

The Two-Track System: Its Necessity and Value

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Really now! Does this subject truly demand a forty-five minute essay plus as much discussion? Everyone knows through the wonders of television that the two-track system is better because it shaves closer and smoother.

The Issue

Oh, I know, such an issue ought not to be subjected to a spoof. Nevertheless I must admit a strong inner urging to dispose of this matter just about as quickly as that. For when speaking of the necessity and value of the two-track system, at least a part of the response ought to be obvious. The system is necessary because it is designed to supply students for two colleges with markedly different entrance requirements. It is valuable to the extent that it supplies those students.

As obvious as that may be, however, it is also superficial to the discussion at hand which calls for a much deeper, more penetrating look at the matter. In fact, some who seriously doubt the necessity and value of such a system will object to such an obvious observation, if left to stand by itself. They are likely to suggest instead that what we have observed is the problem not the answer. For it may seem that we claim the two-track system is necessary just because we have made it necessary and that we are reluctant to test it, evaluate it, and supply the proof of it as something worthy of its status.

What becomes clear, in turn, is that we have an extremely complex issue before us. For, in order to test the system, we cannot merely look to the academies, but must include the colleges which lay their demands on the academies. We ought to include the goals—immediate and long range—the two-track system is geared to achieve. We will have to deal with value judgments in regard to foreign language study in particular, which is the most obvious subject matter creating the need for two tracks. Et cetera.

By the way, one doesn't have to work with this subject long before one gets the feeling of riding a merry-go-round and always just missing the brass ring. Nevertheless it can be worth it just to go around, and maybe—just maybe...

Though the question before us is bigger than any single academy or the academy system, a good place to begin our evaluation is to articulate (but not necessarily exhaust) some of the very practical advantages and disadvantages apparent at our academies under the present two-track system. My primary resource for this and some other critical remarks to follow is a questionnaire on the subject to which twenty of our educators and members of the boards of control of our schools responded. For the most part I will not identify the respondents nor quote directly from them, but I take this opportunity to thank them, one and all, for their thorough attention to my plea for help.

The Advantages of the Two-Track System

Since we have two basic ministries for which we provide specialized training, it is an advantage to supply the distinctive needs of each on the academy level with a two-track system. The system helps provide the students needed for teacher and pastor training at Doctor Martin Luther College and at Northwestern College. It provides a financial advantage by helping keep an optimum number of students at each prep school. It relieves the preparatory school student from taking "unnecessary" courses for his chosen vocation. (Teacher trainees are relieved from some language study. Pastor trainees are relieved from taking keyboard training.) It provides a healthy, normal boy-girl ratio on the prep campus.

This, in turn, permits greater flexibility in recruitment. The student attending the academy has a choice, from the beginning, of which track to follow and may also change tracks along the way as circumstances

dictate. The system highlights that there are two distinct ministries under the Lord which lead to church vocations. An esprit de corps develops among the students of both tracks which can help produce good pastor-teacher relationships later.

Meanwhile, the two tracks are each designed to challenge the student and to prepare him for what is to come. The definite program of studies helps maintain quality, discipline, and a desire for intellectual pursuit needed for college and career. The languages of the pastor-track (teacher trainees may take them too) lead the students into in-depth language awareness and provide a solid basis for language studies to follow. At the same time, a “sifting, screening process” takes place as students test, or have tested for them, their own feelings and abilities for the ministry.

Finally, a combination of several of these advantages also helps preserve the prep school system, where we can best handle the requirements of the two track program.

Undergirding this system, of course, are certain basic assumptions which will demand our attention. For, if they are not valid, the system itself might totter and fall. I speak of the assumption that trainees for the specific ministries must pursue separate “tracks” already at the academy level—that the required language training in the pastor track best satisfies our needs—that we are accomplishing what we say we are.

The Disadvantages of the Two-Track System

That these assumptions should be subject to closer scrutiny becomes clearer when one sees that for every advantage of the two-track academy system there seems to be an equal and opposite disadvantage. Strange enough, in some cases, the same quality, passed off as an advantage, shows up again on the opposite side of the balance sheet.

