

The Battle for the Christian School as a Battle for the Christian Worldview

*(Der Kampf um die christliche Schule als
Kampf um die christliche Weltanschauung)*

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By

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“Next to every Lutheran church a Lutheran school!” As part of an article in 1923 which dealt with the history of the Missouri Synod and the Synodical Conference, August Pieper reflected with approval upon this motto of C.F.W. Walther, whom he called the “founder of the Lutheran parochial school in this country.”¹ Such a statement makes clear how the Lutheran elementary school was of vital importance in the early days of the Synodical Conference to Lutherans in both the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods.

John Schaller, who was a student of Walther and colleague of Pieper, wrote the following article to appear in the *Theologische Quartalschrift* in 1910. It would seem he adapted this article from a speech he had given earlier on the topic of schools in Milwaukee. It would also seem from the subjects he addresses in this article that the Lutheran elementary school had come under attack in a number of ways. Perhaps some had begun to wonder if it really was so vitally important after all.

Over a century later, God be praised that there is still a system of Lutheran schools in the Wisconsin synod. However over the past several years, those in the Wisconsin synod have seen a number of schools close, fewer schools open, and fewer students enrolled in its schools. It would seem again that the Lutheran school is under attack in a number of ways. Important questions must be asked again. Should the school still be of vital importance to the Lutheran congregation? Is the investment in time and resources worth the dividend it pays? Can some of the goals of an elementary school ministry be accomplished in other ways; if so, what are they? How might the Lutheran school adapt to survive and thrive again for another century? Or perhaps should the church get out of the school business?

Questions like these have been asked before, and one might safely bet others will ask them again in the future. In this article, Professor Schaller addresses some of these questions. In addition, he provides a solid foundation to stand on as one would seek to answer other questions he does not tackle directly. Today some might feel he speaks a bit too strongly, especially in the area of public education, when he lays out the principles of the points he is making. However one must also notice the caution he urges when it comes to applying those principles to real people in the real world. It is clear the high stakes in this discussion weighed heavily upon his heart as both a pastor and a teacher. Each must decide whether he achieved a balanced presentation in the end. It is truly remarkable how timely his words have become today, even though it has been over a century since he first put pen to paper. It is a blessing to read them and learn from his wisdom. Those who value Lutheran schools owe him a debt of gratitude.

In 2011, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary hosted a symposium on Lutheran schools. In his essay entitled, *Christian Education: A Matter Of Life Or Death, What The Mission*

¹ August Pieper, “Anniversary Reflections,” in Curtis A. Jahn, ed., *The Wauwatosa Theology* (Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997), 3:242.

Of The Church Teaches Us About Lutheran Schools, President Mark Zarling commended this article as a worthwhile contribution to the discussion on Lutheran schools and encouraged its translation so a broader audience could appreciate Schaller's insight on this subject. A short while later I began the project. I am confident it would have taken much longer to reach completion had Andrew Hussman not been assigned to Neenah as a vicar. He joined in the project, and together we were able to bring the work to completion. I thank him for his willingness, his skill, and his encouragement. I also want to thank those who offered useful critique in the editing process: Rev. Jeremiah Gumm and Mr. Russ Wilke.

It is also my hope that this translation will help future generations to appreciate the work of those who have gone before them. We stand on their shoulders, and by the grace of God they have given our church a solid foundation. May we continue to build on that foundation as we pass down the treasure of the Gospel from one generation to the next. If the Lord is willing, Lutheran schools will continue to aid us in this sacred duty.

*Start children off on the way they should go,
and even when they are old they will not turn from it. – Proverbs 22:6*

Jason D. Oakland
Neenah, Wisconsin
On the 485th Anniversary of the Presentation
of the Augsburg Confession

The Battle for the Christian School as a Battle for the Christian Worldview²

By John Schaller

The interest in establishing and preserving Christian schools is seen far too often in our circles as an issue of convenience, where one could stand on either side without detriment to his own place in Christendom. This approach creates a lack of vigilance in this matter which sadly confronts us all too frequently. In addition to the great shame of the church, it creates negligence toward Christian schools which replaces the thought that Christian schools are necessary. In reality in our American circumstances, it is an issue of *far-reaching principles* in this educational problem. With this battle for the Christian school, we stand in a conflict between *two worldviews* which are diametrically opposed to one another. Once a person has recognized this truth, it is impossible as a Christian to remain indifferent in this matter from that moment on. In the same way, one cannot generally remain indifferent when the honor of our great God is in question.

