

THE ROLE OF THE PREP SCHOOL  
IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM

By

Richard W. Strobel

Presented to

the Dakota-Montana District Convention,  
Northwestern Lutheran Academy,  
Moberge, South Dakota,  
June 20-22, 1978.

WISCONSIN LUTHERAN SEMINARY  
*Library*  
6633 W. WARTBURG CIRCLE  
MEQUON, WISCONSIN 53092

This is a time when our attention as a Synod is being focused on our prep schools. This is the time when Northwestern Lutheran Academy is observing its fiftieth anniversary. Needless to say, this is a school that is dear to the hearts of all of us. Though I myself never attended this school, I learned to know it, to appreciate it, and to love it during my sixteen years of service in the Dakota-Montana District. This is also the time of a special Synod convention to be held next month to determine whether or not we shall buy the so-called Campion property at Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin, as the future home of Martin Luther Academy, now of New Ulm, Minnesota, and eventually also of Northwestern Preparatory School, now of Watertown, Wisconsin. Obviously, whatever the Synod decides will have profound, long-range effects upon its work of preaching the Gospel and, as I see it, upon the role the prep schools will play in the educational structure of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. So when President Kell invited me to be your essayist for this convention and gave me the liberty to choose any topic so long as it would be timely, I could think of none more timely than one that focused on some aspect related to our prep schools. After mulling over the matter for some time, I settled on THE ROLE OF THE PREP SCHOOL IN OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM. In addressing myself to this subject I would answer two questions: 1) What has the role of the prep school been in our circles? and 2) Do we still need the prep school program? I might add that I am confining my study to the prep school as it relates to Northwestern College and our pastor-training course, although a few observations will be included about the relation of the prep school to Dr. Martin Luther College and our teacher-training course.

## I

Before we consider the prep school and its function in our Synod, we might do well to explain what a prep or preparatory school is. Webster's New Twentieth Century Dictionary of the English Language defines preparatory as "undergoing preparation, or preliminary instruction, especially for college entrance; as a preparatory student." That pretty well explains preparatory and, by inference, preparatory or prep school. A preparatory school, then, is one that prepares the student for college or university. In the case of Northwestern Preparatory School, which is on the campus of Northwestern College at Watertown, Wisconsin, its name already indicates that its function is to prepare students for Northwestern College. Its catalog states: "The school's name, Northwestern Preparatory School, indicates that the school's purpose is to give young men and women the necessary foundation for future training as pastors and teachers in the Christian ministry." While the training of future teachers is included here, and rightly so, the emphasis is on the training of future pastors. Thus Northwestern Preparatory School exists primarily as a feeder school for Northwestern College. Consequently the curriculum of a preparatory school is somewhat different and usually more demanding than that of the public high school. It resembles somewhat the German Gymnasium.

The German Gymnasium is in many ways comparable to our American high school except that it is far more selective and therefore academic. Not all German youngsters attend the Gymnasium. While all begin school at the age of six or before, if they attend kindergarten, and spend the first four years together in the Volksschule, sometimes called Grundschule, elementary school, they come to a parting of the ways at that point. Many remain for nine years in the Volksschule after which time they enter an apprenticeship. "The apprentice system," by the way, "is highly developed in Germany. A seven-year

trade school allows the student to spend up to four days a week on the job earning while learning, and two more days in school taking academic subjects as well as theory about the job he is already performing."<sup>(1)</sup> Others, who want to become businessmen or clerks, transfer after the fourth year into either the Mittelschule or the Oberschule. The more gifted students take an entrance examination to the Gymnasium where for the next nine years they study subjects like Latin and at least one or two foreign languages. By the time a student finishes the Gymnasium he has, as a rule, learned as much as an American student after two years of college. After being graduated from the Gymnasium, the student must pass a tough final examination, called the Abitur. This examination is given over a period of several months, even a year (for each subject the student writes a five-hour exam). Having passed the Abitur, the student may enroll in a university.

The entire setup of the German educational system is rather complicated, but "it should be pointed out that virtually any pupil with talent can move up from a more technical school to a more academically oriented one. Nevertheless from the fourth year on, the individual already is delegated on the basis of a battery of tests either for academics and the professions, for routine business and clerical jobs, or for a mechanical-technical occupation."<sup>(2)</sup>

Our prep schools, I said, resemble to a degree the German Gymnasium. More exactly, they are somewhere between the Gymnasium and the American high school, being less demanding than the former and somewhat more demanding than the latter because they are more selective and academic, preparing, in our case, students for Northwestern College or Dr. Martin Luther College. Since all of our four prep schools, Northwestern Preparatory School, Martin Luther Academy, Northwestern Lutheran Academy and Michigan Lutheran Seminary, have this dual purpose, each one of them has the two-track curriculum, one track leading to Northwestern College and the other to Dr. Martin Luther College. This being the case, the two curricula that are offered are determined by what our two colleges expect of their incoming freshmen.

