

Obeying God Rather Than Man:
When to Remove Your Children From Public Schooling

I. Introduction

“Train up a child in the way he should go; even when he is old he will not depart from it.”
Proverbs 22:6

As we celebrate the 175th anniversary of the founding of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, it is a good time to consider how things have changed in the United States since the Saxons arrived and what challenges our church and our families might face in the next decades. One area where we are facing many challenges is the education of our children. Since the first Saxons immigrants arrived in Perry County in 1838, the public school system in America has become an institution which is the center of our communities, and in many ways has supplanted the church in the hearts, minds and lives of many people. Because of the importance of educating our children, whole government agencies are dedicated to ensuring this is accomplished in the hope the schools will produce a well educated population for the benefit of our nation and its people. Iowans take a great deal of pride in their schools and are confident the public schools will educate and train our children well. Many of our members were educated in the public schools and are greatly attached to them.

Parents assume the schools are objective, providing instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic to competently prepare our children for more advanced education and eventually taking their place in an ever more complicated and technical world. Parents assume that public school teachers are well trained professionals who are familiar with the latest techniques in educating the young. In many ways, that assumption is correct. Given their experience in the classroom, teachers often see themselves as the first line of defense in detecting abuse and neglect in the home and help to identify other challenges the children in their daily care may be facing. This perhaps should be commended as many of our children spend more of their week with their teachers, school friends and coaches than they do with parents, siblings and pastor.

Unfortunately, over the decades, the public schools have taken over more and more responsibility for the raising and care of our children. School programs for “before” and “after” care have expanded so that young children are not neglected during those times when their parents are at work. Because many working parents need day care for their youngest children, pre-schooling is provided by the state starting at four years old. Being responsible for essentially raising our youth, it is not surprising that public school teachers at times refer to our children as their “kids” and have taken on the role of instilling their values in their students.

To be sure, the public schools are not here to instill spiritual values and we should not expect them to make our children Christian or even Lutheran. After all, that is what regular church attendance, Sunday School, confirmation classes and devotions in the home are to provide. However, in recent years, a darker side of the public school system has been revealed. Social indoctrination in values contrary to our Christian beliefs¹, a willingness to deceive parents as to what is being taught², sex education at ever younger ages as well as promotion of the deviant lifestyle of the LGBTQ+? culture have all infiltrated the public school system.³

Whether we want to believe it or not, the public schools are not impartial and they are not objective in only teaching the “basics.” And they most certainly are not instilling a Christian and Biblical worldview to the families and children of our congregations. Therefore, remembering the Word of God to His people from Deuteronomy, *“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one. You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.”* (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

So, when asked, “When should we remove our children from public schooling?” The answer is, “Now!”

II. The State of Public Schooling in the United States

“My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because you have rejected knowledge, I reject you from being a priest to me. And since you have forgotten the law of your God, I also will forget your children.” Hosea 4:6

In 1946, over 75 years ago, professor Carl Mundinger wrote an essay commemorating the first 100 years of our synod, entitled, *“Dangers Confronting the Church Today.”* He wrote, warning our grandparents and perhaps even great-grand parents, to be on their guard and not grow complacent during a time of great growth and optimism in our nation and synod, saying, *“The difficulty and dangers threatening our Church as we near the century mark of our existence are truly great. Unbelief, doubt, indifference, weariness in the work of the Kingdom, adverse conditions affecting our hearths and homes, evil influences arising from a rapidly industrialized state and materialistic society – all these tend by a process of attrition to destroy the strength of the Church. We are sent forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.”*⁴

When Mundinger warned the “Greatest Generation,” to not grow “satiated” or complacent, our schools and our way of life were considered second to none. But, now, seventy-five years later how have things changed and how much greater will the dangers be for the church seventy-five years from now? So, in order to meet these challenges we might ask, “what *is* the purpose of education and are the schools helping or hindering us in that purpose?” Most of us would assume the primary function of the public school is to help our children get a good job, make a living that provides for the family and become good citizens.

Addressing the militia of Massachusetts in 1798, John Adams understood that for the “American experiment” to be a success its people and leaders need to remember that, *“Our constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate for the government of any other.”*⁵ As Patrick Henry, member of the First Continental Congress and governor of Virginia also said, *“The great pillars of all government...[are] virtue, morality, and religion. This is the armor, my friend, and this alone, that renders us invincible.”*⁶ Jan. 8, 1799, Letter to Archibald Blair⁷

This begs the question, “What makes a “moral and religious” people?” Whose morals and whose religion determines what is good for our nation and its people? Because the constitution of the United States ensures religious freedom and our founding fathers in the Synod knew the danger of state sponsored religion, we do not want any religion, not even a specific Christian denomination to be the religion of our land to the exclusion of any other. Therefore, we cannot and should not expect the public schools to determine what is “moral” or “religious.” The founding Fathers of our nation assumed there must be a “God,” or some supreme being to rule over all, to give wisdom from above and have ultimate authority for what is right and wrong.

