

Forward in Christ...At the Dawn of A New Millennium

Changing Contexts—Eternal Word

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[Delivered at the Reformation Symposium, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary,
Mequon, Wisconsin, October 31, 2000]

Changing Contexts

The assigned title sounds so hopeful. *Forward*—that’s certainly better than going backwards, isn’t it? *Dawn*—that sounds so much better than calling the paper, “Sunset,” or “The Gathering Gloom.” *New*—what more positive word could have been chosen in our culture, where what is “new” is worshipped as progress, and what is old dismissed as obsolete? Even *Millennium*—a word rife with problems for Lutherans—in this context at least seems to have a positive little spin to it.

And yet, we must wonder about the topic. Are we really all so optimistic at the ending of this 20th century? We have reached this pinnacle of progress, but we seem to be unsure whether we stand at the edge of some broad, fruited plain or on the brink of a dark abyss. Yes, it has been “an age of miracle and wonder,” but also an age of anxiety. This century saw people fly airplanes for the first time, walk on the moon, split the atom, complete the genome project, heal crippling diseases, and connect the world with technology. It also saw tens of millions die in two horrific world wars, and has witnessed several genocides. Though we have solemnly declared, “Never again!” we’re afraid that’s a promise we can’t keep. At last report, xenophobia is seizing Western Europe, and in America, hate crimes are on the rise. Meanwhile AIDS—the worst epidemic since the Black Death—marches relentlessly across Africa.

This was not how it was supposed to be. At the beginning of this century, no one could have predicted any of it. After the religious wars that ravaged Europe in the 1600’s, the great dawn of the Enlightenment promised a new age of hope for the world. Finally man would occupy his rightful place in the world as the measure of all things and the master of all he surveyed. Humanity would be freed from superstition and fear. The great shapers of the Enlightenment project knew their dream might take awhile to come to complete fruition, but they never doubted its ultimate triumph. Hope in mankind’s progress fueled revolutions both political and industrial. It was expressed in mass migrations from old worlds to new frontiers. It received its warrant from Darwin’s evolutionary theories. Finally, by the beginning of the 20th century, the dream seemed at last within grasp.

Then came the mud and the blood of the First World War. Things fell apart. Upon the ruins of Europe, Hitler and Stalin fashioned vast empires fueled by new and demonic ideologies that enabled them to enslave and murder millions. The Second World War left the world divided into warring camps. East and West began fighting the Cold War and mutually enduring life under the terror of instant thermonuclear annihilation. The Enlightenment dream had become a nightmare.

Just when it seemed things couldn’t get any worse, the Cold War ended in the communists’ whimper, inspiring one daring scholar triumphantly to proclaim the “end of history.”¹ According to Francis Fukuyama, we had at last reached the goal of history. The end of the Cold War left us standing in a world where all the alternatives had been tried, and the only political ideology worth following was liberal democracy—with its attendant consumer culture. “On the contrary,” said others,² “You presume too much.” One presumption they railed against the most was Fukuyama’s supposition that there was a higher purpose behind life’s ceaseless ebb and flow.

Against the notion that history had reached its goal and that humanity had triumphed, these people declared that history had no meaning at all. That all attempts to assign a higher meaning to events was a method of maintaining power over other, “voiceless” people. That even viewing humanity as the summit of some

evolutionary hill was an immoral power-grab, dismissive of other species of life. “It could well be,” this group asserted, “that our relentless pursuit of progress is destroying the very planet we call home. Far from having reached the lofty heights, humanity might well be a plague upon the world.” According to them, we—with all our know-how and progress—are bringing upon ourselves ecological catastrophe. “Perhaps that’s the way it must be,” they solemnly intone, “The planet must wipe itself clean of us in order to survive.”

So here we are at the end of the Enlightenment era, on the edge of what we are not sure. At its beginning, man saw himself as the measure of all. By its ending, he had become a planet-destroying virus. At its beginning, the West seemed poised to unite all the tribes and peoples into a new and better humanity. At its ending we seem to be more tribal and fragmented than ever. At its beginning, a rising stock of knowledge seemed to promise greater and more universally-applicable truth for all. At its ending we find ourselves so overwhelmed with data, we have a hard time making sense of anything. Amidst this endless topsy-turvy, we wonder if we can even say (without an ironic catch in our throat), “Forward...at the dawn of a new millennium.”

I suppose we could end this essay here and conclude with a shrug that Heraclitus and Henry Ford both were right, that *panta rhei*—all is flux—and that history is more or less bunk. The only constant thing in this world is change. And even change itself is changing: time’s river seems to flow by faster each day. But if I tried to stop here, you would rightly protest and point out to me, “Mr. Essayist, you have not fulfilled your duty. We haven’t asked you to comment on the idea, ‘Forward, At the Dawn of a New Millennium,’ but ‘Forward *in Christ*, at the Dawn of a New Millennium.’ Those two little words, “in Christ,” change everything. We may have every right to be gloomy as we contemplate the Enlightenment project, or in fact any project merely human. But once we fill our eyes with Christ, we can’t help but look out again at this dying world with wide-eyed, childlike wonder.

Eternal Word

Because God came down into the world in Christ two millennia ago, we can, with joy and unquenchable optimism, go forward into the new millennium. “The glory of the LORD” *has been* “revealed,” and our hearts are now so seized by that good news that we long to carry out our Master’s will. With God, we want “all mankind together” to see that glory revealed in the face of Christ. Let others indulge themselves in apocalyptic pessimism and speak gloomily about this desert life. Let others dismiss all truth with their raised eyebrows and their cynical “whatever”s. If they are bound and determined to go their own way, then let them go. We cannot help but speak the things we have seen and heard.

Certainly we are aware that this world groans under a curse. At times we may become disheartened by the spiritual desolations we see around us. “If a voice calls out in such a wasteland,” we wonder, “Can it possibly make a difference?” But then we remember that God has commanded us to cry out not with our own, but with his voice. Our voice may be powerless, but God’s voice can topple the lofty mountains and smooth out all the rugged canyon lands that stand in the way:

A voice says, “Cry out.”

And I said, “What shall I cry?”

“All men are like grass,

and all their glory is like the flower of the field.

The grass withers and the flowers fall

because the breath of the LORD blows on them.” (Isaiah 40:6-7)

Some may think such a voice is too still and too small to accomplish anything, especially since God puts his words into merely human mouths and asks them to speak. There’s nothing high-tech about a voice. It lacks even the primitive technology of writing to lend it some power and permanence. St. Augustine himself once said:

*Illa enim vox acta atque transacta est, coepta et finita. Sonuerunt syllabae atque transierunt, secunda post primam, tertia post secundam atque inde ex ordine, donec ultima post ceteras silentiumque post ultimam.*³

That voice came and went. It began and it ended. The syllables sounded and died away: the second after the first, the third after the second and so on in their order, until, after all the rest, the final word came. Then silence after the final word.

And he was talking about the voice from heaven which said, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.” For the great church father a voice—even the voice of God—was not enough by itself to help him transcend human limitations and rise up from a fallen world.⁴

But God chooses “the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are” (1 Co 1:28). It has pleased God to set us free from sin, from death, and from all that stands against us by the voice of the gospel, the foolishness of preaching Christ crucified: “The grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever.” And this is the word that was preached⁵ to you (1 Pt 1:24-25).

Ever since the alphabet was invented, humanity has taken pride in its technology. We have gloried in our power to inscribe words onto clay, metal, and rock. We progressed to writing with ink upon leather. Then paper came along. In the middle of this last millennium, humankind took a great leap forward by discovering how, through removable type, to make books and pamphlets available to huge audiences. Finally, within the space of this century, we’ve learned how to broadcast information instantaneously through the air, save it digitally on our computers, and replicate it flawlessly and endlessly on a wide variety of media.

Yet as if to forestall any attempt on our part to glory in our own power to communicate, and so that the excellence of the power would be seen to be his alone, God chose first to sound out the gospel of eternal life by this symbol of evanescence: a mere, human voice. That way, no matter what medium we would use ever afterwards to communicate the good news, we would be sure that the power of the words rest not in our own ingenious devices, but in our God alone.

Putting our confidence in the power of that gospel, we are ready to begin our survey of the various contexts in which the gospel has been confessed during the past few hundred years. We wish to take special notice of the various challenges facing the confessors, as well as the strategies they adopted to deal with them as they carried out our Savior’s command to preach the good news to all the world.

Luther Rediscovered the Gospel

We consider ourselves, of course, to be unabashedly Lutheran as we stand at the dawn of this new millennium. But what exactly does this mean? And how did we come to be this way, at this place, in this year of our Lord’s grace? To find an answer, we first have to return to the old world, going back nearly five hundred years to consider Luther’s rediscovery of the gospel. Only then can we properly turn our attention to our own Synod’s historical experience of the gospel as we have confessed it in the new world.

The story of the reformation is a tale oft-told. How a person tells it depends on his point of view. Catholics perceive it as a revolution that tore apart the fabric of the Western Church. Protestants regard it as a welcome beginning to a process that Luther didn’t take quite far enough. Calvin and others had to complete it by organizing worship and church polity according to pure New Testament standards. Enlightenment intellectuals like Goethe saw Luther as a colossus who had freed Europe from ignorance and priestcraft, paving the way to progress and enlightenment. Others have tried to make Luther into the German prophet,⁶ a nationalist who contextualized the gospel for Germans.⁷ Finally, one recent biographer has cast Luther in the role of postmodern man, someone filled with existential angst at the thought of death, and trying—by sheer force of will—to build himself a truth to hold onto in the face of gloomy doubt.⁸ But for us the one thing that counts with Luther is his rediscovery of the gospel.

