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The Lutheran Educator

The WELS Education Journal

*Do not be anxious about anything
... present your requests
to God. Philippians 4:6*



The Lutheran Educator

The education journal
of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod
edited by the faculty of Martin Luther College

ARTICLES

You are a Deep Concern to Jesus 68
John R. Schultz

Science As Philosophy 70
Paul L. Willems

Rote, Writing, and Roads 73
R. W. Hefti

**The Importance of Parent-Teacher
Communication** 88
Melissa Festerling

DEPARTMENTS

**As We See It
Who we are** 67

Reviews 95

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Who we are

Perhaps you received the wise counsel: Tell a child he is a “brat” often enough, and he will eventually prove you right. Beneath this caution lies a principle that says what’s repeated becomes real, whether it is true or not.

Inside the WELS school culture, what has become our reality? One often played tape says that our schools are small, that they struggle, that they can’t reach the cutting edge. Wait, you say; that’s no perception; it’s reality. Look at the public schools and some other private schools and then look at our budgets, look at our enrollments, look at our facilities.

Look at them we do. They drive our agendas. And we must look at the numbers because they often reveal truths that we should not ignore or hide behind otherwise plausible explanations. We can’t, for example, be fiscally irresponsible and call it something else because, after all, our schools are ministries not businesses. We can’t watch enrollments decline and be unconcerned because, after all, in the end times, people will have misplaced priorities. We can’t neglect facilities and turn a blind eye because, after all, “What happens on the inside is more important than what’s on the outside.”

God give us courage to look at the numbers and learn what we can from them, even if the truth is hard.

But while statistics have some power to describe us, they should not define us. Have words like “small” and “struggling” become synonymous with “ineffective” and “hopeless”? Have we become pre-occupied with survival?

When the numbers eclipse the mission, we give them more power than they deserve.

WELS schools have plenty of reasons to think big and act confidently. Though not quantifiable, these statements reflect the truth. Few private school systems have been around longer. As a rule our students meet with success when they leave our schools. Consistently employers note in our students a strong work ethic and a moral integrity they desire. In general our graduates consider their time in a WELS school an asset more often than they see it as a liability.

All that aside, WELS schools are centered upon the timeless Word of God. Woven into the curriculum and present in every activity is the Holy Scriptures and its influence. In WELS schools sinners are confronted by God’s Law and comforted by his gospel. In God’s hands, WELS schools are tools for shaping heaven’s population.

That is who we are; let’s not apologize. Let’s remember it when the earthly limitations press as they inevitably will. And isn’t who we are the strongest reason for doing what we do even better?

PML



"The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it." 1 Thessalonians 5:24

As a Lutheran elementary or Lutheran high school principal, your primary task is to assist teachers, staff, and others associated with the school in carrying out the school's mission. Our schools have been established to assist parents and the church in following Jesus' commission: "Feed my lambs—Take care of my sheep." Our schools exist to do the Lord's work and you have been called by the Lord to serve him in this most privileged ministry.

What a responsibility! As you well know, the work is difficult because you are dealing with sin and sinful souls. It will add to your comfort and encouragement to know that the Lord who called you into a leadership role in carrying out your school's mission, will not back away from the task. The job of "feeding" and "taking care of" has not been transferred from Jesus to you and the teachers, but because of your call you become the Lord's co-worker. You are not a substitute for the Lord, but Jesus who called you works to carry out his will.

Paul had preached the gospel in

You are a Deep Concern to Jesus

John R. Schultz

Thessalonica with much difficulty because of the fierce opposition of enemies. He had to flee to Athens where he anxiously awaited news from his little mission. Soon greater dangers threatened the congregations than he had anticipated. The congregation became infested with false doctrine. Timothy was sent to Thessalonica. Paul was happy to learn that the immediate threat was lessened. Later, while writing Thessalonians to encourage them, Paul credited their growth in faith not to his work, but to God's faithfulness and deep interest in them.

Paul based his trust in the faithfulness of God because the Lord had called them. There is no farmer so deeply concerned about his crop as is the Lord. How do we know this? Paul says to the Corinthians that he "planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow." Whenever the Word of God is faithfully presented, the Lord is there to make it grow.

As a principal, there are times when you feel that your best efforts count for nothing, when you may be criticized and even ridiculed by parents and even by other church workers for the Christian principles which you conscientiously put into practice. But the Lord who called you is deeply concerned. He

stands beside you with his protecting and guiding hand. He is faithful and will bless your labors in such a way so that his will is done and the spiritual advancement of his children is accomplished.

Read some more: 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

Dear Lord, let your Word put aside my

doubts. You have called me to serve you in this place. Help me to trust your faithfulness and rely on your promises. Amen.

John R. Schultz until recently served as principal/administrator of Minnesota Valley Lutheran High School. He is currently retired and living in New Ulm, Minnesota.

Walking on the Sea

When the storm on the mountains of Galilee fell,
 And lifted its waters on high;
 And the faithless disciples were bound in the spell,
 Of mysterious alarm—their terrors to quell,
 Jesus whispered, "Fear not, it is I."

The storm could not bury that word in the wave,
 For 'twas taught through the tempest to fly;
 It shall reach his disciples in every clime,
 And his voice shall be near in each troublous time,
 Saying, "Be not afraid, it is I."

When the spirit is broken with sickness or sorrow,
 And comfort is ready to die;
 The darkness shall pass, and in gladness tomorrow,
 The wounded complete consolation shall borrow
 From his life-giving word, "It is I."

When death is at hand, and the cottage of clay
 Is left with a tremulous sigh,
 The gracious forerunner is smoothing the way
 For its tenant to pass to unchangeable day,
 Saying, "Be not afraid, it is I."

When the waters are passed, and the glories unknown
 Burst forth on the wondering eye,
 The compassionate "Lamb in the midst of the throne"
 Shall welcome, encourage, and comfort his own,
 And say, "Be not afraid, it is I."

-NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

Science As Philosophy

Paul L. Willems

“Many people think of science as a mechanical process of collecting facts and devising theories. This is not the case. Science is a creative activity that in many respects resembles other creative activities of the human mind” (Giolcolli, 1998, 2).

American culture has often used science to focus on the question, “What is it good for?” This is a very pragmatic view of science. It is not a complete view of science. Technology is the depiction that should be used to pursue, “What is it good for?” Technology is the craftsmanship of what we call science. Technology has given us automobiles, jet aircraft, virtual reality, email, and microwave ovens. However, science also supplies the intellectual concepts underlying the technology. It gives us the understanding of the oxygen theory of combustion, Bernoulli’s equation, atomic theory, the optics of total internal reflection, and resonant cavity magnetron amplification principles. Science occurs when the active human mind, blessed by God with curiosity, logic, and imagination, begins to explore his creation by making judgments about what it observes. Science is the joy of working

with others in a common attempt to gain this understanding. Science is what happens when humans start to envision the basic causes behind what they investigate. Science is the interaction of people proposing new approaches to explain the universe. Science also focuses on these questions: “How does this happen?” and “Why does this occur?” It inspects. It formulates ideas. It tests these ideas, called theories or laws, to determine if their predictions are borne out by experiment. Mathematical analogies and formulas are often used to express these creative ideas of science. These models are much like paintings or musical scores. They are manipulated until they produce a satisfying result. However, when the mathematics become difficult or when the bottom line of dollars and fame rear their ugly heads, many people are tempted to follow only the pragmatic approach of technology and to abandon the intellectual path of science.