What, then, is the course that a ninth grade boy who wants to become a pastor embarks on when he enters Northwestern Preparatory School or any of the other synodical prep schools or academies? The 1978-1979 catalog of Northwestern Preparatory School states, page 23: "Northwestern Preparatory School offers a four-year academic course designed to provide pre-college training for students who intend to enter the preaching or teaching ministry of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. To that end the pastors' course of study includes four years of history, religion, English, and Latin; two years of German and mathematics; three years of science; plus music and typing." As Professor Kowalke stated in his essay to the 1961 Synod Convention (Proceedings, 1961, p. 156), this is basically the course that has been followed since 1869, when, under Professor Ernst's influence, the course preparing for the ministry was modeled after that of the German Gymnasium. Its roots, however, go back to the Reformation, and in particular to Luther, who expected the pastor to be acquainted with the liberal arts, with the chronicles and histories and especially with "Holy Scriptures in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, and in whatever other languages it may be available."

This, in general terms, is the pastor's course on the prep school level, a course designed to prepare young men for the work at Northwestern College. This preparatory aspect of the course becomes all the more clear when one

examines individual subjects taught in the prep school. For example, the Course Syllabi of Northwestern Preparatory School, prepared by its faculty during the academic year 1976-1977, states under "Latin Department," page 33: "The Latin department of NPS bases its objectives primarily on the objectives of NWC's Latin department. It strives, therefore,

1. to provide its students with the knowledge and understanding of the Latin language required for entrance into the Freshman Latin class (Latin 10) at NWC;
2. to give its students an understanding of language techniques in general, which will aid them in their study of other languages; and
3. to broaden the students' historical and cultural background through the study of great Latin literature."

In the same Course Syllabi we read on page 43 with regard to the German Department: "It is the purpose of the department to prepare the students who complete our two year German course for entrance into the Freshman German class (German 10) at NWC. To that end it is the aim of the department to develop in the students:

1. The ability to read simple German fluently without preparation.
2. The skill needed, with preparation, to read correctly and to understand more difficult German.
3. A thorough grasp of the basic principles of German grammar and sentence structure.
4. Authentic pronunciation skills peculiar to German, including a sense for word accent and sentence intonation.
5. The knowledge of German vocabulary necessary for independent work in simpler German, and for work with a dictionary in more difficult German."

The general objectives of the History Department, while not mentioning in so many words preparation for the Freshman History class (History 10) at NWC, certainly imply this: "General Objectives of the History Department."

- "1. To lead the student to see history as the unfolding of God's plan of salvation in Christ for mankind.
2. To lead the student to see the grace of God in the spread of the Gospel through the agency of His Church during the course of history.
3. To lead the student to see God's governance of the course of history in the interest of His Church.
4. In short, to seek to aid the student in the formation of a Christian 'Weltanschauung' with regard to the knowledge of history, which it is hoped that he will gain by means of the several courses." (Course Syllabi, page 9)

Academic preparation for NWC, then, is the main role that our prep schools have played and, by God's grace, still play for all those who want to become pastors in the WELS. A most important role. But the prep schools have played another, equally important role in our educational system, namely that of being feeder schools to NWC, the primary feeder schools. As a recent study of the prep schools by the NWC faculty puts it, "the synodical academies are the best source of supply for pre-ministerial students." This study then gives statistics about the secondary education of college freshmen entering NWC from 1971 through 1977 and goes on to say: "These statistics show that during the last seven years 57.5% of the freshmen entering Northwestern College were graduates of the four synodical academies. The area Lutheran high schools provided 24.2%, while 18.3% came from public and other schools. These figures come very close

to the 60%/25%/15% proportions recommended by the 1971 CHE report (1971 BORAM, p. 10). Our present experience parallels that of the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod during the years when that body had a healthy academy system. The old Missouri Synod academies were 'reliable sources for pastoral ministry students' (letter from Arthur M. Ahlschwede, Executive Secretary, Board for Higher Education, the Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod, to Pres. Toppe, October 11, 1977)."

The "Supplementary Report Re Synodical Academies"---Commission on Higher Education, April 1978, speaks in a similar vein, page 2: "Pragmatically, the role of the preparatory schools in supplying entrants to the colleges is still a prominent one. We expect that about 60% of the incoming freshmen at Northwestern will be supplied by the prep schools. In the past seven years they have come close to that expectation--57.5%. Furthermore, we expect 33% of the incoming freshmen at Dr. Martin Luther College will be supplied by the prep schools. In the past seven years they have provided 34.2%. We do not expect fewer numbers in the years to come. Whether the overall percentages will be reduced will be determined by the growth in the roles of the area high schools and perhaps by our willingness not only to support but also to expand the synodical preparatory school system."

Indeed, from a practical or pragmatic standpoint our prep schools or academies also have served and continue to serve the church well. They are a most important means by which the Savior answers our prayers for more pastors. However, there is yet a third side to the function our prep schools fulfill in our circles: they serve to imbue our future pastors and teachers with a godly, Christ-centered, Gospel-oriented Weltanschauung (world view or world philosophy). In a manner of speaking this is their chief role. And what is the Weltanschauung, the conception of the world, of life, that we try to inculcate in our young people in our prep schools? In a word it is God's Weltanschauung. And where do we find that? In His Word, of course, in the Bible. There we are told where this world came from and Who has preserved it to the present moment; what will finally happen to this world and its people; what purpose the world is serving as long as it stands; what our prime responsibility is as children of God; why there are wars and rumors of wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, tornadoes, floods, and a host of other afflictions; what our attitude should be toward the family and children and Christian education and false doctrine. What Scripture has to say about all of these things and others besides is God's Weltanschauung, which must be ours since we belong to Him. Certainly it must also be that of our future pastors if we as a church body want to remain a "city set on a hill." In the communication of this Weltanschauung our prep schools have played not a small role.