This sentiment is affirmed by George Mason, Delegate to the Constitutional Convention, called the “father” of the US Bill of Rights, who wrote that “*The laws of nature are the laws of God, whose authority can be superseded by no power on earth.*”⁸ Where is this idea instilled and what happens to our nation and its schools when morality fails because the people no longer recognize that ultimate authority must come from the Creator and not the government? Our constitution rightly limits the establishment of a national religion, the responsibility for creating a moral and religious people must come from God through His church and His inerrant Word.

We Lutherans have understood the public schools are not equipped and should not be expected to do produce a religious and moral people because public schools are not bound to God’s Word. Because of this, there is a huge danger that as our citizens move away from the authority of God’s Word, our public schools, its administrators and teachers will adopt a view of the world that is in conflict with the Holy Scriptures and Christianity.

Possibly the most dangerous teaching that has infiltrated public schooling since the famous Scopes Trial of 1925 is the assumption that Darwinian evolution is an irrefutable law of nature.⁹ The official position of the Synod is that God’s Word in Genesis teaches a literal six day creation,¹⁰ In contrast, Darwinian Evolution, which is considered “settled” science and taught in the public schools, assumes we are here by billions of years of random chance, the strongest surviving and the weakest being culled from the gene pool. This flies in the face of Christianity and God’s Word concerning creation, the dignity of life and the purpose of human existence. In public schools, evolution is assumed fact when teaching science, history, psychology and sex education classes. Students are taught that the universe and our planet came from a “big bang,” that there is no creator, no guiding purpose and no eternal existence and that we are just animals who have evolved from apes. This assumption has done great damage in our nation, opening the door to the approval of Roe vs. Wade in 1973 and the murder of nearly 63,500,000 babies.¹¹

If our children are taught to respect those in authority, as we do in the meaning to the Fourth Commandment, and their teachers are instructing them we are no better than animals, but are in fact even worse, since we are responsible for destroying the planet by polluting it, then what are we to expect? This conflict with Christian teaching has brought great despair, guilt, shame, hopelessness, fatalism and violence in our land and its schools. Where no moral absolutes and no absolute truth can be taught and is replaced “tolerance,” for opposing views, ultimately “intolerance” of opposing views is the result. Without the authority of God’s Word to determine right versus wrong, “might” then makes right and survival of the fittest and the mob rule of the majority will result. We are seeing the result of decades of this influence in our schools.

III. How did we get to this point?

As St. Paul warned Timothy, *“But understand this, that in the last days there will come times of difficulty. ² For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³ heartless, unappeasable, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not loving good, ⁴ treacherous, reckless, swollen with conceit, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, “ (2 Timothy 3:1-4)*

Prof. Carl Mundinger wrote about the challenges facing the future of the synod 75 years ago, warning in *The Abiding Word*, that we could become satisfied and comfortable with the unbelieving world, compromising both faith and morals. He identified unbelief as the primary danger to the church, saying,

“Unbelief, whether it be the blatant brand of the professed agnostic or the whether it be the practical kind of the professing Christian, promotes a softening-up process. That is, the individual does not practice self-discipline. Iniquity increases. It gains the upper hand. Evil becomes dominate; love waxes cold. The evil servant in the parable who was convinced that his Lord was delaying his coming began to smite his fellow servants and to eat and drink with the drunken (Matt. 24:49).”¹²

As Mundinger also warned on our Synod’s one hundredth anniversary,

“Now, what are some of the modern factors affecting the solidarity of the family? Let us begin with the dangers which threaten the family and which lie in the changes that have come upon us through modern, industrialization. With the coming of the machine in the modern factory system, first the working man was taken out of the home, then the working child, then the working woman. Father, mother and the children do not live and work and play together a they did in olden times They see relatively little of each other. Home life, which used to engender in the child homemaking qualities, is gradually changing and for many families it has indeed undergone complete transition. (p.498)¹³

We can only imagine what Prof. Mundinger would think of our family life today, where even when working from home, everyone is fixated on their “devices.” Sadly, technology separates us even when sitting at the same table, in the same living room or pew on Sunday morning! To be sure, the family is under the assault of the evil one. This is evident in the fragmentation of the family as 25% of families have only a single parent present and a shocking 57% of millennial moms are single. ¹⁴ Sadly, only about 25% of families in America have a working father and mother who can stay home. In fact, many are convinced this is the only way to make ends meet.¹⁵ The devil also knows that fragmenting and destroying the family is crucial to undermining faith and the “training of a child,” in the truth that Christ was crucified to pay for the sins of the whole world and that salvation is received by faith alone.

