

Our College Pastoral Training Curriculum: A Channel of Blessings from Our God

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Introduction

Discussions about how to train pastors have been a recurring feature of our synod's history. Years ago I put a few noteworthy essays and statements on the subject into a file folder, and from time to time I have added others. My collection is far from exhaustive, but as I look in it I find items from almost every generation since the mid-1800's.

My impression is that, on the whole, our synod has followed a steady policy of emphasizing thorough training for pastors. It has been our policy to provide pastors not only with a seminary education but also with pre-seminary studies. And despite curricular revisions accumulating over a span of more than a century, there has been a striking amount of continuity in those pre-seminary studies. Our synod has consistently given its traditional pre-seminary students a college program emphasizing God's Word, theologically important languages, and a selection of other liberal arts courses.¹

The educational leaders who maintained that steady policy were aware that other models of pastoral education were in use elsewhere. Their essays sometimes take on the tone of an embattled defense. I suppose that in every generation there have been people in our synod who have wanted to make the training of pastors quicker, cheaper, easier, or more effective in some way. These are, after all, matters on which Christians may differ in their sanctified judgment.

If recent years have added anything to the picture, it may be this: Financial developments in the WELS have made us more aware that our synod school system is vulnerable. If the members of the synod do not see reason to support the synod schools adequately, it may become necessary to undertake radical revisions based on what we can afford rather than what is good for the ministry.

Under the circumstances, I take it as an encouraging sign that you want an essay on our synod's college-level training of future pastors. Another good sign is that your program committee put an unmistakably positive spin on the topic by asking for an essay on "The Unique Blessing of [our] College Pastoral Training Curriculum." I am grateful for your interest in the topic and for the opportunity to address it.

I hope no one is disappointed that I have little to say about the *uniqueness* of Martin Luther College's pre-seminary curriculum. I have heard it said more than once that our system is unique because no other seminary has the advantage of drawing upon the kind of pre-seminary education MLC offers. That may well be true, but I have not researched the entrance requirements of all other seminaries or the programs of all other colleges to document the uniqueness of MLC's Bachelor of Arts program (the route traditional students take to Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary). Sometimes it is good to be guided by the garbled wisdom of Shakespeare's Dogberry: "Comparisons are odorous."

Neither will I attempt anything like proof that our present system is the only or the best way to train pastors. According to 1 Corinthians 4:1-5, Jesus is the one who evaluates ministers on their faithfulness—faithfulness to God and his Word, faithfulness in lovingly carrying out duties and seizing further opportunities for service from the heart. We will have to wait till the last day to hear Jesus' evaluation. Meanwhile we recognize the limits placed on our judgment of our own ministry and that of others. Where we see manifest departures from ministerial faithfulness, such as false doctrine or practice, dereliction of duty, or other open

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¹ The curriculum taken by Northwestern College's first graduating class was similar in type to that taken by the centennial class, as Pres. Carleton Toppe emphasized in a commencement address published under the title, "100th Graduation—Northwestern College 1971," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* 68:3 (July 1971), 195-199. Despite more recent revisions, much of the same similarity is still to be seen in the pre-seminary curriculum of Martin Luther College.

sins, we are commanded to apply the standards of God's Word and carry out fraternal admonition as appropriate. But apart from that we are warned not to judge a minister's ministry. If we are unable to give a definitive evaluation of ministry in our circles, we are also unable to give a definitive evaluation of our synod's way of preparing ministers.

Instead of proof or definitive analysis I offer the testimonial of a satisfied customer. I thank God for the education I received at Northwestern College, and I desire to pass on that sort of education to my students. I think I see reasons why it makes excellent sense to offer the kind of pre-seminary studies we offer at MLC. I am glad to find that others see value in those studies, too. Martin Luther College is in the middle of a self-study, and it is encouraging to get positive feedback such as the survey filled out by the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary faculty. While they note some areas where improvement is needed, they provide strong support for the view that, on the whole, MLC is attaining its objectives for pre-seminary students. But I will not try to support my views in this essay with statistical documentation or a broad-based sampling of the views of others. In large measure this essay is a statement of what makes sense to me, with grateful acknowledgement of the views of some men who seem wise to me and have shaped my thinking about the training of pastors.²

A couple of additional clarifications may be useful before we tackle the main business of this paper. One is that your program committee highlighted "College Pastor Training *Curriculum*" (my italics). Naturally, a lot more goes into the preparation of a seminary student than his college coursework. Home, church, grade school, and high school can make vital contributions. During the college years, the student may also be shaped in important ways by campus life (e.g., chapel, extracurricular activities, friends) and job experiences. If we choose to focus on the curriculum, we do not mean to downplay those other factors.

Our focus on MLC's pre-seminary curriculum can be narrowed still further. For simplicity's sake, we will look only at the Bachelor of Arts program taken by most of our future pastors without discussing in detail MLC's seminary certification program available to non-traditional students. And as we consider the BA program, we will emphasize its primary purpose, which is training for pastoral ministry. The BA program is also intended to prepare future pastors to function responsibly as citizens. To some extent those purposes overlap. The communication skills, learning skills, and knowledge of the world useful for citizenship are also useful for the pastoral ministry. But it will simplify matters if we concentrate on the ministerial purpose without which MLC's BA program would not exist.

One way of describing pastoral education is to say that a pastor needs to know God's Word and man and how to communicate God's Word to man.³ That can serve as an outline for the rest of this essay. We will look at ways the present BA program contributes to those goals and thus serves as a channel for blessings from God.

Part I. Educating future pastors to know God's Word

A. Abundant opportunities to learn God's Word

The pastor feeds God's sheep. Some of the sheep have been faithful church-goers and Bible readers for decades. The pastor needs a knowledge of God's Word much deeper than a greeting card theology if he is to feed God's flock well.