There can be no doubt that our prep schools have played a vital role in our pastor-training course. But is it a role that is too costly to the Synod? Might we not be able to accomplish the same thing or pretty close to the same thing with, let us say, the area Lutheran high schools? In a word, do we still need our prep school program? After all, most church bodies no longer have prep schools and the monies we expend to support them, could be used to open more missions, and so on. Well, let's see.

## II

Before answering the question whether or not we still need the prep schools, we must answer another question: Do we still need the kind of pastor-

training course, with its heavy emphasis on languages, that we have grown accustomed to? The answer to this question will determine what the answer to the former question has to be. We have already mentioned that Luther expected the pastor to be acquainted with "Holy Scriptures in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, and in whatever other languages it may be available." But we want to let Luther speak more fully to this point.

Luther told the councilmen of Germany in 1524: "But, you say again, granted that we must have schools, what is the use of teaching Latin, Greek, Hebrew, and the other liberal arts? We can still teach the Bible and God's word in German, which is sufficient for our salvation. I reply: Alas! I know well that we Germans must always remain brutes and stupid beasts, as neighboring nations call us and as we richly deserve to be called. But I wonder why we never ask: What is the use of silks, wine, spices, and strange foreign wares, when we have in Germany not only wine, grain, wool, flax, wood and stone enough for our needs, but also the very best and choicest of them for our honor and ornament...."

"In proportion, then, as we prize the Gospel, let us guard the languages. For not in vain did God have His Scriptures set down in these two languages alone--the Old Testament in Hebrew, the New in Greek. These languages, therefore, that God did not despise but chose above all others for His Word, we too ought to honor above all others...."

"And let us be sure of this: we shall not long preserve the Gospel without the languages. The languages are the sheath in which the sword of the Spirit is contained; they are the casket in which we carry this jewel; they are the vessel in which we hold this wine; they are the larder in which this food is stored.... If through our neglect we let the languages go (which may God forbid!) we shall not only lose the Gospel, but come at last to the point where we shall be unable either to speak or write a correct Latin or German. As proof and warning of this, let us take the wretched and woeful example of the universities and monasteries, in which men were not only unlearned in the Gospel, but corrupted the languages so that the miserable folk were fairly turned into beasts, unable to write a correct German or Latin and well-nigh losing their natural reason to boot...."

"But, you say, many of the fathers were saved and even became teachers without languages. That is true. But how do you account for the fact that they so frequently erred in the Scriptures?... Now when men defend the faith with such uncertain arguments and mistaken prooftexts, are not Christians put to shame and made a laughingstock in the eyes of opponents who know the language? ... Even St. Augustine is obliged to confess, as he does in his De Doctrina Christiana, that a Christian teacher who is to expound the Scriptures must know, in addition to Latin, also Greek and Hebrew; otherwise it is impossible not to stumble constantly; nay, there is room enough for labor and toil even when one is well versed in the languages.

"There is a great difference, therefore, between a simple preacher of the faith and an expositor of Scripture, or as St. Paul puts it, a prophet. A simple preacher, to be sure, is in possession of so many clear passages and texts from translation that he can know and teach Christ, lead a holy life and preach to others. But to interpret Scripture, to treat it independently, and to dispute with those who cite it incorrectly, to that he is unequal; that cannot be done without languages. Yet there must always be such prophets in the Church who are able to treat and expound the Scriptures and also to

dispute; a saintly life and correct doctrine are not enough. Hence languages are absolutely necessary in the Church, just as prophets or expositors are necessary, although not every Christian or preacher need be such a prophet as St. Paul says in I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4.

"...Hence it was also a stupid undertaking to attempt to learn the meaning of Scripture by reading the expositions of the fathers and their numerous books and glosses. Instead of this, men should have given themselves to the study of languages.... How glad would the dear fathers have been if they had had our opportunity of learning the languages and coming thus equipped to the Holy Scriptures! What toil and labor it cost them barely to gather up the crumbs, while we may have the whole loaf with but half their labor, indeed, with scarce any labor at all. Oh, how their diligence puts our indolence to shame; nay, how strictly God will judge our lack of diligence and gratitude!"

Luther loved the Scriptures and the languages in which the Holy Spirit chose to give these Scriptures to us. Perhaps his specialty, his supreme delight, was working in the Old Testament in the original Hebrew. It has been said that if Luther were teaching today at a theological seminary, he would most likely be teaching Old Testament. This would probably be the case. In checking the American Edition, the Concordia-Fortress Press Edition, of Luther's Works, one finds that of the thirty volumes that contain Luther's expositions of Scripture the first twenty contain his comments on selected books and portions of the Old Testament. At first Luther, of necessity, worked mostly with the Latin Bible, the Vulgate, because he knew little or no Hebrew. His Old Testament lectures were based on the Vulgate. But with the appearance in 1506 of Reuchlin's Hebrew grammar, De Rudimentis Hebraeicis (Of the Rudiments of Hebrew), this changed. Luther soon began studying Hebrew so that from 1509 onward he was using the Hebrew in marginal notes in his lecture books. By 1519 when he was lecturing on the Psalms again the Hebrew was the sole basis of his interpretation. It is no wonder, then, that Luther became convinced of the value and necessity of a knowledge of Hebrew for the pastor.