We spoke, for example, of a student’s flexibility of choice with both tracks available. Nevertheless, he has to make a choice—an early, sometimes-felt-to-be irrevocable choice for a type of ministry. For a fourteen-year-old looking at the prep school option, that can be a discouraging prospect. Many students at that age simply do not feel ready to make such a decision.

Yes, the student may change tracks while at the academy. He does it with some difficulty, however, if the change is from the teaching to the pastoral track. If he makes too late a decision in his high school years, he has “makeup” work waiting in college that can be deterrent for him. Changing programs in the reverse order, while apparently easier, sometimes is just a matter of ease for the student. He feels he gets an “easier” course. This creates, as someone has suggested, an “If-you-can’t-make-it-in-Latin-you-can-always-teach” syndrome, and there may follow an undesirable elitism of pastor over against teacher training students.

In this connection, it is generally felt that the pastoral student takes a heavier course load than his teaching counterpart. Third and fourth-year Latin in particular each add an extra “solid” course to his schedule. This puts extra pressures on the student as he competes with those in the other track, gives him more preparation time, and makes it harder for him to participate in extracurricular activities. From the school’s standpoint, this creates an imbalance in teaching sections (both by sex and by ability), causes limited enrollments in some classes, and leads to difficulties in scheduling. (It should be noted that the keyboard training for teacher students also plays a large part in the scheduling difficulties. Furthermore, let it be said that the disadvantages cited here are felt still more acutely at the area high schools where they operate with three or four tracks and more electives.)

Although this is a fair summary of the basic disadvantages of the two-track system, I am including the following list of alleged disadvantages as well for a point of reference:

1. It invites an “invidious comparison” between the tracks.
2. Counselors, deans, and advisors struggle with guiding a student toward one or the other choice.
3. Future workers are lost because the standards are too high.

4. Students are not well enough versed in English to tackle the foreign language requirement.
5. Some students drop the teachers' course due to the keyboard requirement.
6. It creates two classes of students (five-year specials and regulars) at NWC.

So, how do the advantages of the two-track system fare alongside of the disadvantages? It would appear, just counting how many of each, that the disadvantages preponderate. But when it comes to measuring their worth, the balance is likely to swing toward whatever personal bias one brings to the subject. Therein lies one major drawback in attempting to get control of this matter. Entire phalanxes of opinion stand ready to march on either side with little or no incontrovertible evidence to lead them into battle.

What the System Should Help Accomplish - Pastors

The time has come, therefore, to turn away from the academy two-track system and attempt to reapproach the matter from a different direction. Perhaps by looking at what we expect of the finished product of the system, we can better evaluate how the system is operating to produce it and whether we should make some changes. At the risk, then, of repeating or even controverting subject matter presented earlier at this conference, I suggest we need to consider briefly what we expect to see in a pastor and in a teacher as that relates to the schooling on all levels.

Here we have at least the following Scriptural guidelines to help us keep things in proper perspective: The pastor, foremost, should be "able to teach" (1 Ti 3:2). "He must not be a recent convert" (1 Ti 3:6). We expect him to be "a workman...who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Ti 2:15), a man ready to "preach the Word...[to] correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Ti 4:2). He ought to be able to "encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (Tit 1:9).

From those directives, we can draw some valid conclusions for our program of education. We will, to begin with, not be concerned about supplying some easy, quickie course to create a minister out of anyone who comes to us fired up with the blush of enthusiasm. In our system, "a recent convert" (νεόφωτος) ought not to slip into the ministry unprepared. We will want to have a well-educated man so that he is likely to be "able to teach" (διδασκτικός)—not that every educated person is also a good teacher, but because one needs to learn and understand for himself before he can effectively teach others. Most especially we will want him thoroughly trained in "the Word" (ὁ λόγος) with all its "doctrine" (ἡ διδασκαλία).

In all practicality, then, we will expect our pastors to be able to work with the Word in its original languages in order to be ready always to "correct" (ἐλέγχω), to "rebuke" (ἐπιτιμάω), and to "encourage" (παρακαλέω) those who need it. The pastor who is to preach and teach will need to be able to think clearly and logically and to reproduce his thoughts for others in a clear and logical manner. Right along with a command of the Biblical languages, therefore, he will need a command of his own language.