A seminary education in God's Word is a big step in that direction, but it will be that much better if the seminary can build on college courses in Bible and biblical doctrine. One of the things I value about our system is that future pastors spend so many years in the pipeline with lots of formal study of the Bible and biblical

² Those who want an essay that incorporates a broader range of feedback from ministers in the field may wish to study Paul Eickmann's excellent and still timely paper, "The Blessings of a Liberal-Arts-Based Worker-Training Curriculum in an Age of Specialization," delivered at the WELS Professors' Conference, June 6-8, 1990, at Northwestern College.

³ The July, 1950 *Concordia Theological Monthly* contains a Brief Study by Martin Franzmann, "Classics in the Senior College." He quotes with approval a statement by the LCMS Board for Higher Education concerning pastoral education: "the student in the senior college will need instruction which will enable him to achieve additional competence in the following three principal directions: 1. A wider and a better understanding of the Word of God. ... 2. A wider and a deeper understanding of man in society, for whom the Word is intended. 3. The cultivation of knowledge, skills, and attitudes which will facilitate his competence in bringing together the Word and man."

doctrine along the way. As a result, those of us who are slow learners in spiritual matters, where intelligence is no guarantee of quick insight or firm conviction, have many opportunities to grow. Perhaps initially we are inattentive, or we are preoccupied with getting a superficial acquaintance with Bible facts. Sometimes we are hung up on minor issues and fail to grasp the importance of the big issues. But as we return to the same Scriptures, perhaps with added maturity and the guidance of additional teachers, the Spirit often blesses us with deeper understanding and conviction.

Dealing with doctrinal issues has a way of coming up in all sorts of MLC courses, but some courses by their nature have a more sustained focus in this area. The BA program requires a three-semester survey of the Bible (Biblical History and Literature I, II, and III), followed by Symbolics and a series of intensive courses on John, Acts, and First Corinthians. It is worth noting that some of the foreign language courses (particularly in Latin, German, and Hebrew) have a strong theological focus. As a result, it often works out that BA students have one or more courses with a theological emphasis in every semester of their college career.

B. Exegetical training

The courses on John, Acts, and First Corinthians are taught on the basis of the Greek text. By the time the typical student begins the John course, he has five semesters of either classical or koine Greek under his belt. The BA program also requires four semesters of Hebrew. Accordingly, by the time they graduate, pastoral students have worked through a selection of Old Testament texts in their original language.⁴ The opportunity to study the Bible in Greek and Hebrew already at MLC and with still greater experience and intensity at the seminary is a tremendous avenue of blessings in our system.

In that regard, a paragraph from J. P. Koehler's *History of the Wisconsin Synod* has been a guiding star for me for over twenty-five years. I know of no brief statement that shows a more penetrating appreciation of the value of thorough exegetical training for pastors. The context of Koehler's observations is the election controversy of the latter 1800's, which brought to light differences between a predominantly dogmatic approach to Scripture teaching and the genuinely exegetical approach that was getting started at that time. Koehler comments:

It takes a generation for independent exegetical work to come into its own and assert itself to the extent of dominating theological discussion and bringing about a union of minds. It means a complete revolution of mental processes in language, logic, psychology, and their practical application. Seminary study alone does not accomplish it either; the whole training in the preparatory stages must pave the way for it, and the later study of the pastor must concentrate on it to save him from the pit of dogmatism and mechanical repetition. At that, it will always be only the few who achieve real independence, but the rest, by such training, at least will acquire a sensorium for the rightness of the results and their inestimable benefit to life in general and for the life of the church in every practical phase. The net result will be that faith, faith in the sense of the Bible, comes into its own, and having come to life by this most intimate and direct association with and concentration on the Word itself, it is recognized as wholly the work and gift of the Spirit himself.⁵

Every point in that paragraph repays careful attention. Permit me to dwell on a selection of them.

"It takes a generation..." If we lose the exegetical approach or water it down, that's how long it will take to recover it, assuming anyone will be left who can diagnose the problem and persuade the synod to make the effort and investment to restore serious exegetical study.

⁴ In addition to the required semesters of Greek and Hebrew, students can take the Hebrew elective and one or more electives in Greek.

⁵ John Philipp Koehler, *The History of the Wisconsin Synod*, ed. Leigh D. Jordahl (Faith-life: The Protestant Conference, 1970), p. 161, column A.

"It will always be only the few who achieve real independence..." So we build compromises into the system. We cultivate excellence in the students with a capacity for it, but we do not expect every pastor to be capable of writing top-notch professional commentaries on the Bible.

"But the rest, by such training, at least will acquire a sensorium for the rightness of the results..." I recall hearing President Armin Panning make the same point to our class when we were seminary students. The gist of President Panning's remark was that not all of the products of our system become masters of the biblical languages, but the typical student is hard to dupe with false methods of interpreting Scripture. An appreciation for the historical-grammatical approach has been ingrained in them, and they are not quick to embrace fads and willful interpretations—interpretations that claim spiritual value without accounting for the words and the context. Like Luther, we have to deal with theologians and lay people who treat Scripture like a wax nose to be twisted this way and that. Can anyone put a price on training that helps to inoculate pastors against that sort of nonsense?

"Having come to life by this most intimate and direct association with and concentration on the Word itself, [faith] is recognized as wholly the work and gift of the Spirit himself." There is no substitute for immersing oneself in the inspired Scriptures. The text becomes a window enabling the student of God's Word to see for himself a real-life situation in the past and hear what the Spirit of Life said in that situation. That gives a preacher better confidence to say "Thus says the Lord" than the second-hand confidence one gets from reading theologians.

