sacraments]. The focus of Christian worship is the Lord Jesus Christ because through Jesus, God most clearly shows himself as the God who loves us, accepts us, forgives us and cares for us.

The second aspect of Christian worship is response to God's words and actions (Rom 12:1). God is a God who speaks and acts and who invites his people to respond in words and actions. In worship Christians recognise and acknowledge that God serves them and they show by their response that they believe God is worthy of praise, honour, loving obedience and willing service. They pray to God for mercy and for all their needs. They praise and thank God for his loving mercy. At the same time they acknowledge their own unworthiness [confession of sins] and need for forgiveness [absolution].

Christian worship is sometimes called 'divine service' because in worship God serves his people and this prompts them in turn to serve him. This highlights an essential difference between Christian and non-Christian worship. In non-Christian worship the initiative tends to be with the worshippers who try to establish the connection with their god and demonstrate their own worthiness by the earnestness and intensity of their prayers and other ritual acts [contrast the worship of the prophets of Baal with that of Elijah, 1 Kgs 18:16-39; also the Pharisee and the tax collector in Lk 18:9-14]. There is danger, however, that in

some forms of Christian worship the focus can be on what people do, rather than on what God has first done for them.

---

*A discussion of worship in the Lutheran school context raises immediately the question of how worship is to be understood and practised in the school. The key issue here is the recognition that there are those in the Lutheran school who share a faith in Jesus Christ and those who do not. As discussed in the previous chapter, while there is a 'community of faith' within the school, not all members of the school community will necessarily be part of that group. This means that when the Lutheran school community gathers for worship, not all will participate in the same way.*

*While the issue of 'compulsory school worship' will be addressed later, it is important already at this stage to recognise that students and staff who do not share a faith in Jesus Christ cannot be placed in a conflict of conscience by expecting them to make a confession or response which does not reflect their faith. Hence it may be inappropriate to include in school worship elements such as confession of sins and confession of faith, responsive prayers, calls for commitment and participation in the reception of holy communion. [The 'Statement on School Worship', which deals more fully with this area, may be retrieved from the LEA website.]*

---

## The mystery of Christian worship and the triune God

Christian public worship brings those who worship into the presence of the triune God (Mt 18:20) and incorporates them into the heavenly worship (Eph 2:18; Rev 5). It is a divine mystery as the Holy Spirit works faith in people and draws them into a community of worship which is connected with the invisible communion ['the communion of saints'] of all God's people through time and space. The 'invocation' ['In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.'] at the beginning of worship reminds them of the words spoken in baptism which has given them the right and privilege to approach God in worship (Gal 3:25-27; Heb 10:19-22). In order to emphasise this further, some worshippers make the sign of the cross which was made over them at their baptism.

Jesus Christ is the worship leader who brings worshippers into the presence of the Father, representing them before the Father in intercession and thanksgiving (Heb 7:25; 9:24). And he represents the Father to them in proclamation and praise (Heb 2:12). Jesus leads them together with the angels and the whole communion of saints in the performance of the heavenly liturgy (Heb 2:11; 8:2; 12:22-24; 13:15). In this way, Jesus continues to serve them as he served people during his ministry on earth. [In the Lutheran liturgy for holy communion the words ‘Therefore with angels and archangels and with all the company of heaven, we adore and magnify your glorious name’ remind people that they are part of heavenly worship.]

Christ’s continuing service to his people comes through the ‘means of grace’: God’s word, baptism, absolution, and the Lord’s Supper. These are the channels through which the Holy Spirit brings the blessings of Christ’s service to people. Through these means, the Holy Spirit continues the ministry of Christ in and through the church. The Holy Spirit also leads and empowers worshippers in their response to God’s presence and activity in worship.

Because of what God does for believers in worship, worship becomes for them a response of celebration. Its focus is on Jesus Christ and his gifts to them and their response to those gifts. The Holy Spirit leads them in that response. It becomes a two way interaction between God and the believers. Worship also celebrates the mystery of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit who is beyond human understanding. Worship therefore has a strong sense of the sacred, the holy and the divine. It links believers with the holy God whom they approach with reverence, dignity and awe, but also in joy and love because they know God in Jesus Christ. God does not need a human response in worship, in the sense that God lacks something without it. Rather, worship is to be seen as a gracious gift of God through which God nourishes God’s people.

## The dynamic of Christian worship: God’s action, human response

As already indicated, Christian worship is initiated by God’s action. The Holy Spirit works through the word of God and the sacraments to bring people to faith and then draw them together into a worshipping community. In this community he nurtures faith and draws the

believers closer to God and to each other and empowers them for their life and service in the world. (Eph 2:8-10; 1 Cor 12:3). This action of God is sometimes referred to as his ‘sacramental activity’ while the human response is the so-called ‘sacrificial activity’. [In Lutheran liturgical worship, the worship leader usually faces the congregation when speaking for God (eg the absolution, reading the Bible) and faces the altar when speaking to God with, or on behalf of, those who are worshipping (eg confession of sins). This distinguishes the ‘sacramental’ and ‘sacrificial’ elements of worship.]

The biblical account of the risen Lord Jesus Christ with Simon and Cleopas on the road to Emmaus (Lk 24:13-34) provides important insights into the dynamic of worship. Here Jesus took the initiative and came to his two friends and walked with them. He wanted to be involved with them and communicate with them in spite of their misunderstanding and confusion. And the means that Jesus used was the word of God from the Old Testament. Jesus took that word and helped his disciples to see how it spoke about him and what he had come to do for them. He wanted there to be no doubt that through his death and resurrection, they had been brought back into a right relationship with God. And through that word, as the Holy Spirit worked, Jesus gave to them the gift of faith so that they could trust in that word.

But Jesus wanted to make all this even more certain for them by his actions. He did this initially for his disciples on the night he was betrayed when he linked that word with the breaking of bread, an action he now repeated with the two disciples at Emmaus. Jesus incorporated his word into an action so that his disciples could fully participate in it.

And this encounter in word and action created an immediate response in his two disciples. They ran back to Jerusalem and witnessed to the other disciples, ‘The Lord has risen indeed, and he has appeared to Simon!’ (Lk 24:34). And today, too, when Jesus reveals himself to his people, they respond in thanks, praise and devotion. And having experienced the grace, mercy and forgiveness of God, they also respond in sharing this experience with others and in serving others as God in Jesus Christ has already served them.

The following table is helpful in seeing the dynamic of Christian worship at work. God’s action leads, by the power of the Holy Spirit, to a human response.

- God's **action**: human *response*
- God **calls to worship**: humans *respond with the Spirit's help*
- God **forgives**: humans *confess*
- God **speaks**: humans *listen*
- God **listens**: humans *pray*
- God **gives his gifts to people**: humans *bring an offering of gifts*
- God **gives himself in the Lord's Supper**: humans *give themselves in loving service*
- God **blesses**: humans *praise him*
- God **sends people out into the world**: humans *go out to serve others*

The human response in worship therefore involves believers in a number of responses:

- in praise and thanksgiving, celebrating what God has done for them [the emphasis here is on the glory of God, not the 'performance' of the worship];
- in confession because they know of forgiveness in Jesus Christ;
- in public profession of faith [the creed];
- in prayers and intercessions for the church and the world;
- in donations of money or other gifts;
- in offering their whole lives in service to God (Rom 12:1).

---

*Because the focus of worship is on God, worshippers need to be careful that it does not shift to a focus on the individuals involved in or leading the worship celebration. Worship is not a time of entertainment or a concert performance. Worship is a time of celebrating the 'worth' of God and it is to remain focused on the word of God and its relevance for faith and life. There may be a dilemma here for those who prepare worship: do they meet the expectations for those who may be looking for 'entertainment' or do they remain focused on the central components of Christian worship?*

*The words of the songs and other materials used in Lutheran school worship need particular attention to ensure that the theology expressed is consistent with Lutheran theology and the language is 'worthy' of worship celebration.*

---

## The scope of Christian worship

Christian worship transcends the boundaries of time and space. It unites individuals with God's people of all times and in all places [the 'communion of saints']. In this way worshippers anticipate their life with the triune God in heaven (Is 6:1-5; Rev 4). In worship they join with the angels in praising God (Heb 12:22-24) and anticipate the time when the whole of creation will perfectly praise God in heavenly glory (Ps 96:10-13; Rev 5:13). It is an anticipation of the heavenly banquet which Jesus often spoke about in his parables (Mt 22: 2-14; Lk 14:16-24).

Public worship is basic to the fellowship which Christians share (Heb 10:24-25). In worship, the Holy Spirit continues to develop the community into which each Christian is incorporated when they come to faith in Jesus Christ. Fellowship is strengthened as Christians are fed through word and sacrament and as they share in prayer. This fellowship provides support for Christians as they seek to live a life of worship.

Theology grows out of worship. When the disciples of Jesus came together for worship after Easter and Pentecost they retained elements from their previous Jewish worship [prayers, reading of scripture, use of psalms] and combined them with new elements of Christian worship. In Acts we read that they

*devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers' (Acts 2:42). ... 'Day by day, as they spent much time together in the temple, they broke bread at home and ate their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having the good will of all the people' (Acts 2:46-47; cf Acts 20:7).*

As the early Christians worshipped together, listening to the apostles retelling their experiences with Jesus [which grew into the written gospels], reading the Old Testament writings and the letters of St Paul and the other letter writers, celebrating baptism and the Lord's Supper

['breaking of bread'] they began to formulate hymns (Phil 2:6-11; Rev 4:11; 5:9-13), blessings (Rom 1:7b; 1 Cor 1:3; 2 Cor 13:13; Heb 13:20-21), confessions of faith (1 Cor 12:3c), and other early theological formulations (1 Tim 2:5; 3:16; 2 Tim 2:11-13). These formulations gradually developed, sometimes in reaction to heresies and other disputes, into more complete theological statements [eg the Nicene Creed] This process has continued down to our current time, for example in the clarification of the theology of the Holy Spirit which grew out of the 'charismatic worship' of the last century.