In addition, we will want him to be conversant with the specific problems and mores of his own times in order to apply God's Word to today's person in today's world. It will help immensely to know the history of other times and the mores of other cultures as well so as to understand his own times better from the perspective of world history, and to see the Hand of God at work in history. In connection with the historic perspective, while keeping in mind our peculiar heritage and tradition, the pastor will have gained who can use the languages of Luther and the early theologians (i.e., Latin and German) with ease. And, although this ideal may prove to be beyond the reach of many pastors, it is our stated objective to have representatives from virtually every class of seminary graduates who have mastered either Latin or German or both.

And, at last, the pastor should have learned self-discipline and good study habits in order to carry on effectively when faced with the crush of pastoral duties.

What the System Should Help Accomplish - Teachers

Turning to what we should expect of the teacher product, on the other hand, it seems clear that many of the basic requirements should be the same, e.g., “able to teach” and to “correctly handle the word of truth.”

The obvious difference is only that the training we provide for this ministry is more specifically geared to teaching children in the classroom in grades K-8. It is felt the demands of this ministry do not call for quite as rigorous training. Post graduate study, therefore, is not required as for the pastoral student. In order to teach God’s Word in the grade school, the teacher can carry on effectively without having to learn the Biblical languages. Presently, we have not felt that our teachers need to know other foreign languages either.

We do expect our teachers, however, to have a somewhat more advanced knowledge of certain disciplines such as science, music, and mathematics because they will have to teach them in their classes. They need more education courses specifically designed to help guide one through the rigors of the elementary classroom as well as to satisfy certain state requirements. Teachers can use keyboard training both to aid in the classroom and to help assure a continuing supply of musicians for our churches in keeping with our musical heritage. This, too, is an ideal which a number of our students may never achieve, but we continue to look for large numbers of our teachers who have reached it.

We have concentrated primarily on what we expect of teachers different from pastors as it affects their training. The similarities between the two, I trust, are sufficiently obvious to preclude repeating them at this time.

How the System Works - Pastors

Working backwards now (assuming this brief description of qualities for the two types of ministers is sufficient), we should arrive again at the two track system, perhaps better able to evaluate its function.

At the Seminary virtually every course has an evident practical value to prepare students for their pastoral tasks. Questions have been raised periodically whether one or another element of practice, sometimes quite mundane, might deserve closer attention, for example, basic business management, making real estate transactions, how to survive a building program, etc. A more important question might be whether we can provide more training in the techniques of counseling in order to help the pastor as he seeks to “correct, rebuke, and encourage” with God’s Word on a personal level. This, however, would not seem to affect the two-track system at all unless some other basic course would give way to allow for such counseling experience. To my knowledge, no one seriously challenges the Seminary to make any sweeping changes in its curriculum.

It seems evident, then, that we are producing the kind of pastor we want and are satisfied with the workings of our Seminary.

Next we need to consider what kind of course will best prepare the student for his seminary years. Let us look to NWC to see whether, as we hope, its curriculum does the optimum job. Eight semesters of religion head the list of requirements. No one argues with that except, perhaps, to suggest we could add a religion elective. Our history and English (including one semester of speech) offerings also appear to satisfy the needs of our core curriculum. Some ask for more speech, but what we have at least satisfies basic needs. Not much debate is triggered either over our minimal requirements in mathematics, science, music, and psychology as a means of broadening the educational background of the pastoral student. Some would like to see more psychology, but again this, which seems to relate to the call for more counseling techniques at the Seminary, still does not appear critical to the two-track system.

Where the bloodletting begins is with the language requirements at NWC. Here more than in any other area people balk and question whether we are doing what is best. Critics usually categorize the languages in two groups— the Biblical languages (Greek and Hebrew) and the non-Biblical languages (Latin and German). The grouping suggests clearly enough where the controversy lies. The Seminary makes extensive use of Greek and Hebrew in Bible study. If NWC were to fail to give a strong foundation in those languages it would weaken our program where we can least afford it.