To attain excellence, and even to attain a more modest level of authentic benefit from exegetical work, there is no getting around the need for thorough training in Greek and Hebrew. There is no way to get real understanding of the original text without coping with details of Greek and Hebrew grammar and getting acquainted with Greek and Hebrew words. I shudder at the suggestion (sometimes made by people who should know better) that point-and-click tools offer a quick route to success. Computer tools can be time savers for people who already have a good grasp of language basics, but making beginners depend on them instead of learning basic vocabulary and grammar is like teaching someone to skate on ice by giving him crutches.

C. S. Lewis brings out the need for thoroughness with his customary flair. Though he is not talking directly about theology or the training of pastors, the parallels with our circumstances will suggest themselves easily enough:

"The trouble with these boys," said a grim old classical scholar looking up from some milk-and-watery entrance papers which he had been marking: "the trouble with these boys is that the masters have been talking to them about the Parthenon when they should have been talking to them about the Optative." We all knew what he meant. We had read work like that ourselves.

Ever since then I have tended to use the Parthenon and the Optative as the symbols of two types of education. The one begins with hard, dry things like grammar, and dates, and prosody; and it has at least the chance of ending in a real appreciation which is equally hard and firm though not equally dry. The other begins in "Appreciation" and ends in gush. When the first fails it has, at the very least, taught the boy what knowledge is like. He may decide that he doesn't care for knowledge; but he knows he doesn't care for it, and he knows he hasn't got it. But the other kind fails most disastrously when it most succeeds. It teaches a man to feel vaguely cultured while he remains in fact a dunce. It makes him think he is enjoying poems he can't construe. It qualifies him to review books he does not understand, and to be intellectual without intellect. It plays havoc with the very distinction between truth and error.⁶

C. Preparation for exegesis

But as Koehler perceived, it's not just a matter of taking enough time to do Greek and Hebrew thoroughly. Exegetical training "means a complete revolution of mental processes in language, logic,

⁶ "The Parthenon and the Optative," in C. S. Lewis, *On Stories and Other Essays on Literature*, ed. Walter Hooper (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1982), p. 109.

psychology, and their practical application. Seminary study alone does not accomplish it either; the whole training in the preparatory stages must pave the way for it..." What are some of the components in that mental revolution?

The curriculum is designed to help students break out of the narrow confines of their own popular culture and personal interests. It equips them to enter the world of the Bible, which is a *past* world that we access through the medium of *literature* originally written in *foreign* languages.

Thus the BA program includes history requirements: Western History & Culture I and II (four credits each), US History Since 1945, and one additional history course chosen from a menu. The history courses offer a number of benefits—for example, history offers a framework in which the student's other courses have a context and can be interconnected. Thus history also serves as a foundation for lifelong learning. But here we note especially the value of a historical mindset for studying God's Word. Students benefit from seeing the Bible not as a catalog of timeless truths that fell ready-made out of heaven, but as writings inspired by God in the crucible of human history. The historical perspective pertains also to the center of Scripture and of history, the saving work of Jesus Christ, who "suffered under Pontius Pilate." Learning to see the Scriptures in their historical context enhances our intellectual understanding of them, our emotional involvement in them, and our evangelical application of their teaching.⁷ History courses and assignments that challenge students to reconstruct past situations with the help of key documents contribute to that goal.

The BA program also has literature requirements that support the work of exegesis: Literature & Writing I and II, and an additional English literature course chosen from a menu. One could wish there were more literature requirements. When I accepted a call to Northwestern College in 1986, President Carlton Toppe explained to me with evident regret that in the recent curricular revision, English literature was one of the areas that took the biggest hit. There is some compensation in foreign language courses, where the benefit of studying excerpts in the original language may be supplemented by the reading of whole works in English, e.g., Vergil's *Aeneid* or Homer's *Iliad*. Reading literature in English enables the student to confront a wide variety of issues of content and genre. It also gives him a better chance to practice interpreting a whole work instead of atomizing a text and getting lost in the details. And the use of classics of literature, whether originally written in English or translated from other languages, provides a response to the immature student who is quick to say "That's dumb" about anything outside his narrow interests. The classics have been found valuable by many and are capable of enlarging the mind.

History and literature help the student venture out of his narrow world and understand the ever-timely Scriptures also as works of literature from the past. But there is a third element in preparation for serious exegetical work, and that is the study of foreign languages. Here it should be apparent that it takes a colossal mental revolution to break out of the prison of one's native language. It won't take place in ten easy lessons or in a crash course in Greek or Hebrew at the seminary. And there is a lot to be said for tackling the problems of understanding a foreign language by dealing first with secular texts and secular topics in Latin or German or Spanish or classical Greek before plunging into the interpretation of sacred texts in Greek or Hebrew. Let the student first learn to deal with a foreign language simply as a language without trying to pry spiritual insights out of it before he knows what he is doing.

Living languages like German and Spanish have something special to offer here. They give the student a sense of what it would have been like to communicate in biblical Greek and Hebrew when they were living languages. They help us see Greek and Hebrew not as fossilized, artificial codes but as expressive, flexible instruments, rich in idiom and adaptable to situation.

But modern languages can disguise for us the difficulty of our task. While they confront us with cultures different from our own, a lot of what they do is to make us comfortable with new ways of talking about familiar things. Learning to talk in German or Spanish about family members and cars and televisions and schools doesn't take us very far out of our own world or very far into the world of the Bible. And while I have never

⁷ For a short but masterful example of how historical context helps to illuminate our reading of a book of the Bible, see Martin Franzmann's comments on 1 Thessalonians in "Essays in Hermeneutics: II. The Circle of History," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, vol. XIX, No.9 (September 1948), p. 641-652.

studied Spanish and can say nothing about its grammar, I can say that German is a lot closer to English than ancient Greek is. When we learn English as our mother tongue, we become extremely dependent on word order as the fabric of meaning. The fact that German has important patterns of word order means that one can, with a bit of practice, make the adjustment. But Greek is much more fluid in its word order and much more dependent on grammatical endings to make connections. The upshot is that it is much easier to learn to understand German without consciously translating it than it is to understand Greek without consciously translating it.

