

"TEACH THEM DILIGENTLY":  
ESSAYS IN CONSIDERATION OF  
THE CHURCH'S RESPONSIBILITIES IN  
CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

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Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod  
Consideration of the Church's Responsibilities  
in Christian Education  
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## Foreword

The miracle of life is always awe-inspiring. When a father first looks down upon his newborn child, a feeling of thanks, pride, joy, and a host of other inexpressible emotions comes flooding over him. The emotions a parent feels in the first few days of his young child's life almost overwhelm him. It just about boggles a person's mind to realize that the little child, which he sees lying before him so young and so helpless, yet so alive and so full of promise, is the special gift with which God has enriched his life.

But the responsibilities for new life are equally awe-inspiring, especially for us who know that we are accountable to God for the spiritual well-being of the child which He has entrusted to our care. We view the sinfulness of the world in which we live, we consider the many temptations that beset a child as he grows up in this world, and we again become overwhelmed. This time, however, what overwhelms us is not thanks, pride, or joy, but the nagging question: "How can I possibly fulfill toward this child the awesome responsibility that God has placed upon me?"

During this Forty-second Biennial Convention of our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod we shall focus our attention upon just how we, both as witnessing Christians and as responsible parents, can best meet the obligations which God has laid upon us in regard to our children. Each day as we gather in this auditorium we shall be confronted with the words, "Teach Them Diligently." In his sermon at the opening service Professor Albrecht so clearly and concisely gave us an overview of what God's Word has to say about this matter. And before each session, as the chaplains address us in their devotions, we shall consider what the Word of God has to say about the various ways in which we are to meet this responsibility to "teach them diligently."

Perhaps the most important word in the theme of this convention — and a word we should all define and understand more fully — is the word "diligently." When have we, the members of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, been "diligent" in meeting our responsibility of teaching our children? Just what sort of responsibilities does a proper understanding of this word lay upon us? What kind of reevaluation will a deeper appreciation of this word ask of us? These are the questions which we want to answer in a very practical way during the convention. Under the general theme, "Teach Them Diligently," we shall let God's Word speak to us on four practical questions that pertain to our responsibility as Christians charged with the task of education:

- I. Is "Part-time" Education Enough for "Full-time" Christians?
- II. Are Secular Schools "Stumbling-blocks" to Sanctification?
- III. Do We Have "Continuing Education" in Our Congregations?
- IV. What Effect Does a Full Education Program Have upon the Evangelism Zeal of the Church?

In some ways the four essays which we shall be studying can be considered a literary walk with a child of God from birth to adulthood. In the first essay we shall focus upon the type of religious training that God expects us to provide for our children during the first fourteen years of their lives. The second essay will direct us to consider what course of action we should take in view of the anti-Christian environment which our children encounter during their high school and college years. The question of what sort of on-going educational program we offer our adult Christians will be our concern in the third essay. In the last essay we shall see what role a full educational program for all ages plays as we seek to carry out "the great commission" which Christ gave to the Church shortly before His ascension.

## Introduction: Full-time Christians

Most people today resent being called "peculiar," but we who view that word in its biblical perspective rejoice to know that God Himself has labeled us "peculiar." The Bible uses the word "peculiar" no fewer than seven times in the Old and New Testaments; and each time it employs the word, it does so with approbation. Several times in the Old Testament, for example, God reassures the children of Israel that He has chosen them to be His "peculiar treasure." (Ex. 19:5; Ps. 135:4) In the New Testament both Paul and Peter pick up that same word and inform all of us who trust in Christ that we today are God's "peculiar people." (Tit. 2:14; I Pet. 2:9)

Today we usually gloss the Authorized Version's "peculiar" to read "special," and that is a most fitting modern word to describe the blessed position which we have as the people of God. We recognize that God has elected us from eternity to be His children (Eph. 1:3-12); and we realize that the sacrifice of Christ has made our calling sure (Rom. 8:28-34). In the fullest sense of that word, then, we are by the grace of God a "peculiar" or "special" people.

The word "peculiar" does not just apply to us while we are worshipping in church or dealing in matters strictly spiritual however; it is a title we joyfully carry with us every moment of our lives. Paul expressed this thought in such a striking manner when he wrote to the congregation at Corinth: "Ye are not your own. For ye are bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's." (I Cor. 6:19, 20) In other words, we belong completely to God; He has total claim over our lives. God's claim on us is so all-encompassing that Paul could even tell the Corinthians: "Whether, therefore, ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God." (I Cor. 10:31)

If there is one area in particular in which we are to remember that we are full-time Christians who belong to God because of the redeeming work of Christ, it is in the area of religious training. People who have been blessed with the knowledge that God has written His name on them will quite naturally understand that they are to be zealous in passing on that saving knowledge to others. They will also turn to God's own Word to learn the basic principles or guidelines that the Lord sets down to direct them in religious education. In our first essay, therefore, we want to consider just what sort of religious education God expects of His full-time people. In particular we shall use God's Word to answer this question:

### I. Is "Part-time" Education Enough for "Full-time" Christians?

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Deuteronomy 6:4-9

## I. Is "Part-time" Education Enough for "Full-time" Christians?

The most natural place at which to begin in search of scriptural guidelines for Christian education is the text which gives the theme for this convention, Deuteronomy 6:4-9. In that passage, which is a portion of Moses' farewell address to the children of Israel, God's great law-giver states:

"Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart. And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shall talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates."

Of special interest to us in this passage is, of course, the theme of our convention, "teach them diligently." In the Hebrew text there are not two separate words for "teach" and for "diligently." Rather, they are both included in the one word *shanan*. The basic meaning of this Hebrew word is "to sharpen," and the word was originally applied to the sharpening of a sword for battle. In time, however, the word took on a metaphorical meaning and thus began to be applied to the "sharpening" of other instruments or devices. For instance, the Hebrew people would use this word in connection with the tongue, in which cases it meant "to have the capability of making cutting statements" or "to assail someone with sharp sayings."

From its basic meaning of "sharpen" in the Qal conjugation *shanan* progressed in the Piel to mean "to inculcate anything on anyone," especially in connection with matters of theological or academic learning. What we should remember is that our text uses the word in the Piel rather than the Qal, and the fundamental idea of the Piel is to busy oneself eagerly with the action indicated by the verb stem. This intensifying idea which the Piel brings to a word appears most commonly as a strengthening or repetition of the action of the verb stem.

If we reflect on the historical development of the meaning of *shanan* and the particular conjugation used with that word in our text, we can see just why the King James Version translates verse seven as it does. By adding the word "diligently" to the stem "teach" the Authorized Version properly brings out the intensive and repetitive idea of the Piel. Professor Girdlestone, a Hebrew scholar of the 19th-century, suggests that the basic idea in our text is "the plying of the divine statutes to and fro in their [the children's] hearts, and the setting forth God's truths in all its aspects." We could, then, paraphrase the first part of verse seven to read: "You should impress these words upon the minds and hearts of your children by regular and intensive instruction."

We can see that the translation we have just offered is the meaning intended here if we check God's own definition of *shanan*. A little further on in verse seven the Lord says through Moses: "... talk of them [His commands] when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." There is the Lord's own justification for the King James Version's "diligently." Parents are to teach God's Word to their children from morning to night, whether in a setting that is formally designed for such instruction or in a situation that rather casually affords the opportunity for that instruction.

It is interesting to note that God even suggested an audio-visual aid which the parents could use in their teaching, the *tephillim*. The parents were to make small wrist- and head-bands with little pockets that held summaries of the words of God's law. The Jews later allowed these items to deteriorate in their significance and to become the phylacteries which Christ condemns in Matthew 23:5 and the mezuzas which were meaningless ornaments on the right door-posts of their homes. But God's point has not been abrogated: The words of the Lord were to be so much a part of the lives of children after careful instruction that these words were to be carried before their eyes to direct their ways and upon their hands to control their actions.

The Lord introduced this set of instructions for child-training with the words: "Hear, O Israel. The Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thymight." We cannot read those words without noting that both a knowledge of the true God and a willingness to serve that God are essential in the Lord's eyes. But God does not simply state the aims of Christian education and then let it go at that. In the passage that we have studied in more detail He gives us the methodology which He sees will best achieve those aims.

### Ephesians 6:4

Over 1,500 years after Moses revealed God's will in Deuteronomy St. Paul reiterated and reinforced all that the Old Testament law-giver had stated. The New Testament apostle to the Gentiles writes to the fathers at Ephesus:

"Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

The first thing that strikes us in this passage is that once again the "on-going" concept is stressed in religious training. Paul brings out this idea by his choice of the word which our text translates as "bring up." There are only two passages in which this word appears in the New Testament, both in the letter of Paul to the Ephesians. In verse 29 of the fifth chapter the apostle employs the word as he illustrates the relationship that is to exist between a husband and wife in marriage. In order to show the loving concern which a husband is to have toward his wife in all areas, Paul refers to the "one-flesh" concept of marriage and says that a wife is to be as dear to her husband as is the husband's own body. For she is in fact his body by virtue of the union between them that the marriage bond establishes. It is at that point that Paul, to show how a man should care and provide for his wife, says: "No man ever yet hateth his own flesh, but nourisheth (*ektrepho*) and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church." (Eph. 5:29)

Paul's use of the word in chapter five reveals that the basic meaning of *ektrepho* is "to provide for the needs of something or someone." Such providing is to be a continuous action, as the context of chapter five brings out. A man does not just supply the needs of his body on occasion; but he does this constantly, that is, daily, and several times a day.

It is this same concept of continuous provision that carries over into chapter six as Paul employs the word *ektrepho* a second time to discuss parents' responsibilities toward their children in spiritual matters. The fact that the Holy Ghost deliberately moved Paul to use *ektrepho* in our text indicates that nourishment in spiritual matters is to be as regular and necessary a part of daily life as providing for the physical needs of the body. God's directives had not changed in the least between the time of Moses and the days of Paul.

The apostle shows how thorough-going Christian "up-bringing" is to be when he enjoins parents to raise their children in "the nurture (*paideia*) and admonition (*nouthesia*) of the Lord." The basic meaning of the Greek word *paideia* is "discipline" or "regulations"; and *nouthesia*, which our text renders as "admonition," could just as well be translated "words of encouragement and correction." Thus, Paul is saying that parents are to let their children know that God's will for their lives is very explicit. Parents are also to assume the responsibility of correcting their children when they wander from God's ways and of encouraging them when they walk according to God's will. Once more, then, we learn that religious education is to be an integral part of daily life. All of the child's actions are to flow from the knowledge that he is not his own, but that he has been purchased by God with the blood of His own Son.

We dare not think that Paul's instructions about child-rearing are finished just because we know what "nurture" and "admonition" mean. Previously, when Paul told children to obey their parents (Eph. 6:1), he said that they were to do so "in the Lord." Those three words cast their light over all of this first section of chapter six. Parents, therefore, are to carry out the controlling and correcting or encouraging of their children "in the Lord." Christ and His message of salvation are central in child-rearing. We are not only concerned with raising our children to be good citizens of this world; our concern is that our children live as citizens of Christ's kingdom as well. This can be achieved only as we direct our young people "in the Lord."

When religious education truly centers around the living Savior, then parents avoid the pit-fall against which Paul warns in the first part of our verse. He states there that parents should not "provoke their children to wrath," that is, that they are not to do or say anything that will embitter their children. We know, of course, that the Old Adam of our children will resist and even rebel against all constraint or correction. And yet, by using Christ as both our motivation and model when disciplining our children, we allow the Holy Spirit to strengthen the New Man within them. Our power and influence over our children, then, is not due to the terror which we strike in their hearts through dictatorship, but derives from the love of Christ which we set before them daily and in depth.

#### Colossians 1:9--11

If we are tempted to think that Paul's concept of Christian education was any less regular or intensive than that of Moses, we need only glance at the words which the apostle wrote to the people at Colosse. One passage in particular is of interest to us, Colossians 1:9--11:

"... we also, since the day we heard it [their love in the Spirit], do not cease to pray for you and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and understanding, that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God, strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with joyfulness."

We do not have the time to examine every treasure in this storehouse of truth, but it might be worthwhile to begin by reminding ourselves that Paul is here addressing an age not unlike ours — an age that gloried in its learning. Some of the Colossians had come to believe that Christian wisdom was fine as far as it went and if a person felt he initially needed that sort of teaching. They had been led by some in their city to believe that man's reason could reveal a higher and clearer insight into the mysteries of this world than the simple truths of the Bible could.

Three words which Paul uses in his defense of the wisdom of Christ against the claims of secular learning are of special interest to us. The apostle prays, first of all, that the Colossians might be filled with "the knowledge of His [God's] will . . ." The Greek word for "knowledge," *gnosis*, can simply mean "knowledge of facts," but the New Testament writers always use it to refer to Christian facts that are apprehended with the heart as well as by the head. The particular word which the Holy Spirit moved Paul to use here stands in striking contrast to the dead, barren head knowledge of intellectualism. (Cp. II Pet. 1:3) In order that the Colossians might have

such heart-knowledge, Paul continues by asking that they be granted "all wisdom (*sophia*) and spiritual understanding (*sunesis*)."  
To the Greeks *sophia* represented "wisdom of the highest sort," and the Christian writers picked up this word to indicate a wisdom which only the believer has and which unfolds to him all the mysteries of God's will. *Sunesis*, on the other hand, is "understanding" that endues the Christian with a practical insight into how God's Word applies to daily-life situations.

It is not necessary for us to insist that such sharp distinctions be made among these three words every time we use them in their scriptural context. More important for our purposes here is to recognize what these three words tell us about our responsibility toward our children when it comes to religious education. Paul's use of these words shows us that there can be nothing superficial or perfunctory about the spiritual training which we give our youth. Young people are to be firmly founded in a thorough knowledge of God's truths; they are to engage in a steady contemplation of the mysteries of those truths; and they are to develop a ready application of those truths to daily life. In fine, they are to receive in-depth and on-going religious training.

### Scriptural Guidelines

There are any number of other passages which pertain to our present topic and which we could consider for our edification. Because of the limitations of time, however, the three we have studied will have to suffice as our basis for scriptural guidelines.

But just these three selections from God's Word offer us clear guidelines in the area of religious education. These passages all inform us that spiritual training is to be regular, intensive, and all-inclusive. Teaching our children diligently begins, quite obviously, with a study of the will of God as He has revealed it in Christ, but it does not stop with just the "basics." It becomes in-depth training as we unfold to our children the fulness of both Law and Gospel and as we lead them to consider "the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God." (Rom. 11:33) In addition, we cannot overlook the need to show our children God's ways daily and to apply His will to their every situation, for we are directed to train them in heart as well as in head. In short, we are to care for the souls entrusted to our charge as conscientiously and continuously as we provide for their bodies.

God did not command the form which spiritual training is to take, but He did spell out explicitly the principles by which the establishment of any form is to be guided. Only religious education that is both thorough-going in its practice and truly heart-rending in its purpose fulfills the guidelines which God sets down in the above passages. It is incumbent upon us, as Christian parents, therefore, to consider whether or not we have been following these guidelines as we have raised our children in the knowledge of God. Most of us can quote these passages, but has our practice measured up to our profession?

In order to give ourselves a more concrete yardstick by which to measure our past performance in Christian education, we shall look briefly at the ways in which those who first heard God's injunctions responded to them.

### Old Testament Religious Education

We shall begin our survey of religious education by taking a quick glance at spiritual training among the Jews, especially in the Old Testament.

When considering Old Testament education it is important to remember that the Israelites did not use the phrase, "Jewish education," in the same way many people today employ the term, "Christian education." One writer on the subject has noted that "to the pious Jew the knowledge of God was everything; and to prepare for or impart that knowledge was the sum total, the sole object of education." The Jewish people, then, did not think of spiritual education as something separate and apart from education in secular matters. There was not education in the truths of Judaism, on the one hand, and then education in agriculture, commerce, law, or whatever, on the other. Rather, all learning, be it secular or spiritual, was part of a great whole — a unified life-concept that began with belief in the sovereignty of God and that applied that belief to all areas of life.

What a contrast ancient Jewish education affords to the educational programs carried out by the classical civilizations of the same period! Among the Greeks and Romans — as among the Egyptians and Babylonians before them — religion was vigorously practiced, to be sure, but more as an "after-thought" than as the guiding principle of intellectual training. It is not overstating the case to assert that in the classical civilizations we revere so highly today spiritual training was nothing more than an addendum to the book of life rather than the underlying philosophy that gave meaning and direction to that book.

The particular perspective from which ancient Israel looked at education is a point well-taken with us today. We have the blessings of the New Testament and the revelation of Jesus Christ to give us "a more sure Word of prophecy" (II Peter 1:19) than that which the Jewish community presently acknowledges. Because of this clearer revelation, we realize more fully than the Jews that religious education is to pervade all of life; we understand even more clearly that Christian education is not and never can be viewed as either part-time in duration or limited in scope. The principles of Deuteronomy 6, which the Jews followed in setting up their religious education programs, are still the guidelines by which all subsequent spiritual training is to be guided. And the way in which the children of Israel responded to those principles is an excellent reminder to us that our programs for religious training are to be as full as our calling to faith.

Jewish education really began when the child was about three years old. At that early age the child was expected to memorize select passages and to become acquainted with the various religious rites. Most effective in teaching the young children the important



truths of Israel's history was the repeated use of simple stories, prayers, and songs which the children soon learned to relate, recite, and sing. (Ps. 78:1-4; Ps. 44:1,2) Another mnemonic aid in this early instruction was the great number of festivals which were celebrated as assiduously in the home as in the synagogue. These celebrations, with their elaborate ceremonies and detailed explanations, afforded the fathers many opportunities to speak to their children about God's covenant grace. (Ex. 12:21-27; Deut. 16:10-12; I Sam. 20:5, 6)

When the Jewish child reached the age of five he began to read the Old Testament scriptures for himself. His reading usually began with the book of Leviticus, for it was felt that Moses' third book showed clearly both the covenant which God had established with His chosen nation and the ways in which the nation was to respond to that covenant. It may seem surprising to learn that Jewish parents were expected to teach their children how to read — something we today think is best left to the schools. Jewish parents felt, however, that they were not properly caring for their children unless they gave them the training necessary to read and know God's will for themselves. Reading, to the Israelites, was not the door to learning secular subjects, but the way by which the truths of Scripture could be imparted. Thus the parents accepted it as a matter of course that they should teach their children to read. In addition, we, who have been raised to think of formal schools as the centers of learning, need to remember that, as one rabbi has written, "the home as an educational institution would become the hallmark of the Jewish people."

Throughout most of the Old Testament the education of children was the concern of the home. After the Roman conquest, however, the Jewish leaders felt that the changes in secular society rendered the former educational system insufficient and unsatisfactory. Therefore in the First Century B.C. Simeon ben Shetah established a number of elementary schools for religious instructions, and by 64 A.D. the high priest, Joshua ben Gamala, made it mandatory for every community to have a primary school. Jewish children would enter these schools, which were connected with the synagogues, at the age of six or seven. The school day ran from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., and the size of the classes was limited to 25 pupils. The students proceeded from the book of Leviticus, which they had read at home, to a study of the Pentateuch, then to a reading of the prophets, and finally to a perusal of the Hagiographa. It is reported that at the time of the fall of Jerusalem there were 480 of these schools in the metropolitan area, and even though this is probably an exaggeration, it does show the great emphasis that was placed upon religious education.

Boys who seemed especially apt and promising in elementary school were usually directed to continue their studies at one of the academies when they were 16 or 17. Most of the young men, however, began to learn a trade at that time. Religion was still an important part of the life of a young man learning a trade, though, for he came under the tutelage of his father, an uncle, or some other relative or close friend of the family. In each case, the person who served as the boy's supervisor was also a member of the Jewish family of faith. Thus, along with the practical skills that the young man acquired, he was taught to use those skills in the theocracy of Israel. The Mosaic Law became as integral a part of his training as a knowledge of tools, materials, and construction and rabbinic literature repeatedly stressed the importance of showing a young man that it was "a profanation to use one's skill or learning for secular purposes, whether of gain or honor."

What is most impressive about Jewish education during much of the Old Testament — apart from the centrality of the home — is that the children of Israel did not conceive of education as being divorced from the expressed will of God. It made no difference if a person was training to take a position in the temple or the fields, the court or the market-place, the council or the craftman's shop; his education commenced, continued, and concluded with the revelation of God.

