

THE LUTHERAN STUDENT: ROOTED IN THE WORD, READY FOR ANYTHING

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ABSTRACT

God commands believers in Scripture to instruct children in the knowledge of salvation and his ways. What is the best way to carry out that command? It is easy to see why many Christian churches see the Christian elementary or secondary school as a practical and dedicated application of this command. Lutherans hold God's Word with trembling hands in its truth and purity, and they bring that philosophy to their schools and the children there. In a Lutheran elementary or secondary school, the pupil is taught about his relationship with God, with himself, and with his fellowman. This education is invaluable. A Lutheran student knows his Savior, knows God's will, knows the law and the gospel should be applied to their lives, loves God's Word, and craves the sacraments. A Lutheran student looks to God's Word for guidance in all their life's darkest and happiest moments. The Lutheran student: rooted in the Word, ready for anything.

INTRODUCTION

One cannot look at the Wisconsin Lutheran Synod (WELS) without seeing their education system. Christian education is what they do, it is what they strive to give to their children. The synod invests heavily in its worker training system. WELS subsidizes two preparatory institutions that strive to funnel ministry workers to Martin Luther College where they will be trained as pastors, teachers, and staff ministers. These men and women funnel back into the synod to start, maintain, and expand congregations and their ministries. One cannot help but conclude what David Wendler did, "Two of the strengths of the Wisconsin Synod are its adherence to the pure Word of God and its educational system."¹

This is nothing new. WELS has always strived to maintain Christian education in its congregations. From its very beginning in 1850 the Wisconsin Synod expressed a firm commitment to Christian education for the youth of the church. In fact, at the synod's founding, "It was resolved each preacher who is a member of our organization should take an interest in working especially with the youth as well as conducting day schools, Bible study classes, mission classes, etc."²

Congregations in the synod responded and went to work eagerly. Their biggest challenge? Teachers. In those earliest years, the pastors were the teachers.³ Walter Beck notes this handicap in his history of Lutheran schools. This was not the only problem, in fact, the Wisconsin Synod labored under many other

1. David Wendler, "The 1990's – New Trends in Education." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 10 October 2020, 9.

2. (1850 Proceedings, *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, vol 9 #1-2, p. 5)

3. Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* (Northwestern Publishing House, 2017), 144.

handicaps: it had been too slow in beginning the training of its ministers and teachers and was dependent for part of its supply upon various other church bodies or upon men coming from Germany. There were never enough men to fill the calls that came for pastors or teachers. Pastors in rural sections served many congregations. Some circuits included a dozen or more stations and necessitated long and wearisome journeys. But notwithstanding all this, they did not shun the task of teaching a school, even if only three days a week and though many a school-day had to be interrupted because of other official duties.⁴

Beck notes, however, the eagerness of the pastors to do all of this. "It was hoped that the Lord would give the pastors willingness and joy in their double office so that the lambs of Christ might be led to a truly Christian life through the knowledge of salvation."⁵

Despite difficulties, and beginning with only a handful of schools, God blessed the synod's efforts tremendously. In a decade there were over 20 schools, half a decade later the number of schools was over 50. After a quarter-century, there were 85 schools in the synod.⁶ Several years later, an 1893 report from Northwestern's Dr. F. Notz, listed 141 schools, with 119 teachers, educating over 8,600 youths.⁷

This tremendous growth always kept the pressure on to find teachers. A closer union with the Minnesota Synod led to a decision in 1892 to use Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, to train teachers for the Federation of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, et al.⁸ WELS

4. Walter H. Beck, *Lutheran Elementary Schools in the United States* (St Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1939), 193.

5 Beck, *United States*, 197.

6. WLS Lutheranism in America notes.

7. Fredrich, "The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans," 144.

8..WLS Lutheranism in America notes

now had a strong, yet still steadily improving, worker training system to complement its explosive growth. Then, after WWI there was a revitalization of education in America led by its public-school system. In the decade from 1920-1930, the total number of high school graduates went from 300,000 in 1920 to more than 750,000 in 1930. While the upswing in the Wisconsin Synod was on a much smaller scale, the synod experienced a new interest in secondary education.⁹

While the WELS's emphasis on elementary education was ever-present, for many years its presence in secondary education was lacking. As the synod watched secondary education explode in the twenties, many dreamed of high schools in the synod. This dream is best encapsulated by the "Moussa Report" from 1927. With a functioning worker training system, the members of the synod wanted a stronger emphasis on lay education. The report offered five recommendations:

- I. Every parish in our Synod should have a day school with the aim of providing eight years of instruction.
- II. Our college at Watertown and our Teacher's Seminary at New Ulm should not continue as preparatory schools.
- III. The Synod should authorize and subsidize the establishment of preparatory schools, or academies, in many different parts of its territory, preferably according to conferences.
- IV. The Teachers' Seminary should extend and vary its normal course to meet the needs of our day.
- V. Northwestern College, which now has reached the full standard of the American college, should likewise, as prudence dictates, offer college courses that would serve others than those who intend to prepare for the ministry. If the commercial department is retained, it should be open to those who have finished a satisfactory preparatory course¹⁰

9. Fredrich, "The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans," 143.

10. Fredrich, "The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans," 151.

This report was sound in thinking and future oriented. Unfortunately, it was a little too much for one synod convention to handle, and much of it was tabled for other conventions. The dream of the synod educating its teenagers did not materialize immediately, momentum for the novel plan of expansion was killed by the Depression.¹¹ Still, most of the Moussa Report ended up happening over the decades. The era of high school building came after World War II around the time the synod was celebrating its centennial year. During this time an unofficial slogan began: "The first century for Christian elementary education – the second century for Christian secondary education." While the synod never actually adopted that slogan, that's the way it worked out. Elementary education continued to keep pace with synodical growth, while the great upsurge in education from the fifties to the nineties was in secondary education. Going from only three secondary schools to more than twenty.¹²

God continued to bless the Synod tremendously in the decades after World War II. Roughly seventy new elementary schools were being founded every twenty years from 1940 until 2000. Taking the number of schools from 150 in 1940 to 370 in 2000, with over 29,000 students.¹³

Currently, for the school year 2020-2021, the statistical report for the WELS school system lists 123 early childhood ministries, 282 Lutheran elementary schools, and 26 area Lutheran high schools and preparatory schools, educating over 40,000 individuals. These schools are using almost 3,000 professional educators trained at Dr. Martin Luther College and Martin

11. Fredrich, "The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans," 152.

12. Fredrich, "The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans," 244.

13. WLS Lutheranism in America notes.

Luther College.¹⁴ Certainly, when one looks at the Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, they will see their education system.

Thesis Statement

Some congregations wish they had a Lutheran school and there are those that do not. Some members are happy to support a Lutheran school and those who are not. To that end, this paper will examine the reason behind Christian education. Why do go to such lengths for it?