What that means is that Latin is in many ways the ideal introduction to Greek. Latin has classics still worthy of close attention. It takes us out of our modern world to a world two thousand years ago—the ancient Mediterranean world of Jesus and the apostles. It has a grammatical system very similar to that of Greek. It is similarly fluid in its word order. That makes Latin difficult to learn—like Greek. That is not all bad. Martin Franzmann put it strongly:

In studying the [Greek and Latin] classics the budding theologian will learn to submit himself to a mode of thought and expression foreign to him, to enter sympathetically into a world whose norms and axioms are sometimes startlingly remote from his own; he will learn rigorously to exclude himself and to let the text speak to him on its own terms, not on his. That involves hard work—one of the indefeasible advantages of the classics is that Greek and Latin resist the jolly-adventure-in-learning-let's-all-express-ourselves techniques almost perfectly—but since all theology is ultimately exegesis, no course that leads to perfection in its disciplines and techniques can be considered too long or too arduous.⁸

I would say that the course is in fact too long or too arduous if the pursuit of exegetical *perfection* keeps out of the pastoral ministry men who are otherwise qualified and can do *acceptable* work in exegesis. But practically speaking, Greek and Latin are so similar that the man who can do acceptable work in Greek can do acceptable work in Latin, and he will do that much better in Greek if he tackles Latin first. Even if the student doesn't learn Latin well enough to translate Latin fluently and reliably, almost every bit of Latin grammar he learns and almost every Latin translation skill he acquires will be an advantage when it is time to learn the corresponding grammar and skills in Greek. And even those who foolishly refused to do enough work to cope with Latin will start Greek with a keener understanding of what they need to do to succeed in Greek.

The current BA program differs from the previous pattern of requiring healthy doses of Latin and German before and during the college years. Now the requirement is that BA students complement their English and Greek and Hebrew with at least one other language. To that end, MLC offers courses in four foreign language options: Spanish, Latin, German, or a Confessional Languages option that combines the most important of the required courses in the Latin and German options. Alternatively, a BA student could demonstrate competence in a foreign language he learned at home, or he could fulfill the requirement with credits earned at another college or university in French or Russian or some other foreign language.

I think I understand the factors that led to the current policy. I recognize that it does have benefits (I note some of them elsewhere in this essay). But from the standpoint of cultivating exegetical skill, I have reservations. Am I imagining things when I think I see signs of declining expertise in Greek? Would it have anything to do with the fact that the typical freshman twenty years ago came with four years of Latin and two of German, whereas now few come with that amount of foreign language experience, and a considerable number of BA students take Greek without ever taking any Latin? It is not an easy matter to document decline or pinpoint causes. It is a complex situation with many variables. I recall hearing Professor Eickmann comment ruefully on the decline he saw over the years in his Hebrew elective. That was long before the current policy was put in place, so other factors were at work in that instance and may still be at work. Nevertheless, it would not be surprising if reduced requirements in non-biblical languages would result in changed outcomes in Greek.

But let us take a more positive view of the situation. What we have in place is still a channel of blessings from our God. We still have a curriculum that enables pastor track students to equip themselves well for

⁸ "Classics in the Senior College," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, vol. XXI, No.7 (July 1950), p. 523.

exegesis. We would do well to support it financially, maintain its standards against erosion, and improve it where we can.

D. Christian critical thinking

Before we leave Part I on educating future pastors to know God's Word, I'd like to look at the matter from the perspective of *critical thinking*. Critical thinking is a goal cherished by colleges and universities everywhere. Often it is cultivated in a way that undermines religion. But we can and should cultivate a Christian version of critical thinking for future pastors as students of God's Word. What does that mean?

Pastors know they need to be able to do more than repeat clichés and evade difficult issues. Their work may require them to recognize the assumptions people make and know how to deal with them. Pastors also face situations in which important issues hang on subtle distinctions and shades of meaning. They may have to take apart a faulty argument and show how to put together a sound one. Critical thinking skills of those kinds are fostered in many courses in the BA program, but perhaps special mention should be made here of the required course in philosophy and an elective course in logic.

When we have analyzed a problem and know what the issue really is, we go to the relevant parts of Scripture in search of answers. Often it is enough to study the Bible in English. But critical thinking means being able to explore the foundations of a subject, and then it is exegesis that gives us our most direct access to what God has said on the subject. However, the exegete may encounter difficulties. What is the meaning of that word? Which grammatical explanation fits best here? What is the point of that phrase in context? We may not always arrive at sure and clear answers about all the details. So we form firm conclusions where we can and recognize where we cannot be sure. God's Word is reliable, but we need to be able to sort out what we know on the basis of the Word from what we don't know. That is an important critical thinking skill for pastors.

A critical self-awareness means that we know we have limitations and can make mistakes, but on the positive side it also reminds us that we can benefit from the help of others as we study God's Word. In particular, it is valuable for the future pastor to learn how to make use of the help available to him in the writings of theologians and scholars. The students get a chance to see in their exegetical courses at MLC that thorough exegesis means more than looking at a translation and a favorite commentary—there are many learned theologians and many tools to be used with appropriate caution. And let me put in a plug once more for the Latin and German courses. They send an unmistakable message to our students: our confessional Lutheran forefathers have a lot to teach us about God's Word. It's fun to see the light go on when students in the elective on Post-Reformation Latin Lutheran Writings encounter the erudition, insight, and lucidity of Johann Gerhard. I'm sure Professor Danell could share similar impressions from his courses on European and American German Lutheran Writings. And all of this happens in the context of a curriculum that clearly puts even higher value on the Bible itself. The emphasis on Greek and Hebrew exegesis helps to keep our advocacy of the giants of Lutheranism from turning into uncritical acceptance and blind traditionalism.

