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### From the Publisher

Mark Wilhelm

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# From the Publisher



The Lutheran Reformation of Christianity in the sixteenth century also included the reform of education. Prior to the Reformation, education in Europe had been a private matter, reserved for those who could afford tutors or who could enter a medieval monastery. Lutheran reformers insisted

that education should be a function of the community and available to all because education was necessary to fulfill God's desire that human communities flourish and that society function wisely.

Although it is no longer widely known, this Lutheran educational ideal is one of the primary sources of contemporary higher education. The ideal first informed higher education's attention to character development, which remains with us today, particularly in undergraduate education. The Lutheran tradition of educational reform also shaped the university model by helping to establish the University of Berlin, the first modern research university. Concomitantly, the Lutheran movement played a significant role in creating the academy. Drawing on the commitment to embrace God's call to freedom, the value of all people, and care for creation, Lutheranism helped develop key practices of the academy: academic freedom, humble acknowledgment of one's limits, contributions to the common good, and the importance of questioning received knowledge, values, and practices.

The truth that a living Lutheran intellectual movement centrally helped develop Western and then global higher education has been masked in the United States. Immigrant Lutherans founded colleges in America to serve their communities without reference to broader Lutheran ideals. They focused instead on creating schools for educating their own leaders, a necessary task in America, with its disestablishment of religion. The decision of twentieth-century American Lutheran leaders not to establish a

Lutheran research university reflected their focus on residential colleges as vehicles for internal Lutheran leadership development.

This focus on internal leadership development and this forgetting of Lutheran educational ideals left an intellectual void that was filled by a widely accepted secular understanding of academic mission. The Lutheran tradition as a resource for higher education was relegated to campus ministry and, in most cases, to certain religion department courses. At some colleges, the Lutheran tradition continued to provide a pious gloss to the college's academic mission, but it had no substantive place in informing academic work.

The Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities (NECU) was organized in part to awaken Lutheran higher education from our collective amnesia about the ideals of Lutheran higher education and their implications for the mission of our institutions. The statement *Rooted and Open* summarizes the work done to articulate a vision for higher education shaped by Lutheran ideals. We have also made great strides toward drawing on Lutheran educational ideals for co-curricular learning, particularly by emphasizing education-for-vocation. However, we have only begun to reclaim the Lutheran intellectual tradition as an ongoing resource for the full missions of our institutions, including their academic missions.

This issue of *Intersections* includes writings from an initiative by NECU to change this situation. NECU convened a consultation in July 2019 to explore possible uses of the Lutheran intellectual tradition as a resource for the academic mission of our institutions. The case study was whether and how to use Lutheran social teaching as a resource for teaching business ethics. The consultation involved professors from business, leadership, and management departments at Augsburg University, Concordia College, and Augustana College.

Much detritus to discard and much work remains toward reclaiming a vibrant Lutheran identity at NECU institutions. All the articles in this issue on Lutheran social teaching and economic life reflect an important step along the way.

**Mark Wilhelm** is the Executive Director of the Network of ELCA Colleges and Universities.