There appears to be general agreement on that count at least for the present, but there are those who argue vociferously that we will not weaken the Biblical language program by cutting back one semester or two

from the six required in Greek. They maintain that the two semesters of translating classical Greek authors do not make the students any better at translating the Bible. This is a serious concern, but again it does not directly affect the two-track academy system. We can teach the present fifth and sixth semester Greek courses without requiring something special from the academies. The possible connection to the two-track system is that if we should weaken the Greek program significantly in college, we might indirectly and unwittingly weaken the case for the whole system.

Meanwhile, no one here has ever had a doubt about who the real “villains” in this scenario would prove to be, namely, Latin and German. Northwestern College’s requirements of four years of high school Latin and two years of German make the two-track academy system necessary. At the root of most of the disadvantages listed for the system one will find Latin and German. The question is whether we are any better prepared now than we were twenty minutes ago to evaluate the roles of Latin and German in our pastor training curriculum.

Following the track we have been taking we will find that Latin and German are apparently not as essential to the Seminary’s program as, say, English, History, and Greek and Hebrew. To my knowledge the students at the Seminary are not obliged to use either language, but those who can are encouraged to volunteer in certain classes. Students can enter and have been entering the pastoral ministry of our Synod in good standing without taking any Latin or German. The number has increased significantly since the advent of the “Bethany Program.”

We, on the other hand, are also regularly graduating from the Seminary some (as desired) who have mastered the nuances of Latin and/or German. This can only continue if we have a solid program of training in these languages prior to the Seminary. Since it is academic folly for NWC alone to attempt to do the job while including the Greek and Hebrew in a four year program, the Latin and German study has to begin on the academy level, if possible. Any proposal to weaken the language requirements in the pastor-track, then, ought to deal with what that means for retaining a significant number of Latin and German scholars in our midst for the future.

How the System Works - Teachers

This whole matter doesn’t seem nearly so complicated when one considers the teacher-track in the two-track system. It eliminates one whole school and four years of training from the picture. It does not demand a single foreign language. It is a more normal high school track, evidenced by the numbers who enter DMLC without penalty from prep schools, area Lutheran high schools, and public schools alike. It produces teachers who help to make our parochial school system strong and vital. The most perplexing demand it places on the two-track system is the keyboard requirement.

We are, however, looking for the optimum curriculum to do the job. That can as easily suggest adding something important to one track as it might suggest subtracting something of questionable value from the other. Since we have narrowed the consideration primarily to the languages of the pastor-track, the implication is that we should also consider whether the teacher-track would profit by adding languages to its requirements.

The Social Context in Which the System is Operating

Before we attempt to determine the value of studying languages, however, in a social atmosphere which has been singularly hostile to language study over the past fifteen to twenty years (Only 15% of today’s high school pupils study any foreign language compared with 24% in 1965. Only 8% of U.S. colleges now require a foreign language, down from 34%.¹ The number of students taking Latin in high school dropped from 626,199 in 1965 to 184,445 in 1974.²)—instead of just following a course which appears totally out of step with our times, let’s first take a look at what may become the new trend as we observe recent developments pertaining to language study.

To begin with, let’s not be too ready to apologize shamefacedly for what we have. We may be our own worst critics. We might rather learn to treasure what we have and become jealous of it. At any rate, in the eyes

of some disinterested outsiders, we do all right—from a Professor of Classics at the University of Wisconsin who envies our controlled classical curriculum to a couple of cosmetics salesmen who think it is wonderful that we have the language program we do in our academies. And don't forget Ann Landers, whose greatest regret is that she never took Latin. Nor are the only defenders of the languages in our midst to be found among aging bilingual professors whose thinking has become dusty with the time spent in the classical ivory tower. Just last month a 1975 graduate wrote to express his pleasure that NWC had not relaxed her standards in her most recent curriculum revision.