In short, a large portion of the BA curriculum at MLC is devoted to God's Word and the kind of knowledge and skills that are useful for getting the most out of the Word. As such it is a channel for blessings from God to our pastors and through them to our church and the world.

Part II. Educating future pastors to know man

In-depth study of God's Word already tells us a great deal about man: his natural spiritual condition, the causes and effects of that spiritual condition, and the saving effect the gospel of Jesus Christ can have upon man, leading to individual and corporate service to God in this world and in the world to come. Still, there are things we can do to enhance our biblical understanding of man, and MLC's BA program has a number of courses which do just that.

History courses show the endless conflict of wills in our fallen world. They show us the record of man's recurring attempts to solve his problems and attain his aspirations. They also help us see the roots of current issues. Every week we see news stories about problems that defy easy solutions, and we hear about the

grievances of religious and ethnic groups with long memories. How, for example, can we understand Muslims if we know nothing about Muhammad and the Crusades?

But MLC's history courses are not devoted solely to the distant past. We have a required course on US History Since 1945, not just to equip our students for citizenship but also to help them understand the people they will minister to and the events that shaped them. The menu of courses for the required history elective includes The History of Modern China, The Arab-Israeli Conflict, and The World in the Twentieth Century, as well as courses on earlier eras.

Literature courses and the required Introduction to Fine Arts help the students understand the artistic impulse as a factor in human life, a force that drives many to create and many more to appreciate masterpieces of expression. It is good for students to see how art can either convey humanistic themes or serve the gospel and Christian worship.

The BA program requires some study of other current cultures. At present the standard course is Introduction to Minority Cultures, but students in the Spanish option can take Latin-American Culture & Civilization instead, and the Spanish program as a whole makes a big contribution in this area. The news media constantly remind us of the need for sensitivity and respect in dealing with persons of other cultures, but we have even greater reasons for educating future pastors in this area. The gospel of Jesus Christ reaches out to people of all cultures and brings them together in the church. A pastor will want to reflect that in his outreach and his dealings with members from various cultures.

The required Introduction to Psychology is another valuable element in educating future pastors to know man. It is useful to know something about how people perceive the world, how they learn, and what motivates them (natural motivations as opposed to the supernatural motivation provided by the Holy Spirit through the gospel). The importance of psychology in the modern world is such that we cannot afford to ignore it. It is good for pastors to be aware of the non-Christian foundations of the leading psychological theories. But it is also good for them to have some awareness of when the psychological problems of their parishioners require professional help.

Not just psychology but science in general is a huge part of the modern world. Some acquaintance with science is helpful if we wish to understand the intellectual forces that shape people today. Future pastors can benefit from guidance in examining science from a Christian perspective. The BA program requires two science courses, one of which is a biology course with a large component of human biology.

When our future pastors study at MLC, they are part of a college community with roughly equal numbers of male and female students. That social environment gives them a chance for more interaction with women than Northwestern students had. It is a curricular matter also. The current curriculum is set up so that a typical BA student gets at least 56 of his 132 or 133 credits in "cross taught" courses—courses taught to mixed sections of pastor, teacher, and staff ministry students.⁹ There is some cost in doing things that way. It is likely that pastor track students at MLC hear fewer references to pastoral ministry compared to earlier generations at Northwestern. But the intent is to give future pastors a better understanding of women and better skills in dealing with them, along with a better acquaintance with other forms of ministry and the people who are preparing for service in those forms of ministry.

In these ways the pastor training curriculum at MLC helps students understand themselves and the people they will serve from many perspectives: social, physical, psychological, cultural, artistic, historical, and spiritual.

⁹ At MLC, there is a common core of 50 credits taken by all students who come for a bachelor's degree, whether they are taking a BA in preparation for the seminary or a BS in preparation for service as a teacher or staff minister. The common core includes selected courses in Bible survey (9 credits), English (12), history and other cultures (14), science (6), mathematics and Computer Applications (5), fine arts (3), and physical education (1). BA students must also take an English literature elective (3) and a history elective (3), both of which are cross taught. That brings the total of cross taught courses up to 56. But BA students have additional elective credits to take in order to fulfill the total number of credits, and many of the available elective courses are cross taught. Students in the Spanish option will have still more cross taught courses. As a result, some BA students graduate with about half of their credits in cross taught courses.

Part III. Educating future pastors to know how to communicate God's Word to man

Here too the Bible is our essential resource book. It shows us authoritative examples of how to preach law and gospel to people in various situations. It also illustrates for us the use of various genres: sermons and informal conversations, parables and object lessons, books and letters, prose and poetry.

Those who engage in the study of man will also gain insights from literature, art, and psychology about how best to communicate.

But if we want our future pastors to become good communicators, we will want to help them turn theory into practice. The BA program provides opportunities for that.

Students come to MLC with computer skills, but they also take our Computer Applications course. The course helps them get better acquainted with the tools available to them on the MLC network for collecting information, composing papers, or presenting their findings in PowerPoint and other formats.

The required courses Literature & Writing I and II have extensive writing assignments. Students may elect additional writing courses: Intermediate Composition, Creative Writing, Advanced Expository Writing, and Argument & Advocacy in Writing. Writing assignments are also to be found in a wide range of other courses.