#### Religious Education in the Early Church

By the time St. Paul wrote to the Ephesians and Colossians this outward unity between the spiritual and secular realms had been obliterated. It is true, of course, that there was a type of religion being taught in the academies of Greece and Rome, but it was a religion that was founded on the philosophies of man instead of the revelation of God and that led students to worship at Mt. Olympus rather than on Mt. Calvary. In other words, the educational climate was not unlike that which we find in our country today: Athens and Jerusalem had separated, and there was considerable debate about whether or not the two could meet. Because Paul's day did parallel ours in this respect, it would be instructive for us to spend a few minutes considering the way in which the early church met that problem.

We would quite naturally expect that a church which was initially comprised of those who had formerly followed the Jewish faith would continue the sort of educational system that they had previously known. After all, there was no essential difference in the content of faith; and the strictures laid upon the parents concerning the training of their children had not changed either. Childhood training in the early church can, therefore, be considered a continuation of the sort of instruction that the Jews had always been providing for their children. What changed initially was the fulness and clarity of content, not the intensity or repetition of the instruction.

We can arrive at a better understanding of the type of religious education that the early church gave its youth if we consider the formula that the church used in the baptism of children. This might, at first, seem to be leading us away from the subject of spiritual education; but this approach makes sense when we realize that the early church repeatedly emphasized the need for parents to educate their children in the meaning of the baptismal covenant as early as possible.

The baptismal formula which the early church employed is similar to that which we hear in our churches today. Their liturgical ceremony included, for instance, both a renunciation of the devil and his works and ways and a confession of sins and the need for

a Savior. In addition, there was a formula of faith not unlike the Apostles' Creed which confessed the creative acts of the Father, the soteriological works of the Son, and certain aspects of eschatology. One portion of the early church's baptismal formula for children which we no longer include was a profession of practical precepts, which included both a partial enumeration of sins to be avoided and virtues to be practiced.

It is not difficult to envision this baptismal formula, with the addition of the Lord's Prayer and the Sacrament of the Altar, being expanded to form the basis of the *Small Catechism* which our children today study in preparation for confirmation. And there is adequate testimony in the early church fathers to lead us to believe that the Lord's Prayer and Holy Communion, along with the doctrines expressed in the baptismal formula, were part of the subject-matter of religious training. In the early church, then, there was the same concern for thorough indoctrination which the Old Testament church emphasized and which we still hold up as our ideal.

Another point of contact between the Jewish and early Christian communities was the importance of the home in the training of children. It is safe to say that if the parents in the early church had not been faithful and zealous in providing for the spiritual growth of their children, the church initially would not have had the educational man power or machinery to fill the void. In fact, one of the great concerns of church leaders in later centuries — e.g., Chrysostom in the Fourth Century — was that parents were no longer filling their God-given responsibilities. One of the causes of the decline of the church in the Middle Ages was the lack of spiritual understanding among the children.

We can see just how important a role the home played in the religious education of children in the early Church if we envision the background of Paul's words in his second letter to Timothy. (II Tim. 3:14, 15) In the Christian home reading was taught, the Ten Commandments and the more important prayers were committed to memory, and psalms and other spiritual hymns were regularly sung. Above all, though, the practice of the early Christian homes that most deserves our attention was the regular reading of the Holy Scriptures at either the mid-day or evening meal when the entire family was gathered together. The early church was so impressed with the importance of this practice that it supervised the circulation of copies of Scripture to Christian homes. It even sent Christian brethren to read the Bible to those families which were too poor to afford their own copy.

From the time of the Old Testament to the days of the New secular society had changed to such an extent that it was not possible for the early church to maintain as closely as had the Jews the unity between secular and spiritual learning. The academy was no longer under the aegis of the cathedral; in fact, it was diametrically opposed to the church. What this separation between church and state did was impress upon the early church leaders a most important lesson from Old Testament history: Parents were to be made aware of their responsibility to provide for the spiritual care and growth of their children. In the ideal Christian community the home would take the leadership in religious education.

John Chrysostom, the patriarch of Constantinople to whom we referred above, summarized the position of the church in a little book which he wrote as a guide for parents in childhood education. In that booklet he exhorts fathers to hold regular family worship services in which Scripture is read and he appeals to the heads of the households to tell children Bible stories in language the young people can comprehend. He also views the public worship services as an extension of the fathers' responsibilities, for he reminds the fathers that it is their obligation to bring the family to the services and to discuss the content of the sermon with the family after the service.

#### Lutheran Day Schools in America

Our rather extended excursion into the history of religious education among the Jews and in the early church has not been unprofitable, I trust, for it gives us a clear picture of how the people of God initially responded to the Lord's injunctions which we studied at the outset of this essay. What is more, such a journey back in time explains in part why the Lutheran Church has historically concerned itself with a full program of spiritual training for its youth.

Sometimes, when we think about the recent rise in the number of Christian day schools in our Synod, we get the impression that the day school is a relatively modern phenomenon. The Lutheran elementary school, however, has been a part of the fabric of American history since shortly after the settlement of Jamestown. The first known Lutheran elementary school in this country was Swedish and was probably established in 1640. The Swedish colonists who settled along the Delaware River began day schools shortly after their arrival and they provided religious and linguistic instruction for their children. The Salzburger of Austria, who settled in Georgia in 1734, shared the zeal of the Swedes for full-time Christian education and immediately built a day school for their children. In time they had a rather extensive chain of Christian day schools along the southeastern Atlantic seaboard. Henry Melchior Muehlenberg, who has been termed "the patriarch of the Lutheran Church in America," was instrumental in organizing day schools shortly after he arrived in Pennsylvania in 1742. Some of the day schools in that general area of our country can trace their history back almost to his day.

#### Day Schools and the Early Wisconsin Synod

We find this same keen interest in Christian day schools when we look into the early history of our Synod. For example, the history of St. John's in Milwaukee mentions as early as 1848 a little schoolhouse on the first property which the congregation owned. In 1862, when the congregation moved to its new site, the members of St. John's erected a two-story school building

on the property. Grace Church of Milwaukee was also a leader in the area of Christian education, for it established a day school in its first church building as early as 1851. In 1859 it referred with joy and pride to the fact that it enlisted two teachers for the religious instruction of its young people.

The two examples we have considered above were not isolated instances of interest in Christian education among our early congregations. When the First Convention of our Synod met at Granville in May of 1850, it was resolved "that every pastor in the Synod should devote himself especially to the youth and conduct day schools, Bible hours, mission hours . . ." Even though there were only three pastors in attendance at that convention, they recognized the importance of a firm foundation for the faith of the rising generation. Eight years later, when the Ninth Convention assembled, a "school sermon," the first of its kind in the constituted history of our Synod, was delivered by one of the pastors. (The topic of his sermon, incidentally, was: "The Importance of Christian Education.") Beginning with the convention of 1863, the preaching of a "school sermon" became a regular custom; and the district conventions adopted the custom of devoting one service during their meetings to a topic on Christian education.

The *Gemeindeschule* or "congregation's school" — as these early day schools were called — reflected an important belief of our founding fathers: The day school was looked upon as a "family affair," for it was a school that was established by the family of Christ in a given congregation and that taught the younger members of the family their common faith and hope. By 1860, when the Synod celebrated its 10th anniversary, there were already 23 of these "Gemeindeschulen" in our congregations; and at the 25th anniversary in 1875 the little Wisconsin Synod could report a total of 85 Christian day schools. These schools had become such an important part of congregational life by 1876 that the Synod added a "normal" or teacher-training department at Northwestern College. This institution provided the necessary pedagogical skills and religious training for our Christian day school teachers until 1893, at which time Dr. Martin Luther College became our Synod's official normal school.

#### Christian Education Today: An Example

What we should have learned by this time — both from our trip back into a linguistic study of God's Word and our side-trip into the realm of education in church history — is just what words such as, "diligently," "nourish," "knowledge," "wisdom," etc. mean and what responsibilities they place upon us. In the light of what we have learned from Scripture and history we now want to ask ourselves: Are we today offering our children religious instruction that is "diligent" in the fullest, scriptural sense of that word?

In order to answer that question for ourselves, let us follow a child from birth to age fourteen as he goes through the various educational agencies that we have in our congregations. (We shall, for the moment, exclude the training he could receive at a Christian day school, for that agency will be considered separately a little later.)

The training a child receives from birth to age three is most difficult to calculate as to quantity since it is not very systematic or formal. We shall, therefore, begin our figuring with the age of three, for it is at that age that most children enter Sunday School.

The average congregation offers about 1,600 hours of formal instruction for the child between the ages of three and 14. The various educational agencies in the congregation and the instruction time they afford break down as follows: Church — 572 hours; Sunday School — 572 hours; Vacation Bible School — 275 hours; confirmation instruction — 180 hours. Adding these hours together we get a grand total of 1,599 hours of religious instruction for the child who never misses church or Sunday School and attends two weeks of Vacation Bible School each year and confirmation classes for two years.

Let us also assume that the parents of the child we are following take most seriously the responsibilities which God has laid upon them. Thus we might figure that they allot about ½ hour per day for family devotions, Bible readings, and other forms of spiritual training in the home. This gives our child another 2,007 hours of instruction for the 11 years from three to 14.

Does 3,600 hours of instruction — the total of the child's in-church and at-home training — seem to be a proportionate amount of time for Christian education? Before we answer, we might bear in mind that the child between the age of three and 14 has an average of 14 waking hours each day, making a total of 56,210 waking hours for those 11 years. In other words, the 3,600 hours of religious instruction represent only 6% of the child's waking time! (Let us also remember that the child who spends eight years in a public grade school comes under the influence of an a-Christian atmosphere for almost 10,000 hours during a most crucial period in his life. This means that an avowedly godless educational system has about three times the number of hours to inculcate its teachings that we have to lead the child to know, love, and follow God!)

It will readily be conceded that the 3,600 hours of religious instruction may not represent an accurate total in every case, for many parents do much of their spiritual training by way of example, in an informal setting as questions about faith and morals come up casually, and as opportunities for religious instruction present themselves naturally. It will also be admitted that accumulating quantity alone does not necessarily mean that we have fulfilled God's requirements. But the fact still remains that the directives we learned from Deuteronomy, Ephesians, and Colossians are clear: Religious instruction for our children is to be continuous, repetitive, and intensive; in short, full-time! And none of us here would assume that 3,600 hours of spiritual training — 6% of the child's life between age three and age 14 — is full-time.

### A Shifting of Responsibility

What we are suggesting, then, is that Christian parents today do well to consider anew the ways in which they are providing for the spiritual education of their children. In both the passage from Deuteronomy and from Ephesians God stresses the role of parents, especially fathers, in the instruction of children. This is understandable, for the Bible presents children as the gift which God has given to parents and as a charge for which parents are accountable to their Lord. In His grand and wise design of society, God judiciously instituted the family as the framework from which all other relationships develop and in which the growing needs of each individual are provided for. Chief among those needs of children is the early and on-going instruction in the truths of God's Word.

We Christians need to be reminded of our parental responsibility from time to time, for in the last few decades there has been a gradual shifting of those responsibilities from parents to other people. The public school system has been one of the leaders in this shift of responsibility, even though they seemingly decry the fact that this shift has taken place. "We have to do something," secular educators claim, "because parents simply are not meeting their obligations." Then these educators lead us to believe that the only alternative to having public schools take over parents' responsibility is not having the responsibility fulfilled.

There may be some truth in what public educators are telling us; parents may be shirking their obligations in respect to their children. The solution to this problem, however, is not having the public schools assume what the parents won't; it is, rather, re-educating parents concerning the need for them to assume their responsibilities. In addition, the public schools themselves have unwittingly been responsible for the parents' failure to accept their obligations. The public school system has given the impression that there are many tasks for which parents are not equipped and therefore not capable — one of them being the matter of training their children.

We can see just how much the schools have taken over if we consider that they are no longer content with teaching our children the traditional three "R's." Rather, public schools now provide for physical education, social activities, and even driver training. In years past parents were expected to provide for their children in all three of these areas — and they did so very well. But now the public schools have become the self-appointed experts in these areas. The all-pervasive arm of the public school system has even reached down into one of the most sacred areas of human life, an area that parents, it seems to me, would especially want to preserve as their responsibility, sex education. But here again the public schools inform our parents that they aren't "equipped" to handle that subject properly in the home — in spite of the fact that God's Word has so many and such clear-cut directives concerning sexual responsibility!

Some of the schools' reasoning behind taking over what are properly parental responsibilities may have justification. We Christians have, in many instances, allowed ourselves to become lacking in knowledge about important subjects that our children need to know; and we have, far more often than we care to confess, hesitated to accept fully the charges that God has placed upon us in regard to our young people. Many a teacher in our own Christian day schools will tell you, by way of example, that it is increasingly difficult to get parents involved in or concerned about important matters that affect their children. "Let the school and the teachers do it — that's why we hire them!" seems to be the attitude that is creeping into our Christian educational system also. All parents, therefore, do well to consider again just whom the Lord is addressing in the texts we have been considering and what those texts show that our Lord expects of us.

### Day Schools and "Diligent" Instruction

The words of our Lord remind us that we may have to rethink our attitude toward agencies such as the Christian day school. In the past we have, in many instances, looked upon the day school within the congregation as a costly and optional luxury which we can or cannot have, depending upon whether or not we want to spend the money it costs to start and maintain them. (That old bugaboo, money, has raised its head and influenced our thinking about how we are to respond to God's Word, rather than God's Word directing our thinking about how we are to use our money!) But the age has long passed — if it was ever in existence to begin with — in which the Christian school as an educational agency for all our young people could ever be considered a luxury. The present state of public schools, which we shall consider in more detail in our next essay, should move us to consider day schools of our own as a most vital and necessary way of fulfilling the obligations which God has placed upon us. It is true that day schools cost more now than ever before, but that doesn't change the fact that they are needed more now than ever before. Let it not be found that we, who live in the most prosperous times and the most wealthy nation in history, allow our weak flesh to ask: "Can we afford day schools?" Rather, let us, whom God has blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ as well as with material blessings in life, earnestly consider: "Can we afford not to have day schools?"

It may seem, however, that we are being inconsistent when we say, on the one hand, that parents are to provide for their children's spiritual welfare and then to state, in the next breath, that day schools should be established for the education of our youth. What we should understand is that Christian day schools afford us the opportunity to give our children in their modern setting the closest thing to the type of education that God commanded as far back as the Old Testament. Life has changed so much that we cannot all simply stay at home, keeping our children with us, and indoctrinate our young people as we work around the house, toil in the fields, or labor at some craft. Regulations of the government, to which we are all subject as far as is consistent with our Christian conscience, no longer permit such home education in all subjects. In addition, the economic make-up of our society no

longer makes such a life-style feasible. The best alternative we have devised to date is to establish Christian day schools. That is the best alternative, that is, if we want to fill to the fullest the obligation that God has laid upon us as Christian parents. Day schools will enlist others who share our Christian *Weltanschauung* to do in our stead during the working day what we cannot do completely on our own. Perhaps there may come a time — if that time has not already arrived — when we have to take even greater steps to separate ourselves from the life-style and regulations of the world and go entirely our own way under God's guidance, as did God's Old Testament people.

Paul's message to the Colossians reveals just how day schools can play a most important part in inculcating the kind of knowledge God wants our children to have. Not only do day schools offer daily instruction in the Word of God; they also teach all academic subjects in the light of that Word: Science thus becomes a course that unfolds God's wisdom and goodness in creating this world; history is presented as the working out of God's will and power in governing this world for the welfare of His kingdom; art and music are courses in which children learn to develop their talents to bring glory and honor to God; etc. In the day school, in other words, we can closely approximate the Old Testament practice of bringing religion to bear upon all that our children learn and do.

#### Day Schools Versus Christ-centered Schools

We should not assume, though, that just because our congregations establish day schools we are automatically offering our children an education that is distinctively and thoroughly Christian. Having a day school that assembles in buildings provided by Christians or that operates with funds that come from Christian pocket-books does not insure that the school is thereby Christian. Nor will a day school naturally take on a Christian cast just because the students hear Bible stories at the start of the day, pray before they eat their noon lunch, and conclude each day of instruction by joining in the Lord's Prayer. Our day schools can rightly be termed "Christian" schools only if the message of Christ permeates and informs everything that is taught and done in those schools.

While most of us would like to assert that our schools are truly Christian in character, let us always use sanctified judgment when evaluating them that we can detect any signs to the contrary. Consider, by way of example, how we go about "selling" our day schools to those members who do not yet have their children enrolled or who are not yet convinced of the value of Christian education. Quite often we will take pains to show that "the education we offer is just like that which children get at the public school." We will point to our curriculum, our facilities, and our teaching apparatus to prove our point and to extol the virtues of our program. We will add, of course, that we have the "plus" of religious instruction which the public schools cannot offer, but the main thrust of our approach to parents often emphasizes the similarity between our schools and those of the state.

What we in the Church really should be stressing, however, is the essential difference between Christian education and secular learning. We, like the Jewish believers and the Greek Christians, are to understand that the Savior is not just a part of our lives, but that He is our life. This is as true when we are talking about our activities in the classroom as it is when we are discussing our actions in the sanctuary. The curriculum we follow in our schools may seem to approximate closely that of the public schools, for we still subject ourselves to the regulations of the government in this area; but the philosophy behind that curriculum and the objectives in that curriculum are founded on the eternal truths of Christ, not on the temporal speculations of men.

We need to assert continually that the day schools in our congregations are to reflect both in subject-matter and methodology the truth that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the holy is understanding." (Prov. 9:10) The holy fear of which Solomon speaks is to be an intrinsic part of every aspect of education in our day schools, or those schools are not Christian in the scriptural sense. We cannot justify either scripturally or financially the establishment of schools in which we have only the trappings of religion and not the essential truths of Christianity shaping all that we teach. If such a situation should ever arise in our midst, then we shall end up with day schools that are, at best, Christian only for the hour or so of each day that we discuss the saving acts of God. There are basically only two scriptural reasons for establishing, promoting, and maintaining a Christian day school: To teach Christ as the one way to salvation; and to strengthen Christ's lambs by constructing a curriculum in which God is glorified at all times.

#### Day Schools as Supplements, Not Substitutes

Sometimes, after we have carefully founded our day schools on Christ alone, we fall prey to a special temptation which the presence of a day school in our congregation places before us. Occasionally parents, in spite of repeated warnings to the contrary, will look upon the day school as a substitute which fulfills their God-given responsibilities, rather than as a supplement which helps them meet their obligations to the Lord. Let us daily call to mind, therefore, that we as parents have a very special and sacred role which we are to fulfill in leading our children to the wisdom and understanding which Paul discusses in Colossians. Parents, by virtue of their positions of respect and authority, can translate into daily action in their home life the truths which their children have learned from God's Word during the school day.

This is a responsibility which cannot be abrogated just because the congregation has a day school. There is an old saying which states that "more learning is caught than taught." Parents demonstrate the accuracy of that old saw as they become living examples

of what God's truths mean from day to day: They can daily show by their attitude the joy that comes from knowing the only Savior of mankind; they can personally exhibit the confidence that a lively faith in the Savior brings the believer in the day of adversity; they can continually express with their actions gratitude for the many blessings which God has bestowed upon them; etc. Let us not think lightly of the impact which our attitudes and actions have upon our children, for we who are moved by the example of Christ can move others, especially our children, by our Christ-like example.

Parents will also recognize the importance of carrying on what the day school inculcates when they realize that they have in the home that "natural" situation that Moses described in Deuteronomy as being the best environment for religious training: The regularity and care with which parents arrange the family devotions are as effective as a series of day school lessons about the need for frequent worship; the love and consideration marriage partners show toward one another around the house bring to life before the eyes of the children the meaning of the Sixth Commandment; the heart-to-heart talks between father and son or mother and daughter demonstrate the continual need to strengthen one another; etc. In short, Christian parents can pick up where the day school leaves off and can put into practice what the day school had led their children to profess.

### Day School Substitutes

All of us recognize, of course, that in many areas of our Synod it still is not possible for congregations to establish their own day schools or even to begin an interparish school with one or more other congregations. As a result, these congregations are, for the time being, turning to "released-time" programs, week-day schools, or Saturday classes. Two types of these day school substitutes deserve special mention.

The first is that which is held for an hour or so each day after the public school sessions end and includes all students of elementary school age. By means of such a week-day program the children come to realize along with their parents that religion is not just a "once-a-week" matter, but an integral part of their daily lives.