Meanwhile, Latin, which is considered by many to be dead and best buried, is showing signs of rejuvenation. Since 1975 the number of high school students taking advanced placement (college level) achievement tests has risen 62% to 760 last year.³ Some of you have no doubt heard of the Philadelphia experience. By 1974 in over 100 Philadelphia public schools, 8,000 pupils in grades 4, 5, and 6 were having twenty minute sessions in Latin each day. Traditionalists may not be all that impressed when they learn that the instruction was all done orally. “*Ubi est Roma?*” “*Roma in Italia est.*” And it included songs such as “*Quis magnum lupum timet?*” (“Who’s Afraid of the Big, Bad Wolf?”) and “*Ineuntibus sanctis*” (“When the Saints Go Marching In”).

Perhaps it is somewhat more impressive to learn, however, that an additional 4,000 students were studying Latin in grades 7-12, up from 490 in 1967. There is a carryover effect. Also noteworthy is that the students taking Latin showed significant improvement in vocabulary and in reading ability in English.⁴

Of special interest are some of the findings and recommendations of the President’s Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies. The National Association of Secondary School Principals featured the Commission’s report in their May 1980 CURRICULUM REPORT. The title of the article is “Reversing the Trend of Foreign Language Illiteracy,” something the Commission, which finds the present situation “scandalous,” vows to have done.

Among the Commission’s recommendations, “all originally suggested or strongly supported by professional associations,” were:

- “Foreign languages should be reinstated as a college admission requirement.”
- “School systems should encourage all students to master at least one foreign language and, ideally, acquire a second.”
- “Foreign language instruction should concentrate on speaking and understanding before other language skills are developed.”
- “The dull teacher who is bored with teaching must be made effective through better training, retraining, and pedagogical experimentation.”⁵

Among the Commission’s observations concerning the decline in foreign language study were:

- “Even though the elementary years are the easiest time for children to learn languages, fewer than one percent receive such instruction.”
- “As total foreign language enrollments have declined, the attrition rate between first and second year of study has soared 50 percent.”
- “Proliferation of electives in every area of the secondary curriculum has diverted students from opting for the more difficult subjects such as foreign languages.”
- “Foreign language teachers have been trying to pack more and more the shortened sequences, with the result that too much is offered fast. There is almost no emphasis on skills practice.”⁶

The Commission also had things to say about Latin such as:

“Half of all high school students took Latin at the start of the Century. Today, only one percent do.... The chief cause is Latin’s reputation as being dreary and irrelevant.”

“But new twists in the teaching of Latin are reversing that attitude.”

“A study at North East High School in Erie, Pa., found that students of Latin receive higher scores on their College Entrance Exams, and have better English grades and vocabularies, than those who do not study the language.”

“The communications media are replete with allusions to classical mythology, history, and the Latin language. So is English literature.”

“Latin works differently from English and thereby affords students the opportunity to step outside their own language and acquire *Sprachgefühl*... that is helpful in using English and facilitates learning other languages. With renewed attention to basic skills, the linguistic relevance and discipline of Latin studies are resurrecting the ‘dead’ language.”⁷

The Value of Latin and German for Pastors

With voices like that supporting what we already have in large measure in our pastor-training track perhaps we, too, will view the matter somewhat differently than we have been tempted to do. We are not alone if we support the language study. We have reasons which others, too, have tested and articulated.

Nevertheless, we have already demonstrated that an individual can become a competent pastor in our Synod without Latin and German. Should we still keep the two languages in the core curriculum? In their place we could have more stress on speech and communications skills, psychology and counseling, sociology and philosophy. We could avoid “forcing” a student to choose for the ministry as a fourteen-year-old. Et cetera.

The alternatives have appeal. But let’s make sure we know what we are likely to give up if we significantly weaken the language program:

We would lose significant numbers of pastors who can work effectively in the two languages the prime theological sources are written in.

We would severely weaken the firm language foundation and strong language orientation our pastorate presently enjoys. This would include whatever side benefits there may be for English.

We would lose an important advantage our students have now in studying Greek and Hebrew after having already worked in Latin and German.

We would miss what becomes relevant in the more advanced language classes, namely, the thought, the mores, the social atmosphere, the culture of another people at another time as compared with and contrasted to our own now. In this connection, students in some of NWC’s advanced language courses, have learned, for example, principles of rhetoric, philosophy, and sociology.

We would weaken the case for continuing the academy system when the cost is counted for our perennially strained budget.