Nevertheless, this appears to be an area where we need to give more attention, as some of our feedback from the seminary indicates. Could it be that the students who now come to MLC have more experience with texting and chatty styles of writing and less experience with formal writing? Do they find it hard to write sustained, organized exposition because so much of their time is spent on visual entertainment geared to short attention spans? Does web-surfing reinforce quirky lines of thought instead of coherence and logic? Whatever the reasons, we will want to help our students become more adept at communicating the gospel fully and clearly in writing—a mental discipline that is valuable also for sustained forms of oral communication such as the sermon.

While MLC does not have courses in homiletics, there are opportunities for students to practice oral communication skills. The BA program requires two courses in this area: Public Speaking and Interpersonal Communication. Since the latter course was created at the time of the last curricular revision, it may be helpful to note the course description. Interpersonal Communication covers "the theory and practice of communication in informal settings, focusing on relationships, conflict resolution, and small-group dynamics."¹⁰ It can be a fruitful place not just to practice generic communication skills but also to think through one's personal life in the light of the gospel and express oneself accordingly. Since both Public Speaking and Interpersonal Communication are cross taught courses, they give future pastors chances to improve their skills in communicating with women. Further opportunities to practice communication skills are found in a number of other courses that require students to make oral presentations. And though it is not part of the curriculum, pastor track seniors and juniors get further practice when they compose sermonettes under the guidance of a faculty mentor and deliver them in evening chapel.

The courses in German and Spanish take a four skills approach: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. As such they give a future pastor an idea of what it is like to communicate in another language. Even if there will not be many MLC German students who will someday be called to serve a German-speaking community, their German classes will give them a better understanding of what a foreign call would require of them. And there is a greater likelihood that Spanish students will have a chance to serve people whose mother tongue is Spanish. Accordingly one of the courses required of students in the Spanish option is Communicating Christ in Spanish, "a specialized intermediate level course building language proficiency through the use of Bible studies and adult information course materials used in Latino mission fields."¹¹

¹⁰ 2008-2009 MLC catalog, p. 56.

¹¹ 2008-2009 MLC catalog, p. 69.

This essay has not listed all the required courses in MLC's BA program, much less all the elective courses available to our future pastors. More could also be said about the way courses reinforce and build on each other. But I hope enough has been said to make the value of the BA program apparent. Future pastors have many opportunities at MLC to learn more about God's Word, man, and how to communicate God's Word to man. God has given our church many blessings through the thorough training of pastors in the past. May God be pleased to do so now and in the future.

Appendix: A fuller listing of the MLC Studies for Pastoral Ministry curriculum can be found on pages 40-43 of the MLC catalog or at the conclusion of the edition of this essay in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary online essay file. [The 2007-2008 catalog was the most recent available online at the time this essay was posted to the web. Pages 32-36 of that catalog contain listing for the MLC Studies in Pastoral Ministry program, and have been reproduced in the five-page appendix that follows – WLS Library Staff.]

Appendix

STUDIES IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

COURSE LISTING FOR STUDIES IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

The Studies in Pastoral Ministry curriculum at Martin Luther College prepares men to enroll at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. This course of study stresses foreign languages. Hebrew and Greek, required of all students, are the original languages of Scripture. A student selects a non-biblical language option from a menu of German, Latin, a German/Latin combination, Spanish, or another spoken language. Lutheran theologians did much of their writing in German and Latin, while Spanish is the primary language of a growing segment of the American population. A student may also fulfill the non-biblical language requirement with achievement in another living language. In addition, the curriculum includes a selective liberal arts emphasis, with special attention given to literature and history.

Academic Credits Required for the Bachelor of Arts Degree

Psychology/Philosophy	7
English (including an area elective)	15
Greek (including an area elective or GRK3001)	19
Hebrew	14
Non-biblical language option (student chooses one)	
German.....	12
Latin.....	13
Confessional Languages (German and Latin).....	19
Spanish.....	12
Another spoken language.....	12
Computer/Mathematics	5
Music/Fine Arts.....	3
Physical Education	1
Religion.....	21
Science	6
History (including an area elective)	14
Other Cultures	3
Free Electives (four courses).....	12

The curriculum includes two Greek tracks. The koine Greek track serves students in a Seminary Certification program as well as traditional students who display modest foreign language skills on their high school record. The track allows them a higher probability of success in New Testament study. The classical Greek track offers students the fullest preparation for their work in the New Testament. The academic dean assigns entering students to a Greek track on the basis of their high school record and their ACT predictive data.

Students in the koine Greek track have three free electives. Students in the confessional languages option will usually also have fewer free electives. Students may select a maximum of three free electives from one academic area.

Total Credits required for graduation 132/133

A student enrolling in Studies in Pastoral Ministry with the entrance requirements and preferences listed in the admissions section can complete his program of study in four years. Most students can complete a degree program in four years even if they are lacking some of the preferred high school credits.

COMPLETE COURSE LISTING FOR STUDIES IN PASTORAL MINISTRY

Courses marked with a plus (+), or their high school equivalents, are prerequisites for the Bachelor of Arts (BA) program.

Courses marked with a pound sign (#) are required for all students in a BA program.