Now the proclamation of the gospel does indeed “turn the world upside down” (Acts 17:6). Though the gospel is always preached “for faith,” some spurn it, and so division becomes an inevitable by-product of genuine gospel preaching. Yet this is God’s “strange work,” as Luther would have said, something foreign to God’s original intention in sending out the Word. Those who can’t understand why Luther didn’t go further in his Reformation also fail to grasp the gospel freedom we have, which does not need a Biblical warrant to validate a specific worship form, and by which we can welcome all that is lovely or admirable from the past as gifts of God, handed down to us from “our” church.

In response to the Enlightenment intellectuals, we say: believing the gospel *does* turn fools into wise men, while unbelief turns wise men like Goethe into fools! In his praise of Luther, Goethe chose to overlook the Reformer’s emphasis on man’s depravity, a dogma which Goethe could never have accepted. Consequently, Luther simply can’t be squeezed into the heroic role Goethe imagined for him. Instead, the Reformer urges us all to confess, “We are beggars, that is true.”

The myth of human progress is also a notion Luther would have utterly rejected.⁹ “God creates out of nothing,” he declared, “Man changes one thing into another. This is a futile occupation.”¹⁰ Nor was Luther much of a nationalist, if one means by that someone who puts his nation ahead of truth. He would make no political bargains for the sake of earthly security, and his discovery led to wars from which it would take Germany a long time to recover. As for being a prophet, Luther would only call himself that in the sense of “one who preaches the Word of God,” but certainly not in the sense of being an inspired religious genius.¹¹ And the thought of Luther being some kind of postmodern man is simply laughable. Luther did not, by his own will or choice, build himself a mystery simply to relieve his own fears. His tortured conscience rather drove him into the Word. He listened to what God said there,¹² and then confessed it before the world.

What matters to us, then, is God’s message, not his messenger. A voice is a voice—just that, and no more. Though we honor Luther, we care a great deal more about the gospel he proclaimed, the good news of a God who justifies sinners through faith in Christ Jesus. This is the *articulus stantis vel cadentis ecclesiae*.¹³ The loss of this teaching would not only mark the end of the Lutheran Church, it would also mean the end of the Holy Christian Church on earth. Why? Because this is the one Word without which the Church cannot live.¹⁴ And if the Church should lose her hope in this Word, there would be no hope left for the world, either, for “there is only one Gospel for all nations, just as there is only one Christ for all men.”¹⁵

The bold claim of gospel certainty (which is really what our claim of possessing the truth is all about) must sound utterly foreign to our fragmenting world. For people today, an individual’s life and experience seem far more important than pure doctrine. How can a single teaching matter so much? Yet the Lutheran Church remains absolutely sure of it, because the mouth of the Lord has spoken it, and the Lord Jesus came down to accomplish it.

Luther and the rest simply confessed it. No one can read about the Reformation, or page through its foundational writings, without coming to understand the “profound seriousness”¹⁶ with which the Reformers viewed God’s truth. As confessors, they were all deeply conscious of the fact that what they said, they said before God’s throne. As Luther once put it, “I am determined to abide by [this confession] until my death, and (so help me God!) in this faith to depart from this world and to appear before the judgment seat of our Lord Jesus.”¹⁷

Luther did not come all at once to a pure understanding the doctrine of justification, nor did it remain his without a struggle. In his *Anfechtungen*, Luther yearned for the certainty of having a merciful God. Medieval Catholicism had taught him that God would not withhold grace from any man who did his best.¹⁸ This brought him no certainty, however, because he could never be sure his best was good enough. His uncertainty led him into having thoughts that were even more ungodly. “I became angry with God,” he said. Naturally, this experience left him feeling even more anxious and afraid. Finally, after diligent study, Luther found his merciful God in the Christ who died for the ungodly. He understood that he could never find a place to rest within himself; he had to look outside himself to Christ alone.

From all this it should also be apparent how closely the doctrine of original sin is related to the doctrine of justification. As the Church sings to its Lord each year at Christmas: “Come from on high to me; I cannot rise

to thee.” These same words capture the essence of Luther’s understanding of human nature. Partly through his own bitter experience, but mostly through the Scriptures,¹⁹ Luther had come to understand humanity’s complete inability to rise up to God.

Nor did he see this inability in some passively inert sense, as if we were like some wounded individual lying helpless in the road. The Scriptures had convinced him that humanity’s innate “spiritual” powers worked in active opposition to the one true God who saves. As a result, natural man was at his worst when he was on his best behavior, and when he was trying his hardest to be good, he was God’s bitterest enemy.²⁰ Only when Scripture has taught us to appreciate how deeply corrupted we are in our nature can we find joy in the love that “reaches down into the world”²¹ to redeem our nature, and reconcile us back to God.

Luther’s opponents immediately began to question the legitimacy of his Scriptural insights by pointing to the writings of the fathers and to the authority of the church. The Devil then joined in by attacking him with another troubling doubt: “Are you alone wise, as opposed to so many through the centuries?”²² Medieval certainty of its own doctrinal truths had rested, in large part, on the unbroken continuity of the Church’s teaching.²³ Yet increasingly Luther had begun to realize that this unbroken continuity was a myth. Popes, councils, and church fathers had all contradicted one another. Only when he had freed himself from relying on the Church’s teaching tradition could he continue to find solace in the teaching of justification. In the end, he made his stand on the authority of Scripture alone. And for Luther, the Scriptures could no more err than God could lie.

That’s why for the Reformers, Scripture’s authority and the doctrine of justification were two truths that belonged together. The doctrine of justification was drawn from Holy Scripture and rested on its authority. The Word of Truth was only rightly divided when it was understood in the light of justification. As the Apology puts it:

Justification is of particular usefulness in arriving at the clear, correct understanding of the entire Holy Scriptures. It alone shows the way to the unspeakable treasure and the right knowledge of Christ. It alone opens the door to the entire Bible.²⁴

This is just another way of saying that Christ stands at the center of Holy Writings: “If you take Christ out of the Scriptures, what will you have left?”²⁵

The greatest impact of the gospel was the sweet freedom it gave to anxious and troubled consciences. Since the Christian was now convinced that his relationship to God was firmly established in Christ, he was free to live each day from the forgiveness of sins. Gone was the necessity to go on pilgrimage, enter monasteries, sink into mystic depths, or practice other heroic feats of piety in order to find peace with God. With the vertical relationship a given, the Christian’s horizontal relationships now regained their true, Scriptural significance. No longer were certain estates or callings in life to be considered higher or lower, more or less sacred. Now all of life was charged with the holy, and each calling a sacred vocation. Now the Christian had become radically freed to serve his neighbor in love, just as Christ had served him. There was no holier life than this.²⁶

The impact of the gospel demonstrated itself in many other ways during the Reformation era. When a person considers the sheer volume²⁷ Luther’s prodigious literary output, to say nothing of its breadth and variety,²⁸ one can only stand back in awe and say, “Faith is a living, busy, active, mighty thing!” Luther was determined to get the gospel out using the medium of the written word.²⁹ In this effort, of course, the printing press was his greatest ally:

Luther only needed to publish a new work in Wittenberg for printers in Leipzig, Nuremberg, Augsburg, Strasbourg, Basle and other cities to fall upon it and reprint it, and this was usually done by two, three, or four presses in the same city... There is evidence extant that every popular devotional work which Luther published up to the summer of 1520... was reprinted on average twelve times.³⁰

And while Luther would not allow Erasmus' reasonable approach to reduce the Scriptures to an opaque book, he still felt free to make use of the philological methods and tools the great Renaissance humanists were then developing. Luther also found their sense of history to be a vital weapon in his attack on the Papacy.³¹ The Catholic Church was not an unchanging institution, and so a perfect guarantor of the truth. Its forms, institutions, and theological opinions had continually developed and changed through history.

Perhaps the greatest evidence of Luther's sense of freedom can be seen in his liturgical and translational work. He felt no qualms about accepting all that was good from the past. And so he preserved whatever he could of the ancient forms in his *Formula Missae*. At the same time, when the needs of his people required it, he did not hesitate to contextualize worship with an entirely German setting in his *Deutsche Messe*. "Both text and notes," as he put it, "must proceed from the mother tongue and voice."³²

This same attitude prevailed in what must be regarded as Luther's crowning literary achievement: the translation of the Bible into German. There, in fact, he felt a freedom to express the Scriptures' truth in a way that his sons and daughters have often lacked. Impatient with methods of translation that preserved the form but lost the meaning, he struggled to make the prophets "give up their Hebrew and imitate the barbaric German."³³ Luther wanted to produce a translation that, while remaining faithful to their original meaning, didn't sound like a translation.

In view of all this, it seems odd that Luther has sometimes been accused of lacking true mission zeal, as more recent generations have come to define such zeal. True, some of his more heroic statements on the gospel's power might be interpreted as a call for us to do nothing but sit in taverns drinking "good Wittenberg beer," while the gospel goes out and does the work all by itself. In those statements it is clear, however, that Luther is merely emphasizing the truth that—whatever pots of clay we might put it in—the good news of Jesus remains God's power for rescuing poor sinners.³⁴

In 1546 Luther's voice was finally stilled by death. But not the gospel's. The good news of God's pardon in Christ continued to sound through the centuries of war, turmoil and change that followed. If we pass over those centuries in silence, it is not because they are unimportant. We do it only because we want to hurry on to our own history in the new world.

Eternal Word, New World

Changing Identities

It's hard to hear—really hear—a story that's your own, and that you've heard so many times. Most interesting, perhaps, is what we *weren't*: not confessional; not tightly knit; yet definitely German, only not like Missouri. Perhaps "not like Missouri" is the key phrase, since like siblings of one family, we so often compared ourselves to what would soon be our big sister.