Once the directive and value of Christian education have been examined, the paper will explain what makes Lutheran education different from simply Christian education. Part of that examination will be studying what kind of education Luther intended, and how others have developed that into a working philosophy of Lutheran education. In other words, if a school is Lutheran – what makes it Lutheran? Finally, this paper will conclude by studying why a Lutheran Christian education is still extraordinarily valuable today. This will be established from three Lutheran educational objectives, man in relationship to God, man in relationship to self, and man in relations to fellow man. Ultimately this paper will demonstrate that the Wisconsin Synod should continue to go to great lengths for Lutheran education because it is the only education that trains a child to be a Christian rooted in the Word of truth, prepared for a life of service to God.

14. WELS School Statistics 2020-2021. <https://cls.welsrc.net/download-cls/general-documents/?wpdmdl=3106&ind=1606226657714>

WHY CHRISTIAN EDUCATION?

Christian education is a direct application of the Lord's repeated command to educate children in his ways which is found in both the Old and New Testament. Moses speaking to God's chosen people directed:

"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates."¹⁵

Wise King Solomon suggests if you, "Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it."¹⁶ In the New Testament Jesus, our dear risen Savior commanded moments before his ascension, "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and *teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.*"¹⁷ Jesus also implores his listeners in John 21 to "feed my lambs," and to "take care of my sheep."¹⁸ And more than a millennia after Moses' encouragement to the promised-land bound Israelites, Paul implores the Christians in Ephesus, "Fathers, do not exasperate your child; instead bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord."¹⁹ In a different letter Paul, writing to Timothy, implies education starts at infancy, "From infancy, you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for

15. Deuteronomy 6:4–9

16. Proverbs 22:6

17. Matthew 28:19–20 (Emphasis mine.)

18. John 21:15–17

19. Ephesians 6:4

salvation through faith in Christ Jesus."²⁰ Simply put, when Lutherans undertake to educate, they know they are carrying out God's will.

What makes Christian education what God intended?

What makes Christian education, Christian education is the presence of the fundamental truths of Scripture. Therefore, Mark Zarling concludes that Christian education is evangelism. "The Christian school is not simply a school with 'values,' nor is its method of motivation insipid moralizing... What do people understand when they recite 'teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you?'"²¹ Zarling thinks that they should understand it to mean being taught about what Christ has accomplished for sinners. To teach little ones, pre-teens, teenagers, and young adults that they are infected with sin. That, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up like a leaf, and like the wind, our sins sweep us away."²² Also, to teach that sweet saving message like what Paul taught the Roman Christians, "We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death so that just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life. If we have been united with him in his death, we will certainly also be united with him in his resurrection."²³ That is what Christian education is all about. Proclaiming to the worst of sinners that Jesus shed his blood for them!

20. 2 Timothy 3:15

21. Mark Zarling. "Christian Education: A Matter of Life or Death." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 2 November, 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4287>,15.

22. Isaiah 64:6

23. Romans 6:4-5

What is the best way to carry out God's directive?

Since God directs his Church to carry it out, Christians will strive to do it to the best of their abilities. It's a simple application then: if God says to impress His ways on your children, the best way to do that is with a full-time education system.²⁴

One could easily wonder how a full-time education system is needed to communicate the simple truths of law and gospel. Could a family not simply hear that on Sunday? What is wrong with public schools? Well, technically, nothing. However, if one wants their child to be educated in God's ways, the best and only option is a Christian day school. Allan Hart Jansmann notes, "The congregation which is truly interested in weaving Christ into the warp and woof of the life of its children must finally direct its attention to that institution which we know as the parish school, the Christian day school."²⁵ For sake of comparison, John Schaller says this of the public school:

Our public schools are and ought to be non-religious. It is a fundamental principle of our civil law that church and state must be kept entirely distinct, that encroachment of one upon the functions of the other must be carefully avoided... Moreover, if the public school is to be a real common school, acceptable to all the people, religious instruction in any form... may not be introduced.²⁶

It is natural to conclude that the public school cannot direct and lead a child toward the end of true education— first, to make them wise for salvation through faith in Jesus; second, to train them up in the ways of the Lord. Jansmann echoes this, "The public schools of our land cannot

24. This paper will operate under this assumption. It will not discuss other practical alternatives.

25. Allan H. Jansmann, *What's Lutheran in Education?* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1960), 109.

26. John Schaller. "The Christian Church and Education." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 29 September, 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/2026> ,8.

contribute to the attainment of these goals (of Christian education). They are considered important, but cannot one only say that 'the Christian day school is the only school' for the attainment of these goals?"²⁷ Parents cannot forget, pastors cannot let their members forget, that the public school –which may be perfectly adequate, cannot help a child become a true Christian. It is even possible the public school may seriously endanger their spiritual well-being.²⁸

As noted earlier, the good news about Jesus is *the* fundamental characteristic of Christian education. God is serious about the world knowing that he loved them so much that he sent his Son to die for them. This does not make it the only part. God is also serious about education in his ways. He is so serious that he addresses it in his Word numerous times. The command to teach children is reiterated again and again. Naturally then, Christians build schools to teach children that God declares them righteous because of Jesus, and secondly to train a child up in the way he should go. To examine the full scope of Christian education Wayne Schmidt gives a fine working definition of Christian education:

Christian education is more than an encyclopedic transmittal of facts, religious or secular, but is a spiritual formation that acknowledges Jesus Christ as God and Lord and seeks to live life in conformity with Christ's Gospel... Faith in Christ as the Son of God as Savior from sin is the ultimate aim of all Christian education and from that primary objective, there also flows a secondary aim, namely, guidance and encouragement to live a God-pleasing life.²⁹

John Schaller puts it this way:

Whereas Christian education, if it succeeds lifts the child out of the much of sinfulness and sets him on a new plane, with a new outlook upon life and a strong tendency toward righteousness. This, again, is merely another way of stating the familiar axiom that the only educative force in the world is the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the power of God unto

27. Jansmann, "What's Lutheran in Education," 109.

28. Schaller, "The Christian Church and Education," 12–13.

29. Wayne E. Schmidt, *The Lutheran Parochial School* (Chelsea, MI: Sheridan Books, 2001), 378.

salvation, which creates spiritual life in a man who otherwise is dead in sins and transgressions.³⁰

Are other denominations capable of such an education? Certainly. God does not need Lutherans to accomplish his work. However, true Lutherans value above all else – preserving God's Word in its truth and purity. "The revelation of God as we have it in the verbally inspired Scriptures will thus serve as the constant factor in the pursuit of truth and learning. This is the one thing that does not change but stands as a foundation and anchor for all of our teachings."³¹ Victor Krause explains, "When Lutherans undertake to educate... They know that God has given definite instructions concerning the basic character of this education. To learn what this character is, Lutherans turn to the Bible, which they accept as God's message to them and by which they accordingly let themselves be guided."³² The result? An educational system that places the highest value on the Word of God and properly conveying its teaching. The Lutheran school is not a private school that appears like any other school only there is a little religion sprinkled in, with perhaps a devotion in the morning, or some crosses on the walls.³³ Zarling writes,

Lutheran teachers know that a Christian school is not simply a school with "values," nor is its method of motivation insipid moralizing. ...to train people to obey all the rules in the 'good book.' Christianity's focus, then, is damningly reversed. No longer a focus on the disciple and what he does. Free grace is buried and the *opinio legis* elevated. ... God encourages the Church to guard and keep the truth, to entrust the "everything Christ commands" to others, to preserve that truth. And I believe that the "everything" is the

30. John Schaller, "The Christian Church and Education," 15.

31. Siegbert W. Becker. "The Role of Religion in a Lutheran High School in a Changing World." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 12 October 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/350>,3.