Science can be used to explore one of the great mysteries of our world. This is the mystery of stability in the world along with diversification. What we observe every day simultaneously

exhibits these two opposing properties. As we look about us we see a seemingly endless variety in the world. Our eyes show us a rainbow of colors in the red sunset, orange autumn leaves, yellow chrysanthemum blossoms, green grass, the blue sky, and the deep purple of the failing night. We can even investigate the world of heat, electricity, x-rays, and the invisible force of the wind. In size we observe bacteria under microscopes and we search out island universes of stars, called galaxies, with telescopes. We detect variety among living things. Some organisms make their own food while others prey upon the producers. Some organisms reproduce alone while with others it takes two. In fact, we are confronted with so much variety in the world we cannot comprehend it at all unless we group things together, classify them, and study them in bunches.

In spite of this great diversity we do not find chaos in our world. There is order. There is a permanence about creation. We have confidence that tomorrow will be much like today. As we gain in experience we begin to depend on this stability. The offspring of creatures resemble their parents. Day follows night. There is an orderly progression of the seasons. We assume this permanence. We tell people, "I'll see you tomorrow." We say, "That's as solid as the Rock of Gibraltar." We do not sense any great changes in God's creation within our lifetimes. You may argue an older generation has seen horse travel become air travel, e-mail replace letter writing, and thermonuclear weapons supplant gunpowder. Yes, there is some

change, but it is also an adage among us, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." Although the details may waver, their basic intellectual structures remain constant.

Now how can creation exhibit both variety and permanence at the same time? The ancient Greeks also pondered this paradox, as have people of all ages. Democritus of Abdua (c. 400 B.C.) gave the world his concept of atoms (Greek for "uncuttable") as an explanation. According to his theory the atoms were eternal and uncaused and by their changing motions produced all the variety we see. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.) refined this theory defining the four elements of air, earth, fire, and water as being the atoms of Democritus. The states of matter, its chemical composition, and even gravity and the geocentric universe could then be explained by the development of Aristotle's ideas. His ideas held sway over human imagination until the sixteenth century. From then through the nineteenth century the concepts of force, matter, and fields conceived by Galileo (1564-1642), Isaac Newton (1642-1727), and James Clerk Maxwell (1831-1879) were used to explain the variety and permanence of the known universe. The mathematics needed to model their ideas became more complex. Calculus was invented to describe their science. Today's science accepts the dual nature of matter and light and embraces Albert Einstein's formula, $E = mc^2$. The equations of quantum mechanics developed by Julian Schwinger (1918-1994) and Richard Feynman (1918-1982), the interactions

of quarks and gluons and even black holes in space are now the models of science. The implications of these scientific models are staggering—time dilation, nuclear energy, the uncertainty principle, and proton decay.

This philosophical discussion is an example of the nature of science. Science changes. It is born in the imagination of its human designers. It develops in other minds. It may even be overthrown by still other human ideas deemed “better” or “more correct” for their time. In this respect science is a philosophy for it gives its practitioners a dynamic world-view of their universe. In fact, the early practitioners of science were called natural philosophers. As teachers we should lead our students through the changing philosophical viewpoints of science as its history unfolds within our classrooms. If we perform demonstrations or conduct laboratory sessions, let’s link them to the intellectual ideas of science and to the historical context of their discoveries. We do our students a disservice if we fail to do this. Without a world-view, what we may call science becomes only attention grabbing entertainment and theater. Rock collections, science fairs, and the study of trees have their place in the science curriculum, but don’t forget to discuss the obsessions and struggles of the people who first developed scientific concepts. Teach how the theory of plate tectonics overcame isostasy in the 1960s. Describe the revolution that occurred in Luther’s time by the replacement of the geocentric universe with the heliocentric solar system. These were great turn-

abouts in the perspective of science. These changes describe how doubt was just as important to science then as it is now. Such a study shows science as a creative human pursuit. It subscribes to the emotions of hope and despair. Science contains the elements of history and the passion of ideas as well as facts and concrete objects. As you discuss the progression of scientific ideas as creative activities among humans in their cultural backgrounds, you encourage the skills of creative thinking and spur on student interest. As you teach science, dare to allow your students to become involved with its intellectual struggles and encourage them to think and develop bold new thoughts of their own. Teach science as philosophy. ✪

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Rote, Writing, and Roads

Technology in the Light of the Scriptures and in the History of the Church

R. W. Hefti

"Computers in the future may weigh no more than 1.5 tons."

Popular Mechanics, forecasting the relentless march of science, 1949

"I think there is a world market for maybe five computers."

Thomas Watson, chairman of IBM, 1943

"I have traveled the length and breadth of this country and talked with the best people, and I can assure you that data processing is a fad that won't last out the year."

The editor in charge of business books for Prentice Hall, 1957

"But what is it good for?"

Engineer at the Advanced Computing Systems Division of IBM, 1986 commenting on the microchip

"There is no reason anyone would want a computer in their home."

Ken Olson, president, chairman, and founder of Digital Equipment Corp., 1977

"Do not say, 'Why were the old days better than these?' For it is not wise to ask such questions."

Ecclesiastes 7:10

"Some trust in chariots and some in horses, but we trust in the name of the Lord our God."

Psalms 20:7

"Our inventions are wont to be pretty toys, which distract our attention from serious things," said Henry David Thoreau. "They are but improved means to an unimproved end, an end which it was already but too easy to arrive at... We are in great haste to construct a magnetic telegraph from Maine to Texas; but Maine and Texas, it may be, have nothing important to communicate."

Thoreau himself was not as much of a simple-living hermit as many think. Yes, in the summer of 1845 he gave up his job as a pencil maker and set up house for two years at Walden Pond, outside Concord, Massachusetts, in a little cabin he had built. But he had frequent visitors. Sometimes whole gangs of people came out to join him and picnic in his front yard. And when they weren't coming to him, he strolled back into Concord to hang with them. Nor did he live only on twigs, roots, and tree-bark. Often enough he left his cabin to go to his mother's house for dinner! Reminds one of hippy types in the 60s who rioted on campuses against the establishment while their establishment parents footed the tuition bill.

I say this to temper Thoreau's criticisms on the technologies of his day. His

mother probably cooked his meals on a nice stove. Allow me to be transparent. I have concerns about this “brave new world” of technology. I will speak about some of them. But I drive about in a car, not a horse-drawn buggy. I prepared this paper with Microsoft Word. I use my Dell to write sermons and bulletins. I run the bulletins off on a copying machine at the school office. I don’t have to type the Sunday bulletin on a stencil with the texture of toilet paper and stretch it on the inky rack of one of those mimeograph machines with which I began my ministry. The computer permits us to e-mail our grown children in Mankato, Florida, and California—and to receive pictures of our grandson. I watch CNN “Breaking News” now and then, and reruns of MASH at 10:30 or 11:00 to wind down before going to bed. My family owns a VCR and a microwave. We have cell phones. For several years, the parsonage has been air-conditioned. My wife gave birth to our six offspring in hospitals, not in a one-room, little house on the prairie. So, I’m not inclined to play the hypocrite. For the most part, I like these things. They make my life in a sin-broken world a little easier.

But the child of God knows how easily science and its practical applications are deified. From medicine to the military, from communication to convenience, from education to entertainment, from transportation to architecture, technology has exploded exponentially in the last century. Nonagenarians who rode to church in horse-drawn buggies appreciate many of the changes. But

they are skeptical too.

All of this has happened so quickly. Too quickly? Those involved in the congressional debates on cloning and genetic research have said for some time that science is advancing more rapidly than our ability to assess the ethical and moral implications of what we are doing.

