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THE GLORY OF THE TEACHING MINISTRY

You are all aware that our Lord Jesus has given us but one work to do, namely to teach the Gospel. This is the primary factor in the building and preserving of the kingdom of God. By the use of the word "teach" we do not wish to limit the scope of the public ministry since there is only one public ministry, but it has many functions and commands. We know that the work of the ministry has been jeopardized by a dangerous and disheartening shortage of long-serving male personnel. This is very likely occasioned by all responsible in gaining boys for this divine work. The objective then of this brief essay is to show the glory of the teaching ministry to the end that it may redound to the welfare of the Church and the Kingdom of God. Therefore we shall wish to consider the following parts:

- I. Wherein does the glory consist
- II. The Duty of the teaching ministry
- III. The Privilege of the teaching ministry
- IV. The Final Glory of the teaching ministry.

I. WHEREIN does the glory consist

In the assignment of this topic, "The Glory of the Teaching Ministry," I am sure it was not intended that a separation or alienation be made from the doctrine of the public ministry and thus to set up ranks within the church. For we are all coworkers in the vineyard of the Lord and ranks or special stations are foreign to us. Generally speaking we apply the term "minister" to a pastor. Webster defines it as referring to an inferior, a servant. Jesus used it in this sense when he said; "Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many." Matt. 20:26-28. The ministry then as we refer to it is the work of preaching of the Gospel of Christ Jesus and the administrations of the

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Sacraments. The Church has rightly divided its functions as we have pastors, professors, teachers, and officials and laymen in local congregations. But the work has been given to every believer, young and old, men and women. As 1 Peter 2, v. 5 and 9 says: "Ye also, as lively stones are built up a Spiritual house, an holy priesthood to offer up Spibitual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ ----- Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light." Because God is a God of order, the Church from the very beginning has especially appointed men to discharge publicly the duties assigned to the Church. All Christians are not qualified to perform publicly and therefore different offices have been established for various tasks. God tells us that Christ gave gifts to men, for in Eph. 4:11 we read: "And he gave some apostles, and some, prophets, and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers for the perfecting of the saints." God does not specify which forms the church must have; but no one form is instituted. The functions of this public ministry are very clear for it is to feed, to watch, to rule, to rebuke, and to baptize. (etc.) This unity of the work is shown by St. Paul when he writes to the Corinthians in 1 Cor. 3: 5-8, "Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, ev as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one; and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. (For we are laborers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building.)" Yes, though we recognize the external forms, yet one is our master, Jesus.

The work of the teaching ministry centers about man's spiritual welfare, for it deals with his immortal soul. As we know it today in the case of t

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parochial school teacher, it centers about the performance of the public ministry among the children by teaching in a classroom or by activity in and through other agencies of Christ-centered training for children. This work for the Master may also extend to older youths and even adults in Young People's work, Sunday School Teacher Training, Bible Classes, various societies, and Choirs. Educational work and other services at Conferences or on boards and committees may also at times fall to the lot of teaching ministry. The playing of the organ in the public worship, or the directing of choirs may also fall into the services which the teaching ministry must perform, but this too must be done for the Glory of Jesus whose work we have been chosen to perform. We must always be missionaries not only in winning the souls of the children but also in winning their parents and friends when and if, the opportunities present themselves.

Although not all of these things may be required, yet it is important that we remember that the congregation lays down its definition of the functions of the public ministry in the call. Since this can be done only in bold outline, it follows that there must be sufficient flexibility for additions and deductions in details. But if important changes are to be made the love and justice as we have experienced it, would demand that such changes be made by mutual agreement. Included in this call is the obligation to give the children a general education. Indirectly and by implication Scripture reveals, however, that a general education is the will of God, and ~~that~~ that is to be a general Christian education, which can be provided only by Christians and the Christian Church. It also reveals that the Church cannot carry on its primary mission of saving souls without a general education. We do this at our synodical schools. And in the local congregation it would be likewise true where the pastor and teacher would have great difficulty without a general education of the hearers and ^{ar} learners.

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II - The Duty of the Teaching Ministry

Man was created for a double purpose. He was intended to be the lord of the earth; for when all else was created God took counsel with Himself saying: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and the fowl of the air, and over cattle, and over all the earth." Besides appointing him lord of the earth God "breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul," that he should live for God and with God forever. Both his dominion over the earth and his immortality man lost by sin. Now it costs man labor and pains to make his living upon earth, and in order that he may not remain in eternal death, but may obtain everlasting salvation man must be taught that special plan which God devised for the salvation of sinners. Without the fall of man there might also have been agencies for teaching, but, of course, agencies of a very different character than they are now needed, because now man must be ^{shown God's plan of salvation,} ~~taught to regain what was lost to him.~~

How must any agency be constituted in order to answer the double purpose for which man was created? It must certainly teach how to make a living in this world and how to be saved. Our forefathers already found that where either of these two things were absent the agency was deficient and was not as it ought to be. Therefore they established Christian Day Schools. On this Luther speaks to the point when he says: "Some teach nothing from the Scriptures; some teach the children nothing but the Scriptures, both of which are not to be tolerated." He further says, "I certainly would not advise anybody to send his child to a school which is not ruled and guided by the Holy Scriptures." And again, "We must have and maintain Christian Schools, for God preserves the Church through schools, and schools are the conservatories of the Church." If a school is to answer the double purpose for which man was created, both must be taught in it, worldly knowledge and the knowledge unto salvation.

