

Foreword

In commemoration of the sixtieth anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, this issue of the *Quarterly* is being devoted to a special remembrance of our history. This is a time to remember all the wonderful blessings that the Lord has poured out upon our seminary during the past sixty years.

The purpose of the seminary is to prepare pastors who will preach the inerrant Word of God in its truth and purity and administer the Sacraments in accord with Christ's command. In this anniversary year we consider the words of encouragement offered by the Rev. Bjug Harstad from Jeremiah at the organization of the synod: "Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls" (Jeremiah 6:16). The seminary desires to remain in the old path in all its teachings where one can indeed find rest for the soul, true rest found in Christ our Savior. Our souls are never at rest until we are at rest in Him.

Each year Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary strives to prepare men as pastors that will follow the old paths proclaiming the gracious message of justification by faith alone in Christ as taught in the Scriptures and summarized in our Lutheran Confessions. As the Lord has blessed our "school of the prophets" for the past sixty years so we pray God's continued benediction on our seminary for the future that all may work to the glory of God in Christ and the salvation of souls.

This issue includes the sermon preached at the sixtieth anniversary of the seminary on June 18 and a history of the seminary entitled "Sixty Years at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary." Short biographies of the seminary deans and seminary presidents are included with a sermon by each of them.

The last article in this *Quarterly* is an unpublished essay by the Rev. Theodore A. Aaberg, "The Ecumenical Scene." This essay was prepared in book format to be published by Northwestern Publishing House in 1973.

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Gaylin R. Schmeling

Sixtieth Anniversary Sermon on Jeremiah 6:16

Sixtieth Anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary,
June 18, 2006

by Gaylin R. Schmeling

PRAYER: Dear Father in heaven, on this happy occasion we thank You for all the blessings that You have poured out on Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary during the past sixty years, and especially for preserving our seminary in the old paths of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. Through Your Spirit You have kept us in the doctrine of Scripture that centers in Your Son's atoning work for salvation. As You have blessed our seminary in the past, we pray that You continue to bless us in the future through our regular use of Your Holy Word and Blessed Sacraments. We ask it in Your Son's name. Amen.

Text: *Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls.* (Jeremiah 6:16)

Introduction: Most people today are looking for new paths, new vacation routes to see something new and exciting. We are tired of the same old, same old. We want to see some new paths on our summer vacation to satisfy our curiosity, even when they result in dead ends or worse. But there is an old path that means more to me than all the new paths. It is the road outside of Hutchinson, Minnesota, that leads to my home farm and home church. My great-great-grandfather, my great-grandfather, my grandfather, and my father lived and worshiped there. These are wonderful old paths because they lead to home and family. No new path, regardless of how novel and exciting, would lead home.

On a much grander scale on this the Sixtieth Anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, sixty years of God's grace and mercy, we want to **Ask for the old paths**. This is an important celebration for our seminary and our synod. We want to thank the Lord for all His blessings these past sixty years and we pray for His

continued blessing in the future. Jeremiah says, “*Ask for the old paths.*” We ask for the old paths because these paths are good and because here we find rest for our souls.

I. The old paths are the good paths. This text is probably more familiar to the members of Evangelical Lutheran Synod than to the members of any other church body. In 1918 at the reorganization of the synod the Rev. Bjug Harstad encouraged the little group gathered at Lime Creek with these words. They were to remain on the old paths, the good paths where they would find rest for their souls. There are no other paths by which to find our true home in heaven and eternal salvation. Our synod and our seminary have remained on the old paths by preserving the faith of our fathers.