32. Victor Krause, *Lutheran Elementary Schools in Action* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 1963), 3.

33. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 10.

reality that truth, ultimate and eternal truth, is centered only in Jesus the Christ. He alone can claim, I am the truth."³⁴

This is why the Wisconsin Synod Christian schools carry the label of "Lutheran." As Zarling says it's not just about following rules or acting with high character. Lutheran education is about "all of the above." Since Lutheran schools are united in common faith and purpose, their religion becomes more than a part of the curriculum. It is the glue that holds the curriculum together.³⁵ Schmidt explains it this way, "The Lutheran school was more than just a place where formal classes in religion were conducted. It was a place in which the Word of God was to be the guide and where the Christian faith was to be practiced and lived."³⁶ Wisconsin Synod Lutherans have the firm conviction that the Lutheran education they offer is capable of enabling the learner to grow into Christian maturity, capable to serve God in every life relationship in accordance with God's will.³⁷ For them to be rooted in the Word, and ready for anything as Lutheran Christians. To better understand this conviction, one should examine what Martin Luther thought about education.

34. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 15.

35. Becker, "Changing World," 3.

36. Schmidt, "Parochial School," 391-392.

37. Krause, "Schools in Action," 4.

LUTHER AND EDUCATION

In comparison to the rest of his staggering body of work, Luther wrote precious little about education. Luther never wrote a formal education thesis or laid down any formal principles on education. However, he still had a great influence in and on the field of education. The two major works of Luther on education are his *Address to the German Nobility* in 1520, and *Letter to the Councilmen of All Cities in Germany That They Should Establish and Maintain Christian Schools*, in 1524.³⁸

Not only does Luther have few official writings on education but for the sake of perspective, Elmer Kiessling reminds his reader that, "Much of what Luther said on the subject of education applied to conditions in the Germany of his time... four hundred years and 6000 miles separate us from the world in which he achieved his great work. He was a patriotic German with a Catholic background who still belonged to the Middle Ages."³⁹

That said, many historians have noted that Martin Luther championed the education of children, perhaps as much as anyone in modern history. "It is no overstatement to suggest that today's worldwide expectation that all children receive formal education began in Wittenberg."⁴⁰ Robert Rosin describes how he accomplished this:

38. Mark Braun. "What Our Fathers Taught Us about Lutheran Schools." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 30 October, 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4279>, 8.

39. Braun, "Lutheran Schools," 6.

40. Paul Prange. "Luther Taught the Children- And So Do We." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 24 October, 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4125>, 6.

He was not a tactician or a detail man, leaving others to work on the nuts and bolts. But because of his outsized presence, when he spoke, people listened. He provided an immense service by arguing simply for the need for more than a cursory education, thinking through the purpose and goal as this all related not only to the Reformation cause but also to life in general. Along the way, he tried to persuade and cajole those who took short views and short-changed education.⁴¹

Luther's effect on education was not so much that he changed it, or that he crafted a new sort of pedagogy, but rather he helped spur society toward greater heights in education.

Paul Prange summarizes the state of education over a millennium and a half to help us see exactly how low education had dipped in Luther's day.

Yes, there was a pre-Reformation Catholic system of education for children. It had replaced a system that would have been recognized by the writers of the New Testament. Formal education for children in the ancient world was generally only for the sons of wealthy families. They were free people, not slaves, and they learned the "liberal" (free) arts rather than the "servile" (slave) arts. ...Western historians generally trace the roots of formal education in the liberal arts back to ancient Greece with teachers like Plato. ...The odd caesaropapism, the tempting mixture of Church and State, had begun to rear its ugly head. For the next thousand years, most education of any sort in Europe took place in the cloistered environments provided by the Roman Church. As a result, when Lutherans began their attempt to reform and replace Roman institutions with beautiful and evangelical catholic institutions, it was natural for Martin Luther to picture classrooms in which clergy were the teachers. ...The problem Luther identified early in his career as an educator was that the Roman clergy serving as teachers were trained to think of everything in terms of the philosophy of Aristotle, which obscured the truth.⁴²

What did Luther's efforts lead to? Well, initially not a whole lot. During the Saxon Visitation Luther discovered what he reported to Spalatin as varying "miseries." He found that the pastors were living cheerfully with their peasants, yet they were not partaking in the Word and sacrament. So, Luther began the next stage of his career writing "a catechism for the raw pagans."⁴³ Luther sought to connect the common person, who was not being educated with

41. Robert Rosin, "Luther on Education," *Lutheran Quarterly* 21 2(Summer 2007): 199.

42. Prange, "Luther Taught the Children," 4.

43. Prange, "Luther Taught the Children," 5.

Scripture. To educate individuals and their families Luther created his Catechism. The Catechism would not only share with them God's saving Word, and teach them to participate in the sacraments, but also explain what that meant for their lives. Braun quotes Luther, "Everyone is personally responsible for the salvation of his soul... and must be placed in a position to know his Maker through the reading and the study of the Bible."⁴⁴ This is a key education principle for Luther, which corresponds directly to the fundamental natures of Christian education.

This eventually led to the first Lutherans paring with the Lutheran princes in Germany to improve the forms of general schooling for the nation. Luther encouraged that primary education be mandatory and universally available. Students entered these primitive new schools not knowing the alphabet and might leave able to handle difficult readings in classical Latin. Religious instruction occurred each day, and catechetical instruction a full day and a half each week. These schools continued to modify themselves to become better schools for the community. The Reformers even called upon state officials to pay attention to the qualification for schoolmasters.⁴⁵

Thomas Korcok writes extensively about what an early Lutheran school looked like. He explains that Lutheran schools were not just places of humanistic learning, but also prayer, arts, and the catechism were all essential components of the Reformers pedagogical model.⁴⁶ They considered that if you took the humanistic modeled liberal arts together with their catechism, you

44. Braun, "Lutheran Schools," 7.

45. Prange, "Luther Taught the Children," 7.

46. Thomas Korcok, *Lutheran Education: From Wittenberg to the Future* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, 2011), 61.

had a model that effectively turned young people into Christians. In early Reformation era schools, "The old sinful man and the new righteous man were preparing Christians to live simultaneously under the Law and the Gospel, in the kingdom of the left and the kingdom of the right, to be served by God and to serve their fellow man."⁴⁷