Just which direction gives the greater advantages—staying with the pastor-track much the way it is or relaxing the language requirements significantly—is something each person will have to decide for himself. It remains and always will remain a subject open for debate. There is no such thing as saying the last word and incontrovertibly deciding the issue. By now, however, this writer’s bias should be beginning to show.

The Value of Language Study for Teachers

Turning again to the teacher-track, it seems that a case may be building to call for a high school language requirement here as well. The alternative courses to the languages, to begin with, have not been

uniform in our prep schools and can hardly begin to be in the other school systems feeding DMLC. Seemingly, they represent subjects not essential for entering the program at the college.

The DMLC-bound student would gain most of the advantages already cited for language study. Of special interest might be the degree to which a study of Latin could lead him to become a better teacher of English. In our country today, bilingual confrontations are commonplace and we can all expect to encounter them. In this regard, a teacher might find a working knowledge of German or Spanish extremely helpful. Meanwhile, if we begin to turn out more teachers with language proficiency we may want to look into the prospect of teaching some foreign language also on the grade school level, as they have done in Philadelphia. Moreover, with the teacher-track students also taking languages, the problems of elitism and overloading for one track should diminish. Finally, with teacher trainees required to take languages also, some of the onus of making an early choice for the pastoral ministry might be relieved.

The Question of Relevancy

Before we can turn to some concluding remarks and get off the merry-go-round, one basic objection, leveled especially against Latin in the two-track system, still needs direct attention, namely, that it isn't **relevant**. "I don't use it in the ministry," insists the adamant detractor.

While laying aside the question whether that is a logically valid objection to make, it should be noted that the same thing might be equally said of medieval history, square roots, chemical equations, Shakespeare, even Hebrew and Greek. Furthermore, not everything has to be relevant in the sense it is used in this argument. Leave it to the students, as Professor of Psychology Henry Clay Lindgren sees it, and they will likely urge us to "give them only relevance—a diet that is exciting, but, like a meal of junk food, one that is insubstantial and only briefly satisfying, leaving the diner empty after an hour."⁸

It would be easy to bog down here, in turn, with the term "relevant." In today's technological society it often means "producing a marketable skill." Interestingly enough, Latin does just that for those pastors (few though they be) who continue to use it in their ministry. More important, however, there is a "relevance" not so manifestly utilitarian that Latin can boast and many more pastors can share. We have already alluded to much of it, e.g., relevance to English. Some thoughts bear elaboration, however.

Keeping Latin keeps us in a tradition—a tradition that has made us what we are. That applies, overtly, to our tradition as a church body with pastors trained in Latin and with theological sources written in Latin. It applies just as surely to the traditions of western civilization of which we are a part. As Dr. M. I. Finley of Cambridge points out, "It is...a fact of history that the language and literature of the Greeks and Romans are woven into the web of our own language and literature, of our cultural traditions, and even... of our religious thinking."⁹ William Riley Parker, while President of the Modern Language Association of America, asserted that "Education that neglects the past is unthinkable, suicidal,"¹⁰ and that Latin, "when studied beyond the elementary stage, enables one to live intellectually in the distant past out of which all Western cultures developed."¹¹

Growing bold with the backing of authoritative voices that are not pre-World War II, allow me to follow through with some more of the thinking of Mr. Parker. He supports Latin as "a first foreign language which is a demonstrable stepping-stone to others."¹² We of the Wisconsin Synod have experienced that relevant benefit not only in connection with other languages in the pastor-training curriculum, but also in connection with our missionaries training to use a foreign language for their field work. Again Mr. Parker feels that Latin "enlarges the pupil's mental horizon by introducing him to a completely new medium of verbal expression and communication and consequently to a new cultural pattern."¹³

In summary, Mr. Parker contends: "Latin, simply as a foreign language, offers a demonstrable valuable experience, and, studied to the point of reasonable competence, it offers also an educationally unique experience: a sense of our relevant past, cultural and linguistic."¹⁴ From all that we have determined so far, I think it's fair to say we would like all of our pastors to have what Mr. Parker feels Latin will give them.