Psychology

PSY2001#	Introduction to Psychology	4
PSY3001	Lifespan Development	3
PSY3002	Abnormal Psychology	3

Philosophy

REL3030#	Introduction to Philosophy	3
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English—Communication Arts & Literature

One English literature area elective is required for all students in a BA program. The menu of courses fulfilling this requirement is marked with an asterisk ().*

ENG1301#	Literature & Writing I	3
ENG1302#	Literature & Writing II	3
ENG1310#	Public Speaking	3
ENG2301	Intermediate Composition	3
ENG3001	Topics in Literature and Language: American	3
ENG3002*	American Renaissance Realism & Naturalism	3
ENG3004	Twentieth Century American Literature	3
ENG3010	American Minority Writers	3
ENG3101	Topics in Literature and Language: British	3
ENG3102*	British Authors before 1700	3
ENG3103*	Shakespeare: Comedies & Histories	3
ENG3104*	Shakespeare: Tragedies & Romances	3
ENG3105*	Early British Novel	3
ENG3106*	The Age of Romanticism	3
ENG3107*	The Victorian Age	3
ENG3108	Twentieth Century British Literature	3
ENG3201	Topics in Literature and Language: World	3
ENG3202	Literature of the Ancient World	3
ENG3203	Literature of the Modern World	3
ENG3206	Modern World Drama	3
ENG3301	Topics in Literature and Language: Communication Arts	3
ENG3302	Creative Writing	3
ENG3303	Advanced Expository Writing	3
ENG3304	Argument & Advocacy in Writing	3
ENG3310#	Interpersonal Communication	3
ENG3320	Introduction to Logic	3

A student may not receive graduation credit for both ENG3202 and GRK3002.

German Option

GER1001+	Elementary German I	4
GER1002+	Elementary German II	4
GER2001#	Intermediate German I	3
GER2002#	Intermediate German II	3
GER2011#	Survey of Theological German	3
GER2012#	Luther German	3
GER3002	Readings in German Literature	3
GER3021	European German Lutheran Writings	3
GER3022	American German Lutheran Writings	3
GER4010	German Immersion I	3

Greek

Courses marked with a section symbol (§) are required for students in the classical Greek track. Courses marked with a paragraph symbol (¶) are required for students in the koine Greek track. One classical Greek elective is required for students in the classical track. The menu of courses fulfilling this requirement is marked with an asterisk ().*

GRK1001¶	Elementary Koine Greek I	5
GRK1002¶	Elementary Koine Greek II	5
GRK1101§	Elementary Classical Greek I	5
GRK1102§	Elementary Classical Greek II	5
GRK2001¶	Intermediate Koine Greek I	3
GRK2002¶	Intermediate Koine Greek II	3
GRK2101§	Intermediate Classical Greek I	3
GRK2102§	Intermediate Classical Greek II	3
GRK3001¶	Hellenistic Texts	3
GRK3002¶	Greek Classics in Translation	3
GRK3101*	Greek Comedy	3
GRK3102*	Herodotus	3
GRK3103*	Lysias & Greek Oratory	3
GRK3104*	Homer's <i>Iliad</i>	3
GRK3106*	Plato	3

Hebrew

HEB1001#	Elementary Biblical Hebrew I	4
HEB1002#	Elementary Biblical Hebrew II	4
HEB2001#	Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I	3
HEB2002#	Intermediate Biblical Hebrew II	3
HEB3001	Prophetic & Poetic Texts	3

Latin Option

LAT2001#	Intermediate Latin	4
LAT2002#	Vergil's <i>Aeneid</i>	3
LAT2011#	Classical Latin Literature	3
LAT2012#	Ecclesiastical Latin	3
LAT3001	Roman Historians	3
LAT3003	Post-Reformation Latin Lutheran Writings	3

Confessional Languages Option

The confessional languages option enables students to read theological literature in both German and Latin. The option requires the equivalent of five college semesters in each language. Individual student programs will vary, depending on the number of German and Latin credits earned in high school. Students choosing this option will usually have fewer free electives than students choosing other language options.

GER1001+	Elementary German I	4
GER1002+	Elementary German II	4
GER2001#	Intermediate German I	3
GER2002#	Intermediate German II	3
GER2011#	Survey of Theological German	3
LAT2001#	Intermediate Latin	4
LAT2002#	Vergil's <i>Aeneid</i>	3
LAT2012#	Ecclesiastical Latin	3

Spanish Option

SPN1001+	Elementary Spanish I	4
SPN1002+	Elementary Spanish II	4
SPN2001#	Intermediate Spanish I	3
SPN2002#	Intermediate Spanish II	3
SPN2011#	Intermediate Spanish III	3
SPN2012#	Communicating Christ in Spanish	3
SPN3001	Latin-American Culture & Civilization	3
SPN3002	Spanish & Latin American Literature	3
SPN3011	Advanced Spanish Conversation	3
SPN4001	Selected Topics in Spanish I	3
SPN4002	Selected Topics in Spanish II	3
SPN4011	Spanish Immersion I	6

Another Spoken Language Option

A student choosing this language option must furnish an official college transcript verifying six college semesters of another spoken language or must provide other recognized verification that demonstrates the equivalence of six college semesters.

Computer/Mathematics

MTH1001#	Computer Applications	2
MTH0002+	Developmental Mathematics <i>(required of students who have an ACT mathematics subscore of 17 or lower before they may enroll in MTH1010 Introduction to Contemporary Mathematics)</i>	3
MTH1010#	Introduction to Contemporary Mathematics <i>(a lower level course)</i>	3
or		
MTH1011#	Mathematics: A Human Endeavor <i>(a higher level course)</i>	3

Music/Fine Arts

MUS0001+	Introduction to Music	1
MUS2030	Applied Voice	1
MUS2035	Chorale	.5
MUS2037	Male Choir	.5
MUS2040	Applied Instrument	1
MUS2045	Band	.5
MUS2201#	Introduction to Fine Arts	3
MUS2301‡	Introduction to Conducting	2
MUS3035	College Choir	.5
MUS3101	Theory of Music I	3
MUS3102	Theory of Music II	3
MUS3103	Theory of Music III	3
MUS3210	Johann Sebastian Bach	3
MUS3211	American Music	3
MUS3212	World Music	3
MUSxxxx	Applied Keyboard	1

‡To qualify as a SPaM free elective of three credits, a student taking this course needs to add a 1 credit performance course: applied keyboard, applied voice, applied instrument.

A combination of 1 and 0.5 credit music courses may not substitute for a 3 credit SPaM free elective.