This "new" style of school was beginning to gain traction. Luther was reforming the nation by opening their eyes to the truths of Scripture via the Catechism, while simultaneously, Luther and his contemporaries were reforming the educational culture of the nation. However, it is important to keep the focus on the Catechism in all of this. It helps one understand how Luther was practical and not systematic like some of his contemporaries. Arnold Koelpin noted, "He did not formulate systematical laws to govern learning or teaching. Nor did he write books on education or education psychology in the technical sense. Nor did he wish to perpetuate an institution. His approach was more practical than theoretical."⁴⁸ John Schaller highlights Luther's emphasis on the practical advantage of educating the nation by quoting from the Large Catechism,

If we desire to have good, skillful men, both for temporal and for spiritual government, we must truly regard neither diligent work nor expense in the teaching and education of our children, so that they may serve God and humanity. . . . If this were done, God would also richly bless us and graciously help us to educate men who would be of benefit to the country and its people; also well-educated citizens, chaste and home-loving women, who might thereafter educate pious children and servants. Here you should consider the murderous damage which will result if you neglect to do your duty in educating your child to be useful and blessed; you would also gather upon your head all sin and wrath, and thus earn hell from your children, though you might otherwise be pious and holy.⁴⁹

47. Korcok, "Lutheran Education," 61.

48. Arnold Koelpin, "Martin Luther on Education: Schooling for Life," in *Heritage and Hope: Essays in Honor of the 150th Anniversary of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary*, ed. Kenneth Cherney (Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Press; Mequon, 2013), 333.

49. John Schaller. "The Need of Christian Education By Means of Parochial Schools." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 25 September, 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/2029>, 28.

Again, Luther's emphasis on universal education cannot be overstated. Both as an encourager to parents to send their children to school, and also for both genders to come and learn. Koelpin writes that Luther, "reiterated the broad-based need for universal public education for everyone, girls and boys alike, to benefit society: 'Only one thing is lacking: the earnest desire to train the young and to benefit and serve the world with able men and women.'⁵⁰

Luther was able to reform a church and offer help reforming a failing education system at the same time. Through God's grace, the education system helped Luther reform the nation spiritually. In Luther's day, the church and the state were so intimately joined together that he was able to expect a state-established and operated school to work "in total harmony with the church and activities to support and promote the educational goals of the church."⁵¹ This had to have made Luther ecstatic because, for Luther, the core of all learning must be Scripture, and the goal of education must always keep Christ its true focus.⁵² Simply put this core, is "to know Christ and know him well."⁵³ So while Luther was imploring the German Nobility to build schools, encouraging the common people to participate in them, he was extremely confident and satisfied that not only would they be better equipped to live in society, but they would be hearing about Christ.

50. Koelpin, "Schooling for Life," 340.

51. Schmidt, "Parochial School," 17.

52. Cale A. Mead. "Exploring the Role of Federation Pastors in Promoting Support and Recruitment Opportunities for Small Area Lutheran High Schools." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 13 October, 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4340>, 20.

53. Koelpin, "Schooling for Life," 333.

The Saxon Visitation showed Luther that families were failing to hear and love God's Word. He knew children would hear God's Word at school.⁵⁴ If a child heard God's Word every day and was instructed in it, they might grow to maturity to care for their faith. They might begin to crave God's Word; they might begin to desire the Lord's Supper. "He believed that education was the only avenue to maturity. He gave the world a faith that set human beings free and thinking, a philosophy of education that opened new vistas and a vernacular Bible."⁵⁵ This was a bold, new idea for not just the Church and Christian education. Kretzmann writes that "Luther's ideal, then, was a lofty one. It contemplated the training of the individual to be, each in his station, in his surroundings, a Christian personality, dedicated to a life of service to his God and the Church, to his country and community and himself."⁵⁶

Framing a Lutheran Philosophy of Education

Luther wanted to provide an education that built a Christian identity and personality. Centuries later, educators are striving to do just that. How do teachers and pastors work to accomplish this? By giving their students a foundation of core knowledge, which will carry them to Christian maturity. Jansmann says, "Therefore education from a truly Lutheran point of view is seen not as the teaching of a historical faith but also as the nurturing of growth toward Christian maturity."⁵⁷ This is a critical distinction. A Lutheran philosophy of education is not simply saying this is what

54. Mead, "Small Area Lutheran High Schools," 20.

55. William C. Rietschel, *An Introduction to the Foundations of Lutheran Education* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Academic Press, 2000), 21.

56. Paul E. Kretzmann, *A Brief History of Education* (Saint Louis, MO: Concordia Publishing House, not dated), 57.

57. Jansmann, "What's Lutheran in Education," 70.

we believe, it is an "exposition of a Christian world and life view."⁵⁸ This is in sharp contrast to the philosophies of secular education. Lutherans have a different source of knowledge, we view the pupil differently, the goal we aim to reach is different, and finally, even the means to reach our goal are different.⁵⁹

Rietschel notes that for Lutherans to have a true education philosophy, however, they would need to present a developed perspective on such areas as "the ultimate nature of reality, knowledge and knowing values, and the requirements of correct and valid thinking."⁶⁰ However, Lutherans have never published a true systematic theoretical study of education. Rietschel does conclude though that "truly Lutheran educational philosophy is biblical theology and Lutheran thinking applied to education."⁶¹ In other words, since Lutherans have a defined theology and theological principles, really all you need to do is apply them to the realm of education and then, you do have a Lutheran philosophy of education.

Since Lutheran educators want to build a Christian identity paired with Lutheran theology through education, it is important to examine the three main philosophical questions in education. How should a Lutheran feel about ontology? The question of "what exists" and "what is the nature of reality?" Another is epistemology, dealing with knowledge, "what is truth?" And finally, the study of axiology, "what is valuable?" These questions have been asked in educational settings since the beginning of time. They are questions knit into our human

58. Jansmann, "What's Lutheran in Education," 1.

59. Jansmann, "What's Lutheran in Education," 47.

60. Rietschel, "Foundations of Lutheran Education," 45.

61. Rietschel, "Foundations of Lutheran Education," 45.

experience; our conscience demands answers to them. "What ought a man to be? What is a man to do? Answer these questions in the light of God's Word, and you have indicated your definition of the goal, or the purpose, of Christian (Lutheran) education. Our answer to these questions must of necessity influence our view of education."⁶² The answers do influence the Lutheran view of education; the answers provide that core knowledge we want our students to have.