The source of this faith is the inspired inerrant Word of God. The Holy Scripture is the only source for doctrine, faith, and life. It is the doctrine of the inerrant Word that all the professors of this institution have taught and continue to teach. This is the doctrine that you, the Rev. Michael Smith, will teach as you are called and installed as professor in the seminary. That life-giving Word we will diligently read, mark, learn and inwardly digest as the ancient collect directs. The pastor and all his members for that matter are to meditate on and contemplate the Word. That doesn't mean one quick reading and then off to the listserve on the Internet. No, we will contemplate the Word and inwardly digest it. Gerhard in his *Schola Pietatis* says that the Christian will ruminate on the Word or roll it over in his mind as a cow chews on its cud. You have seen a cow resting in the pasture quietly chewing away. Thus you will take time to meditate and ruminate or chew on the Word (*Schola Pietatis* 2:291-292).

We follow the old paths, the good paths, by a proper use of the Lutheran Confessions because they are a correct exposition of God's Word. We value the early church fathers: Irenaeus, Augustine, and Cyril. We treasure the Reformation fathers: Luther, Chemnitz and Gerhard. We will preserve that heritage of the Norwegian trio, Preus, Ottesen, and Koren, and the important works of Dr. Walther. In the same way, we will heed the exhortation quoted by the first president of the reorganized synod: “*Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you*

will find rest for your souls” (Jeremiah 6:16). These are the paths that were followed by Dean Madson, Dean Otto, President Aaberg, President Reichwald, and President Petersen, and, by the grace and mercy of our Lord, these are the paths that we continue to follow.

We are not to look for new paths, new and strange doctrines of man, that lead to destruction. These paths do not lead home to rest for the soul but to the gates of hell. All around us we see churches that have taken new directions and now they have nothing to offer but chaff and dust. Former brothers and sisters have taken new paths to the detriment of their faith. Concerning the pictures of the three founders of the Norwegian Synod, Preus, Ottesen, and Koren, that are displayed in the seminary atrium, Aaberg said that they are not there merely for show but they remind us that the theology of these men is to be the theology of our seminary and synod. We will follow the old paths, the good paths.

II. Yet why will we follow the old paths? Why will we go the old ways? We will stand firm in the good old paths because here alone will we find rest for our souls in all the burdens and troubles of life. The new paths of this world provide no real peace and security in life even though great things are promised.

First and foremost, rest, peace, and security in life are sought in money and wealth. With enough money and wealth a person’s every desire is to be satisfied and his every longing fulfilled. Enough hoarded wealth is to bring true, lasting happiness. Yet, can wealth really fulfill all these promises? The answer, my friends, is a definite no! In one natural disaster, as was seen in New Orleans last fall, all our treasured possessions can so easily be destroyed. All the money we have stashed away for our old age is constantly dwindling as prices continue to rise. Then, of course, at the hour of death, as we stand before our Lord’s judgment throne, a hundred-dollar or a million-dollar bank account won’t make a particle of difference (Zechariah 1:18).

Also, true lasting security is sought in those around us, our friends and relatives. Yet, in times of crisis, friends have a tendency to fade away. Their help is, at best, weak because they too are made from dust. The Lord says, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength” (Jeremiah 17:5). Finally, such peace and

security cannot even be found in the strength of this body. No matter how beautiful or strong this physical frame may be, no matter how intelligent we may be, this body can wither as the grass and return in a matter of days to the dust from which it was formed, as one of a variety of deadly diseases begins to grow within. The delusive paths of this world can never provide peace and purpose for this life and the hope of the life to come. The Law of God shows us our absolutely hopeless condition by nature.

Only in the old paths will we find rest for our souls, for our souls are never at rest until they are at rest in the Lord, as St. Augustine wrote (Confessions 1:1). There is hope even in our lost condition. Jesus became poor and lowly to raise us to His divine glory, eternal life in heaven (2 Corinthians 8:9). In the incarnation Christ took upon Himself our dying flesh so that, through unity with His divinity, He might conquer sin, death, and all our foes in that flesh and make us partakers in His divine nature as the sons of God with an eternal existence (Galatians 4:5; 2 Peter 1:4). He partook in our suffering, death, and hell so that we may partake in His glory, life, and heaven – a wonderful exchange (*Der fröhliche Wechsel*). This wonderful treasure is brought to us through the means of grace and is received by a simple confident faith in the Savior that is worked through those same means of grace. This is the message that Professor Michael Smith will teach.

