

OUR GROWING BLESSING
A Brief History of M.V.L.

Senior Church History
Professor E.C. Fredrich
May 1983

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library
11851 N. Seminary Drive. 65W
Mequon, Wisconsin

M. Birkholz

Introduction

A few miles outside of New Ulm, Minnesota on Highway 14 a new building was born two years ago. The distance from the highway and the proximity of the hills trick one into believing that the hills are slowly swallowing the building. Those same factors make the structure seem deceptively small. But in reality the landmark of glass, steel and brick is quite large. It has to be large in order to house the growing faculty and student body of Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School.

The construction of that building is an interesting tale in itself. But the building is only the physical evidence of a more interesting tale, the movement known as "Our Growing Blessing". In the following pages I would like to record some of the earlier steps in that Growing Blessing. It is the story of men and women's initial efforts to establish an area Lutheran high school in south-central Minnesota. Their emotions, attitudes and actual physical labor are all part of the story. But in the final analysis "Our Growing Blessing" is really the account of almighty God working through these selected individuals to carry out his own purposes.

I took on this subject fully aware of my inability to tell the complete history of M.V.L., brief as it may be. New Ulm was my home for only one summer. My other connections with the high school were limited to observations during vacations or occasional news through letters. A more complete history will have to come from another source, perhaps the board of director's historian or one of the prime movers on the original exploratory committee.

It is perfectly legitimate to ask then, "Why this paper, at this time, from this source?"

Admittedly, what occurred in the New Ulm area from 1977-1979 hardly qualifies as history in the usual sense, at least at this time. Yet it is history. And those events and attitudes should be recorded, now. The notes, minutes and news clippings will undoubtedly be around for ages. The people, or their memories, who made the news will not. Already some of the key figures in establishing the high school have left the area. And in more than one instance the memories of others produced two or three versions of the same decision or meeting. It seemed best then to record the impressions and opinions of these founding fathers. Their thoughts breathe life, meaning and rationale into an otherwise unarousing collection of notes and minutes.

This presentation is not a step by step chronology. And for the most part it is limited to the time period 1977-79. But there are references to what occurred before, and what resulted from, the events of those three years. Also, the last thing I'd want to produce is a bland series of facts and figures. That type of information is available from official records. My chief intention is to gather the thoughts and views of those who had a hand in establishing the high school. Their words, quoted or paraphrased, are the heart of this paper.

Finally, this is not merely history for the sake of history. There's a secondary purpose for my writing. Apparently misconceptions concerning Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School do exist. I've encountered those erroneous thoughts in New Ulm as well as Milwaukee and other places. If nothing else, this is one attempt to clear up those mistaken views. For instance, some seem to think that this high school appeared by simple divine decree as a replacement for Martin Luther Academy. In truth there were a number of serious roadblocks standing between these W.E.L.S. Christians and a high school of their own. The establishment of a school in the New Ulm area involved a great deal of time, money and effort.

A second mistake notion is that a few influential professors and local pastors started a high school with their own glory and children in mind. Common sense shows that a few men, no matter how influential, could not have pulled off such an accomplishment in this area or this synod. In addition, document upon document indicates that from the beginning this was the project of laymen.

The final and most common false belief is that M.V.L. is a "New Ulm" school, opened and dominated by the two large W.E.L.S. congregations in that town. Again the records show otherwise. Every effort was made to insure that this would be an AREA high school. No one wanted to make New Ulm the Mecca for all W.E.L.S. churches within 40 miles. In fact some members of St. John's and St. Paul's, New Ulm shyed away from certain board and committee positions so that other congregations might have equal input.

That building on Highway 14, between Courtland and New Ulm, is in every respect an Area high school. It is the answer to many peoples' prayers, some of which were uttered twenty and thirty years ago. That is where the story really begins.

I. OLD RUMORS

"That talk was mostly filler during pastoral conference coffee breaks or folks' backyard barbecues."

M.V.L.'s publicity pamphlet for 1980 as well as the 1981 dedication program contain the following paragraph:

Old timers tell us that Lutherans in this part of the Minnesota River Valley have talked of a Lutheran high school for twenty years and more. Perhaps the timing wasn't right or perhaps the existence of Martin Luther Academy in New Ulm (fulfilling at least a portion of the need for such a high school) kept things from materializing until this time.

That is a good summary statement of the historical situation.

But actually people did more than talk about an area high school, at least at one point in time.