A Christian teacher in a Christian Day School must instruct the children entrusted to his care in the accomplishments necessary for the life in this world, and herein he is to apply all diligence that the children may grow up to become useful members of society; for the welfare of state and society is dependent on the school.

But far more important than the imparting of worldly knowledge is it to teach the children what is right and wrong before God and men, and to instruct them in the way of salvation which God has prepared for us sinners in Christ Jesus, that they may grow up not only to become virtuous men and women who walk in the way of right and shun the paths of sin and vice, but also to become true Christians who walk in the fear of God and the true Christian faith and who when coming to die knew where their souls go. Of this latter the Prophet Isaiah commands when saying in chapter 40,9:

"O Zion, that bringest good tidings, ~~lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid.~~
~~lift~~ get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid."

Who is Zion and Jerusalem that bring good tidings? It is the church of the New Testament, the church of Jesus Christ, and the good tidings which it brings are the tidings which the angel proclaimed on the fields of Bethlehem, the tidings that the Son of God is born to save His people, hence also children, from their sins, and these tidings the Church proclaims through her servants in the teaching ministry. This is the basic and primary duty of a Christian teacher, to bring the tidings of Jesus to Zion's children. This is to be his labor by day and his prayer by night; this is his highest and chief object that with the children entrusted to his care may be fulfilled what is prophesied concerning the chief Shepherd: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom." What would it profit a teacher if he would equip his scholars with all worldly knowledge and would not lead them to Jesus? What would

it avail if he would say: I have educated wise men and women of the world? I fear the Lord would answer: If instead of feeding my lambs with the bread of life thou hast labored only for the world thou must also share the fate of the world. This, then, must be the Christian Teacher's highest aim ~~to~~ to lay the lambs of Zion into the arms of Zion's Shepherd.

These duties any teacher of the Word is to perform fearlessly and boldly. Of Zion bringing good tidings the prophet says: "Get thee up into the high mountain." And of Jersalem he says: "Lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!" These of the teaching ministry should be like one standing on a high cliff, fearless, although beneath him all is turmoil and confusion. A teacher of the Word should perform the duties of his office in the fear of God, but without the fear of man. "For if God be for us, who can be against us?" If God be on our side, we need not fear the outcome of the battle for we are always in the majority. Whether men love him or hate him, praise him or rail at him, he should do what is right and he should do it without flinching and without wavering.

For the right education firmness must be coupled with loving kindness. A teacher of the Word is sent to perform Christ's office, and how did Jesus deal with men? Impenitence and the stubbornness of the Pharisees He rebuked with hard and sharp words. Severe correction is often necessary especially with children. Selemen says: "Foolishness is bound in the heart of a child; but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him." Prov. 22, 15 To break stubbornness and to drive out wickedness the rod of the law must be used, even as a paster must use the hammer of the law to break the stony heart. For without the law, the Godpel has no sweetness. But the love of Jesus cannot be driven in by the law, as little as a broken heart can be healed by the law. The love of Jesus must be implanted by loving kindness. Herein every teacher of the Word should strive to follow Jesus Christ of whom the Scripture says: "He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry

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them in his bosom," that is, He shall embrace them, He shall fondle them, He shall gather them up and comfort them, like a mother will take up her crying infant on her arm and will comfort it. Constrained by the love of Jesus a Christian teacher is to strive after Jesus in all things. And in this he should persevere never permitting himself to be carried away by a spirit of bitterness and discontent. He should never forget that he has made it his life's work to lead children to Jesus and when trials come and troubles multiply, he should deny himself and should get himself up into ~~the~~ the high mountain from where he can look down upon trials and tribulations. And troubles a teacher of the Word can not escape, they will come upon him. Hence we also consider the privilege of the teaching ministry which is a part of the glory.

