

The Life of a Pastor or of a Teacher is to be a Life of Sanctification

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[Essay delivered at the Southeastern Wisconsin District Convention -- Kenosha, Wis., 6/5/58]

A month ago we celebrated the third of the three great festivals of the of church year - Pentecost, the Festival of the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost's work, which began in eternity, which was made known to man after Creation, and which was showered upon the human race in new and richer measure on Pentecost, is still going on. We're grateful that this is so. We're happy that the Holy Ghost is still busy today, gathering His little group of believers. This essay is to focus our attention on the Holy Ghost's work. in the hearts of pastors and teachers, that work known as sanctification.

It seems to me that in order to establish this thesis, we would have to see that:

1. this applies to him (the pastor or teacher) in his private life as individual Christian, and
2. this applies to him in his public life as a teacher of the Word.

I.

As children, we learned that the word sanctification can be used to describe several different things. Used in the widest sense, the word sanctification describes the entire work of the Holy Ghost, which He does in man's heart through the Word of God - Law and Gospel. We can see this very readily from the example of the Apostle Paul. What the Holy Ghost did to Paul is what He still does to people today. When Paul was on the road to Damascus, the Holy Ghost first used God's Law on him, to break him down. Similarly, the Holy Ghost through God's Law has broken us, has condemned our wisdom as foolishness our pretty-appearing good works as filthy rags, our attempts at appeasing God as insults to the Almighty. He has changed our rosy hopes of earning our eternal reward into a horrible fear of a deserved eternal punishment. The Holy Ghost used the Law to do this same preliminary work on Paul, just so that the Word of forgiveness, the Gospel, might do its saving work in his heart.

Again, that is the work of sanctification which the Holy Ghost does in us, too. Our lives have been spared; God does not condemn us, as well He might. Through Word and Sacrament the Holy Ghost has taught us that God delights in mercy. He has taught us that God wants us to trust in His mercy. The word sanctification used in this wider sense is simply this, that the Holy Ghost has taught us to sing:

"Thy Word first showed me my sin;
It taught me to believe;
Then, in believing, peace I found,
And now I live, I live!"

The Holy Ghost has sanctified us. He has saved us, through the preaching of Law and Gospel. He has convinced us, as He convinced Paul, that that's the only way anybody is ever going to be saved.

But Scripture frequently uses the word sanctification in another sense, in a narrower sense. It is also used to describe specifically the Holy Ghost's working in the Christian's heart, by which the Christian is separated more and more from the sinful world, and serves his Savior in holiness of life. This narrower sense is the sense in which the word sanctification will be used in this essay, as the truth is emphasized that the life and work of the pastor or teacher is to be a fruit of the Holy Ghost's working in his heart.

In order to see this, we will have to stop thinking of pastor and teacher, as professional theologians. Of all the people Jesus met during His ministry, it was the professional church people who caused Him the most grief. With every other group of sinners Jesus had success, but to the Pharisees Jesus could say nothing but

"Woe unto you! Publicans and harlots go into the kingdom of God before you!" So that we may not have to hear Christ speak those awful words to us, let us realize that God does not look upon us as professional church leaders, but as individual sinners. When we, therefore, in the first part of this essay, speak about how a pastor's or teacher's sanctification affects his private life, we think of him as an individual sinner, standing face to face with the holy God.

What has the grace of God done for the pastor or the teacher? We believe and teach that through the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ, our sins have been paid for. But is that all God has done for us as individuals? No; Scripture emphasizes that when Christ nailed our sins to the cross, He not only freed us from the debt of sin. We know that Christ gave His life to restore to sinful man the image of God, which was lost in the Fall. Now what is this image? When we teach this to children, we're inclined to oversimplify, and to say that the image of God was holiness; Adam and Eve were free from sin. But is that really all? Was the image of God only something negative, only the absence of sin? No; it was also something wonderfully positive, the image of God, in which Adam and Eve were created, was also this, that they loved God that they trusted Him completely, that they wanted nothing more than to serve him. It's quite obvious, then, that when Adam and Eve lost this image in the Fall, they lost more than simply holiness. They lost their love of God. That was now replaced with hatred of God. Instead of trusting Him completely, they now doubted Him. Instead of wanting to serve Him completely, they preferred to take their orders from the devil.

Shortly thereafter, God appeared on the scene and gave them the first promise of the Savior. Now what was this Savior's work to be? Is it enough to say that He was simply to remove man's sin and guilt? Christ died to restore to mankind everything that Adam and Eve had lost. Now certainly an important part of that was their holiness. But another important part of Christ's work was to win us back to serving Him, as holy Adam and Eve had done. Just as surely as Christ died to pay for our sin, so surely He died to break the power of sin in our lives.

In our attempts to make this clear to people, especially to children, we like to separate the blessings of salvation into two big categories. We say that first of all, because of the work of Christ, God can pronounce us innocent. That we call justification. And then we're tempted to say, "After God does that, then He brings about a change in our lives, the change known as sanctification." And that oversimplification is simply not correct: You can't cut up a Christian's life that way. The Holy Ghost does not work on the installment plan, but the holy Ghost's activity in us is one consistent effort to produce a "man of God that is perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." When we talk about the sanctification of pastor or teacher, then, let us remember that although our Catechism may separate the teaching of the forgiveness of sins from the teaching about our lives of holiness, actually the two are not separate. Our being declared innocent, free from sin, and our lives of holiness, our sanctification, must go together very closely.

It cannot be overemphasized that our sanctification is really a part of our faith, and cannot be separated from our faith. The faith which the Holy Ghost created in us really does two things for us. By faith we lay hold not only of Christ's payment for sin, but also of Christ's victory over sin.