Maybe you feel that way about technology and its use in our churches and Christian schools. We have synodical and congregational websites. We have interactive, 3-D Bible courses on CD-ROM. PowerPoint has made its way into the sanctuary. Computers have become an integral component in the classroom and for homework. It would be a simplistic generalization to say that the younger teachers and preachers are enthused about all of this technology while the older crowd is afraid of it. Neither the excitement nor the fear is limited to one generation. We see possibilities and opportunities. We see pitfalls and apprehensions.

To address the issues we may wonder, “What would Jesus do?” But that reminds one of the kid who asks his dad for a car. The dad lays down three conditions: “Go to church every Sunday. Get your grades up. Get a haircut.” Several weeks pass. The kid returns to his dad and says: “I’ve been in church every Sunday. My grades are up. How about that car?” Dad says, “How about that haircut.” The kid says, “I’ve been thinking about that. After all, Jesus and his disciples all had long hair.” Dad replies, “That’s right, son. And they walked everywhere they went.”

What would Jesus do? Would he do a PowerPoint presentation of the Sermon on the Mount? What would St. Paul do? Would he e-mail his epistle to the church at Corinth? In looking to the Scriptures to address our enthusiasm or our angst regarding the technology of our day, we must distinguish between descriptive and prescriptive passages of Scripture. Shamgar used an ox goad to strike down 600 Philistines, and thus, says the Bible, "He too saved Israel" (Jdg 3:31). David used a sling and stone (1 Sa 17). But that doesn't mean we should have a markdown sale on ox goads or slings from NPH with a grant from Thrivent to save the kingdom. The magic is not in the method, nor the secret in the strategy, but in the *sine qua non* of faith. "All things are yours," said the great apostle (1 Co 3:21). He went on to say: "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Co 9:22). New Testament believers are given the freedom of grown sons. Islamics and Amish bind their creeds to the cultures of the past. Who of us here would say that true patriotism means wearing a powdered wig like the founding fathers? Who of us would insist that true Christians wear tunics and use handwritten scrolls instead of printed books? "All things are yours," says Paul. Of course he refers to those things which God has neither commanded nor forbidden—*adiaphora*. Any tool, any technology, any method which is employed to undercut a clear confession of our faith in any doctrine or which causes someone to stumble in their faith ceases to be an

adiaphoron. The Formula of Concord makes this axiomatic.

So it is with technology and all other arts of men on the pages of the Scripture and in the history of the church. Genesis begins with perfect people in a perfect world. There is an assignment to subdue and rule. All of this is good. But good things go bad in sinful hands. If we remember that technology is merely one application of human reason—and that human reason has been compromised by sin but is sanctified in conversion, then we will understand Luther's paradoxical view that "Reason is a big red murderess, the devil's bride, a damned whore, a blind guide, the enemy of faith, the greatest and most invisible enemy of God," and yet, "Reason is God's greatest and most important gift to man, of inestimable beauty and excellence, a glorious light, a most useful servant in theology, something divine" (Becker, 1982, 1). Reason can take on the role of master or servant. Children in your classrooms learn from Luther's explanation to the First Article that God gave them their mind and abilities. And yet the explanation to the Third Article tells them that their own thinking will not get them one step closer to their Creator.

We who live in the age of church bodies run amuck with apostasy know how reason has been used to suppress and distort the truth of God's Word. But we all know God-fearing men and women who have taken every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Once again, the difference is one of faith. To paraphrase the First and Third Articles, God

gave us our reason and technology, but neither our reason nor our technology will get us one step closer to our Creator.

Human wisdom and technology are portrayed in the humble hands of faith and in the defiant fists of unbelief in the Scriptures. The paradox begins in Genesis 4.



Amid an avalanche of evil in a world still young, there is something that puzzles us. We see Cain, encircled with visions of dread, looking over his shoulder, smitten with the anathema of God, hounded by the shrieking blood of his murdered brother, the object of endless finger-pointing by little children—“There he is—the first guy who ever killed someone!”—and yet none of this seems to cripple him. Instead, he seems driven to ceaseless activity, marching, traveling, laboring, building. He builds a city!

We are told that his descendants were

forgers of bronze and iron—all at the same time by the way—not in two separate ages called the “iron age” and the “bronze age.” And bronze is listed first! Cain’s descendants are not cave men. Tubal-Cain forges all kinds of fancy tools. Jabal goes into the portable housing business, making tents. Jubal works in the fine arts, composing music on the harp and flute.

In short, Cain and his descendants are very productive. They are not, despite their wickedness, depicted as anti-social riff-raff. They are pioneers of progress. Fruitful fields and flourishing cities spring up beneath their hands. They were the fathers of what we might call culture and civilization.

By itself, there is nothing wrong with this. But why is it that most of the great achievers, the captains of industry, the leaders in arts and entertainment, in science and technology seem to be—for the most part, I say again—why does it seem that such people more often belong to the line of Cain, to the fellowship of unbelievers? Is it because Cain is a restless wanderer—his heart too? Cain tries to sink down roots, but is forever restless. He builds a city—an illusion of permanence—and yet he is wandering. His descendants strive, achieve, excel, and build because they have nothing but this world into which they may sink their hands and hearts.

Fifteen hundred years ago, the church father Augustine wrote his classic work comparing the worldly city founded by Cain’s descendants with the City of God to which the descendants of Abel belonged. Three hundred years

ago, an English preacher named John Bunyan wrote a book called *Pilgrim's Progress* detailing the journey of a man named Christian who set out from the City of Destruction to go to the Celestial City, that is heaven.

This is the way the Bible portrays it too, reminding us that here we have no continuing city. Instead, we look for a city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. So it has ever been and so you teach the lambs in your classrooms. Cain and his family rear their earthbound monuments, while Seth and his family are off building the Church. You introduce your children to the wonders of technology all the while reminding them that they are the spiritual descendants of Seth, "those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away" (1 Co 7:31).

The years evaporated. The gathering storm of God's judgment rolled in over a world where God was no longer part of the equation—not in marriage, not in the raising of children, not in using God's gifts to his glory. We are told in Genesis 6 of the Nephilim. "Giants," says the King James Version. It may be fascinating to speculate on the physical size of these people in the pre-Flood era, in a world we can neither get back to nor reproduce in a laboratory. The Hebrew word can be understood to mean "tyrants, dictators, worldly strongmen." They are further described as "the heroes of old, men of renown." Their lust for outward beauty was matched only by their craving for power over

other people. When the sons of God intermarried with the daughters of men, their children did not become humble believers like Enoch who walked with God. They became just what their ambitious, earth-bound parents wanted them to become—powerful, proud, wealthy, greedy, infatuated with this life and utterly forgetful of the life to come. And the world worshiped them as heroes! They were viewed as the good guys—while the believers were viewed as the bad guys. What has changed?

So in the days of Noah, God determines to scrub the world clean with a Flood that covers the earth. God does not forget his little remnant of believers who still look for a coming Savior. Noah, his wife, their three sons and their wives—eight people in all—are given a technological task that takes the breath away. It was technology in the humble hands of faith. So says Hebrews 11: "By faith, Noah, when warned about things not yet seen, in holy fear built an ark to save his family." Noah listened and Noah obeyed. He built an ark, a ship, a box that was meant more to float than to navigate. If we accept the traditional assessment of a cubit, the ark was 450 feet long—about one and a half times the length of a football field. It had three stories, each floor having a 15 foot ceiling. The total floor space on the ark would have been slightly more than 20 college basketball courts. People who study this sort of thing say that the total volume of the ark was equal to 522 railroad box cars, more than adequate for 8 people and 2,000 animals.

This is some pretty impressive technology in the service of God. What Noah did, he did by faith. Anyone can pound nails. But faith made this an act of worship.