Unfortunately, the local school system, even if not openly hostile to Christian families, can also hinder the growth of our children in the fear and knowledge of the Lord because it is obligated to promote the agenda and views of those who are in charge of the government and its agencies. A progressive world view, directed by the federal government and the funding it provides to the public schools has been influencing our children’s education for as long as there has been a government funded school system. When we turn our children over to institutions and leave their

upbringing to others at ever younger ages, beginning with day care only six weeks after birth, preschool at four years, kindergarten, elementary school, middle school, high school, trade school, community college, state run universities and even the military¹⁶, we are allowing those agencies to catechize our children in a world view contrary to our own as Christians.

Obviously, a vital role of the church must be to promote Biblical marriage and the family in a culture that is more and more at odds with this traditional view of the family. Unfortunately, a school system that does not share this view, will instead promote a competing worldview. “Wokism,” the LGBTQ+? movement, transgenderism, cancel culture, environmentalism, extreme feminism and antiracism, are just a few of the ideologies that Munding and our forefathers could scarcely imagine. As in the case of sex education and books promoting homosexuality and encouraging children to question their gender, it has been discovered that the schools deceptively keep this curriculum from the parents who would otherwise object. This trend we are seeing has its roots in Marxism that states, *“There are, besides, eternal truths, such as Freedom, Justice, etc., that are common to all states of society. But Communism abolishes eternal truths, it abolishes all religion, and all morality, instead of constituting them on a new basis; it therefore acts in contradiction to all past historical experience.”*¹⁷

Many of the theories of education and instruction of school children being promoted in the progressivism infiltrating our public schools are taken from Marxist philosophy. Ironically, the Communist Manifesto was published in 1848, only a year after our own Synod officially came into existence. Consider what Carl Marx wrote nearly one hundred and seventy-five year ago:

*“Abolition [Aufhebung] of the family! ...Do you charge us with wanting to stop the exploitation of children by their parents? To this crime we plead guilty. But, you say, we destroy the most hallowed of relations, when we replace home education by social... the Communists have not invented the intervention of society in education; they do but seek to alter the character of that intervention, and to rescue education from the influence of the ruling class. The bourgeois clap-trap about the family and education, about the hallowed co-relation of parents and child, becomes all the more disgusting, the more, by the action of Modern Industry, all the family ties among the proletarians are torn asunder, and their children transformed into simple articles of commerce and instruments of labour.”*¹⁸

According to Bradley Thomas and others who are following the “culture wars” of the last thirty years,

*“There’s little debate that modern-day American universities, public education, mainstream media, Hollywood, and political advocacy groups are dominated by leftists. This is no accident, but part of a deliberate strategy to pave the way for communist revolution developed more than eight decades ago by an Italian political theorist named Antonio Gramsci. Described as one of the world’s most important and influential Marxist theorists since Marx himself, if you are not familiar with Gramsci, you should be. The Italian communist (1891 – 1937) is credited with the blueprint that has served as the foundation for the Cultural Marxist movement in modern America. Later dubbed by 1960s German student activist Rudi Dutschke as “the long march through the institutions,” Gramsci wrote in the 1930s of a “war of position” for socialists and communists to subvert Western culture from the inside in an attempt to compel it to redefine itself.”*¹⁹

The objectives of Marx and the Communists did not infiltrate our institutions overnight, but we see how their influence has crept in. Already aware of their dangerous and ungodly intentions, C.F.W. Walther wrote to warn our young synod in 1879:

“The efforts of the socialists and communists are, in the third place, contrary to the doctrine of the sanctity of the marriage state, as taught in the sixth commandment and elsewhere in the Scriptures... These efforts are, in the fourth place, contrary to the differences between man and man as approved in the Scriptures. These differences pertain not only to parents and children, husband and wife, master and servant, but also to rich and poor. I need but refer to these doctrines and every Christian must say: “Verily, if I will be a Bible Christian, I cannot possibly take part in these movements. The moment I connect myself with such an association, I must cast the Bible into the flames, or I am a wretched hypocrite, who is carrying water on both shoulders, and walks lame on both legs.” They are, in the fifth place, contrary to the doctrine of the Scriptures, that through all kinds of troubles, God would draw man to Himself, try him and prepare him for Eternity.”²⁰