Despite all apparent variety, fundamentally there are only *two worldviews possible*. They are as different from one another as day and night, as light and darkness, as heaven and hell, as God and the devil. But at the same time, they are so entirely decisive for the state of man, i.e. will he be a child of heaven or of hell depending on which of the two worldviews holds sway over him. If one wants to know these worldviews in their most elementary and candid form, then one must go back in the story of mankind as far as the gray dawn of history, the first period of the world. Just at that time when man was created, both worldviews came into being, one directly after the other and in absolute opposition to one another. One of those worldviews or the other still holds sway over all thoughts and intentions of every man.

When he created man, God saw all that he had made, and it was *very good*. All—that means man too! And with that statement, God was not just declaring that at that time man totally filled his place in the visible creation and would not be able to go into conflict with any creature through his reign as ruler or that he grasped his earthly duty in every aspect and had the necessary understanding to carry it out. But above all, God was declaring that man stood in *total harmony* with his *Creator* and was unaware of any opposition toward the almighty God. So also through creation he was given the worldview, which was *good* according to the decree of God because it agreed with his divine purpose. The innermost essence of man, indeed his entire *will*, was made in the image of God, and so his will was in fullest agreement with the will of God. So it was only natural for sinless man that he and everything around him exist only *for the honor of God*. With Adam, there can be no mention of selfish thoughts, of striving after self-seeking

² The *Quartalschrift* adds this footnote to the title: “A writing, expanding on the outline from the address which was given at an assembly on schools in Milwaukee.”

goals because his whole mind is entirely devoted to God. In that respect, it did not even upset him that eating from the tree in the middle of the Garden was forbidden to him. God had made this command known as his will. The man, created in the image of God, saw no limitation of his freedom in this command but simply saw it as just a part of God's will with which he found himself naturally in agreement. Without any inner conflict, man was therefore a creature that sought only God's honor with awareness and full recognition of every circumstance. That was the *divine* worldview, which the Creator implanted in him; it was absolutely *theocentric*.

But then the lies from hell approached man and destroyed what God had so wonderfully created. With cunning, the tempter crafted a question of friendly inquiry: Did God really say? Was it not possible you people were mistaken? And when Eve emphatically and correctly repeated the command, Satan was there with his explanation ready: "God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened." An insolent blasphemy, but at the same time it was an attempt to teach Eve a new, *diabolical*³ worldview. Eve should think *about herself*, should desire and seek gain *for herself*, so that God would be driven out of his ruling position in the hearts of men and *selfishness* would take the place of God's love.

Eve gave in. In a masterful way, the brief words of the biblical account show us how consistently the reversal in Eve's heart took place. Now she looked at the tree with completely new thoughts. Indeed she looked at it as an obvious reminder of the divine prohibition while before she had caught sight of it only in passing and considered it worthy of no further thought. Suddenly she realized the tree looked pleasing to the eye. Her eyes widened with selfish desire at this seductive sight. The forbidden fruit enticed her. Whereas before it did not even enter her thinking that here might be a forbidden *pleasure*, now she felt the irresistible desire to enjoy what had been kept back from her and to make up ground on her own. Besides, according to the tempter's word, a rich profit for *herself* was indeed in store for Eve: a nearly unlimited expansion of her intellectual power in the world. She ate *because her worldview had been reversed*. God was pushed from the center, and the self took his place. With terrible quickness and ease the change had come, through which the entire attitude of man had been transformed from divine to *diabolical*! The essence of man was now focused *anthropocentrically*, and a separation from God, his highest good, happened with it. From this time on, man no longer says, "God above all, and to him alone be the glory!" In place of this divinely intended motto runs the diabolical one which has sounded through the millennia, "Every man for himself!" Without understanding just how precisely that phrase expresses the damning corruption of human nature, the American vernacular is used to pointing to the self as "Number One."⁴

Of course we know that the first, divinely-correct worldview was planted again immediately after the Fall through the Gospel by the undeserved grace of God. The comfort of the Word about the woman's Seed led Adam and Eve back to God and directed their thoughts

³ *teufliche* lit. "devilish" as in coming from the devil but "diabolical" seems to be the better English adjective.

⁴ Schaller wrote the "Number One" in English.

anew toward God.⁵ Since then, also by the mercy of God, there has always been a church which clings to the *Soli Deo Gloria*,⁶ even if in great imperfection. But all people are born as children of Adam, are in his own likeness, and bring along into life this worldview which is hostile to God.⁷ “There is no one who seeks God,”⁸ says the all-knowing One about those who are not born again by the power of grace to a new life in God.

And ever since, both of these worldviews stand in the most bitter feud. The battle surges through the millennia since Cain strangled his brother. There this new worldview brought about its legitimate fruit: the murder of one’s brother. Cain struck his brother dead because he hated Abel’s divine worldview. It has always been this way in the world. Whenever the children of God are serious about their confession of God and seek his honor more than the things of this world, this hostility raises its serpent-like head and the battle flares up. Is it any wonder then that *the Christian school*, born from the divinely ordained worldview, is recognized as the adversary of *the public school which is formed by the world*⁹ and for this reason is most bitterly hostile to it!