It is this faith which qualifies us to be ministers of the Gospel. Although God did on occasion use an ass to speak for him, He doesn't make a practice of that. God wants only those to speak for Him who themselves have experienced what Christ has done for them. God wants only such as servants of his Word who can say with the psalmist, "I believed; therefore have I spoken." God doesn't want anyone to assume the responsibility of caring for blood-bought souls who has not himself tasted and seen that the Lord is good. God doesn't want preachers and teachers who are dead instruments. A trumpet is a beautiful instrument, but it can speak only when man's breath is passing through it. But when that stops, the trumpet is a dead thing. How different with God's mouthpieces, His preachers and His teachers! They themselves have been filled, their souls have been stirred, their entire being has been touched. New life is throbbing within them. We who by birth hate God now love Him. We who mistrusted Him now know that He is our only hope of being saved. The Gospel of free forgiveness, a message which was foolishness to us, is to us now the greatest wisdom. We who were serving ourselves now ask with Paul: "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?"

Among us it is taken for granted that the Christian's new life of holiness is the fruit of the Holy Ghost's work in us. Through God's Word and the two Sacraments, the Holy Ghost has broken the powers of sin in our lives, enabling us to serve the Savior Who bought us with His blood. We did not meet the Holy Ghost halfway, or even part way. When we speak of the sanctification of the preacher or the teacher, therefore, we dare not speak of any ability of our own, but only of a gift given us by the Holy Spirit through the Word, a gift which we accept by faith. The new man in us, this new life in Christ, was brought into existence when we were born again of water and the Word.

But now an apparent contradiction. On the one hand, we believe and teach that our sanctification, the new lives of holiness which we lead as saved children of God, is alone a gift of the Holy Ghost. On the other hand, it must be kept clear that the Christian may and must cooperate in his sanctification, for he is a person in whom the Holy Ghost has worked. The Holy Ghost's activity certainly ought to have had results in us. We're no longer spiritually dead. We are alive in Christ, and new life is stirring within us. We certainly cannot remain unresponsive to the Holy Ghost's working. We must respond. The Christian may and must cooperate in his sanctification. Listen to Paul speaking to the Roman Christians: "Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but yield yourselves unto God as those who are alive from the dead, and (yield) your members as instruments of righteousness unto God" (6,13). Can you imagine Paul making a statement like that about their justification? Paul could not have told anybody, "If you want to be saved, you will have to give yourself over to God." But he does make that statement about their lives of sanctification.

This statement of Paul was re-echoed centuries later by Lutheran teachers such as Quenstedt, who wrote:

The Holy Spirit works our renewal so that man also cooperates, through the powers of grace which he has...By the powers supernaturally received he renews himself every day. The Holy Ghost generates in man a certain faculty of doing good...without the cooperation of man; but man cooperates toward...the exercising and continuation of sanctification once introduced through the Holy Spirit...Thus through powers divinely bestowed upon him, man becomes a coworker with God in his continuing sanctification.

Our Lutheran Confessions also emphasize that the Christian cooperates in his life of sanctification. The Formula of Concord puts it this way (907,65.66):

As soon as the Holy Ghost...has begun in us His work of regeneration and renewal, it is certain that through the power of the Holy Ghost we can and should cooperate, although still in great weakness. But this (the fact that we cooperate) does not occur from our natural powers, but from the new powers and gifts which the Holy Ghost has begun in us in conversion, as St. Paul expressly and earnestly exhorts that 'as workers together with Him' (the Greek "synergountes" is the exact equivalent of the Latin "cooperate") 'we receive not the grace of God in vain,' 2 Co 6,1. But this is to be understood in no other way than that the converted man does good to such an extent and so long as God by His Holy Spirit rules, guides, and leads him, and that as soon as God would withdraw His gracious hand from him, he could not for a moment persevere in obedience to God. But if anyone would take the expression of St. Paul in this sense, that the converted man cooperates with the Holy Ghost in the manner as when two horses together pull a wagon, this could in no way be conceded without prejudice to the divine truth.

The fact that in our sanctification we are laborers together with God is certainly nothing for us to feel proud of. Our sanctification is still not our own doing. The new spiritual life pulsating within us is, as we heard, a gift of the Holy Ghost; it's the product of His working in us. Rather than being proud of this, we ought to be very humble as we recognize the responsibility that rests upon us as condemned sinners who have been reborn into children of God. "Receive not the grace of God in vain," Paul urges us. Our faith in Christ has to find its way into our lives; it cannot just lie in our heart, like foam on beer, to use Luther's homely comparison. The

private life of a pastor or teacher will show that there have been some important goings-on in his heart, that the Holy Ghost has been training us through the Gospel. This new life of holiness is to be looked for in every Christian, but God expects a stronger and more sturdy life of sanctification from a pastor or teacher, for "to whom much is given, of him shall much be required."

How will this life of sanctification show itself in the private life of a servant of God's Word? Generally speaking, in two ways: by putting certain things off, and by putting other things on. The pastor or teacher will, first of all, strive to put off those things that are out of harmony with that new life created in him by the Holy Ghost. Or, as Luther puts it in his Catechism, he will strive to drown the Old Adam whenever and wherever he appears. As long as the servant of Christ still has flesh and blood, his sinful heart is going to oppose his new life of sanctification. The Christian pastor or teacher will oppose his own sinful inclinations at every turn, knowing that not to do this would be to suffer a setback in his new life. Not to oppose the Old Adam would be to damage our faith and to endanger our hope of being saved. The Christian's sanctification, or more particularly, the sanctification of the pastor or the teacher, is truly a matter of life or death.

What are some of the evidences of the flesh in our preaching and teaching ministries, things which will have to be put off if our life of sanctification is not to be endangered? One of the foremost dangers to our private lives of sanctification is selfishness. What frequently makes this pretty difficult to spot, even for the pastor or the teacher in his own life, is the fact that selfishness often hides behind the cloak of respectability. A pastor might be tempted to defend his selfish concern for his own congregation or school to the neglect of the larger fellowship by saying, "Well, my congregation is doing the Lord's work too, isn't it? I've been called here, haven't I?" If I'm accustomed to think in terms of my congregation, my welfare, my pleasure, my standard of living, then I have no one but myself to blame for my people's apparent indifference to God's Word.