The second day school substitute is that which meets on Saturdays and lasts from four to six hours. This type of program does not just provide confirmation instruction for those who do not attend a Christian day school, but it offers courses of instruction for all children of day school age. Although this type of school is not as satisfactory as is the week-day program since it cannot integrate religion into daily life as well as the former does, it still is the only alternative in those areas in which the members of the congregation are too widely dispersed to gather for a week-day school.

It may seem to some that the alternatives to the day school which we are suggesting are simply impractical when it comes to implementing such programs in the local congregations. The main obstacle, as far as most people are concerned, is the lack of qualified instructors for these programs. That should never be a problem, however, for the Lord Himself has already indicated who should take the lead in such instruction — the parents of the children involved. The passages which we have considered in this essay are unanimous in their assertion that the parents are primarily responsible for the religious education of their children.

### Conclusion

Regardless of the type of educational program a congregation adopts for its children, several important principles laid down by Scripture should guide that program. The first is that it should involve the parents fully — and not just in matters such as providing transportation for the children, which seems to be the case more and more these days. Too often we have allowed parents to cling to the unscriptural notion that their obligation has been fulfilled when they bring their children to class on time and pick them up after the sessions have ended. It is time, I feel, to explore new areas in which we involve the parents, both in teaching classes in the congregation and in working with their children at home. Even parents who are not especially "apt to teach" can serve as teachers' aids and can help out with certain portions of the class-room instruction, such as listening to memorization assignments and reviewing previous lessons. In addition, any homework that is required of the students between class periods should be carried out under the close supervision of the parents. Parents themselves will want to go beyond what the educational program of the congregation requires or asks and will search for new ways to teach their children diligently.

The second principle which should guide all instruction of our children is the awareness that religious training is to be as full-time as our Christian calling. In the past we have, it seems to me, set up as our goal that of imparting a few religious facts once a week. While that is a good beginning, it is only that — a beginning. God's Word reveals Christian education to be a regular and intensive process, carrying over to every aspect of the believer's life and taking precedence before all else. Even if we are not fortunate to have the ideal situation of a day school in our congregation, the regularity, intensity, or importance of the educational program is not lessened thereby. Both parents and congregation will simply have to work to free more time outside of public school hours in which they can instruct their children spiritually, even if it means that the children will have to forego some of the extracurricular activities which the public school supports. It is not enough that our children have only a knowledge of the rudiments of Scripture; we are desirous of watching them grow in wisdom and understanding also.

In spite of the many trials and heartaches, costs and sacrifices that we are called upon to endure in raising our children, none of us here will question the truth of the psalmist's statement: "Children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is His reward." (Ps. 127:3) Let us, therefore, joyously and conscientiously accept the full responsibility that God places upon us when He instructs us to "teach them diligently."

## Introduction: Jerusalem and Athens

Down through the ages the Christian scholar has been one of God's great blessings to the Church. To take examples with whom we are all familiar, consider how far the Reformation would have progressed if the Lord had not called into the service of His Church men with the intellectual stature and acumen of a Martin Luther or a Philip Melancthon. Our understanding of Scripture would be considerably less Christ-centered and our Lutheran confessions much less perspicuous if these men of scholarly bent had not turned their gifts to a thorough study of God's Word. Or, to reflect on an example that might not be quite so obvious, think how little of the Reformation heritage would have endured without the succeeding work of the great theologians in the latter half of the 16th-century. A 17th-century adage states that "if the second Martin [Chemnitz] had not come, the first Martin [Luther] would hardly have stood." This is not fallacious folk-wisdom, for the scholars who followed in the footsteps of Luther and Melancthon were most important in transmitting the treasures of the Reformation to succeeding generations, including ours.

Today, however, the term "Christian scholar" has, to some people, become something of a contradiction in terms. Many who have a conservative bent in matters theological assume that same posture in matters educational. With a theologian of some stature they ask:

"What is there in common between Athens and Jerusalem? What between the Academy and the Church? What between heretics and Christians? . . . After Christ Jesus we desire not subtle theories, no acute inquiries after the Gospel . . ."

It matters not that the man who wrote these words was named Tertullian and lived about 100 years after the last of the apostles. The sentiment he expresses is as modern as tomorrow. Many thoughtful Christians today recognize the great gulf that exists between the wisdom of the Church and the learning of the world, and they ask if it is possible for a person to be a Christian in the biblical sense and also a scholar in the world's eyes.

This second essay will consider from a scriptural viewpoint the question of whether a separation does in fact exist between Jerusalem and Athens, the Church and the Academy. We shall especially be interested in defining the impact an education at a secular institution has upon the spiritual growth of our young people. For the title of this essay, therefore, we have chosen the question:

### II. Are Secular Schools "Stumbling-blocks" to Sanctification?

#### John 17:11, 14–21

The first passage we want to peruse in order to find guidelines for our essay is contained in the seventeenth chapter of St. John's Gospel. That chapter records the great and glorious "high priestly prayer" of Christ, a prayer which He uttered in the upper room just before He went forth to meet His captors in the Garden of Gethsemane. In a portion of that prayer Jesus says:

"And now I am no more in the world — but these are in the world — and I come to Thee. Holy Father, keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me that they may be one, as We are. . . . I have given them Thy Word. And the world hath hated them because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that Thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that Thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through Thy truth — Thy Word is truth. As Thou hast sent Me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on Me through their word, that they all may be one, as Thou, Father, art in Me and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me."

Our Savior here defines the paradoxical position in which we, His followers, find ourselves. He states that we are "in the world," but not "of the world." The meaning of these words is quite obvious: As long as our earthly lives go on, we Christians live in this world; and yet, even though we live in this world, we do not have the same attitudes held by the people of this world. For those who do not have a saving knowledge of the Anointed One there is nothing real or meaningful beyond this present existence; but we, whom God has sanctified by His Holy Spirit, know that our lives are already hid with God in Christ. (Col. 3:3) We recognize that we have here no continuing city, but that we seek one which is to come. (Heb. 13:14) Our hopes, our aims, and our attitudes, therefore, are not dictated by the transitory joys of this world, but by the Blessed One who leads us toward the world to come.

What we may not always emphasize as we read these words of Christ is that Jesus is setting the separation between His people and the people of this world into bold relief. Our Lord does not ask His Father to take us out of this world, it is true; and yet, there is no reason to assume therefore that we are one with the world. The only reason Jesus wants us in this world is that we, who have

come to know and trust in His redemptive work, should be the messengers by whom that redemption is proclaimed to others. If the world were without the witness of God's people, there would be no one to hold up to the fallen and condemned world the banner of hope in Christ. Our mission to the world, then, does not imply in the least that we accept the world and its thinking. In fact, exactly the opposite is expressed: We are to turn the world from its way of death to the path of life.

Being in the world and yet not of the world puts the Christian in a spiritually precarious position, and thus Jesus prays that we might be kept from the evil that is in this world. The only way that we can be kept from the evil is, as verse 17 indicates, when we are sanctified through God's Word, which is truth.

The statement, "Thy Word is truth," is so simple that it may lull us into assuming there is no need to stop and meditate on it. But that deceptively simple statement illustrates in the sharpest way possible the great gulf that does exist between us and the people of this world. Truth for us begins only as God reveals Himself in His Word and through His Son around whom that Word centers. In addition, all that this world presents as truth is acceptable only as it accords with God's revealed truth.

While what we have heard thus far in this passage is not, admittedly, new or startling, it does have important implications for us as we consider what sort of education is suitable for our children. The basis and purpose of Christian education cannot and does not fit in with the source and goals that this world adopts in its educational systems. Christians begin by listening to what God has to say; they consider what God has done for them in Christ; and they never lose sight of where God is leading them. In short, our educational program is based on "*eine andere Seite Theologie*," as Dr. Walther so aptly put it. But secular education — in Christ's own words — "hates" us for using such an approach, for it can see only this world and what little man's sinful and fallible reason has revealed about this world. It still insists, however, that its limited vision of reality is truth — and it will allow no one to gainsay it!

#### I Corinthians 1:18–29

The implications of Christ's words were not lost on the apostle Paul, for in the opening chapter of his first letter to the Corinthians he speaks explicitly about the separation between our approach to education and this world's pedagogy. We read in I Corinthians 1:18–29:

"For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness, but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. For it is written: 'I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent.' Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this world? Hath not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? For after that in the wisdom of God the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. For the Jews require a sign, and the Greeks seek after wisdom. But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumbling-block and unto the Greeks foolishness. But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men; and the weakness of God is stronger than men. For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty. And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence."

In these words to the congregation at Corinth Paul spells out a rather obvious, and yet, most important principle about the ends of education. He tells us that if we wish to learn that wisdom which reveals to us the redeeming love of God and shows to us the way of salvation, we should not search for it among the wise discoveries that men have made on their own. The wisdom of man — as great as it may appear by some standards and as beneficial as it may prove in some areas — can only lead to a dead-end spiritually. (In the next chapter the apostle shows more fully that "the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God . . . neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." (I Cor. 2:14; 2:7–9) Then this messenger to the Gentiles asserts that "the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him" can only be "revealed unto us by His Spirit" as He speaks to us in the inspired words of the Bible. (I Cor. 2:10–13) In other words, in the second chapter of this letter Paul discusses the limited nature of human wisdom.) In our present chapter, however, he simply refers in a passing way to this limited nature of man's discoveries and then goes on to focus upon the disastrous consequences of trusting man's wisdom exclusively. By quoting from Isaiah 29:14 Paul reveals that the wisdom of the world can only lead to damnation when we place all our trust in it.

What is especially telling about this passage is that here God is speaking to us through His evangelist to the educated, through a man who once had been steeped in a strictly secular education. On the basis of his firsthand knowledge of worldly wisdom this inspired servant of the Lord makes several statements which warn us against too quickly embracing all that this world teaches. Paul does not only state in our text that man's wisdom is found lacking when it comes to revealing the way of salvation; he also shows that this world's philosophy teaches men to disdain what the Bible leads us to believe about salvation in Jesus Christ. Time and again the words "foolish" and "foolishness" appear in this text as the epithets which this world, puffed up in the pride of its



own wisdom, hurls at the preaching of the cross of Christ. In other words, the world does not allow for the possibility that there might be some truth to the message of the crucified Christ — some truth which its wisdom is not equipped to evaluate properly; nor is the world “neutral” or even just “coolly indifferent” about the redemptive blood of the Lamb. Rather, the world in its wisdom has considered the claims of Jesus of Nazareth and has found them to be unacceptable by its standards; and now it openly and aggressively opposes His claims by labeling them “utter nonsense” and by calling “stupid,” (which is the basic meaning of the word that our text translates as “foolish,”) all who believe those claims.

It ought to be abundantly clear to us, then, that the wisdom of God and the knowledge of man are not compatible when it comes to the most basic and essential truths of life. In verse 20 Paul refers to three different representatives of the “intellegentsia” of His day: the “wise” or philosophers, who insisted that any teaching must be intellectually satisfying before they would accept it; the “scribes,” who demanded empirical “proof” before they would approve of any doctrine; and the “disputers” or rhetoricians, whose chief delight in life seemed to be poking fun at any statement that was not logically expressed or persuasively presented. Paul says that no matter which of these three approaches to learning a person adopted, they all had one thing in common: They studied the preaching of the cross by their standards and they declared that it could not be harmonized with their criteria. As a result, all the “intelligentsia,” being wise in their own conceit (Rom. 11:25; 12:16), had only one recourse, and that was to reject the cross of Christ.

In Paul’s day the battlelines were clearly drawn, and the line of demarcation then — as today — was the shadow of the cross of Jesus Christ as it fell across every community and as it hit upon every aspect of society, including the educational institutions. Nor was it possible for anyone to claim that the battle was none of his concern and that he thus preferred not to choose sides. The Commander-in-chief of the forces of faith, from whom the Church Militant always takes its marching orders, had earlier declared that in this battle there could be no “neutrality” or “sitting this one out.” When Christ confronted the intellectual leaders of His own day, He told them in no unclear terms: “He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth.” (Luke 11:23) And, as He shows in our present text through His inspired servant Paul, spokesmen of secular education have, more often than not, declared themselves to be aligned with the forces of unbelief.

It is essential for us to bear in mind that the educators of Alexandria, Athens, and Rome against whom Paul warned the early Christians have their counterparts in modern society, particularly in *academia*. They are still alive in the rationalists and materialists, in the scientists and the empiricists. Whether we call them by Paul’s titles or give them modern nomenclature, they are still openly contending with the crucified Christ and all that He has revealed. To those people Christ is “foolishness,” a “stumbling-block,” or even worse; and anything that Christ reveals to us is discarded by them as just so much meaningless religious clap-trap!

#### Romans 12:1, 2

Because there is such a close parallel between secular education in Paul’s day and in our own time, an exhortation which the apostle set before the little band of believers at Rome is especially pertinent for us as we seek scriptural guidelines to direct us in the area of education. In Romans 12:1, 2 Paul writes:

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”

Chapter twelve begins a new section of the book to the Romans. In the previous section, which ran from the beginning of chapter nine to the end of chapter eleven, Paul showed that in Christ God has created a new “Israel,” a new special people unto Himself. With the text before us the apostle begins to unfold what the worship-life of this new Israel, made up of both Jew and Gentile, is to be like.

In the first verse of our text Paul is, quite obviously, harking back to the worship-life of God’s Old Testament people in order to bring out an important point. He informs the Romans that they, like the old children of Israel, are to offer sacrifices in gratitude to God for the depths of His love. In the new Israel, however, the sacrifices are no longer of cattle, meal, or drink; rather, they were to be the bodies of God’s redeemed people as they daily offered their lives to the service of the Lord. Our response to God is to be as all-encompassing as His mercies which evoke that response; and just as the new Israel comprehends all nations on earth, so the new worship-life is to comprehend all of our activities here on earth.

It is most important for our present topic that Paul declares that the new, all-inclusive worship-life begins not with externals, but with a renewal of the inner man. No longer can the Christian conform to this world and adopt its values, attitudes, and thought-patterns. Instead, he is continually called upon to assert the “separateness” to which God has called him in Christ and to express the “No!” of nonconformity when he is being pressured by current thinking. It may, admittedly, be a difficult posture to assume, but it is a most necessary stance to accept, for the Christian recognizes that “the god of this world [i.e., Satan] hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” (II Cor. 4:4)

Instead of being swept along by the powerful tide of impressive, appealing, and popular thought, the Christian always seeks to "prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." "The Word of God, which effectually worketh . . . in . . . [them] that believe" (I Thess. 4:13), becomes the touchstone by which the believer now tests all the teachings of men. He cares not that an opinion may be "gratifying," "current," or "popular" among men; his concern is that it proves to be "good," "acceptable," and "perfect" in the eyes of God. This is an on-going concern for the child of God, for the making-new of the religious intellect will not be completed until we shall see God "face to face" and "know [Him] even as also we are known." (I Cor. 13:12)

#### Scriptural Guidelines

If there is one thing which, above all else, comes out most clearly in the three passages that we have been considering, it is the concept of "separateness." It should, of course, come as no surprise to anyone here to learn that Scripture repeatedly speaks about the separateness of the believers. In a certain sense we can properly say that all of God's redeeming acts on our behalf are acts of separation. For example, when Paul discusses the doctrine of divine election in the first chapter of his letter to the Ephesians, the word in that text (Eph. 1:4) which is translated as "choose" could quite rightly be rendered "set apart" or "separate." That is exactly what the Greek word means: In Christ God selected us from among all mankind and set us apart for His own purpose. This separating process, which began with our election before the world came into being, was made manifest when Christ redeemed us from Satan and unto God (Tit. 2:14; II Cor. 6:14–17) and will reach its conclusion when Christ returns in glory to gather all nations before Himself and to "separate them one from another." (Matt. 25:32)

The separation of the believer from the unbeliever is so important that Christ Himself prayed that it might be preserved and that we might be kept apart from this world's spirit even though He wanted us to remain in this world to carry out His mission. In no area is it more essential for us, as Christ's witnesses, to be aware of and maintain our separateness from the world than in the attitude we take toward the Word of God and its central message of the crucified Christ. It is incumbent upon all who have been called into the Christian community to weigh carefully all that this world teaches and to accept only that part of man's wisdom which accords with the Word of life.

One of the greatest mistakes that we Christians can make these days is to fail to recognize fully that in many academic disciplines Scripture leads us to a knowledge that is diametrically opposed to this world's teachings and in others it asks us to disagree vigorously with man's final conclusions, if not with his basic facts. It may seem, at first, that "proving" all human wisdom by testing it against the divine revelation would be a most obvious and natural step for all who have been enlightened by God's Word. But higher education as it is represented by our secular institutions of learning has become 20th-century America's answer to the sacred cow – and it dare not be refuted, disputed, or denied! Thus, we find that Christians who normally are outspoken when it comes to most forms of unrighteousness, shrink back from being a single, small voice that speaks out against the powerful and persuasive proponents of public education.

As personally difficult and distasteful as the responsibilities which our separateness might seem to be when it comes to making evaluations about education, those responsibilities must be accepted by all whose minds have been renewed by the mercies of God. The Word of truth, which our Synod counts as its great treasure from God, requires that we, who hold that Word in trust as stewards, remain faithful to it in all matters. (I Cor. 4:1, 2)

#### Confession or Compromise

History is replete with examples of those who failed to see the significance of the Christian's separateness also in matters of education – beginning with the early Greek churches, continuing with the Church of the Middle Ages, and existing in many of the modern church bodies. When the Church has forgotten or refused to maintain the distinction between God's truth and man's speculations, one of two things has happened: Either the Church has compromised the absolute and unchangeable truth of Scripture and thus created "another gospel" (Gal. 1:6–9); or it has joined the ranks of those who are wise in their own conceits and thus no longer proclaims God's Word as a trustworthy presentation of the truth. (Rom. 1:22, 28–32)

There may be signs in our own midst which indicate that we have arrived at the point in our Synod's history when one of the two above-mentioned compromises could easily occur. Lest you dismiss this as nothing more than an alarmist's wail, consider for a moment what we see taking place among the young people in our own congregations. In an increasing number our young people are enrolling in secular colleges and universities with the hope of improving themselves and their chances to assume meaningful positions in society. That in itself is not improper; in fact, we can commend their motives. What is a matter for concern, however, is that we are sending our youth to secular institutions at the very time that Satan has enlisted many of the instructors at these institutions as some of his most vocal and vituperative spokesmen against the revelation of God. The Tempter, wily and seditious as always, has not allowed to pass unnoticed the fact that our nation has committed itself to a program of educational advancement for all; and in his malign cleverness he has puffed up and perverted the minds of many who are the most influential in the public education system. Now we, for good purposes on our part, are entrusting our young people to these sergeants of Satan.

In that very act of entrustment, which seems so justifiable from many a Christian parent's viewpoint, we may unwittingly be vitiating doctrinal purity and scriptural practice in our midst. Future history may well show that the time when our Synod turned from the authority of Scripture to the appeal of philosophy came not when our own colleges and seminary began to produce teachers and pastors who no longer trusted in the wisdom of God's Word, but when our own congregations began to produce a rising generation that was tainted by the skepticism of secular learning. The history of Lutheranism in America, including the history of the past three or four decades in which we have been called upon by God to play an oftentimes painful and unpleasant part, has taught us that deterioration of faithfulness to God's Word frequently begins with those who are called to preach that Word. But the admonitions of Scripture which we have been considering have been directed to the men and women in the pew as much as to the man in the pulpit or behind the podium. Paul recognizes, therefore, that erosion at the "grass-roots" level is as dangerous to the Church as is uncertainty on the part of those who are called to sow the Seed of the Word.

In demonstration of the need for a laity that is grounded and informed scripturally we have only to turn to Christ's parable of the Sower and the Seed. (Matt. 13:3-9, 18-23; Mark 4:3-9, 14-20; Luke 8:4-8, 11-15) Or we might consider Paul's classic and much-quoted statement, "If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to battle?" (1 Cor. 13:8) Most of us are accustomed to recite this passage to show the need for a clergy that is committed to a clear and courageous proclamation of the Gospel. It is instructive to note, however, that in the succeeding verse Paul himself applies those words to prove the necessity of having congregations filled with men and women who are understanding of what Scripture says to them in all things. In other words, being corrupted and misled by the wisdom of man is not an occupational hazard peculiar to the clergy; it is a danger against which every Christian has to contend. We may well be asking our young people to fight that battle virtually unarmed and with one hand tied behind their backs if we send them to secular institutions for four, eight, or more of the most impressionable years of their lives.