Of course, very few of our public-school officials and teachers would call themselves Marxists or communists and would be appalled to think they were promoting such extreme views. However, not knowing or believing God’s Word, more and more teachers and school counsellors see themselves protecting LGBTQ+? children from homophobic or transphobic family and the parents who they feel put their students at risk. According to a former elected member of the Carlisle school board,

“The schools in Carlisle have numerous books on reserve in their library that depict homosexual pornography. The Gay/Straight Alliance Group and other LGBTQ affirming groups are also active. Nothing is done to “Trans Bullies,” who are students who harass other students in school and on social media for being Christians and for “hating” LGBTQ simply because do not support the “lifestyle.”²¹

It is ironic that not long ago, “bullying” was a hot topic in our public schools, but as it turns out, “bullying” only protects the victimized LGBTQ students. To have a different opinion, or a Biblical worldview which does not support this lifestyle often invites ridicule and even punishment. This is extremely stressful to Christian students who are bombarded with teaching and lifestyles that are contrary to God’s Word. This also causes some conflict in our homes as our Lutheran students and parents attempt to obey the Fourth Commandment to “honor our father and mother” under the authority of the public school and its teachers and administrators.

The Apostle Paul’s letter to the Romans comes to mind, ²⁸ *“And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. ²⁹ They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, ³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, ³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. ³² Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”*

Therefore, as Voddi Bocham quipped, *“We cannot continue to send our children to Caesar for their education and be surprised when they come home as Romans.”²²*

IV. A Brief History of Christian or Education in the Churches of the Lutheran Reformation

Seeing the consequence of unbelief, Munding warned seventy-five years ago of the dangers of a modern industrialized culture on the family. As we are observing the apparent success of Marxism's "*long march through the institutions*," and its effect on public education, we might conclude these challenges are totally new. However, as we know, the desire of the devil, the world and even man's sinful flesh is to hamper the spread of the Gospel and keep it from being taught. As King Solomon, wrote, "*What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun.*" (Ecc. 1:9) The words of Genesis 6:5 also comes to mind, how, prior to the Great Flood, "*The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.*"

Also remember how the apostles could not restrain themselves after they had escaped imprisonment and returned to the temple to teach the Good News of Christ, "*And when they had brought them, they set them before the council. And the high priest questioned them, saying "We strictly charged you not to teach in this name, yet here you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, and you intend to bring this man's blood upon us." But Peter and the apostles answered, "We must obey God rather than men. " (Acts 5:27-29)*

Early in the Reformation, Martin Luther wrote a lengthy treatise calling upon the nobility to aid in this endeavor. Three hundred years later, the Saxons who would eventually emigrate to America and form the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, made the establishment of Lutheran schools a priority, realizing this was not a responsibility that could be left to secular government and its institutions.

A. Luther's Emphasis on the Need for Christian Schooling

In his treatise written in 1520, on "*An Appeal to the Ruling Class of German Nationality as to the Amelioration of the State of Christendom*," Luther realized that the reform of education, centered around God's Word, is for the good of all people, both genders and all ages. He warns that it is our responsibility and is God's will for His people, to ensure our young receive a Christian education when he stated,

"But I would not advise anyone to send his son to a place where the Holy Scriptures do not come first. Every institution, where the Word of God is not taught regularly, must fail. That is why we observe the kind of people who are now and will continue to be in the universities . . . I greatly fear that the universities are but wide-open gates leading to hell, as they are not diligent in training and impressing the Holy Scripture on the young students."²³

We may be tempted to think this is typical Lutheran hyperbole to conclude that the institutions of higher learning are "*wide-open gates leading to hell.*" But anyone who has attended a state school or even a private "Lutheran" college must admit that temptations abound and the teaching offered there often challenges, runs contrary to and can even condemn the Christian faith. Every pastor knows of one or more families where the college experience was damaging to a young person's faith. Our forefathers in the LCMS, were not unaware of this great need for Christian education beginning as soon as possible for our young children.

When Luther wrote the Small Catechism, he emphasized the importance of teaching the faith at an early age and sticking with it. He introduced the six chief parts of the Small Catechism with these or similar words, “how the *“Hausvater,”* or *“Head of the family is to teach it in a simple way to his household.”* This is the first and most important vocation, and responsibility of every parent. God’s Word reminds us, *“Fathers, do not provoke your children to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.”* (Ephesians 6:4) It has been proven that little infants recognize the voice of their parents even before they are born and as Jesus himself says, they can believe.