The Missourians as we all know, had been forged within the crucible of controversy into just such a tightly knit group with a definite *esprit de corps*. First, they had left their homeland for conscience' sake, unwilling to accept the blurring of confessional lines between Lutherans and Reformed that their governments had been advocating in the Union.³⁵ They then survived the crisis of faith brought on by Stephan's fall from grace,

chiefly through the Scriptural counsel and sobriety of young Pastor C.F.W. Walther of St. Louis. They were afterwards firmly resolved to listen to no other voice than that of the Lutheran Confessions which they accepted as the true presentation of the Word of God.³⁶

Because of what they had gone through, these men had a very low opinion of any Lutheran who deviated from their line. We also understand, given their context, why the Confessions loomed so large in their thinking and argumentation: they were trying to reclaim and reassert their gospel-identity in the New World! They were the true Lutherans, "Old" Lutherans, confessing the same faith that the Lutherans had of old.

No such confessionally-defining moments accompanied the birth either of the Wisconsin Synod or of the various state-synods which later joined her. Instead, the immense tide of German immigration provided the major impetus for Muehlhaeuser, Wrede, and Weinmann to form their ministerium in America. To serve the German immigrant, in fact, was the compelling reason for their coming to the United States in the first place. Beginning with the 1830's the volume of Germans coming to this country had begun to pick up dramatically. By the mid-1850's, their yearly numbers exceeded those of every other immigrant group including the Irish, a position of prominence the Germans maintained until the 1890's.³⁷ "Before the end of the century, more than 5 million had arrived."³⁸ The German mission societies took note of "the deplorable spiritual condition of our emigrants"³⁹ and commissioned gospel-servants like Muehlhaeuser to attend to their needs.

These mission societies had formed within the context of a large, conservative, religious reawakening that had occurred in Germany at the beginning of the 19th century. Pious Christians had finally risen up in a concerted effort to defend the faith against the depredations caused by 18th century rationalism. Used by Jacob Semler on the Scriptures,⁴⁰ rationalism had put a question mark over nearly every major Biblical truth. To fight it, people in the mission societies "felt conscience-bound to stand shoulder to shoulder with all (evangelicals) who loved the Savior, regardless of doctrinal and confessional differences."⁴¹ The peril of the times, they felt, demanded such a united effort. They were simply showing their agreement with the many voices in Germany at the time who felt that a union of Lutherans and Reformed in Germany was the best way to form a solid front against unbelief. Such a union should exist in an outward, organizational form at least, even if a common doctrinal confession could not immediately be achieved.

This explains why the men trained and sent out by groups like the *Langenberger Verein* at Barmen weren't inclined to be too picky about the differences between themselves and the Reformed. Though Barmen men wanted to be Lutheran, they saw themselves as confessors of a kinder, gentler Lutheranism than that espoused by those crabbed and cranky Missourians.⁴² They were the "New" Lutherans. So long as they had the freedom to preach according to their own conscience, they saw no harm in an outward union with the Reformed. In a similar way, they regarded all the German immigrants as objects of their love and spiritual care. Should they find a number of Reformed Christians among them, they would serve them "until they were able to call a pastor of their own convictions."⁴³ Muehlhaeuser even saw the confessional flexibility of the New Lutheran position as a distinct advantage to him in carrying out his mission.⁴⁴

While we aren't inclined to give Muehlhaeuser high marks today for his lack of confessional rigor, we find ourselves inspired by his love for souls. Here was a man who had been willing to go on a Pilgrim's mission⁴⁵ into the heart of Catholic Austria. Like the Apostle Paul, he suffered imprisonment for his pains. Following his service there, he was willing to uproot himself entirely and go from Europe to America. After he had built up a congregation in Rochester, New York, he eagerly responded to Weinmann's appeal to go west to help out in the wilds of Wisconsin, where thousands of German immigrants wandered as sheep without a shepherd. Listen to his reasoning, "Since the congregation was well organized and in a position to support a pastor properly, and since I still felt healthy and strong, I decided to move...in order to carry on mission work for a few more years."⁴⁶ There beats a gospel heart!⁴⁷

We should also take care not to be overly critical in judging his confessional worthiness. His mild form of Lutheranism was not without backbone. With Walther he shared an unswerving commitment to the Holy Scriptures as God's inspired, inerrant Word against every form of rationalistic unbelief. He could be critical of those who failed to appreciate the Lutheran treasure of justification by faith alone.⁴⁸ It is true, we pay tribute to other men for helping our Synod see the necessity of saying a confessional "no" as well as a confessional "yes." Yet we don't want our gratitude for the confessional strengths of others lead us to become dismissive of Muehlhaeuser's mission strengths. Those strengths were born of the same gospel we confess. Nor would we want our own confessional "no"s to be the only discernable notes in our gospel song of praise.

In a sense the tension we observe in the account of our first beginnings is emblematic of a tension that continues to exist among us today. Our mission zeal is not always so very well integrated with our confessional zeal. So long as both remain in balance, so long as both remain centered in the gospel, all is well. But just as

mission zeal without a passion for truth turns into a misty syncretism, so confessional zeal without a passion to share our Savior with the lost is bound to turn into a musty traditionalism.

The story of how we found our confessional identity has been well-described by others; we need only summarize their conclusions here. Through the leadership of men like John Bading and Adolph Hoenecke our Synod came within the space of fifteen years to a far deeper sense of the need to defend and preserve the gospel's truth from error. First the Wisconsin Synod took a firm stand against the General Council's vacillating confession. By repudiating the Union in 1867, the Synod showed itself willing to endure the loss of support from the mission societies—a support which it still, humanly speaking, desperately needed. Finally, by 1868, the “New” Lutherans of Wisconsin were able to embrace the “Old” Lutherans of Missouri in “full unity of faith.”⁴⁹

Now the Scriptures lead us to believe that our God shapes history also in other ways besides working through the Word. In every historical force and social movement, God is directing matters for the ultimate good of his Church. With the eyes of faith, then, we may examine how other forces shaped our identity as a Lutheran Synod in this new world. Since our judgments are not directly based on the Scriptures, we must not absolutize our conclusions as if they represented the final word. Yet because we are confident that God works all in all, we naturally seek to identify ways in which God has worked both in judgment to bring us to repentance, or in mercy to lead us more deeply into his Word. Often we may be able to discern—in one and the same historical or cultural force—consequences both good and bad for the visible church.

For example, we've said we were a church made up of German immigrants. Since the flood of German immigration continued throughout the 19th century and into the 20th, we would expect to discover our German-ness being continually refreshed throughout these years. This is, in fact, what happened, and it had both positive and negative consequences. Positively, one can say that it provided a favorable context in which confessional conservatism could take root. Immigrants, surrounded by a new and alien culture, quite naturally long for their former home. They then, may “seek to recreate those aspects of life most precious to them from the old world,”⁵⁰ Cultural motivation like this, of course, is not the same thing as gospel motivation. But one can see how God can use a longing for an earthly home to kindle a deeper longing for the better country.

Negatively, however, it can contribute to a practice of exclusivity on the basis of one's race or language.⁵¹ An attitude like this may not always be a carefully worked out position, it may not be malicious, but the exclusivity is there, nonetheless. It is true that there were leaders in both the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods who, from the beginning, called for a greater use of the English language.⁵² Yet those voices, by and large, were not heeded—at least, not among us. We may ascribe some of our exclusivity to “the rural nature of our Synod, and the fact that many of our congregations were in German enclaves.”⁵³ To put it another way: it is hard to envision a broader scope of mission work if you have little contact with a wider world. Finally, we might argue that there was nothing wrong with playing to our strength in this area. So long as more Germans were coming, why not do our best to reach them?⁵⁴

Yet even taking these things into account, it remains troubling to think that it took so long for us to see outreach in broader terms than simply as a matter of gathering in our fellow Germans. Our inclination to be less than speedy in these matters is something worth recognizing about ourselves, not because there's any profit in criticizing our fathers, but because similar exclusive enclaves are still so easily built and maintained among us today. After a while, offering justifications for them begins to sound like making excuses. Soon what began as a necessity can even be turned into a virtue, backed up by many and weighty reasons. “Lutheranism might suffer too much in the translation from German to English.” “Changing over to English might tempt us to become more Calvinistic or Arminian.”⁵⁵ “There are organizations...that remain small in number and in that have a token of their mission to do intensive rather than extensive work.”⁵⁶ The fact remains that so long as there continued to be an ample supply of “our kind of people,” Wisconsin Synod efforts to cross the linguistic divide and act as a gospel voice to the broader population remained less than heroic.

Besides our German-ness, there were other powerful cultural forces shaping our attitudes. Most notable of these was our relationship with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. The importance of this relationship can scarcely be overestimated. As a positive force, she represented to us a beloved big sister on whose strength and

power we depended. Three of our best seminary teachers, for example, received their own seminary education at the feet of Missouri greats like Walther and Stoeckhardt. We rejoiced in Walther's exposition of objective justification. Through him the voice of the everlasting gospel had sounded out on American soil in clear and unmistakable terms.⁵⁷ We stood in awe of Missouri's single-minded ability to make "the most of the opportunities God gave them."⁵⁸

As a negative force, we felt a true sibling rivalry with her. Living in her shadow, we felt this compulsion to compare ourselves with her.