This selfishness takes on many different forms. There's the temptation for the pastor to pity himself because he has so little time for himself or his family, or because of the tiring nature of his work. Selfishness tempts the teacher in a Christian school to feel that his labors are unrecognized and unappreciated. Selfishness on the part of pastor or teacher often manifests itself by an undue stress on our Christian liberty. How necessary it is that we in our private lives hold high the ideals of the ministry! Paul, a veteran servant of the Word states that he was conscious of not wanting to give offense in anything "that the ministry be not blamed." Is our ministry benefited or, for that matter, our life of sanctification furthered, when we have used our Christian liberty to demonstrate to the men of our neighborhood that we can bend our elbows at the corner bar with the best of them? Ought the Christian pastor or teacher not only be willing to but actually want to put away anything and everything which would offend his fellow man? "Giving no offense in anything, that the ministry be not blamed."

How often isn't such offense given by our use of our tongues! It's easy enough to say with the psalmist: "Lord, open Thou my lips, and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise," but how often don't our mouth and our lips tell things considerably far removed from God's praise? It's one thing to sing with Johann Heermann, "My words grant power and grace lest I offend the weak," but how often haven't we undermined the Spirit's work of sanctification in us by using language that is hardly a credit to Christ - be that angry talk, uncalled for criticism, or, perhaps "filthiness, or foolish talking, or jesting which is not convenient." It's just possible that pastors and teachers are included in the group to whom Christ refers with the words, "I say unto you That every idle word that men shall speak they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment." The life of a pastor or teacher is to be a life of sanctification. In his private life, the pastor or teacher will show this by putting off those things which hinder his sanctification. The Apostle Paul tells us what he did about the temptations which his sinful nature sent his way. He said, "I keep under my body and bring it into subjection." "I keep my body under," literally, "I beat my body," "I give myself a black eye, so as not to allow my flesh to have the upper hand. When was the last time we gave ourselves a black eye for Christ, in putting off those things which were hindering our life of loyalty to Christ?"

Selfishness is just one of those things. Formalism is another - going through the motions of our ministry. When the good Lord put our bodies together, He did it wonderfully well. He made us so that each succeeding time we perform a particular act that act becomes easier and more automatic. We appreciate as a God-given

blessing that it's not as great an effort for us to walk today as it was the first time we took a step. No one of us would read his daily newspaper if reading were as difficult for us today as it once was for us as 6-year olds. This facet of God's creation is unquestionably a blessing, but it can definitely be a source of hindrance to our lives of sanctification. The acts of our ministry as teachers or preachers can become progressively easier, as we become better acquainted with the techniques and mechanics of conducting the liturgy, making sick calls, preparing school lessons, and attending to the details of school administration. Each time we perform these acts, they require less concentration. Consequently, they become easier. There's the temptation for us to go through the motions. Our ministry can easily degenerate into making the budget for another year, completing another year of Confirmation instruction, getting through the Synod course of study with our classes one more school year. The result is that our ministry becomes routine, less to get excited about, and the new life created by the Holy Ghost suffers. It's damaged.

Another work of the flesh which will do untold damage to the preacher's or teacher's sanctification is the temptation to laziness, the unwillingness to do more than is absolutely required of us. Of course, our flesh puts up this defense: "Is it wrong for me to want to have a good life, to have it nice, to enjoy myself?" How prone the pastor is to excuse himself from studying the Scriptures, say some Sunday evening, by saying, "I've done my Gospel-work for the day; I'm tired." How easy it is for the teacher to maintain that his big work in the interest of Christian education is restricted to the nine months of the school year, and that during the summer months the congregation is unreasonable in expecting him to make home calls and to do other work in the interest of Christian education.

It is God's will that we grow in sanctification. That means that with the years we must more and more resist the strivings of our sinful heart. Another one of those is pride. We rejoice to be somebody; we want to be recognized; we delight in having an office, even if it's nothing more than passing out election ballots at a Synod convention. We like to have the reputation among our brethren of being a top-notch school administrator, or a good congregational organizer. Every one of us will admit to having harbored thoughts such as, "Well Christ, I really brought forth a fruit of faith there, didn't I?" "God, I certainly think I did my duty today, don't you?" The queen of virtues for the Christian pastor or teacher is humility. Think of John the Baptist. Let us learn from him how to resist the proud strivings within ourselves. Listen to John the Baptist, of whom Christ said, "Among me born of women there is no greater." John admitted that his place was at the feet of Jesus, where he wasn't worthy even to untie Jesus' sandals. Not worthy! Such an attitude made possible what are probably the most beautiful words ever to come from the lips of a sinful mortal: "He (Christ) must increase, but I must decrease." How do you and I to compare? How hard are we trying to put down the proud, self-satisfied thoughts that crop up within us? As the years of our ministry pass by, are we decreasing more and more? Is our humility becoming greater?

God has decided that the life of a pastor or teacher is to be a life of sanctification. We cannot build our sanctification, just as little as we can make the sun shine brighter, but we can hinder it. That means that in our private lives we are to strive increasingly harder to put off those things which hinder our life of faith and our undivided loyalty to the Savior Who bought us with His blood.

Our ministry, whether that be the teaching or the preaching ministry, will be an accurate reflection of our personal faith. If our faith has been stimulated by the Means of Grace, that's going to show itself in our private lives. Now we will all admit that in many areas our lives of personal sanctification leave much to be desired. Now what's the remedy? Will a good raking over the coals of God's Law do it? One thing God's Word has taught us is that the Law cannot produce any spiritual life. Look at how little the Law accomplished among the Jews. Except for occasional pious spurts, the majority of the Israelites disregarded God's Law. Think of their idolatry in Canaan. And most of the minority went to the other extreme and esteemed God's Law so highly that they made it their whole religion and fell under Jesus' condemnation. All that God's Law can do by itself is to knock down, to condemn our Old Adam, the sinful nature we brought with us into the world. God knows that the sinful nature of ours can never be improved. And so, when we urge our Christians and ourselves to greater loyalty to Christ, we don't address our appeals to man's flesh, to the Old Adam. He can be polished up a bit, some of his rough spots can be covered up, he can to a certain extent be kept in check with God's Law, but our

sinful nature can and must never form the basis of our relation to God. The old man must be drowned, killed, put off, not dressed up and improved. For that reason God gave us new natures when we became Christians. “If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.” And it’s that new nature which must be cultivated if our private personal lives are to be lives of sanctification.