In a life and death struggle, there can be no talk of success if one misjudges the enemy. We do not recognize often enough the true character of the public school’s nature. Far too often, we are still ready to grant all kinds of good qualities to it. Therefore it is necessary in our own circles to be entirely clear on this point: the public school, as we have it, *is not founded on the divine worldview*, does not *support* it, and for this reason *can only produce opposition to it*. In addition, we assume some sort of school system is required for the education of children in our situation. Therefore this school can be designated as a relatively necessary institution.

Among other things, the American public school differs from the German public school in this: it is *religion-less*.¹⁰ By this I mean it does not explicitly teach any of the recognized religions. At times, this point is credited to the public school as an advantage, but it only makes a virtue of necessity. In our situation, the state must simply refrain from setting itself up as a teacher of religion especially in light of the fundamental separation of church and state. That is also quite right because the state has no call to teach people religion. And wherever it attempts to do this, it only causes harm in the end. But from the beginning, the fundamental character of the public school has been allowed in the proper sense to be *God-less*,¹¹ without God! The

⁵ Genesis 3:15.

⁶ “Glory to God alone!”

⁷ *Gottfeindliche* is the word he uses which does not have an exact equivalent in one English word, although “God-hating” might come closest.

⁸ He seems to be intentionally playing off the wording of Romans 3.

⁹ *weltförmigen Staatsschule* is the rather nice and concise phrase Schaller uses. That adjective which is rendered, “which is formed by the world”, is difficult to translate as concisely in English. It appears again a couple of times later on, and it has the basic idea that the world has shaped something into the form it wants it to take.

¹⁰ *Religionslos* is the word he uses. Perhaps one could also render the term “irreligious.”

¹¹ *gottlos*, Schaller adds the parenthetical note at the end of the sentence: (*Vgl. brotlos, ehrlos, arbeitslos u.s.w.*). “Compare this with bread-less [unemployed, without work], honor-less [dishonorable, disreputable], work-less [out of work] and the like.”

teacher¹² in the public school can say nothing officially about God and divine matters. And if he does it all the same, then he exceeds his authority. If he comes to a moral question, which he cannot avoid, he is not permitted to point out the binding power of divine will. He has no choice but to explain moral demands by human agreement or by the authority of the policeman's club. Because this school *fundamentally ignores* God and divine matters, we recognize immediately from this point the theocentric worldview is simply out of the question for it. Since a worldview must necessarily be at the root of all education—if it wants to be set up in a sensible way overall—the only worldview available to the public school at its lowest foundation remains the one which led Eve to delight in the forbidden fruit.

The *goal* which the public school sets for itself also agrees completely with that worldview. But according to the theocentric worldview, the children of men by right belong to God, their Creator and Redeemer, who also clearly demands: “Do you question *me* about my children, or give *me* orders about the work of my hands?”¹³ Now hardly anyone will dare to make the bold claim that the public school is intending to educate their students as children of God. But giving their pupils simple, spiritual instruction is not even a goal of the public school. Of course, at times they have made the “Three R’s: Reading, ‘Riting, and ‘Rithmetic,”¹⁴ out to be the *Summa Summarum*¹⁵ for the work of the public school. Even now many people think the public school reaches its goal in matters of elementary subjects. But based on reading, writing, and arithmetic alone, this noble institution would be a fetish.¹⁶ It is far too shaky for teachers to have so much enthusiasm about it.

Rather at their conventions, public school teachers claim for themselves the task of *educating the people*. This school wants to be an *educational institution*. As such, it must set higher goals for itself than the meager intellectual instruction of their pupils. Apart from various attempts to achieve something in the aesthetic field, this has theoretically been made into the main task in the public school: to teach children to be good citizens, really, to be *patriots*. That really sounds like the public school has not necessarily recognized grooming for selfishness as their task. But does practice agree with this theory? Is it really impressed on the child in all subjects that they should pursue them because they regard it as necessary for the well-being of the state?

Anyone who knows anything about how the public school stimulates the pupil's eagerness for learning will realize that this school habitually operates with the lowest possible motives, namely, with *ambition* and *selfishness*. Or it would be better to say it motivates only

¹² It may be interesting to note that Schaller adds the feminine form for teacher as a parenthetical note: “*Der Lehrer (die Lehrerin) der Staatschule...*”. One may also find it interesting that it was under Schaller's time as director at Doctor Martin Luther College that female students began attending and graduating as teachers.

¹³ Isaiah 45:11 “Weiset meine Kinder, das Werk meiner Hände, zu mir!”

¹⁴ Schaller quotes these words in English.

¹⁵ Latin for “the all in all.”