Up to and including the late 50's there may have been dreams or talk of an area high school. There are no official documents to suggest that this was ever anything more than idle speculation. But beginning in the early 60's there are references to an area high school in the minutes of the local pastoral conferences. In fact, some preliminary studies concerning enrollment and financial support were conducted.

There is a threefold reason for the abrupt end of the early 60's movement. First of all, there is no evidence that this was ever anything more than a pastoral endeavor. If there was lay participation that is not on record. And an area high school is not the type of project which can be pushed through by pastors' ambitions alone, no matter how strong their combined wills might be.

Secondly, as this was primarily a pastoral movement, those individuals had other weighty matters on their minds. The early 60's was a period of soul searching for pastors as individuals and in groups. The dispute with Missouri had to be settled and our own synodical position solidified before there could be serious talk of an area high school.

Even if these other situations had been different, it is doubtful that an area high school would have been started in the early 60's. People were content with the education being offered by the high school department at D.M.L.C. Even when local students occasionally felt left out of the social life at the academy, that and other problems didn't provide sufficient impetus to establish an area high school.

M. L. A. continued to satisfactorily meet the needs of local Christian secondary education throughout the 60's and most of the 70's. Even if an area high school had been established, it's unrealistic to suppose that it would have grown much as long as M.L.A. was around. When M.L.A. left town, the voices of the early

60's were resurrected. W.E.L.S. people in general, not just the called pastors and teachers, began to speak seriously of an area high school of their own.

II. A SCHOOL IS BORN "We had to open in 79."

In trying to characterize the preliminary work of forming this high school I'm tempted to use terms such as swift and hectic. One member of the original committee even suggested "Organized Chaos". That may be a slight exaggeration. But it comes close to the truth. As I will point out later this movement was organized. If it seemed chaotic at times that was out of necessity. The necessity was reflected in a phrase oft repeated in the records and minutes, "We have to open in the fall of 79". To this day some folks in the area claim that the founding fathers moved too swiftly. I disagree. These were not a bunch of dreamers who got lucky in spite of their hurried approach. My impression is that the original committee members knew the mood of the W.E.L.S. community. They challenged that community to respond to their bold, and hastily laid, plans. The pace was fast. But in no way can it be said that this movement was disorganized. As the plans were made the Lord moved the people to meet the challenge. Looking back, the ten or eleven congregations probably surprised themselves by moving so swiftly and decisively in opening a high school.

The actual history of M.V.L. begins with the Synod Convention at New Ulm in 1977. One of the major issues at that time was the overcrowded state of the D.M.L.C. campus. Martin Luther Academy had

to be relocated in the area or elsewhere. The appropriate people were to find a solution. Shortly after that convention, at the local pastoral conference in Sleepy Eye, Professor Manthey from M.L.A. expressed his opinion concerning the future of that high school. He felt that M.L.A. would be moved and therefore urged a feasibility study for starting an area high school in or near to New Ulm.

From that point a second man of insight, Pastor Tom Henning, carried the ball. I say this not because Pastor Henning was alone in his desire for an area high school. But he deserves the credit for calling the first meeting to discuss the possibility of such a school. In attendance were area laymen and church workers of his own choosing. Two significant things happened at that time. The delegates probably best remember the ten dollars per man they contributed toward an exploratory fund. More importantly, these men decided to follow A.A.L.'s guidelines for establishing an area high school. Even a cursory reading of those guidelines will show that no one man, pastor or otherwise, could dominate the proceedings from that time on. Thus we put to death the oft whispered rumor that this was "Tom Henning's school." Those who know him realize that his own glory was never Pastor Henning's purpose for organizing the first steps of the high school movement.

After that first meeting a group of fifteen men began preliminary studies and other exploratory work. They restricted themselves somewhat until a final decision on the fate of M.L. A. was

made. Nevertheless, when the special Watertown convention decided to move M.L.A. to Prarie du chien, much of the initial study for a New Ulm area high school had already been completed.

A little known fact is that the preliminary work almost went for naught. The fourteen men involved polled themselves after the initial studies as the guidelines had suggested. Seven believed there was enough basis to begin planning a school. Seven others were not so convinced. Fortunately the tie vote was broken by the chairman. October 24th, 1978 would be the date of the first steering committee meeting. From that time on more detailed minutes and records were kept, making the historical record of the steering committee available to anyone.

