

**THE DIALOGUE OF THEOLOGY AND EDUCATION:  
CLARIFYING THE ROLE OF LUTHERAN CONFSSIONAL THEOLOGY  
FOR AUSTRALIAN LUTHERAN SCHOOL EDUCATION**

Submitted by  
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**DOCTOR OF EDUCATION**

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## Statement of Sources:

This thesis contains no material published elsewhere or extracted in whole or in part from a thesis by which I have qualified for or been awarded another degree or diploma.

No other person's work has been used without due acknowledgment in the main text of the thesis.

This thesis has not been submitted for the award of any degree or diploma in any other tertiary institution.

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In preparing this thesis I wish to acknowledge the support and assistance of a large number of people without whom this study could not have been completed.

My appointment as a lecturer to Lutheran Teachers College in 1983 provided the opportunity and incentive for me to begin to explore the relationship of theology and education and its relevance for Australian Lutheran school education. I was encouraged to continue to work in this area by the faculty of Lutheran Teachers College, and the opportunity to discuss with these valued colleagues and to draw on their insights as well as those of students and teachers in the field, has allowed me to continue this exploration. The role of the former principal of Lutheran Teachers College, the Reverend Rolph Mayer, is particularly acknowledged. His support and encouragement extended to delaying his retirement by one year in order to give me time to work full-time on my study.

This collegial support has been continued by the members of the Luther Seminary community and again valued input and questions from colleagues in discussion and examination of issues related to Australian Lutheran schools are most gratefully acknowledged. In particular, I wish to thank my former lecturer in education and the founding principal of Lutheran Teachers College and former principal of Luther Seminary, the Reverend Doctor Elvin Janetzki, for reading an early draft of the thesis and commenting on its representation of the theology of the Lutheran confessions. I also wish to acknowledge the time and expertise contributed by my Secretary, Miss Juanita Lieschke, in the production and presentation of the thesis.

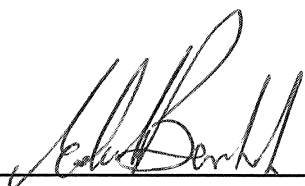
The Committee on Scholarships of the Lutheran Church of Australia, the Council of Luther Seminary and the Board for Lutheran Schools have provided financial support and ongoing encouragement to pursue this project. It is hoped that the final result goes some way towards meeting their expectations.

The Australian Catholic University through its Mount Saint Mary Campus, Strathfield, New South Wales, has provided the academic and research environment in which this study could be undertaken. The opportunity to work with a cohort of fellow educators as well as with the highly qualified and experienced faculty and staff of the Australian

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Above all, I owe a great debt of gratitude to my family for their love, understanding, encouragement and support during what has become a very long haul in the completion of this study. My wife, Anne, has played a very important role also as a discussion partner and reader of the drafts of the thesis. Without her support, and that of my family, I am sure that this thesis would not have seen completion.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_



Date: \_\_\_\_\_

3 JUNE 1998

## **Abstract:**

### **Aim:**

This study aims to clarify the role of Lutheran confessional theology in informing and shaping policy and practice for Australian Lutheran school education. In doing this, it also seeks to provide another step in the on-going process of developing for Australian Lutheran schools a comprehensive theoretical framework that reflects insights from both Lutheran confessional theology and educational theory and research.

### **Scope:**

The thesis begins with the presupposition that education is a value-laden process and that schools need shared beliefs and values to function effectively. In the current scenario of change in society in general and in education in particular, such a common vision is difficult to maintain. However, Australian Lutheran schools begin with theology as the starting point for their value base. This means that they can share a common vision drawn from God's revelation in Scripture. However, this theology needs to be expressed in such a way that it can be brought into dialogue with educational theory and research in order to develop insights relevant for determining the nature and purpose of Australian Lutheran schools.

Since Lutheran theology sees itself as 'confessional' in nature, and since the Lutheran Church defines itself in relation to its confessional writings, the *Book of Concord* (1580) is taken as the theological basis for this thesis. While the *Book of Concord* could be seen as containing documents from a different era, nevertheless it is still the accepted theological basis of Lutheranism and any attempt to provide a theoretical framework for Australian Lutheran schools would need to be consistent with its theology.

Before examining the theology of the *Book of Concord*, the study briefly traces the development of Lutheran schools in Australia and the aims and purposes for which they were established. The role of theology in motivating the establishment of those schools is also considered. The rapid expansion of Australian Lutheran schools during the past three decades is then investigated for the purpose of identifying current issues faced by these schools which need to be addressed through insights from Lutheran confessional theology.

The study then turns to the *Book of Concord* in order to summarise major emphases of Lutheran confessional theology. This is done to identify critical Lutheran theological perspectives which need to be brought into dialogue with the educational challenges faced by Australian Lutheran schools in the current context of rapid social, cultural and educational changes. The central teaching of the *Book of Concord*, the doctrine of justification by grace through faith on account of Christ, is examined first. This is followed by theology of the cross, law and gospel, the perspective of the 'two kingdoms' and the individual as saint and sinner. Throughout this process, the dialectic nature of Lutheran confessional theology is emphasised.

In bringing these major teachings of the *Book of Concord* into dialogue with the educational issues identified earlier in the thesis, a number of implications are developed for Australian Lutheran school education. In particular, the Australian Lutheran school is considered as a 'confessional community' and examined from the perspective of the 'two kingdoms'. Other educational issues are explored, including Lutheran anthropology of the

individual, the place of the Bible in Lutheran schools, the role of the law in Lutheran schools and the implications of 'theology of the cross' for life in the church and the world.

**Conclusions:**

In attempting to clarify the role of Lutheran confessional theology for Australian Lutheran school education this study deduces that theology and education exist in a process of 'dialectic dialogue' with each other, 'listening to each other' but also retaining certain levels of dialectic tension as each side responds to the other.

However, this study also emphasises the dialectic nature of Lutheran confessional theology which must be preserved in order to avoid the danger that only one side of the theological tension will be considered in the dialogue with education.

Thus this study concludes that if Lutheran confessional theology is to play its vital role in developing a comprehensive theoretical framework for Australian Lutheran school education, then a 'double dialectic' needs to be maintained – the dialectic tension within Lutheran confessional theology in dialectic dialogue with educational theory and practice. In this way balance can be maintained in developing insights into the nature and purpose of Australian Lutheran school education based on Lutheran confessional theology.