#### Public Education's Philosophical Basis

If you are tempted to dismiss this warning as nothing more than an unsubstantiated jeremiad, let us briefly hear from some of the spokesmen of public education and learn from their own lips the position they espouse in several rather fundamental issues. Perhaps the best way to consider the "wisdom" that the public education system presents to the young people entrusted to its care is by asking the question, "What does secular education have to say about the origin and nature of man and about man's purpose and destiny here on earth?"

It should be no secret to anyone here, of course, that public education uses the theory of evolution as its explanation of ultimate causes or origins. What we sometimes overlook, however, is that this anti-scriptural theory serves as the foundation for all the academic branches. Evolution is not just the special message of those who delve into the mysteries of science; rather, as one of the leading scientists of our time, John T. Bonner, has stated: "... evolution is the largest and most encompassing [theme] of them all. Evolution has provided the framework for life in general. . . ." Observe the unapologetic and unabashed candor with which Dr. Bonner asserts that the basic "truth" from which all learning is to proceed is the theory of evolution, which, as we know, denies the historicity of Scripture.

If Bonner's statement were an isolated instance of man's pride in this area, we would not and need not be too concerned. Unfortunately, his remarks are typical of the assertions we find in most books that deal with the underlying philosophy of public education. Consider the case of Sir Julian Huxley, a renowned British biologist and the grandson of the famous Thomas Huxley. In the 19th-century Thomas Huxley was one of the most ardent and influential spokesmen for the cause of evolution; and in the 20th-century Julian has carried on this family tradition. With a zeal approaching that of a dedicated missionary Julian Huxley states in one of his writings:

"The concept of evolution was soon [after Darwin's time] extended into other than biological fields. Inorganic subjects such as the life-histories of stars and the formation of the chemical elements on the one hand, and on the other hand subjects like linguistics, social anthropology, and comparative law and religion, began to be studied from an evolutionary angle, until today we are enabled to see evolution as a universal and all-pervading process. . . . Our present knowledge indeed forces us to the view that the whole of reality is evolution — a single process of self-transformation." (Emphasis Huxley's!)

Huxley's words are so eloquent, albeit, so erroneous, that they do not need much in the way of comment. The basis of all of life, according to his definition, lies not in the revelation of God as we find it in the Holy Scriptures, but in the discoveries of man as they develop from the theory of evolution.

It is not necessary for us to add quotation after quotation from secular writers who support this thesis. What we should remind ourselves once more, however, is that this supposed foundation of "truth," this evolutionary theory about the origin and nature of man, has permeated every academic discipline in the secular institution. The basic philosophy upon which the social sciences, the humanities, and even the study of religion are based is an application of the Darwinian tenet. Consider, by way of example, the fields of psychology and psychiatry — fields in which we have a special interest since they relate directly to our task of counseling depraved and lost mankind in the way of righteousness. Henry W. Brosin, chairman of the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Pittsburg, says: "Without this work [i.e., Darwin's theory of evolution] it is difficult to imagine what the state of

of our discipline would be like." The implication is, of course, that if we did not have the "truth" of evolution, we would be most inept when it comes to correcting, counseling, and training anyone.

### Evolution and the Theory of Learning

Before we leave this point, it would be worthwhile to consider the impact that man's teaching about his origin and nature has had upon the theory of learning. The one individual who has exerted the greatest, single influence on modern educational theory and practice in this century is, undoubtedly, John Dewey, and Dewey was an ardent advocate of the implications of evolution. During his chairmanships at the schools of education in Columbia University and the University of Chicago Dewey thoroughly indoctrinated future educators and administrators with "ethical relativism." As one of his biographers has written with approbation:

"The starting-point of his [Dewey's] system of thought is biological: he sees man as an organism in an environment, remaking as well as made. Things are to be understood through their origins and functions, without the intrusion of supernatural considerations."

What can be clearer or more anti-Christian than that? Dewey will not hold with those who want to bring such supernatural considerations as creation, the fall, sin, and redemption into the education of young people.

Lest we think that this is the sort of stricture that has since become passé, let us remember that the two main schools of the psychology of learning today — as represented by Carl R. Rogers and B. F. Skinner — have not withdrawn one iota from Dewey's basic approach. While they may admit a certain latitude in application and methodology, they do not argue in the least over the underlying philosophy. Educators may tell us that the former is humanistic while the latter is scientific, (in hopes of making one or the other more palatable to us), but in the final analysis it makes no difference whether error comes to us under the guise of "the phenomenological" or "the behavioral" approach to learning. In either case it serves as a proponent of a heresy that is rooted in evolution.

### A Lutheran Theologian on Public Education

If we, by the grace of God, are wise enough to evaluate public education for what it is, we have to confess with one Lutheran theologian: "First of all, we see how the schools are deteriorating throughout [our land], . . . for through the Word of God the unchristian and sensual character of these institutions is becoming known."

The theologian who made that evaluation was Martin Luther. In his "Letter to the Mayors and Aldermen of All the Cities of Germany in Behalf of Christian Schools" Luther sets forth several points that still deserve our serious study these 448 years after their writing. In one section of his letter Luther says:

"It is no wonder that the devil meddles in the matter [of education] and influences groveling hearts to neglect the children and the youth of the country. Who can blame him for it? He is the prince and god of this world and with extreme displeasure sees the Gospel destroy his nurseries of vice, [the public schools], in which he corrupts the young beyond measure . . . Hence he acted wisely at the time when Christians were educating and bringing up their children in a Christian way. Inasmuch as the youth of the land would have thus escaped him and inflicted an irreparable injury upon his kingdom, he went to work and spread his nets, establishing such [secular] schools, that it was not possible for a boy to escape him without the miraculous intervention of God."

And a little later in that same letter Luther makes this most remarkable statement — a statement which is apt to jar us who know how difficult economic survival or social advancement is today without academic instruction:

"I should prefer, it is true, that our youth be ignorant and dumb rather than that the universities . . . should remain as the only sources of instruction open to them. For it is my earnest intention, prayer, and desire that these schools of Satan either be destroyed or changed into Christian schools."

With Luther, as with St. Paul before him, we are not hearing from some ivory tower theologian who is taking pot shots from afar at secular education. Rather, this man, like Paul, had walked within the ivy-covered halls of the universities and had sat at the feet of some of its most revered doctors. On the basis of his firsthand knowledge Luther issues the same, stern "Cave!" that Paul had spelled out 15 centuries earlier. Certainly, then, we who live in an age that veritably glorifies education in man's wisdom and rewards those who hold degrees in it cannot turn a deaf ear to those warnings.

### The Value of Human Reason

One thing we should not do, though — either in applying Paul and Luther's pronouncements on secular wisdom or in assuming our posture toward public education. We dare not foolishly adopt an attitude of "anti-intellectualism." There is nothing scriptural in the approach of those who would have us believe that all learning outside of the Bible is "the devil's whore" and that the best thing for Christians to do is to remain intellectual "brutes, blockheads, and drones." It is not without importance that God called into

His service at the most vital of times two of the best-educated men the world has ever known, Moses and Paul. Moses, we learn from the book of the Acts, "was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was mighty in words and deeds." (Acts 7:22) And Paul, when defending his ministry and his training before the Corinthians, did not feel that he had to take a back seat to them or to any of the learned men who had instructed them. (II Cor. 11–13)

St. Bernard of Clairvaux has succinctly stated what our position should be when he wrote: "It ill becomes a spouse of the Word to be stupid!" In short, it gives no greater glory to the power and operation of the Holy Spirit if we, out of a misdirected or improper sense of humility, rejoice that we have turned our backs on all truths which are revealed in nature. St. Paul's injunctions to Timothy still have much to say to us: We too should be diligent, on the one hand, that we "give attendance to reading" (I Tim. 4:13) and "study to show ourselves workmen that needeth not be ashamed" (II Tim. 2:15); and we should also strive, on the other hand, to "be instant in season, out of season" (II Tim. 4:2) and to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you." (I Pet. 3:13)

### The Confessions on Human Reason

It might also be in place here to remind ourselves what our confessions have consistently set forth along these lines. In Article XVIII, dealing with the "Freedom of the Will," the Augsburg Confession states: "It is also taught among us that man possesses some measure of freedom of the will which enables him to live an outwardly honorable life and to make choices among the things that reason comprehends." (German text. The Latin text for the last phrase reads: ". . . and for the choice of things subject to reason.") In the Apology of the Augsburg Confession our Lutheran fathers added a further explanation, for there, in Article XVIII, they write: "Since human nature still has reason and judgment about the things that the sense can grasp, it also retains a choice in these things, as well as the liberty and ability to achieve civil righteousness." The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord paraphrases, in Article II (Free Will), one of Luther's comments on Psalm 90 and asserts: "In secular and external matters affecting the nurture and needs of the body, man is indeed very clever, intelligent, and extremely busy."

What these statements from the fathers should impress upon us is that there is nothing either Christian or Lutheran about disdaining the truths that man's wisdom can offer us. We Christians can discredit our cause and raise obstacles to the Gospel if we take a "shotgun approach" in condemning all that man's wisdom teaches. We cannot label as "atheistic," "inappropriate," "unsatisfactory," or "useless" everything the world teaches, for there is much that God, through the wisdom of this world, would have us use and benefit from. It is true that much of what this world teaches must be sifted and evaluated in the light of Scripture, but the need for such a scrutiny in no way negates the value that we can derive from its learning.

Ignoring the fruits which we can pluck from the wisdom of this world is often an unscriptural form of anti-intellectualism or of excusing ourselves for not growing in knowledge. Anyone who has read the book of Colossians and has seen how Paul confronts the wisdom of man with a full understanding of that wisdom knows that, at the very least, we ought to be aware firsthand of what the world is teaching. Scathing, but unsubstantiated generalizations about the atheism of secular institutions add nothing to a faltering faith and may merely hold up our church for ridicule. "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (I Cor. 9:22) is still an excellent principle for witnessing Christians to follow, including those times when they must witness against error in educational matters.

### The Paradox of Our Position

It may seem to some, though, that our position in this essay has not been consistent. We began by showing that God's Word points out our "separateness" from the world; we heard the testimony of modern educators which witnesses that our truth is different from theirs; and yet, now we claim that we can benefit from the wisdom which the world offers.

If this seems inconsistent at first reading, it is only because it reflects Christ's paradoxical statement that we Christians are in the world but not of the world. There is much truth which can be taught to us by the world in which we live, but the truth of secular learning is often hidden by the sinful world's mode of presenting or interpreting that truth. The only way we can see beyond the glittering husks to the real kernel of that truth is by having our minds informed, enlightened, and sanctified by Scripture.

### The Need for a Scripturally-Educated Youth

The seemingly contradictory attitude we have toward the wisdom of the world only supports the thesis that our young people must, of necessity, be well-grounded in the truths of God's Word. If they are sent into the secular system of education before receiving a thorough training in the Word of the Lord, they will not be prepared adequately to carry out the "sifting" that is so vital when considering man's wisdom (Col. 2:4–8). Instead, Satan may well use the "wisdom" of the university to "sift" the immature believer. (Luke 22:31, 32)

There is serious question whether or not we are giving our youth the depth of training which they need before facing the tests of faith which the secular schools force them to endure daily. In fact, there is much debate about whether or not it is possible to give our young people such adequate instruction in Scripture during the few years afforded us before we send them to a secular high school or college. In our confirmation classes we are forced, because of time, to limit our instruction to just the chief truths of the Bible. Thus, during the course of two years of confirmation instruction our students, at the very best, just begin to scratch the surface of the unfathomable depths of God's Word.

Our concern would not be so great if confirmation instruction in our churches was just the beginning of a regular and systematic program for the study of God's Word. Sad to say, however, to a majority of our confirmands it appears that confirmation is the terminal training agency in the congregation. When we entrust many of our children to secular schools for the next four or eight years of their lives, it is not surprising therefore to see that their "confirmation faith" does not always withstand the polished and persuasive attacks of unbelief. As Luther pointed out in the quotations we considered above, Satan often uses the instructors of secular education to take over the minds and hearts of our children. That is not just Luther's opinion, for St. Paul warned the Ephesians: "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." (Eph. 6:12) Nor is it without significance that this warning of Paul comes just after he had enjoined the parents to train their children thoroughly. (Eph. 6:4)

### Spiritual Attrition among Our Young

One of the most dramatic ways to show how vital it is that we provide thorough indoctrination for our young people is by considering the spiritual attrition rate among those between the ages of 14 and 22. Or to put the matter in terms of a question: "Just how many of the young people in our congregations seem to fall from faith or from a regular use of the Means of Grace during their high school and college years?"

Although exact figures from our Synod are not available, a recent religious study indicated that between 30% and 40% of the 14–22 age-group are uncertain, doubtful, or downright sceptical about the basic tenets of the Christian faith. This survey included young people from the three major Lutheran synods, and we might well feel that in our Wisconsin Synod the figure would be much lower. In addition, we know that many of those who are disturbed in their faith during the teenage years are later returned to the fold by the grace of God. And yet, the fact that our Synod has a better "track record" than other Lutheran bodies is not a reason to become complacent; and the hope that many who wander or waver in their faith will later be restored is no reason to believe that we need do nothing.

Let us, for the sake of argument, assume that one young soul in each of our 1,000 congregations is in dire danger of being misled by secular education. (No one who has dealt with our young people for any period of time would consider that an extravagant or unwarranted assumption to make!) The Parable of the Lost Sheep (Matt. 18:12–14; Luke 15:3–7) teaches us that we are to be concerned about just one lost soul.

A number of years ago there was a rather widely-distributed article by a Christian businessman who had become concerned about what happens to young people in the Church after they attend a secular institution of higher learning. That businessman wrote: "If I saw that my business was suffering a regular loss of about 25% of its clientele, I would set about to find the cause of the loss and then take whatever steps were necessary to correct the problem." Then this Christian drew an interesting comparison: "Now I would become alarmed if I observed a dollars-and-cents loss of 25%. Should we not be much more concerned when we in the Church regularly see about 25% of the souls entrusted to our care being led away from the one road to salvation?"

The point which the businessman made is a point to which the Church dare not turn a deaf ear. That we are experiencing a loss in the ranks of the 14–22 age-group of our congregations is not even open to debate, for a study of those confirmed in any of our congregations during the past ten years will show an alarming attrition rate. That the teachings of secular education have contributed greatly to this loss is more than likely, especially when we find that the uncertainties of our young people's faltering faith are often couched in the very language that secular education uses to attack Christianity. We, therefore, cannot but search for more effective ways in which to arm our youth against the teachings of man that militate against salvation.

### Christian Colleges

One of the best solutions to the problem of wavering young people is a solution which has been available to us for over 50 years, but which, quite frankly, we have been slow to acknowledge and slack to appreciate. We are talking about Bethany Lutheran College, a college to which we can confidently direct our young people for their first two years of higher education. At Bethany the one, true faith is propagated in all its purity and an accredited program of academic subjects is offered from a scriptural approach. We can only pray that our members will begin to understand how vital a role a college such as Bethany can play in the spiritual welfare of their college-age children.

What has been said of Bethany will apply, we trust, to Wisconsin Lutheran College, which is opening its doors for the first time this coming fall. We cannot but commend the spiritual concern which the founders of this college feel for the welfare of our young people. We pray that the Lord will add His blessing to their labors; and we implore our parents to consider this college as a scriptural alternative to sending their children directly to a secular institution.

An excuse we often hear from those who choose not to direct their children to Bethany (and now Wisconsin Lutheran College) is that they cannot afford it. But what sort of price-tag can we put on the souls of our children? Christ Himself asks us to reconsider our priorities when He puts forth the question: "What shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:36, 37) Financial excuses become considerably less pressing — or at least are viewed in their proper perspective — when we consider that distinctively Lutheran colleges offer a sound, scriptural basis from which our children can evaluate all further academic learning.

## Christian Learning Centers

In all fairness, however, we have to acknowledge that for some of our parents sending their children to Bethany or Wisconsin Lutheran College simply is not feasible. In some cases finances are a very real barrier; it may be that parents in outlying areas do not feel that their children are ready to attend a school far-removed from home; or it is possible that the program which their children want to pursue is not available at the two Lutheran colleges. In addition, we are going to find other parents who simply do not see the pressing need to send their children to a Christian college. For a variety of reasons, then, we are faced with one, inescapable fact: Our young people will continue to attend secular institutions, and we must address ourselves to the matter of serving their spiritual needs and safe-guarding their souls' welfare while they are at these institutions.

One step we would do well to take is to begin a more intensive program of providing for our young people while they are away from home. In the past we have served their needs through what we term the "campus pastor ministry." In many instances this is really a misnomer, for the men who are asked to serve the various secular campuses are, with few exceptions, also accountable to congregations of considerable size. Because of the press of their congregational duties, these men simply do not have the time to serve our college youth fully. Distance also is frequently a barrier to the close and pastoral relationship that is a prerequisite to providing for our young people at a particularly trying time in their lives. What is more, those working in the campus ministry are often unaware of the presence on their assigned campuses of many of the young people whom they could be serving. There are, in short, a number of factors that have made our present campus ministry less effective than we would desire.

These factors are not mentioned as criticism of the men presently charged with the ministry on various campuses. We refer to them only to show that various obstacles are keeping us from serving our youth according to their needs. We are most thankful that we have men who are willing to give even a portion of their busy schedules to seek out our youth away from home. Without their unselfish service we would find that many more of our college-bound youth would stray much farther from the truth. The fact remains, however, that besides encouraging those in the campus ministry to continue their efforts, we should consider new avenues of approach to help them become more effective in their work.

In this connection I would encourage you to read an article entitled, "Evangelical Living and Learning Centers: A Proposal," that was published by Frank C. Nelsen in the May 26, 1972, issue of *Christianity Today*. Dr. Nelsen, who is an assistant professor at the University of Wisconsin—Milwaukee, has suggested that the church consider erecting near state universities buildings in which Christian students could live and take their meals and where they would also take courses and seminars in the Bible, theology, apologetics, philosophy, etc. during their stay at the Christian center.

Professor Nelsen's suggestion may be too complex and too costly for us to embark upon at the present time, and it contains certain features which we would find inconsistent with our fellowship principles, but there is no reason why we cannot adopt some of his proposals to our present campus pastor program. What a blessing it would be, for instance, if our Synod would develop interesting and pertinent Bible courses that deal with the problems which most plague our students at secular schools and which could be studied by our students under the direction of a campus pastor. What a source of counsel and encouragement our students would have if there were available for informal discussions a theologically-trained man who could investigate honestly, but scripturally with them the conflicts between church and college. And how much more effective our witness program on campus would be if our students took the lead and became informed, encouraged, and emboldened voices that spoke the message of Christianity in front of their classmates and professors.

It may seem to some, though, that what we are proposing is too visionary to be considered seriously. To those people we would recall the words of Solomon: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." (Prov. 29:18) If the Word of God becomes forgotten and the people of God do not have it to guide their lives, there can only be spiritual disaster. That is what is happening today on the campuses where our young people hear the wisdom of this world without the balancing and correcting influence of God's wisdom. Our Christian vision, then, must see clearly enough to realize that we have to take whatever steps are necessary to keep the divine vision of forgiveness and salvation before our young people at a most critical time in their lives.

One way to put the needs of our youths on secular campuses into proper perspective is to view them as uncollected congregations. Imagine, if you will, what we would do if we had several congregations, ranging in size from 100 to 800 communicants, who had no pastor to proclaim the Word of life to them. It is quite obvious that we would take the necessary steps to call into their midst men who were equipped to provide for their particular needs. Well, that is what our young people on various state colleges represent — congregations of as many as 100 to 800 communicants who are without spiritual leadership. Let us, therefore, begin now to train and send men to serve these spiritually besieged soldiers of Christ's army.

## Athens and Our Own Academies

We have, to this point in this essay, concerned ourselves with a discussion of the impact that secular learning has upon the trust our young people place in the wisdom of God. While that is a major concern, the application of the Scripture passages we have used as our guidelines does not end there. Let us take just a few minutes to consider the effect that the allure of the secular institutions may have upon those in the Church who are charged with training our future pastors and teachers.

When a vacancy at one of our institutions of higher learning occurs or when a new professorship is created, a "Call for Nominations" appears in *The Northwestern Lutheran*, and the members of the Synod are asked to nominate qualified candidates to fill the respective offices. The list of nominees is then published in *The Northwestern Lutheran* and the members of our Synod are invited to express in writing their knowledge of or feelings about any of the nominees. This system gives the entire Synod an opportunity to participate in determining who shall be entrusted with instructing its future pastors and teachers and serves as a type of "check-and-balances" for the confessional caliber of our prospective professors.