Unlike Missouri, Wisconsin was not of one mold. It was not born of one united, strong, clear, Lutheran spirit. In its beginnings it was a conglomeration of peoples...not thoroughly instructed...strangers to each other. They had no outstanding or even authoritative leader... Many, indeed, had no idea how to organize a Lutheran congregation properly...[In contrast to Missouri] we are a conglomerations of different synods and of individual elements which are ecclesiastically similar to us but striving for the greatest possible independence.⁵⁹

We struggled, in other words, with a sense of inferiority, a sense that was exacerbated by what appeared at times to be Missouri's dogmatic smugness and sense of superiority to us clueless country bumpkins.⁶⁰

Once again, we tended to console ourselves by turning our necessities into virtues. Were we a conglomerate rather than a unified group? Well then, we would revel in our independence and individualism. Did Missouri line up behind great leaders? Well then, we would take pride in our unwillingness to automatically fall in line behind ours, finding pleasure, instead, in taking potshots at them. Was Missouri self-assured and polished? Well then, we would be humbly content with our limited mission and despise all forms of PR. We would not be imbued with a triumphalistic spirit. We would refuse to be fascinated by "bigness." "*Wird sind in der Wisconsin Synode,*" August Pieper is reputed to have said, "*Wir machen kein Show!*"⁶¹

All this is not to deny that, on a spiritual plane, a triumphalistic attitude is antithetical to the gospel. Missouri certainly seems to have been imbued with an over-emphasis on externals. No doubt there was justification for our criticisms. No doubt our own historical situation presented fewer external obstacles to our hearing the message of the still, small voice. Yet taking pride in our fierce independence and in our *lack of esprit de corps* is, in its own way, a perverse sort of triumphalism. If finding a churchly identity in "bigness" is wrong-headed—because it replaces the gospel with something else—so is finding one's identity in smallness.

In view of these tensions, it is all the more remarkable that Wisconsin and Missouri remained united in the Synodical Conference for as long as they did. The fact that these social forces were at work confirms all the more that our unity with Missouri was ultimately one of faith resting on the infallible Word of God. Many external things may divide one from another; the eternal gospel triumphs over them all. The fruit of that supernatural unity was most clearly seen at the time of the Election Controversy.⁶² Relying on the 17th century dogmatists, some Lutheran teachers in America had tried to explain why God had chosen some to be his own and not others. Besides his eternal grace in Christ, these men suggested another reason for God's choice: God had done it, they said, *intuitu fidei*, in view of the faith he foresaw some would have.

By the 1870's, Walther had come to see that this teaching simply did not square with the gospel. It located in man a reason for God's grace. It could not be supported from the Scriptures nor was it found in the Confessions. As Walther began to publish on the topic, he met strong opposition from those who disagreed. Soon the entire Synodical Conference became embroiled in the controversy. In what was surely his finest hour, Adolph Hoenecke took a firm stand and led members of the Wisconsin and Minnesota Synods to side with Walther. Overall, the entire episode had the effect of welding us more firmly together through our common study of the Scriptures and the Confessions.⁶³ For the same reason, it strengthened our bonds with Missouri. It's greatest effect, of course, was to preserve in the new world the authentic voice of the unconditional gospel. By holding faithfully to the Word in the face of opposition, we had been confirmed in our identity as a gospel voice in the land.

The Wauwatosa Gospel

In the previous section we passed over one of the greatest challenges our Synod had faced in our earliest days. We should talk about it now. The problem? We had a hard time finding a reliable supply of faithful pastors to carry out the expanding work of serving those German immigrants. A brief glance at the minutes of those early Synod meetings will amply bear this out. Candidates were examined who had come from here, there, and everywhere. Some proved faithful; others did not.⁶⁴ The best ones still came from the overseas mission societies, but these mission societies had many other requests to fill besides our own.⁶⁵

A number of attempts were made to find alternative sources. We made use of apprentice-type training in pastors' homes, for instance.⁶⁶ We sent one man to Gettysburg seminary in Pennsylvania. We even considered, for a time, a cooperative effort with the Illinois State University. None of these ways satisfied. We finally decided, in 1863, to meet the need by founding our own worker training institution, a combined college and seminary in Watertown. After the rapprochement with Missouri, we agreed to combine our efforts with them in worker training. As a result, the seminary was detached from the college and amalgamated with Missouri's in St. Louis, where our students were trained until the spring of 1878.

At the 1877 convention, we had decided that we needed to have our own seminary again. We were motivated partly by need, but also by an "anti-bigness" mood, and by a desire to preserve our own identity.⁶⁷ We feared being swallowed up by a greater Missouri Synod. In any case, the new seminary in Milwaukee did much more than answer our need for pastors. Under the faithful leadership of Adolph Hoenecke, it soon became another force for cohesion in our Synod. Granted, an institution as such is not a means of grace. Yet as noted before, cultural forces also come under the rule of God's providence. Having a single source of pastors in our Synod went a long way to temper our centrifugal tendencies. After another generation had passed and another move had taken place, Wisconsin's seminary would lend its name to a strikingly new emphasis in American Lutheranism. This emphasis would be called "the Wauwatosa Gospel," after the seminary's new home town.

The Wauwatosa Gospel⁶⁸ was a product of mature reflection on methodology by seminary professors J.P. Koehler, August Pieper, and John Schaller. The need for a careful re-examination of the way Lutherans *did* theology had become apparent in the Election Controversy. In that conflict, as we have noted, the later dogmatists of the Lutheran Church were cited as authorities to "prove" that the *intuitu fidei* idea was Lutheran and Biblical. In fact, it seemed perfectly natural to many to read the Scriptures in the light of the great dogmatists. Walther himself had educated an entire generation of Missouri pastors by using Baier's *Compendium*, even going so far as to insist on giving his lectures in Latin. Dogmatics was considered queen of the theological sciences at St. Louis.

How unsettling, to say the least, to hear Walther asserting a theology of election that disagreed with the very "fathers" he so often cited as authoritative! What could it mean, then, to be orthodox? What did it mean, then, to be Lutheran? Obviously, these questions could not be answered by citing the early fathers against the later ones, Luther and the Confessors against Gerhard and Quenstedt. All of them had wanted to be Biblical theologians. In essence, the problem was one of maintaining the proper relationship of between the doctrine we have confessed and the source of all doctrine—between the *norma normata* and the *norma normans*.

God's Word is the only source of genuine doctrine; it must rule over all other voices in the church. Whatever is Scriptural, then, is truly Lutheran, and whatever is unscriptural can never be Lutheran, no matter what the teacher's pedigree may be. Lutheran doctrine must proceed first from a careful exegesis of what the Scriptures actually have to say, not from a reading of what our teachers say they say. Not dogmatics, but exegesis is the queen of the theological sciences. These were the basic insights of the Wauwatosa gospel, as Pieper, Koehler, and Schaller came to articulate it.

This re-emphasis of *sola scriptura*, coupled as it was with a renewed appreciation for the gospel, led to a theological flowering in which all three men participated. As one reads their writings, one gets a sense of men set free to listen directly to every word that comes from the mouth of God. If some historical formulations of the doctrine of election were flawed, they reasoned, the same might also be true of other doctrinal expressions from

the past. In essence, the Wauwatosa men applied Luther's historical method of critiquing the Catholic tradition to the outward forms of the Lutheran Church.

Furthermore, as new questions arose in the life of the church, the Wauwatosa men resolved to base their answers first on careful Scriptural study, rather than immediately to fall back on what the fathers had said. They wanted to allow the Scriptures—not the fathers—to frame the discussion. The Wauwatosa seminary's teaching on Church and ministry provides one example. In their articles on the subject, all three men demonstrate a breathtaking freedom in being able to re-think from the Scriptures what is essential and what is external in the life and ministry of the church. The result was a rare ability to distinguish historically-conditioned forms from the everlasting gospel, the eternal Word from its changing contexts. Permit me to cite one of the finest examples of this:

People who are won by the Gospel remain, in their outward condition, like other people. They share [with them] the same external forms...as before. The great new life in them does not validate itself by creating new life styles. The externals of the religious life (reverence for God, hope, trust, prayer, praise, thanksgiving, and other expressions of the resultant inner life) are already present in external form in every human being. The same is true of the forms which take shape in the human situation: organization, morality, art, and science. But the new life in Christians pours new content into these available forms—the spirit of the Gospel. That works as a mighty force and shapes the existing forms, so that they give expression to the new content.⁶⁹

“The Gospel creates its own forms” is a popular summary of the above both apt and succinct. In our own age of rapidly changing contexts, I find Koehler's words to be particularly helpful.

The Wauwatosa theology bore other fruit as well, both good and bad. What we might hope remains its most enduring emphasis among us is the sort of personal, prayerful, and devotional study of God's Word both Koehler and Pieper advocated. Because it was the Word of God, they said, Scripture was not to be reduced to a mere tool in a pastor's or teacher's professional work kit. In our use of it, they encouraged us to steer clear of the temptation to reduce its message to a set of easily managed proof passages. Rather each book should be studied as a connected whole, with the reader taking care to observe in each the line of thought and historical context. Furthermore, each book “was carefully placed together by God through men to form a well-ordered whole...No one book contains everything...[Therefore we] must learn and know the Scriptures BOOK BY BOOK.”⁷⁰

The great strategy of the Wauwatosa confessors was the printed word. Here the gospel bore abundant fruit. Their era saw the founding of the *Quartalschrift* from which a constant stream of theological articles flowed. It witnessed the publication of at least three major scholarly books: Schaller's *Biblical Christology*, Koehler's *Kirchengeschichte*, and Pieper's *Esaias II*. Besides all this, the seminary professors found time to write papers for Synodical gatherings which are still being read and re-read today.

In them, one discovers men who are engaged not simply with narrower world of the American Lutheranism, but with the far wider world of ideas that swirled around them. They did not hesitate to make use of the latest in philological tools. They adapted what they could of current historical methodology, not, however, in such a way as would detract from their ability to drink in the pure Word of God. In connection with their scholarly writing, one should also mention their curious habit of seldom referencing any of their sources. This was probably due to their abhorrence of *die Vätertheologie* as well as their desire to present the gospel from a fresh perspective and without tedium. It does, however, make it difficult for us at later date to retrace their steps.