Therefore, this responsibility to teach the child the Christian faith begins in the home. Even before the birth of a child, what is heard, read and sung in the home and in the liturgy, through the spoken Word from the pastor and in the hymns that are sung are already taking root. But the responsibility to water the seed of God’s Word that is planted is first and foremost the parents. The positive influence of the Father cannot be overstated. Therefore, the teaching of Christ and Him crucified and that we are sinners saved by God’s grace through faith in Christ, is not something the public schools should be expected to provide.

B. The Missouri Synod During its Early Period

It should be noted that the early constitutions, essays and writings of the church fathers of our Missouri Synod, particularly those of C.F.W. Walther and F.C.D. Wyneken indicate they have taken Luther’s admonition to heart. Having left Germany to make a new life in Perry county, they show an intense concern that God’s Word and a Christian education be of first importance for the pastors and youth of the new synod. They were determined that the dangers of the public schools they left in Germany would not continue to haunt our churches in America. Consistently throughout their writings it is assumed, *church and school* go together. The idea of having a school is not seen as a luxury for the congregations until a public school became available. Rather, establishing a Lutheran school was seen as a necessity and that every attempt would be made by every church to have a school and a Christian education, no matter how modest.

In an essay commemorating the 100th Anniversary of C.F.W. Walther’s death, Arthur H. Drevlow wrote this, *“The continuing struggle with the crippling blight of rationalism in church and school finally crystallized plans of likeminded Lutherans to escape the difficulties in Saxony by selecting a site for a new home in North America. Among the causes prompting the migration from Saxony to Perry County, Missouri, concern for the education of their played a key role.”*²⁴ *Walther affirmed this by the observation: “Concern for the future of their children in both church and school, was the most compelling reason for the emigration to America.”*²⁵

Walther identifies the seed which is now bearing so much bitter fruit in our nation and among our people today, *“the crippling blight of rationalism.”* Simply put, rationalism is the result of the magisterial use of human reason over and against God’s Word. This unholy use of human reason, flawed and tainted with sin, has produced some of the dangerous ideologies promoted in the public schools. Beginning in the Ivy League schools during Walther’s day, now the teaching and influence of the agnosticism and atheism of Marxism has filtered down even to elementary schools, where things such as evolution, Cancel Culture, CRT, etc. are being taught to our youth.

One of Walther's associates, H. G. Loeber, discussing the establishment of the Lutheran schools in Perry County wrote that. *"To be sure, the principle reason for the emigration was to ensure a Christian schooling for our children."*²⁶ This is quite telling and may come as a surprise as we celebrate the one hundred and seventy-fifth anniversary of the synod. It is well known that our forefathers left Saxony to avoid unionism with the Reformed and other Protestants that would certainly coerce the Evangelical church to compromise the teachings of Holy Scripture. Sadly, the concern for the education of their children as a primary reason for the immigration may not be as well known today. Given the constant pressure to compromise our faith in the public square and the public schools today, and even from influences within our own Synod, the desire of our forefathers to counter this with Lutheran education should not be ignored.

So, while the challenges were great for the small group of German immigrants, literally strangers in a foreign land, they knew the need to educate their children in schools where God's Word and the Lutheran confessions were at the center, was far greater. As Carl S. Meyer would write in *Moving Frontiers*, *"However, while reaching out to those calling for help, the founders of the Missouri Synod did not dare to neglect their own children. In the first weeks after their arrival in America the Saxons made provision for Christian elementary education. Textbooks and teachers had to be provided for their religious schools. Other groups too, established such religious schools. This obviously raised the question of the relationship of these schools to the public school system rapidly emerging in the Midwest."*²⁷

C. C.F.W. Walther on Christian education:

At the one hundredth anniversary of the synod, H.A.O. Keinath noted the commitment of Walther and the other Missourians to *"training up"* their children in the Word of God and the doctrines of the Lutheran church, writing that,

*"Accordingly, a call for the organization of emigrants was issued, which met with a very hearty response. More than six hundred people, all from Saxony and the Saxon duchies, signified their willingness to leave home and friends to try and build up their lives, and above all, their church [and school] on the American frontier."*²⁸ He also noted that, *"The earnestness of their concern for their children's education is apparent from the religious instruction given on the river boats in their native Germany, as well as the day by day instruction while crossing the Atlantic."*²⁹