"I have often advised you to learn the Hebrew language and not to neglect it so. For even if this language were useless otherwise, one should still learn it out of thankfulness. It is a part of religion and divine worship to teach or learn this language through which alone we can learn anything at all of the divine. In it we hear God speak, we hear how the saints call upon God and achieve the mightiest deeds; thus study directed toward learning this language might rightly be called a kind of Mass or divine service. Therefore I earnestly admonish you not to neglect it. There is a danger that God may be offended by this ingratitude and deprive us not only of the knowledge of this sacred language but of Greek, Latin, and all religion....

"I know how useful it has been to me against my enemies. For that reason I would not be without this knowledge--however small it is--for infinite sums of gold. You, too, as future teachers of religion, should apply yourselves to the task of learning this language, unless you want to be taken for dumb cattle and uninstructed rabble who somehow teach the Sunday Gospels and the Catechism with the help of books that have appeared in German. We need theological leaders; we must have fighters who stand on the battle front against men of other nations and languages, men who are teachers, judges, and masters in this language."<sup>(3)</sup>

Luther regarded Hebrew important even for the New Testament. "The Hebrew language is wholly despised because of impiety or probably because people despair

of mastering it (desperatione artis)... Without this language there can be no understanding of Scripture; for even the New Testament, though written in Greek, is full of Hebraisms. Therefore it has been correctly said: The Hebrews drink from the springs, the Greeks from the brooks; but the Latins from the puddles..."(4)

With no less energy did Luther apply himself to the study of the New Testament in the original Greek. Before 1514 Luther knew little Greek. But his friends John Lang and Philip Melanchthon helped him to overcome this deficiency. When Erasmus' Greek New Testament appeared in 1516, he at once began to immerse himself in it. So proficient did he become in it that by 1521 he translated the New Testament into German on the basis of the Greek text.

The long and short of it so far as Luther was concerned is that the "holy languages" are necessary for preachers. "I am sure that he who is to preach and expound Scripture and has no help from the Latin, Greek, and Hebrew languages but is to do his work solely with his mother tongue will certainly make many a pretty mistake. St. Augustine felt that too and held that there ought to be men in the church--especially those who are expected to deal with the Word--who are conversant with Greek and Hebrew, since the Holy Spirit has written the Old and the New Testament in these two languages."(5)

Luther's attitude toward the study of the Biblical languages has been that of all pastors and teachers of pastors who know whereof they speak. Dr. A. Graebner wrote: "This Word of God, it is true, was not composed in a language devised expressly for the purpose of thereby uttering what was in the mind of God, as it might have been, if God had chosen thus to communicate with man, but in languages which had been in substance the spoken languages of men before they were made the vehicle of divine thought to be conveyed to human minds. These languages, Hebrew and Greek, having thus been for all times elevated to the dignity of sacred languages, the vocabularies and the grammatical forms and structure of which were adopted and adapted by the Holy Spirit to serve the purpose of a divine revelation to man, it, of course, becomes incumbent upon those who would interpret the ipsissima verba Spiritus Sancti to acquire a knowledge, and not only a superficial, but a thorough knowledge of and familiarity with these languages, just as, if God had chosen to frame a new language for this purpose, the study of that language would have become the task of those who would equip themselves for exegetical theology."(6)

Non-Lutherans have also recognized the necessity for pastors of working with the Bible in the original languages. With reference to the Greek New Testament, A. T. Robertson, the Baptist seminary professor who stood in the front ranks of Greek, especially New Testament Greek, scholarship in his day, said: "It ought to be taken for granted that the preacher has his Greek Testament. This statement will be challenged by many who excuse themselves from making any effort to know the Greek New Testament. I do not say that every preacher should become an expert in his knowledge of the New Testament Greek. That cannot be expected. I do not affirm that no preacher should be allowed to preach who does not possess some knowledge of the original New Testament. I am opposed to such a restriction. But a little is a big percent on nothing. This is pre-eminently true of the Greek New Testament.

"There is no sphere of knowledge where one is repaid more quickly for all the toil expended..."(7)

"The real New Testament is the Greek New Testament. The English is simply a translation of the New Testament. It is good that the New Testament has been



translated into so many languages. The fact that it was written in the koine, the universal language of the time, rather than in one of the earlier Greek dialects, makes it easier to render into modern tongues. But there is much that cannot be translated. It is not possible to reproduce the delicate turns of thought, the nuances of language, in translation. The freshness of the strawberry cannot be preserved in any extract. This is inevitable....(8)

Furthermore, "the trouble with all translations is that one's mind does not pause long enough over a passage to get the full benefit of the truth contained in it. The Greek compels one to pause over each word long enough for it to fertilize the mind with its rich and fructifying energy. The very words of the English become so familiar that they slip through the mind too easily. One needs to know his English Bible just that way, much of it by heart, so that it will come readily to hand for comfort and for service. But the minute study called for by the Greek opens up unexpected treasures that surprise and delight the soul....(9)

"The preacher cannot excuse himself for his neglect of Greek with the plea that the English is plain enough to teach one the way of life. That is true, and we are grateful that it is so." (10)

But Robertson maintains that the preacher is a Bible specialist and goes on to say: "We excuse other men for not having a technical knowledge of the Bible. We do not expect all men to know the details of medicine, law, banking, rail-roading. But the preacher cannot be excused from an accurate apprehension of the New Testament. This is the book that he undertakes to expound. It is his specialty, and this he must know whatever else he does or does not know. Excuses for neglecting the New Testament are only excuses after all....(11)