But Genesis 11 depicts technology as an expression of arrogant defiance. Moved, seconded, passed—“Let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves.” The key word is “ourselves.” It’s all about them. One can hear these architects of a brave new world patting each other on the back: “Well, we’re supposed to subdue the earth, aren’t we? Didn’t God himself summon us to dominion over all things? Well then, let us be the masters.”

Of course, when God said to man, “Subdue the earth,” he had altogether different plans for you and me, for us and for our children: “Yes, go ahead and cultivate this created world in my name and as my representative. Cultivate reading and writing, pursue the arts, science, music, and technology in service to your Maker. As you do these things, remain close to me, the Source of all things.”

But the tower of Babel is something different altogether. These folks set out to build a city and a tower whose top shall extend into the clouds. By itself, we might say, “What’s the problem? Man is using the gifts God has given him. Is God against buildings, technology, and human advancement? Does he want us to sell our washing machines and beat our clothes on a rock down at the river?” Of course not. But motives are everything. Why are these people

building this city and tower? They got together in their conference room and spelled out two reasons: “That we may make a name for ourselves...and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

Both of these reasons fly in the face of God’s expressed will. This building project is not for the glory of God nor the Church of God. It’s all about them! And once they have promoted themselves to godhood, they need a rallying point, for they have forsaken their center. They no longer look to God, listen to God, care about what God says, nor do they see God as the reason for what they are and do every day. It’s all about them!

God wanted man to spread out on the surface of the earth and to subdue it to God’s glory. Man replied: “No, I am my own master. My mind is made up. Don’t bother telling me otherwise. I know what I want and I am going to do it. And it’s all to the benefit of mankind, isn’t it?” And so they gather to join hands around their marvelous monument on the plains of Shinar, and perhaps they sing something like: “We are the world...we are the children...and we’re saving our own lives.”

Today this goes by the name of secular humanism, the philosophy that has infected every area of life in our world—education, politics, economics, ethics, and morals—the idea that “man is the measure of everything.”

The people in the book of Judges were secular humanists. The Bible says, “In those days, every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” So the Soviet cosmonaut gets shot up a few miles into

space years ago and sarcastically radios back from his puny bucket of bolts that he sees no God up there. Museums and amusement parks proclaim man's advancement up the evolutionary ladder. Children in textbooks read about man's achievements with no one ever telling them that the great cathedrals of Europe whose spires pointed man to God were built for entirely different reasons than our modern skyscrapers.

And just when the tower is rising and the whole team on the plain of Shinar is chanting: "We're number one!" and "We are the champions," God descends in judgment. "He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh," sang the psalmist, "the Lord shall have them in derision." "The Lord came down to see the city and the tower that the men were building." Moses portrays this as a "mouse that roared" sort of attack on God's throne. It is as though God has not been listening to the network news coverage of this grand project. The whole thing is so puny that he must "go down" just to see this cute little thing put up by the Lilliputians. It's all so microscopically small that the Almighty must don his spectacles, so to speak, to see this bunch of Legos that the children of men are building. We brag and boast about our buildings and space shuttles and God says, "Hand me my eyeglasses." Remember how they talk? "Come, let us make bricks ... Come, let us build ourselves a city." The Triune God mocks them: "Come, let us go down." And when the judgment strikes, it strikes not with flood, fire, or lightning bolts—but with a simple change in vocabulary:

"Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other." Babel. Wherever and whenever we forget God, whenever life is all about us, we are lost, scattered, confused, and without purpose.

So the children in your classroom make use of the same technology as other schools. They learn to access information in ways never before thought of. They learn what great gifts God has given to people. But you, dear teachers, can teach them what becomes of all this if they lose their center, if they forget God. Confused hearts. Confused minds. Confused lives. You, dear teacher, have a cure to offer for this confusion—that for men who wanted to be god, God became man—that this God came down to see us—not in judgment, but in mercy—to gather together the scattered children of God by dying in our stead. Jesus said so: "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me." This cross alone is the cure for my confusion, for if the Christ who loved me even unto death is at the center of my life, then this answers all of my questions—about the use of my wealth, about my commitment to my spouse and children, about my morals, my tastes in entertainment, my use of technology and the arts to his glory, about how to spend my time on this earth, about why I am here and where I am going.

Genesis tells us how God prepared a special people to be the incubator of the promise. We trace the family tree of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Judah. We digress from the line of the Savior him-

self to learn of young Joseph, sold into bondage by his brothers, elevated from the prison to the palace in a single day. After the family reunion in Egypt, the children of Israel, enslaved by an unfriendly dynasty of Pharaohs, multiplies into a mighty nation. The book of Exodus begins with the birth of Moses.

It is here we might think the age of “rote” or “oral tradition” comes to a close and the age of “writing” begins as a new technology of communication. The negative critics years back questioned whether Moses himself could have had highly advanced writing skills. They attributed the first five books of the Bible to multiple editors and redactors. Graf-Wellhausen touted the sources as JEDP—Jahwistic-Elohistic-Deuteronomic-Priestly. As with the proposed New Testament source document Ur-Markus, no such documents have ever been found. They do not exist except in the mind of speculative scholars who prefer to build a case on what they don’t know instead of what we do know.

Then came the discovery of the vast library at Ebla as well as other finds which made it clear that writing was around in abundance well before Abraham. You would think any Egyptologist could have guessed that. As a matter of fact, could an illiterate Noah build an ark, or illiterate rebels at Babel build a tower? I leave to others the fascinating and entertaining speculations about just how advanced the pre-Flood and post-Flood civilizations were. I have said little about the age of “rote” simply because I do not believe there was much

of such an age. In his Genesis commentary, Luther has no problem with the notion that Moses may have used pre-existing documents, perhaps a little history set down in writing by Abraham.

Still, we may refer to the era of the pre-Flood patriarchs—Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah—as the age of rote in this sense, that there were very few links between Adam and Noah. The promise of a Savior was passed on in a very personal way. If we run the numbers in Genesis 5, it appears that all of these pre-Flood patriarchs, with the exception of Noah, would have known Adam. Noah’s father, Lamech, could have heard the account of creation, the fall, and the promise directly from Adam himself.

But the lifespan of man decreased steadily after the Flood. It was natural that written records became more common. And since Moses is the inspired writer of the first five books of the Bible, it is natural to emphasize “writing” as the art or technology by which God preserved and spread the hope of a coming Savior.

Except for the account of his infancy and early childhood, Exodus passes over the first 40 years of Moses’ life. Two other portions of Scripture throw light on these first 40 years. One is Hebrews 11. The other is part of the sermon Stephen delivered to the Sanhedrin in Acts 7 before they took him out and stoned him to death. Other sources, such as the Jewish historian, Josephus, who lived around the time of Christ, try to fill in the gaps. Josephus tells how Moses, as a mighty general in Egypt,

conquered the Ethiopians. Maybe.

It is from Stephen in Acts 7 that we hear that “Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.” Later, at the burning bush, Moses claims to be slow of speech and clumsy of tongue. This is no contradiction. A trained speaker, mighty in word, may not necessarily be a ready tongue in thinking on his feet. It should also be borne in mind that at the burning bush Moses was offering excuses to avoid God’s call to lead his people

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*The magic is not in
the method, nor the
secret in the strategy,
but in the sine qua
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out of Egypt.