A question may arise here: “why must the new man, the Christina in us, be cultivated and encourage to greater sanctification? Doesn’t he know that by himself, since he was created by the Holy Ghost?” The fact remains that the Holy Ghost begins spiritual life, just as God begins physical life, from small beginnings. The baptized infant, although a Christian, just as much born again and just as much saved as you and I, has not reached the level of spiritual maturity that you and I should have reached by this time. It’s the Holy Ghost’s wish that the new life which he implants in us is to grow.

But the question which concerns us here is “How?” We’ve got to recognize that we’re going to be only as good Christians as the Holy Ghost has had a chance to make us. It was pointed out before that our life of sanctification is not a demand, not a challenge that we meet, but a gift of the Holy Ghost. Scripture reminds the Christian, “We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works.” As far as we know, the Holy Ghost strengthens our faith and builds our sanctification only through the Gospel message of Christ, as that comes to us in God’s Word and the two Sacraments. He may have other ways of doing it, but if He has, He has not told us about them. After all is said and done, there is still only one thing needful. There is only one means by which you and I will increase in sanctification, and it’s the same means by which you and I are saved, and that’s the Word which tells us of God’s wonderful plan. How necessary, then, that we make this Word our possession!

Here some honest soul-searching might be in order. Why is it that our personal sanctification is so often at low ebb? Is it because God’s Word no longer occupies the place it should in our lives? If we have to make a choice, which books do we prefer to read – books about the Bible, or the Bible itself? What we read will serve as a pretty accurate gauge of how our life of sanctification is progressing. If the sports page of the daily paper gets more of our reading time than God’s Word, we’re giving quite concrete evidence that we’re not particularly interested in growing in sanctification. How often do we as pastors and teacher read through the Scriptures each year? Or do we plead Christian liberty and say, “There’s no law which says I have to read through them even once?” Prof. Pieper once wrote that after a man has been in the ministry 10 or 15 years (and that would appear to include the teaching ministry) there should be nothing, really nothing, in Scripture which he does not know.

The more critical our times are, the more we need to grow in our appreciation of the Gospel. It simply will not do for pastors and teachers to regard the Bible as a technical reference manual, which we consult when we want to prove a point in a sermon, or when teaching a Catechism lesson, or when conducting an opening school devotion. Is it possible that we are convinced that we, as professional theologians, know most everything that we need to about God’s plan for saving the world - how He made that plan and how He carried it out? Let us not forget that our personal salvation stands and falls with that Word and the message it brings us. The Christian pastor or teacher needs more of God’s Word for his soul than the average Christian, because he’s tempted more than they. The servant of the Word must undergo temptations which are peculiar to his calling: the temptation to doubt the truth, to grow weary of his Gospel-work, to consider his labors a failure. Think of the particular temptations to become proud, to want to be a ruler over God’s people. Think of the temptation to be a man-pleaser, a hypocrite. These and other temptations (e.g., to be lazy, to be envious) make it necessary for the pastor to be concerned constantly about the welfare of his soul. Our personal salvation stands and falls with that Word and the message it brings us. If you and I are to be saved, God’s Word will have to be more to us than a professional tool, a handy reference book.

Just as our use of God’s Word affects our salvation, so it affects our lives of sanctification. They will be in direct proportion to the nourishment our faith receives from the Word of Scripture. God’s Word, as we know, not only instructs the head, it also moves the heart. It guides us as we lead our lives of sanctification. And in our lives as individual Christians, how badly we need that! Or have we reached that stage of Christian maturity when we no longer need anyone’s help in determining what God’s will is, His will for our salvation as well as His will for our sanctification? How often doesn’t it happen that we confuse God’s will with our will! God’s

Word will guide our Christian life along paths that please God. Only our study of God's Word will give us a reliable answer to the question which we, as individual Christians must constantly ask ourselves, "Is it my own ideas and program that I'm furthering; or am I truly serving my Savior with my ever day life with the way I spend my time, my money, with my actions at this District Convention?"

The life of a pastor or teacher is to be a life of sanctification. This is to be evident, first of all, in the private life of the individual. He ought, first of all, to put off the works of the flesh in his personal life. But, more important, he must also give evidence that his new man, the new life created in him by the Holy Ghost, is growing stronger. This new life a can be nurtured and strengthened only by the Word of truth, the message of the Cross. Thereby, and only thereby, will we - not professional theologians, but sinners saved by grace - "grow in grace, and in the knowledge of God and our Savior Jesus Christ."

II.

When the Holy Ghost brought us to faith, He did not make us Christian hermits, existing only for ourselves. No, He first of all made us members of that large, invisible group of believers known as the Holy Christian Church. But, still more, He made us His tools in proclaiming the Word. It is well for us to note the relation which exists between our personal faith and the work which God has given us to do. The psalmist puts it this way (116;10): "I believed, therefore have I spoken." Our work of preaching and teaching is to be a fruit of our sanctification. That's the way God has ordained it, and that's the only way He wants it. God doesn't want us to be parrots, simply spouting what we've heard others say (perhaps one of our college or Seminary professors), but we're to speak what we ourselves have seen and heard and experienced in our own hearts.

It follows, then, that the interest we have in the sanctification of the group entrusted to us will be pretty well determined by the personal interest we have in Christ Jesus and in His work of saving sinners. The more solid, the more joyful my personal faith in Christ is, the more fervent is going to be my love for and my interest in my fellow sinners, and, in particular, in the souls of the flock God has entrusted to my charge. Conversely, if my life of faith and my life of personal sanctification is not what it should be, that fact will show itself where the sanctification of the larger group is concerned. In his first Epistle, the Apostle John puts it this way: "If a man say I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" Let us, therefore, in the second part of this essay, observe the life of sanctification practiced by the pastor or teacher in his public work. Let us pay particularly close attention to the manner in which he shows his interest in the sanctification of the larger group entrusted to His care. What will the Christian pastor or teacher do to further the sanctification of this larger group?