## The form of Christian worship

Worship has its roots in scripture. Already in the Old Testament people like Noah and Abraham built altars and praised God for his gracious actions. Worship was also conducted at special places where God had appeared (eg Bethel). Although God cannot be confined in buildings (2 Chron 6:18), God instructed his people to erect the tabernacle and then later the temple as the meeting place for God with his people in worship. God instituted the cult of sacrificial worship which was administered by the priests who also mediated God's word to the people and interceded for them before God. These sacrifices of the Old Testament were temporary and pointed ahead to the final and all-sufficient self-sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. God also gave his people the Sabbath day as a special day set aside for worship and special worship festivals (eg Passover, Day of Atonement) which allowed the people to focus on God's mighty acts of deliverance.

Jesus and his disciples observed the worship patterns of the Old Testament. Like the prophets in the Old Testament, Jesus called for worship that was not mere empty ritual but was sincere devotion (Mt 6:5-13; 15:1-9), 'in spirit and in truth' (Jn 4:24). As God in human flesh, Jesus himself is the New Testament tabernacle and temple – the 'place' where God's glory is fully revealed (Jn 1:14; 2:19-21). Jesus promised his followers that he would be present even when only two or three of them came together in his name (Mt 18:20). Christian worship is not restricted to certain rituals at particular places and times (Col 2:16). The Sabbath having fulfilled its purpose, Sunday came to be observed as 'the Lord's day'. On this day Christians celebrate God's supreme work of deliverance through the death and resurrection of Christ.



Jesus did not institute a particular order or pattern of worship for the church. However, he did give directives about essential features of Christian worship: baptism (Mt 28:19), confession and absolution (Jn 20:23), reading and preaching of the word (Lk 24:46-47), prayer and thanksgiving (Lk 10:16; 11:1-13), the sacrament of the altar (Mt 26:26-28), and blessing (Lk 24:50-51). Jesus also instituted the public ministry (Jn 20:21-23) for the preaching of the gospel and the administration of the sacraments.

The church year gives a structure to Christian worship arranged around the major festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. This ensures that the essential aspects of the Christian faith receive due emphasis. Christian churches vary in the extent to which they follow other aspects of the church year such as minor festivals and saints' days.

Although there are elements of worship which are essential since they are commanded in scripture, no particular form or style of worship is commanded by God. Christians are free to choose in the area of forms of worship. [These non-essentials which have been neither commanded nor forbidden in scripture are sometimes referred to as *adiaphora*.] However, decisions in these non-essentials must be made in genuine concern for the welfare and unity of the body of Christ and in Christian love for all members of the body. The Lutheran confessions state:

*We believe, teach, and confess that the community of God in every time and place has the right, power, and authority to change, reduce, or expand such [worship] practices according to circumstances in an orderly and appropriate manner, without frivolity or offense, as seems most useful, beneficial, and best for good order, Christian discipline, evangelical decorum, and the building up of the church (SD 10,9; Kolb and Wengert: 637).*

Whatever form or style Christian worship takes, it needs to be the best which can be offered to God in response to his grace and mercy to all people. Since in worship God gives his best gifts through word and sacrament to those gathered for worship, they need to employ the best forms, words, music and arts to respond to God and to show appropriate reverence, awe and wonder for all which God does through the mystery of worship.

*Lutheran school worship will be discussed more fully below. However, whatever forms school worship takes, worship leaders must strive for excellence in worship to make the experience as effective, respectful and meaningful as possible. It needs to be sensitive to the particular context in which it occurs, relevant to those who are participating, but it cannot compromise the biblical focus and the centrality of the gospel. In the school context it is vital that appropriate emphasis, attention and resources are given to planning and leading of worship.*

---

## Aspects of a Lutheran approach to worship

While the following aspects are not unique to a Lutheran approach to worship but are shared by other Christian denominations as well, these represent particular emphases in Lutheran worship. Lutheran worship has these particular emphases but Lutheran worship is also ecumenical, recognising all of God's people who have faith in Jesus Christ as part of the body of Christ and members of the universal church. This is particularly significant for worship in Lutheran schools where members of the school community come from many different Christian backgrounds.

### **Lutheran worship is centred in the word of God and is Lutheran theology in action**

As Lutherans gather together [congregate] in worship, the Bible is central in all that is said and done because they recognise that God speaks to them in and through that word. In particular they celebrate what Jesus Christ has done through his life and suffering, death and resurrection. God's revelation in the Bible comes to worshippers as law and gospel leading them to confess their sins and receive the joyful news of forgiveness through the proclamation of the gospel. The Bible provides the basis for the message which is preached and the motivation for a life of love and Christian service.

As indicated earlier, theology originally grew out of worship. However, Lutheran worship now reflects Lutheran theology. It is Lutheran theology in action. Lutheran worship therefore emphasises theology of the cross, justification by faith alone, law and gospel, the saved and

sinful nature of Christians, and living as Christians by the power of the Holy Spirit. All aspects of Lutheran worship find their centre in the teaching and witness of the Bible and in Lutheran theology.

---

*In preparing worship activities in the Lutheran school, staff and students need to keep the focus clearly on the central gospel message of the Bible. While the worship planned needs to be relevant to the particular context of the Lutheran school, it cannot simply present moralistic messages or 'feel good' experiences. The law and gospel message of the Bible, which convicts, comforts and challenges in the name of Christ, is to be central. While the Bible is not to be presented as some 'holy book' to be worshipped in its own right, it is God's word through which he is revealing himself to his people and which they need to hear and recognise as such.*

*It will be important when reading or quoting from the Bible to draw attention to this and also to show how messages presented in worship are based on scriptural passages or texts. In formal worship settings where there is a worship table or an altar, an open Bible should be placed on the altar or table together with other worship aids such as candles or crosses.*

---

### **Lutheran worship is 'liturgical'**

In common with other denominations such as the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglican churches, Lutherans often use a particular structure, form and style for worship which is called the 'liturgy'. ['Liturgy' is a Greek word which originally meant 'works or service of the people'.] The origins of liturgical worship go back to the worship of God's people in the Old Testament and make use of biblical sentences and passages. In this way God gives people the words to use in worship. As indicated earlier, Jesus did not prescribe a set structure for worship although he did indicate essential components of public worship: the reading and preaching of God's word, baptism, holy communion, prayer, thanksgiving, the confession of sins and the receiving of forgiveness [absolution].

The liturgy helps to maintain the proper focus of worship and allows worship to be carried out in an orderly way (1 Cor 14:40). It is important,

however, that the liturgy does not become mechanical or routine. The liturgy follows the structure of the traditional church year which is arranged around the festivals of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost. There are rituals such as kneeling, making the sign of the cross, and passing of the peace, and blessing, which aid people in their worship. Vestments, liturgical colours, altars, lecterns, pulpits, and candles, are also part of liturgical worship. The sacraments of baptism and holy communion have their own liturgical structures, rites and practices which help to reinforce the purpose, meaning and celebration of these sacraments

---

*Worship in the Lutheran school provides an opportunity to introduce staff and students to the significance and practice of liturgical worship and to some of the rites and practices which are part of such worship. For some staff and students this may seem like 'foreign territory' and sensitivity and care will need to be exercised in this process. However, the importance and appreciation of ritual and repetition in the lives of students should not be underestimated. This is particularly relevant for younger students to enable them to participate in worship in ways appropriate for their age level. However, this practice may be seen by some as forcing children to participate in worship in a similar way to requiring older students to be involved in responsive prayers.*

*It is important that students and staff are given clear teaching and explanation of the significance of what is said and done in the liturgy so that their participation in worship becomes more complete. This may be done as part of a teaching component within the worship structure.*

---

### **Lutheran worship celebrates the sacraments**

The sacraments are central in the worship life of the Lutheran church. Together with other 'sacramental churches' such as the Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox and Anglican churches, Lutherans celebrate the sacraments in worship as the word of God in visible form (water, bread, wine) and visible action. Lutherans believe that Jesus commanded his followers to celebrate baptism and holy communion as special means through which the Holy Spirit works in a believer's life creating faith

and strengthening that faith. Through these sacraments Lutherans believe that they come into a close personal encounter with God and that Jesus Christ shares his body and blood with them in the bread and wine of holy communion. These sacraments emphasise both the sense of awe and mystery in worship, but also the intimate way in which God comes to his people in worship.

---

*In chapter 6 the Lutheran teaching on the sacraments was treated more fully. The sacraments are not always celebrated in Lutheran school worship. However, where they are, it is important that people recognise the special nature of these celebrations.*

---

## The life of worship

While it is important to set aside special times when Christians come together for worship in the name of the triune God, the whole of life becomes for them an act of worship to God as they offer themselves in service to God through serving those around them (Rom 12:1). The blessing ['benediction'] at the end of the Lutheran liturgy is also a sending out of the those who have participated in the worship service to serve God through serving and witnessing to others in the worship of their vocations – those areas of responsibility into which God has placed them. Worship leads to serving God through serving and witnessing to God's creation.

While worship in the first place is communal since Christians are called by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ, communal worship also provides the motivation and the context in which Christians develop their personal or private worship. Private worship is the daily worship of Christians as they pray, read and meditate on God's word, worship as family, say grace at meals, and develop their own worship rituals and practices. It also happens through daily life lived in service to others as worship is linked with vocation. St Paul urges Christians to offer their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God (Rom 12:1) and to respect their bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 6:19-20). In this way public and private worship are intimately tied together.