In any case, the fact that “Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” is no small thing. In no nation of that age was education so highly valued as in Egypt, this cradle of civilization wherein the pyramids sprung up so soon after the Flood, monuments which stagger the imagination even today. For those who were to occupy positions of leadership, Egyptian education embraced mathematics,

astronomy, chemistry, medicine, religion, philosophy, and law. As a prince of Egypt, brought up in Pharaoh’s palace, Moses would have received massive doses of such education. Far from being some scraggly, illiterate fanatic, he was the equivalent of a modern university man with doctorates in several areas. These gifts were employed by the Holy Spirit who inspired Moses to write the first five books of the Bible. These gifts were useful as Moses taught the people of Israel. Then there was the political and military science Moses learned. One does not grow up as a prince of Egypt without learning something about how to govern, legislate, organize, and lead. God used these gifts, yes, this technology, also. God was preparing Moses to lead the armies and civilians of Israel. There were some 600,000 infantry. None of this counts the women, the children, the elderly, and the great mixed multitude that went up with them from Egypt when Moses led them forth from bondage. We are dealing with a nation in the millions. Imagine the system of communication that was needed to pass information throughout the ranks and tribes. The book of Numbers describes the organization of the camps according to tribes—three to the North, three to the South, three to the East, three to the West. There were instructions about food gathering and even about toileting procedures. In any such multitude of refugees in the Near East today, you just know there would be rampant disease due to poor sanitation and poor and meager food distribution. Through the

miraculous gifts of manna and water from rock—and through the natural gifts of the organizational technology of the day—God preserved his ancient people for 40 years in the wilderness of Sinai.

Technology came into play in the wilderness for both good and evil. On Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the blueprints for the tabernacle. The people would use the gold and other materials they had plundered from the Egyptians to carry out the project. The Holy Spirit sanctified the abilities of Bezalel and Oholiab (Exodus 35) to do the work. But before a tent peg was driven for the tabernacle, the people used their Egyptian-learned technology to build a golden calf. Thus the technology of smelting and refining became a prostitution of God's good gifts to his people. In countless areas, the Church is reminded these days of its liberty to "plunder the Egyptians." There may be some value in the analogy. But it is just that—an analogy. It is descriptive of what Israel once did. It is not prescriptive. And what may be plundered to build a tabernacle may also be plundered to rebuild the idols from which the gold was first taken. Some things are harder to sanitize and baptize into the service of God than others. Faith knows this and arms the heart against trusting in chariots and horses instead of in the Lord.

Perhaps this explains why Joshua in his day—and David in his day—hamstrung the horses and burned the chariots of their defeated enemies. Moses had warned the future kings of Israel

not to multiply horses and chariots like other nations—lest they trust in the technology of their times instead of in the Lord God. (Dt 17:16; Jos 11:6; 11:9; 2 Sam 8:4; 1 Ch 18:4).

The age of Solomon is in a class all by itself. In the days of Moses, God took off the wraps and showed his power. In the days of Solomon, God pulled out all the stops in showering worldly prosperity on his people. In a positive use of technology, Solomon built the temple of the Lord at Jerusalem. He purchased materials from Hiram, king of Tyre. It took him seven years to build the temple. But it took him thirteen years to build his own palace. One can see a shift in the emphasis. Slogans such as "all to the glory of God" can easily morph into shameless self-promotion when we fail to stand guard over the castle of our hearts. Ecclesiastes seems to be Solomon's "too soon old, too late smart" lament of a man who had it all, saw it all, did it all—and concluded that life is meaningless when God no longer holds center stage. Surely if God came down and showed himself, if people got everything they ever wanted, if the Church fell on good times—then God's people would follow him like a puppy dog, right? David in the cold caves of Engedi's wilderness was miles ahead of Solomon in his palace. One teacher with a piece of chalk and a rich devotional life is miles ahead of a teacher with all the latest gadgets with no faith. No one during Solomon's reign would have guessed how thunderously the kingdom would collapse into civil war.

Following the sad tale of the divided

kingdom comes the captivity. The Assyrians carry off the northern tribes in 722 B.C. The Babylonians carry out a series of deportations on the southern kingdom of Judah—586 B.C. is close enough. Nebuchadnezzar does a brain-drain on the land of Judah, plundering the best and the brightest for service in his cabinet. We see men of faith in less than ideal surroundings—Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—and yes, Daniel—serving God and the foreign authorities over them with all the learning at their disposal, yet ready to face a furnace of fire and a den of lions before selling out on the faith itself.

In hindsight we can see in the intertestamental period the hand of God in history. We need not equate every event with “the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4). The “fullness of time” is whenever God in his eternal counsels determined that his Son should set foot on this planet. But humanly speaking, the time was right for the coming of Christ and for the spread of the gospel. To the methods of “rote” and “writing” we can add a network of “roads.” Caesar Augustus had ushered in the Pax Romana, the “Roman Peace,” throughout the civilized world. It was a peace held in check by the iron legions of Rome and regulated by Roman law. Durable Roman roads, built for the rapid deployment of troops and convenient commerce, also made it easier to take the message of Jesus from place to place. The pathways of the sea were made safe even prior to Augustus. Julius Caesar got rid of the pirates. He showed no mercy to terrorists. He hunted them

down and crucified them. Christian missionaries didn’t have to learn a new language every time they crossed a border. Lawyers spoke Latin, but the common Greek language of Alexander the Great was spoken in every marketplace throughout the empire. The New Testament itself would be written by inspiration in the common or koine Greek of the day. The apostles made use of these advances in civilization. Paul used these roads. He spoke this language. He sent his inspired letters to congregations by sea and land.

Yet he sounded notes of caution when writing to the Greek minds of his day. He warned against the dangers of human wisdom and human eloquence as substitutes for what he called “the foolishness of God” and “the foolishness of preaching” (1 Co 1). He thundered against false prophets who not only “peddle(d) the word of God for profit [Greek: *kapeleuontes*—“to dilute or water down for the sake of selling more of something”] (2 Co 2), but who also used secret and shameful ways, who used deception [Greek: *panourgia*—literally “anything that works”], and who distorted the word of God (2 Co 4). He said he himself was not a trained speaker, but that he had the knowledge that counts (2 Co 11:6). He never hedged on where the real power of his ministry lay: “The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to

make it obedient to Christ” (2 Co 10:4-5).

Once outside the New Testament itself, we can point to the stained-glass windows of medieval cathedrals as a visual teaching tool, and to the efforts of the universities and traveling missionaries. But there is little doubt that the most significant technology to affect the Church and Christian education was the invention of the printing press. In his televised *Biography of the Millennium*, anchor Harry Smith gleans the names of the 100 most influential people of the past 1,000 years. Number 1—Johann Gutenberg, inventor of the printing press. Number 2—Isaac Newton. Number 3—Martin Luther. The printing press was revolutionary technology. It changed the world. Books and tracts became available to the common man on the street. The 95 Theses were spread all over Europe in a matter of weeks. The world became a smaller place.

And then men went down to the sea in ships. They traveled to a new world across the ocean. The industrial revolution, and eventually, “planes, trains and automobiles”—and radio and TV—even on the moon. Yes, the world became a smaller place. All of these technological tools were used for good and for evil. They took the gospel to places where Christ had not been named before. They took the evil excesses of sinful society to places, which would have been better off without them.

And then came the personal computer. Who would have guessed? Once again, the world became even smaller.

Information multiplied. Speed increased. Strangely, “rote, writing, and roads” are all part of this new technology—the auditory word, the printed word—all speeding down the information superhighway called the internet.

Putting it all together, new roads have opened up for the proclamation of the gospel. Mission boards, to say nothing of the family and friends of our missionaries, now have immediate and round-the-clock communication with preachers and teachers in dangerous places halfway around the world. We can know what is happening to them in Albania, Indonesia, Africa, South America.

Folks outside the range of missionaries or pastors can be served by live or taped video. It is not ideal. But while Paul longed to see many of his far-flung sheep in person, he and they often had to settle for letters. We can do better than that today—faster and farther. Congregations without an organist can now use Hymnsoft. Not ideal, but better than what we’ve had before. Missionaries need no longer be “out of the loop” in the ongoing practical and doctrinal discussions going on among their brethren in the synod.