Finally, another fruit both sweet and bitter to our taste was the Wauwatosa theologians' penchant for malting direct criticism of the current state of spiritual affairs in the church. Both Koehler and Pieper detected deep problems. Both saw a Synod experiencing spiritual decline. Both wrote extensively on the subject.

In his perceptive assessment of their words, Professor Martin Westerhaus points out that while Koehler tended to be pessimistic and passive, Pieper was active and optimistic, believing in the possibility of spiritual

renewal. Yet in rounding off his assessment, Professor Westerhaus concludes, “Both at times were given to hyperbole, to exaggeration.”⁷¹ This kind of exaggeration, he implies, contributed to the Protéstants’ later predilection for a type of criticism and fault-finding that was not always carried out in the gentle spirit of love. He may well be right. Certainly both Koehler and Pieper were demonstrating that independent, individualistic stance so prized by our Synod. And in view of the rupture that later occurred between the two men, it’s not hard to see the dangers of this type of writing.

At the same time, it is just that sort of direct application which makes both Koehler’s and Pieper’s words so fresh and thought-provoking for us today. They were not afraid to call the Synod to repentance when repentance was called for. They were not afraid to encourage us in the new life of sanctification. Both men seem to know us well, and the problems they point out (spiritual torpor, mental inflexibility, isolationism, “professionalism” in our use of the Word, boring preaching, a lack of enthusiasm for personal Scripture study, half-hearted efforts in mission work, legalism) are problems we still must face.

Perhaps there is some middle ground—created by the gospel—between the church where “never is heard a discouraging word,” and the church of the terminally glum. Is it possible that, being justified in Christ, we can find a firm place to stand in him where we can still take a good, long, hard look at ourselves? I’m sure of it. Is it also possible that, in him, we can speak to one another sincere words of love, thanks, and (yes even) praise without fearing that we’ll become lost in the pink mists of *theologia gloriae*? I see no reason to doubt it. Can we still practice *evangelische Ermahnung*—preaching the gospel of sanctification—without fear of being accused we’ve sold out to the Reformed? I pray so.

Breaking Away

Wisconsin’s breaking of fellowship with Missouri surely ranks as one of the most important events of our recent past. Equally important, however, is the fact that, even as we were breaking away from Missouri, we were also breaking free from the walls of our midwestern German enclave. From 1941 onwards, we entered a period not only of increasing confessional solidarity, but also of accelerating mission expansion.

This is not to say that we suddenly became aware of the Great Commission in 1941. Muehlhaueser’s mission spirit lived on among us, breathing in the hearts of *Reiseprediger* who crisscrossed Minnesota, Michigan, the Dakotas, and Nebraska. As we’ve already learned, our home mission thrust was almost entirely directed at the huge task of gathering our fellow Germans. Yet even in the 19th century there were two notable exceptions to this. The first was our participation in the Synodical Conference’s “Negro mission” in the South. The second was our embarking on our own “heathen mission” project by sending Adascheck and Plocher to the Apache in 1893.

Closer to our own times, a fine mission spirit can be seen in the Michigan District’s remarkable memorial to the Synod in 1929:

America in the last decades has developed from an agricultural to an industrial nation...[which] has led to an immense growth in city population...Along with this many rural inhabitants...are attracted and absorbed by the cities...Many opportunities...present themselves and what is at stake is mission in the true sense of the term. In the cities all kinds of people live together...It is not only a matter of finding in the cities the members of our own church...but also to approach with the gospel the unchurched masses.⁷²

The vision was not, for the most part, shared by the rest of the Synod. And, in any case, shortly thereafter the Great Depression set in, making it an impossible dream.

We’ve often responded with more money and passion to the call “Strengthen the stakes!” than to cry, “Lengthen the cords!” The entire decade of the 20’s was a time of great expansion, but an expansion of our efforts in education, not in missions. I do not mean to suggest that the two are opposing goals. Just the opposite. They belong together, just as confessionalism and a mission spirit do. Teaching the next generation to know the

Lord is vital part of our gospel mission, a mission that begins right where we are and continues to the uttermost parts of the earth. Who could ever disagree with John Schaller when he says, “Christian education means...to bring [children] to the [Christian] *Weltanschauung*”?⁷³ But there do seem to be whole periods of our history when we chose to do mightily the one and to leave the other half done. We worked hard on our institutions of education. As soon as that job got done, we told ourselves, we’d get down to doing more mission work.⁷⁴

Perhaps this “either...or” frame of mind (maybe it’s better to call it a “first...then” attitude) comes from not always seeing Christian Education in the light of the Church’s gospel mission. It’s easy to see how this can happen. There are all kinds of reasons why we need to have schools—quite apart from a gospel impulse to teach our children God’s Word. In complex societies, educational institutions serve to preserve the culture. Without institutions, a common culture cannot be passed on; and without a common culture, a society is bound to disintegrate. What is true of societies is also true of the visible church. The gospel may create its own forms, but who would ever conclude from this that earthly forms are unimportant?

But in saying, “The gospel creates its own forms,” we remind ourselves that the forms themselves *are* malleable, and that at their center must always be the burning heart of God’s love for poor sinners. When the form or the method becomes the “thing,” when the emphasis is on the clay pot rather than on the treasure it carries, we run the grave risk of losing the gospel treasure itself. Clay pots are brittle; they break. *Paragei gar to \sxhma tou kosmou toutou* (1 Co 7:31)—the world in its present form is *not* going forward; it’s going away!

That is precisely why our zeal to preserve the gospel through Christian education must flow out of a mission ardor to share Christ with all the world. If the two are not felt as different sides of a single coin, a school can easily become an man-made safety zone where we find an ersatz refuge from a stormy world of change. That this did, in fact, happen seems clear from the way we clung to our German. But of that subject, enough has been said already.

There was also at times a lack of evangelical balance in our attitudes towards mission outreach. This seems clear enough from Koehler’s remark regarding the founding of the Apache mission, “The idea that a church is not living up to its mission unless it engages in heathen-mission work...is dogmatism, with a streak of pietism, and it provoked the criticism of Prof. Hoenecke.”⁷⁵ In context, Koehler seems to be saying two things: 1) insisting on a prescribed form for doing mission work is wrong-headed; 2) lurching into mission work without a proper confessional attitude, adequate preparation, or sufficient financing is misguided. With this, I would heartily agree.

Two additional thoughts, however, were also sounded among us quite frequently, ones which seemed to derive from Koehler’s basic argument. They were: 1) we have, as a Synod, a unique gift for Christian education, which is and must remain our first order of business; 2) we must, therefore, exercise care not to divide our strength, watering down our primary commitment to education in our zeal to do mission work. But again, surely it is not a matter of “either...or,” but of “both...and!” In any case, until the crisis with Missouri loomed, we never seemed to be able to devote our hearts to missions in the same way that we did to Christian education.

That the growing confessional crisis took place at a time of an increasingly urgent outreach effort seems no accident. Hermann Sasse once declared that “a church body’s confessional position will largely determine its theology of missions.”⁷⁶ Our struggle with Missouri drove us into the Word. The more the Word’s truth gripped us, the more it compelled us to go out with it into all the world. In the 1940’s, nearly 90 new home mission congregations were established by a fresh batch of *Reiseprediger* (now called “general missionaries”).⁷⁷ “Mission districts” were established in Arizona and Colorado, allowing for greater flexibility in approach and greater intensity in planning.

On the world scene, Edgar Hoenecke and Arthur Wacker became our WELS Forty-Niners, scouting out a suitable place for us to begin a new mission in Africa. Pastor Hoenecke describes for us the pair’s feelings at one point, “We were very discouraged as we now faced the prospect of the more than 1500-mile drive across Africa through Angola and the Belgian Congo.”⁷⁸ Yet they made that drive anyway, and because they did some fifty years later we can thank God for having blessed his Word with a national church consisting of 29 national pastors, 200 congregations, and 36,000 baptized members.⁷⁹

Once the break with Missouri had finally occurred, we simply redoubled the efforts already begun. Methods of planting home mission work changed and developed over the years. In the 60's and 70's our stated objectives were 1) to reach the unchurched, 2) to conserve the membership of the WELS, and 3) to serve others who shared our confessional concerns.⁸⁰ As we moved into the 80's, we tackled objective number one with renewed zeal, and the concept of the "mission exploratory" was born. Back in the heartland, personal and congregational evangelism began to be emphasized as never before. In the late 80's and 90's, we became aware of the rising percentage of immigrants and minorities in our national demographic. This led to new initiatives in urban and cross-cultural work. New forms of gospel ministry came into being.

Meanwhile the scope of our world mission work continued to expand as well: Asia, Latin America, and Europe—opportunities seemed endless. By the late 90's we were supporting 72 missionaries in 24 different mission fields.⁸¹ Since the late 50's the Board for World Missions has operated on a set of principles that wishes to avoid the creation of perpetually-dependent missions. Instead, the principles commit us to the planting of "self-dependent" national churches, churches that are self-supporting, self-governing, self-propagating, and solidly confessional. The confessional aspect of our work is most clearly seen in the emphasis we have placed on "the training of reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (1 Tm 2:2).

As some of our earliest missions have matured, we have begun to have a sense of receiving back from them as much as we have given. Our heart has thrilled to see our sons and daughters come to Zion from afar. Their appreciation for the gospel has fired our zeal. Their songs have enriched our hymnody. Their insights into the Holy Writings have enabled us to see those ancient truths in fresh, new ways. We had always known the passage, "I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22), but now the Holy Spirit was confirming this vital truth in our living experience. This is all as we would expect. As the gospel works its way more deeply into the culture of each nation that receives it, the creative power of true spiritual life reshapes, renews, and transforms everything it touches.