¹⁶ By “*Fetisch*” Schaller has in mind a thought like this: the attribution of religious or mystical qualities to inanimate objects.

with selfishness, of which ambition is merely a deviation. Students compete with each other to win a certain place of honor or a good grade. They work hard to gain recognition so that they can participate as representatives of their school in competitive contests and the like. In addition, not the slightest consideration is given to their neighbor (to say nothing of God's will), but only their own advantage is the decisive factor. Such things are so common that one easily views them as legitimate measures for the school and only becomes upset about it, if their own child is apparently neglected. The main driving force, however, at all times is the reference to personal success,¹⁷ which one promises the diligent student as a certain future gift. Whoever wants to make money, must learn—that is more or less the theme which is sung to the children in every key. The self is placed into the foreground. Egotism is deliberately fostered.

Moreover, everywhere there is so little talk of promoting interest in *religion*. Instead that interest is weakened by the whole tendency of all scientific and historical instruction, if it ever was present. Our public schools up through the universities decisively and systematically promote *evolutionism*. And it is not evolution in the deistic sense, so that God still somewhat remains the root cause of all being and existence. But at best they teach it agnostically or in a way that is completely atheistic. As a result, the power of God is completely eliminated from nature and history. Wherever it is possible, the glory of *man* steps into the place of the glory of God. Everything is aimed at the glorification of man. In short, the *goals* of the public school are not thought of as being remotely *theocentric*, but they are completely *anthropocentric*. That this goal lies in the nature of an irreligious school is not an excuse. Rather it is all the more a confirmation of the thesis: the worldview which God wants us to have does not matter for the public school, but the other worldview which the devil brought into the world does.

And the *results*? The public school has already had in their hands more than a generation of our people and has molded them according to its principles. For decades, we have had to put up with the clamor in our ears that this institution is actually the palladium¹⁸ of our freedom, the very foundation of the republic which could not stand without it. This cry has made such an impression on Christians too that most church bodies have gullibly and blindly put the education of the young into the hands of the state. If the public school has achieved anything for improving our situation, then it must be able to produce results because “by their fruit you shall recognize them.”¹⁹

What about patriotism, which seeks the nation's well-being at the expense of one's own interests? That is an absurd thought in a nation that moans and groans like no other under the exploitative cravings of greedy men. And yet in this nation almost everyone who groans would immediately join those who exploit them if the opportunity would present itself. In addition, there is the most horrible corruption in our entire nation, which has made our politics into the

¹⁷ Schaller repeats the word in English, “auf den persönlichen Erfolg, auf den success.”

¹⁸ “Palladium” is a reference to anything that provides protection or safety. In ancient mythology, the palladium was an image of the goddess Pallas Athena that first protected the city of Troy, then the city of Rome.

¹⁹ Matthew 7:16.

dirtiest business that exists in the world. This corruption has made every large city and a good part of the rural districts into a Sodom and Gomorrah, whose sins stink to heaven. Everywhere the crassest *egotism* rules, by which man makes himself the center of the world and claims all rights for himself—exactly like the devil planned it in Paradise.

The public school does not want to accept responsibility for these conditions, do they? If it doesn't, then at once it loses all right to existence on account of the shortcoming of its methods. Only a bad school does not finish what it was meant to accomplish according to its entire design and operation. But it is understandable that a farmer who had perhaps tended and cared for a weed, who had watered and fertilized it, would not want to accept responsibility later for the luxuriant growth of this most disgusting weed. Yet it is deplorable that we Christians often allow ourselves to be blinded by the outward glamour of the public school. Meanwhile the evil foe looks on with pleasure as people take pains to promote the luxuriant growth of the destructive weed, which he has sown. *Because it cannot be otherwise*: wherever this worldview that is cultivated in the public school rules, the evil foe preserves his own with peace.

Of course, the job of establishing educational institutions for the children of the world does not belong primarily to Christians. Indeed, our attempts in this direction are likely to meet with little success because the world wants to be deceived. However, God has entrusted us with children whom we should give back to him, whom we should educate in the worldview that conforms to his divine will. What a damned sin it is—I am speaking with Luther—if this is neglected! It is horrible to think how many parents who pretend to be Christians have already earned hell for their children. Let us note well: to educate children in a Christian way does not just mean to *tell* them they should be Christians. It also does not just mean to teach them to know from memory a certain treasury of religious knowledge. Instead, it means to lead them to the worldview that God, their Creator, Redeemer, and Sanctifier, is the highest good and his honor should be the goal of every human aspiration so that their own self is nothing compared to it. This concept, and not a hair less, is what Paul means when he says parents should educate their children in the training and instruction *of the Lord*.²⁰

Now to be sure all attempts of Christian parents in this regard are imperfect, as is the total sanctification of their life in general. Daily forgiveness of sin is necessary for us here also even if we have done *all things* in a way we perceive to be right. But how can it be justified if someone not only doesn't do everything he could for Christian education, but he doesn't do one percent, in fact, he even deliberately abandons children to influences opposed to God?²¹ It is indeed a crying shame to see how the church in our day suffers unspeakable harm because so many Christians strike a compromise in the matter of their children's education. As a result, the form of worldliness rises to the top, and the Christian faith stays at the bottom.