Among the many accomplishments of that fifteen man steering committee one stands out in particular. Their biggest task was winning over the area congregations, a feat they accomplished in a matter of months. They needed to convince the churches not so much of the necessity of a high school, although this was also part of their presentation, but of the area's ability to open and maintain such a school. On five successive week-ends in January and February of 1979 members of the steering committee visited each of the congregations which had shown some interest in the high school. Largely on the basis of those presentations ten congregations voted to join the high school association. An eleventh came into the fold a short time later.

That sort of positive response surprised even the steering

committee. Publicly they had been optimistic all along. Privately they had talked of what might be done if only four or five congregations joined the association. And one can hardly blame them for having such doubts. Some of the congregations were already economically strained without the added burden of high school support payments. And humanly speaking, seven of those ten assenting congregations had no reason to hope for immediate benefits from such an association. Either they had no Christian grade school or very few of their own children were inclined to attend a Lutheran area high school. That ten congregations did join is as clear a sign of God's hand in these proceedings as one will find. In the final analysis only He could move hearts to support this project. And with that gracious stamp of approval at this point the early history of M.V.L. takes on a new tone of optimism.

It's hard to characterize that steering committee on the basis of records and a few conversations with those men who served during that hectic six month period. Only they know just how much time and effort was spent in this cause. And knowing some of them I'm sure they want no more reward than the knowledge that a Lutheran high school now flourished in the New Ulm area. But they should be credited for their work on at least four accounts.

First of all, they adapted the A.A.L. guidelines to their needs rather than following them to the letter. By combining certain steps and even whole stages the high school was able to open

in 1979. Secondly, the swiftness with which they acted is nothing short of amazing. It often takes years for a single congregation to agree upon opening a grade school. In this instance eleven congregations joined to open their own high school with less than one year of preparation. That accelerated pace succeeded because already busy men made themselves busier and cooperated with one another in committee and sub-committees. And for all of their haste the records give the clear impression that this was a thoroughly researched and orderly project.

Thirdly, that committee deserves credit for making this truly an AREA high school association. Everyone involved knew that a majority of the students during the first few years would come from the New Ulm congregations. Yet the minutes reveal an effort on the part of the committee to address the needs and desires of every member congregation. **One** can't call M.V.L. the property of New Ulm anymore than he can call the capitol the property of Washington D.C.

Finally, the outstanding feature of the steering committee work is the lay involvement. Most of the January and February presentations were given by lay people. Most of the sub committees were chaired by lay people. And most of the work in the trenches was done by lay people. More on that subject will follow.

As well as everything went in the early months of 1979 there was still one more close vote on whether to continue the high school project. Some steering members doubted that the long term financial support existed. Those doubts are reflected in an 8-5

vote(with two abstaining) at a mid-February meeting. Again, the project went ahead because a slightly larger majority were willing to issue a challenge to the area congregations.

On March 22nd the steering committee met formally for the last time. Five days later at a meeting of the association delegates official power was given to the fifteen members of the Board of Directors. At that time the board was authorized to begin calling teachers, a privilege which they exercised just two days later. With the calling of an administrator and two other teachers a new chapter of M.V.L. history began, a chapter which I'm totally unqualified to write. Thus I will bow out. But those late March meetings also produced some of the first signs of public(Lutheran and otherwise) opposition to the high school project. Setting aside the chronological method for a time, that topic of opposition should be addressed now.

For the most part the story of M.V.L.'s beginning is a tale of positive thinking and cooperation on the part of Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, government officials and local residents. Opposition to this whole movement did exist however. In discussing that opposition there is a temptation to wander too far in either of two directions. Maintaining that there were never any doubts or voices against the high school is one extreme. It is based on the belief that a high school movement could never fail due to the tradition which M.L.A. had established in the area. The other extreme would be over esaggeration of whatever opposition did exist in the area.

One aspect of this subject is the lack of strong, visible support for the high school shown by the D.M.L.C. faculty members as a group. Supposedly some professors were vehemently opposed to such a school opening. I say "supposedly" because I found no evidence to suggest any opposition of this type from the men on the hill. If indeed there was opposition then there are at least a few things to keep in mind. First of all, the individual opinions of a faculty that large can't be generalized in a matter such as this. Secondly, what people interpreted as opposition was often no more than a sincere effort to avoid a central role in high school planning committees. In the earliest months some men did not want to seem anxious to be rid of M.L.A. Later on many professors recognized the lay involvement and leadership of this movement and were willing to accept secondary roles. Also, many of these professors were busy men whose children attended the prep schools. They simply did not have the time or motivation to become actively involved.