Ultimately, the faith is not a solo act, but there are folks who would never visit a church to start with. They might log on to the WELS website. They will read the question and answer section. Their curiosity might move them to click on *What About Jesus* to get their questions answered, or even to look at *God’s Promise—An Interactive Journey Through The Bible*.

In the Christian classroom, students

can learn both the perils and possibilities of the internet alongside the basics of word processing, skills they will be expected to know in almost any line of work. They can collaborate with other schools or even with experts on given subjects or questions. They can learn how to search for answers quickly and they can and should learn about the addictive dangers posed by internet

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*Faith understands
that any earthly
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pornography and predators. Like it or not, they will live out their lives in a world of computers. Teaching-games can reinforce subjects taught in the classroom. Teachers have the opportunity to guide their students to enjoyable and profitable uses of the educational programs out there.

Other technology, too, is useful. A constant showing of movies and instructional videos can become a lazy teacher's poor substitute for teaching. But if I were teaching a course on the Civil War, I can't imagine not showing at least some of Ken Burn's Civil War series. It creates a thirst for more.

In the Church itself, visual aids have been used from the beginning. The

tabernacle and temple of the Old Testament, the word pictures of Jesus in parables, the statues and windows of cathedrals, maps, chalkboards, overhead projectors, now PowerPoint. "All things are yours," said Paul.

But as Lincoln once remarked, the wolf and the sheep are not agreed on the meaning of the term "liberty." Faith is an ever-vigilant thing.

Faith understands that any earthly thing can become an idol. We deify science if we expect these recent advances in technology to be a magic bullet. God has chosen to work through no other means than the gospel in Word and Sacraments. To confuse God's means with men's changing methods of delivery is deadly.

Take, for instance, the multimedia centers gaining in popularity in church sanctuaries. Pastor Robert Koester writes:

Multimedia intends to be engaging. A pastor whose sermon is alive with love for the text of the day, who offers helpful illustrations and who wants the people to grow in faith, engages his people's minds and hearts. Computers are not a magic bullet to draw people into Bible study. There is good multimedia and boring multimedia. A Bible study or sermon may be so interesting that the speaker's use of multimedia technology would only prove to be a distraction. And many computer programs have been written that fall far short of engaging interactivity. (2002, 22)

Especially to the point on the use of

large screen videos and power point in the church service is this warning from the WELS website Question & Answer section.

The writer says:

In a media culture where people are bombarded constantly with extremely high quality and professional visuals, can the parish pastor compete in the video arena with a visible Gospel message that does not look amateurish in comparison? In order to produce something as excellently as possible, how much time will be demanded? Will a pastor spend four hours on carefully crafting a power point presentation, but be satisfied with a cursory 45 minute exegetical stroll when preparing the assigned text? I fear that such a priority can mesmerize our people with technological glitz, but leave souls starved for sermons that lead ever deeper into the mysteries of God's grace in Christ.

(Zarling, 2002, 305)

The sinful flesh of pastors may move them to take flight into busyness, even into more elaborate liturgies, even into technology to avoid the hard, but blessed work of pondering the text and preparing a sermon. Where is this flight taking us? Into seven-minute, anecdotal sermons and PowerPoint? What may enhance or clarify dare never replace nor supplant the assignment Christ gave pastors: "Preach the Word!"

The sinful flesh of teachers can go the same way in their classrooms. Real teaching, interacting with students, knowing your material—which in itself

provokes a great deal of interest—all of this is hard work. In regard to the use of technology in our schools, Gail Potratz from Emmanuel, New London, sounds a similar caveat:

The use of technology to enhance instruction, not technology itself, is the goal. Some institutions have misused technology. Instead of using it to supplement the basic curricular goals, the use of technology has become the goal. We need to be aware of this mistake in order to avoid it. For example, some students have spent time learning to produce multimedia but have not been given ongoing and continuing instruction in the writing process...Educational goals should never be sacrificed for the glamour of technology. (2002, 24)

Technology has its limits. We have learned this in our war on terrorism. We have satellites, so people reason: "You can see a license plate from 200 miles away." But then as Retired USAF General Robert E. Hawley reminds us, "This is very helpful if you've been attacked by a license plate. Unfortunately, we were attacked by humans. Finding humans is not possible with satellites. You have to use other humans." We are still looking for Osama.

Technology in church and school has limits. No computer can replace a teacher. You had better hope not, or you're out of a job. And like the commercial says, "What do you want on your Tombstone?" "Here lies a facilitator?"

Permit a few more observations.

Whatever gets in the way of the bare words of Scripture, whatever overshadows them, creating multi-layered filters instead of throwing open windows to the text, whatever highlights our cleverness instead of God's truth must go.

Not all methods are neutral. Professor Becker made this point in regard to the inherent presuppositions of the historical-critical method that brought trouble to the LC-MS and others. There is baggage that attaches itself to certain media. So we must not be afraid to ask questions, to interrogate ourselves. How advisable is it to clothe Jesus and the apostles in the same cartoon genre as Scooby Doo? As we try to make Jesus more "fun," do we also make Jesus more unreal, more mythological? Can the vehicles and gimmicks—detective motifs, for example, become so much of a filter that this is the concept the kids take home instead of the actual Bible account itself? Are we promoting too many filters, layers of paper and programs to dig through before a kid can get down to an actual Bible in his hand—the very thing we fought a Reformation in order to do? Are you old enough to remember what a special thing it was when you graduated from the Bible history book to actually owning and reading your own Bible in class! I remember—and I still have the first Bible I ever owned—\$2.50—and we studied the lesson right out of the Bible. We had arrived! Are we retreating from this goal? Is not the height of genius simplicity in Christ, to teach with authority and not as the scribes, not with an endless complexity of acronyms,

nor a labyrinth of committees and organizational pyramids which promise us a path out of our quandaries. Does the *Small Catechism* need to get thicker and thicker? Can an emphasis on the tools instead of the text lead to a sanctification-based or even a law-based paradigm for Christian education—as though our friendship with God were based on ten academic points on the screen?

Let us receive the gifts of God with thanksgiving. But let us never confuse the gifts with the Giver. Let technology be a tool, but never merely an "improved means to an unimproved end." Let us not fear to let the word of God have speedy course by "rote, writing, or roads," but let us slow down long enough to "read, mark, learn and inwardly digest" it. ✝

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The Importance of Parent-Teacher Communication

Melissa Festerling

In the last decade of the previous century and in these beginning years of our new millennium, educators and researchers have flooded and continue to flood our society with a virtual stream of information concerning the importance of parent-teacher communication. Various sources state ideas such as, “[With communication] we [teachers] gain increased understanding of the children we teach, and contribute to a lasting legacy of family support for each child” (Fischer, 1998, 141), and “it is important to stress that these [parent-teacher] relationships don’t just happen. Instead, they are built” (Borrue, 2002, 54). One can pick up almost any current early childhood periodical or journal and find a statement such as these proposing that increased attention and emphasis be given to building strong parent-teacher partnerships. This increased emphasis might cause one to wonder, why, of all times, we are stressing parent-teacher communication now, when parents and families fly from activity to social engagement and back again at a greater pace and with higher intensity than ever before. However, upon dissecting current trends in our society today and in viewing more intently the broad benefits, both secular and spiritual, of such a partnership, the reason for focusing on such a topic, especially in

relation to our Christian schools and early childhood centers becomes clear, and the justification for its increased support is quickly understood. Because parent-teacher partnerships produce innumerable benefits for children, parents, and teachers, administrators and staff of our Christian early childhood centers need to work toward creating and fostering these partnerships even at this earliest stage of a child’s education, and they need to strive for improved implementation of these partnerships by becoming familiar with a variety of tools, practices, and ideas to ensure that these relationships are consistently maintained.