²⁰ Ephesians 6:4

²¹ widergöttlichen Einflüssen

These compromises mainly take two forms: In the first case, the parents think they have completely satisfied their Christian duty if they send their children to Sunday School while they provide them with the irreligious public school every other day the week. In the second case, the parents place their firm confidence in confirmation instruction, which is supposed to complete a Christian education in half a year, when the child has been exposed to the public school education which is formed by the world for more than six years of his life. If both of these compromises are blended so that Sunday School and confirmation instruction come together at times, very little changes. A compromise which comes about like this only has infinitely small advantages over those parts from which it was assembled. In the examination of these compromises that follows, there is no value in judging the worth of the instruction which is taught in Sunday School or the confirmation classroom in and of itself. It really depends entirely on this question: does the Gospel get the attention it deserves? When we are shedding light on the responsibility *of parents*, we obviously don't have to consider here what the Holy Spirit *can* perhaps work in children through the means of the most inadequate religious instruction. To be sure, God can save a poor child from the pit into which the parents have plunged him. For us the question is: can the parents be held responsible when they plunge their child into the pit?

If parents just hope that the Christian education of their children is not at all compromised when the public school is allowed to train them for years and then they are sent to Sunday School once a week for a brief hour or finally entrusted to the pastor for confirmation class after seven years of schooling, those parents are demonstrating little sensible thought. Instead they must be telling themselves that the ongoing instruction in a religious school certainly won't produce any interest in religion for their children. And on the other hand, they are telling themselves the small amount of religious instruction in Sunday School and confirmation class is just enough to produce a strong and thorough knowledge of religion in their children.

An example from nature may illustrate the first point. The first time a person tours the prairie in the Dakotas, it strikes him that the few trees, planted by people, never stand entirely straight. All of them lean in one direction. With many of them it is not just the trunk that has this tendency, but all the branches are also bent in a certain direction. The result is that the treetop at times looks like a mop of hair which has been blown from the back to the front over the face. When one asks why they look like this (an appearance which jars nature lovers), the inhabitants of the region say that the constant and sometimes violent winds which come mostly from the northwest are responsible for it. Their continual influence on the small trees blows them gradually but without fail from growing in a straight line. If the wind blows from a different direction now and then, it cannot overcome the effect of the very frequent northwest wind. Therefore all the trees have grown leaning that direction.

It is easy to make the application. Those trees are like the children who are sent from Christian homes into the public school and are left for years under its influence. The constant northwest wind is the religion-less instruction these poor children receive. The other winds

which should counteract the constant northwest wind are the few religious hours which these children receive in Sunday School and confirmation class. Can one be surprised if they wither away spiritually and grow with a lean? Day after day, week after week, year after year, the spirit of the world blows on them. Their thoughts are directed with every power of the craft of education to “worldly things” which are never connected to God and divine thoughts. Every influence which the school can assert aims at this: make their pupils into complete children of the world. Should one be allowed to hope that all this doesn’t leave a mark on the children? Should one also be allowed to hope that the barest minimum of religious instruction offers a sufficient counterweight? Can one expect these children will bring forth true fruits of godliness and serve their neighbor for *God’s* sake? Anyone who thinks like this must indeed be slapping his common sense in the face. But the sad truth of it is very few parents make themselves think seriously about this point. In their task with the greatest responsibility here on this earth, they act without thinking and their poor children suffer as a result. The evil fruits only show themselves afterwards, when one can’t do much more about it, i.e. when the children are freed from the discipline of parents and go the way which they have learned to go while under the authority of their parents. Then the parents see how their children are more and more estranged from the church. Then the bitter cries go up everywhere about how so many confirmands become unfaithful to their confirmation vows and follow the world. But if we are honest with ourselves for once: can any other result be expected when bringing up children in this way has been our practice for so long?