---

*As worship is celebrated in the various contexts in the Lutheran school, students will need to be helped to see how worship relates to the whole of their life as students and that it is not simply a necessary way to begin the school day or week. They can be encouraged to recognise situations for individual or corporate prayer which arise during the school day and in activities in the school environment. This will be an important aspect of the pastoral care program of the school as students are encouraged to pray for themselves and others in the circumstances which arise in the school environment or in the students' home and private lives*

---

## Prayer

Christian prayer is an important component of both communal and individual worship. It is an expression of the relationship God has established with his people through Jesus Christ. It is a conversation with God which God initiates. Christians speak to God because God has spoken to them and invites them to speak with him (Kleinig: 151-217).

Christian prayer flows from Christian faith. Christians do not have to pray in order to get close to God because in Jesus Christ God has already come close to them. Some Christians tend to see prayer as a 'means of grace'. They believe that they get God's love and forgiveness by praying for it. However, God's love and forgiveness come to them through God's word and the sacraments: prayer is not the reason these gifts come to them, they are given by the grace of God.

### **God's invitation and promise**

Christians pray because God invites them to do so. The Holy Spirit, who has made them God's children through adoption in baptism, teaches them to call God 'Abba Father', a very intimate and personal form of address (Gal 4:6; Rom 8:15) Luther picks up this aspect of prayer when he explains the introduction to the Lord's Prayer in the *Small Catechism* (SC 3,1-2; Kolb and Wengert: 356):

*Our Father, you who are in heaven.*

*What is this? Answer:*

*With these words God wants to entice us, so that we come to believe he is truly our Father and we are truly his children, in order that we may ask him boldly and with complete confidence, just as loving children ask their loving father.*

Jesus invites his followers to pray (Mt 7:7; Lk 18:1; 21:36). He gave them his own prayer (cf below). He has also given his promise to answer those prayers (Jn 16:23-24). Praying ‘in the name of Jesus’ recognises that prayer to God is possible only because Jesus has given Christians that access to the Father (Jn 14:6; Mt 27:51; Heb 10:19-22). He has removed the barrier of sin which prevents God from hearing and answering prayer. Jesus intercedes with the Father on behalf of the members of his body as their advocate or high priest (1 Jn 2:1; Heb 7:25). Praying ‘in the name of Jesus’ is not using some magic formula, but it is recognising the basis on which Christians can approach God - with Jesus’ credentials and not their own.

The New Testament writers repeatedly urge Christians to pray as part of their daily life (eg Rom 12:12; Col 4:2; 1 Thess 5:17; 1 Tim 2:1; Jas 1:6; 5:13). This includes not only prayers of requests or petitions seeking God’s help, but also prayers of praise, adoration, confession, intercession for others and thanksgiving. The prayer book of Jesus and the Old Testament people of God, the Book of Psalms, provides excellent examples of various kinds of prayer for all circumstances in life and death.

### **God answers prayer**

Christians pray with confidence because God promises to answer prayer which is based on faith in Jesus Christ (Jn 14:13-14; 15:7; 16:23; Mt 7:7-11; Ps 50:15).

God answers prayer, but not always in the way people may expect [see ‘theodicy’ in chapter 4]. God’s answer may be something which God *does* (eg healing, protecting, forgiving). In this situation, God may also work through the person who prays to bring about the answer to their prayer. God’s answer may be something which he *says* through his word or through another person. God may respond in a way which is direct and clear, but he may also drive individuals back to his word in the Scriptures. This is why there is such a close link between prayer and reading and hearing God’s word. However, it is important that God’s

answer to prayer is not seen as being dependent on the level of faith of the person who is praying: that God will answer if the person believes more fervently, prays more earnestly, or trusts God more fully.

Christians believe that God's answer to prayer comes not only in God's own way but also in his own time. Jesus urges his disciples to be persistent in prayer (Lk 11:5-13; 18:2-8). Often the answer to prayer will be recognised only as people look back on a situation some time later. They may also recognise blessings which have resulted from times of distress and suffering. Christians trust God in his love and wisdom to answer in the way which is best for the situation (Mt 6:32b).

### **Corporate prayer and private prayer**

Prayer is corporate in nature. Through faith and baptism Christians are united in fellowship with all God's people. Prayer is an expression of that relationship, the 'communion of saints'. The members of the body of Christ pray through Jesus Christ who is their head and who represents them to the Father. The model for corporate prayer is the Lord's Prayer with its emphasis on 'our', 'we', and 'us'.

Private prayer grows out of corporate prayer. Jesus Christ urges his followers to pray privately for those things which are of concern to them (Mt 6:5-6; Lk 11:1-13). For the Christian, private prayer is an essential aspect of Christian spirituality [Richard Foster provides a very helpful exploration of the relationship between prayer and other spiritual disciplines in 'The celebration of discipline'.]

The Bible speaks of the Holy Spirit praying with and for the individual (Rom 8:26-27). This prayer of the Holy Spirit may be at a subconscious level, as the Spirit 'intercedes with sighs too deep for words' (Rom 8:26) with the Father for those things which the individual may not be able to articulate. In this way prayer becomes part of the internal conversation within the triune God between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Through the Son believers have access to the Father and he intercedes with the Father for them (Heb 7:25). And the Holy Spirit brings prayers of believers, even those which are unspoken, to the Father.

### **The Lord's Prayer**

In response to the request of his disciples to teach them to pray, Jesus gave his own prayer to his followers (Mt 6:9-13; Lk 11:1-4). Rather than simply teach about prayer, Jesus gave Christians his own prayer which



they can pray with him, knowing they are praying for those things which Jesus himself prays for. In praying this prayer Christians join together with all Christians everywhere.

It is important that the Lord's Prayer does not become simply a convenient 'space-filler' in worship. The treatment of the Lord's Prayer in Luther's *Small Catechism* and *Large Catechism* can be very helpful for ongoing study both privately and in groups in order to be reminded of those things for which Jesus invites people to pray.

---

*Lutheran schools provide a great opportunity to foster communal and individual prayer. Prayer may not be an integral part of a child's life but may become so through experience of prayer in the school context. Planning corporate prayer may provide a way to include students who may not be Christian or who do not wish to participate publicly in leading prayers. Prayer will be part of the formal school worship and also daily devotions in the classroom. The day may begin and end in prayer, grace said before the lunch meal, opportunities to pray for members of the class, at birthdays, in times of difficulty, giving thanks for good things which have happened. Sometimes discussions in the classroom can lead to an opportunity to pray about what is being discussed, for example poverty, hunger, sickness, disasters, but also for the wonder of God's creation, the beauty and complexity of the world and the excitement of life and learning. Prayer will also play a vital role in situations of pastoral care and counselling and the practice of 'restorative justice' or confession and absolution. It may be important in one-on-one situations to ask for permission to pray for an individual and in this way communicate respect for that individual.*

*It is important, however, that students do not come to expect that God will answer prayer just in the way they anticipate or hope. God's will may not coincide with the will of the person who is praying. God's answer to prayer may not be recognised immediately but seen in retrospect as an individual looks back on the way God has worked in a particular situation. How God answers prayer is an important area for exploration not only in Christian Studies and school worship, but also in pastoral care and other interaction between individuals in the school context. The material dealing*

*with ‘theodicy’ [chapter 4] may also provide important insights when considering the way in which God answers prayer.*

*It is important that staff model prayer in school life. Students need to be aware that the principal, school pastor and other members of the staff pray regularly for the school, for each other and for individuals in the school. There may be a roster of people and situations for regular prayer. Some Christian staff members may need encouragement and assistance in these areas. Class teachers can indicate that they pray regularly for each member of a class and can invite the students to pray for them and for all teachers and others who work in the schools.*

---

## **Worship in the Lutheran school context**

Worship is central for the Lutheran school community. While the primary role of the school is as a formal educational institution for learning and teaching, since the Lutheran school is an agency of the Lutheran church and has within it a community of faith, that community participates in worship as it receives blessings from God and responds to God. This worship is also a witness to those in the community who do not yet profess faith in Jesus Christ.

### **The context of school worship**

Worship occurs within a number of different contexts within a Lutheran school: in the whole school, in sections of the school and in class-sized contexts. It therefore reflects that community in its worship. It may be in a ‘community of faith’ where all members of that community share faith in Jesus Christ and share in some voluntary form of worship. It may be a ‘mixed’ community in which all members belong to God because he created them and where there are those who also belong to God through their faith relationship with him. Worship in this latter context is part of the way in which God cares for the world in two ways, his general care [‘left hand’] and his specific care [‘right hand’]. Whether a person ‘worships’ in the full sense or just experiences community or care from others, that person is still receiving God’s care.

The Lutheran school is not, however, a Christian congregation although it may have a congregation within it or closely associated with it. It

should not therefore be regarded as a substitute for local congregations of various denominations. However, there are increasing numbers of students and parents who participate in worship only within a school context. This is where they come into contact with the word of God and in some cases also the sacraments. This is where God comes to meet their needs with his grace and forgiveness and where they respond in prayer, praise and thanksgiving and find support for their life of love and service in the world. Such people come to regard the Lutheran school as their spiritual 'home' and turn to it in times of difficulties or when some situation requires the help of a pastor or chaplain. Lutheran schools may be used by former students for weddings and they may also be the venue for student or parent funerals. While people will be encouraged to find a congregational home, especially when students graduate from the school, many are not ready to make such a commitment.