Jansmann has these seven points of emphasis for core knowledge:

- 1- Because man is a creation of God, It is for God to say what the purposes of man's education ought to be.
- 2- Since God's purpose in creating heaven and earth, and man, was that He might be glorified, the first and final purpose of all education, ought to be the glorifying of God.
- 3- The first concern of Lutheran education must always be the leading of people to a conviction of sin and personal faith in Jesus Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
- 4- Lutheran education has the primary purpose and function of the preaching and teaching of the Gospel.
- 5- Godliness—Christlikeness "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" — Christian maturity and completeness in Christ are what God wants in people. ... He is spiritual, he is moral, he is religious in the various other aspects of his life.
- 6- The educational objective is to give the power to live a Christian life.
- 7- Lead one to fulfill specific service for Christ as members of His church. A great Lutheran educator has emphasized that the training of the young for participation in the life and work of the church is a major aim of Christian education.⁶³

These are not concepts that can be taught once and it is expected that children will cherish them forever. No, it is a process. Lutherans use the educational process to "unfold to man the truth of God. Man cannot find an adequate solution to his deepest needs and questions himself. He needs to know who he is and how he is in his finiteness of sin. He needs to know

62. Jansmann, "What's Lutheran in Education," 2.

63. Jansmann, "What's Lutheran in Education," 7-10.

who other people are and how he is to relate to them. He needs to know what the purpose of life is, where he is going in eternity, and what he is."⁶⁴ The answers are difficult to grasp especially when many answers are super-rational. Secular education will place reason as the master of all knowledge. Rietschel notes that the Lutheran Christian cannot play by those rules. "Reason is not a source of truth in the same sense that divine revelation or experience is. Rather, reason is essentially a tool, an instrument used to draw logical conclusions from the data provided by reason and experience."⁶⁵ Instead, "God's gracious Word breaks through man's defenses and prepares his heart to receive Christian answers to the deepest and most persistent questions arising in human existence."⁶⁶

Pastors and teachers in Lutheran elementary and secondary schools are showing their dear students the depths of Christian truths so that they may understand what God is doing for them in "all areas of their experience."⁶⁷ Lutheran educators teach and recognize that God is Lord of all. That God the Father created the universe. That Jesus is the Son of God and has redeemed us from all sin and guilt and shame. That the Holy Spirit lives within and maintains their faith. The Lutheran educator will personalize that for every child. They will teach again and again and again that God is good and gracious, forgiving all of their sins. The Lutheran educator teaches that faith is something to be nurtured and fed as one lives in whatever situation they find

64. Krause, "Schools in Action," 7.

65. Rietschel, "Foundations of Lutheran Education," 50.

66. Krause, "Schools in Action," 8.

67. Krause, "Schools in Action," 9.

themselves in. Educators teach their students that their worth begins and ends as a redeemed child of God. Deutschlander writes:

The Bible tells us that we are all equal and alike: doomed and damned sinners who deserve nothing but God's wrath and punishment. No matter how many gifts of appearance, intellect, or physical prowess we have or lack, we are all alike on the dung heap of sin, death, and hell. Ah, but the Gospel says to every one of us: How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God. And that is what we are!"⁶⁸

It is this point that is the vital difference between the Lutheran education philosophy and that of any other education system or philosophy.

If a Lutheran philosophy of education is taking Lutheran theology and integrating it into an educational system, then the product of a Lutheran philosophy of education should be taking Lutheran theology and integrating it with the soul of a student so that when they graduate, they see the world from the worldview of a redeemed child of God, rooted in the Word, ready to live their Lutheran Christian faith.

68. Daniel Deutschlander. "Let's Keep the Lutheran in our Lutheran Schools!" Unpublished paper presented to the Western Wisconsin District Teachers' Conference, Rice Lake, WI, February 18, 2010, 4.

THE VALUE OF LUTHERAN EDUCATION

We have established what basic Christian education is, and why it is valuable. We have examined how Christian education can be distinctly Lutheran. Finally, we will establish that a Lutheran Christian education is still remarkably valuable today. This will be established from three Lutheran educational objectives: man in relationship to God, man in relationship to self, and man concerning fellow man.

Man and His Relationship to God

The Lutheran school seeks to help the child develop first and foremost knowledge of Jesus Christ as personal Savior from sin. It also strives to nurture a firm trust in that redemption, and then to grow in sanctification. Within that growth is the continual study of Scripture, understanding of law and gospel, and a lifelong appreciation for the sacraments. Pastors and teachers will also strive to cultivate an understanding of the Church on earth and foster a desire to participate in the Church.⁶⁹

Lutheran students will hear every day that they are a desperate sinner in need of a Savior. They will also hear the soothing promise of salvation. The lifelong student of Scripture will also learn from an early age that their life of faith is not immune from bad things in life. "Rather the Spirit fills the child with promises of God so that he matures seeing the reality of an evil world, understanding why such evil will always be present before the trumpet, yet having the confidence that in the living Savior there is an ultimate triumph, a victory he shares only because

69. Krause, "Schools in Action, 10.

of the grace of God."⁷⁰ This is something only a *truly Lutheran* school will teach and something only a *true Christian* will grow up to understand. Becker quotes Luther on this matter. "If the Holy Spirit is not ruling men, they become corrupt again; but the Holy Spirit must cleanse the wounds daily. Therefore, this life is a hospital; the sin has been forgiven, but it has not yet been healed."⁷¹

Do not take Zarling's or Luther's word for it however, hear from the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Colossians a crucial reminder that this knowledge is a gift from God and something to be nurtured.

We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his holy people in the kingdom of light.⁷²

Lutheran education itself must always give glory to God by making his grace shown in Christ. the spiritual lives of the students are to be enriched so that they are to rise above temptations and do every good work.⁷³ Braun notes that it is even more than these two things. It is not just that a Lutheran school will teach one to believe in Jesus Christ as their Savior or to be prepared to do every good work. "Their entire view of the world and life should be focused on the principles of Scripture, and their judgment of current events and their conceptions of occurrences among the

70. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 27.

71. Siegbert W. Becker. "How Can our Teachers Retain their Christian Identity in a Secular World?" *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 20 October 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/322>,3.

72. Colossians 1:9–12

73. Mead, "Small Area Lutheran High Schools," 21.

nations should be ripened in the mild rays of the light of God's Word."⁷⁴ They accomplish this by establishing Christ as the focal point of everything within the school, and when one leaves, Christ will be the focal point of everything that they do. In other words, a student is never apart from the Word and therefore never apart from their relationship with God certainly within the school, and, God willing, outside of it.

This relationship between man and his creator is an intimate worldview, and it is under siege. How easy is it for Christians to think to themselves, "God=church." They think that God matters are church matters and should be left there. The temptation to compartmentalize is real and ever-present. Zarling writes this illustration:

Do we wonder how people can come to church on a fairly regular basis, but turn around and defend abortion as another woman's right even if I might disagree with it? Nancy Pearcey calls it the 'Heart versus Brain' divide. 'The first step in forming a Christian worldview is to overcome this sharp divide between heart and brain. We have to reject the division of life into a sacred realm, limited to things like worship and personal morality, over against a secular realm that includes science, politics, economics, and the rest of the public arena.' Is not Pearcey simply echoing a truth that the Reformers Proclaimed?⁷⁵

A solution to this problem of compartmentalization is a focus once again on the core knowledge of Christianity, that one is a sinner, and they have been saved. This is the truth that dictates the entire Christian life. It is a truth spoken by the one who is Truth. It is critical then, that we appreciate that when Jesus said, "I am the Truth,"⁷⁶ it was an all-inclusive claim.⁷⁷ He did not leave any room for compartmentalizing. "He did not say that he is the Truth in spiritual

74. Braun, "About Lutheran Schools," 14.

75. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 17.