And this tremendous expansion began as we were breaking away from Missouri. If ever we needed evidence that God's love is infinitely greater than the sum of our fears, surely the break and its aftermath should prove it. It was for us a long process that was at once deeply saddening, and profoundly purifying. We learned who we were under Christ; we learned what great power his promise would give us when all seemed bleak.

Earlier we spoke about how many cultural issues had divided us from Missouri. None of them had been able to disturb our unity of faith. Then, sometime in the 30's, Missouri began to change. In a general way, perhaps, we might say she was influenced by the rising tide of Americanization that followed the first World War. It was the era of "Jack Armstrong, the All American Boy." No one wanted to be stuck in an immigrant enclave. Immigration itself was drastically reduced. Bigotry and the Ku Klux Klan came into vogue. Guttural languages were viewed with suspicion. Assimilation was on the national agenda as folks turned up the heat on the melting pot.⁸² Missouri, of course, was in a more exposed position than we were. She already was a national church body. She already lived and worked in the cities. She already had a sizeable number of English-speaking congregations.

These same forces also made themselves felt among us. We began to lose our German far more rapidly than we had anticipated. We began to realize that some of our own people were making the move to the city. But whereas we submitted to these changes with a good deal of reluctance, Missouri seemed to embrace them. They *wanted* to go mainstream. They *wanted* to be American. They *wanted* to make an impact on a larger stage. It didn't happen all at once, but the direction was clear. One could see it in their new willingness to meet and discuss cooperative efforts with former confessional rivals. One could detect it in their new openness to the boy scouts and military chaplaincy. Was an embracing of Americanism all part of their triumphalistic spirit? It seems so.

But the divisive issues were ultimately doctrinal, not cultural. Missouri had changed in her confession of the truth, even though she claimed again and again that she hadn't. The record is very clear on that point, in part because of our patient admonition through the years. In her expansiveness, Missouri began to embrace many things Walther would have abhorred. Truth became negotiable, so long as the greater good of a "widening edge" of an external fellowship was kept in view. Doctrinal discipline was no longer practiced with any great

rigor. Destructive, rationalistic methods were adopted at St. Louis in interpreting the Sacred Word. The protests of the WELS were ignored. We had become an embarrassment. We just didn't get it.⁸³

In 1961 we broke away. Some felt the act would lead to our ultimate break-up. As we have seen it led, in a sense, to our breaking free, free to be a voice of the everlasting gospel in ways we had never before imagined we could. Who can doubt, given who and what we are by nature, that the glory remains God's alone? He remains our hope in all the years to come.

Changing Contexts, Eternal Word

What will those years to come be like? The future is fact free. It forms a wonderfully white canvas upon which any dreamer can paint what he likes. The only hope we have of being objective is through identifying trends in our present circumstance and extrapolating them. Yet anyone who studies the history of such extrapolations knows how dicey a business it is to make them. So many of them fail to pan out. Still, a sober counting of the cost can never be considered contrary to the spirit of Christ. I would like to begin by identifying what I believe are a few important trends and forces in our current culture. Then I would like to speak a little about who we are—our strengths and our weaknesses—why we are here, and how we can go forward in Christ.

It seems to me that there are two overarching trends today. These are the increasing rate of change coupled with an accelerating fragmentation. Technology drives both. Let me explain. Technology has made it possible for the world to be connected in ways never before imagined. A butterfly can flap its wings in central Africa, and I'll feel the breeze in New Ulm. I remember as a child in Africa how a round of communication between my father and the stateside executive committee usually took at least a month to complete. Now, through email, that turnaround time has been reduced to mere hours. And it costs less to do. That means American and African thoughts can connect and change each other much more frequently and rapidly than before.

Now simply apply this same dynamic to all the other individual components that make up our worldwide network of transportation and communications. Through these improving connections, the rate of change has been increased exponentially. We have every reason to suppose that the trend will continue. We detect it in phrases like "the e-economy," "globalization," and "multi-culturalism." We can measure it in the worldwide movements of peoples. We can watch it on CNN. Disparate groups that had never before made contact are suddenly sitting in each other's laps. People are connecting with people. When people connect, things change. And change. And change. Faster and faster and faster.

Which brings us to the great paradox: the more connections we make, the less connected we feel. The rate of change fragments us. Life becomes a blur of flowing data, far too much for anyone to manage. So we spin off from the flow, forming our own self-chosen little eddies. They may be shifting and impermanent, but they offer us a brief respite, at least, from the full force of the current. For a while we can center our thoughts on one thing before we must drift along to the next.

From these trends, we might mention a number of emotional and spiritual spin-offs. A sense of impermanence increases anxiety: people long for the past. They struggle to cope with the present. They fear the future. Too much life in the fast lane makes middle-aged adults feel like they're running on empty. They want to slow down, but they're too afraid they'll fall behind. There's just no time. Older adults feel isolated, cut off within a past no one else seems to remember. For the young, a sense of impermanence destroys their hope of coherence: everything seems arbitrary. Nothing really matters. Life becomes a game of risk, and truth is what you feel.

Of course, this generational analysis is overdone: young, middle-aged, and old all experience the entire range of feelings described above. But two basic points remain: 1) times of great change increase the distance between generations since each one grows up in a different world; 2) a sense of too much change too fast begets feelings of alienation and weariness, of fear and cynicism. This is not to deny that some people can and do become future boosters. In the end, however, I believe humans must grow weary of the merry-go-round even if at first it gave some thrills. Everyone has tough times absorbing too much change.

And who are we in all of this? We're still pretty German. We like our structures and our institutions—our safe little enclaves where we can be surrounded by people just like us. We like it when things are buttoned down and under control, especially our own control. We're still fiercely independent; team ministry is not our strong suit. We like to be right. We rarely praise our Synod, or each other. We often criticize. We're not the flashiest bunch around. We really don't want to be. We abhor emotional displays. We like to set modest goals, and prefer incremental changes. We're not the easiest on outsiders, nor the most welcoming to folks whose ways are different. We prefer to hold ourselves aloof. Oh, but when you finally get to know us, there's not a better bunch of people on earth. We're loyal, hardworking, honest, and devoted to our families. And did I mention? We're still not Missouri.

Put all this together with the two trends mentioned above, and what do you get? Apart from those strong family values mentioned at the end, our Synodical nature seems singularly ill-suited to our current context! People who like control in a world of rapid change. People who are fiercely independent in a world already fragmenting. People who like to be right in a pluralistic world. People who tend to play down feelings in a world that almost deifies them. People who like to hold themselves apart in a world where disparate groups are being jostled together.

Then, too, what has been stressing the world has also been putting the squeeze on pastors and teachers. How hard it is to meet the increasingly diverse needs of the various generations! How hard it is to reach out to the new folks on the block! How hard it is to help families in trouble! So hard we might be tempted to say, "I don't have time to reach out to the community or do anything new; I'm having enough trouble just keeping this thing going." "I don't have time to look beyond the walls of my classroom. I have these lesson plans to do." How easy it is to retreat into the externals of institutional life for those bewildered by a world out there that's whizzing by. Pushing paper is its own reward. It's certainly more rewarding than dealing with people who never listen to what you say. Or trying to decide what to do amid an expanding array of options. We can content ourselves with a good Luther quote, "All I did was drink good Wittenberg beer" and presto: God's charge to get the Word out to people has become Corban (Mark 7:11)!

And so our congregations gray. Our youth go away. Our families crack under the strain of time pressures and busy-ness. We get discouraged. We burn out. We wander off alone into desert spaces. We wonder why we're still here. What good we can possibly do. "I have had enough, LORD," we say, "Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors" (1 Kings 19:4).

And yet, we have a little strength. God still speaks to us gently with a voice. In the quiet whisper of grace, he assures of his love. How strong is that Love? Strong enough to leave his Father's side. Strong enough to take on all the fiends of hell. Strong enough to come into a world he knew would kill him. Strong enough to bear the woe of a humanity that did not want him. Strong enough to walk alone into death's darkness. Strong enough to face God's great and terrible anger for sins not his own. All because of you. Because he loved you and wanted you to be his forever. That voice revives us. In the story of Christ's love we have more than a little strength. We have a message that gives eternal life. We have the power that transforms the world.

When we remember who he was and why he came, we know who we are and why we're here. With the Reformers, we are convicted and compelled by "the profound seriousness of truth." Since God has put us here, and since God has spoken to us, we know we are here to be a God's voice in this wilderness. God has put into our mouths the pure gospel of his unconditional grace. In that pure gospel, we live and move and have our being. It is our *Existenzberechtigung*,⁸⁴ whether we worship in a small town church, or a big city storefront. Whether we preach it at New London, Wisconsin, or at Ntiabali in Cameroon. Whether we teach it at Martin Luther College, in a tiny one-room classroom, or on a Web page in cyberspace. The gospel is the beating heart of our personal ministries and the one true power in our public ministries.

The gospel makes us completely inflexible in confessing its truth. Doctrine matters because doctrine is life. God's Word gives life and the devil's lies destroy it. So we diligently search the inspired, inerrant Scriptures because they are the one true source of life. We carefully teach those truths with all the power and energy God gives. We also respect the great teachers of the Church's past who confessed Scripture's truth before us. We are not so arrogant as to suppose that the gospel originated with us. We want to understand *in*

context their struggles and the issues they had to deal with so that we can speak and apply those same truths within our own context.

Perhaps the best practical application of this for ourselves is to rededicate ourselves personally to that connected study of God's Word once emphasized by the Wauwatosa theologians. If people sense an excess of appeals to the head in our preaching and teaching, if they complain that we don't always apply the Word to the life of the living, perhaps the problem is more than that we find ourselves in a postmodern world where everyone wants to live from their emotions. Maybe *we* are suffering from a disconnect between head and heart. I know it's happened to me, and I know why it happens: it arises from an inexcusable lack of listening to God in my daily devotions and from a torpid unwillingness to pray through his Word. From this evil, I can only ask my Savior to preserve me—and so may he preserve us all—by the power of his Word! May he write his love on our hearts in letters of living fire!