Prof. Keinath emphasized the centrality of providing an education grounded in God's Word and its importance to the founders of our synod. Citing Walther, he notes that *"In order that the word of God may live richly in a congregation, if possible the congregation should establish an Evangelical Lutheran School for children."* In response to inquiries why congregations should follow this policy, Walther cited Scriptures. *"Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 18:10)"*³⁰

Instilling the faith in our young through Christian schooling cannot be overstated. In 1855, Walther began the publication of *Lehre und Wehre*, a theological journal for the church workers of the young synod. He used this theological periodical to communicate his commitment to "teach and guard" LCMS doctrinal positions. In the Foreword to the 1856 volume, Walther

wrote, *“Instruction and Defense!” This is the motto we expressed when we began to publish this periodical, and we have since been guided by these words. And as long as God gives us strength and opportunity, we shall continue to be guided by this motto.*”³¹ This should most certainly be our motto since fierce wolves will from within and without to destroy our church, our families and devour our children with false teaching and unbelief if we let our guard down.

Walther wrote this in *Der Lutheraner* in October of 1868, *“So, I congratulate you, dear members of the German, Evangelical-Lutheran congregation of this city! It has been your concern, too, from the beginning, to have in your midst not only public houses of worship for yourselves, but also schools for your children. Thereby you have proven that you are also a living branch on the living tree of the true Christian church, whose precious gems were always its schools. You have also not been satisfied to institute only good elementary schools for your children, but have also recognized that it is no less your precious duty to call into being institutions of higher education for your growing sons and daughters.”*³²

Walther continued, admonishing those who would be teachers of their great responsibility, not to indoctrinate children into the culture of this world, but in the Word of God, *“We have not wanted to send our children to schools directed by unbelievers or false believers. Rather, we ourselves have set up an institution of higher education [so that] in spite of our poverty our youth would not breathe in with science and art, a false spirit, either one of unbelief or one of false theology. So it is our task not only to enrich our dear youth with all kinds of useful knowledge, but no less to plant and tend in our youth the spirit of pure Gospel and pure Christianity and to protect them from the false spirit of unbelief and erring belief.”*³³

The importance of Lutheran education continued to be of chief importance as a means of uniting confessional Lutherans for Walther. In the February, 1873 issue, he wrote this in response to an article in a Baptist publication, which noted that the children who had a church school learned “four or five times” more of the Bible and catechism than those whose educational program was limited to Sunday School alone, commenting, *“May God preserve for our German (and English) Lutheran Church the treasure of its parochial schools! Humanly speaking, everything depends on that for the future of our church in America. As all church bodies in America have worked for their own dissolution from the time when they permitted the state to care for the education of their children, so the most careful cultivation of our parochial schools is and remains, after the public ministry, the chief means for our preservation and our continuation.”*³⁴

The rapidly growing synod prompted our first president, C.F.W. Walther to present a series of theses outlining the duties of the synod and its churches. In one of these essays presented to the Iowa District in 1879, Walther, quoting Luther, wrote, *“God will require it of us and will demand an accounting for the souls of all our descendants whom we neglected.” What a striking statement! But, oh, so true! God will require of us an accounting for the souls of all those who could have been saved if only we had done what was needed.” What a grievous sin it is, therefore, when a congregation does not see to it that its children are instructed in the Word of God! What a grievous sin when a congregation says, “it’s okay to send them to the public (englische) school, where they can learn how to do arithmetic, write and read.” No dear parents, God also wants the pure doctrine to be passed on to our descendants.”*³⁵

Beyond a doubt, for over 175 years, the synod has been dedicated to teaching its young. Sunday school and confirmation classes are an important part of that education. Taking Walther and Luther's words seriously, our synod has developed one of the largest systems of parochial schools in the nation in order to provide Christian education from elementary school through post graduate degrees at one of our Concordia universities. Our two seminaries are second to none in the education they provide to the men God calls to be pastors. But as has been seen over the last forty years, what is taught cannot be taken for granted, but must be "Defended."

V. Conclusion: Where do we go from here?

"But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have firmly believed, knowing from whom you learned it and how from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. "
(2 Timothy 3:14-15)

Comfortable with the education and socialization our children are getting in the public schools, many of our families may be content to think that one hour a week in church and confirmation classes for a few years are sufficient to accomplish what St. Paul describes. Thankfully, God's Word will not "return void" as the prophet Isaiah proclaimed (Isaiah 40:8) and not one of God's elect will be lost as Jesus declared (John 6:39). However, we do not feed our children the bare minimum to keep them alive or give them the least we can provide for their care and welfare. So, why would we put the Lord to the test and our children's eternal life at risk assuming that only the most meager of Christian education would be sufficient?