Some Observations and Opinions

It appears, then, that there is much to be said for retaining the two-track system with its strong language requirements in the pastor-track. If the two tracks should become more alike, strong consideration should be given to require more language study also in the teacher-track. What remains is to make some observations, to offer some opinions, and to suggest some improvements. By then, perhaps, you will feel sufficiently titillated by the inherent controversy surrounding this subject to make your own observations, offer your own opinions, and suggest some of your own improvements.

Of those responding to the questionnaire I used, it seems significant that when asked to propose a single-track system to replace the two-track system, virtually everyone (with the possible exception of one ambiguous response) included language study, and most favored at least two years of Latin. On the other hand a number favored greater flexibility of choice between Latin, German, and Spanish.

It may be true that many of the benefits of Latin, particularly its value for working with language grammar, are achieved to a large extent in two high school years. Conversely, however, proficiency in a language ordinarily takes the equivalent of three college years of study to achieve. To get people proficient in Latin and German in our pastor-track, we appear to need the requirements we have at present. Besides we may not wish to demand that our students get the tools of the Latin trade and then not provide the more rewarding opportunity to use the tools.

We should be careful not to make exaggerated claims for Latin and German, or to make the study of either of them appear the less attractive by suggesting it teaches “how to do hard work even though it may be unpleasant,” or to claim accomplishments through our language courses that cannot be demonstrated in fact. Among the exaggerated claims might be that Latin (in particular) helps develop disciplined thinking and careful speech, that it helps train the mind. Maybe it does to some extent, but so does disciplined education in general. Furthermore there is no concrete evidence to support the contention that Latin does it better than a number of other subjects might. Most recent supporters of Latin no longer attempt to promote it as a “mind trainer.” T. S. Eliot, speaking of *The Classics and the Man of Letters* suggests “that the defense of any study purely as ‘discipline’ in the modern sense can be maintained too obstinately: I have, for instance, heard compulsory chapel defended, by an unbeliever, on the ground that it was good for boys to have a duty which they disliked so much.”¹⁵ It seems the time has come to promote Latin and German on their positive merits and to make the study of them as attractive as possible. Lastly, if we say we teach culture as an integral part of a course, let’s be sure we teach culture and not bog down in the ablative absolute.

Let us also be suspect, however, of the claims for how many more students we will get into the ministry if only we drop our Latin requirements. We have no assurance the number of students would change appreciably. Lutheran bodies who do not have strict language requirements still experience shortages of pastors. Students who fail Latin and drop out of the pastors’ program often will have failed another subject as well and be low in others. Sometimes they may pass Latin and fail Greek or science or history. To my knowledge, no unmistakable pattern emerges.

One area that receives only passing attention in the language debate in our circles, as it seems, is the ways and means of teaching languages. In my estimation—as reinforced by the President’s Commission’s report¹⁶—this matter deserves special attention, especially on the level of study where the student is forming his first impressions of the language. If some languages are not, in fact, dead, apparently there are some classrooms where teacher and student alike are doing their level best to kill them off. I don’t say this with any particular teacher or class in mind, but believing we dare not be complacent nor assume that we can continue doing as we have always done and necessarily still be successful and effective in our day. I say it with a growing conviction that we can do a lot more with German, for example, as the living, spoken language it is than we presently appear to be doing.

If we were voting today in favor of or against the two-track system as we have it—as if those were our only two choices this writer would vote, “*Ja!*” The alternatives, however, should not have to be so limited as

that. I, for one, am intrigued at the prospect of some choices for the students in the languages. Pastoral students for example could begin both Latin and German at the academies as now—possibly with a slight reduction in Latin to three years—and in college have a choice of which one to continue to concentrate on. Also, since our pastors no longer have to go to a mission in Latin America to find themselves working among Spanish speaking people, Spanish seems to beg for at least an elective place in the curriculum.

In all fairness, it should be stated that these proposals have had a hearing with the NWC faculty and have been judged wanting. The need for Spanish did not prove to be as urgent as might seem—at least not urgent enough to find room for it and teachers to teach it in our heavily loaded college schedule. An overriding fear, when it comes to electing to concentrate on either Latin or German, is that students may flock to one, to the exclusion of the other, and bring about the early demise of the language shunned. If that fear is probable or likely to come true, then the conclusion drawn was a good one. If not, then we may have an alternative that deserves another look.