However, it is no less a violation against common sense, let alone the reason of the enlightened Christian, if lasting results are expected from instruction *only* in the Sunday School and confirmation class. Consider carefully: We need to instruct children in the divine worldview, which is opposed to the ambition and the entire way of natural man. We need to establish them in divine wisdom. How true the word of the Lord is here: “The people of this world are more shrewd in dealing with their own kind than are the people of the light.”²² If the child is to learn reading, writing, and arithmetic; if he is to be taught the basic concepts of geography and secure a certain number of historical concepts; if much later he should learn a skilled trade—no one thinks it is nearly enough if that child occupies himself with that subject casually for an hour on one day of the week. Nor do they think it is enough if he spends an hour with it every day for half a year. There is good reason that lessons in reading, writing, and arithmetic, instruction in grammar, geography and history, are carried on daily for years. It is only in this way a person obtains a thorough knowledge that remains his intellectual property as long as he lives. It is only in this way he learns to think definitively about these areas in the right way. This is so obvious to us that we have even experienced parents in the bigger cities who allow their children almost none of the time required for confirmation instruction.²³ With a sigh,

²² Luke 16:8.

²³ The distinction Schaller makes between the urban and rural settings would not apply any longer in our circles today. There is competition for time everywhere. However, one might consider the time given for religious instruction on Wednesdays. At one time, there were no school activities scheduled right after school on Wednesday.

pastors have to adapt so that they only get the children for instruction after school, when they are intellectually exhausted and cannot make much of an effort. In addition, they also have to adapt to the idea that they should expect as little work as possible from the children because of the demands which worldly instruction makes on them.

Now compare this idea with the surprising view some Christians have that education in Christianity needs almost no time at all. They think that the highest wisdom there is—God’s revelation in his Word—could be acquired in such a casual way. Is anyone able to say, then, that here the divine worldview is missed by a wide margin? “Yes,” you might say, “but in our congregations there are a great many people who, in spite of being educated in the way that was just described, can be counted as dear church members?” You are right, but how do you account for things like this? These people are very easily still blown about by every wind of teaching, so that they often lean toward the world and its practices. Quite often in congregational meetings they demonstrate very little Christian understanding, and they only apply the world’s standards in congregational matters. And again how do you account for the many thousands who, although born of Christian parents, still become alienated from Christianity so quickly as a result of this kind of education? Doesn’t it happen with them just as Christ says, “They believe for a while, but in the time of testing they fall away”?²⁴ In such people, how can one expect the apostle’s prayer to be fulfilled: “that out of his glorious riches he may *strengthen you* with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, *being rooted and established* in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God!”²⁵

The Christian worldview requires *establishing* the youth in Christian truth. Therefore the church also, as long as this worldview governs it, will fight for the *Christian school*. Since there must be schools in our circumstances, the preservation of the Christian school becomes the vital question for us. The importance of this matter has frequently been obscured. *German* schools have been desired as a counterpart to the public school. Even the name “congregational school” also misleads some poorly informed Christians about the sharpness of the contrast. The time may come when German no longer plays a role among us, or the Christian congregation only considers the establishment of a school as an afterthought. But what matters is that the congregational school, whether German or English, should be a *Christian* school.²⁶ May God never let us live to see the day when those who fight for *this kind* of school in our church form a

That courtesy seems to be disappearing. In a smaller community or rural setting, one might find those more willing to accommodate such a schedule. In our larger communities, that no longer can be assumed.

²⁴ Luke 8:13.

²⁵ Ephesians 3:16-19.

²⁶ Retaining the German language in our schools is no longer an issue, but these words still speak to the challenges that face us. One might wonder what Professor Schaller would advise in the case of “choice schools” where the subject of religion is only an elective. Again, one might wonder what would he advise when enthusiasm and zeal for attending a basketball game at the school far outweighs the eagerness to join in public worship even when the children are singing for the service.

desperate minority! For a Christian school in a congregation is *a child of the divine worldview*. Whoever is battling for the one is fighting for the other.

Really the entire *design* of this school reveals its origin. It can deny its origins as little as the public school can. Wherever Christian children are educated by Christian teachers in this way, the predominant and preferred *subject matter* is that which makes people into Christians and saves them: *God's Word*. The most ideal time of the school day is set aside for this subject, and indeed *every* school day has at least an hour that is dedicated exclusively to God and divine matters. Worldly, earthly wisdom takes *second* place here, as it ought to be with people for whom God's kingdom and righteousness far surpass everything else in importance. Because the Christian still lives in the world and should serve his neighbor in it to God's glory, the Christian child must also be equipped with certain secular knowledge. Therefore this knowledge is also taken into account in the schedule of the Christian school. But it stays in its proper place so that it does not rule but actually serves.