The means of grace are the greatest treasure there is because here Christ is present for us. Without Jesus, life has no meaning or purpose and our end is destruction. Without Him there will always be something missing in our life. There will be an emptiness within that will not be filled with wealth, power and prestige. Only Jesus can the heartfelt longing still. With Him as our Savior we have peace and purpose in this life and the blessed assurance of life beyond the grave. Regardless of our burden or problem He is with us strengthening us all the way through His Word and Sacraments, giving us the power to do all things through Him, the power to overcome and obtain the victory.

Our seminary has stood firm in the old paths and continues to do so because here alone will we find rest for our souls in all the burdens and troubles of life. Professor Smith, as you are being installed this evening you are committing yourself to making

your stand on the old paths of the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Then all your teaching will indeed be of benefit to your students and our entire church.

We thank the Lord for all the blessings that He has bestowed upon our seminary for these past sixty years. We are grateful that we have a faculty that is committed to the inspired, inerrant Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions. While other schools have turned to higher critical methods, church-growth methodology, and have imbibed post-modern thought, the Lord has preserved our seminary on the old paths. We are grateful that we have a student body that desires to grow in the knowledge of salvation and which is committed to inculcating those truths in their future calls. We have a beautiful building which more than meets the needs of the seminary. Our seminary is in the prayers and on the hearts of our ELS congregations. This is seen by the generous support given to the seminary. As the Lord has blessed us in the past, we know that He will continue to be with our seminary and bless it in the future.

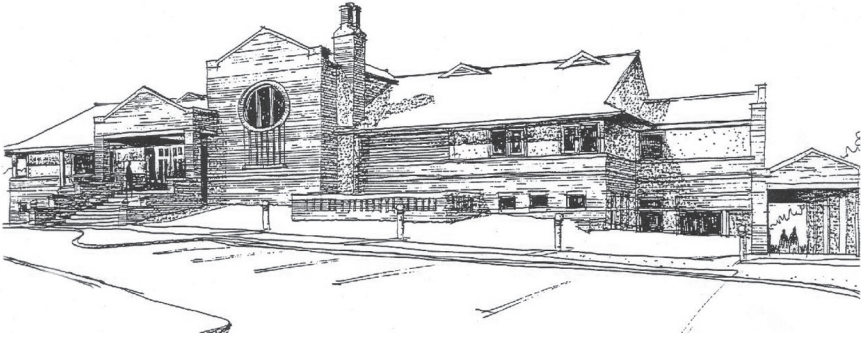
As we look to the future we will strive to preserve the Word of God in its truth and purity in our seminary and we will strive to teach our students to be true shepherds under the Good Shepherd. They will be prepared to spread the Gospel of full forgiveness in Christ to the ends of the earth. The strength to go forward and do all things through Him—that strength He gives us in the life-giving Word and the holy Sacraments. As we move forward, may our prayer be that of the sixteenth century theologian and hymnist Nikolaus Selnecker:

*Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the even-tide;
Nor let Thy word, that heav'nly light,
For us be ever veiled in night.*

*In these last days of sore distress
Grant us, dear Lord true steadfastness
That pure we keep, till life is spent,
Thy holy Word and Sacrament.*

(ELH 511:1–2)

Sixty Years at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary



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Sixty Years at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

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The chapel of our Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary contains a beautiful stained-glass window of the Good Shepherd that well summarizes the purpose of the seminary. The window first of all shows that the heart of all Christian preaching is the Good Shepherd who laid down His life for our salvation. Our Lord Jesus said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd gives His life for the sheep" (John 10:11). All people by nature were wandering sheep. We had gone astray in the terrible corruption of sin. Satan, that old wolf, had attacked us, grabbed us by the neck and was dragging us to eternal destruction. Yet the Good Shepherd came to our defense. He did battle with Satan throughout His life, culminating in the battle of the ages on the cross. There He crushed the old wolf under His feet, thus freeing us from his terrible grasp. He gave His life to destroy the power of sin, death, and the devil and opened for us the gates to paradise. Still the sheep were not left without a shepherd. On the third day the Good Shepherd arose triumphant from the grave, our victorious Savior. It is this Good Shepherd that sends shepherds or pastors to shepherd the flock, the church of God, with the means of grace.