"The physician has to study chemistry and physiology. Other man may or may not. The lawyer has to study his Blackstone. The preacher has to know his Bible or the people suffer the consequences of his ignorance, as in the case of the physician or lawyer. The extreme in each instance is the quack who plays on the ignorance and prejudice of the public. It is true that the minister can learn a deal about his Bible from the English versions, many of which are most excellent. There is no excuse for anyone to be ignorant of his English Bible, which has laid the foundation of our modern civilization. But the preacher lays claim to a superior knowledge of the New Testament. He undertakes to expound the message of the Gospel to people who have access to the English translations, and many of these are his equal in general culture and mental ability. If he is to maintain the interest of such hearers, he must give them what they do not easily get by their own reading. It is not too much to say that, however loyal laymen are to the pulpit, they yet consider it a piece of presumption for the preacher to take up the time of the audience with ill-digested thoughts. The beaten oil is none too good for any audience. Now the preacher can never get away from the fact that the New Testament was written in the Greek language of the first century A.D. The only way for him to become an expert in this literature of which he is an exponent by profession is to know it in the original. The difficulty of the problem is not to be considered. One will not tolerate such an excuse in a lawyer or in a physician. The only alternative is to take what other scholars say without the power of forming an individual judgment. Some lawyers and physicians have to do this, but they are not the men one wishes in a crisis. The preacher lets himself off too easily and asserts that he is too busy to learn his Greek New Testament. In a word, he is too busy about other things to do the main thing, to learn his message and to tell it. Fairbairn says

'No man can be a theologian who is not a philologist. He who is no grammarian is no divine.' Melancthon held that grammar is true theology."(12)

J. Gresham Machen, outstanding Presbyterian theologian and Seminary professor during the early decades of this century said: "If, on the other hand, the minister is a specialist--if the one thing that he owes his congregation above all others is a thorough acquaintance, scientific as well as experimental, with the Bible--then the importance of Greek requires no elaborate argument. In the first place, almost all the most important books about the New Testament presuppose a knowledge of Greek: the student who is without at least a smattering of Greek is obliged to use for the most part works that are written, figuratively speaking, in words of one syllable. In the second place, such a student cannot deal with all the problems at first hand, but in a thousand important questions is at the mercy of the judgment of others. In the third place, our student without Greek cannot acquaint himself with the form as well as the content of the New Testament books. The New Testament, as well as all other literature, loses something in translation. But why argue the question? Every scientific student of the New Testament without exception knows that Greek is really necessary to his work: the real question is only as to whether our ministry should be manned by scientific students."(13)

Let it be noted here that Luther and the other men we have quoted fully understood that a knowledge of the original Biblical languages is not the only requirement of the theologian who would also be a shepherd of Christ's flock, a pastor. If he had only a linguistic knowledge of the Bible, he would be a philologist and nothing more. As A. Graebner put it: "While the knowledge of Hebrew and Greek must be looked upon as an indispensable prerequisite for the interpretation of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures, such linguistic preparation does not constitute a man a theologian qualified for exegetical work, the interpretation of Scripture. To the Gentiles in the days of St. Paul the Gospel of Christ was 'foolishness' (1 Cor. 1,23), though it was preached to them in Greek, and they are expressly termed Ἕλληνας, Greeks, by the apostle (1 Cor. 1,22.24). A philologist may be able to point out all the peculiarities of Pauline and Petrine diction, of the Pastoral epistles, of the book of Job and the prophecies of Isaiah, all the linguistic beauties of the Song of Songs and of the Gospel according to St. Mark, and yet be only a philologist and in no sense a theologian, but the very reverse, an impugner of all sound theology. As a philologist he may render very valuable service to the theologian who knows how to avail himself of such services. He may write a linguistically excellent grammar of New Testament Greek, or a grammatical commentary which may conclusively settle a multitude of grammatical questions and difficulties, thus rendering services which the theologian should gratefully accept and utilize (though also in such works of untheological biblical philologists the lack of true theology will not fail to make itself most painfully felt), and yet deserving the name of a theologian far less than many a man who had never learned the Greek alphabet and would not know if he held the Hebrew Bible upside down....

"A man may be a celebrated astronomer, familiar with the stars, computing their movements and positions for thousands of years, and yet fail to find in them a trace of their sublime testimony to the power and wisdom of their Maker. And a man be a linguist quoted as an authority in Hebrew and Greek, an ingenious writer of commentaries covering the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and failing to find Him, Who from Genesis to Revelation is the Alpha and Omega of the book of God, to Whom 'all the prophets give witness' (Acts 10,43; cf. Luke 24,27; John 5,39), fail to find that very God Who by the Scriptures would reveal Himself

and the counsel of our salvation, the mysteries of His grace. And should such a man, to whom true theology has remained a hidden wisdom and even foolishness, be termed a theologian, lucus a non lucendo?"(14)

Truly, the pastor needs more than linguistic knowledge; he needs more than a working knowledge of Hebrew and Greek. He needs the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. In a word, he needs to be a humble, believing child of God who says with Samuel, "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth" (1 Sam. 3,9). It is as Luther says, "As to the internal clearness, no man sees one Iota in Scriptures, unless he have the Spirit of God; all have darkened hearts, so that, even if they profess and know how to propound all that Scripture contains, yet they know and truly understand nothing thereof.... For the Spirit is required in order to understand all Scripture and any part thereof."(15)