One thing we have observed in this excellent procedure that gives us pause, however, is a note that has, of late, accompanied more and more of the "Calls for Nominations." This note usually states something to the effect that the man called "will be granted the opportunity to engage in graduate study" or "should be willing to take additional courses" to qualify himself for the position. The reaction I feel to such phrases is, I must confess, one of mixed emotions.

It is encouraging, on the one hand, to see that our boards of control are concerned with "continuously upgrading" the quality of instruction offered at our institutions. Since most of our prospective professors have received their education at these institutions, they usually have not had the courses in their undergraduate program or the experience in their parish work to qualify them to teach on the college or seminary level. And being "apt to teach" (I Tim. 3:2; cp. II Tim. 2:24) requires, as a close study of Paul's words reveals, both the ability to learn for oneself as well as the capability of imparting one's knowledge to others. Our professors, therefore, must be thoroughly knowledgeable about the subjects they are to teach, and those who oversee our institutions show that they are cognizant of this fact. In addition, our boards of control want to steer away from "academic inbreeding" at our higher institutions. Men whose only source of knowledge and pattern for presentation have been the professors under whom they studied 10, 20, or more years earlier are not always able to match the acumen or vitality of their predecessors without additional study. Without further training, then, it could easily happen that the content and the approach of the courses which new professors teach could become sterile and insubstantial.

There is another side of the picture, however; and it is this aspect that causes some uneasiness. Perhaps we can best express the concern we feel over our professors continuing their education by asking the question: "Where — where will our men continue their studies?" This may seem to be an indifferent matter when it comes to a man studying the basic facts of history, the terminology of the new math, or the literary works of one of the masters. (I personally feel, however, that history and literature courses are most critical subjects since they involve interpretation of life and life philosophy.) The question of who will teach our professors may not even alarm us when the man we have called is to delve into the mysteries of science. (We would assume that anyone who has been theologically-trained in our circles could detect and reject the heresies attendant upon evolution.) But what about those who are requested to further their knowledge of such "speculative" and "subtle" subjects as psychology or counseling and guidance, the theory of learning or innovations in education? The humanism and secularism that permeates these disciplines is not always so obvious and overt; and the desire to be "professional" in what we may erroneously consider an indifferent matter could lead our men to adopt a worldly approach that is inconsistent with the Christian message. It could thus result that in the very attempt to improve our educational institutions we could well be inviting the first "drops of poison" to enervate its Christian character.

What I am suggesting, then, is that we rethink carefully our present policies about graduate study for our called professors. Of paramount importance is a careful survey of the institutions at which these men continue their studies. It is worthy of serious reflection that of the 40 men at our two colleges who have done graduate work, only three of these men — to the best of my knowledge — have carried on their studies at what we could term a "Christian institution" — and two of these three were working toward an advanced degree in music. The "separateness" of our position, particularly as it pertains to Christian education over against worldly learning, dare never be discarded, disregarded, or diminished.

Let no one here feel that this is in essence a plea to do nothing. I personally commend any steps our boards of control take to help us offer the very best education possible for our future pastors and teachers; but I cannot condone any action that will militate against the essential Christian nature of that education. We also recognize how difficult it is to find an institution that teaches the academic subjects from the divine perspective. But sending our men to a certain institution for graduate study just because that particular institution happens to be inexpensive, conveniently located, or amicable toward our synodical graduates is not a sound or sanctified approach to upgrading our educational system. We need to search out those institutions that most closely approximate our "peculiar" philosophy of education and then direct our men to such schools. Even when choosing supposedly Christian schools we should beware that they are not Christian in name only and that their philosophy does not just seem to be Christian. Many so-called Christian schools profess to start from the Christian viewpoint but in practice they still espouse the world's thinking. This duplicity only makes these supposedly Christian schools more dangerous since their error takes on a Christian disguise and can more easily deceive the uninformed or unwary. The recent history of those church bodies with whom we once walked arm-in-arm in fellowship stands as a stern warning that those who do not maintain the separateness of the Christian wisdom will soon share in the destruction of the world's wisdom. As one of the world's own men has told us, "Those who would not learn from history are doomed to repeat it."

#### Day School Teachers at Secular Institutions

What we have just said applies with equal force to congregational boards of education as they fulfill their responsibilities. Many congregations share in the synodical desire to upgrade the quality of instruction in our circles and thus encourage or even require



their teachers to engage in a graduate program. We can again commend the zeal which is exhibited, for anything that is done in the name of Christ is to be done to the very best of our abilities. Just because we have Christian day schools does not mean that we can afford to be shoddy or careless in our approach outside of religion classes. As Professor Elton Trueblood has stated in another connection, "Holy shoddy is still shoddy!" It cannot be stressed too strongly, however, that our local boards of education and congregational teachers weigh carefully all that they learn in secular institutions. If we allow our guard to relax, Satan may insidiously corrode the Christ-centered foundation of our schools.

If that sounds to you like too general and sweeping a statement to make, let us get down to cases. Consider, as an example, the method most commonly employed to determine the textbook series that our day schools will select for the various courses. More often than not, the approach we take is one that combines the desire to correlate our instruction with that of the public schools and the wish to allow our teachers freedom to use the new methodology they have learned in secular education courses. Our starting-point, then, is a consideration of what is current, what the world recognizes as authoritative, what is innovative or in step with the latest this world's wisdom has to offer. Just by using these criteria we could be turning away from Christ-centered education and adopting textbooks, methodology, motivation, etc. that are humanistic at best and atheistic at worst.

It is imperative, therefore, that our day school teachers and our boards of education be on guard against incipient "worldliness," whether in an area as seemingly "objective" as mathematics or in subjects that clearly require "interpretation," such as social studies and science. Our day school teachers especially stand in a most precarious position: They are, on the one hand, the recognized experts in our congregations upon whom we rely for direction and guidance in improving our day schools; but they are also, on the other hand, daily beset by pressures from within and without to be "professional" in the world's sense of the word. Only a close application of the truths of God's Word will keep our day schools from becoming imbued with humanism. Only an educational system that begins, continues, and ends with Christ can open the eyes of our children to see the stumbling-blocks that secular learning would throw before them.

#### Educational Autonomy for Christian Academies

There is a final application which I feel constrained to make before leaving this subject. In view of what we have said about the separation that exists between our philosophy of education and that of this world, it seems to me that there should be a change in our approach to institutional accreditation and teacher certification. In our Synod we have established our own day schools simply because we want to raise our children according to the will of God, something which the world not only cannot do, but against which its educational system actually militates. We also maintain a teacher-training facility here at Dr. Martin Luther College because we believe that only those who follow the principles of education as laid down by God's Word are properly equipped to teach the children of God. How, then, can we capitulate and allow different states to tell us what our teachers have to take in the way of courses before they are qualified to instruct our children in one of our own schools? How, then, can we submit to the various state legislatures when it comes to setting up the curriculum for our own day schools?

I am not saying that we should ignore the injunctions of the Lord which tell us to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's" (Matt. 22:21) and to "be subject unto the higher powers." (Rom. 13:1) What we should recognize, however, is that there is a point at which we have to determine that "we ought to obey God, rather than man" (Acts 5:29), and that point may well have been reached in the area of Christian education. Now may be the time that we have to assert our "separateness" before the world and test in court our responsibility and right to carry out our programs of education according to God's will. No one who bases his approach to education merely on the wisdom of man is qualified to tell us how to establish Christian teacher-training colleges, how to prepare men and women who are "apt to teach" according to God's standards, or how to set up day school curriculum in which God is glorified in all things.

The time has come, I feel, that we must assert what we believe to be the scripturally correct way to train our teachers and educate our children. The world may not agree with our stand, they might not honor our programs, and they probably won't accede to our wishes; and yet, if we are right according to Scripture — as I believe we are — then we dare not allow Caesar to regulate what Christ commands. It is true that, as far as in us lies, we are to "live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18), but I feel that "peaceful coexistence" with the world in the matter of education is no longer possible.

#### Conclusion

Much of what we have discussed in this essay has, admittedly, been polemical in nature; that is, we have often struck a negative note and have frequently sounded the alarm in some areas and even attacked opponents in others. However, in taking this approach we have not attempted to erect "straw men" with whom we could duel theologically without fear of riposte; rather, we have tried to allow Scripture to enlighten us that we might recognize the very real foes we face in the arena of secular education.

We realize that polemical writing is not very popular these days, but Scripture shows us that it is still a most important and necessary aspect of theological discussion. Consider how often Christ Himself sprinkled His conversations with phrases such as, "Beware of," "Woe unto," "Take heed of," etc. (Matt. 7:15, Mark 9:42; Luke 8:18; etc.) In addition, the inspired writers whom Christ called to convey His message of truth to the New Testament Church repeatedly inform us that we need to examine closely all the teachings of man that come to us in the guise of truth. (Rom. 16:17, 18; I John 4:1; II John 9, 10, etc.)

The polemics in the scriptural passages which we have discussed remind us, first of all, that we dare not give in to the currently popular philosophy which would have us "forget our differences and emphasize our similarities." The Church of Christ must ever recognize that it cannot walk shoulder-to-shoulder and stride-for-stride with the people of this world: You and I march to the beat of a different drummer. Our marching orders come from Christ Himself. To ignore His commands to be "separate" and to seek peace with this world's leaders would be surrender of the most shameful and fatal kind.

In no area is it more imperative for us to maintain our "separateness" than in our approach to education. The passages to which we have looked for guidelines have been consistent in asserting that the teachings of man are incompatible with the wisdom of God. The philosophy of education that views man as the tailless and trousered ape and religion as nothing more than one of the neuroses of mankind cannot in any way accord with the divine revelation that teaches us to base our education on the eternal verities of sin and grace. We Christians must, therefore, keep the concept of "separateness" ever before our members, especially as we help our young people to grow in faith and knowledge.

A second principle that must guide all our activities in relation to secular education is a recognition that the world will hate us for drawing attention to the differences which exist between us and them. The world's hatred may take a more sophisticated form than in the Apostolic Age, and we shall not have to fear for the moment the threat of reprisals such as being thrown to the lions; but bearing that hate will be no less painful for our young people, for they will endure scorn, insults, and ostracism when they confess their confidence in Christ.

Of prime importance to us, therefore, is the task of helping our young people to grow in spiritual wisdom and understanding as well as in the knowledge of Christ. The light of God's Word must be used to show our youth how to evaluate all that the world sets up as truth, and this calls for us to improve and expand the educational programs we now offer our young people at secular institutions. Only a full understanding of God's Word will teach them that bearing the world's hostility is part of the Christian calling; and only an appreciation of the depths of Christ's love will strengthen them to endure that hostility at all times.

Christian education as we have outlined it in this essay is going to be costly — both in terms of dollars-and-cents and in respect to the time and effort we shall have to expend. However, nothing is more precious to us than the young souls whom God has committed to our care; and nothing is more impelling than the love of Christ which dwells in us and shows us that it is the will of our heavenly Father that not one of these little ones should perish. (Matt. 18:1—14) It is imperative, therefore, that as we seek to safeguard our young people against the perils of secular education we count the cost in spiritual rather than financial terms. Then we shall willingly rededicate ourselves to do whatever is necessary to "teach them diligently."

## Introduction: The Adult as Student

One of the remarkable features of American life these days is the great number of people who are involved in what is commonly called "continuing education." A recent survey showed that about 30% of the people currently enrolled in our public colleges and universities are in "continuing education" programs. What this means, basically, is that these people are not full-time students involved in a regular undergraduate program; instead, they are men and women who usually hold down full-time jobs and attend school only after 4:00 p.m. Their reasons for attending afternoon and night classes vary greatly, ranging all the way from taking classes in the hope of getting promotions on the job to simply wanting to know more about the world in which they live.

As we consider the tremendous interest that many adults today have in "continuing education," at least as far as secular subjects are concerned, we cannot help but recall Christ's words at the end of the parable of the unjust steward. (Luke 16:1–8) That is the parable, you will recall, in which a servant who is about to be dismissed by his lord for mismanaging the estate reduces the bills of all his lord's debtors and thus obligates those debtors to care for him after he has been dismissed. While that parable is somewhat enigmatic to many people, its meaning becomes clear when our Lord concludes by saying: "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." (Luke 16:8)

What Christ is commending in that particular parable is not, of course, the dishonesty of which the servant was guilty. He, whose meat was to do the will of Him that sent Him, (John 4:34) would not contradict even by way of suggestion any of the dictates which His Father had laid down in the Moral Law. What Jesus is saying is that the people of this world are often wiser in striving after their unrighteous or temporal goals than are we who seek the kingdom of God. We can, therefore, take a lesson from them in certain ways, especially when it comes to showing zeal and judgment as we strive to promote the glory of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Pet. 2:9)

One of the areas particularly in which we can take a page from this world's book is "continuing education." The Christian, who realizes that faith and the manifold blessings which the Holy Ghost imparts to those who have faith come only from the Word of God, (Rom. 10:17) will want to be a diligent student of that Word throughout his life. In our third essay on Christian education, therefore, we shall consider this question on the basis of God's Word:

### III. Do We Have "Continuing Education" In Our Congregations?

#### Ephesians 4:11–16

If any among us have any doubts about the need for "continuing education" within the Church, we can give them no better advice than to reread Paul's inspired words in Ephesians 4:11–16. There the apostle writes:

"And He [Christ] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ; till we all come in the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things which is the Head, even Christ, from whom the whole body, fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

We usually turn to this passage from Ephesians when we want to demonstrate that the office of the ministry is a divinely instituted office; and there is no doubt that these words are well-suited to show just that. However, we should not allow that glorious truth about the ministry, which shines forth so brightly here, to blind us to an equally important truth which this passage contains. Beginning with verse 12 of our text, Paul shows why Christ instituted the various forms of the ministry which the apostle had mentioned in the preceding verse.

The Holy Ghost revealed to Paul that Christ's reason for instituting the office of the ministry was two-fold: First of all, that the saints or believers might be led to maturity and thus might be able to join in the work of the Church; and secondly, that the entire body of Christ might be edified or built up in the faith.

One important truth in this passage that we dare not rush past is that our Lord is vitally concerned with strengthening those who are already in the Church. In particular, we should focus upon the fact that He is desirous of having those who already believe so strengthened that they might become active in His work. That is what Paul points out when he refers to Christ's first purpose in establishing the office of the ministry: "For the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry." (The King James Version, which breaks up this clause by the insertion of a comma, gives the impression that Paul is here mentioning two different and distinct purposes of the ministry. It is better, therefore, to follow the New American Standard Version which translates the first part of verse 12 as follows: "For the equipping of the saints for the work of service.")

Paul does not envision the *Una Sancta* as it manifests itself in visible congregations as being a regimented institution in which only a select few in the ecclesiastical hierarchy were qualified for or entrusted with the sacred responsibility of proclaiming the grace of God. Rather, the Holy Spirit revealed to him that the work of the ministry is the shared responsibility of all whom Christ has apprehended by faith. An important task of the full-time workers, therefore, is to train and equip the full-time Christians to join them in carrying Christ's saving name to men everywhere.

After setting forth this "perfecting" principle in very abstract terms, Paul continues in verse 13 by giving a concrete example which shows why such "equipping" of the saints is so vital and necessary. He compares the life of the Christian to the life of a growing person. New converts to the faith, even if they are mature adults chronologically-speaking, can initially be considered little children when it comes to religious development; for these converts are usually quite limited in biblical knowledge and spiritual understanding. They are in need of a steady diet of the Word of life to bring them to a higher level of spiritual maturity and religious "muscle." It is only through continual growth in spiritual matters that they can avoid falling prey to every alluring and appealing doctrine of men that comes their way.

Intertwined with this basic picture of Christians as growing children Paul uses two additional images that are especially instructive for our purposes. He speaks, first of all, of immature Christians as a rudderless ship in the turbulent sea of this sinful world, tossed to and fro by the winds of false doctrine and eventually destroyed by the wind and sea unless help comes. Secondly, the apostle compares the errorists and false teachers of this world to charlatans and "con men" who can mislead all those who have not been warned in advance and are not prepared to meet such deceit. Both of these striking pictures show most graphically just how important it is that Christians, even those who have been long-standing members of the body of Christ, grow in grace and knowledge from day to day.

Christ's second purpose in instituting the office of the ministry — that of edifying His body — develops quite naturally out of the first. In connection with this second purpose Paul employs a picture with which we are all familiar, the Church as the body of Christ. He uses this picture here, however, to impress upon us the truth that Christ's body has not yet been built up to either the strength or size that the Lord desires. Christ therefore established the ministry that others, who are not yet members of His body, might come to know Him as their Savior.

The "edifying" principle which Paul spells out here is not an end in itself however. Christ is not merely interested in adding numbers to His body; rather, He is concerned that each new soul in turn becomes a living member of that body. Thus this text really takes us full circle, for as the body of Christ is edified when new members are added to it by faith, so each of those members is to be perfected to carry out the work of Christ's body. In a very real sense, then, the educational task of the Church is never completed.

#### Ephesians 6:10–17

While there are many aspects of Ephesians 4:11–16 over which we could linger with benefit, time compels us to move on to consider one of Paul's most famous pictures, that in Ephesians 6:10–17. There the apostle uses the following image to impress upon us the importance of continuing Christian education:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. Put on the whole armor of God that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand. Stand, therefore, having your loins girt about with truth; and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked; and take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

In order to catch more clearly the imagery which Paul here employs, imagine for a moment that you are a soldier back in Paul's day and are about to prepare yourself for battle. You would not simply jump into your fatigues, slap on your helmet, and grab your M-1 as the soldiers of our modern armies do. Because of the nature of warfare and weaponry in the apostle's time, your accouterments would be quite different. You would put on a breastplate to protect your chest, a type of girdle to cover your lower torso, and shoes that afforded both protection and mobility. You would then don a helmet, place a shield over one arm, and finally pick up your sword.

In considering the meaning of this picture which Paul holds up for our edification, we can do no better than to reflect on Luther's comments concerning this passage. They are still classic; and they read in part:

"First of all, the loins are to be girt about with truth; that means, they are to lead an upright life, in all sincerity, free from any hypocrisy . . . . After this first requisite, the elimination of all hypocrisy, is assured, there must then follow that the Christian protect his bosom with the breastplate of righteousness; that means, an approving conscience, namely, that the Christian live a blameless life, injure no one, so that no one may accuse him justly . . . . [Having your

feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel of peace] means, in summary, that if you are willing to be a Christian and to live rightly in the world, then you will progress in patience. . . .”

After thus describing the armor with which we Christians protect ourselves, Luther then goes on to comment on the weapons by which we parry and mount an offensive in the fight of faith:

“[The devil’s] darts are called fiery darts which burn and penetrate, piercing the heart so as to weaken life and a good conscience, even as wax is melted by the fire. . . . At such a time we must take a weapon of defense, we must take a good and strong shield. . . . This shield, as Paul himself points out, is faith, which clings to the Word of Christ, takes hold of the Savior, and answers the devil: ‘Though I be a sinner and have an imperfect life, both in what I have committed and what I have omitted, yet there is a perfectly holy One, clean and pure, who has given Himself for me and has died for me.’ . . . The helmet of salvation is the hope and expectation of another life, the life in heaven above, for the sake of which we believe in Christ and suffer all things, and without which we could not endure all the blows with which Christians are attacked by those who seek their body and life. . . . [The sword of the Spirit] is the final and most powerful weapon of our warfare, . . . for . . . it is not sufficient that we guard ourselves against the foe and may defend ourselves when he attacks us, . . . but it is for us also to grasp the weapon of offense, with which we can pursue the enemy and put him to flight. . . . Every Christian should use this sword in hearing the Word, reading it, singing it, speaking it, and meditating upon it.”

One cannot read these comments of Luther without realizing that this servant of the Lord clearly understood the seriousness of the fight of faith which every Christian has to wage. We fight against a well-organized and well-trained enemy who will be satisfied with nothing less than the eternal destruction of our souls. We need “the whole armor of God,” including the weapons for offense as well as defense, if we are to wage a successful fight. Our only hope of victory is to have God’s grace arm and strengthen us as His Holy Spirit perfects and equips us through the continual study of His inspired Word.

There are few pictures in all of Scripture which impress upon us as forcefully and as convincingly as does this one the need for continuing education among all the members of the body of Christ!