First of all, in his dealings with them, he will fight against those things which will hinder their lives of sanctification, which would prevent them from "growing up in all things unto Him Who is the Head, even Jesus Christ." How easy it is for the servant of the Lord unconsciously to set goals which are foreign to the work of Christ! How easy it is to lose our interest in the larger group of believers in our selfish interest in our own flock! How interested are we in keeping our members informed of the progress and the work of our Synod? Is it possible that the only information our people get about their 225,000 fellow believers in the Synod is what they hear on Mission Festival, or read in the daily newspaper, or perhaps in occasional Sunday bulletin inserts? Do we constantly remind ourselves and our people that our synodical work is nothing but a big battle which we're waging jointly against the devil, that it's part of the Holy Ghost's plan to gather is little group of believers? Or does our apparent indifference toward the work of our Synod cater to our people's inborn selfishness, their "the local congregation comes first" attitude? Do we strive to fight against such selfishness wherever it appears, knowing that it will choke off our and our people's lives of sanctification?

If our congregation has a Christian school, why do we maintain it? As a matter of course? The die is cast, the thing is there anyway and besides we rather think it's a good idea to maintain it? Formalism, let us remember, is deadly to the Christian lives of our flock. What's the aim of the teacher - to have a model school, or to help build Christian personalities? If our congregation does not have a Christian school, is it possible that our sinful flesh is partly to blame? Is it partly because we don't want the headaches connected with maintaining

a Christian school, e.g, the difficulties connected with providing competent teaching personnel? Is it partly because we'd just as soon not take the salary cut which is inevitable if several teachers salaries are included in our church's program? Is the fact that we don't have a school traceable in part to the pastor's feeling that a Christian school is unnecessary? Is it perhaps that the pastor has never really urged it consistently, and the people won't take the lead by themselves? The pastor or teacher will want to remember that his public life, just as his private life is not his own, to lead as he sees fit, When God sent him, God told him, "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" And that means, among other things, that he must fight against those things which would hinder the sanctification of the larger group.

Among those things which the Christian pastor or teacher must strive to put off are methods which are unbecoming to the Gospel of the Crucified. One of these is the desire to rule, to be somebody in the church. When you teachers step into your classroom, is the important thing that you're the teacher, and that the pupils are just pupils, subject to you? Or is the important thing that you and they together are going to learn more about God's wonderful plan for saving the world? Do we pride ourselves about being in a position of authority? Are we lords and masters, even schoolmasters, or are we messengers who have just one job - to point to Christ? If I bring somebody a happy message, there's something to rejoice about, but I certainly don't rejoice in the fact that I brought the message to him. I rejoice that the message has made him happy. A desire to rule can only damage our personal sanctification as well as that of the larger group involved. Jesus once told His disciples' "The heathen are the ones who love to rule, to be in charge. But so shall it not be among you." Related to this desire to rule is the insistence on having our way, of feeling hurt if the pastor, the teacher, the Church Council, or the Board of Education doesn't see eye to eye with us.

The way of sanctification is slow and the short-cuts seem attractive. Only too often we yield to the temptation to force our way through, rather than assuming the slow, time-consuming task of convincing and persuading. The student who misbehaves can be overpowered much more quickly than he can be convinced. Perhaps a sarcastic comment from the teacher is just the thing which will put the unruly student in his place. Perhaps we ridicule the student who asks an honest but embarrassing question. What does that amount to? Simply using the tools of the flesh to do the work of the spirit. The fruits produced by means foreign to the Gospel of Christ are strictly temporary; they're of no lasting good. True; the Savior Himself used sarcasm, but let's not forget, He used it only on hardened sinners. He could see when a man was hardened, but that's hidden from our eyes. When we use methods foreign to the Gospel of Christ, all we can hope to accomplish is to deal our own life of sanctification a setback; and to hinder the Holy Ghost's work of sanctification in the larger group.

Instead of being too interested in the end-result let's be more concerned about the means we use to gain these ends. Love for the blood-bought soul of our fellow man, plus the knowledge that God wants him to grow in his sanctification will prompt us to be very careful how we treat him. Paul rebuked the Galatians sharply but in all love. We sometimes complain about conditions in our congregation or in our school. We think they're not what they should be. Well, how about us? Has our love for the sheep and the lambs of our flock grown cold? If so, then let us remember that it's difficult to build a fire with icicles. If even Paul had to confess, "I know that in me...dwelleth no good thing," then it's likely that you and I will have to say that too. Let us see to it that we're concerned about putting off the works of the flesh, which can only hinder the sanctification of those whom God has entrusted to our charge.

While we do that, however, let us never forget that the image of God which is gradually to be restored in us and in our flocks is not only a negative one. It consists not only in putting off the vices of the flesh but also in practicing the virtues of the spirit. Just as surely as the old Adam is daily to be drowned, so surely is the new man to come forth and arise. The pastor or teacher, as a servant of God's Word, will therefore in his public life do all that he can to further the sanctification of his God-entrusted flock. That means that, first and foremost, we are to preach the Word. We're to preach the way to salvation as we have learned to know it. In addition, we're to remember that it's God's will that our flocks be guided in their new lives of sanctification. The Holy Ghost did not bring them to faith in order to turn them loose. He has given us the charge to "feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." That means that we, pastors and teachers are to strive to equip

our sheep and lambs so that they're able to fulfill the purpose of their lives here on earth. The purpose of our preaching of God's Word must always be to help our flocks to be able better to recognize God's will for their lives, and to be more willing to live up to this purpose. God's instructions to John the Baptist state very clearly what God expects of His servants today: "Prepare ye the way of the Lord!" The aim of our preaching ministry dare never be simply to get our people eventually to support the church more liberally, or to clean up their lives a bit. The purpose of the Christian teacher dare never be simply to keep order in the classroom, and to impart a certain amount of knowledge about Bible stories, Catechism truths, geography, and arithmetic, in the process of which he uses up 9 months of the year. No; God says to us, "Your job is to prepare the way of the Lord!"

