



LUTHER SEMINARY

2481 COMO AVE. + ST. PAUL, MN 55108
651-641-3456 + FAX 651-641-3354
Website: www.luthersem.edu

Rev. Alvin Erickson
6732 Pleasant Ave. S.
Richfield, MN 55423

Here is my review of your books:

Review: Al Erickson with Patricia Malloy. *Parents Arise! Grandparents Arise! Book 1: Ten Challenges to Overcome to Safeguard our Children*. Austin: Langmarc Publishing, 2011 186 pp. *Parents Arise! Grandparents Arise! Book 2: Ten Actions to Take to Safeguard our Children*. Austin: Langmarc Publishing, 2011 218 pp.

Walter Sundberg
Professor of Church History
Luther Seminary

In the first of these two indispensable volumes on safeguarding children today, Pastor Al Erickson (along with Patricia Malloy) notes that in 1960 the four most important influences on children were family, school, friends and peers, and church. Having entered the world of the teenager in the early sixties, I can personally attest to this list; although in my case, my close friends and peers were in my congregation which magnified the influence of the church on my formative years. By 1980 the situation had changed. The four greatest influences in order were friends and peers, family, media, and school. Church was out of the top four, family and school demoted, peer pressure increased, and media on the rise. It was about this time that Hollywood realized that its meal ticket depended on the tastes of teenagers and so put enormous amounts of energy and money to create the summer adventure blockbuster (think "Star Wars" and "Raiders of the Lost Ark"). By 2000 media took top spot, friends and peers second, family and school at the rear. But media was no longer simply TV, popular music, and movies; it now included the computer with the internet: a wild-west world of anything goes in which children could often navigate better than their parents. With bedroom door closed, boys and girls could enter forbidden worlds: pornography, chat rooms, and the like where predators, who have always lurked in the shadows, acquired new weapons to tempt and ensnare vulnerable youth to drugs, sexual slavery, and other horrors. To make things worse divorce and out-of-wedlock births have increased many fold across the decades since the watershed 1960s. Who will safeguard our children if not the family?

Pastor Erickson knows the force of this question personally. He had a child ensnared. He tells stories in the book of parents blindsided and their children stolen from them in schemes and scams. For example there is "Jenny," who interviews in a Twin Cities restaurant for what she thinks is a job as a disc jockey. Jenny is told she is on the short list, but needs to undergo a second interview in Chicago. Her father, Mike, is unsure about letting his daughter go to Chicago but a professional business card, provided by the interviewer, and a phone call to the number on the card, answered by a pleasant sounding female "receptionist", reassures him. It is all an elaborate, diabolical setup. When Jenny arrives in Chicago, 400 miles from Mom and Dad, she finds herself at the mercy of two ruthless men.

Erickson and Malloy speak with authority. A former missionary to Papua, New Guinea, Erickson is the founder of two ministries: Grassroots Ministry serving the vulnerable in inner-city Minneapolis and Adults Saving Kids. Patricia Malloy has been a public school teacher and a full-time trainer for Tentmakers Youth Ministry. They consider the battle to protect our children a matter of spiritual warfare, calling upon the power of Jesus Christ as Lord and the wisdom of the Bible as a sure guide. Erickson offers a concrete and practical analysis of the situations that parents face. He and Malloy describe the dangers and pitfalls of present day parenting (and grand parenting) with an unblinking eye. In this task he is inspired by the Gospel of Matthew. Why Matthew? "Matthew knows conniving" (I, 68). The Gospel tells stories of treachery (e.g., Herod seeking to kill the newborn babe). It takes Jesus to heart when he tells the disciples that they will be "sheep among wolves." Matthew witnesses to Jesus' command that we be "wise as serpents" (Mt. 10.16) and assures us that we can depend upon him in time of need, knowing that he has authority and that for him, unlike us, the 'yoke is easy and the burden light' (Mt. 11.30). We must live in the world realistically. We need to face the power of the devil. We are to trust the Lord Jesus Christ.

Pastor Erickson is a superb, down-to-earth expositor of Scripture; a rare talent in the mainline church today. Not only does he provide fresh insights into the reading of Matthew, showing the sober realism of the Gospel's understanding of society and world. He also uplifts and guides the vocation of Christian parenting in his reading the Epistle to the Ephesians (I, 119-123) which opens this letter in a way that I have not encountered before. And he offers this powerful witness: "The enemy we face today is not only the scheming treacherous person out there somewhere," who seeks to rob us of our children, "but the principalities and powers that have that person dangling on a string like a puppet. Will power, street smarts, and insight will not defeat such an adversary. The power that raised Christ from the dead (Eph. 1.19-23) is what Paul speaks of again in Eph. 6.10: 'Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his power.'" Pastor Erickson draws this lesson: "So it starts with each of us. Every Christian finds himself or herself in a struggle to stay grounded in that strength and salvation of God. Christian adults must witness to their own spiritual battles in such a way that youth may locate the source of their strength" (I, 123).

The ten challenges of the first volume and the ten actions of the second are specific, pointed and all make sense. You will have to read the books to find out what they are; which I encourage you to do. For those who care about our youth today, these books are must reading.

Hope this is of help.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Walter Sundberg". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Sincerely".

Walter Sundberg
Professor of Church History