III - The Privilege

Leading souls to Jesus is a work which Satan hates and he employs all means to prevent it. He even works overtime. There is no man more hated of Satan than a faithful teacher of God's Word. And not only Satan, the whole kingdom of darkness is against him and his work. He has his own flesh to contend with too, because the Old Adam never wants to work for Jesus. He must daily contend against depravity and the evil propensities of human nature manifesting themselves in those he seeks to teach. He must often experience great ingratitude of such who should be highly indebted to him. He must endure the scorn of the world and the sarcasm of fanatical men who praise a religion without knowledge. ^{peritance} He must often labor seeing little fruits and frequently the discouraging thought may harass him that he is neither worthy nor qualified for this work; and these gloomy thoughts may become a sore trial depressing the heart. But we must not forget that it is God who hires laborers into His vineyard and He frequently chooses such whom the world would not choose. We who are laboring in the vineyard are not to ask whether we are sufficient for work, - in himself and of himself no one is sufficient to do the least good in the kingdom of God. With us the decisive question is to be whether we are called of God, and if we know that God has called us, then we are cheerfully to stand where he has placed us and gladly perform what He has given our hands to do; --knowing this that God will put none of His laborers to the wrong place. Unto this day it remains as the Lord says: "One soweth and another reapeth." John 4:37. Not all His laborers have the same kind of work and the same kind of success; but it is the Lord who chooses both His sowers and His reapers and he makes every one of them sufficient to accomplish that whereunto He sends Him.

For all difficulties with which teachers of the Word may meet, for all trials which may befall him, his very work and calling must afford him a strong comfort. He is sent of God and called by the daughter of Zion to bring good tidings to those within her scope; the good tidings that there

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is salvation for their souls, that through Jesus Christ, the Son of God and of Mary, they are made heirs of an eternal kingdom of glory. Verily a great and glorious work to bring these tidings to lost souls and to draw them into that kingdom. There is not a more blessed work under the sun than to lead souls to Jesus. It is a privilege above all privileges. In the 18th chapter of Matthew the Lord says: "Whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he drowned in the depth of the sea." Now if it is so dreadful to give occasion for children to depart from Jesus, what a great and glorious work to draw them to Him! Surely a work worthy of labor and self denial. Men will labor day and night, they will endure hardships, they will sail on stormy seas and will risk their lives to gain gold and to win fame; things which pass quickly away; -----but the souls which a teacher of the Word wins for Christ are not consumed by moth and rust, they will stand with him at God's right hand. What a grand thing will it be if he can step forth and say: 'Master, Thou didst send me to bring to these the tidings of Thy salvation; behold they are here, delivered from the kingdom of darkness and saved for Thine everlasting arms.' Surely the Lord will say unto him: 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.' Teachers of the Word, lay your hands to the plow lustily! Thou art favored among many. The Lord God has called you to a blessed, a glorious work; a work for the sake of which we rejoice to be hated of all men, yea, to endure, if need be, starvation, nakedness, and death itself.

Against the enemies also a teacher of the Word should always remain cheerful, because they can proceed no further than God's will shall suffer them, as this text testifies: "Behold, the Lord God will come with a strong hand, and his arm shall rule for Him; behold, his reward is with

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him, and his work before him." A teacher of the Word is in the service of a Great Lord whose arm is mighty to protect and to save and who will never abandon His faithful servants or leave them unrewarded. And though some of His servants are sent to be sowers only and are not granted to reap the fruit of their laborers in this life, yet they shall not lose their reward, in the world to come they shall receive an hundred-fold and shall inherit eternal life.

IV. - THE FINAL GLORY OF THE TEACHING Ministry

The aim then of the teaching ministry is to make man truly happy in this life and to lead him to a life of eternal bliss. While this is going on with all the power given us by God, we must not forget that in the Almighty Word which we teach we too can find that which can entirely satisfy our spirits and advance our own selves, by God's grace, in the way of our own salvation. Knowing that our work is never entirely futile and in vain, we rejoice when we read Jesus's words in John 17:24, "Father, I will that they also whom Thou hast given Me be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which Thou hast given Me." //

When the labors of a teacher of the Word seem most difficult, when we are buffeted and ridiculed, when we are called narrow-minded and bigotted because of strict adherence to the teachings of the Bible, then we must remember the words of St. Paul as he writes in Romans 8, 18, "I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." And again in Daniel 12:3 - "And they that shall be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever." And also in Rev. 2:10 - "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give thee a crown of life." This glory exists in the world to come and is unexpressibly great, exceeding anything we could have asked or prayed for in this life.

To all of us this should be greatly encouraging and should strengthen this trust that the Lord will prosper the work of our hands. Through this work of the teaching ministry the Lord has commenced vigorously to build His Zion. He will rule with His arm and His work is before Him, but how far His work is to proceed we do not know, because it is hid in the counsel of God. But this we know that our work is right, that it is well-pleasing before God, because we are only doing what is our duty to do according to His Word, and therefore the arm of the Lord will be with our work and it will rule for Him. The increase will certainly not fail. The Word which is

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taught will not return void; it will bring forth fruit under the blessing of God. Into the hands of the Father over all do we commend the work; for it is His and not ours. It is He that must govern and guide both teachers and scholars, and may He cause His word ~~and~~ to dwell with us in all its truth and purity for generations to come.

Ralph
Swantz