### **Appropriate school worship**

School worship needs to reflect the Lutheran heritage of the school and at the same time be considerate of those in the community who may come from other faith traditions or are non-believers. In eliciting a specific faith response, whether it be in a confession of sins, joining in a creedal statement, the saying of prayers, the singing of songs or anything else that may lead to a conflict of conscience of others, due consideration will need to be given. However, these elements of worship can be included if participation is invited and not expected from those who feel unable or uncomfortable to do so. It is also important to be aware of what may be appropriate for students in different age groups in the school and therefore how they are asked to be engaged in worship activities. It should not be forgotten that worship is primarily God's action and that response is a result of God's act of loving service.

There is a certain amount of freedom in determining the format of worship. A variety of styles should be employed in order to reach out to the greatest number of people. The culture and needs of the students and staff must be considered and worship needs to be sensitive, creative, dynamic, challenging and relevant to the school community. However, the challenge for relevance should not lead to compromising the liturgy or the theology. It should be remembered that Lutheran worship is 'planned' worship, so as to promote the primary action of God coming to the worshippers while at the same time encouraging

them to respond to him. Central to Lutheran worship is the word of God as it is read, sung and proclaimed. Nothing in the practice of worship should obscure the clear message of the gospel. The message carried by means such as spoken word, music, actions, web-based resources, and illustrations should not simply communicate information about God and the Christian faith, but should also invite people to respond in faith and motivate people to practice actively the implications and challenges of the message.

Those who are involved in preparing and leading worship, have a special responsibility to make the whole experience effective and significant. Worship brings people into the presence of God and is therefore carried out in an orderly and respectful manner. This means that worship offers to God the best that can be offered; the best words and the best forms, the best music and the best arts. However, worship is not a 'performance' nor is it simply a response of personal piety. It is a response to the love and mercy of God.

---

*Leading worship may at first seem a rather daunting responsibility for students and teachers new to leading worship. Here sensitivity is again necessary in asking all teachers or students to lead worship where it may lead to a conflict of conscience. However, it is also an opportunity to encourage students and staff to put their faith into action and grow in confidence in leading worship as God's gifted people.*

*If teachers have not planned or conducted worship activities before, they should seek guidance from the school or congregational pastor or other appropriate persons in regard to the format and content of their worship planning. This will assist them in the preparation of their worship celebration and put to rest any concerns they might have about the appropriateness of what they are preparing. It will also give them a good opportunity to sit down with a spiritual mentor and discuss any issues they might have about worship and their own journey of faith. It will also be important for non-Lutheran members of staff to understand a Lutheran approach to worship. This collaboration is helpful not only in the initial stage, but it will prove a useful avenue for direction and feedback as teachers lead further worship activities in the school. Teachers can*

*also ask students for their reaction to their worship experiences and give them a sense of involvement and ownership in the school worship activity. Preparing and leading in worship may be an excellent topic for staff professional development from time to time and should be part of initial teacher orientation.*

*Students will also need guidance in the preparation of worship. A selection of simple orders for worship which students can adapt will be helpful. Students need guidance to recognise the importance of the content of worship, particularly the words which are used so that God's word is central in what is said and done.*

*Music and singing play an important role in Lutheran worship. In some secondary schools, students are reluctant to sing in the presence of others but music can still be used very effectively in worship celebrations. Song selection is important because what is sung needs to reflect God's word and Lutheran beliefs and not simply some pious thoughts. Singing provides an important way for students to learn of the love, grace and forgiveness of Jesus Christ. Music should not be chosen simply because it is 'what the students love to sing' or 'a good one for the band to play', but because of the relationship between the words and the music. While feeling and emotion are important in worship, worship involves the whole person and the whole of life.*

*Since worship is so central to the life of the Lutheran school, schools need to provide quality resources for worship. Gifts such as music, drama, dance, and singing need to be encouraged to help to enhance worship. There will always be a need in the busy life of the Lutheran school to devote necessary attention and resources to worship in order to retain the appropriate emphasis on the importance of worship.*

---

### **Worship and teaching**

Because Lutheran school worship is celebrated in the context of learning and teaching, it is important to recognise the distinction between worship and teaching. In worship the emphasis is on proclaiming and experiencing God's word (Jn 1:14; 1 Jn 1:1-3) with the aim to provide an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to create or enrich faith in individuals.

However, worship often involves some teaching or explaining of God's word or the Christian faith as well.

In teaching, the emphasis is on explaining God's word with the aim to increase understanding of the Christian faith. However teaching may include some elements of worship as a response to what is taught.

---

*It is important to be aware of these distinctions in planning and conducting school worship, and in planning and implementing the Christian Studies program in the school. While similar topics may be dealt with, they are dealt with in different ways according to their context.*

---

### **Celebrating the sacraments in the school context**

As indicated in the section on the sacraments in chapter 6, the sacraments are celebrated in some Lutheran schools. In providing worship celebrations including the sacraments, schools can be seen as including in school worship, experiences normally associated with worship in a local congregation. In fact, the school may be the only environment in which some students and their families experience sacramental worship. However, not all schools are comfortable in providing sacramental worship because of the nature of the school community. This is an area in which the consciences of members of the school community must be respected.

Baptism as the sacrament of entry into the Christian church happens in the context of the people of God who gather together in worship. This normally happens within a Christian congregation. Where there is a direct relationship between a Lutheran school and a Lutheran congregation, baptism in the school can be seen as a pastoral act of that congregation under the pastoral oversight of its pastor. The congregation as well as the school is therefore responsible for instruction prior to baptism as well as pastoral care after baptism. This situation can be complicated if there are a number of congregations which support the particular school.

Baptism can also take place in a congregation [community of faith] within the school. As mentioned previously, this may be the only worship context of individuals being baptised and members of their

families. The school will be the context for instruction prior to baptism and for ongoing pastoral care of the individuals and their families. Instruction for students or staff members prior to baptism will go beyond the normal teaching of the Christian faith in the classroom and the proclamation that is part of school worship, because it presupposes commitment *to* the faith. It will also be important, before they leave the school context, for the school to try to establish bridges and develop links between any persons baptised in the school and an appropriate Christian congregation for their ongoing pastoral needs.

Holy communion may also be celebrated in the school context. Because not all members of the school community can participate in the reception of holy communion, schools have developed various practices to deal with this situation. Some Lutheran schools have holy communion services which are voluntary in addition to the regular school worship for all members of the school community. Others have included the whole school community and invited all to participate in the worship service. All participants are encouraged to go forward to the altar at the appropriate time; those who wish to take the bread and wine do so while others indicate by crossing their arms across their chest that they wish to receive an individual blessing instead. Some schools invite parents and carers to participate in the sacrament. Schools also vary the times for such services; for example at the beginning and/or end of year or term, for special occasions during the year, at times when the parents of boarding students are able to be present and for special times in the church year. Pastors who celebrate the sacrament in the school are responsible for the instruction and ongoing pastoral care of the communicants in these services.

### **Compulsory school worship**

In Lutheran schools, worship is seen as important for all within the community. It is a part of the daily life of the school, whether it is expressed in the whole school assembly or in the classroom or individual context. However, it needs to be recognised that with the decline of religious practice in society many students may have had little, if any, prior experience of Christian worship.

Attendance at most worship celebrations in Lutheran schools is compulsory. This needs to be made very clear to parents and students when they apply to enroll in a Lutheran school. It is a core part of the Lutheran school community in which they are choosing to participate.

However, the practice of compulsory school worship is regularly under discussion in Lutheran schools. In general, the older the students are in the school, the more frequent and acute the question of compulsory attendance becomes. Staff members may raise objections to this practice and the expected frequency of their own participation in worship. Despite their choice to enroll their children in a Lutheran school, some parents may also raise objections. Two types of objections are raised.

One approach is to question it on educational grounds. Is worship a valid and effective educational experience when it is made compulsory? Does it engender cynicism and negative attitudes in those who may not be able to participate in good conscience? Is it counter-productive? Does it 'waste time' which could be spent on more valuable educational activities? Do students feel that religion is being 'forced' on them with the result that they turn their backs on any religious activity in later life?

The practice of compulsory worship is also questioned on theological grounds. The basic argument here is that 'worship which is enforced is no longer worship'. The Lutheran teaching of justification by grace through faith on account of Christ suggests that worship should be freely offered in a Lutheran school but not be required. To require attendance seems to be a contradiction of the theology of 'by grace alone', and 'by faith and not by good works'.

Another version of this position arises from time to time which relates to issues discussed previously in the section dealing with how God cares for the world. The school is seen as belonging to God's 'general care' for all people ['left hand']. The church, as the redeemed people of God, is under God's 'special care' ['right hand']. It is argued, therefore, that if the church wishes to provide schools, it can do so only under God's general care [the law] and it cannot add requirements, such as worship, which fall under God's special care [the gospel]. Christians can witness to their faith in the school context, but cannot assume or require response from other members of the school community.

These objections need careful and sensitive handling with respect for an individual's situation and conscience. However, at the same time the Lutheran school needs to be unapologetic in its position on worship. Individuals who object to school worship can be helped to see that they can appreciate and participate in Christian worship activities without necessarily denying their own different spirituality. It is crucial



that staff promote and display a positive view of school worship and assist students in their own attitudes. Anecdotal evidence indicates that a significant number of students who in the initial stages of their attendance at a Lutheran school have questioned worship participation have later considered it to be one of the most significant aspects of their schooling. Through worship, God's Holy Spirit has established and nourished the faith of many. In school worship the action of God coming to people through his word should be emphasized, rather than the giving of a particular faith response.