76. John 14:6

77. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 19.

matters. He did not say he is the Truth in matters Jewish. He did not say he is the Truth contextualized for the first-century Roman empire of the Hellenistic world scene. He is the Truth — the essential, the eternal, the all-encompassing truth."⁷⁸

The Lutheran school teaches that this relationship to the Truth is essential to a life of faith, that no matter what happens in life, the truths you were taught and raised in will remain the same. That is how they remain truthful because the Truth does not change. God cannot lie. He alone is the Christian's strength in life and source of life. How does one remain in this truth? By maintaining that relationship with God through the Holy Spirit who is found in the Word of God, by applying law and gospel, hearing God's Word weekly, daily devotion, and participation in the sacraments.

Man and His Relationship to Himself

The Lutheran school seeks to help the child develop a relationship with themselves. It seeks for a child to learn the knowledge, understanding, attitude, and skills necessary to function as God's child, how to apply God's Word to any life situation. The child will learn about their own body and the benefits of health, safety, and recreation. They will learn how to communicate with others: how to find and appreciate their cultural heritage, participate in fine arts, and develop creative thinking habits. Teachers will teach the child social skills to live completely and creatively in society, to participate responsibly as Christian citizens in their community. Finally, the Lutheran school helps the child develop understanding and appropriate use of their emotions, specifically a firm reliance on God and trust in Christ "as the integrating factor in a God-pleasing self-concept."⁷⁹

78. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 19.

79. Krause, "Schools in Action," 10.

All of this is Luther's doctrine of vocation. Lutheran schools equip the learner to take his or her place in the tasks and responsibilities of life so that they might fulfill their vocation "as God's man in the world."⁸⁰ Zarling makes this point on vocation:

So already in grade school, the child of God begins to learn the wonderful doctrine of vocation. Whatever the Lord Jesus has entrusted to you to do, do it with the confidence that it is a task worth doing well, for Jesus is pleased when his child does his best. Athlete, student, piano player – discover the gifts God has given you and use them to his glory. Pastor, plumber, teacher, technician – every vocation is noble in God's eyes.⁸¹

No matter one's vocation, the temptations of the world will always be there. The secular world is always knocking on the door, especially the impressionable minds of children and young adults. It is not always a tangible, visible evil. "It is rather an attitude which impinges on our hearts and minds, it is a spiritual atmosphere which we draw in with every breath."⁸² Jesus in the book of Luke refers to the idolatry of everyday material things that plagued the earth before its destruction in the flood. "They did eat, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, ... they bought, they sold, they planted, they built,"⁸³ Does one think those times were corrupt? Where are these things not happening in Christ's day or Luther's day? Are they not happening today? Becker notes of course that none of this is all that remarkable. The list of activities does not include one thing that is sinful in itself. It does indicate that those people Jesus was referring to were interested *only* in the things of this life, "and this is secularism,"⁸⁴ or to be even more

80. Paul Lange, "Why Lutheran High Schools," in *Christian Education: A Book of Readings*, eds. John Isch, David Wendler (New Ulm: Martin Luther College Printshop, 1999), 83-5.

81. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 29.

82. Becker, "Christian Identity in a Secular World," 7.

83. Luke 17:27–28

84. Becker, "Christian Identity in a Secular World," 7.

serious, idolatrous. The Lutheran school offers the child something beyond this life. Forgiveness of sin and guilt, a relationship with their creator, and eternal life in heaven.

Therefore, students taught in a Lutheran school will know that the things of this life, that is, material things are not worth that much. Paul writes to the Philippian Christians, "... I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or want."⁸⁵ Students will be taught that if you lose something in this world, it is not an irreparable loss. Carl Lawrenz writes this:

By guarding hearts with the Gospel Christian education purposes to turn the hopefulness and idealism of youth into God-pleasing channels by showing the young that no matter how wealthy, learned, renowned, or might they otherwise become, true happiness can come to them only by clinging to their Savior in faith, by walking in His ways, by serving others in love for His sake.⁸⁶

This is the hope and prayer of every Lutheran educator. As noted earlier, this relationship with God can only be fostered by a presentation of the clear Word of God. Through the Word, children can grip ever more firmly to the truths that give them true happiness in all situations. The young, maturing Christian needs then to always be on guard against themselves. Their sinful nature will seek to rationalize their faith.

It is a faith that says that God created the world, but not in six days, that Christ is the Son of God but that He was probably not born of a virgin, that He rose from the dead but that His bones still lie moldering in some forgotten Palestinian grave, that the children of Israel were delivered from Pharaoh but the story of the ten plagues is an exaggerated account of natural events, and so on. Such a point of view is then characterized as a "mature faith" and in case one or the other of us may find such a phrase appealing, we

85. Philippians 4:11b–12

86. Carl Lawrenz. "The Philosophy of Secondary Christian Education." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 27 September 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/2950>, 10.

might be reminded that the Lord Jesus told us that his followers must become as little children.⁸⁷

This fight, this personal struggle, will always happen. How does a Lutheran guard against the weakening of their faith? Faith is strengthened by the clear presentation of the Word of God. As one develops their relationship with themselves, they must be taught to put their reliance upon reason to the side, and cling firmly to the source of truth. "To attempt to defend the Word of God with reason is to use the scabbard to defend the sword and the head to protect the helmet, as Luther put it, and to use reason to illumine the Christian faith is to use a candle to find the sun."⁸⁸

Lutherans cannot try to answer life's hardest questions through reason, they must only answer through faith. And if the question has not been answered directly in the Bible, the Christian will find his or her way using the sound principles based on the Bible learned in their Lutheran school. Borgwardt gives this vivid example: "The young woman thinking about abortion and noting the 60-40 chance of a mongoloid child will first consider faith. That is, she will remember that she has a Lord who lovingly guides her life and that of her husband. Then she will consider love — her love for that person whose life the Lord has now created."⁸⁹ There are countless other examples of life's situations that need to be viewed not from Scriptures and the guiding principles found within.

87. Becker, "The Role of Religion in a Lutheran High School," 8.

88. Becker, "The Role of Religion in a Lutheran High School," 8.

89. Wayne M. Borgwardt. "Educating For Christian Living in a Humanistic Age." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 27 October 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/688>, 16.

That biblical literacy may only be based on memory. When in time of need, the Lutheran Christian can look within for comfort because of careful memorization of Bible passages.