Martin Chemnitz, the "alter Martinus," second in rank among the theologians of our church, speaks similarly: "The gift of interpreting (Scripture) is not without the church in the unregenerate; for it is the light of the Holy Spirit received in the hearts of godly men"(16)

What the both Martins, Luther and Chemnitz, have said is, of course, based solidly on the Scriptures. We think of 1 Cor. 12,3: "No man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost;" and 1 Cor. 2,14: "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." The "things of the Spirit," the entire Biblical revelation, finally, are foolishness and a closed book to natural man, for they must be searched and judged spiritually, that is, through the illumination of the Holy Spirit. Therefore Beck translates this verse as follows: "A natural man doesn't welcome the things of God's Spirit. He thinks they are foolish and can't understand them, because you must have the Spirit to see their real value."

The pastor, then, is first and foremost a disciple of his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, one whom the Holy Spirit has sanctified. That is the sine qua non, the absolute necessity, at least in our circles, for the pastor and for anyone who aspires to the office of a pastor. Secondly, such an individual ought to be, if at all possible, a student of Greek and Hebrew. Note that I did not say that he should be a Greek and Hebrew scholar. Northwestern College does not train Greek and Hebrew scholars but men who are able to work firsthand with the Biblical languages, who will be students of these languages their whole life long, not A or B or C students, but students. And to become such students during the years at Northwestern College, a preparatory school background is highly desirable, if not absolutely essential.

We have mentioned that the prep schools have served, and still serve, our Synod very well as schools where our future pastors are prepared academically for the intensive language study, among other things, at Northwestern College. By this we mean more than that the prep school graduate has four years of Latin behind him in preparation for the fifth year in the freshman year in college, more than that he has had two years of German to lead into the third year in his first college year. We mean rather, the kind of instruction such a student has received in the prep school in these two languages, instruction that stressed grammar with its forms and syntax and the memorization of vocables, the attainment of a basic vocabulary. With four years of that kind of Latin and two of that kind of German in the prep school, language study is quite intensive already on that level and thus makes the study of Greek and Hebrew that much easier. Greek is a structured language, so is Hebrew, although somewhat less so. Latin

and German are also structured languages, that is, inflected languages that change, for example, the forms of nouns, verbs, and adjectives according to definite patterns; languages whose nouns and pronouns have cases and different forms or endings for the different cases, whose adjectives have various endings, whose verbs have different forms for different tenses and moods, and so on. Since English is no structured language, the study of Greek is a whole new ball game for students who have had no Latin or German other than conversational German during their high school years. And it is a more difficult ball game for them. For one who has taken our prep school pastors' course, however, the task is that much more familiar and consequently easier. When the freshman Greek text says that there are three declensions in Greek instead of five in Latin, or when the Greek instructor tells the class that the Greek genitive absolute is like the Latin ablative absolute, the prep school graduate at once makes the association and comprehends that much quicker. This also saves valuable teaching time and speeds up progress.

The approach taken in the Greek and Hebrew courses at Northwestern College is the exegetical approach. This approach demands of the student that he know what the words say and why they say what they do. This obviously means being able to explain every form and construction. Only in this way can one arrive at the thoughts the writer had as he penned a given document. This is the approach used in classical Greek at Northwestern and in Biblical Greek at both Northwestern and the Seminary. And it is the proper approach. But the exegetical habit must be formed early. The prep school years are ideal for the formation of this habit, for laying the foundation of a discipline that must always be the pastor's meat and potatoes, so to speak.

The prep school forms other habits, too, which are very important in the ministry. In the formation of these habits the study of the languages, Latin and German, contributes a great deal. In his study of these languages the student also receives training in accuracy, application, memory and reasoning. As he learns the various verb forms and the many other forms of nouns, pronouns, adjectives, etc., he learns accuracy, perhaps unconsciously, but he learns it. Surely an important asset for one who wants to proclaim the whole counsel of God, neither adding to it, nor subtracting from it, nor changing it in any way. He also learns to apply himself to a task. He may find Latin difficult, but if he really applies himself, he soon learns that he, too, will succeed. Even the student who has no special difficulty with languages soon finds that he must sit down and do that Latin assignment day after day, whether he wants to or not! To do what one must when he must, though it means self-restraint, self-denial and plain hard work--that's a mighty important lesson to learn at a tender age, a lesson that will stand him in good stead when as a pastor of a large congregation he has six funerals in eight days plus a wedding or two thrown in for good measure. Language study as we have it in our prep schools also means the training of the memory. Can a future pastor ever receive enough memory training? Then there is the training to think, a most essential by-product of this kind of language study, for the pastor's life, if anybody's, is one that demands almost constant, clearheaded thinking.

What we are saying with all this is that already in the prep school the beginning is made of the development of the so-called theologicus habitus, the theological habitude or ability. This includes the ability to curb the Old Adam who would like to read into the Scriptures what he wants to see there and to draw all doctrines from Scripture by means of a thorough study of the original text. This is the exegetical approach, the beginnings of which are made in the prep school via the study of Latin especially, but also of German.