#### Acts 20:28

As a way of summarizing what Paul spelled out in some detail in his letter to the congregation at Ephesus, we might turn now to his oral charge to that assembly of believers shortly before he left them. St. Luke has recorded Paul’s final instructions to the elders (i.e., pastors,) in Acts 20:28:

“Take heed therefore unto yourselves and to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the Church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood.”

The brevity of this text should not in any way deceive us about the importance of the matters it sets forth. Paul here speaks to the elders as pastors in the most basic sense of that word. He uses the image of a shepherd caring for his flock to show the close and personal relationship that is to exist between a pastor and his congregation. We should not get the impression, though, that this personal relationship is an end in itself. As desirable and blessed as that closeness is in its own right, we are to recognize that Paul emphasizes above all what results from such a relationship — the careful feeding of the flock in accord with its needs.

Several features in Paul’s picture bear close scrutiny either because of the way the apostle stresses them or the manner in which he presents them. The first is the use of the word “all.” In the Greek, as in our English translation, this word is in the first or emphatic position; Paul is bringing special stress to bear upon the fact that “all the flock” is to be the pastoral concern of the shepherd whom God the Holy Ghost calls to watch over it. Sometimes, as a result of a misunderstanding of Christ’s words to Peter in John 21:15–17, we in the Church feel that we should single out children as our one and only object of concern in Christian education. As a result, we tend to overlook the Good Shepherd’s injunction to feed His “sheep,” or more mature believers, as well. Paul corrects such misunderstanding when he puts the word “all” in the emphatic position in his exhortation. All — old as well as young — are to be the recipients of the blessings of the Church’s educational program.

The second main feature in this text is the injunction which our version translates with the word “feed.” Although there is justification for this particular rendering, it might have been preferable if the Authorized Version scholars had been a little more faithful to the root of the original. The Greek word in our text, *poimaino*, has as its most basic meaning, “to shepherd” or “to do the work of a shepherd.” Some may feel that there is little actual difference between that basic meaning and the way our version translates it, for the work of a shepherd is to feed his sheep. While that is true, feeding the flock is only part of the shepherd’s responsibility. A shepherd also watched over the activities of the sheep and kept an eye out for any danger or foe that might threaten their welfare. What is more, even the feeding process itself was not a matter of “spoon-feeding,” as if the shepherd poured the food down the passive throats of the sheep or threw fodder into troughs before them. Rather, the shepherd searched out the green pastures and still waters and led the sheep to them (Ps. 23:1, 2), but the sheep themselves did the grazing.

If it seems that we are carrying Paul's imagery a bit too far or are involving ourselves in theological nit-picking, let us remember that what we have just pointed out is in line with Paul's own words in our text. The apostle states that the Holy Ghost has made the elders of Ephesus "overseers" (*episkopos*). This word, which originally sprang into use in the civil courts, means exactly what the term "overseer" implies — one who sees or watches over the affairs of a designated area of responsibility, in this case, a congregation. We do not mean to say, by pointing this out, that pastors are to be excused if they don't discharge their duties faithfully, as if it were strictly the members' responsibility to see that they feed themselves on the Word of life. Not at all! God's words about calling ministers to give an account one day for the souls entrusted to their care are too serious to be dismissed so lightly. What we are saying, though, is that the members themselves have the parallel responsibility to partake of the spiritual food which the pastor places before them in a sermon, to which he would lead them during a Bible class, or on which he would have them meditate in home readings. Too often we look upon adult education as an adiaphoron, but that is not the case — either as Scripture pictures the leading of the pastor or the following of the congregation. (John 10:25–29; Acts 10:33; Phil. 2:12)

### Scriptural Guidelines

The truths which we have heard in the three passages under consideration should not come as new or startling revelations to any of us. Most of us have heard these passages often enough before to say that we are conversant with them and the substance of what they teach. It is still in place, however, to ask ourselves if we have in the past listened to these passages with a readiness of will as well as with an attentiveness of ears. As we reflect on the educational agencies within our individual congregations, for instance, can we say that we have translated these passages from words on the page in the Book of Life to programs for continuing education in the lives of our congregations?

The first principle that these passages set before us and that might require us to realign our congregational priorities is that each member of the body of Christ is to be involved in continuing education for applying the truth that the Christian is to be a student of God's Word. It is almost as if we feel that once a person has been confirmed — or at least when he is beyond the age of high school or college — that the Church has no corporate responsibility for his spiritual growth. Nor do we feel that we have scriptural grounds for admonishing an adult member if he does not exhibit any interest in such agencies as the Bible class.

Paul knew no such limitations, however, for in each of the passages we have considered the apostle sees no difference between believers when it comes to their need for religious education. He states without qualification that each member of the body of Christ, be he young and spiritually immature or old and scripturally proficient, is to continue to use the Word of truth to unfold the manifold riches of God's grace. He teaches that the Word of God is to be a living part of each member's day.

Perhaps we have been somewhat remiss in the area of continuing education because we have not always recognized as we should that temptations and falling from faith are not dangers exclusive to the young. The temptations which beset our young people seem to be getting more "press" these days, it is true, for the world loves to analyze, visualize, and publicize the sordidness of "spectacular" sins; and it does not sell many newspapers or make very exciting movies to depict the gradual erosion of an average person's faith and his slow drift into spiritual ennui. But Paul pictures each Christian, regardless of age, as being subject to the attacks of unrighteousness and in need of an on-going program of Bible study.

This leads us to the second principle that we found running through all of our guiding texts. Paul spelled out in some detail and with striking pictures the role that polemics is to have in our continuing education programs. We touched upon this matter at the end of the second essay, so it is not necessary to elaborate too much farther on this point today. It cannot be impressed too firmly on our minds, however, that the Church is to use polemics as well as apologetics in its programs of education. One of the basic reasons why continuing education is so necessary is just because our members continually encounter theological gainsayers. The Church must, therefore, give its members the weapons that enable them to contend successfully with their spiritual foes. It must uncover errorists, refute their argument, point out their deadly consequences, and reaffirm the knowledge of what is right and holy.

We can get a clearer insight into the need for continuing education if we remember that the word which our texts translated as "edify" is a term from the construction trade and has as its most basic meaning that of building up, especially in reference to a temple. In Paul's day temples, to which the apostle often compares Christians, constantly needed to be built up again because of various factors which weakened or tore down parts of them. In the same way we Christians continually need to be edified, for the devil, the world, and our own sinful flesh are daily tearing away at our faith. The Church dare never, therefore, be concerned only with imparting a few basic facts about the way to salvation; it must also direct itself to edifying all its members in the fulness of the Gospel.

If all our members are continually built up through a diligent program of studying God's Word, then we shall more nearly arrive at one of the principal goals of continuing education — equipping our members for service to Christ. One of the great blessings of the early Church was that its members shared a Christ-like concern for all the other members of the body and for those who were not yet in that body. This "corporate" feeling led them to reach out and strengthen their fellow-believers (Acts 2:42) and to share their beliefs with their fellow-men (Acts 4:20). For far too long we have allowed to stand as valid the unscriptural bromide, "That's the pastor's job," whenever we see that the Church is failing to edify its own members or enlist new ones. Part of our educational thrust, therefore, must be to educate our own members to see and share in the high calling that Christ sets before each of us when He brings us into the fellowship of faith.

## Checking Our Educational Pulse

How do we determine whether or not we have in our congregations the kind of “continuing education” described by the passages we have just considered? That may be a rather difficult question to answer satisfactorily, for the very nature of continuing education does not lend itself to the customary modes of evaluation. In other areas of congregational life we keep records, compile statistics, and establish yardsticks by which to measure our performances. For instance, most congregations carefully work out budgets, record exactly what they take in and send out each week, and even keep track of how much the individual members contribute. In addition, our congregations usually keep current records of congregational church attendance and individual communion reception, and these, especially the latter, are watched closely by the elders and pastors.

The fact that both financial and attendance statistics are kept indicates that we feel it is important to check by one means or another our spiritual pulse. We can accept these statistics as being one of the ways in which pastors and congregations try to fulfill the awesome responsibility that Paul mentions in Acts 20:28. What we would suggest, though, is that the concern we feel in those areas should also carry over into other areas of the faith-life of our members, especially to continuing education.

Some may feel that we are already checking our continuing education pulse since pastors and elders usually keep informed on the church attendance of members. While there is no doubt that growth through hearing the Word in sermons is one aspect of continuing education, such checks on attendance at church represent an evaluation of less than 1% of the time we have for continuing education. Limiting our checks to church attendance alone can also lead us to the mistaken notion that if our members are regularly in church that they are automatically continuing their spiritual education in other ways. What is more, most of the time that a person’s church attendance comes under consideration is when that person is on the verge of being considered “delinquent.” In other words, our present concern most often shows itself not in measuring whether a person is being taught diligently through continuing education, but if he is turning delinquent because of continuing absences. We, in short, have too often in the past limited our concern to becoming alarmed only after it appears that the pulse of faith is getting weak.

A more positive and productive way to check our educational pulse is to ask ourselves two simple questions: What do our congregations offer the confirmed members in the way of continuing education? How many of our confirmed members take advantage of the educational opportunities afforded them?

## Education beyond Confirmation

Let us begin by considering the educational agencies designed for the age-group that first qualifies for and often most needs continuing instruction — those who have just been confirmed. It may seem strange that we say the new confirmands are often most in need of continuing education, but such a statement can easily be justified. For one thing, let us remember into what kind of educational system we usually send our young people who have just been confirmed. In our second essay we considered the undeniably atheistic approach that public education takes to all learning, and just the prospect of sending our children into such an a-religious environment for most of the day should impress upon us the need for continuing education for the new confirmands.

There is another reason, though, why we can say that the newly confirmed need continuing education. As we have stated a number of times previously, there is a prevailing attitude in some of our congregations which holds that confirmation instruction is the conclusion of all religious education. It is almost as if a great many of our members feel that beyond confirmation there is little more in the area of scriptural knowledge that is necessary or available. If we are to follow in our congregations the principle of continuing and edifying education that we learned from Scripture, it is essential, then, that we impress upon our young people and their parents the need for going from faith to faith. (II Cor. 8:7; 10:15; Rom. 1:17) And we can do no better toward establishing a program of continuing education than to begin by making provisions for the continued spiritual growth of our confirmands.

One of the best ways to exhibit to both confirmands and their parents the need for continuing education is by holding up for their consideration Paul’s words in Colossians 2:6–8:

“As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him: Rooted and built up in Him and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, abounding therein with thanksgiving. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.”

This selection from Scripture states so concisely and forthrightly the absolute necessity of a continuing education program for all our members, starting with our young people. Paul here gives both the positive blessing of growing in the grace and knowledge of Christ and the negative warning of guarding ourselves and our children against the deceit of this world.

## Education That Fits the Need

How are we to see that our children are “built up in Christ and stablished in the faith?” One of the obvious solutions is, of course, working toward increased attendance of our young people at the Bible class. Having our children attend the Bible class, even if it is a Bible class that is more specifically intended for adults, has the advantage of bringing our youth into congregational life at an earlier age and of having them grapple with the Church’s concerns.

Those who conduct a combined Bible class know, though, that there are certain limitations to the effectiveness of such a class with the younger members. For one thing, the teacher is continually trying to reach two different age-levels, each of which has a different level of understanding as well as differences in interests and concerns. Then, too, we often find that our young people are "intimidated" by the presence of adults, especially of their own parents, and will not as readily ask the questions that are bothering them or discuss the matters that are weighing on their hearts. It is much preferable, therefore, if our congregations can provide a separate Bible class for the high school and college age youth.

#### Education That Comes When Needed

We should not feel, however, that just because we have in our congregations Bible classes for the young as well as the adult members that we are satisfactorily carrying out a program of continuing education. Even when our youth have their own Bible class there is not always the time or the occasion to discuss each of the questions that trouble our young; nor can the needs of the youth be provided for as they arise. For instance, many young people might hesitate to speak up because they feel that their problem is too personal a matter or is not of sufficient interest to all in the class to be discussed; or by Sunday morning the disturbing features of something they learned in a science lecture the previous Tuesday may have become more acceptable in their minds, or the alluring temptations of the Friday night date may now be less revolting to them. Thus, the nourishment which the Bible class affords might be least available when our young people have their most pressing need.

What this ought to impress upon us most clearly is that parents dare never assume that a Sunday morning Bible class is providing for the full needs of their children. As we mentioned in our first essay, parents are still responsible for the spiritual growth of their children; and their responsibility includes directing the lives of their children through regular study of God's Word in the homes. Our parents cannot conclude that they have fulfilled their obligations as parents just because they are interested in their children's academic endeavors or athletic activities. Of supreme importance for parents of young people in high school or college should be the spiritual growth of those children.

In this respect we might do well to take a cue from the "early morning Bible study hour" which one of the sects in my city has instituted for its youth. This church group has overcome all the standard objections — such as time, transportation, teachers, and facilities — and has gathered a great number of its young people to study God's Word before those youth go off to the local high schools each day. Such a proposal is, admittedly, quite innovative in our circles; but it is imperative that we do something, either at home or through the church, in order to fulfill our scriptural obligation of providing continuing education for our youth.

#### Delegating Responsibility

Whatever approach we choose to adopt in our individual congregations, whether it is church-run or home-oriented, several things should be clear: First of all, there is a definite, scriptural need to do something! Secondly, we ought to delegate to some board within our congregations the responsibility of overseeing the effectiveness of the program we adopt.

The logical board with which to place this responsibility is the congregation's Board of Education. This board could, with the help of the pastor, compile a list of all the young people of high school and college age. Then they could take an inventory of what those young people are doing spiritually as far as can be determined: How many are regular in church and communion attendance; what percent faithfully attend a Bible class and the young people's society's discussion meetings; what number are becoming souls for whom the board feels a concern about their spiritual welfare. Using such criteria, or any others that the board would want to draw up for themselves, those men entrusted with the responsibility of overseeing the youth could make a quarterly or even monthly review of their findings and determine what steps are necessary to improve the situation.

This does not mean, however, that parents would thereby be relieved of their scriptural obligations. It would quite naturally be the parents through whom the responsible board works to correct and counsel those young people who appear to be back-sliding. But simply having a board within the congregation to oversee the young people will keep the need for continuing education before all the members and will more likely result in positive action being taken in that area.

#### Where Are the 94½%

Let us turn our attention now to consider what we offer to our adult members in the area of "continuing education." The first agency that comes to mind is again the Bible class, and there is no doubt that Bible classes are still one of the most effective educational programs that we have in our congregations. These classes afford our adult members the opportunity to join their pastor and/or teachers in an in-depth study of the different books of God's Word, in a consideration of what God has revealed about current religious issues, or in a discussion of some other timely topics on which the Lord has spoken.

While such Bible classes are available in just about all of our congregations, what is not so unanimous is the presence of all our adult members. According to the latest "official figures" available, we have 15,327 adults attending Bible class throughout our Synod. Does this strike you — as it does me — as a shamefully low figure for a church body that counts as its great blessing the fact that God has entrusted to it His Word in all its truth and purity? (Even if we add to this total the 8,392 high school students who attend Bible class, our percentage is not the least bit impressive.) We are currently attracting only 5½% of our adult membership synod-wide to classes in which they can search the Scriptures under the leadership of a theologically trained worker.



There are, no doubt, as many reasons to explain this low percentage as there are congregations in our Synod; and we just don't have the time to weigh those 1,001 reasons to see whether or not they are valid. In addition, there are a number of congregations in which the percentage is much, much higher; and we rejoice with those congregations over the success they are experiencing. But one fact still stands out: By-and-large, the Synod that stands for biblical purity has little or nothing to gladden the heart when it comes to biblical study. We are failing to get our members to join with one another and under their called workers' guidance to study the very Word on which they place their hope of eternal life.

It really does no good, either, to protest that many of our members "diligently" study the Bible at home. Scripture gives us both examples and exhortations which show that studying God's Word with others is part of the Christian way of life. Even if we are really convinced that 90% or more of our members study the Bible with all diligence in their homes, think what they could add to the group discussions and to the spiritual growth of the other 10% if they would attend the Bible class.

#### Becoming More "Apt to Teach"

Where are we falling short? Why are we failing to attract our adults to Bible classes? Either we pastors are not offering lively and enlightening Bible classes, or our members do not see the vital need for such classes.

There is, perhaps, an element of truth in both of these answers. Consider, first of all, how precious little time most pastors are able to spend in preparing for their Bible classes. While the average minister allots between 15 and 20 hours each week to write and memorize the next Sunday's sermon, the hour of Bible class quite often gets an hour or less of preparation. Most pastors feel that there are so many other, pressing matters that require their attention that they usually do not have adequate time left to prepare properly for the Bible class. As a result, the Bible class often becomes another hour of "sermonizing," but an hour in which the pastor lectures to the class without being fully prepared to do so in a lively or interesting manner and an hour in which the little group sits rather lifelessly and uninvolved since no questions have been prepared to stimulate them.

How much better it would be if our pastors had time in their schedules each week to spend 10 or more hours preparing Bible class lessons that would truly interest and involve the members. How much more edifying our Bible classes would be if our pastors had the "luxury" of sufficient time to think through their materials more thoroughly and to plan their presentations more effectively. If pastors had the opportunity to prepare themselves to be more "apt to teach," more of our members, without doubt, would be more apt to want to learn.

#### Ministering or "Serving Tables"?

What we are saying does, of course, take us right back to the point at which this essay began: a consideration of the primary needs of our members. God has made it abundantly clear that all our members stand in daily need of strengthening through the power of His Word. Our congregations' programs and our pastors' efforts must be directed at all times to seek out and build up the flock of Christ. If we are not concentrating our talents and our energies upon that important work, we can not say that we are serving the members of the Church according to their needs or the Head of the Church in accord with His will.

We do well in this respect to take a lesson from an incident that took place in the early Church. When the growth of the Church was so rapid and the work of the apostles so multiplied that they could not fulfill satisfactorily all that was formerly expected of them, the twelve sat down with the members of the Church and realigned their priorities. The apostles determined that they should not "leave the Word of God and serve tables." (Acts 6:2) This did not mean that "serving tables," such as administering to the physical needs of the Grecian widows, was not important. Rather, it simply reflected the truth that those who had been trained and instructed to preach the Word of God should not allow other matters to take precedence over the ministry of the Word.

In our midst it appears that this is a lesson which must be reaffirmed. The practical affairs of many congregations — for example, mission congregations just embarking on a building program and self-supporting congregations that have 500 or more communicants — require so much "serving tables" on the part of the pastor that he often wonders just whose "business" he is about, the Father's or the world's. And it is most sad indeed when conducting the affairs of the Church requires more of the time and talents of an administrator of a corporation than the aptitudes and abilities of a minister of Christ.

Our pastors and our congregations need to be reminded — or reeducated, if you will — that there still is no reason why the full-time workers should leave the Word of God to serve tables. Our pastors and teachers should have at their disposal whatever time is necessary to make them more "apt to teach" in their sermons, Bible classes, and other educational programs. Other matters within the Church may be pressing and necessary, it is true; but our members should be given the opportunity to serve the Lord by assuming those responsibilities — responsibilities for which they are often more capable and qualified than our theologically trained workers. Then our workers will have at their disposal the time to study and prepare for their Bible classes in such a way that will make these classes a delight to attend.

#### Becoming More Spiritually-oriented

By making these suggestions we do not mean, though, that our pastors are entirely responsible for the success of the Bible class. The Master Teacher Himself needed more of an audience than row-upon-row of empty pews to make His instruction edifying; He needed the ears and hearts of those who crowded around in the marketplace or on the hillside to heed what He had to say. Spiritual education is still a two-way process, involving one who is "apt to teach" and others who are willing to listen.

In the second area, exhibiting the willingness to learn, the responsibility falls directly on the shoulders of our members. Today a great variety of interests — ranging from school and the job, through entertainment and sports, to weekend jaunts and family outings — clamor for the time and attention of our members. The church simply is no longer the center of life the way it once was 40 or 50 years ago. The church's voice, especially in the area of continuing education, is not being heeded nearly as much as the siren songs of this world. The excuses heard by the man who invited guests to the Great Supper (Luke 14:16–23) are excuses that every pastor here has heard in one form or another when he exhorted members to attend the Bible class. Our members are forgetting God's directives about continuing in the study of His Word.