Though our high-speed society would suggest that parents and families today are much too busy to concern themselves with partnering up with teachers to further children’s education, in reality, it is precisely because of our high-speed society that it becomes even more essential to include parents in their children’s educational process in every way possible. In the past, children often spent the first few years of their young lives under their mother’s watchful eye, interacting primarily with siblings and neighbors and gaining life experiences as they participated in the routine processes of making a livelihood through farming (Berger, 2000, 78). When chil-

dren started school, their mothers waited intently at home for their return to hear what the child had learned that day. Parent-teacher communication was less difficult, because in the smaller, rural communities of the past, interactions between parent and teacher happened easily and often. Toward the middle of the previous century, communities grew, but many mothers still stayed at home and were thus able to participate in school functions and to serve as parent volunteers or the highly esteemed "room-mother." However, in today's society, things have changed. Though parents still undoubtedly care greatly about their children's education, in many families both parents work, leaving children in others' care from an early age. In addition, societies have grown so that it is no longer commonplace for a teacher to see her students and their parents on a regular basis. For all these reasons, it has become more important now than ever before that parents and teachers work together to form a collaborative educational unit for their children and students (Berger, 2002, 89).

Educators and researchers alike have shown the great benefits of building such a collaborative unit. The first and most important benefits gained through the development of a supportive parent-teacher partnership are those reaped by the children or students. When parents, who know their individual child's background, interests, and needs, team together with teachers, who are often more experienced and knowledgeable in areas of child development and gen-

eral knowledge about young children, the child reaps the benefits because parents and teacher share one common goal and then work together to best ensure that the individual needs of the child are met in a developmentally appropriate manner (Bundy, 1991, 12). In her article, "Preventing and Resolving Parent-Teacher Differences," Lillian Katz states that it is important to remember that "parent and teacher know the child in different contexts" (Katz, 1996, np). Aware of this fact, a teacher can make use of parents' expertise about their child and the way he acts at home and then connect it or contrast it with events that happen at school, thus better allowing her to identify the child's needs. For instance, if a teacher finds that the child has behavioral problems at home similar to the ones he experiences at school, she and the parents can work together to discover the root of the problem and then resolve it. If, on the other hand, a child displays contrasting behaviors at school and at home, teacher and parents can work together to analyze the different circumstances surrounding the child in each location in order to make sense of the framework surrounding the child's behavior. In each of these examples, the child benefits as parents and teachers collaborate in order to understand better the child and meet his needs. Parents and teachers can also collaborate in order to maintain consistent goals for the child concerning routine parts of the day such as eating, sleeping, and toileting. In this way, the child has continuity from home to school, will

know his routine and feel comfortable in either locale, and will therefore be free to expend his energy in more purposeful ways than simply fighting his caregivers (Allen, 2002). Collaborating at this early stage of children's education will help to foster better communication further down the educational road as well, where studies show the benefits older children receive due to strong parent-teacher partnerships such as more positive attitudes and behavior, better attendance records, and higher grades and test scores. All of these benefits clearly portray the importance of parent-teacher communication for the children involved (Internet 2, 2002).

Though children undoubtedly benefit most from parent-teacher partnerships, studies have shown that parents benefit from these partnerships as well. Most obviously, parents benefit because their children are happier and more successful in school, but parents also benefit in other ways. When parents regularly communicate with their child's teacher, they have a better understanding of the school system and a teacher's curriculum, they gain more confidence in their ability to parent because they know what is happening at school, and they enhance teachers' overall views of parents, helping teachers to see them as willing partners, thereby making parent-teacher communication even easier the next time it occurs (Internet 2, 2002). Parents also benefit because "good child care provides parents with an extended family to help share in the challenges and joys of raising children" (Allen, 2002, np). Many parents, especially

those of young children, express concern that their children will like caregivers better than their parents. Parents may, therefore, erect a type of barrier between themselves and the caregiver, in hopes that their child will put them first. However, when parents and caregivers tear down such a barrier, the parent who chooses to work outside the home receives a valuable ally in the child-rearing process, someone with whom she can relate the child's (and her own) trials and triumphs. Parents can further strengthen this relationship as they talk about caregivers with their child, recognizing them as playing an integral part in the child's wellbeing and life (Internet 1, 2002).

In addition to parents and children reaping the benefits of a parent-teacher partnership, teachers also benefit, despite the fact that in the past, teachers have been trained (albeit subconsciously) for survival by "keeping parents at arm's length" (Fischer, 1998, 143). When teachers foster and perhaps even initiate parent-teacher partnerships, they strengthen relationships with the families they serve, and thereby strengthen their ties to the general community they serve as well (Internet 2, 2002). Teachers also benefit in that they no longer have to attempt to puzzle out the reasons behind a certain child's behavior on their own and with difficulty because more heads are coming together to work on the single problem and the teacher has more background knowledge to assist the child (Internet 1, 2002). With this constant interaction, both formal and informal, a teacher

becomes more aware of each of her family's situations and needs and therefore also gains more confidence in speaking before larger groups of parents (Eisenberg, 2002). Finally, an early childhood teacher or caregiver's most important job is to nurture young children, and with good parent-teacher communication, the teacher can become more effective in helping the child to grow and learn, thereby bringing more joy to her work as she sees the positive effects of her efforts.

To this point, much has been explained concerning the importance of strengthening parent-teacher partnerships in a secular light. As a part of the early childhood ministry of the church, we, as Lutheran educators, have even more at stake concerning the importance of fostering and maintaining sound parent-teacher relationships. As a church body, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod is beginning to see the benefits of using early childhood ministries as a possible outreach arm for congregations. While recognizing that "God specifically gives parents the primary responsibility for nurturing their children," we also recognize that "the care and education of young children outside the home has become almost indispensable in our society" today (Commission on Parish Schools, 2001, 1). As such, early childhood centers will continue to have an increasing draw in our societies and communities as parents search for excellent child care or preschool for their young children. As more and more children from unchurched families enroll in our

church-supported early childhood centers, God gives us countless opportunities to reach out to these children and their parents with the message of his Word. This gospel outreach occurs first, and most naturally, when children learn about their Savior at school and then share that message at home by retelling Bible stories, reciting passages and singing songs about their Savior. However, as unchurched parents enroll their children in our programs, we also have an open opportunity to strengthen parent-teacher relationships and thereby create new avenues for sharing the gospel message with parents directly. Our role, as early childhood public ministers, is to act as an arm of the church in "encourag[ing] and support[ing] parents in their God-given obligations and help[ing] children grow as disciples of Jesus Christ" (Commission, 2001, 3) and to "nurture the home-church partnership by being a means to strengthen the relationship of the family with the Savior" (Commission, 2001, 4). The benefits of strengthening a parent-teacher partnership in our early childhood centers are easily identifiable. First, parents will receive all the earthly benefits of strong partnerships as were mentioned above, but in addition, parents will receive countless spiritual blessings. Parents of children who do belong to our church will be nurtured in continuing to "bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord" (Eph 6:4), and unchurched parents and children will have the benefit of forming bonds with teachers and other parents who care about their spiritual well-being

and who are willing to share “the words of eternal life” (Jn 6:68) with them.

Though the gospel message may more often than not be seen as only a small, less vital part of the children’s day, the Holy Spirit can and will use our early childhood centers to bring the gospel to those who have not yet heard it.