Worship can provide a positive outcome from an educational and community building perspective. It is a shared experience which helps to mould various groups within the school as well as being a shared experience for the whole school. Worship also contributes to the learning and teaching processes within the school as part of the school's comprehensive Christian education focus. However, people will respond differently to the worship experience; some will react positively, some will ignore it or reject it, many will simply accept it as part of the culture and routine of the school, while some may even become negative or hostile. Dealing with Christian worship in Christian Studies may also help students gain insights into worship and appreciate its significance in the church school.

Worship is the most obvious identification of a school as an authentically Lutheran school. It is important as an expression of identity and ethos, even though there may be only a minority of Lutheran students and staff in the school. Most importantly, it is a channel for the Holy Spirit to work through the word of God to enlighten, sanctify and challenge the learning and believing community.

---

*The attitude of staff to worship and their participation in worship in the Lutheran school is critical. Negative comments about the place of worship or the practice of worship in the school are quickly picked up by students especially by those who may not have extensive previous experience of worship. School worship needs to be seen as the essential communal activity of the Lutheran school. Through it God forgives, feeds and nourishes believers to live their new life in Christ, and he reaches out in his grace and mercy to those who do not yet share faith in him.*

---

# EPILOGUE

## Authentic Lutheran Schooling

---

The continuing dialogue of theology and education is critical if Lutheran schools are to remain true to their vision and purpose as authentic Lutheran educational institutions. Drawing on the dialogue between theology and education represented in this volume, the following are suggested as qualities and characteristics of an authentic Lutheran school:

- a community built on the relationship between the triune God and the individuals who make up that community, recognising that within that community there are those who participate in a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ given by the Holy Spirit, and those who do not;
- a community centred on worship of the triune God and deliberately and intentionally witnessing to the grace of God in Christ to all who come into contact with that community;
- a community which fosters life-long learning for students and staff in their knowledge and understanding of, and response to, God's revelation in his word and a community that sustains the Lutheran faith tradition in a dynamic interrelationship with contemporary life and thought;
- a community which is a school of the Lutheran Church of Australia and as such is part of the ministry and mission of the LCA and its congregations;
- a community searching for truth through revelation and reason, learning to judge truth which is provisional from truth which is absolute, and recognising that Jesus Christ is 'the Truth', and that the 'fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom' (Prov 9:10);

- a community in which individuals recognise that God addresses them in his word through both law and gospel and is therefore conscious of operating under both God's 'left hand' [the law] and 'right hand' [the gospel] to carry out God's purposes in and for the world;
- a community of inquiry incorporating students and staff as life-long learners in an educational program of excellence built on a Christian world-view and based on God's revelation in his word and current educational understanding and practice;
- a learning community which values academic freedom and which sharpens the critical awareness of students regardless of their religious background;
- a community where Christian Studies is an essential curriculum component taught with sensitivity to the spirituality commitment of the students and engaging in respectful dialogue with insights from other denominations and religions, but clearly and consciously presenting what the Lutheran church believes and teaches;
- a community which recognises that the process of education belongs under the 'left hand' work of God through which God preserves creation and upholds the structures of society against the effects of sin and evil and prepares all people for their various areas of responsibility in the world;
- a community which is led by educators who are committed to, and who exemplify, those qualities and attributes which create, foster and maintain authentic Lutheran schools, who are spiritual leaders in those schools, and who identify, mentor and support emerging leaders;
- a community affirming that the final responsibility for education belongs to the parents of children as they have been given that responsibility by God even though they may use the resources of the state and/or church to assist them to carry out this responsibility: and a community which supports and encourages Christian parents and caregivers in the Christian nurture of those for whom they are responsible;
- a community which stands in awe and wonder at the mystery of creation and which explores that creation with the best insights and

resources of the human mind and which operates between creation as it now is and the new creation in Jesus Christ, recognising already in this present world signs of the world to come;

- a community that recognises the fallen nature of the whole of creation and the resultant impact of sin and evil in the world but which is also a community of hope, believing that in Christ ‘all things hold together’ (Phil 1:17);
- a community that takes seriously a biblical anthropology which recognises the sinful nature of human beings but which celebrates the God-given potentialities of every human being and recognises and values the uniqueness of every person in that community, helping them to identify, cultivate and creatively use the gifts and abilities which they have been given while developing as integrated individuals intellectually, spiritually, socially, emotionally and physically;
- a community which appreciates the individual learning styles of students and which provides appropriate multiple pathways of learning;
- a community that is inclusive of characteristics such as race, colour, disability, economic or social status, and personal faith commitment, and in which all members of that community experience the love and care which flow from the grace of God;
- a compassionate community that is motivated by the love of Jesus Christ which extends pastoral care to all who are in that community and all who are attached to that community and which encourages all in that community to be involved actively in extending such love, care and concern to each other;
- a safe community for all sustained by a careful application of law and gospel which assists students to develop self-discipline and respect for others and that seeks to achieve reconciliation in situations of interpersonal relationship breakdown or conflict through promoting programs such as ‘restorative justice’;
- a community which assists all in that community to see themselves in vocation as they live interdependently and serve in the various areas of responsibility into which God has placed them, keeping in balance the demands of their different responsibilities;

- a community that nurtures a service mentality, motivated by theology of the cross and demonstrating faith active in love, which respects and values the dignity and humanity of others, and which creates sensitivity, raises awareness of and motivates responses to social and justice issues such as discrimination, oppression, injustice and suffering in the local and global community;
- a community which helps those within that community to live with ambiguity and dynamic tension between choices in ethical decision making and which guides them as they learn to respond with confidence and humility, and with belief and passion;

The challenge for educators operating within Lutheran schools is to integrate qualities and characteristics such as these into a coherent philosophy of education which will provide the basis for their teaching and learning in Lutheran schools. In this way, insights from the God of grace who speaks and acts and who invites us to respond in love and worship of him and in love and service to those in our local and global community, will provide the foundation for all which is taught and done in Australian Lutheran schools.

# Selected References

---

- Albinger, Kenneth C, 1990. 'Mission opportunity or missed opportunity? Towards an understanding of the place of Lutheran schools in the mission of the church', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 24/2 (Aug), 62-68.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2002. 'Managing the maelstrom: value and decision in educational ministry', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 36/2 (Aug), 51-59.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2010. 'Can we find a theologically informed philosophy of education for Lutheran schools?', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 44/3 (Dec), 146-153.
- Altmann, Mark and Neal Nuske, 2009. 'No longer a world of our own: challenging the case for compulsory worship in Lutheran schools', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 43/1 (May), 39-48.
- Bartsch, Malcolm I, 1993. 'Changed and different. The challenge to Lutheran schools', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 27/1 (May), 23-32.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1996a. 'Cultural dialogue': an approach to Christian studies in Lutheran secondary schools', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 30/3 (Dec), 131-141.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1996b. 'Insights from Luther on current educational issues'. *Perspectives on Martin Luther. Papers from the Luther Symposium held at Luther Seminary Adelaide, South Australia 22-23 March, 1996 commemorating the 450th anniversary of the Reformer's death*, ed Mark W Worthing, Openbook Publishers, Adelaide SA, 129-140.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1998. 'Where is wisdom to be found? Finding meaning in the web of information'. The 1997 Reuther Oration. *Australian Lutheran Education Yearbook 1997*, Board for Lutheran Schools, North Adelaide, SA.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1999a. 'The old content for a new context: Lutheran theological perspectives for the future of Australian Lutheran school education', *Australian Lutheran Education Yearbook 1999*, Board for Lutheran Schools, North Adelaide, SA.

- \_\_\_\_\_, 1999b. 'The dialogue of education and Lutheran confessional theology', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 33/3 (Dec), 147-156
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2000. 'The danger of 'worm theology'', *SchoolLink* 6/4 (Nov), 1,2.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2001. *Why a Lutheran school? education and theology in dialogue*, Board for Lutheran Schools, North Adelaide, SA.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2003. 'Church schools as a multi-cultural, multi-faith interface: issues for theology and religious practice', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 37/1 (May), 13-22.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2004. "Respectful dialogue": teaching Christian Studies in the multi-faith context', *SchoolLink* 10/2 (Aug), 1,2.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2005. *Christian Studies Curriculum Framework: theological notes*, Lutheran Education Australia, North Adelaide, SA.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2006. 'The principal as spiritual leader: developing and leading faith communities', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 40/1, 28-39.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2008. 'God's weaving and our challenges', *SchoolLink* 14/3 (Oct), 10,11.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2010a. 'Quality or service – is that the question?' *SchoolLink* 16/1 (Mar), 1,2.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2010b. 'Celebrate the Spirit's freedom: see the Holy Spirit play', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 44/3 (Dec), 139-145.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2011. 'Doing theology in the Lutheran school', *SchoolLink* 17/1 (May), 4-5.
- Braaten, Carl E, 2007. *Principles of Lutheran Theology*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, Fortress Press, Minneapolis, MN.
- Brennen, Thomas, 2011. 'A case for compulsory worship in Lutheran schools', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 45/2 (Aug), 124-133.
- Choitz, John F, ed, 1969. *Christian education - in transit*, Lutheran Education Association, River Forest, IL.
- Christenson, Tom, 2004. *The gift and task of Lutheran higher education*, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN.