The Lord, the Lord Jesus, must be central in all our preaching and teaching. That truth sounds so obvious, but is it really so obvious among us? Is it possible that Christ Crucified is not always at the center of our preaching and teaching, but sometimes somewhere out at the fringes? How often, in our preaching, is the Gospel content not restricted to calling Christ "the Savior," to mentioning that "He saved us from sin" without spelling out that Christ took the sinner's place before an angry God letting God's anger strike Him so that it wouldn't strike us? How easily doesn't emphasis in our preaching shift from Christ as our Substitute to Christ as our Lord and Master? Do we (occasionally or even oftener) preach sermons that are so general in nature that they could have been preached by pastors of any one of a number of denominations? Are we keeping an edge on our confession? Does every sickbed visit we make remind the sick person of his forgiveness in Christ? Or do we console a person trembling before an operation with such dishwater as, "Don't worry; everything will be all right. Have faith in God: God will take care of you?" Is that specifically Lutheran preaching? Is that what we understand by preaching the Gospel of Christ, the One Who suffered punishment just so that we wouldn't have to suffer it? Is such spineless preaching helping to make Christ big in the eyes of our people, or are our pious phrases just helping them to strengthen them in a polyanna brand of religion which, amid all the trials of life, assures them: "God's in His heaven, all's right with the world?" If our people are to grow in sanctification, be assured that it will happen only when Christ Jesus is the heart of our message, our every message.

This is something which dare not be forgotten by the Christian teacher, either. The teaching of Christ Jesus has to be central in our schools. Isn't there danger of forgetting that? For example, isn't there the danger of teaching Bible stories (especially those of the Old Testament, such as Samson, Eli, and Daniel) without teaching Christ? Can such teaching be justified? The same danger threatens our teaching of the Catechism. Think of the 4th Petition of the Lord's Prayer: "Give us this day our daily bread." Do we actually think we've brought our pupils the God-intended meaning of this word of Christ when we enumerate at length what is meant by daily bread, and then urge ours pupils to be grateful to God as the Giver of all? Where is Christ? Or doesn't he belong in our teaching of the 4th Petition? Won't we rather want to point out that the only reason God keeps us alive with daily bread is so that we may live to learn of our Savior and of His plan, His plan for our salvation and His plan for our sanctification? When we ask our pupils to explain the work of Christ, are we satisfied with the stock answer, "He died on the cross?" Won't we want to inquire more deeply as to what significance that pat answer has for the pupil? If we believe that the Gospel of Christ is the only thing which will build our flock's sanctification, then let us show it by making the cross of Christ central. Just as surely as no preacher would ever want to leave the pulpit without having explained God's plan for saving the world, so it would appear elementary that no pastor or teacher would ever want to close an instruction class without having explained some new facet of God's wonderful plan for gathering a group of people with whom He's going to spend eternity in heaven.

Since He deigns to use us in furthering this plan, God has placed His Word into our hands. Why did He do this? Jesus explained this to His disciples just before He left them: "Teach them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." On the day of our ordination we promised to preach the whole counsel of God. Is that truly the case with our preaching and teaching ministry? When was the last time we preached a Reformation sermon on the Antichrist? Or when was the last time you mentioned this neglected teaching in your classroom? The Holy Ghost is using us to help Him perfect His group of believers. Are we doing them a favor by concealing certain teachings from them? Is our excuse: "Well, they wouldn't understand it, anyway?" Is that the fault of the pupils or of the teacher? Is our excuse: "Well, my people don't want to hear that?" Since

when is man's opinion the guide for our sanctification? Luther once made a statement which hits pretty hard those preachers and teachers who through fear or favor or whatever shut up. Luther said: "On Judgment Day they're going to have to hear people say 'There's the man who was our preacher, and he didn't tell us these things. And it won't be an excuse on that day to say, 'Lord, they didn't want to hear it.' For Christ will answer, 'Don't you know I commanded you to be a salt? Don't you know you were supposed to take your orders from Me and not from your congregation?'" If our flocks, be they sheep or lambs, are to grow in sanctification (and that is certainly God's will for their lives), then be assured that such growth will take place only at the hand of Christ-centered preaching and teaching of God's Word.

The title which was given to this essay by the committee which assigned it focuses attention on one particular area in which attention must be given to the sanctification of the flock, and that is the area of Christian education. The education of Christ's lambs gives us a golden opportunity to do some work for eternity also in this field of furthering their lives of sanctification and consecration to their Savior. Christ has not entrusted the lambs of His flock carelessly, thoughtlessly. After all, they cost Him His life. He values them very highly. He has said, "Of such is the kingdom of God." "Whosoever shall offend one of these little ones which believe in Me, it were better for him that a millstone here hanged about his neck, and that he be drowned in the depth of the sea." Christ entrusts His lambs to our care because He knows what results His Gospel has had in us.

Furthermore it is easy to see why the Lord of the Church has given us the Christian school. In these last days, Scripture tells us, Satan will deceive, if it were possible the very elect. Ought we not give the work of training Christ's young elect our best efforts? We're not dealing here with a matter where mistakes can be tolerated. We're dealing with believers, children who are bought with a price. In the field of Christian education, God is letting us share in the high and holy work of preparing saints to spend eternity in heaven with their Savior.

Now what is the most satisfactory way to do this high and holy work? There are Christians, there are Lutheran Christians in our congregations, who honestly believe that such instruction in the truths of the Gospel can be provided for quite adequately with part-time religious instruction, usually in the Sunday School and the Vacation Bible School. Our duty here, as responsible Christian individuals, is to ask ourselves, "Is that really so? Is part time religious instruction good enough for Christ's lambs?" The fact that Satan has convinced many Christians that this is so is just further proof of the truth of Christ's statement: "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." Would the children of this world consent to having their sons and daughters taught arithmetic and geography and spelling at the rate of one hour per week? The very idea is not only objectionable, but next to ridiculous. But to apply that kind of thinking to the teaching of the Gospel of Christ does not seem objectionable at all to many. It has been estimated that if a child learned arithmetic at the rate he learns religion in the Sunday School, it would take him about 21 years to get a working knowledge of arithmetic (enough to be able to figure out correct change at the grocery store). Verily, "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light!"