Part of the task that lies before us as a witnessing Church, therefore, is to exhibit to our own members the need for continuing education in their lives. Scripture has armed us with many a passage that declares the urgency and necessity of growing in the Word of life; and we should declare those portions of God's will as frequently as we proclaim others. Temptations are not peculiar to those under 18; apostasy is not the private domain of the college crowd. Neither is growing in grace and knowledge the special concern of the young; nor is edification the need of only those who are under 30. God speaks to all in the passages we considered; and we all should be responsive to His exhortations to continue in the study of His Word.

We can see how vital it is that our adults continue their spiritual education if we consider the responses we get when we ask our adult members to witness for Christ — something which, as we shall see in our next essay, is part of being a disciple of the Lord. Ask any ten members in our congregations to make an evangelism call, and at least nine of them will confess: "Oh, I couldn't do that. I wouldn't know what to say." Or, "I'm sorry, but I just can't explain to others what we believe. I'm no good at it."

The fact that we have such reluctance, such trepidation, and such lack of ability when it comes to witnessing to others only demonstrates all the more vividly how much our congregations need continuing education. Paul stated that one of the prime purposes for which Christ gave us pastors and teachers was "for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry." If we are to achieve that purpose, what we need is not some "crash" or "quickie" course in "How to Become an Evangelist." Rather, we need to see all our members join us in a diligent and continuing study of God's Word. Dealing directly with God's Word is the most effective way we have of making every member an ambassador for Christ — not to mention the growth in love and knowledge of God, zeal to know and do His will, ability to resist errorists and temptation, etc. that also result from diligent Bible study. Let our members, therefore, read again Paul's confession, "For me to live is Christ," (Phil. 1:21) and let them know that as Christ's Word grows among us, so Christ dwells within us.

### Socializing Versus Edifying

What we have been saying about becoming more spiritually-oriented in our approach to life applies with double emphasis to any agency or organization that we have within the congregation. It makes no difference if we are talking about Pioneers, young people's groups, Ladies Aid Societies, Men's Clubs, or Parent-Teacher Leagues — all these groups should strive to edify their members through a study of the Word of God.

We can evaluate how effectively the organizations we mentioned above are serving as educational agencies by asking what percentage of their meetings is given to Bible study. This does not mean that we have to have so-and-so much time of Bible study in these groups before they are truly educational agencies. Nor are we suggesting that there is no place in the Church for groups that promote fellowship. What we want to guard against, however, is the tendency for socializing to become more important than edifying.

Sometimes, when we consider our church organizations in the light of the passages that have guided us in this essay, we get the uneasy feeling that the religious instruction is the least popular drawing card at their meetings. Further, we occasionally feel that the role of the pastor in these organizations is that of a director of pious entertainment rather than of an instructor in edifying discussions. If that seems to be overstating the case, consider for a moment how we "sell" our organizations to others in the hope of getting them to attend the meetings and join in their projects. We emphasize the fellowship, the worthwhile projects, the interesting outings, etc.; and then, after we have "sold" the program, we add that there is also the opportunity to grow in grace and knowledge through the study of God's Word. It almost seems that we are not sure that any organization can exist only for the purpose of searching the Scriptures; and yet, such an educational end should be our main, if not our only purpose for having organizations within Christ's Church.

### Conclusion

When we add together all the different programs and agencies that our congregations have for educational purposes — including those with a more social cast, as well as those with a strictly edifying purpose — it may appear that we can answer the question of this essay in the affirmative. After all, in addition to the more obvious educational agencies such as the worship services and the Bible classes, most of our congregations have organizations for just about every age-level. In all these organizations there is usually some form of spiritual training.

Let us bear in mind, however, that apart from the weekly sermons which our members hear and the Bible classes which they attend, most of our confirmed adults belong to only one, or at the most two church groups which offer them continuing education, and the majority of these societies meet only once a month. What is more, in these different organizations the main emphasis is as much on fellowship and activities as it is on the close study of God's Word. We can rightly say, therefore, that the main areas in

which the average congregation offers its members regular study of the Word are in the worship services and the Bible classes.

This realization should awaken us to several important points about our programs of Christian education for the adult members. First of all, we cannot be content with attracting only 5½% of the adults to the Bible classes — as we are presently doing. These classes, which constitute the church's one formal agency in which adults can regularly continue their spiritual education — discounting for the moment the sermon — cannot be thought of as optional or unimportant agencies. Not if we take seriously what the Lord tells us in the passages we considered! They are, in essence, the one way we presently help our members become the diligent, informed, and established students of the Word that God both wants and expects them to be.

It is also important for our members to understand that they cannot look to just the Bible class as their one means of growing in grace and understanding. Continuing education cannot be thought of as existing in our congregations according to God's will until all our members are daily searching the Scriptures to strengthen and establish themselves in Christ. Those who, according to the national averages, watch 3½ hours of television each day, spend almost an hour browsing through the evening paper, and scan books and magazines for 30 minutes daily ought to be just as regular and diligent about setting aside a daily time in which the Lord speaks to them.

What Paul said in the passages we used to guide us should also sweep aside any limp excuses our weak flesh might want to offer for not being diligent students. The way in which Paul presented the foe who attacks our faith daily reminds us that it is a long time from Sunday to Sunday, even if we would get 100% of our members in church and at the Bible classes. The temptations and errors with which Satan assails our trust in Christ are more numerous than the hours and minutes in a week. And the old, evil foe does not cease to hurl his fiery darts the moment a person passes his thirtieth, fiftieth, or seventieth birthday. From morning to evening, from the cradle to the grave, our Adversary seeks to turn us away from Christ and the salvation He has gained for us.

Both God's clear will and the devil's constant workings show that there is more than a kernel of truth in the suggestion of the pastor who once said, "Let's turn all our meetings into Bible classes." The Church should continue to explore new ways to lead its members to study God's Word for life, both in the congregation's formal programs and in the members' private meditations. Our members should also be unceasing in learning more about the joyous message that God has revealed to them in His Word. Then we can rightly say that we do have continuing education in our congregations, for we shall see all of God's adult followers studying for themselves what they "diligently teach" to their children.

## Introduction: The Purpose of the Church

What is the prime responsibility of the Church in the world today? Modern man's understanding of that responsibility has changed rather dramatically during the past three or four decades of this century. It was formerly an accepted axiom, in our country at least, that the Church was to care for the soul while the state was to provide for the body — and never the twain shall meet. But in recent years those distinct and separate responsibilities have met; yes, they have even overlapped, so that now we see a confusion about what the Church is to do. Even some Lutheran bodies, sad to say, are confused about the prime responsibility of the Church and are redirecting the main thrust of their efforts toward social concerns.

By the grace of God we have been spared such unscriptural confusion within our Wisconsin Synod. The Lord has given us leaders who have kept before us Christ's classic statement to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world," (John 18:36) and we therefore continue to seek the prime purpose of Christ's Church in areas spiritual. We are also aware that if we want a general directive about the spiritual area in which we are to labor, we need only listen again as the Head of the Church tells us: "The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost." (Luke 19:10) The purpose of the Church, then, is the salvation of lost souls.

While within our fellowship of faith there is no debate concerning the Church's purpose, there is considerable discussion about how our Synod can best fulfill that purpose. During the past few synodical conventions, for example, our delegates have had to spend many hours deliberating whether to lead us in the direction of expanding our institutions of education or in promoting our interest in evangelism. As one veteran observer of synodical conventions has remarked: "It seems that we continually have to make a choice between mission outreach and educational build-up. The pendulum never stops in the center. We constantly have to reevaluate and redirect our efforts."

This final essay is another step in that on-going process of reevaluation. In this essay we want to consider again just what our Synod should emphasize as its prime responsibility and how best it can fulfill that obligation. Since this convention is looking into the area of Christian education as it pertains to the over-all work of the Church, we have chosen as the title of this essay:

### IV. What Effect Does a Full Education Program Have upon the Evangelism Zeal of the Church?

#### Matthew 28:18–20

The sub-title which we have selected for this essay is the question, "What should we emphasize as best achieving the twin injunctions to evangelize and educate in Matthew 28:18–20?" It is only natural, therefore, that we begin this paper by turning to the words of Jesus as Matthew records them in that passage.

In the last chapter of his Gospel St. Matthew presents our Lord as He makes one of His final appearances to His disciples. On this occasion, which took place in Galilee shortly before the ascension, Jesus appears to His disciples both as the risen and glorified Savior of the world and as the authorized and empowered Head of the Church. At this time, which has its parallel record in Mark 16:15–18, Christ gives the Church Militant, as represented by the eleven disciples, its final marching orders:

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.'" (Matthew 28:18–20)

#### "Make disciples of"

There are two injunctions of Christ in this passage which especially call for our attention, and both of them lead us back to a fuller understanding of the Church's prime responsibility. In addition, a careful consideration of these injunctions will help us see how we might better fulfill the purpose for which Christ founded the Church on earth.

The first commission that Christ sets before His disciples is that they "teach all nations." The New American Standard Bible has wisely taught us to gloss the phrase, "teach all nations," as "make disciples of all nations." While such a translation gives us a clearer idea of the meaning of the original language, it is still questionable whether or not that translation conveys the full implications of the Greek word. For that reason we want to spend just a few minutes looking into the linguistic background of *matheteuo*.

Both the Greek word in our text and the Greek word for "disciple" (*mathetes*) share the same root and thus are co-heirs of a rich linguistic heritage. The basic idea behind the root which these words share is "to direct one's mind to something," with the element of compulsion in so far as the "something" that the person is being asked to consider is so essential for him. When the root-word is used in connection with people, as opposed to animals, it means "to learn to know," and in classical literature this learning process involves both an intellectual or inner impact and an external effect. Socrates, for example, used this word to signify learning that leads to moral judgment and moral action; and Plato, who had many of the same goals as his mentor, felt that rudimentary knowledge and skills were indispensable for achieving those goals of sound judgment and action. Thus, the classical idea behind our word in this text is that of a learning which begins with basic instruction and leads to a desirable end.

By the time of the New Testament the root-word had been carefully shaped on the linguistic anvil and while it still signified a learning process that effects a change, it had been narrowed to the extent that the substance of what was to be learned came from the Scriptures. In fact, the word could be employed by the New Testament writers as a technical term for the academic study of the Scriptures.

Since the words for "disciple" and "make a disciple" have developed from the literary background which we have just described, it is important to keep that background in mind as we consider what discipleship is. Being a disciple always means more than simply knowing a few, rudimentary facts about the one whom the person looks upon as his master. Rather, discipleship also "implies the existence of a personal attachment which shapes the whole life of the one described" and "which leaves no doubt as to who is deploying the formative powers." Applying this background to the word in our text means, then, that a disciple is one who has been called by Christ's power, is committed to Christ's person, and has become a partner in Christ's work. The moment Jesus calls disciples to Himself, that "implies already that the witness to Him is the task to which they have been called as His disciples." If we, therefore, follow Jesus' command to "make disciples of all nations," we too have to consider the whole process of calling, committing, and sharing that comes as a result of learning the Scriptures.

### "Baptizing"

We can discover how to inculcate this "learning-that-leads-to-witnessing" if we consider the injunctions that Christ Himself sets before His apostles that they might "make disciples of all nations." Such discipleship, Christ informs His followers, comes first of all by "baptizing" (*baptizo*).

It is not difficult for us, whose minds have been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, to understand how Baptism fits into the scheme of discipleship. Through Baptism God the Holy Ghost calls men to faith and works in them a "commitment." It is important, however, to clarify that the "commitment" we are talking about is that act by which the Holy Ghost works faith in an individual and thus attaches that person to his Lord. This "commitment" is an act that is initiated and sustained solely by the work of the Spirit; it shows itself in the Spirit-wrought faith with which the individual confesses and trusts in Jesus as His Lord. The "commitment" of discipleship, as we learn from its scriptural usage, does not in any way even smack of the "decision-making" of which we hear so much these days; nor does it share in the confusion of justification and sanctification which is so prevalent in "fundamental" circles. Such unscriptural uses of "commitment" are grounded in subjectivism and have no place in the biblical concept of discipleship.

Without belaboring this point, we want to reaffirm clearly our belief that only the Comforter can work the sort of "commitment" that is implied in the scriptural concept of "discipleship." (1 Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:13) And, as Christ points out in the text under consideration, one of the means by which the Holy Spirit comes to men and works in them the scriptural commitment is Baptism. (Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:26, 27; Col. 2:10–14)

### "Teaching"

We need not spend further time here discussing the word *baptizo*, for its essential meaning is understood in our circles, and delving into its truths would only lead us too far afield from our main point. What would be fruitful, however, is to consider the second way that Christ indicates as leading to discipleship, that of "teaching."

The root of *didasko* means, very simply, "to teach" and denotes teaching in the widest sense, whether the imparting of information, the passing on of knowledge, or the acquiring of skills. When the word is used in classical literature, the aim of "teaching" is the highest possible development of the talents of the pupil.

The translators of the Septuagint took over the word *didasko* and employed it about 100 times. While *didasko* still has the broader meaning of "teaching" generally, in the Greek Old Testament the particular object of teaching most often referred to is the will of God as His declarations and demands come forth from the Scriptures. One new idea which the Septuagint adds to this word is that it always has a volitional as well as an intellectual reference. It became, in fine, the word peculiarly fitted to signify presenting God's will to His people in order to subject those people to that will. The concern is with all aspects of man and with his education in the deepest sense.

With this classical and Jewish tradition behind the word we can see what Jesus has in mind when He tells His followers to go forth, "teaching them [all nations] to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." The object of teaching, while it begins with the presentation of facts, is not just the impartation of knowledge. Rather, it involves teaching that reshapes the pupil to the will of God. Such reshaping, according to Jesus' own commission, comes only as the individual learns all that the Lord has revealed to His disciples. In other words, our Lord was not referring to "quickie courses," "once-over-lightly" biblical learning, or "How to Become a Disciple in Six Simple Lessons" handbooks. Jesus means that we are to "indoctrinate" in the fullest sense of that word.

### Textual Guidelines

From this perusal of Christ's words in Matthew 28:18–20 we are able to draw a number of conclusions that direct us as we seek to understand how to fulfill the purpose of Christ's Church:

1. Discipleship means a state in which a person's attention is directed toward that which God reveals as essential for him and in which the person's will is inclined toward what his mind has learned.
2. Discipleship especially involves a Spirit-wrought attachment of faith and trust in the Savior and a sincere desire to assume a share in the Savior's work.
3. The state of discipleship comes through baptizing and teaching, both of which the Holy Spirit uses to lead the person to the proper attachment and active involvement that constitute discipleship.
4. Education in discipleship, if carried out in accord with the Lord's directives, has as its purposes those of equipping and motivating the disciples to go forth and seek to gain others for that blessed position.
5. Education and evangelism are not two separate activities between which disciples are forced to make a choice, but twin injunctions that strive toward the same end of making disciples of all nations.

It is significant that in our text Jesus does not divide the work of the Church into primary and secondary responsibilities — at least not in respect to matters of education and evangelism. Our Lord does not say, "Go into the world and win men by the Gospel; and then, if you have the time and the money, get into the area of educating them more thoroughly in the truths of Scripture." Instead, the Savior sets before us the simple injunction, "Make disciples of all nations;" and He shows us that this responsibility can be carried out to His satisfaction only as we baptize men and instruct them in all that our Lord has taught us.

### Synodical Objectives

By Christ's own definition, then, the purpose of the Church is best achieved when there is thorough learning that leads a person to have both a personal attachment to the Lord and a zealous inclination to carry out the Lord's mission. In our Synod we have incorporated that dual responsibility in the list of objectives we have set down for ourselves. In 1965 the 38th Biennial Convention of our Synod authorized the Conference of Presidents to "appoint a committee to make a detailed study of the scope of the responsibilities and the general methods of . . . all departments of the Synod . . ." This committee, which became known as the "Administration Survey Commission," was only able to "establish some modified form of budget control" which it recommended to the 1967 convention. Four years ago, when the 40th Biennial Convention of our Synod met on this same hill, the Administration Survey Commission came in with a list of synodical objectives which the convention adopted.

The full list of these objectives may be found in the *Reports and Memorials for the Fortieth Biennial Convention*, beginning on page 125: The general responsibility of our Synod was well-expressed when the commission wrote: "The continuing purpose of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, as a gathering of Christians, is to serve all people in God's world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures." Then, proceeding from that general statement, the commission expressed so very well the twin injunctions of Matthew 28:18—20 as they added a set of specific objectives which are to serve as guidelines for the programs which our Synod pursues. Those specific guidelines say, in part, that our responsibility is "to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ with all people . . . [and] to assist in counseling and equipping all members of the Synod for greater service to the Lord, to each other, and to the world."

### Call for Reevaluation

The words of Christ in our text and the objectives our Synod has drawn for itself on the basis of passages such as this ask us to reconsider periodically whether our practice does in fact match our profession. In particular, it is incumbent upon us to consider the direction in which we seem to be moving when it comes to our educational objectives.

Let us begin our reevaluation by going back just four years. In 1969 our Synod convention instructed the Nebraska District to sell the land at Grand Island that had been purchased with an academy in mind; and that same convention made the difficult choice of closing Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee. It was felt that, in view of the pressing, financial shortage which was limiting our mission outreach both at home and abroad, it would not be good stewardship to continue to operate the one school or to plan to open the other.

It is not my intention to reopen the controversy which was felt rather strongly at the time those decisions were made; nor do I want to call into question the wisdom of those decisions. What is worthwhile for us to reconsider, however, is whether in a sincere desire to fulfill one of Christ's injunctions in Matthew we have failed to recognize the importance of the other injunction. One of the basic assumptions upon which we have seemed to operate in the past is that our Synod must choose between exhibiting a proper evangelistic zeal toward all nations and establishing a full educational program for all age-levels. But is that a valid assumption? In our text Christ does not merely give us the command to "make disciples of all nations;" He also gives us the *modus operandi* — and the methodology He sets forth includes Baptism and in-depth instruction.

### Support from Scripture

Besides the words of Christ in Matthew 28:18—20 there are a number of other passages, some of which we have referred to previously and others which our chaplains are expounding in their devotions, that link education and evangelism. Think of the apostle Paul, by way of example, and the instructions he gave to congregations to lead them to fulfill Christ's commission. Paul's evangelistic zeal was unflagging and above question; and yet, that apostle repeatedly stated that, in addition to "evangelists," God gave to the Church "pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints for the work of the ministry." (Eph. 4:11, 12)

Let us remember, as noted in the previous essay, that the King James Version of the Bible has inserted an unwarranted comma between the word "saints" and the phrase "for the work of the ministry" in its rendering of the Ephesians passage. That comma changes to some extent the real meaning of the passage. Paul's meaning is that the saints or believers in congregations such as Ephesus are to be so well-grounded in the truths of Scripture that they can join in the work of the ministry. And that parallels what Christ Himself says in Matthew 28:18–20.

We might also refer in passing to some of Paul's more personal epistles, those written to his young co-worker Timothy. Those letters give us the opportunity to listen as the experienced evangelist reflects, as it were, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, on the requirements of the ministry. It is instructive for our purposes to note that Paul did not just enjoin Timothy to "do the work of an evangelist." (II Tim. 4:5) He also exhorted his partner in the faith and in the ministry to "give attendance to reading" (I Tim. 4:13) and to "study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the Word of truth." (II Tim. 2:15)

### Stewardship and Education

If Scripture, then, clearly upholds the need for an educated as well as an evangelistic Church, why have we so often been confronted with the situation in which we are making choices between the two, as if it were an "either-or" matter? This has been the case, I feel, because we have at times made some of our decisions on the basis of synodical finances rather than scriptural dictates. There is no denying the fact that in the past our contributions to the work of the Church-at-large have not been consistent with the richness of God's grace or in keeping with the doors He has opened to us. Falling short in the area of stewardship has then forced us to make some rather short-sighted choices in the area of education.

An essential point to keep in mind as we consider the role of education in the work of our Synod is that education's role dare not be determined on the basis of any poor performance we might show in stewardship. If education is vital and necessary for the work of the Church-at-large, as I believe it is, a past record of poor stewardship should not move us to conclude that we cannot expand our educational program. Those whom we elect to direct us in either home or world mission work would not accept such an approach as a scriptural directive for their endeavors — and rightly so. If they saw that our activities in mission work were being limited or jeopardized by lack of funds, they would not conclude, "We should be content with our short-comings, for this merely indicates that we should curtail our mission outreach." Never! What their zeal for the Lord's work would move them to do — and let us thank God for such leaders — is to ask us to consider again Christ's commission to the Church; to view the many fields "white unto harvest" to which the Lord is opening doors to us; and then to reflect once more on the redeeming love of Jesus that we might be moved to carry out His commission and to reach out to His people.