## SELECTED REFERENCES

- Cooper, Marlene E, 1996. 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me: exploring Godly hospitality and its implications for Christian education', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 30/3 (Dec), 120-130.
- Eisenmenger, Ray, 1998. 'Schools, working with congregations, as agencies for mission', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 32/2 (July), 73-82.
- Foster, Richard, 1989. *Celebration of discipline: the path to spiritual growth*, Hodder & Stoughton, London.
- Greenthaner, Mark, 2011. 'Ministry in Lutheran schools – real ministry?', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 45/2 (Aug), 87-94.
- Harms, Graham R, 1994. 'The family under law and gospel'. *Lutheran Theological Journal* 28/2 (Aug), 71-79.
- Harran, Marilyn J, 1990. 'The contemporary applicability of Luther's pedagogy: education and vocation'. *Concordia Journal* 16, 319-332.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1997. *Martin Luther: learning for life*, Concordia Publishing House, St Louis, MO.
- Hauser, Richard J, 1990. 'An historical analysis of the Lutheran school boom in Queensland 1970-1990'. Dissertation (MEdStudies). University of Queensland.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2003. 'Australian Lutheran schooling: a historical perspective', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 37/3 (Dec), 111-118.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2009. *The patriarchs: a history of Australian Lutheran schooling 1839-1919*, Lutheran Education Australia, North Adelaide SA.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2012. *The pathfinders: a history of Australian Lutheran schooling 1919-1999*, Lutheran Education Australia, North Adelaide SA.
- Hayes, John W, 1978. 'Education and the Lutheran church', in *Half a million children: studies of non-government education in Australia*, ed John Cleverley, Longman Cheshire, Melbourne, Vic.
- Hebart, Friedemann, 2000. *One in the gospel*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed, Openbook Publishers, Adelaide, SA.
- Hebart, S P, 1970. 'Education in the light of law and gospel'. *Lutheran Theological Journal* 4/1 (May), 18-24.



- Jacqueline, Dominique, 2011. 'Equipping for now and the future: a window into Lutheran Education Australia's training program for teachers of Christian Studies', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 45/2 (Aug), 114-123.
- Jaensch, Andrew, 2008. 'Full immersion: a valid approach to worship in Christian schools?', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 42/2 (May), 92-99.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2011. 'The Lutheran school: communicating hope, vision and leadership in challenging contexts – historical and global perspectives', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 45/2 (Aug), 95-102.
- Janetzki, Elvin W, 1985. *The church teaches: a Lutheran view of Christian education*, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide, SA.
- Jennings, Meryl A, 2004. 'Elitist Lutheran schools? Maybe – and so what?', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 38/1 (May), 3-18.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2007. 'Metaphors shaping Lutheran education', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 41/3 (Dec), 147-156.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2011. 'Lutheran education serving the community', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 45/2 (Aug), 103-113.
- Kahl, Barry J, 2011. 'Why all the attention on accreditation?', *SchoolLink* 17/1, 1-2.
- Kleinig, John W, 2008. *Grace upon grace: spirituality for today*, Concordia Publishing House, St Louis, MO.
- Kleinschmidt, L Robin, 2002. 'The spiritual leadership of the principal', *Lutheran Theological Journal*, 36/2 (Aug), 60-70.
- Knight, George R, 1989. *Philosophy and education: an introduction in Christian perspective*, Andrews University Press, Berrien Springs, MI.
- Koch, John B, 1990. 'Challenges confronting Lutheran schools', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 24/2 (Aug), 53-61.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2000. 'Giving one's life to Jesus: conversion theology and decision theology' *Lutheran Theological Journal* 34/3 (Nov), 154-160.
- Kolb, Robert, 1989. 'Saint and sinner: still experiencing the distance, but secure as the Father's children', *Lutheran Education* 125/1 (Sept/Oct), 20-25.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- \_\_\_\_\_. 1993. *The Christian faith: a Lutheran exposition*, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis MO.
- Kolb, Robert and Timothy J Wengert, eds, 2000. *The Book of Concord: the confessions of the evangelical Lutheran church*, Fortress Press, Minneapolis MN.
- Lewis, C S, 1952. *Mere Christianity*, Fontana Books, Collins, London.
- Lockwood, Peter, 1998. 'Biblical perspectives on education for the gifted and talented', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 32/3 (Dec), 117-122.
- Lumpp, David A. 1990. 'Christians as saints and sinners: the dynamics of New Testament sanctification'. *Lutheran Education* 125/5 (May/June), 271-275.
- Luther, Martin, *Luther's Works: American edition, 55 vols, 1951-1988*, Helmut T. Lehmann and Jaroslav Pelikan, eds, Fortress Press, Philadelphia PA, and Concordia Publishing House, St Louis MO.
- Luther, Martin, 1529. Large Catechism, tr Friedemann Hebart, in *Luther's Large Catechism: anniversary translation and introductory essay by Friedemann Hebart*, 1983, Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide.
- Lutheran Church of Australia, 2001. *The Lutheran Church of Australia and its schools*, <http://www.lutheran.edu.au/tools/getFile.aspx?tbl=tblContentItem&id=65>
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2002. *Statement on school worship*. <http://www.lutheran.edu.au/tools/getFile.aspx?tbl=tblContentItem&id=22>
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2002 *The role of the pastor in the Lutheran school*, <http://www.lutheran.edu.au/tools/getFile.aspx?tbl=tblContentItem&id=84>
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2006. *The Lutheran school as a place of ministry and mission*, <http://www.lutheran.edu.au/tools/getFile.aspx?tbl=tblContentItem&id=66>
- Lutheran Education Australia, 2001. *Relative responsibilities of pastor and principal within the Lutheran school*, <http://www.lutheran.edu.au/tools/getFile.aspx?tbl=tblContentItem&id=84>
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2005. *A vision for learners and learning in Lutheran schools*, Lutheran Education Australia, North Adelaide, SA.

- \_\_\_\_\_, 2011. *Service Learning in Lutheran schools*, <http://www.lutheran.edu.au/public/content/ViewCategory.aspx?id=1186>
- Mackintosh, H R, 1961. *The Christian experience of forgiveness*. Fontana Books, Collins, London and Glasgow.
- Marks, Ian, 1999. 'Reflections on community', *Australian Lutheran Education Yearbook 1999*, Board for Lutheran Schools, Adelaide, 36-44.
- Moulds, Russell, 2003. 'What's Lutheran about Lutheran teaching?', *Lutheran Education* 138/3 (Spring), 180-194.
- Muetzelfeldt, Karl, n.d. [1936] *Why we again must have Christian day schools*. Tr. E. Wiencke. Lutheran Book Depot, North Adelaide, SA.
- Nuske, Neal, 2001, 'Doing theology in the market place of the school', *Lutheran Theological Journal*, 35/2 (Aug), 51-64.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 2011. 'When rectangles become circles; the classroom as a hermeneutical circle', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 45/2 (Aug), 77-86.
- Painter, F.V.N, 1989. *Luther on education*. Concordia Publishing House, St Louis, MO.
- Prenter, Regin, 1959. 'Luther's theology of the cross', *Lutheran World* 6, 222-233.
- Rossiter, Graham, 2010. 'Rethinking the purposes of K-12 Lutheran Christian Studies in the light of contemporary youth spirituality', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 44/3 (Dec), 128-138.
- Samiec, George, 1999. 'To expel or not to expel! Exclusion policy and related issues in Lutheran schools' *Lutheran Theological Journal* 33/2 (Aug), 79-85.
- Sandsmark, Signe, 2002. 'A Lutheran perspective on education', *Journal of Education and Christian Belief* 6/2, 97-105.
- Schlink, Edmund, 1961. *Theology of the Lutheran confessions*, tr Paul F. Koehneke and Herbert J.A. Bouman, Fortress Press, Philadelphia PA.
- Schnabel, Robert V, 1989. 'Broadening the view of Christian vocation'. *Lutheran Education* 125/2 (Nov/Dec), 8591.

SELECTED REFERENCES

- Schubert, David, 2004. *Christian faith and freedom: Martin Luther's 'The freedom of a Christian' paraphrased for today*, D Schubert, Magill, SA.
- Schwarz, Hans, 1996. *True faith in the true God; an introduction to Luther's life and thought*, tr M W Worthing, Augsburg, Minneapolis, MN.
- \_\_\_\_\_, 1996, 'Martin Luther's understanding of vocation in the light of today's problems'. *Lutheran Theological Journal* 30/1 (May), 4-12.
- Silcock, Jeffrey G, 2010. 'The role of Spirit in creation', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 44/1 (May), 4-14.
- Simmons, Ernest L, 1998. *Lutheran higher education: an introduction*, Augsburg Fortress, Minneapolis, MN.
- Strelan, John G, 1989. 'Theologia crucis, theologia gloriae: a study in opposing theologies'. *Lutheran Theological Journal* 23/3 (Dec), 99-113.
- Strelan, Richard E, 1991. 'Is God only right-handed?: the Lutheran church of Australia and social justice'. *Lutheran Theological Journal* 25/2 (Aug), 126-133.
- Sturm, Wilhelm, 1983. *Luther's views concerning education*. tr. L.B. Grope. Lutheran Publishing House, Adelaide SA.
- Truemper, David G, 1991. 'The gospel, the world, and the classroom. Pedagogical reflections on the two-kingdoms notion'. *Lutheran Education* 126/3 (Jan/Feb), 125-130.
- Veith, Gene Edward Jr, 2010. *The spirituality of the cross: the way of the first evangelicals*, rev ed, Concordia Publishing House, St Louis, MO.
- Vitale, John, 2002. 'A brief response to Neal Nuske's 'Doing theology in the marketplace of Lutheran schooling'', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 36/1 (May), 38-40.
- Wagner, Mervyn A, 1990. 'Christian education as making disciples', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 24/2 (Aug), 69-80.
- Wegener, Malcolm E, 2006. 'Mystery, challenge and the training of teachers for Lutheran schools in Australia', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 40/3 (Dec), 126-142.

Worthing, Mark Wm, 2001. 'The fragility of grace', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 35/1 (May), 23-32.