The window then reminds us that in all this training centered in the Divine Shepherd the seminary desires to prepare men who will be shepherds or pastors under the Good Shepherd, Jesus Christ our Lord. They will warn God's people of false prophets who come to them in sheep's clothing (Matthew 7:15), and they will feed the flock of God on the green pastures of the Word and the Sacraments (Psalm 23). In times of conflict and sorrow they will point the flock to the gracious Savior who will hold them secure in His loving arms all the way to the heavenly homeland above. We thank our gracious Lord for all the blessings poured out on our seminary during the past sixty years; may He continue to bless our seminary so that many under-shepherds of the Good Shepherd are sent forth to claim blood-bought souls for the heavenly kingdom.

Pastoral Training in the Norwegian Synod

In his second letter to Timothy St. Paul directs, "The things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (2 Timothy

2:2). Our forefathers took these words to heart. They were concerned that the Norwegian Synod (officially the Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church in America organized in 1853) would have properly trained pastors and other servants of the Word. It was self-evident to them that those in the public ministry should know how to interpret the Scriptures and that they should be able to convey its teachings to others. They were to have a love of God's Word and a love for souls. With this in mind the synod desired to establish a college and seminary.

The first pastors of the Norwegian Synod came from Norway; many of them had studied at the University of Christiania (Oslo) under two important confessional Lutherans, Gisle Johnson and Paul Caspari. These men were a part of the Lutheran Renewal (*Erweckungsbewegung*) of the nineteenth century in Europe, which is the origin of confessional Lutheranism in America. However, the number of pastors coming from Europe could not meet the needs of the growing church in America. In 1855 the synod sent a committee to visit a number of Lutheran seminaries in this country to see if any of these institutions could provide suitable worker training for the synod. The committee strongly recommended the seminary of the Missouri Synod in St. Louis, Missouri. The Norwegian Synod found brothers in the faith in these German Lutherans of Missouri.

Norwegian Synod students began to study at Concordia, St. Louis, with the first class graduating in 1863. The Rev. Laur. Larsen was called as the Norwegian professor at Concordia, and later the Rev. F. A. Schmidt served in this position. During the years that the Norwegian students studied in St. Louis Dr. C. F. W. Walther was president of the seminary and was certainly a positive influence on the students.

Walther's influence was evident in a whole generation of confessional Lutheran pastors. They were firmly grounded in the inerrant Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Concerning Walther it was said: "He is as orthodox as John Gerhard, but as fervent as a Pietist; as correct in form as a university or court preacher, and yet as popular as Luther himself."¹ This is the ideal of a Lutheran pastor that confessional Lutheran seminaries will ever strive to prepare.

Luther Seminary

In 1876 the Norwegian Synod established its own seminary, but not on the campus of its college in Decorah, Iowa, as one might have expected. They probably wanted their liberal arts college to remain an entity by itself and not be regarded as mainly a pre-seminary department. Luther, the name given to the seminary, was located in Madison, Wisconsin, in a building that had once been the governor's mansion and later the Civil War soldiers' orphan home. Professors F. A. Schmidt and O. B. Asperheim were called to the seminary. In 1878 the Rev. H. G. Stub was called to replace O. B. Asperheim.

Luther Seminary was moved to Robbinsdale in the Twin Cities area of Minnesota in 1888 and then, after a fire in 1899, to the nearby suburb of Hamline. After the church merger in 1917 the seminaries of the three Norwegian church bodies were also merged, using the buildings of the United Church seminary in St. Anthony Park, another suburb of the Twin Cities.