Upon examining all the statements mentioned above, the benefits, both secular and spiritual, of working to improve parent-teacher partnerships become clear. However, though many early childhood administrators and teachers may acknowledge the myriad benefits of strong parent-teacher partnerships, they may fail to see the abounding opportunities that surround them to make such an idealistic partnership a reality, and though parents may also play a part in maintaining these relationships, teachers are responsible to initiate and take the lead in showing parents how these partnerships can serve them and their child’s needs.

First, teachers can change parts of their environment to support and encourage parent-teacher communication by adding adult-sized furniture to areas where parents and teachers may wish to speak at length about a child’s development or needs (Carter, 1999), by placing eye-catching bulletin boards containing vital information about the center’s calendar of events and upcoming opportunities in a quickly-noticed location, and by maintaining a current, parent-friendly resource collection concerning aspects of child development, health needs, and information about your center’s philosophy and church’s

beliefs in an easily accessible shelf or tract in the room.

When parents first come to enroll their child, teachers can inform parents of the center’s basic philosophy, mission, and curriculum, give parents a tour of the facilities, find out how parents may be most easily contacted concerning various issues at the center (Katz, 1996), and add fun, family pages to the thick package of enrollment materials that parents and child can fill out together and that can later be added to a classroom book (Carter, 1999). These beginning steps of communication are essential in getting a parent-teacher partnership off on the right foot, but the parent-teacher partnership must not end there.

As the child begins attending the center, teachers can continue to foster communication by sending home positive personal notes or anecdotes from the day at regular intervals, in addition to sending home the weekly newsletter (Bundy, 1991). When parents drop their children off and when they return to take children home again, staff, and especially administrators, can make sure to greet parents and help parents and teachers with the separation process (Eisenberg, 2002), perhaps even implementing a rule such as the 10 Foot Rule which states that any parent who comes within ten feet of staff should receive three things: 1) a warm greeting, 2) a smile and a question, and 3) a fond farewell (Borrueal, 2002, 55). In communicating with parents about a less than wonderful day with a certain child, administrators and staff can use the

Oreo cookie method of conveying information by first telling parents something positive about the day, then stating the negative, and then once again ending the conversation by stating the positive happenings of the day (Borrueal, 2002). Administrators can also send home surveys in which parents can express the different ways in which they might like to become further involved in the center (Berger, 2000).

Finally, teachers can work toward building more effective parent-teacher relationships by reaching out to parents after school hours. In accomplishing this task, teachers have a wide array of possibilities, including organizing parent meetings concerning a variety of topics, creating lending libraries in which parents and children can choose books together to take home and enjoy, sending home activity bags containing materials such as Unifix cubes which parents and children can work with together for either specified or unspecified aims, or making out activity cards giving parents ideas such as checking out a Tana Hoban book focusing on shapes in our surroundings and then working together with the child to find similar shapes in the child's surroundings (Stipek, 1994). In addition to these ideas, some parents may not truly understand the daily routine of the center or be familiar with what their child is learning at school, so sending home materials about the routine and including words to songs or rhymes that the children are learning could be helpful to parents in better communicating with their child about his day (Stipek,

1994). Administrators and teachers in our early childhood centers will also want to be consistently sending home materials concerning what the child has learned about his Savior. This mission can easily be accomplished by sending home ChristLight lessons every week, or by sending home short devotions for parents to read with their families each night. In areas in which many families remain unchurched, parents could be invited to short Bible information classes, in addition to, or as a part of, other parent meetings. Or, in areas in which many parents speak a language other than English, offering English classes could be a way by which teachers can encourage communication with parents and also eventually teach these parents of Christ's love. Clearly, administrators and teachers have countless avenues available to them in reaching out to the families they serve. They need only look carefully at the families whom they serve, ask them about their needs, and decide which method or methods of communication might work best in their given surroundings.

As families in our high-speed society today have less time for each other and sometimes crumble and fall apart, it has become even more essential today than ever before that parent-teacher partnerships be created and preserved. The benefits of such partnerships to all involved, even when only looking at benefits for this life, are endless, and when administrators and teachers take into account both these earthly benefits and the priceless spiritual blessings that abound through such partnerships in

our centers, their implementation becomes indispensable. With technology and the countless other avenues for communication that exist in our society today, sound parent-teacher partnerships are easier to accomplish than ever before. With these varied tools available to them, administrators and teachers need to take the initiative and nurture such partnerships that the families we serve may be strengthened, becoming firmly rooted in God's Word. In this way our early childhood centers can foster—by God's blessing—the learning and ultimate good of children. ✦

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REVIEWS

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The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2000. 774 pp, hc, \$45.00. ISBN 0-8006-2740-7.

The Book of Concord on CD-ROM. Robert Kolb and Timothy J. Wengert, eds. Minneapolis MN: Fortress Press, 2002. \$39.00. ISBN 0-8006-3441-1.

When called workers in our Lutheran churches are installed into positions of ministry, they pledge to uphold the teachings of the Lutheran confessions as contained in the Book of Concord. To carry out that pledge, it would be good for those who serve the church to maintain an active connection to the confessional writings of the church. A fresh translation of the confessions is now available to renew our interest and study of those documents.

The Kolb/Wengert edition of *The Book of Concord: The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church* has been adopted for use by Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and is being used for confessions classes at Martin Luther College as well. Its editors call it “an extensive revision of the Tappert edition”—the 1959 version that has been the standard volume for WELS educators for several decades. The new edition ought to serve us well for decades to come.

The seven translators who worked on this edition have done a good job to offer a clear, readable English text. Note the modification of phrasing in

this sample from the Smalcald Articles (III, 8) regarding enthusiasm (seeking religious truth apart from God’s Word): Concordia Triglotta: “Enthusiasm inheres in Adam and his children from the beginning [from the first fall] to the end of the world, [its poison] having been implanted and infused into them by the old dragon.”

Tappert: “Enthusiasm clings to Adam and his descendants from the beginning to the end of the world. It is a poison implanted and inoculated in man by the old dragon.”

Kolb/Wengert: “Enthusiasm clings to Adam and his children from the beginning to the end of the world—fed and spread among them as poison by the old dragon.”

There are exceptions, of course. Sometimes attempts to avoid gender-specific language yield clumsy results. On a rare occasion a phrase seems more aimed to impress than to communicate to the regular reader. [Speaking of Rome’s penchant for praying to saints, we’re told, “On no other topic do they speechify more prolixly” (Apology XXI).] But those minor foibles are not characteristic of the translations overall. This is a book that can be put in the hands of laypersons in our congregations and be understood well.

Making the Book of Concord more accessible to our laity is certainly a good thing. This book is recommended for church libraries and ought to be

encouraged for purchase and use at home as much as are catechisms and hymnals. There are a number of features of this new volume that recommend it to readers who may not have studied the Lutheran confessions before. An editors' introduction to each of the confessional writings gives brief background on the historical context. In addition, a wealth of helpful information has been provided in footnotes at the bottom of each page—noting nuances of translation, pointing to Bible references, explaining references to persons and terms. For instance, the text of the Augsburg Confession (which is offered in two translations, as was the case in Tappert—one from German, one from Latin) is accompanied by 227 explanatory notes. What is more, there are three separate indices in the back of

the book—a listing of Bible references, a biographical index of persons mentioned (including a brief description of each), and a very substantial subject index, encompassing the last 80 pages of the volume.

Searching and finding topical information is easier still if one uses the search engine on the CD-ROM version of the product. The Book of Concord on CD-ROM was released earlier this year, using the Libronix Digital Library System. It has capabilities for bookmarking, note taking, working with word-processors and more.

It would be wonderful if the availability of this new translation and electronic tool will spark a resurgence of reading and study of the Lutheran confessions by called workers and laity alike.

David Sellnow (MLC)