Where D.M.L.C. professors are concerned I heard of only two types of minor opposition. And I hesitate to even use the word opposition in these cases. Some of these men believed the area's high school needs could be served best by a relocated M.L.A. campus in either New Ulm or Mankato. They were part of a larger group who later on would not hide their disappointment when the academy was moved out of the state. The second form of opposition took the form of cautious warning. Once M.L.A. had left and the plans for M.V.L. were being made, certain professors advised that

great care be taken. They did not oppose an area high school. They opposed over anxiousness and blind haste. They opposed the establishment of a high school with a guaranteed base of support. For the record, those precautionary warnings and other forms of advice from D.M.L.C. professors were often heeded by the various planning committees. Finally, the best reason for not placing too much emphasis on the "prof's opposition" rumor is an argument from common sense. Why would men and women in the business of education Christian teachers oppose the opening of an area Lutheran high school?

A second possible source of opposition might have been the non-Lutherans in the area. But with the tradition of secondary education established by M.L.A. very few opposed the opening of a new school. In fact certain groups, such as the Catholic high school in New Ulm, welcomed the new addition. The local media-radio, newspapers, and television- gave M.V.L. good coverage. After a few years they even learned to distinguish M.V.L. from M.L.A. That may say as much about the local attitudes as anything: apparently many area folks, even some W.E.L.S. people, thought M.V.L. was just a reorganized form of M.L.A.

Only two forms of local opposition ever raised their heads high enough to be seen. The strongest opponents of M.V.L. were, and still are, the local school districts, particularly the Nicollet district. In their systems students mean money, state money. Every student that M.V.L. "stole" translated into a huge monetary loss for the public school system. And while in a sense

we can't blame these districts, one would think that their administrators and coaches would recognize the advantages of having another high school in the immediate area.

There was a smattering of opposition from local people when a site for the new building had been chosen. And when there were instances of vandalism during construction this was interpreted as a sign of those hostilities. Investigation proved that these actions were probably directed against a sub-contractor, not the school itself.

Of course the most important question in this whole matter of opposition concerns the W.E.L.S. people in the area. The usual gripes concerning Christian education did arise: Where will we get all the money? Why do we need our own high school if the public schools are doing a fairly decent job? Must I support the high school if my kids don't attend? Considering the economics of the late seventies and some other factors, perhaps the biggest surprise in this whole movement is that there weren't more complaints of this type. Apparently, once people had been shown that a high school could succeed and would be a blessing for all those involved, any opposition died quickly.

For the sake of posterity then, we should record that M.V.L. was established with a minimum of opposition on any front. The overall tone of the years 1977-79 was positive. In a very short time God established an area Lutheran high school through the efforts of his zealous servants.

III. THE CONNECTION WITH M.L.A.

"The name of the school is M.V.L., not New Ulm Area."

It seems best to more thoroughly address a few subjects which have only been mentioned in passing. Chief among those would be the connection between Martin Luther Academy and Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School. As I have already mentioned, in the early stages of planning and even after the opening of M.V.L., many people failed to distinguish between the academy and the new area high school. There are legitimate excuses for that type of thinking. There was no gap of time between the move of one school and the establishment of the other. The summer of 1979 was an important junction for Christian education in the New Ulm area. But many people were unaware of what was happening. Also, there had been a strong contingent of influential people who wanted to keep a synodical academy in the area. To some observers M.V.L. might have seemed like that new academy. And finally, after the school opened, the curriculum, heavily laced with academics as opposed to vocational studies, resembled that of an academy more than an area high school.

All of this meant that M.V.L. had to struggle to establish its own identity in the community. Gradually that distinction has been made. But his much should be said of the connection between the two schools. For years M.L.A. had prevented an area high school movement. Yet the area high school ^{which} was established had its roots in M.L.A. The kids left behind by M.L.A.'s move almost

forced local W.E.L.S. people into starting their own school, one that would be run completely by the area congregations.

Occasionally I've referred to the efforts to make M.V.L. a true AREA high school. The proof of those efforts is in the minutes and notes of the association. The transparencies used for those early '79 congregational presentations stress the area concept. The selection of board members displays a genuine concern to involve men from many congregations. The site committee sought land which would be easily accessible to the greatest portion of area students. Tuition and travel breaks were given to those who had to travel greater distances for school. And at all times the association informed and reached out to those area congregations who had not yet joined the organization. These points need to be made, lest anyone have the impression that M.V.L. is only a school for the residents of New Ulm.