The theological habitude also includes the ability to teach the whole Word of God as it is presented in the Scriptures and to exhort and convince the gainsayers. This is what Paul says in Acts 20,27: "I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God" (NIV), and in Titus 1,9: "He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it" (NIV). To do both or either one of these again requires the exegetical approach to Scripture, which is our approach and which we introduce already in the prep school, though we may not call it that there. By the way, I don't think we always appreciate this approach as we should. It sometimes takes others to make us appreciate anew just what we have here, like the Baptist pastor who told one of our pastors that he envied the pastors of the WELS. When he was asked why, he replied, "Because you know Hebrew and Greek. Often when I am conducting Bible class or Sunday school or preaching, I don't know exactly what the Word of God says, what it means, but must take somebody else's word for it."

The theological habitude embraces lastly the ability to renounce ease, to subject one's self to a higher purpose, a higher goal, namely the preaching ministry with all that this implies. This may involve, and often has to involve, considerable self-denial. In fact it may even mean putting one's life on the line for the sake of Christ and His Truth. To this Paul urges Timothy when he writes: "Endure hardship with us like a good soldier of Christ Jesus" (2 Tim. 2,3 NIV). This quality, too, is nurtured already in the prep school, particularly by the language study. As we indicated above, the daily preparation for Latin or German isn't always easy, and it isn't always fun. But it must be done regardless. That is training for life which everyone needs, but which the future pastor needs above all. And our prep school pastors' course gives that kind of training, which, in the long run, is more important than the amount of Latin or German the boy learns.

We ask, then, "Do we still need our prep school program? With the job that it has been doing for us and with all that is at stake, we can only answer with a resounding YES! Our prep schools must remain the chief source of supply for NWC. The place that they have in our educational system, especially with reference to the training of pastors, could never be filled by the area Lutheran high schools. For two reasons: 1) With but a few exceptions the preministerial course at area Lutheran high schools doesn't compare all that favorably with that of the prep schools. When a boy who has taken German in a Lutheran high school all four years and is supposed to have a good background in the language finds himself at sea as soon as he begins the freshman German course at NWC, or when a boy has the same experience with regard to Latin, and when this situation repeats itself time and again, then one can see that this is so. The cause? A different approach to the teaching of the two languages perhaps. Or, the Lutheran high school, because its function is not that of the prep schools, just may not have the staff adequately to teach the preministerial course and perhaps cannot afford to have it. However, if an area Lutheran high school in its recruitment efforts offers a preministerial course as the same product that is given in the prep schools, then it should see to it that it is the same, or at least very close to the same. 2) Area Lutheran high schools would not be able to recruit preministerial candidates in sufficient numbers and keep them in the system. When about forty students enter the preministerial course at an area Lutheran high school in the ninth grade and there are three left in the course by graduation, we can appreciate the problem the Lutheran high school faces when it offers a course that is harder and more unpleasant to the Old Adam than the general high school course. Human nature being what it is, it will take the easier and more popular route to the high school diploma, the route that doesn't require "all that Latin and all

that studying at home." So while the area Lutheran high schools have been serving as feeders to NWC, having supplied almost 25% of the freshman class over the last seven years, they could not take the place of the prep schools. Nor should they be expected to. This is not their purpose.

As to the public high schools, in so far as they come into consideration here, we would say this: They usually offer no Latin or German, and if they do offer one or the other or both, they are taught neither with intensity nor according to the exegetical method. Consequently, the public high school graduate entering NWC must almost always take the five-year course. Besides that, the public high schools inculcate on their students a philosophy that is opposed to Christ and His Word. What the Synod's Commission on Higher Education, known at that time as the Advisory Committee on Education, stated in 1969 is even more true today: "The training in public high schools cannot be Gospel-oriented. Even though the teacher may be a sincere Christian, yes, a member of one of our churches, he must instruct in a setting of secularism, materialism, unionistic ecumenism, worldliness and legalism. It is not within his right to expound and promulgate his faith in his functions as a teacher. To be sure, also the public school student still has the example and instruction of faithful Christian families and Christian congregations. We have reason to be thankful for the graduates of public high schools who have been led by God's Holy Spirit to serve their Savior by a vocation in the church. We must be prepared to offer them the training they need. Nevertheless, the church should earnestly guard its future workers against the level of worldliness. And in these last days of doctrinal laxity our church should be very much concerned about giving as many as possible of its future church workers a Christ-centered secondary education. This is extremely important for the preaching ministry." (Proceedings, 1969, p. 81).

So, then, as I see it, the prep schools must always be the prime feeders to Northwestern College, with the Lutheran high schools and public high schools serving as auxiliary feeders. This, I believe, puts the whole matter into the proper perspective. This is also the considered judgment of the NWC faculty. In a study undertaken by this faculty during the last school year at the request of the CHE, a study entitled "Questions Regarding the Prep Schools--an Evaluation by the Faculty of NWC," one reads: "Our Synod should educate its own church workers on the secondary as well as on the college level." The study then quotes this 1971 statement of the CHE: "Ideally, all of our future workers should receive their pre-college education in our own Christian schools, both on the elementary and secondary level. To question this principle would be to reject the principles on which our system of Christian education is founded. Only in our own Christian schools will religion be an integral part of the curriculum, and only in them will all subjects be taught from the Christian point of view" (Supplementary Report of CHE on Role of Academies, 1971 BORAM, p. 9. Cf. 1971 Proceedings, p. 83).