Physical Education

PED1112#	Fitness for Life	.5
PED1xxx#	Phy Ed. activity course	.5

Religion

REL0001+	Survey of Christian Doctrine I	3
REL0002+	Survey of Christian Doctrine II	3
REL1001#	Biblical History & Literature I	3
REL1002#	Biblical History & Literature II	3
REL2001#	Biblical History & Literature III	3
REL3010#	Symbolics	3
REL3011#	St. John's Gospel	3
REL3020	World Religions	3
REL3021	Patristic Readings in Context	3
REL4010#	The Book of Acts	3
REL4011#	First Corinthians	3

Science

Two science courses are required

SCI1001# Our Living World & Lab (SCI1002) 3
and

One of the following science electives

SCI1101 Our Physical World 3
(required, if student does not have a high school physics credit)

SCI1110 Physical Geography & Lab (SCI1111) 3

SCI2001 Advanced Biology & Lab (SCI2002) 3

SCI2010 Human Anatomy & Physiology I & Lab (SCI2011) 3

SCI2020 Marine Ecology 3

SCI2120 History of Science 3

Or, with consent of the instructor

SCI2101 Physics 3

SCI2103 Astronomy 3

SCI2105 Geology & Lab (SCI2106) 3

A student may take for degree credit up to three additional science courses from the above lists as free electives. Also acceptable as a free elective is:

SCI3010 Human Anatomy & Physiology II & Lab (SCI3011) 3
Prerequisite SCI2010/11

Social Sciences

SSC3201 Sociology 3

SSC3202 Principles of Economics 3

SSC3210 World Regional Geography 3

SSC3212 Geography of Latin America 3

A student may take only one of the geography courses (SSC3210 or SSC3212) for free elective credit.

History

One history area elective is required for all students in a BA program (). An elective from this history menu fulfills this requirement.*

HIS2110# Western History & Culture I 4

HIS2111# Western History & Culture II 4

HIS3001 Survey of Art 3

HIS3010# United States History since 1945 3

HIS3020* Early America: Revolution & Constitution 3

HIS3021* The Union in Crisis 3

HIS3022* America's Gilded Age and Progressive Era 3

HIS3101* The Ancient Near East 3

HIS3102* The High Middle Ages 3

HIS3105* First Century Roman World 3

HIS3110* History of Modern China 3

HIS3121* From Despots to Nation States 3

HIS3125* The Arab-Israeli Conflict 3

HIS4101* The World in the Twentieth Century 3

HIS4110* Foundations of History 3

Other Cultures

One other cultures course is required for all students in the BA program.

HIS9704 The Civil Rights Study Tour 3

SSC3220 Latin-American Culture & Civilization (*Spanish Prerequisite*) 3

SSC4201 Introduction to Minority Cultures 3

Note: A student in a BA program may carry other courses from the MLC curriculum as extra courses not counting for graduation credit, provided the student has fulfilled the prerequisites or receives the approval of the instructor.

STUDIES IN PASTORAL MINISTRY SAMPLE FOUR-YEAR PLAN

Freshman – Sem. I

ENG1301	Literature & Writing I	3
GRK	Elementary Greek I	5
MTH1001	Computer Applications	2
REL1001	Biblical History & Literature I	3
	Non-biblical Language	3/4
	Total Cr	16/17

Sem. II

ENG1302	Literature & Writing II	3
GRK	Elementary Greek II	5
MTH1010/1011	Math	3
REL1002	Biblical History & Literature II	3
	Non-biblical Language	3
	Total Cr	17 (33/34)

Sophomore – Sem. I

GRK	Intermediate Greek I	3
HIS2110	Western History & Culture I	4
PED1112	Fitness for Life	0.5
REL2001	Biblical Hist & Literature III	3
SCI1001/2	Our Living World (+ Lab)	3
	Non-biblical Language	3
	Total Cr	16.5

Sem. II

ENG1310	Public Speaking	3
GRK	Intermediate Greek II	3
HIS2111	Western History & Culture II	4
PSY2001	Introduction to Psychology	4
	Non-biblical Language	3
	Total Cr	17 (33.5)

Junior – Sem. I

ENG3310	Interpersonal Communication	3
GRK	Greek Elective	3
HEB1001	Elementary Biblical Hebrew I	4
REL3010	Symbolics	3
SCI	Science Elective	3
	Free Elective	3
	Total Cr	19

Sem. II

ENG	English Literature Elective	3
HEB1002	Elementary Biblical Hebrew II	4
MUS2201	Introduction to Fine Arts	3
PED	Physical Education Activity	0.5
REL3011	St. John's Gospel	3
	Free Elective	3
	Total Cr	16.5 (35.5)

Senior – Sem. I

HEB2001	Intermediate Biblical Hebrew I	3
HIS3010	U.S. History since 1945	3
REL4010	Book of Acts	3
	Other Cultures Elective	3
	Free Elective	3
	Total Cr	15

Sem. II

HEB2002	Intermediate Biblical Hebrew II	3
HIS	History Elective	3
REL3030	Introduction to Philosophy	3
REL4011	First Corinthians	3
	Free Elective	3
	Total Cr	15 (30)

Total Program Credits 132/133

- Students choose a non-biblical language option with the following requirements:
 - German Equivalent of six college semesters
 - Latin Equivalent of six college semesters
 - Spanish Equivalent of six college semesters
 - Other Living Language Equivalent of six college semesters
 - Confessional Languages Five semesters German/Five semesters Latin
- The high school prerequisite is two years of the language of the option (equivalent to two college semesters if the student scores adequately on the placement test).
- There are required area electives English Literature, Greek, history, physical education, science and Other Cultures.
- Koine students carry GRK3002 Greek Classics in Translation and have one less free elective.
- Confessional languages option students usually have fewer free electives.