What is to be our attitude toward the education offered by the public schools of our land? Isn't it true that about all you can say for it is that we're glad it has taught people to read and write? A literate citizen will probably be more of an asset than an illiterate one. More important, our Gospel-work would be made considerably more difficult if people could not read the Scripture. But do we as Lutheran pastors, teachers, and laymen honestly want to be understood as saying that an educational system without Christ can be of any real lasting blessing to our nation? Must we not testify instead that our public school system knows neither the goal of true education nor the means to reach that goal?

Our criticism of the education offered by the schools of our land is, therefore, really a double one. It offers everything except the one thing needful; it gives a child everything but what he really needs. And for us to say that 5-day a week education without Christ is all right does not say much for our understanding of the Gospel nor for our love of Christ.

But our objection goes much deeper than simply this, that the public school as we know it tries to educate children without bringing them the Gospel of Christ, the only thing which can train the mind and heart of a child. We must disagree with public education not only because of that it does not offer, but also because of

what it does offer. When we examine the training offered by the schools of our land, we find that it is definitely in conflict with the type of training Christ wants His lambs to have. Let us never forget that God expects us to guide His lambs in the way of sanctification, He wants us to guide their training with His Word, so that they learn to dedicate their lives to Him more completely as they grow in years, Can we honestly say that the public school helps this purpose of God, or even that it does not hinder God's purpose for our children?

Whether we like it or not, religious work is being done in the public school. The public school is not only in the educating business, but it's also in the character-building business. Now we know from God's Word that there are not two ways to train a child. There is only one way. God's Word is the only way. The message of the holy God - His Law and His Gospel - must be applied to the child. The child must learn from God's Law what God expects of him; he must also learn from the Law how far short he has fallen, how he has disappointed the Lord Who bought him, and how richly he has deserved eternal punishment with his sinful life. By teaching him this, the Law of God has accomplished no real, positive good. The Law's work is only preparatory, never Final. The Law can do only a slave's work (Prof. Koehler calls it "Handlangerdienste," Prof. Pieper "Magddineste.") Only the Gospel of the Crucified can teach a child how to escape the condemnation of the Law, and how to lead a happy, successful life here on earth, and how to win a happy eternity after he leaves this earth. But compare this Christian educational philosophy with the brand of education offered by the schools of our land. Here it is presupposed that every pupil has it in himself to be the best kind of person. Here it is denied that man by birth is God's enemy. Here the demands of the Law are presented as capable of fulfillment. Here the child is given the idea that if he tries his level best to live up to the Golden Rule, he will get along wonderfully well. The child in the public school is exposed to the righteousness of the Law all week long. "Be a good citizen! Be tolerant, respectful and respectable, clean, decent, and hard-working, and you'll get along all right!"

We might summarize the two conflicting educational viewpoints thus: Christian education says: "Cursed is he that continueth not in all the words of this Law to do them;" the other educational system tells its pupils: "Do your best to live up to the Golden Rule, and you have got nothing to worry about." One system says, "Man shall not live by bread alone," and the other insists: "By bread alone!" One system knows that its pupils were by nature the children of wrath, whereas the other maintains that there's good in every child, and that it's the duty of the teacher, by skillful handling, to bring out that good. One system motivates a child by saying, "Christ died for all, that they who live should not henceforth not live unto themselves, but unto Him Who died for them and rose again," whereas the other system preaches, "My boy, be a good boy!" Our educational system holds up to its pupils the glory of God as the final end of all our actions, in accordance with the Scripture, "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God," and the other system teaches that our life has accomplished its purpose when we have learned to provide for ourselves and to help our neighbor.

What's wrong with this? Basically, it's a serious confusion of Law and Gospel. Let us not deceive ourselves into thinking that public school education is neutral in regard to Christ. Although it claims to be non-denominational (just as does the lodge) it nevertheless has a very definite idea about morality, an idea which is completely foreign to the Christian's life of holiness, which is the work of the Holy Ghost. We know that, when it comes to this business of being saved, every bit of credit given to natural man robs Christ of just that much. At its worst, the philosophy being peddled to hundreds of thousands of unsuspecting children amounts to this: "Whether you are a success or a failure rests squarely on your own shoulders." At its noblest it amounts to this: "The highest form of morality lies in serving your fellow man." Any way you look at it, that is standing the Law on its head, making it say something it does not say, and cutting the heart out of the Gospel.

Can we honestly say that this is what God wants for our children, or more accurately, His children? Are leading sanctified Christian lives by adopting a careless, indifferent attitude toward this brand of education? Can we honestly say that being satisfied with this type of week-day education is putting off the Old Adam? Isn't it rather swimming with the stream, something which any dead fish can do? Hasn't God got a right to expect more of us, whom He made alive in Christ?

Can we tolerate such a Law-centered educational system for the lambs of our flock? As reborn Christians, enlightened by the holy Ghost, we know that God's Law is not just a list of suggestions for improving our conduct and getting along with people. The 10 Commandments were added just because the inscribed Law, written in man's heart at Creation, was failing in its purpose of preparing man to receive the Gospel. Because of sin, man's conscience was blunted; it was no longer getting man into a condition where the Gospel of the Promised Savior could work on him. And so in the 10 Commandments God once more comes to man, opens up the innermost corners of man's heart, reveals his every sinful thought, and then forces man to look Him in the eye and thunders into his ears, "You sinner!" God's Word never once presents the Law as a comforting encouraging message. Rather it says, "The Word of God is quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The prophet Jeremiah compares the Law to a hammer smashing a rock in pieces. As a result we know that anyone (child or adult) who makes the Law - the Golden Rule, if you will - the principle of his life, is under the curse. Anybody who can look at God's Law with a sense of satisfaction is on his way to hell. Adam didn't look at it that way in Eden, nor did Paul en route to Damascus. Paul wrote to the Galatians, "through the Law I died." The Law damns. We know that because of what the Law has done to us. It accuses, convicts, and condemns. And knowing that, we should permit that message to be the guiding spirit of a child's education and not open our mouths in protest? Would we be seeking first the kingdom of God; by keeping silent about such serious shortcomings? Is it a part of our sanctification to permit lambs entrusted to our care to be educated in a way that we know to be false?