Duetschlander makes this point:

Long after the particular proof passage may have been forgotten, long after even the Six Chief Parts can no longer be quoted from memory, the memory will linger hidden deep within; they will think and act in response to that hidden skeleton of the soul, even when they cannot quote the bible passage or the page of the Catechism that proves such and such a course of thinking or action to be right. The truths learned in religion classes will be the frame of reference.⁹⁰

What a tremendous blessing the Lutheran educated child has. The blessing of ingrained core knowledge of Bible passages meant to guide and keep them. That is why person to self-relationships are fostered in Lutheran schools. So that their very souls are rooted in Scripture. That even when faced with the most personal of decisions, they view the world not simply *with* a biblical lens, rather they view the world *as a Christian*. Zarling concludes, "Does not Christian education, and especially the Lutheran school, provide the Church with a wonderful tool that God can use to 'root' souls, 'build-up' souls, and help souls 'take captive every thought and make it obedient to Christ?'"⁹¹

Man and His Relationship with Fellowman

The Lutheran school seeks to help the child develop recognition that all people are subjects of God's creation and redemption, and the willingness and ability to show respect, courtesy, and consideration for the rights and welfare of others. They learn respect for parents, who are God's representatives, as well as the ordained government God has placed in their nation and

90. Duetschlander. "Lutheran Schools," 13.

91. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 6.

community. They are taught Christian social responsibility and cooperative skills. Students learn to have Christian concern for the spiritual and material welfare of all people.⁹²

This objective of Lutheran education is especially important when talking about reaching others who are not like us. Sadly, many fall into the trap of our Lutheran schools becoming a place for only Lutheran students. Braun warns against this mentality. "We may argue that this distinctiveness and separateness have come about as unintended consequences of our deep concern for Lutheran doctrine and our strong devotion to ethnic heritage —except sometimes, it seems, these consequences were unintended. Maybe we wanted to be safely separated from the world in a church and school filled only with other people just like us."⁹³

Anyone who has ever been in a classroom knows that it is not just about those who are not just like us. Differences are exploited by the Evil One to cause dissension and hate for anyone and everyone, even in the kindest hearts. The Lutheran school setting teaches that those differences are from God, and hate has no place in the classroom or their heart. "No classroom in a truly Lutheran school will allow students to view their peers through any prism other than the Word of God which declares each one a precious life, loved by God."⁹⁴ Since God loves my classmate, I too will love my classmate. Later in life, the Lutheran Christian knows that old teaching to be just as true for their neighbor. Zarling continues, "The Lutheran school, since it clearly and constantly communicates the Gospel of Christ, is the Spirit's tool to purge prejudice from the human heart and to stomp out stereotypes from a student's mindset. The student learns

92. Krause, "Schools in Action," 11.

93. Braun, "What our Fathers Taught us About Lutheran Schools," 35.

94. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 24.

the inseparable and unbreakable connection between a living faith and a faith that lives for Jesus by also living for others."⁹⁵

Living for others means loving others. That means a Lutheran Christian is taught to be ready to offer help where and whenever. It means that they learned neglecting and despising fellowmen who need help and love is not acceptable. Gladly they will bind up their wounds, and earnestly carry them to the foot of the cross. There they will show them the source of help that will keep them safe now and for eternity.⁹⁶

No, the Christian person must be different in their relationships with others because their relationship with God is different. Lutheran schools teach children that they are to be different and treat people differently from the way non-Christians treat each other.

The Lutheran Christian Teacher Models Walking with God

A careful look at the responsibility of Lutheran schoolteachers gives a key insight into the value of the education they provide. When a parent sends their child to a school, they are giving their child to someone who can shape and mold them. It is no different in a Lutheran school.

Noted earlier was the objective for Lutheran education to develop a child's relationship with himself. In that relationship, when they look inward, they ought to find the Holy Spirit dwelling there. Through the gift of the Spirit, a child can make every thought captive to Christ. With every thought captive to Christ, a child knows their relationship with God. This knowledge of the Truth will guide them through life walking with God.

95. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 34.

96. Siegbert W. Becker. "A Lutheran Educator In A Secular World." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 24 October 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/306>,7.

Becker says this clearly, "The Christian's (Teacher) first aim is to build the kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, to win souls for that kingdom, to keep boys and girls loyal and faithful to that kingdom, to make them better subjects and soldiers of that King."⁹⁷ The soldiers of that kingdom must remain in the vine. Christ says, "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing"⁹⁸ God has provided the standards for all, teachers live by them, and teach their students to live by them as well.

This does not mean good behavior for good behavior's sake. Lutheran teachers know that there is no place in the classroom for moralizing. "Simply put, moralizing is doing desirable behavior without any relationship to Christ. In other words, we try to grow a branch that has been cut off from the Vine. Christian morality is present when — and only when — the branch is growing from the Vine when actions are from sincere faith."⁹⁹

Related to the danger of growing apart from the vine, is the danger of building an *identity* apart from the Vine. Deutschlander writes that if Lutheran teachers bring their children to see where their real worth is found, then they have been *Lutheran* teachers in a *Lutheran* school.¹⁰⁰ Lutheran educators teach their students to "beware the American cancer of individualism at all costs. We find our contentment in being united to Christ in baptism and thus part of the body of Christ,"¹⁰¹ in other words, part of the Vine. What other schools will communicate that what

97. Becker, "Christian Identity in a Secular World," 5.

98. John 15:5

99. Borgwardt, "Living in a Humanistic Age," 15.

100. Deutschlander, "Lutheran Schools," 5.

101. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 29.

matters is that a child's identity should be that of another? Only Christian schools will, and this is "a heartening and motivating truth to children who are searching and wondering 'what good am I?' Other schools of various stripes point students to 'self-fulfillment,' 'finding yourself,' 'changing the world for the better.' Define better. Define self. Define fulfillment. Only a Christian school will do so with a Biblical definition that points back to Christ. Always back to Christ. He is all in all."¹⁰² Sorum echoes this:

We teach and apply God's word with the specific intent of persuading our students to derive identity through their relationship with God. We want them to find that their life is "now hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3) To the degree that our students derive identity from Instagram, they are at risk. Such an identity is easily shaken and insecure. What matters is what the Father thinks of us in Christ. ... Now in view of iGen's susceptibility to social media and Satan's ability to manipulate the message in that media, Lutheran families and educators must focus even more on teaching our children to think of themselves in terms of their relationship with God in Christ. And we will model this identity in Christ for them. We will guard our hearts in Christ so that we can model the identity we enjoy as children of God through Christ.¹⁰³

As Sorum said, the Lutheran teacher is a model for the malleable student. This is biblical. "Two hundred times, give or take, the Old Testament speaks of 'walking in God's ways.' ... There seems to be the assumption or even a strong suggestion that how an Israelite 'walked' as an adult was (often) an outcome of the mentoring/modeling 'walks' they were taken on as a child."¹⁰⁴ That is exactly why Lutheran education is so valuable because those who receive it can take their education with them for their lifetime. The students do not have to wonder as they do in Algebra

102. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 29.

103. E. Allen Sorum. "Modeling Mission Leadership in our Lutheran Schools." *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, Vol. 115, No. 4 (Fall 2018), 279.

104. Sorum, "Modeling Mission Leadership in our Lutheran Schools," 271.

1. "When will I use this?" They are taught how, when, and why they will use their Lutheran education.

What a responsibility! Borgwardt writes that this is a meaningful responsibility. He knows, however, that he has the tools that he needs, the tools that any Lutheran educator needs: law and the gospel.¹⁰⁵ This is means of grace ministry, "a constant application of law and gospel throughout every classroom endeavor, curricular or extracurricular."¹⁰⁶

This biblical principle of modeling is not just from the Old Testament.