The two-track system is, for now, necessary. Is it valuable enough to continue to make it necessary? That question surely is bigger than a single paper. The Commission on Higher Education's study on the worker training curricula will have to ask it again and attempt an answer that will satisfy the Synod's constituency. There is no easy, blanket answer unless God Himself were to give it—and He hasn't. There is always room for testing our hypotheses and redefining our objectives. Hopefully, as we continue the debate, we will always strive for what is ideal and keep clearly in mind what kind of a pastor or a teacher we want to produce with our training. Let us be clear on all the implications and ramifications of whatever course of action we pursue. And let us intend always to strengthen our ministry and the program leading to it.

-Addendum-

THOUGHTS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Would the weakening of our pastor-track language program threaten the existence of the academy system as some suggest? If so, should we keep the two-tracks if only to preserve the prep system?
2. Which language is more “useful”—Latin, German, Spanish, or other?
3. Can we keep Latin viable and continue to produce at least some pastors regularly with proficiency in it if we allow a choice between Latin and German (Spanish?) as a college language concentrate?
4. A problem with keyboard training for teachers was alluded to but left undeveloped in the paper. Is it a problem calling for more attention?
5. The paper strongly suggests a language requirement for our future teachers. Is this feasible? Is it reasonable?
6. Should we move toward introducing foreign language study in our Christian day schools?
7. The two-track system calls for some early career orientation for students interested in ministry. A single-track system might possibly lead to less goal orientation. Which is the greater disadvantage? Why?
8. Are there any tests we can and should be running (but aren't) that will help us determine whether we are indeed working with the preferred high school curricula for future pastors and teachers?
9. The two-track system creates a lot of “special” students for NWC because of the number who have not completed the full pastor-track in their high school years. Is this a healthy situation? How many (what %) special students can we tolerate before we have an unwieldy imbalance needing a change in policy to correct it? Is the five-year special student unfairly penalized for not deciding to leave home to study for the ministry until he has finished high school? Is it wrong to make a pupil decide for or against language study when he enters high school?
10. How can teaching methods make Latin or German more interesting?
11. If Latin and German become expendable in the pastor-training course, does that make Greek and Hebrew vulnerable? Does it represent an inevitable weakening of the structure of the curriculum that must go beyond anything we now would term acceptable?
12. What subjects, now missing, ought to find a place in our system—whether affecting the two-track academy system or not?
13. Is the problem of inadequate elementary English preparation, alluded to in the disadvantages of the two-track system, serious enough to make the pastor-track's language requirements untenable?

Endnotes

- ¹“Reversing the Trend of Foreign Language Illiteracy,” NASSP Curriculum Report, (May, 1980), p. 2.
- ²“Pueri et Puellae Certantes,” *Time*, Vol. 110, (August 15, 1977), p. 82.
- ³“The Latin Language Is Finally on the Rebound,” *The Huntsville Times*, (February 24, 1980, p. 36.
- ⁴Eleanor R. Cederstrom, “Latin in Philadelphia,” *Educational Digest*, Vol. 39 (April, 1974), p. 48.
- ⁵“Reversing the Trend,” pp. 1, 2.
- ⁶*Ibid.*, p. 2.
- ⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 3, 4.
- ⁸Henry Clay Lindgren, “Teaching Relevance,” *Education*, Vol. 99, (Summer, 1979), p. 334.
- ⁹M. I. Finley, “Crisis in the Classics,” *Crisis in the Humanities*, J. H. Plumb, ed. (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 17.
- ¹⁰William Riley Parker, *The Language Curtain and Other Essays on American Education* (New York, NY: Modern Language Association of America, 1966), p. 98.
- ¹¹*Ibid.*, p. 99.
- ¹²*Ibid.*, p. 102.
- ¹³*Ibid.*, p. 95.
- ¹⁴*Ibid.*, p. 104.
- ¹⁵T. S. Eliot, *The Classics and the Man of Letters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1942), p. 19.
- ¹⁶See “Reversing the Trend,” pp. 2, 6.

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