As Christians are in the world but not of the world themselves, so their schools certainly are too. The world also characteristically recognizes this fact. The Christian school has had to endure hostility from the children of the world again and again. Consider all the school legislation that was aimed at the destruction of the true Christian school.²⁷ All this provides proof that the world instinctively recognizes how strange these schools are. From the start they have a character that the world cannot recognize as true without denying its own cause. For this reason as long as the church purposefully and vigorously emphasizes the civil and social value of our schools, we may also expect no recognition of this work. If the congregational school is recognized by the world, then it is at once proof that it has not remained a Christian school. "If you belonged to the world, then the world would love you as its own!"²⁸

Further in the Christian school, the *method of instruction* is oriented according to the Christian worldview. Therefore it is divinely oriented. By this, we do not mean the technique of instruction. This is the same for all instruction. Here it's a matter of the *spirit* that dominates all the instruction. It has correctly been said that in the Christian school all classes are *religious* classes. Not only is the actual religious material related to God and derived from God, but the proper understanding and the right application in all other subjects is also made according to God's Word. When the Christian teacher describes the necessity of worldly subjects, he does not emphasize them so that a person might secure his worldly advancement and lay a foundation for acquiring money. Rather he emphasizes those subjects so that in accordance with God's will we

²⁷ Schaller is most likely referring to the attempts in the late 1880's to intervene in the affairs of parochial schools and mandate English instruction especially. Examples of this are the Pond Bill and, more famously, the Bennett Law. J. P. Koehler addresses this topic in *The History of the Wisconsin Synod* on pp. 183-188. An overview of this topic is found in *Wisconsin Synod: Right or Wrong in Handling the Bennett Law?* by Joel B. Schroeder. As of July 2015, one can find this paper on the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library's Online Essay File. <http://wlsessays.net/files/SchroederBennett.pdf>

²⁸ John 15:19.

might put the gifts he has given us into the service of our neighbor, because the Christian lives as one who lives only for God and for the service of God toward his neighbor.

Especially in practical subjects, the divine worldview dominates all the teacher presents. He does not teach agnostic-evolutionary science, geography, and world history. Instead he teaches the fact that everything in creation is created by God for his glory and exists in him. He teaches that all of man's movements and achievements are in God's hands. He teaches that world history is an ongoing sermon on the merciful goodness and righteousness of the Creator. For example then, if we teach American history from the point of view that the entire foundation and current preservation of our republic by the hand of God was only a means of once more giving an opportunity to preach the Gospel most freely in these last days, then who can be amazed that the American world, which learns to know its history and wants to have it only in the form of hero-worship, condemns our historical instruction as inadequate, maybe even hostile?

The *goals* of the Christian school, which follow in part from what was said above, also correspond to the divine worldview. Since God is the highest good and union with him is the greatest happiness, the Christian school for its part wants to cause its pupils to become and remain God's children. The ultimate goal of their efforts regarding children is their salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Secular, civil education comes after that. It cannot be otherwise.²⁹ Someone who is trained for God is also best trained for mutual interaction with others. In other words: that which the Christian school is not at all seeking to achieve as its first priority, it achieves almost in passing through the power of the divine Word. And the Christian school does it so completely that no secular school could ever reach a similar level. At times, the Christian school faces the charge that the children do not learn enough there when it comes to worldly wisdom. Therefore they put the helpless little ones into the secular school where only those things are emphasized. In spite of all these claims, however, the promise remains true: "all these things will be given to you as well."³⁰ It is fulfilled here also. Whoever honestly and with Christian sense compares this claim with Jesus' promise will have to admit that God's blessing also rests on Christian schools like this: the Christian school, with little time wasted, produces more in accurate and strong school knowledge than the best of typical public schools. Christian children in Christian schools learn simply because *God* wants it to be that way. In addition, the Christian school has the only educational means that can develop a good and valuable *nature*.³¹ The public school with all its character has never yet produced a single actually *good* citizen, nor

²⁹ Schaller speaks quite strongly on this point: *weil es nicht anders sein kann*.

³⁰ Matthew 6:33.

³¹ It may be of interest to note the words Schaller used which have been translated "nature" (*Charakter*) and "character" (*Gepräge*). *Charakter* seems to focus more on the inner part of a person. So "nature" seemed to be the definition that fit best. *Gepräge* seems to have more of a focus on external characteristics. It is like the picture, words, and ridges on a coin where the former might be the substance of which the coin is made.

trained a single *good* father or a single *good* mother for a family.³² If any school can achieve such magnificent things, it is the Christian school and only it can.

With these things, we have already begun to speak of the *results* of the Christian school. They are evident to all just as clearly as the universal failures of the public school are. We do not want to stress that a Christian school cannot have any *evil* results because it also turns against and fights all inborn and learned evil in man and presents divine power in the Gospel as the good opposed to it. We need only to look at the history of our church. It speaks more loudly than any individual about the priceless results of our congregational schools. How many preachers of the Gospel do we have to thank for the fact that our fathers diligently held on to Christian schooling for the youth? How many excellent teachers were also educated for the church through their schools? And in how many congregations are there especially those members that have *simply* attended the Christian school, who actually form the center, the solid foundation one can count on, in that church? In our congregational schools, we educate people truly with a strong, divinely oriented worldview. If the world calls them mind-dulling institutions, then we count that as praise; for whatever is foolish to the world is exactly what is godly.