Jesus, the Master Teacher, was and is the Master Model. What kind of models are we as we appear before our students? Do we provide examples that our youngsters will observe and emulate? Or do our lives say something which contradicts our words? We need to be the genuine people we are in Christ, those Vine-engrafted branches. We will then be models who of necessity reveal sound faith in the thousands of situations in which the youngsters observe their teachers day after day. As redeemed children of God, we enjoy the privilege of membership in God's kingdom.¹⁰⁷

The most important thing for teachers to model is also one of the easiest things: a devotion to the Holy Scriptures. All that needs to be done is to daily proclaim the law and gospel in their intended meaning. This will instill in the Lutheran student uncompromising loyalty to the Word of God. "Every teacher in the Lutheran school unabashedly asserts to teach truth— objective truth, eternal truth, truth centered in the One who is the Truth."¹⁰⁸ The Word teaches that God is an ever-present help in trouble and thousands of other crucial promises that young people especially need to cling to be taught and cling to with all their might. Times of crisis are often

105. Borgwardt, "Living in a Humanistic Age," 17.

106. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 14.

107. Borgwardt, "Humanistic Age," 17.

108. Zarling, "Matter of Life and Death," 16.

when loyalty to the Word of God and one's relationship with God are strained the hardest. Again, the Lutheran teacher will seek to model for their impressionable students.

Do we often not see God's hand in the midst of a crisis? We know that in these moments, God provides an opportunity for us to model humility and boldness, prayer and praise, and patience even as we await God's rescue. Sometimes what we need to make a decision is not data but courage to stand up in front of everyone and to admit to the Lord, 'We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you,' ... God, help us model trust in you and our fellow Christians in the face of every trial."¹⁰⁹

Closely connected with being a model for students is being the source of answers for students.

The answers a teacher gives can easily leave a long-time impression on a student. Considering that Lutheran teachers are models of personal knowledge and devotion to Scripture when

Lutheran teachers give answers, students can be sure that this answer is congruent with what the Bible teaches, and therefore is *truthful*.

There will be countless others to create doubt in the minds and hearts of our young people. What they read in their newspapers, what they see on the screen, what they learn from the world, all this will cause them to wonder whether the moral principles that they are called upon to follow are valid and whether the truths which they have learned from their church are true. As teachers in Lutheran schools of higher learning, we are here to answer those questions with authority, to help them to overcome their doubts, to become ever more firmly grounded on the only foundation that will stand the test on the day of judgment.¹¹⁰

Often, however, students will not bring easy questions. They will bring questions that have to be wrestled with and sympathized with. Lutheran Christian teachers must be ready for the doubts and questions their students will wrestle with. "We need Christian teachers who will patiently guide them to recognize the limits of their human reason, and this particularly also by their

109. Sorum, "Modeling Mission Leadership in our Lutheran Schools," 274.

110. Becker, "Changing World," 7.

example as Christians who despite thorough knowledge, and despite being abreast of all vital and current human thought, are nevertheless fettered to Christ."¹¹¹

To put it a different way, making disciples is not just transferring information and testing to see if they "understand the material intellectually. It is helping them apply the truth to their lives."¹¹² Teachers and pastors have to keep encouraging their students to practice their faith. The alternative is becoming pharisaical, spiritual, sofa sleepers. Christians who sit in desks and "pride themselves on being well taught but who have little impact with the Word in their homes and communities."¹¹³

This would not mesh with what God expects from his soldiers, or what Luther had in mind when he envisioned the Lutheran school to be a place where the individual is trained to be a Christian personality dedicated to a life of service to his "God and the church, to his country and community and himself."¹¹⁴ Lutheran Christian educators should never take for granted the children sitting in front of them and how they have the high privilege of teaching them how to be Lutheran Christians.

111. Lawrenz, "The Philosophy of Secondary Christian Education," 6.

112. Donald W. Patterson. "What Practical Experience Teaches Us about Lutheran Schools." *Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library essay file*, 1 November 2020. <http://essays.wisluthsem.org:8080/handle/123456789/4283>, 11.

113. Patterson, "What Practical Experience Teaches Us about Lutheran Schools," 11.

114. Kretzmann, "Brief History of Education, 57.

CONCLUSION

This nation finds itself in a moral wilderness. Wrong is right, right is wrong. Social media has poisoned the minds of young people to the point where self-worth is boiled down to a tally of "likes." In this wilderness, the loud minority dominates the landscape. Impressionable young people are swallowed up as the crowd follows that loud minority. In this modern mass of people, there is no right or wrong. Man is the judge of all things, and positions of authority are stripped of their credibility.

Parents might think that their children are safe in a Lutheran Christian school and that they are safe under the close supervision of family life. By God's grace, they might be. "But being in the world means that we will in some ways be shaped by the events that happen in it. Though parents will have the strongest influence upon children in their impressionable years, so will events and circumstances in history."¹¹⁵

As history unfolds around children in a Lutheran school, how will they be shaped? The Lutheran school shapes them in such a way that they will be their own person, drawing their own opinions, *all in light of their own faith*. When they wonder what they ought to be, what they are to do, what exists, what is reality, what is truth, they will answer those questions in light of God's Word. Students learn that the search for truth begins and ends with the Bible. Nothing beyond that is certain. "Truly Lutheran education ought not be a take-it-or-leave-it proposition. If that seems to be narrow and bigoted, we might note that when men become uncertain about the

115. Sorum, "Modeling Mission Leadership," 277.

revelation of God, they suddenly become very certain about other things which are not revealed in God's Word."¹¹⁶

At the core of this barren wilderness is the search for truth, this author calls it a "search" because it is all subjective. The smog of atheism is polluting our world and defiling the air young people breathe. Lutheran educators need to be aware and redouble their efforts at bearing witness to the truth as it has been revealed in the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God. When educators do that, "the Spirit of God may do His blessed work in the hearts of whom (they) teach."¹¹⁷

The Day is long past when we could assume that all of our little ones would grow up safe and sound in their home parish... And naïve at best is the expectation of many parents that if they just send their children to a Lutheran school at least they will be kept out of the clutches of the devil for a little longer, and even if they get into trouble, it will be "with their own kind" and thus less serious. The godless culture of our society presses in on our children more insistently each year. The hedonism, the relativism, the disappearance of the concepts of modesty and shame are all too evident on every hand. Few there are who are about their soul's salvation at all. And most of those who do care about it assume that they can get to heaven on The American Plan: Just as I am, I'm good enough; and besides that, Jesus loves me; this I know and this is all I want to know.¹¹⁸

Lutheran education is eternally valuable because it teaches the child to know that they are not enough on their own, so Christ died for them. With this truth, they are equipped to navigate the barren wasteland of morality in America. They know that the law and the gospel should be applied daily to their lives, they love the Word of God and appreciate the sacraments. They become their own Christian in God's family, looking to serve Him in all they do. Looking for His

116. Becker, "Lutheran Educator in a Secular World," 9.

117. Becker, "Lutheran Educator in a Secular World," 9.

118. Deutschlander, "Let's Keep Lutheran," 14.

guidance in all their life's darkest and brightest moments, finding eternal peace in the Truth.

Rooted in the Word and ready for anything.

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