Struggles within the Norwegian Synod

The church here on earth is never at peace. It will always be engaged in constant warfare. The Norwegian Synod faced controversies concerning lay preaching, the doctrine of Sunday, slavery, and absolution.² However, the most devastating conflict was the Election Controversy. Professor F.A. Schmidt of the Norwegian Synod accused Walther and his synod of teaching John Calvin's doctrine of conversion and election. Walther maintained the scriptural doctrine that we are elected unto salvation not on the basis of anything in us, our works, deeds, faith, or non-resistance of the Spirit, but alone by God's grace. Schmidt said among other things, "We believe and teach now ... that salvation in a certain sense does not depend on God alone."³ Schmidt and his followers held that God elected and converted some in view of the faith (*intuitu fidei*) that they would some day possess. This implied that faith was a work of man on the basis of which God elected us. There were those who said that God elected some because they did not resist the Spirit as much as others. In all this something in man helps in our salvation,

and with such an understanding one is again on a work righteous path. This was a sly but vicious attack on the central article of the faith.

Koren and the leaders of the synod stood with Walther and the doctrine of Scripture but at a terrible price. The strife ripped families apart, brother against brother. In the 1880s about one-third of the congregations and pastors left the synod. The synod maintained its doctrinal integrity, but after the turn of the century there was strong sentiment for one Norwegian church body in America. Union fever got the better of them. In 1917 on the basis of two compromise documents, the Madison Settlement and the Austin Agreement, a majority of the Norwegian Synod decided to merge with various other Norwegian Lutheran synods in America to form a new church body. This Norwegian merger was named the Norwegian Lutheran Church in America (NLCA). It was later changed to the Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELC) which became a part of The American Lutheran Church of 1960 (TALC) and then the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) in 1988.

Pastoral Training in the Evangelical Lutheran Synod

The Early Years

The Lord's grace and mercy had not come to an end for Norwegian Lutheranism. The same Lord who had been with Augustine and Luther in difficult times was with the small remnant that knew it was contrary to the Scriptures to enter the merger of 1917. In June of 1917 a small group of pastors met at the Aberdeen Hotel in St. Paul to evaluate the situation. They issued an invitation to whoever was still interested in the pure doctrine of the Norwegian Synod to meet at the Lime Creek Lutheran Church north of Lake Mills, Iowa, in 1918.

June 14-19 in 1918, thirteen pastors met at Lime Creek to reorganize the synod. The first officers of the reorganized synod were Pastor Bjug Harstad, president; Pastor John A. Moldstad, vice-president; Pastor C.N. Peterson, secretary; and Pastor A.J. Torgerson, treasurer. The official name of the reorganized synod was The

Norwegian Synod of the American Evangelical Lutheran Church. In 1958 it was changed to the Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS). These men, assembled at Lime Creek, faced much harassment and derision for not entering the merger. President Harstad encouraged them with the words of Jeremiah: “Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find rest for your souls” (6:16). The little synod would remain on the old path where alone one could find rest for the soul. An interesting aside to this meeting was the fact that it was illegal to use a foreign language in the conduct of public gatherings in Iowa (World War I was in progress). The assembly had to travel about a mile north of the church to conduct its Norwegian services and sessions in a tent just across the Minnesota border.

In 1920 the reorganized synod was accepted into the membership of the Synodical Conference. Were it not for the safe haven and nurturing of the Synodical Conference brethren, the little group might not have survived. The initial thought of the remnant had been to become a Norwegian District of the Missouri Synod. This was discouraged by Dr. Franz Pieper, who was now the leading light in Missouri, and by others. It was hoped that the reorganized synod would serve as an island of refuge for other Norwegians who might abandon the ship of the merger, and indeed it did.