Zweck, John E, 1973. 'Lutherans and state aid in South Australia, 1838-1900', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 7/1 (May), 1-17.

\_\_\_\_\_, 1988. 'The origins of Lutheran schools in Australia', *Lutheran Theological Journal* 22/3 (Dec), 135-146.

# Index

---

## Index

---

### A

anthropology 6, 8, 28, 80, 93, 164, 247

Augsburg Confession 71, 77, 85, 150, 161, 187, 188, 206, 207, 210, 216

---

### B

baptism 14, 18, 34, 45, 77, 105, 112, 116, 120, 131, 133, 135, 136, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 146, 149, 160, 162, 181, 182, 198, 213, 222, 223, 226, 228, 230, 231, 233, 235, 241, 242

behaviour management 8, 9, 92, 205

blessings 135, 137, 138, 141, 142, 143, 144, 146, 149, 178, 179, 180, 213, 223, 227, 235, 237

blood 18, 121, 136, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 163, 214, 232

body 51, 54, 58, 59, 79, 110, 111, 112, 133, 136, 137, 139, 140, 143, 144, 145, 146, 147, 148, 149, 154, 185, 188, 198, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 214, 215, 228, 229, 232, 234, 235

body of Christ 139, 144, 148, 209, 214

bullying 5, 62, 64, 80, 170

---

### C

call 14, 66, 87, 90, 92, 99, 117, 162, 166, 173, 215, 216, 233

calling 66, 67, 99, 172, 187

Catechism 18, 48, 70, 77, 88, 104, 121, 131, 140, 141, 144, 146, 149, 163, 194, 195, 198, 207, 233, 236

celebrate 26, 55, 56, 114, 124, 130, 136, 147, 148, 151, 188, 227, 229, 231, 242

Christian Studies 26, 34, 40, 48, 110, 113, 134, 173, 197, 199, 200, 202, 215, 236, 241, 244, 246

church 3, 27, 28, 33, 38, 40, 41, 44, 46, 47, 48, 49, 66, 67, 69, 88, 103, 111, 112, 116, 117, 121, 123, 126, 130, 132, 133, 136, 137, 139, 141, 142, 143, 144, 148, 149, 153, 154, 155, 159, 171, 177, 185, 186, 187, 188, 189, 190, 191, 192, 193, 196, 198, 199, 200, 202, 203, 204, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 218, 219, 221, 223, 225, 228, 229, 231, 237, 241, 242, 243, 244, 246

commandments 78, 91, 104, 189

community 3, 5, 8, 10, 13, 26, 27, 28, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 68, 69, 71, 73, 80, 84, 90, 92, 93, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 103, 110, 113, 114, 118, 125, 126, 127, 133, 134, 143, 146, 149, 151, 152, 154, 155, 157, 163, 164, 167, 169, 170, 171, 172, 173, 174, 175, 176, 177, 179, 180, 181, 183, 188, 189, 190, 191, 193, 197, 198, 199, 200, 201, 202, 203, 204, 205, 206, 207, 208, 209, 211, 213, 214, 216, 218, 219, 222, 223, 226, 228, 229, 237, 238, 241, 242, 243, 244, 245, 248

community of faith 134, 151, 157, 199, 203, 237

confession and absolution 103, 105

confession of faith 44, 154, 208, 222

confirmation 136, 148

conscience 12, 61, 65, 74, 76, 104, 105, 180, 190, 192, 204, 222, 238, 239, 243

continuing creation 51, 52, 57

creation 7, 9, 11, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 21, 23, 24, 25, 27, 31, 32, 39, 40, 42, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 69, 73, 74, 75, 76, 79, 82, 85, 91, 99, 112, 117, 120, 121, 130, 138, 155, 157, 163, 169, 174, 179, 185, 190, 192, 194, 200, 205, 215, 226, 232, 236, 246, 247

culture 3, 12, 177, 187, 205, 218, 219, 238, 244

curriculum 3, 9, 20, 55, 56, 63, 110, 113, 130, 134, 156, 246

---

## D

- death 14, 27, 32, 33, 40, 54, 59, 71, 74, 76, 78, 79, 84, 85, 89, 90, 99, 102, 108, 110, 111, 114, 115, 116, 119, 120, 121, 122, 137, 138, 139, 140, 141, 147, 163, 167, 168, 170, 175, 186, 224, 227, 229, 234
- devil 74, 75, 78, 81, 121, 131, 138, 139, 141, 147, 163, 177, 207
- dialectic 49, 91
- dialogue 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 22, 26, 44, 50, 203, 204, 205, 209, 210, 219, 245, 246
- discipleship 172
- discipline 3, 83, 92, 93, 171, 183, 211, 228, 235, 247
- divine 13, 17, 35, 37, 39, 42, 49, 52, 78, 91, 108, 110, 114, 130, 131, 146, 149, 158, 221, 222, 223
- doing theology 6, 9, 10, 21, 45, 46, 205

---

## E

- epistemology 8, 9, 155
- eternal life 32, 85, 132, 138, 190
- ethical 180, 181
- ethics 3, 7, 90, 181, 182, 183, 189
- evil 47, 51, 54, 64, 65, 73, 75, 76, 77, 78, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 87, 91, 116, 117, 123, 140, 160, 161, 181, 185, 186, 187, 188, 192, 208, 246, 247
- evolution 56, 57
- excellence 22, 113, 126, 127, 201, 215, 229, 246

---

## F

- faith alone 86, 88, 90, 229
- fear of the Lord 24, 26, 27, 28, 245
- flesh 18, 108, 110, 111, 112, 135, 157, 159, 160, 163, 227
- forgiveness of sins 33, 72, 90, 95, 136, 138, 139, 144, 145, 146, 148, 161



freedom 9, 23, 74, 80, 87, 101, 102, 119, 132, 134, 147, 151, 156, 160,  
164, 165, 166, 167, 179, 180, 182, 197, 238, 246

fruit of the Spirit 97, 132, 151, 153, 160, 177

---

## G

gifts 9, 19, 22, 23, 28, 44, 55, 61, 62, 68, 69, 70, 88, 90, 121, 124,  
126, 127, 130, 132, 138, 140, 141, 148, 151, 153, 154, 155, 172,  
173, 178, 187, 191, 207, 212, 214, 217, 223, 225, 228, 233, 247

gifts of the Spirit 153, 154

God the Father 16, 17, 18, 29, 51, 88, 120

God the Son 18

good works 69, 71, 87, 89, 94, 97, 121, 150, 151, 158, 159, 160, 182,  
187, 208, 243

grace 13, 15, 20, 22, 29, 33, 34, 36, 45, 47, 49, 71, 72, 76, 85, 86, 87,  
88, 89, 90, 91, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 107, 114, 115, 117, 121,  
124, 132, 133, 134, 135, 138, 142, 149, 150, 151, 154, 158, 159,  
160, 161, 164, 165, 166, 172, 178, 181, 184, 188, 206, 207, 210,  
217, 223, 224, 228, 232, 233, 236, 238, 240, 243, 244, 245, 247,  
248

guilt 76, 80, 84, 92, 96, 110, 115, 116, 149

---

## H

heart 11, 24, 77, 78, 89, 99, 107, 114, 120, 152, 158, 159, 161, 181,  
195

holiness 60, 99, 150, 151, 157, 163, 210

holy communion 136, 137, 145, 148, 149, 162, 211, 222, 223, 230,  
231, 242

Holy Spirit 14, 15, 16, 18, 19, 21, 24, 28, 29, 31, 32, 33, 35, 36, 38,  
39, 42, 43, 45, 46, 47, 51, 53, 59, 60, 62, 63, 70, 73, 77, 79, 83, 84,  
87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 95, 96, 97, 99, 101, 103, 106, 107, 113, 116, 119,  
120, 122, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 138, 139, 142,  
150, 151, 152, 153, 155, 158, 159, 160, 161, 163, 164, 165, 166,  
168, 170, 173, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179, 180, 181, 182, 184, 201,  
206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 211, 213, 214, 216, 222, 223, 224, 226,

227, 231, 232, 233, 235, 240, 244, 245  
hope 24, 34, 70, 73, 74, 83, 113, 115, 117, 134, 176, 190, 205, 236,  
247  
human nature 77, 78, 79, 160, 163, 164

---

## I

image of God 17, 57, 60, 61, 63  
incarnation 110, 111, 120, 122, 138

---

## J

joy 49, 55, 69, 74, 79, 98, 100, 144, 146, 147, 151, 153, 162, 166, 179,  
223  
judgement 21, 26, 27, 41, 70, 78, 119, 167, 174, 208  
justice 17, 34, 61, 74, 81, 85, 90, 91, 92, 98, 99, 103, 105, 123, 125,  
126, 162, 164, 185, 186, 187, 188, 190, 191, 192, 205, 218, 236,  
248  
justification 45, 47, 49, 71, 72, 85, 86, 90, 91, 150, 190, 229, 243

---

## K

keys 33, 103, 104  
kingdom 10, 74, 87, 109, 114, 116, 122, 139, 142, 186, 187  
knowledge 8, 21, 24, 25, 26, 35, 43, 101, 158, 181, 245

---

## L

law and gospel 7, 37, 41, 45, 49, 90, 98, 100, 101, 102, 103, 164, 188,  
189, 191, 205, 219, 229, 230, 246, 247  
law of God 37, 96, 97, 159, 160, 180, 181, 189, 191  
left hand 186, 187, 188, 191, 192, 193, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199,  
204, 205, 237, 243, 246  
legalism 100, 101, 118, 151, 167