So, where do we go from here? One option is to do nothing. Many in our churches are content that everything is alright, convinced that the public schools are fine and that our rural schools will never succumb to the progressivism of the urban school districts of Chicago, Los Angeles, New York or even Des Moines or Iowa City. However, not digging into what is being taught locally, such as Critical Race Theory, Social Emotional Learning, cancel culture, wokism, pro-abortion, gender questioning, LGBTQ+ affirming, sex education in younger and younger grades, allows the schools to keep teaching what the "experts" and the government want taught. We must also acknowledge that there are people in our communities and churches who find progressivism and its values a good thing. But even if the teaching of the public schools was totally objective, our forefathers in the Synod were passionately against sending their children to those institutions. They rejected public schooling even though they lived when the schools were still run and attended by a majority of people who were at least nominally Christian, because they knew God's Word could not be taught properly there.

Another option is to "fight the good fight" and attempt to make the long march back through the institutions. This means preparing for a lot of challenging work in an attempt to move against the tide of our current culture. Any person attempting to "take back" the public schools must be aware that you will most likely be attacked on social media by those who are very much behind this trend toward progressivism.³⁶ Our parents, grandparents and members will need to be heavily involved on the school boards and PTA. This will mean more work for us as pastors. We will need to keep ensuring our members are well equipped to daily debrief and deprogram their children while reinforcing a Lutheran Biblical Worldview. Providing daily devotions and

weekly prayer offices, while strongly encouraging consistent attendance at Sunday Divine Service, Sunday School and daily Bible study, as well as including the teachings of the Lutheran Confessions as found in the Small catechism and the Book of Concord is essential. Also, doctrinal preaching, good practice and hymnody by good Lutheran hymnwriters that intentionally catechize to protect our families and God’s children is a must. Every congregation should be doing this already, to protect all our members from the temptations and influence of the fallen world in these last days. But, we must be all the more intentional if our children are attending public schools. Because the spiritual welfare of our people is at stake, there is no room for half-hearted complacency.

Remember that for our forefathers, exposing our children to the influence of the public school was not seen as an option. From Essays in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Carl Walther’s Death, Arthur Drevlow writes, “Walther instructed the future pastors that if small congregations were so financially strapped that they were unable *“to support a school teacher, members of the congregation ought be secured to teach children during the winter months. For without the help of the schools, there is no way to plant godly knowledge and godliness.”* The ideal situation, the Professor advised, was that a congregation have a parochial school.”³⁷

Starting a Lutheran school can be a daunting task. The size of our congregations are steadily shrinking and the average age of our members, especially in rural churches, is increasing.³⁸ Therefore , the traditional church school in the LCMS, with numerous teachers, a principle or other administrators may be out of reach financially for many congregations. The desire to be accredited and compete with the facilities available at the public school often makes starting a Lutheran school unattainable. However, for those congregations that are blessed with the demographics and the ability to start a traditional Lutheran day school or high school they are to be encouraged and commended.

Again, in a rural, or even a urban setting with aging members, fewer children and limited resources, we might be tempted to think there are no options. But be encouraged by these words of Dr. Luther from his Table Talk and remember the ingenuity of our forefathers who faced the challenges of being a small church 175 years ago,

“When schools flourish, things go well and the church is secure. Let us make more doctors and masters. The youth is the church’s nursery and fountainhead. When we are dead, where are others [to take our place] if there are no schools? They are the preservers of the church. Schools don’t have a beautiful appearance, and yet they are very useful. Little boys have learned at least the Lord’s Prayer and the Creed in the schools, and the church have been remarkably preserved through such small schools.”

³⁹

Therefore, another option might be to start a Micro-School. A Micro-School, can take on several forms, from being a group of homeschoolers who share resources or even resembling the old one-room school house with one paid teacher. The important thing to remember is that restoring education to the church and our members, no matter how humble, is a salutary thing that also helps return God’s Word and the church to the center of family life as God intends.

Finally, there is homeschooling. Homeschooling is becoming more mainstream and with more families used to being home during COVID, more comfortable. While this may not be an option

for everyone, it should not be ruled out. Also, for many of our families it helps restore the order of creation as father and mother work in their unique vocations to provide and care for their children. The teaching is easily tailored to the needs of the individual children and the parents are able to focus on God's Word and emphasize our Lutheran confession without fear of it being in conflict with what the public school is teaching. Also, homeschool children are often academically stronger than public schooled children when applying for college. But most importantly, there is the comfort of knowing that your children will be protected from a competing worldview and the often unhealthy socialization of un-Christian peers.