One question will naturally arise when drawing a connection between the two high schools. Which school best serves our New Ulm area congregations? I don't want to enter into a debate: the advantages of an academy over against those of an area high school. Because of their different natures and structures these two schools shouldn't and can't be compared in many respects. But the record should show that the people who established M.V.L. feel that their children are in better educational situation now than during the academy years. That same feeling is echoed by the students who have had the opportunity to attend both schools.

Why are both parents and students happier with the present situation? I don't perceive that these people were dissatisfied with or hostile toward M.L.A. In fact I get the impression that the majority strongly supported the academy. But in some areas there were problems, mostly social, for local students attending M.L.A. Those students were the ones most affected by the lack of elbow room on the D.M.L.C. campus. The space provided for their home or town rooms simply was not adequate. As a result those students tended to band together off campus during free time and were even more alienated from the student body than in a normal situation. That led to troubles off campus and divisions within the student body between dorm and town students. M.L.A. can't be blamed for that situation. Nevertheless the problem did exist for the students and their parents.

There is also a positive series of answers to that question, why are the people involved happier now? Again without entering into the academy and area high school debate the adults who established M.V.L. seem to prefer this type of secondary education for their children. Most of the parents whom I spoke with felt a strong need to provide their teenagers with a normal home environment. And as strong as the support for synod and M.L.A. might have been, M.V.L. was "their" school and could be run the way they desired. Humanly speaking their support would make or break the school. They seem to accept and relish that challenge.

The proof of the parents' and students' feelings toward the two schools are reflected in various attendance figures. Today,

St. Paul's and St. John's, New Ulm are sending two to three times as many students to M.V.L. as compared to the number which attended M.L.A. in its last years. In a number of families the younger children are going to M.V.L. even though the other children in their families attended public high schools. And in the last few years eight families have moved to the New Ulm area primarily for the luxury of the area high school.

All of this is not an attempt to ruin M.L.A.'s good name. That school served the area Lutherans admirably for many years. But in case anyone should wonder, those are people who've supported both schools seem to prefer the area high school set up.

IV. LAY INVOLVEMENT

"We kept the pastors informed and involved"

If there is one aspect of the M.V.L. story which should be underscored repeatedly it is the lay involvement in this project. One can understand why that fact might be overlooked. Among the called workers in the area there are a number of men who could be labeled influential. Include in that grouping pastors, teachers and professors. A natural inclination would be to credit those individuals for establishing M.V.L. The record proves otherwise.

Recall that at the initial organizational meeting the planning committee started to use the A.A.L. guidelines for a high school. According to those guidelines 60% of the leadership should be provided by the laymen. That rule of thumb was followed. And to this

day the chairman of the board of directors has always been a layman. In fact there have been many instances of apparent role reversals. Those men who were accustomed to leadership roles, the full time church workers, stepped aside and let the laymen run the show. One example would be the hours of manual labor which professors Hoenecke and Sievert donated in order to remodel the portable classroom building. Meanwhile, qualified laymen filled what might be called the managerial positions in which we'd expect to find our veteran church workers.

I referred to those laymen as qualified for two particular reasons. First of all their professions prepared them for such positions. Repeatedly a lawyer, builder, publicity man, etc. would come on the scene to fill a committee position or other key role. And if their contribution wasn't actual service then it was making use of their connections with the business world. That phenomenon occurs in any religious building project to some extent. But these men were also uniquely qualified in terms of Christian dedication. Granted, they were moved by the grass roots or lay nature of this whole project. And they had the talents to donate. But even a hasty trip through the association minutes will reveal a special type of Christian dedication and ability. Repeatedly one encounters this type of phrase: "even with all the other reasons to build a high school, the best is still our Lord's directive to spread his Truth." More often than not that type of confession came from laymen.

Was this a case of men joining together for their own glory or benefit? Was Christian education their long term objective or

merely a pretense for satisfying the needs of their own children? We can't read their hearts and minds of course. The records do suggest genuine concern for this type of education. As an example, fifteen men made up the original board of directors. Of those, only one had a child who would be ready for high school during the first year of operation. To me that suggests genuine interest, not fulfilling selfish needs or desires. And if there were any further room for doubt there is the testimony of the administrator and the faculty as a whole. They credit the success of the school to the initial and sustained dedication of the lay people.