Lord 12, 15, 16, 24, 29, 37, 69, 77, 82, 88, 89, 99, 107, 109, 111, 113, 114, 117, 120, 121, 122, 130, 131, 142, 145, 146, 154, 157, 159, 165, 172, 177, 179, 189, 206, 210, 212, 221, 224, 227

Lord's Prayer 18, 233, 235, 236

Lord's Supper 34, 144, 223, 225, 226

Lutheran Confessions 36, 47, 48, 49, 91, 92, 95, 122

Lutheran schooling 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 204, 245

---

## M

mask 67

mercy 15, 17, 29, 52, 76, 77, 85, 86, 90, 95, 98, 105, 115, 116, 139, 141, 154, 159, 166, 172, 181, 182, 185, 186, 188, 221, 224, 228, 239, 244

ministry 18, 19, 44, 48, 65, 98, 103, 114, 120, 129, 131, 133, 146, 152, 153, 154, 155, 170, 171, 175, 192, 199, 211, 212, 213, 214, 215, 216, 217, 223, 228, 245

moralism 100, 101, 118, 151, 167, 211

morality 12, 26, 28, 90, 93, 164

mystery 15, 16, 25, 63, 87, 111, 116, 119, 136, 138, 145, 146, 148, 222, 223, 228, 232, 246

---

## N

name 15, 17, 18, 29, 33, 82, 109, 114, 131, 138, 142, 144, 175, 222, 223, 227, 230, 232, 234

new birth 132, 139

new creation 52, 53, 73, 74, 174, 247

---

## O

obedience 88, 89, 150, 155, 158, 159, 221

office 2, 44, 94, 103, 104, 115, 194, 215, 216, 217

orders of creation 65

ordination 104, 136, 212, 216

original sin 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 86, 94, 121, 132, 139, 140, 142, 160

---

## P

parents 3, 4, 8, 10, 44, 46, 62, 63, 69, 70, 72, 77, 80, 81, 113, 125,  
134, 194, 195, 196, 197, 198, 199, 202, 238, 242, 243, 246

pastoral care 4, 17, 34, 64, 69, 73, 80, 82, 84, 98, 105, 124, 152, 169,  
170, 171, 172, 177, 179, 180, 216, 233, 236, 241, 242, 247

peace 29, 67, 74, 85, 91, 92, 94, 99, 109, 123, 144, 151, 153, 161, 180,  
185, 186, 187, 188, 192, 231

pedagogy 5, 7, 8, 9, 22, 23, 26, 27, 62, 63, 125, 195

people of God 14, 22, 46, 109, 130, 144, 179, 191, 199, 206, 207, 234,  
241, 243

perfection 55, 74, 79, 181

performative 14, 32, 41, 54, 86

philosophy 5, 6, 7, 35, 46, 248

political use 91, 92, 98, 187, 190, 191

power of God 29, 32, 121, 219

prayer 12, 18, 41, 46, 70, 83, 105, 121, 152, 172, 178, 179, 180, 181,  
209, 215, 226, 228, 230, 233, 234, 235, 236, 237, 238

preaching 2, 14, 40, 95, 130, 131, 135, 142, 190, 207, 210, 212, 215,  
228, 230

promise 32, 39, 48, 83, 88, 90, 100, 131, 135, 136, 142, 145, 149, 161,  
218, 233, 234

public ministry 215

punishment 82, 85, 86, 92, 102, 109, 117, 122, 139, 165, 166, 187,  
190

---

## R

reason 6, 9, 13, 15, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 46, 48, 49, 51, 56, 57, 60,  
65, 78, 82, 85, 86, 91, 97, 115, 119, 121, 130, 155, 156, 187, 193,  
194, 212, 233, 245

relationships 34, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 73, 75, 76, 91, 100, 114, 164, 169, 174, 218  
repentance 42, 95, 96, 103, 132, 140, 148, 150, 161, 162, 164, 181, 216  
restorative 34, 98, 103, 105, 162, 205, 236, 247  
resurrection 14, 32, 33, 40, 43, 71, 74, 79, 85, 89, 99, 108, 111, 112, 114, 116, 117, 120, 122, 131, 167, 175, 186, 210, 224, 227, 229  
revelation 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21, 22, 23, 27, 28, 33, 34, 36, 40, 45, 46, 47, 49, 57, 78, 82, 90, 96, 101, 115, 119, 120, 121, 155, 189, 209, 229, 245, 246  
righteousness 29, 85, 87, 89, 92, 105, 122, 139, 140, 151, 157, 165  
right hand 49, 111, 115, 116, 123, 186, 188, 189, 191, 192, 193, 198, 199, 200, 204, 205, 215, 237, 243, 246

---

## S

sacraments 34, 87, 111, 133, 135, 136, 137, 138, 162, 178, 188, 190, 206, 207, 210, 212, 215, 216, 221, 223, 228, 231, 232, 233, 238, 241  
sacrifice 109, 115, 144, 159, 165, 168, 169, 227, 232  
saint and sinner 49, 97, 160, 161, 163, 164, 180, 186  
saints 116, 146, 151, 152, 159, 160, 164, 206, 207, 208, 209, 210, 222, 223, 226, 228, 235  
salvation 14, 29, 32, 33, 36, 37, 39, 40, 42, 71, 79, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 99, 102, 108, 109, 116, 117, 118, 138, 146, 150, 165, 167, 180, 191, 219  
sanctification 150, 180  
saviour 16, 19, 76, 95, 99, 111, 112, 114, 118, 119, 129, 131, 167, 189, 206  
science 8, 20, 21, 23, 35, 39, 53, 56, 57, 65, 182  
servant 28, 39, 115, 116, 120, 165, 197  
service 4, 28, 66, 67, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 104, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 127, 140, 154, 166, 167, 174, 175, 177, 178, 188, 200, 201, 204, 208, 212, 214, 221, 223, 224, 225, 229, 230, 232, 238, 242, 248  
service learning 61, 71, 72

- sin 7, 17, 19, 21, 23, 27, 53, 54, 55, 57, 60, 64, 65, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 89, 90, 91, 93, 94, 95, 98, 99, 100, 102, 103, 104, 105, 108, 109, 110, 115, 116, 120, 123, 132, 133, 139, 140, 141, 146, 147, 149, 150, 151, 159, 160, 161, 162, 163, 165, 175, 180, 181, 185, 187, 188, 191, 194, 204, 208, 211, 234, 246, 247
- sinner 41, 45, 79, 80, 86, 105, 116, 151, 160, 163, 164, 181, 184
- social justice 190
- Son of God 15, 16, 18, 107, 108, 109, 157
- spirituality 46, 51, 59, 121, 178, 235, 243, 246
- stewardship 7, 19, 61
- suffering 14, 28, 49, 53, 73, 76, 81, 82, 83, 84, 89, 110, 111, 114, 115, 117, 119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125, 126, 127, 163, 167, 169, 170, 177, 191, 229, 235, 248
- suspension 102

---

## T

- teachers 3, 4, 8, 27, 44, 46, 48, 50, 69, 70, 73, 79, 92, 112, 118, 123, 134, 137, 155, 171, 172, 180, 197, 201, 202, 217, 237, 239
- teaching 2, 10, 14, 17, 26, 36, 47, 54, 61, 66, 70, 71, 77, 79, 88, 90, 91, 96, 98, 99, 100, 111, 112, 124, 134, 135, 143, 171, 173, 175, 183, 186, 193, 197, 199, 200, 201, 210, 212, 226, 230, 231, 232, 237, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244, 248
- temptation 21, 56, 72, 81, 110, 115, 120, 192, 210
- theodicy 81
- theological use 91, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 100, 105, 160, 181
- theology of glory 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 210
- theology of the cross 28, 39, 45, 82, 112, 114, 119, 121, 122, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 138, 166, 173, 174, 177, 208, 209, 214, 229, 248
- through faith 29, 74, 98, 235
- tradition 6, 9, 26, 35, 44, 46, 52, 114, 136, 142, 203, 219, 245
- trinity 15, 16, 19, 31, 63, 109, 115, 129
- triune God 15, 16, 18, 19, 31, 46, 53, 116, 129, 130, 212, 222, 226, 232, 235, 245

trust 11, 12, 21, 25, 31, 65, 72, 88, 89, 138, 148, 150, 151, 173, 180,  
216, 217, 224, 235

truth 5, 7, 8, 15, 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 33, 38, 42, 44, 48, 56, 90,  
112, 131, 155, 168, 209, 227, 245

two hands of God 183, 185, 186, 189, 190, 193

---

## U

use of the law 91, 93, 96, 97, 103, 159, 165, 181, 189, 200

---

## V

vocation 3, 28, 46, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 79, 92, 122, 123,  
126, 144, 154, 169, 171, 174, 176, 177, 185, 186, 188, 191, 197,  
201, 213, 215, 232, 247

---

## W

will of God 16, 29, 51, 91, 96, 97, 152, 159, 184, 191, 192, 195, 209

wisdom 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 39, 42, 52, 108, 119, 147, 173, 219,  
235, 245

witnessing 151, 172, 175, 177, 184, 232, 245

wonder 12, 25, 26, 40, 55, 56, 130, 133, 177, 218, 228, 236, 246

work of Christ 99, 117, 122, 133, 210

worship 12, 24, 34, 40, 41, 44, 46, 48, 54, 69, 95, 102, 104, 105, 113,  
118, 124, 134, 136, 143, 147, 149, 179, 180, 182, 188, 202, 203,  
207, 210, 212, 213, 221, 222, 223, 224, 225, 226, 227, 228, 229,  
230, 231, 232, 233, 236, 237, 238, 239, 240, 241, 242, 243, 244,  
245, 248

worthy 148, 149, 161, 172, 221, 226