We have had just that sort of "call for reevaluation" over the course of the past six or eight years. What purpose were "Missio Dei," "Called to Serve," "Another Step along His Way," and all the other stewardship programs of our Synod to serve? Their only justification was that they were supposed to remind us of our blessed position as the people of God and to show us the sacred responsibility that this position places upon us. Or to put it another way, they have been programs in which we reconsider Christ's directives to the Church so that we might overcome any failings of the flesh in stewardship and rise to shoulder our responsibilities in evangelism.

Now is the time, I feel, to take similar steps of scriptural motivation and information that we might expand our Christian education program. I will admit that I cannot demonstrate as dramatically the needs for on-going education as can the men who inspire us to mission outreach. A foreign missionary can persuasively talk of the pagans of far-flung lands who are dying in superstition, heathenism, and unbelief at the rate of 120,000 souls a day. A home missionary can graphically speak of the millions in southern California or the tens of millions along the eastern seaboard who do not have the clarity and purity of the Gospel comforting them. While I cannot address you as dramatically as can these men, the concern that should move us to action in the area of Christian education is no less dramatic than in mission fields. A soul that is losing its salvation because of the attacks upon its faith from all sides is as much a matter of concern as is a soul that has not yet come to faith. It is as much a cause of grief to watch our sons and daughters fall from faith and the joy of salvation as it is to know that nameless sons and daughters around the world have not yet experienced that faith and joy.

Nor should we allow poor stewardship on our part to turn us from this "both-and" concern which our text teaches to an unscriptural "either-or" choice. In these essays we have been asked to use Scripture to reconsider the educational aspect of our Synod's responsibility, whether that responsibility arises in the Sunday Schools and day schools, the colleges and universities, or in the continuing educational agencies of our congregations. And we dare not accept as valid in those areas the cry, "But we don't have the money," any more than do the men in home or world missions or any other division of our Synod's program. It may be true that the money is not presently available, but that does not change in the least the fact that we still have a two-fold responsibility laid upon us by the Head of the Church. What has to be changed, therefore, is our response in stewardship, not our responsibility in education.

## Evangelism and Education

We mentioned before, in discussing why our Synod has of late laid more emphasis on evangelism than education, that one of the reasons was a rather poor stewardship record. That is not the whole story however. Part of the reason the pendulum has swung away from education and toward evangelism is because those who oversee our Synod's mission programs and those entrusted with our educational efforts have tried to work hand-in-hand in a realistic fashion. Those who are called to awaken us to the mission opportunities that lie before us have properly taken their responsibilities seriously, and it is quite natural, therefore, that they would show us just how "white" the fields are and how "late" the hour is. In addition, those in charge of educational endeavors have felt that they have more than shared in the synodical offerings, so they have felt that it was time to "back off," so to speak, and devote themselves to internal strengthening and improving rather than to additional expansion and out-reach. Thus a spirit of Christian cooperation has been instrumental in recommending to the Synod the course of action it should pursue.

This spirit has, without a doubt, been a blessing to our Synod. As one of the essayists pointed out four years ago, we were with some justification being viewed as "an historical debating society for the preservation of the Lutheran confessions" — and little more! While that image was not entirely a correct one, there was enough truth in it to disturb us and to call us to a new course of action. We may now more properly be thought of as a confessional church that is vitally interested in sharing the truths of Lutheranism. What is more, the zeal for evangelism that God has brought into our midst came through a closer study of the Word of the Lord. It is a joy to see that throughout our Synod, from the presidential office to the congregational pews, we have people who are confessing, "The Lord means me when He says, 'Ye shall be witnesses unto Me . . . unto the uttermost part of the earth.'" (Acts 1:8)

Let us not forget, though, that this evangelism zeal, no matter how well-intended, must always be just as well-founded. We may be tempted to join with others who would substitute enthusiasm for edification, zealous activism for diligent study of the Word of truth. If this situation ever besets our Synod, we shall find that our members, while giving lip-service to the value of on-going Christian education, might not be convinced that they can lend their support to it because of the more pressing need for mission work. Some among us already seem to make a dichotomy between Christian education and Christian witness; and they feel that it has to be the "either-or" to which we referred previously. Others feel very strongly that there is only one choice we can make; and they wax very eloquent and emotional — not to say, convincing — as they depict the heathen dying in their sins and the minute-hand of time running up to 12.

Without questioning either the sincerity or the sanctified judgment of these individuals, there are certain relevant points for us to consider on the basis of Scripture. For instance, the hour is late, to be sure — but when hasn't it been? Men such as St. Paul, who stressed the need for an edified church, did so even though they felt an eschatological urgency that often makes our sense of urgency pale by comparison. Even though they constantly exhorted their hearers to grow in Christ, they did so while looking back over their shoulders, as if they expected Christ to return at any moment. If the hour is so late — as I also believe it is — then that is all the more reason for educating others to assist us in the task of doing Christ's work while it is still day. (John 9:4)

It is also true that souls are dying in unbelief — but when haven't they been? Paul repeatedly refers to the many areas into which he feels compelled out of compassion for dying souls to carry the Gospel. And yet, when he and the other New Testament evangelists exhorted Christian congregations to be witnesses along with them, they did so with the understanding that a knowledgeable faith was a necessary prerequisite. The fact that over a thousand die each hour without Christ should not compel us into enthusiastic activism without religious indoctrination. If souls are dying — as I too recognize that they are — then that is all the more motivation for us to prepare others to join us in reaching out to them before death overtakes them. (Matt. 9:36–38)

While all of us want to face the needs of those who are dying in other lands, we dare not forget that there are still souls facing spiritual death in this land and in our congregations. Our members, especially those in their teens and early 20's but including also those more advanced in years, face spiritual deprivation and enervation if we do not dedicate ourselves to their needs as well. It would do us no credit as ambassadors for Christ if we point to the far-flung mission opportunities around the world while the mission within our home congregations is ignored. It does the Church of Christ no good if we win souls in infancy only to lose them in the teenage or young adult years. We implore, therefore, that no matter how impassioned or persuasive the arguments for evangelism are, that they be weighed on the balance of God's Word that presents an equally pressing injunction about education.

The need for a spiritually knowledgeable youth at home weighs most heavily on the whole "mission-thrust-or-educational-growth" question. In the past the educational agencies of our Synod have shown themselves to be the best source of zealous and consecrated laymen and of future, full-time workers. That should come as no surprise, especially when we bear in mind that Christ Himself indicated that true discipleship comes from scripturally trained individuals whose wills have been bent to align with that of God through what they have learned. If we, therefore, are concerned about the future of the Church and about fulfilling the purpose of the Church, the best direction we can set for ourselves is to expand our educational programs as we plan our mission out-reaches.

## Partners, not Competitors

What Scripture teaches us, in short, is that education is the partner of evangelism; and a sound Christian education leads to a lively evangelistic zeal. We should not look upon evangelism and education as being mutually exclusive, but as Scripture presents them —



that is, as being mutually conducive to and supportive of one another. We in our Synod can rejoice that, by the grace of God, we possess the purity of the Gospel which we can share with others, but we cannot neglect to delve into the depths of that Gospel for ourselves. We can confess that God has given us the responsibility to hold up the banner of truth to today's world, but we are also to be careful to read and study for ourselves what is written on that banner.

Let it be clear that what we are saying in this essay in no way militates against the home or world mission programs of our Synod. As a matter of fact, if we are more diligent in following what this essay suggests, we shall find an ever greater interest in and ability for the work of evangelism. Education in the will of God only leads to increased activity in evangelism. It can never do anything but that if carried out as Christ's words instruct us. Perhaps we can summarize the whole issue here by saying, "Let's quit fearing education as a competitor for the funds available in our Synod and start viewing it as a partner in the responsibilities set before our Synod."

#### A Modern Example

If we want to see in more practical terms just how true it is that education leads to evangelism, let us consider for a moment the unique situation that exists in one of the churches that is exceptionally strong and aggressive in my part of our country. The Mormon Church has brought about what, if it were not that it is the work of men rather than of God, might well be called one of the "miracles" of modern church history. Each member of the Mormon Church is expected to give two years of his life to the church as a missionary. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints does not just tell its male members that they must give that much time for full-time missionary work however; it goes a step farther and says that the missionary must also support himself during those two years. The missionary pays for his transportation to the land to which he is sent, he provides for his sustenance throughout his tour of duty, and he funds his return trip home.

What is surprising about this particular arrangement is that the Mormon Church actually gets young people to volunteer for these missionary tours, and in a large number. Much of the credit, according to the "elder" in charge of the "stake" which includes my city, belongs to the thorough and continuing program of education that the Mormons provide for their young people. There are not many of those we refer to as "jack" Mormons entering the mission fields. Those who know little about their faith care just as little about spreading that faith. On the other hand, the Mormons have taken at least one page from Scripture and have demonstrated that as people grow in the knowledge of their faith they will also grow in the zeal to share that faith, even if it demands a high cost of them. And all this the Mormon Church is accomplishing with the motivation of one of the "other gospels" that Paul condemns in Galatians. (Gal. 1:6-9) Think what the power of God can do along the same lines for us who have been privileged to enjoy the true Gospel in all its fulness and clarity.

#### C.M.C., L.B.I., and T.E.E.

Is it not time that we began to explore new ways in which to equip our members for greater service to the work of the Lord? With the hour so late and the need so great, this is not time to sit back and say that we are doing pretty well in the area of mission work for such a little church body. Our growth has been great — yes, even spectacular — by the grace of God; but the reports which both the Home and World Mission Boards will be presenting to this convention indicate that God is placing before us opportunities that are even greater. We, therefore, need to act now to use to the best advantage those opportunities that God is opening up for us.

The logical place to begin our search for new ways to walk through the open doors of mission opportunities is in the area of education. Several years ago our Synod adopted the concept of the Christian Missioners' Corps, a concept which was quite a departure from our former mode of working in foreign mission fields. To date, however, we have not implemented that program fully; nor have we employed it to the best advantage. The "corps concept" calls for sending out teams of missioners much in the fashion that Christ sent out the seventy (Luke 10:1-22); but while we have been employing a new name for our program in mission work, much of the old methodology still shapes our mission endeavors.

We can more fully develop the potential of the Christian Missioners' Corps if we come to understand that consecrated and knowledgeable laymen can play an important role in its work. Laymen could, for example, do much of the initial canvassing of different areas, some of the calling on prospective members, and even part of the conducting of instruction classes. Under the supervision of a pastor such trained layworkers could actually gather the nucleus of future congregations and could even begin to nourish the first converts in their faith in Christ.

To this end we might well consider developing Lay Bible Institutes at Dr. Martin Luther College and Northwestern College. At these institutes laymen of Christian demeanor and conviction could — for a period of six, nine, or twelve months — take intensive courses in different books of the Bible, in dogmatics, in pedagogy, and in homiletics. Their training could, in short, be similar to that which we presently offer at the Bible Institute in Lusaka, Zambia. Such theological instruction could, when coupled with language training, equip a greater number of our laymen to become directly involved in the pressing work of world missions.

Another area we could explore with profit in order to enlist laymen in our mission work is what the African Church calls "Theological Education by Extension." This type of program, which in our local congregations could be a correspondence course carried out under the supervision of the pastor, would also help us to prepare layworkers for missionary activities. While it may not afford the depth or thoroughness offered by a Lay Bible Institute, it could be the initial step by which men prepare for work in both the home

and world mission fields. A layman who has completed such a correspondence course and has exhibited the necessary aptitude could then, under the supervision of a pastor, do the work of an evangelist in certain mission areas.

### Enlisting Congregational Support

Some may feel that what we are suggesting is not practical since it will only add to a synodical budget that has already been stretched to the limit. Other theologically sensitive ears may object to this methodology since it seems to smack to much of the practice of the "enthusiastic" sects or the "Bible-spouting, pulpit-pounding" denominations.

However, if individual congregations or groups of congregations were to provide both the cost of training and supporting such missionaries, there would be no additional expense to the Synod. Being directly involved in mission work in this way might well stir up a greater awareness of zeal for the out-reach of the Lord's Church on the part of many congregations. The actual administration of the program and the allocation of funds would be the responsibility of the Synod, but the local congregations could still feel very much a part of reaching out to others with the Word of life by directly supporting a layworker from their midst.

The objection that such a method is "too much like those other churches" is not insurmountable either. For one thing, a study of Paul's missionary methods in the book of Acts reveals that he frequently employed a procedure not unlike that which we have proposed. In other words, it might well be that other church bodies, whose doctrinal confession is not thoroughly scriptural, can still teach us something about scriptural methods that we have too long overlooked. In addition, our synodical leaders know enough about the truth and how to impart that truth to others that they can forestall the problems and pitfalls which plague the lay missionary programs of other church bodies.

### Congregational Education in Evangelism

Another area that we ought to reexamine is the way in which we are educating our members to become more evangelism minded. One of the best ways to achieve our desired goal is, it seems to me, by laying greater emphasis upon evangelism as an integral part of the Church's work. In some of our congregations evangelism and mission out-reach seem to be too much of a once-a-year proposition. We often expend a considerable amount of time and effort working toward an "Evangelism Sunday," sending out men and women to canvass a neighborhood on a given day, arranging for foreign missionaries to speak to our congregations, and having the members develop some sort of "Mission Fair." But then, when these special events have taken place, we so often breathe a collective sigh of relief that "that's over for another year."

Having special Sundays on which we emphasize home and world mission programs can serve a good purpose, for they can bring the needs of evangelism before our members in a very vivid manner. And yet, instituting special programs or setting aside certain Sundays for evangelism emphasis may very well be defeating our main purpose. We can actually give our members the mistaken impression that evangelism is just a footnote to the Christian way of life instead of being one of the focal points in our response to the message of Christ. What is needed, therefore, is an on-going program of education in which our members are continually reminded through their personal study of God's Word that to be a disciple is to want to make disciples of all others.

Let it not be thought that I want to disparage the benefit that can result from programs such as "Sharing the Savior," the "Lenten Evangelism Devotions," or "Talk about the Savior." In their place, which means incorporating them into a regular program of continuing education, these programs can give our members very practical suggestions about reaching out to others with the Gospel. It is still true, however, that in too many cases these programs are nothing more than "stop-gap" measures or rather frenzied responses to the "we've-got-to-do-something" syndrome. It is equally true that such programs can never be thought of as substitutes for giving our members a sound and solid foundation of faith through on-going Bible study. Without such a program of continuing education any zeal and enthusiasm which our members initially exhibit will soon wane.

It will benefit the Church much more greatly in the long run if handbooks such as "Organize . . .," "Study . . .," and "Train to Be 'Witnesses unto Me'" were incorporated into our regular programs for adult education and used as a source of motivating and equipping our members for evangelism. If, for example, our congregations were to work through these handbooks after first studying one of the Gospels or the book of Romans, their concern and zeal for reaching lost souls will be more thoroughly founded on the love of Christ and more scripturally knowledgeable about the message of Christ. Then, as our members continued to study the Word of God while they were implementing the skills which they had picked up in a special evangelism program, their zeal for this aspect of the Lord's work would continue to be nourished and increased.

But whatever method we choose to adopt in our individual congregations, we cannot emphasize too strongly that "mission awareness" programs or evangelism efforts are to be a part of the Church's greater work, educating all its members in the hope which God has set before them in Christ and leading them to share that hope with others.

### Conclusion

During the past decade or so our Synod has taken tremendous and much-needed strides in both educational build-up and evangelism outreach. We now have, in the main, adequate facilities for providing the Church with full-time pastors and teachers who are thoroughly trained in the Word of life; and we have established necessary beachheads at home and abroad from which our full-time workers can move on to share the life-giving Word with others.

It is the opinion of some among us that, because of our advances in education and evangelism, we can now conclude that we are adequately fulfilling the main purpose which Christ set before His Church. Let us recognize, however, that the task of saving lost souls through the preaching of the Gospel cannot and will not be fulfilled until our Lord Himself rings down the curtain of time when He returns in glory. Let us further realize that we shall not be striding as quickly as we might toward that goal of spreading Christ's name everywhere as long as we look upon this as a responsibility for our clergy alone. We cannot claim that we are faithful to our calling until we fully understand that Christ's great commission contains twin injunctions, injunctions that direct us to awaken in the Lord's present disciples a desire to share in making disciples of others, as well as instructions that command us to preach the Savior everywhere.

Any reevaluations which we make of our present programs or new plans that we draw up for future expansion must be carried out with the understanding that our work is always two-pronged in nature — it includes a program of continuing education along with a plan for increasing our outreach. As we come to acknowledge this dual nature of the Church's work, we shall carry out Christ's commission in greater conformity to God's will and with greater impact upon God's people. Then we shall truly be "making disciples of all nations" in the scriptural sense of that word and we shall more properly be termed "an evangelistic Church."

## Postscript

Much of what we have said in these essays is, admittedly, a request for a searching reevaluation of our Synod's entire program. And the new directions we have suggested will, quite obviously, involve a considerable expenditure of money if we follow them. But neither the call for reevaluation nor the cost in dollars and cents should hold us back for a minute if what we have said is scriptural. The moment the Lord enters the picture — as He must in all phases of church work, or the Church ceases to be the Church of Christ — there can be no room for "murmurings and disputations" (Phil. 2:14), but only cause for rejoicing and responding. (Acts 5:41, 42) The cost may seem high to us — both in the matter of confessing our past mistakes, misdirections, and shortcomings, as well as in offering our present time, talents, and money. But our cost will seem high only until we consider that our Lord has already paid the highest cost, His precious blood and innocent death, in order to call and equip us for our task.

While it is the love of Christ which moves us to shoulder whatever responsibility our Lord lays upon us, it is also a Christ-like love for sinners which dictates our course of action. We in the Wisconsin Synod stand as one of the last bulwarks in the unending war against the powers of unrighteousness. The prince of this world is mounting an ever-increasing attack against the "soldiers of the cross," and only by taking to ourselves and to those we enlist in Christ's service "the whole armor of God may we be able to withstand in the evil day and, having done all, to stand." (Eph. 6:13)

One of the great tragedies of modern church history is the surrender to the pressures of this world by some formerly orthodox church bodies. Our Wisconsin Synod is being asked by God to defend and extend the truth of the Gospel, and this high responsibility can only be met by thorough indoctrination of those who come to us. If we fall short of or turn aside from that task, the Lord will undoubtedly find others who are willing and able. But, as Paul says, "Woe is unto us if we preach not the Gospel!" (1 Cor. 9:16) The love of Christ compels us to our important task; the condition of lost mankind requires that we fulfill that task; and nothing less than a thorough-going education in Christ completes the "necessity" that is laid upon us.

If, because of our weak and sinful natures, we tend to shrink back or hesitate as we consider what the Lord is asking us to do in the area of Christian education, let us remember the responsible yet blessed position in which we in the Wisconsin Synod find ourselves. It is my firm conviction that ancient Philadelphia in Asia Minor has been removed by our Lord to modern Milwaukee in Wisconsin; that is, I feel that the word of the Lord in Revelation 3:7—11 applies with special meaning today to our Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In that passage St. John writes:

"These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth and no man shutteth, and shutteth and no man openeth: 'I know thy works. Behold, I have set before thee an open door, and no man can shut it. For thou hast a little strength and hast kept My Word and hast not denied My name. Behold, I will make them of the synogogue of Satan, which say they are Jews and are not, but do lie; behold, I will make them to come and worship before thy feet and to know that I have loved thee. Because thou hast kept the Word of My patience, I also will keep thee from the hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world to try them that dwell upon the earth. Behold, I come quickly. Hold that fast which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.' " (Rev. 3:7—11)

We today are small, as men judge strength; we are poor, as men consider wealth. But we have the strength of the power of God's Word and we enjoy the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God. For these reasons, which are due solely to the continuing grace of the Lord among us, we are people whom the God of all love and pity is calling to walk through many newly-opened doors. Those doors are, perhaps, most dramatically evident in those areas at home and abroad in which men are earnestly beseeching us to serve them with the Gospel of pure grace; but those doors are present just as certainly in the arena of Christian education in which our rising generation is hopefully looking to us to strengthen them with the Gospel of forgiveness. In short, while we are quite definitely being encouraged to lengthen our cords, we are just as assuredly being enjoined to strengthen our stakes. And this two-fold responsibility can only be accomplished in accord with God's will as we "teach diligently" those who daily turn to us as representatives of the one, true faith.

*Soli Deo Gloria!*