The gospel also sets us free, filling us with a restless longing to proclaim it, and making us flexible in the methods we use to spread its truth. In a changing world, we will resist the temptation to build safety zones. We will not allow the outward forms and traditions of the church's life become laws and prescriptions. As we study mutable historical forms, we will keep before our eyes this confessional insight: *Perpetua voluntas evangelii consideranda est*—the everlasting intention of the gospel must be kept in mind.⁸⁵ The second matter we keep in mind here is love. Love is neighbor-centered, and asks the question, "How can I best serve *my neighbors'* needs?"

If God employed the technology of writing, if Luther could use the power of the printing press, we certainly don't need to be shy about using the advances modern technologies offer. If God did not consider it beneath his dignity to speak "in many and various ways" (Hebrews 1:1) to his people, if Luther was willing to present the gospel through song, story, liturgy, sermon and treatise, must we lock ourselves into one correct style of reaching out to others? Must we view with suspicion those who do the same thing differently? Must we shut our ears to every truth the world might have learned (as part of God's enduring creation gift to them) simply because they use it to glorify themselves? As Ambrose once said: we are free to spoil the Egyptians and use their treasure to bring glory to God.

So if we hear that postmodern youth "hear with [their] eyes and think with [their] feelings,"⁸⁶ aren't we free to figure out ways to portray Christ more vividly before those eyes⁸⁷ so as to reach those hearts? And if we are told that boomers like their Bible studies to be related to their living experience,⁸⁸ aren't we free to construct opportunities to learn, times when we might lecture less, and let God's people talk more? And if we hear that our women would like to serve their Lord more fully, but are fearful of stepping over lines, aren't we men free to take the lead in finding God-pleasing ways for them to use their gifts? And if we hear how important it is in inter-cultural work to raise up gospel leaders early, aren't we free to come up with different ways for them to be trained?

But if you say, "That's too much for me. I can never do all that." You are absolutely right. In my own life I have been surrounded by people whose gifts were so much greater than my own. If I don't have the penetrating scholarship of a Fredrich, the preaching power of a Deutschlander, the kindness of a Nass, or the humility of a Valleskey, so what? If I lack the vision of a Kelm, the genius of a Brug, the teaching ability of a Heidtke, the sincerity of a Schulz, if I cannot think in big terms like a Lawrenz, write clearly like a Braun, move huge audiences like a Mueller, again I say, "So what?" I think God knew who I was when he put me in this church. That's why he gave me these people to help me. They make up for what I lack, and I make up for what they lack. And with Christ as our head, together we'll have the strength to accomplish what God desires.

What is true in the Synod is true in the congregation. If you need help, look around you. I have served at places both large and small, in the country and in the city, in the heartland and in the intermountain west (where, supposedly, I was all by myself). But I have never served in a congregation where there weren't enough of God's gifted people to help me. My members taught me as much as ever I taught them. After I'd get done helping them with some spiritual problem, they'd often help me. In those fellowships there was always enough wisdom to see what God wanted done, and plenty of keen minds, willing hearts, and eager hands to do it. The

days of the lone cowboy preacher, the lofty mind who delivers his gems “*von oben herab*”⁸⁹—those days are long gone.

Confessional faithfulness firmly united with gospel freedom will be our great strength as we go forward in Christ. As we do, we need have no fears about the future. Of ourselves, we are no more sufficient to be God’s voice than Paul was. But by God’s power we have been born again into a living hope. That hope will sustain us though we must pass through many uncertainties. God’s love will still lead us on his own bright way until we pass safely through them all! He will teach us in every circumstance how to find new ways of expressing his timeless grace for poor, lost sinners.

Even if we must go through those parched regions where uncertainty borders on despair, we can be sure that God will cause his water to flow in the desert and his hope to spring up new. We remember that our Savior passed all this way before. We remember what he, too, said in the depths of his self-emptying, “I have labored to no purpose; I have spent my strength in vain and for nothing.” And what did God tell him? “It is too small a thing for you to be my servant to restore the tribes of Jacob...I will also make you a light for the Gentiles...In the time of my favor I will answer you” (Isaiah 49:4,6,8).

Because God did, the Lord’s Apostle can say to us all, “Now is the time of God’s favor!” (2 Corinthians 6:2). Surrounded as we are by change and decay, and by all the flux of life, this is still God’s golden moment. Remembering what he has done, waiting in hope for his ultimate deliverance, we will boldly, faithfully, lovingly bring word of his salvation to the ends of the earth.

Endnotes

¹ See Francis Fukuyama's "The End of History," *The National Interest* (Summer 1989) 16.

² Notably those of a postmodern ilk.

³ *S. Augustini Confessionum* 11.6 (paragraph 8).

⁴ At most, they could serve to make the mind open its "interior" ear to the "eternal Word existing in silence 'far above me.'" Note the context of the above citation.

⁵ Peter makes it clear he's interpreting the "enduring Word" of his Isaiah citation as being the good news preached about Jesus: *τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τὸ ἐκείνου*.

⁶ Most recently Richard Marius (*vid. infr.*).

⁷ For this whole section, see Hermann Sasse, *Here We Stand*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1938.

⁸ Richard Marius, *Martin Luther: The Christian Between God and Death*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1999.

⁹ See Heiko Oberman's comments on this point in *Luther: Man Between God and the Devil*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982, pp. 266ff.

¹⁰ WA 1.183f.

¹¹ See Sasse, *Here We Stand*, p. 63, and pp. 39ff.

¹² "Let the man who would hear God speak read the Holy Scripture!" (WA 54, 263).

¹³ Alister McGrath lists Luther's remark "*quia isto articulo stante stat Ecclesia, ruente ruit Ecclesia*" (WA 40 111.352.3) as a "precursor" to this phrase which, surprisingly, is nowhere found in the Confessions [qtd. in *Iustitia Dei: A History of the Christian Doctrine of Justification: From 1500 to the Present Day*, page 193, note 3]. In Walther's expanded version of Baier's Compendium, Meissner speaks of it as "*illud Lutheri proverbium*," quoting it in full as, "*Justificatio est articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*." [Volume III, page 245] *Iohel Fredrico, qui mihi has testimonias invenit, gratias ago!*

¹⁴ See 1 Peter 1:23; Galatians 5:3; Ephesians 5:25-27. Also Luther in the Smalcald Articles, "Upon this article all things depend...[if we lose our certainty of it] all is lost, and the Pope and the devil and everything that stands against us will win out in the end." Part 2, Article 2.

¹⁵ Sasse, *op. cit.*, p. 49.

¹⁶ Sasse, *op. cit.*, viii.

¹⁷ WA 26, 499.

¹⁸ *Homini facienti, quod in se est, Deus non denegat gratiam*.

¹⁹ "This hereditary sin is so deep and horrible a corruption of nature that no reason can understand it, but it must be believed from the revelation of Scripture," SA Part 3, Article 1.

²⁰ Sasse, *op. cit.*, p. 35.

²¹ Sasse, *ibid.*, p. 106.

²² Oberman, *op. cit.*, p. 316.

²³ Café Marius, *op. cit.*, p. 184.

²⁴ Ap IV (*Triglot* p. 121). Luther said much the same thing in the preface to his Latin works. As soon as he discovered the truth of justification: *Ibi continuo alia mihi facies totius scripturae apparuit*. "Right then and there, the outward aspect of the Bible looked entirely different to me."

²⁵ *Tolle Christum a Scripturis, quid amplius in illis invenies?* WA XVIII, p. 606, 29.

²⁶ "If Christ has now thus become your own, and you have by such faith been cleansed through him and have received your inheritance without any personal merit, but alone through the love of God who gives to you as your own the treasure and work of his Son; it follows that you will do good works by doing to your neighbor as Christ has done to you." from Volume I:134-160 of *The Sermons of Martin Luther*, published by Baker Book House (Grand Rapids, MI). Found at: <http://www.ultranet.com/~tlclcms/mlselk2.htm>, on October 3, 2000.

²⁷ In 1964, Gerhard Ebeling pointed to the Weimar Edition, which then consisted of "100 folio volumes of approximately seven hundred pages each" Gerhard Ebeling in *Luther, An Introduction to His Thought*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980, page 46.

²⁸ Lectures, Sermon helps, sermons, letters, pamphlets, catechisms, doctrinal treatises, polemical writings, devotional writings, hymns, translation.

²⁹ Ebeling suggests the primary impulse to write came from Luther's sense of "responsibility [as] a pastor for a pure, clear, comprehensible, convincing, and liberating proclamation of the gospel," *ibid.*, p. 55.

³⁰ H. Dannenbauer, *Luther als religiöser Volksschriftsteller*, 1930, 30, as quoted in Ebeling, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

³¹ For more on this subject, see Werner Elert, *The Structure of Lutheranism*. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, page 480 ff.

³² As qtd. by Theodore Hoelty-Nickel in "Luther's *Deutsche Messe*," *Luther and Culture*. Luther College Press, 1960, p. 184.

³³ As qtd. by Dr. Ernst R. Wendland in his unpublished paper "Martin Luther—Father of Confessional, 'Functional Equivalence' Bible Translation," presented to the Lutheran Confessional Free Conference held at Lusaka, Zambia on March 22, 1994.