Have we as pastors and teachers honestly testified to our people against the dangers of the public school system? Or have we by our silence blithely permitted, or, worse yet, encouraged our people to think that public school education is perfectly all right for our children provided, of course, that the child also receives an hour of Sunday School training each week? Is that the way a Spirit-motivated sanctification guides us, or is our silence motivated only by an unwillingness to stick our neck out? Remember what Christ said about the millstone. Paul was righteously angry when he learned how the Jewish false teachers were treating his Christians in Galatia. He didn't want them treated like Law-slaves, and he protested vigorously. Are we equally as vehement in denouncing an educational system which treats our grade-school Christians as Christians ought not be treated? Sending our own children to our own Christian schools is a confession of our loyalty to the Savior for whom those schools exist. But it's also an open declaration: "The public school isn't good enough for my child." But what a blunted confession the opposite is! When a member of our congregation, or worse yet, a teacher or a pastor, fails to send his child to a Lutheran elementary or a Lutheran high school, where such is available, he is thereby announcing, "As far as I am concerned, the public school is perfectly all right for my child." What incalculable offense!

Surely the Savior has a right to expect much better things of us. Surely a Law-motivated education was not what He had in mind when He told us, "Train up a child in the way he should go," and again, "Bring up your children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

Our love for Christ certainly ought to move us all to speak out forth rightly for a system of weekday education which not only sees straight in the matter of God's Law, but which also brings a child into daily association with Jesus, the only Savior that child is ever going to have. God certainly looks for it as a part of any pastor's or teacher's sanctification that he promote the cause of Christian education in our midst actively, not only passively. The measure with which we seek to provide for Christ's lambs is the measure of our love for Christ.

Perhaps conditions make it difficult, if not impossible, for our congregation presently to operate its own Christian school. What then? Several courses are very obviously open to the pastor who loves his Savior. Doesn't loyalty to the Savior then demand that we take the next step and attempt to establish a working relation with a congregation that has a school, with our support thereby showing that we treasure the work of Christian education? If that pastor has children of his congregation who live in the neighborhoods of other Christian schools; ought he not, by pastoral visits into those homes, urge that the children be enrolled in schools where God's Word will have a chance at them during the week, too? In any case, the pastor will continue to speak up

for Christian education. He will point up the inadequacies and dangers involved in much of that is known as education today. In addition, we in this area have a Lutheran High School, given us by the Savior as an added opportunity to show our love for Him and His teenage lambs. When the problem of support seems irritatingly burdensome, let us remember that the flesh is striving constantly to regain the dominion snatched from it when we came to faith in Christ.

In this area of our sanctification, as in every other, it's a struggle for us to drown the Old Adam. "That rascal can swim," as Luther points out. When the new spiritual life throbbing in us wants to express itself in favor of Christ-centered education, our sinful flesh will present opposition. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts," and preachers' hearts are no exceptions to the rule. Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, such as thoughts of indifference. Who of us has not heard this opinion expressed? "Circumstances prevent the establishment of a Christian day school in my congregation; therefore I think it wise and expedient not to push the idea of Christian education. I'll let my congregation feel that it's doing its shape by maintaining a Sunday School." Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, thoughts of selfishness and self-interest, such as this: "My congregation has its hands full supporting its own local projects; let other congregations support the local Lutheran High School." Brethren, can such an attitude honestly be said to be a fruit of our love for Christ, or is that merely an indication of how we're hemming our faith in, not letting it bear the fruit our love for Christ should be bearing?

The life of pastor and teacher is to be a life of sanctification. The Christian teacher will do all in his power for the sanctification of the lambs of the flock. Obviously, he will do this first of all in the classroom. We talk in glowing terms of how the Christian school teaches every subject in the light of God's Word. Actually, how true is this claim? How often do you teachers in our schools bring Christ into your language classes, into our arithmetic lessons? Or is Christ limited to the first hour of each school day? Is it possible that the criticism that "sometimes the Lutheran school is just a public school plus religion classes" is warranted? Have we failed to realize and to show that we realize that the Gospel of Christ is to education what mortar is to the bricks of a building, that knowledge of individual facts (history, arithmetic, geography or whatever) is of no real value at all unless those facts contribute to a unified Christian philosophy of life? The reminder is always in place to Christian teachers not to let their teaching degenerate into mere imparting of facts, but to keep Christ in the center of their teaching.

But outside of the classroom, too, there is much that the teacher can do to further the cause of Christian education. We think, for example, of the school reports presented regularly to the congregational voters meetings. Are they such as will show the positive values to be aired from a Christian school or are they a cold recitation of some statistics, about as attractive and appealing as a dead fish? Does the teacher's enthusiasm for Christ-centered education show through his presentation of school information? Then, too, what an excellent chance he has to help further the sanctification of the lambs of the flock when he makes his summer visits into the homes of the congregation. Should it not be taken for granted that every child of school age in the congregation is visited by the teacher every year? Isn't that, among other things, an excellent chance to deal a body blow to the Old Adam which cries, "It's the pastor's job to get new pupils for the school. A teacher is entitled to a rest in the summer months and ought not be expected to make home visits?"

In all their efforts on behalf of Christian education, the pastor and teacher will remember that their labors will be in direct proportion to their love for Christ and for His Word. We complain about indifference of our people toward the work of our congregation, including the work of Christian education. But let's not criticize them until we've criticized ourselves for our own indifference, our unwillingness to exert ourselves, our desire to take it easy. Our congregations don't have much to worry about, as long as their leaders are at their posts, burning with love in their hearts for their Lord.

And so let us - pastors, teachers, and laymen - go into that Gospel-truth, let us study it anew, learn it better, make it our own, bow to it, push it ahead and ourselves back, give it the place of prominence in our preaching, teaching, all our congregational work. If the servant of the Lord feels that way about Christ and His precious message, then only, but then surely, will he match the description of the man of God found in the first Psalm:

"He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."