Continuing, the study states: "The synodical academies are the best agency to supply Northwestern College with students whose preparation has been geared to Northwestern's curriculum. Our Synod's standard academy pastor-training course was originally the first half of an integrated eight-year pretheological curriculum. The separation of Northwestern Preparatory School from Northwestern College has not changed the preministerial course in the prep school, which is still designed to lead directly into the courses of the freshman college year. The introduction of a new language every two years is just one evidence of an eight-year design, as opposed to a separate plan for high school and college." Therefore, "in some respects the academy curriculum provides the necessary prerequisites for college work; in other respects it supplements the college courses....

"The total program of the academies is college-prep directed. Students form sound study habits. They learn to do disciplined, intensive language study, a sine qua non for our college program. At the same time they are encouraged by the fact that all their schoolmates are meeting high academic requirements. And as the academies have set a standard for the preministerial program in the Lutheran high schools, so the graduates of the academies and of the Lutheran high schools together set the pace for students entering Northwestern from public high schools."

Furthermore, "the synodical academies, supplemented by the Lutheran high schools, are the best agency to supply Northwestern College with students whose attitude is soberly goal-oriented.

"The Word of God does not return void in the secondary-school preparation of Northwestern's students. While these young men are still subject to all the lapses experienced by other sinners, the presence of a large majority of students from synodical academies and area Lutheran high schools helps to set a spiritual and moral tone on the college campus.

"The College faculty sees a blessing in the presence of a certain number of public high-school graduates in the college. They may help the rest of the student body to appreciate values which could otherwise be taken for granted. The public high-school graduate, perhaps as a result of his conscious choices during his high-school years, often shows evidence of a high level of commitment to the goal of the ministry. But coupled with this commitment he may also display an unrealistic attitude toward his preparation for church work. Impatient for work in the mission fields, he may feel that his college-level preparation for the seminary offers him too little for too long.

"The academy graduate expects to meet high academic standards. Generally he realizes that not all the subjects in a liberal arts curriculum will seem immediately applicable to the work of the ministry. His motivation for the pastoral ministry, however, has been nourished by the Word of God, which he has heard both in the classroom and in chapel services emphasizing the goal. His expectations are sober. He has begun to learn that he must fertilize and cultivate, weed and water before expecting a harvest. Few lessons are more important in the preparation of pastors."

All things considered, NWC needs the prep schools. But does Dr. Martin Luther College? I think that the majority of Synod's pastors, who have gone through our system from the ninth grade in the prep school through the last year at the Seminary, are convinced that NWC needs the prep schools. But there would be less who have the same conviction with regard to DMLC. Those teachers, however, who received their high school education in one of our prep schools, can see the desirability, if not the absolute necessity, of a prep school education also for our Christian day school teachers. So the Synod as a whole has always seen it. So it still sees it today. Otherwise, why worry about giving Martin Luther Academy space for its operations? Why not just close it down? Which is what one layman suggested at the Western Wisconsin District Convention two weeks ago. Really, do we want to deprive all of our future teachers across the board of the extensive Gospel-oriented preparation our prep schools offer and of the discipline that the more difficult and more rigid prep school curriculum requires?

In conclusion let me say this: while it may seem to some that I have been belaboring a point and tilting at windmills, since we all, or at least most of us, agree that NWC needs the prep schools and that DMLC is better off with them, I do not think that I have done so. For this reason: before us is the Champion issue,

but I firmly believe that behind this there is something even more weighty, namely, the question of whether we need the prep schools at all. Granted, today, at least ostensibly, we as a Synod are all for the prep schools. But when one observes the Synodical scene, the question arises: How about ten or fifteen years down the road? If we should one day lose our prep schools, this would have dire consequences for our pastor-training course. It would mean, ultimately, downgrading this course at NWC and at the Seminary. Would we want that? But even more is at stake. In 1969 the CHE stated: "The history of many a church body that has lost its confessional position indicates a close connection between such loss of confessionalism and a growing dependence on schools outside its control for the training of its public ministry." (Proceedings, 1969, p. 77). This is indeed the case, for the loss of the prep schools had this result in other church bodies going back to colonial times. Secularization began on the prep school level with the loss of the prep schools and then spread to the colleges and seminaries. This, I submit, is a price we cannot afford to pay.



E N D N O T E S

1. L. Rippley, Of German Ways (Minneapolis: Dillon Press, Inc., 1970), p. 147.
2. Ibid., p. 147.
3. E. M. Plass, What Luther Says (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), vol. II, no. 2269, p. 729.
4. Ibid., no. 2272, p. 730.
5. Ibid., no. 2274, p. 731.
6. A. Graebner, "What Is Exegetical Theology?" Theological Quarterly, vol. 1 (1897), p. 281.
7. A. T. Robertson, The Minister and His Greek New Testament (New York: George H. Doran Co., 1923), p. 15.
8. Ibid., p. 17.
9. Ibid., p. 21.
10. Ibid., p. 18.
11. Ibid., p. 19.
12. Ibid., p. 80 f.
13. J. H. Skilton, ed., Studying the New Testament Today (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1974), p. 153 f.
14. A. Graebner, op. cit., p. 281 ff.
15. Quoted by A. Graebner, op. cit., p. 283.
16. Quoted by A. Graebner, op. cit., p. 283.