- ³⁴ No doubt the best refutation of this silly idea will remain Werner Elert's ironic comment: "Instead of founding a missionary society, accompanying Cortez to Mexico, or at least assuring for himself a professorship of missionary science, Luther devoted himself, of all things, to the reformation of the church!" Elert, *op. cit.* p. 385.
- ³⁵ "The Union" is a generic term describing attempts by various German church groupings and governments to unite the Lutherans and Reformed into a single organization. Of these attempts, the Prussian Union of 1817 is the most memorable. In some of its forms, the Union allowed for individual churches to retain their confessional distinctiveness so long as "outward" cooperation was maintained. This "outward" cooperation, however, led inevitably to pastors and churches making unscriptural compromises in doctrinal practice. For more, read Sasse, *op. cit.*, pp. 8ff.
- ³⁶ M. Lehninger, "The Development of the Doctrinal Position of the Wisconsin Synod During the Century of Its History," *Quartalschrift*, 47:1, pp. 10-11.
- ³⁷ Leonard Dinnerstein et al., *Natives and Strangers: A Multicultural History of Americans*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1996, p. 95.
- ³⁸ Delores J. Hoyt, "19th Century German Immigration In Historical Context," <http://www.lib.iupui.edu/kade/nameword/contexts.html>. (8 October 1998, 16 October 2000).
- ³⁹ E.C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992, p. 5.
- ⁴⁰ Who gained notoriety for his statement "The root of evil (in theology) is the interchangeable use of the terms 'Scripture' and 'Word of God,'" as qtd. in Gerhard Maier's *The End of the Historical-Critical Method*, St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977, p. 15.
- ⁴¹ M. Lehninger, "The Development of the Doctrinal Position of the Wisconsin Synod During the Century of Its History," *Quartalschrift*, 47:1, p. 9.
- ⁴² "The three Barmen men...looked upon the...Missouri representatives as narrow-minded bigots."
- ⁴³ M. Lehninger, *ibid.*, pp. 11-12.
- ⁴⁴ "Just because I am not strictly [Lutheran] or Old-Lutheran, I am in a position to offer every child of God and servant of Christ the hand of fellowship over the ecclesiastical fence," as qtd. in Fredrich, *WSL*, pp. 10-11.
- ⁴⁵ Men sent out by Christian Spittler from St. Crichona as tradesmen and laborers who would exert a gospel influence on those with whom they would be working in various lands. For more on this see Lehninger, p. 7.
- ⁴⁶ From, "The First History of the Wisconsin Synod," [a translation of Muehlhaeuser's work prepared by Arnold Lehman] *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, 17:1 (April 1999), p. 31.
- ⁴⁷ A heart that was shared by the *Reiseprediger* who followed.
- ⁴⁸ Note two examples of this, one described by J.P. Koehler in his *History of the Wisconsin Synod*, St. Cloud: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970, p. 35; the other by E.C. Fredrich, *op. cit.*, p. 11.
- ⁴⁹ Fredrich, *op. cit.*, p. 52.
- ⁵⁰ Mark E. Braun, "Changes within the Ev. Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America which led to the Exit of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod." From the unpublished manuscript version of his doctoral thesis, July 5, 2000, p. 28.
- ⁵¹ Much of this discussion is merely a poor restatement of a much more careful consideration of the question in Norman W. Bergs' "Home Mission Moods And Modes—125 Years in WELS," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 73:4 (October 1976), pp. 250-267.
- ⁵² Braun, *op. cit.*, p. 28-29; see also John M. Brenner, "Forward in Christ: Doctrinal Challenges and Language Change," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 97:3 (Summer 2000), p. 171ff.
- ⁵³ Brenner, *ibid.*, p. 171.
- ⁵⁴ Bading, for example, felt that reaching German immigrants provided us with a "holy and important mission" which we would not be able "to finish in our whole lives," as qtd. in Braun, *op. cit.*, p. 49.
- ⁵⁵ Cited by Brenner as commonplace reasons given for the resistance to the change from German to English, *op. cit.*, p. 171.
- ⁵⁶ J.P. Koehler, *History of the Wisconsin Synod*, St. Cloud: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970, p. 196.
- ⁵⁷ See, for example, August Pieper, "Anniversary Reflections," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 84:2 (Spring 1987), pp. 101-102.
- ⁵⁸ August Pieper, "Anniversary Reflections," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 84:1 (Winter 1987), p. 23ff.
- ⁵⁹ Pieper, "Anniversary Reflections," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 84:3 (Summer 1987), p. 187.
- ⁶⁰ For an expression (from of a Wisconsin point of view) of this smugness, see Pieper, "Anniversary Reflections," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 84:2 (Spring 1987), p. 114.
- ⁶¹ Besides looking through Pieper's "Anniversary Reflections," I've found Dr. E. Kiessling's essay, "Blest Be the Tie That Binds," useful in giving descriptions and details of these attitudes. As an example of "bigness" versus "smallness" one might point to the so-called "State Synod" controversy, in which Wisconsin resisted a proposal from Walther that might easily have resulted in our own dissolution and absorption into what might well have become a "greater Missouri."
- ⁶² For a summary of the Election Controversy, consult Brenner, "Forward in Christ: the Maturing Synod Looks Beyond Itself," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 97:2 (Spring 2000), pp. 94-96.
- ⁶³ August Pieper, "Anniversary Reflections," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 84:3 (Summer 1987), p. 195.
- ⁶⁴ See Muehlhaeuser's summaries in, "The First History of the Wisconsin Synod," [a translation of Muehlhaeuser's work prepared by Arnold Lehman] *WELS Historical Institute Journal*, 17:1 (April 1999), p. 32-40. Also consult E.C. Fredrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 70-72, for a useful listing of the where the first twenty-six pastors came from along with their reasons for leaving the Synod (death, expulsion, resignation, etc.).

⁶⁵ E.C. Fredrich, *op. cit.* p. 15.

⁶⁶ E.C. Fredrich, *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Part of the Walther's "State-Synod" proposal involved the establishment of a single Seminary *cum* university at St. Louis, to serve all orthodox Lutherans in America. Our resistance to some of the terms of the proposal led to charge and counter-charge. Missouri saw our response as an anti-Christian display of individualism. We saw Missouri's insistence upon a single "correct" form of administration as dogmatic—even sectarian—and as another example of their "bigger is better" triumphalism. For a brief summary, see Brenner "Forward in Christ: the Maturing Synod Looks Beyond Itself," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 97:2 (Spring 2000), pp. 92-94.

⁶⁸ One of the best summaries of this subject is found in Martin O. Westerhaus' "The Wauwatosa Theology: The Men and Their Message," pages 13-98 in vol. 1 of *The Wauwatosa Theology*, edited by Curtis Jahn. 3 vols. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997.

⁶⁹ J.Ph. Koehler, *Lehrbuch Der Kirchengeschichte*, Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1917, p. 1. Translated by Professor Alan Siggelkow.

⁷⁰ August Pieper, as qtd. by Westerhaus, *op. cit.*, p. 62.

⁷¹ Westerhaus, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

⁷² As qtd. in Fredrich, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-173.

⁷³ As qtd. in Westerhaus, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

⁷⁴ In his 1919 essay "The True Reconstruction of the Church," Pieper spoke about the indifference then apparent in the church both towards Christian education and missions. He also spoke of how our schools had become a "capsule," in which we had isolated ourselves by the German language from the English-speaking people around us. The Synod did respond by a major increase in its efforts to build up Christian education. A similar effort in missions would have to wait. Pages 295-345 in vol. 3 of *The Wauwatosa Theology*, edited by Curtis Jahn. 3 vols. Milwaukee: Northwestern Publishing House, 1997.

⁷⁵ In his *History of the Wisconsin Synod*, St. Cloud: Sentinel Publishing Company, 1970, p. 198. Pieper also refers to Hoenecke's attitude (not favorably) in his "Anniversary Reflections," *op. cit.*, p. 196.

⁷⁶ As qtd. in *To Every Nation, Tribe, Language, and People*, page 18, edited by Harold R. Johne and Ernst H. Wendland. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1992.

⁷⁷ James Korthals "Forward in Christ: Lengthening the Cords and Strengthening the Stakes," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 97:4 (Fall 2000), p. 250.

⁷⁸ "Fifty Years Ago: A Swan Song," unpublished ms.

⁷⁹ Korthals, *op. cit.*, p. 256.

⁸⁰ Berg, *op. cit.*, pp. 264-265.

⁸¹ Daniel Koelpin, "WELS World Missions-Now And Into the 21st Century," presented at the Minnesota District Convention of the WELS, June 20th, 2000.

⁸² See Dinnerstein, *op. cit.*, pp. 238-241, for a description of the effects of nativism and World War I on America.

⁸³ Ample evidence for these statements can be found in Mark Braun's doctoral dissertation referred to earlier. Whatever exaggerations there might be must be chalked up to myself, and not to him.

⁸⁴ The justification for our existence. We have a unique reason for existing even where others are already preaching the gospel. We have the unconditional gospel in the means of grace. We have a commitment to understanding Scriptures' teaching and passing it on clearly and exactly. We have a unique commitment to understanding the visible church's confessing of the truth in its historical contexts. These themes and their implications for world missions is developed in E.H. Wendland's paper "The WELS Identity As A World Mission Church," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 93:3 (Summer 1996), pp. 168-187.

⁸⁵ CA 28:65 (*Triglot* p. 92).

⁸⁶ Ravi Zacharias, as qtd. by Paul Kelm, "Understanding and Addressing A Postmodern Culture," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 97:2 (Spring 2000), p. 117.

⁸⁷ οἱ καὶ ἀγαθὰ μὲν ἠσούσιν Χριστὸν προεγράφη ἐσταυρωμένον (Galatians 3:1).

⁸⁸ We might call it "good news you can use." The observation comes from an outline on "Adult Spiritual Growth," presented to the Western Wisconsin District by Paul Kelm in June, 2000.

⁸⁹ From on high to [the dullards] below.