To conclude, given the situation in the public schools and knowing the history of our synod, if your children are not in public school, do not send them. But if asked, "When should you pull your kids out of public schools?" According to God's Word and as confessed by Luther and the founders of our synod, the answer is, "NOW!"

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End Notes

¹ <https://www.iowasafeschools.org/>

² <https://www.aim.org/activism-category/aim-investigates-crt-caught-on-tape-in-a-third-state/>

³ <https://www.dragqueenstoryhour.org/>

⁴ Munding, Carl. "Dangers Confronting the Church Today." Page 506 in *The Abiding Word*. Edited by Theodore Laetch. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946.

⁵ https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/john_adams_391045, accessed April 23, 2022.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ <https://www.history.com/topics/roaring-twenties/scopes-trial>

¹⁰ <https://witness.lcms.org/2018/concerning-six-day-creation/>

¹¹ <https://www.lifenews.com/2022/01/07/63459781-babies-have-been-killed-in-abortions-since-roe-v-wade-in-1973/>

¹² Munding, Carl. "Dangers Confronting the Church Today." Page 487 in *The Abiding Word*. Edited by Theodore Laetch. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1946.

¹³ Ibid., pg. 498

¹⁴ <https://comparecamp.com/single-parent-statistics/>

¹⁵ <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2015/11/04/how-american-parents-balance-work-and-family-life-when-both-work/>

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¹⁸ <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm>

¹⁹ Bradley Thomas, October 28, 2020 The Neo-Marxists' Long March through the Institutions - SAVVY STREETS SAVVY STREET | (thesavvystreet.com)

²⁰ Walther, C.F.W. "COMMUNISM and SOCIALISM Minutes of The First German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation, U.A.C." page 18, from the 1947 reprint by The Lutheran Research Society. Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis Missouri, 1879.

²¹ Interview with Sam Fett, member, Carlisle School Board, April 20, 2022

²² Voddic Baucham, Jr. , *Family Driven Faith: Doing What it Takes to Raise Sons and Daughters Who Walk with God* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2007)

²³ Ibid. pg. 471.

²⁴ Drevlow, Arthur. H. "Walther the Educator." Pages 173-184 in *C.F.W. Walther: The American Luther, Essays in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Carl Walther's Death*. Edited by Arthur H. Drevlow. Mankato: Walther Press, 1987.

²⁵ C.F.W. Walther, *Kurzer Lebenslauf des weiland ehrwuerdigen Pastor Joh. Frieder, Buenger, treuverdienten Pastor der evangel. – lutherischen Immanuels Gemeinde zu St. Louis, MO., nebst bei seinem feierlichen Begrabnis gehaltenen reden.* (St. Louis: Verlag von F. Dette, 1882), 55.

²⁶ Drevlow, Arthur. H. "Walther the Educator." Page 174 in *C.F.W. Walther: The American Luther, Essays in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Carl Walther's Death*. Edited by Arthur H. Drevlow. Mankato: Walther Press, 1987.

²⁷ Meyer, Carl S. "Early Growth in the Missouri Synod." Page 194 in *Moving Frontiers*. Edited by, Carl S. Meyer. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964.

²⁸ Drevlow, p.174

²⁹ Ibid. p. 174.

³⁰ Ibid. pg. 176.

³¹ Drevlow, Arthur. H. "Walther the Educator." Pages 173-184 in *C.F.W. Walther: The American Luther, Essays in Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of Carl Walther's Death*. Edited by Arthur H. Drevlow. Mankato: Walther Press, 1987.

³² Ibid. pg. 182

³³ Walther, "Rede zur Feier der Wiederoeffnung der deutschen ev. Luth. Hoeheren Buegerschule zu St. Louis Mo., gehalten im Versannlungs, Saale der Dreinigkeitsgemeinded dasselbst, den 20. September 1868, Der Lutheraner, XXV (October 1, 1868). 18. (Drevlow 182.)

³⁴ Ibid. p. 184

³⁵ Walther, C.F.W. "Duties of an Evangelical Lutheran Synod." Pages 224-330 in *At Home in the House of My Fathers*. Edited by Matthew Harrison. Lutheran Legacy, 2009.

³⁶ Interview with Sam Fett, member, Carlisle School Board, April 20, 2022

³⁷ Walther, C.F.W. "Gemeindeschulen." Der Lutheraner, XXIV (15 February, 1873). Page 8 (Drevlow, 183).

³⁸ LCMS statistics for 2016: membership down, contributions up

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