One note of precaution is in order. We dare not underestimate the role which the called workers played in this movement. No doubt a lack of cooperation or interest on their part would have hindered the association's attempt to open in fall of 1979. Quite possibly they could have prevented the school from getting started at all if they had been interested in keeping all of those support dollars at home. But their desires seem to have been just as strong as the lay peoples'. Give them credit for letting their people run the show while they took on advisory and supportive roles. It is a wondrous thing when church leaders turn their people loose as was the case in the establishment of M.V.L. That lay leadership and participation guaranteed deep-rooted and strong support for the high school for many years to come.

V. BENEFITS FOR THE AREA
"A sleeping giant has come to life"

The most enjoyable part of this whole endeavor has been listening to the local people as they reflect on the last six years. There is a tone of wonder in their voices when they speak of the whole high school movement. One suspects that at least part of their amazement comes from the realization that they could have been much more active in religious affairs prior to 1977. The capability had always been there. There was a strong conviction concerning Christian education, as well as the tradition provided by M.L.A. There was more money available than anyone realized. And the other natural resources, time and talents, had barely been tapped over the years. One man analyzed the high school project in this way: "A sleeping giant has come to life." Historically this may be one of the great turning points for Lutheranism in the New Ulm area.

The proof of what M.V.L. has stirred up is seen in the way people talk about the school and respond to its activities. I mentioned previously that the students and their parents in the area feel more comfortable with an area high school. But even those who don't have daily contact with the school have responded positively to its existence. How else does one explain the overflowing crowds for dedication of the building, the school's first play, and basketball games? Area pastors testify that members who haven't done anything else but attend Sunday morning services over the years are regularly showing up for M.V.L.'s activities or supporting the school in other ways.

M.V.L. has also brought a new spark of life to some of its supporting congregations. It has given them a cause over which to get excited. And some of that new found support and enthusiasm is showing up in other areas of congregational life and support. The synodical offerings have not dropped off. New members have been drawn to the area. A few congregations are in the process of opening grade schools or plan to do so in the near future. These might all be classified as immediate and rather indirect benefits from having an area high school. The major benefits will be seen ten or fifteen years down the road when today's students become the leaders of their congregations.

We should not overlook what might seem to be an obvious benefit of this area high school: a group of congregations working together closely. Obviously they had worked together previously. But the high school has brought these churches into contact and fellowship with one another on a more regular basis. And now with the inclusion of E.L.S. congregations in the association that sphere of fellowship, cooperation and understanding has been extended even further.

One is tempted to ramble on and on in describing the way these congregations have benefitted by establishing their own high school. There's no doubt that this area, one of synod's most densely populated, has been in some ways rejuvenated. Realizing that, people are looking to the future. All indications are that they will continue to emphasize the growing in "Our Growing Blessing". Given the

area's concentration of congregations, the potential financial support, the beautiful building and a healthy supply of capable leaders there is no doubt that M.V.L.'s best days are still ahead of it. But the most encouraging sign of all is the continued reliance upon the Lord for guidance and a commitment to His Truth. A brief essay by Gene Rodewald, the first chairman of the board, is indicative of that dedicated spirit which I found to be prevalent among M.V.L.'s supporters:

WHY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?

Why do we support and use Christian grade and high schools? How do we promote them to fellow members? Do we hope our children will be exposed to fewer temptations regarding drugs and alcohol? Are we anticipating less cheating in class and a more positive attitude toward learning and authority? Do we foresee fewer problems with sexual permissiveness and even mixed marriages? Do we expect to graduate more active church members who will lead a more Godly life? And do we use these same expectations as we promote Christian education to fellow church and family members?

It's fine for us to wish and pray for these and many more ingredients for the happy lives of our children. But, we, and Christian education, might be far better off if we would quit trying to convince ourselves and others with these outward appearance items.

WHY ? Because each of these items represents a human "measuring stick" of something which is clearly divine in nature. We will often be disappointed. We can so easily give others a "better than thou" impression thus turning away the prospective students we're trying to attract. And, these same measuring sticks can be used by opponents of Christian education to show how ineffective our efforts are.

Christian education exists and is worthy of our support for two very simple reasons: 1) God commands us to preach and teach, and 2) God promises us His results. What is the result He promises? It may involve some of those human measuring sticks. But it does involve just one goal... the salvation of still another soul...nothing less and nothing more. When that command and promise are kept clearly in focus, our support, use and promotion of Christian education take on the clear light of God's truth. We are in the soul-saving business. Christian grade and high schools are important instruments in accomplishing that goal... nothing less and nothing more. Could we ask for anything more ?