That we must vigorously fight most of all *within our own congregations* does not ultimately do away with the fact that our battle for the Christian school is a battle for the Christian worldview. While this worldview is not completely lacking in any true Christian, it is also not immediately granted that the divine worldview will be accepted without trouble and struggle in every area of human life. This is because of the imperfection in sanctification for every Christian. Sadly this stands out especially in the work of education to the great harm of many children. If a congregation fights against setting up its own school because the necessary expense seems unpleasant, then it very clearly reveals it lacks the understanding of this truth: our children belong to God and not to the world. The same is valid for parents who cannot at all be persuaded to entrust their children exclusively to the Christian school. Without a doubt, they are completely controlled by the *inborn* opinion that it is necessary above all else to make their children competent in secular wisdom. Even if a congregation feels it must complain that its flourishing school has declined without being able to find purely local reasons for it, then it appears to be high time again to take a careful look at whether the divine worldview has not already been pushed into the background in its circles. Perhaps this word of the Lord applies to them, “I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”³³

In considering all these points, *how we are to fight the battle for the Christian school* will also follow easily. One can achieve almost nothing with requirements of the Law, because the correct zeal for the congregational school requires the divine attitude, which is only produced

³² “Good” here does not have the idea of civic righteousness but the idea of being truly righteous before God.

³³ Revelation 3:15-16.

through the Gospel. A paragraph in the by-laws of a congregation that requires members to send their children to the Christian school does not make anyone do it—at least it is not done with the proper mindset. That paragraph only has value as a reminder and belongs to the law as a guide for Christians.³⁴ It goes without saying that one cannot actually bring a father under church discipline because he does not send his children to the congregational school.³⁵ It might just look like he is bringing them up in a way that is not at all Christian, and one may well demand that he remove the appearance of evil. It is a different matter, however, if he consciously abandons his child to the ungodly influence of the worldly school and risks the salvation of his child’s soul in this way. As soon as he demonstrates that attitude with no reservations about doing such a thing, he certainly offers himself to brotherly rebuke.

But as is the case with all instruction about the necessity of the Christian school, this admonition must keep a consistent focus in every case that one can only successfully have an effect when the proper Christian worldview takes a dominant position with the people being instructed. If that is not so, if a person would not very much like to seek the honor of God in every respect, then one cannot really assume he properly understands the question of bringing up children in this way until he has become a Christian at any rate. But if all he lacks is that he has not yet realized how decisively the Christian worldview, which he has through faith, intervenes in the aforementioned question, then evangelical instruction has the job of making it clear to him. For the sake of God’s mercy, which he himself has experienced, and for the sake of Jesus’ love, which has been given to him, he will gladly accept the instruction which shows him how he can reasonably meet this difficult responsibility toward his children. Evangelical admonition will also give him power to overcome the constant opposition of his flesh. One also considers how few can achieve this all at once, just like any other part of sanctification. Therefore one keeps going with *patience* and *instruction*.

And what if our battle for the Christian school should fade out? What if the call to battle for it resounds unheard and the voices of its fathers gradually fall silent “because it no longer does any good”? God save us in his grace from such an evil day! In his writing to the councilmen, Luther has spoken a prophetic word of warning, which never goes out of date and should rouse us now again: “Buy while the market is at your door; gather in the harvest while there is sunshine and fair weather; make use of God’s grace and Word while it is there! For you should know that God’s Word and grace is like a passing shower of rain which does not return where it has once been. It has been with the Jews, but when it’s gone it’s gone, and now they have nothing. Paul brought it to the Greeks; but again when it’s gone it’s gone, and now they

³⁴ The German reads *als der Christen Regel*. He seems to have in mind that such is proper, but only when it is understood as belonging in realm of the Third Use of the Law.

³⁵ Schaller may be thinking of the Cincinnati Case of 1899 that led to serious discussions about church and ministry with the Missouri Synod in the years that followed. This situation involved a Missouri member who had been excommunicated by his congregation, apparently for withdrawing his son from the congregation’s school. District officials rejected the congregation’s excommunication, and for a time the congregation and its two pastors were suspended from synodical membership. Wisconsin was drawn into the dispute when congregation and pastors applied for membership in that synod in 1903.

have the Turk. Rome and the Latins also had it; but when it's gone it's gone, and now they have the pope. And you Germans need not think that you will have it forever, *for ingratitude and contempt will not make it stay. Therefore, seize it and hold it fast, whoever can; for lazy hands are bound to have a lean year.*³⁶

³⁶ LW 45:352-353. *To the Councilmen of All Cities in German That They Establish and Maintain Christian Schools, 1524.*