At the time of the Lime Creek meeting it was sarcastically said on the streets of one of the towns in northern Iowa, “That little synod is nothing but a plucked chicken.” The man who said it was obviously in favor of the merger. But a sensible down-to-earth Norwegian farmer is reported to have responded, “Yes, but if the chicken is healthy the feathers will grow back.” (*Den Norske Synode er bare en ribbet høne. – Ja, men naar høne blir frisk og bra igjen så skal fjærene vokse tilbake.*)⁴ With the Lord’s help the feathers did start to grow. The synod became a haven for many who knew that the merger was wrong. Small groups in the Midwest and other parts of the land called for help and the synod answered the call. After the synod’s later break in fellowship with the Missouri Synod, it became a refuge for many in Missouri who wanted to remain faithful to the truths of Scripture. By 1967 the synod had grown to 83 congregations with 15,000 members. Today the ELS

has 140 congregations with 21,000 members and an active home missions program of beginning one or two new missions a year. Outside the Midwest the greatest geographical expansion has been in Florida and along the West Coast.

Striving for a Seminary

Education was an important concern for the reorganized synod as it had been for the “Old” Norwegian synod. No church body can exist a long period of time without its own educational institution. Bethany opened its doors as a coeducational high school and liberal arts junior college of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in 1927. It was located on McMahan Hill in Mankato, Minnesota. A small group of pastors and laymen in 1926 purchased the former Lutheran Academy for Women and presented it to the synod for the education of young people. There were fears that the fledgling synod could not financially manage the responsibilities of a college. But at the Lime Creek synod convention in 1927, the Rev. G. A. Gullixson, an ardent advocate of the college, moved that the synod take over the school, and Bethany has been an important part of the synod ever since. Dr. Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker became president of the institution in 1930. Under his leadership the school prospered and drew students from the other synods in the Synodical Conference. To be sure, there were financial difficulties during the Depression years, but the synod always managed. It is interesting to note that Bethany’s purpose was different from that of the schools of Missouri and Wisconsin. Bethany’s purpose was not only to train pastors and teachers but to provide a Christian education for all walks of life.⁵

From its reorganization in 1918 the Evangelical Lutheran Synod was without its own theological seminary for twenty-eight years. It depended on its sister synods for the seminary training of its pastors. First, students were sent to the seminaries of the Missouri Synod as had been done in the early history of the Norwegian Synod, and later also to the seminary of the Wisconsin Synod. One of our present clergymen who attended Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at this time is the Rev. Juul B. Madson.

During these early years the hope of establishing its own seminary had been kept alive, but not until 1931 did the convention

authorize its president, H.M. Tjernagel, to appoint a committee of three to prepare a plan to be discussed at General Pastoral Conference. This action of the synod was in response to the urgent plea of some of its pre-theological students.⁶ It is interesting to note that this is the same year that Dr. Franz Pieper, the president of Concordia Theological Seminary in St. Louis, passed away a few days before our convention.

Nevertheless, no real progress was made until the 1942 convention. That year, at the urging of Synod President Henry Ingebritson, the convention directed the Board of Regents of Bethany Lutheran College to take the necessary steps to make it possible for the synod's ministerial candidates to have "their last year of training in our own school."

Recognizing the need of pastors to be placed in mission stations and vacant charges and in order to facilitate the preparation of students for the work, the Synod authorizes its Board of Regents to make the necessary adjustments at our Bethany College, to the end that our Seminary students may be given their last year's training in our own school. If possible, this work is to be begun this fall.⁷

The next year's synodical convention stepped up the pace by authorizing the Board of Regents "to establish our own theological seminary as soon as possible."⁸

However, it was wartime—World War II—and the Board of Regents' efforts to gain exemption from the draft for its ministerial candidates ran into difficulties because of Selective Service guidelines concerning new seminaries. Eventually, however, a change in ruling by the Selective Service Administration removed the last remaining barrier.

In the 1944 *Synod Report*, the convention expressed its appreciation to the members of the Synodical Conference for the use of their institutions of higher learning over the years.

Our brethren of the Missouri and Wisconsin Synods have met us in this regard with the greatest kindness and consideration, and we can never fully show our appreciation of the many favors

which they so generously have shown us. For several years our students attended the institutions in St. Paul and New Ulm, until we unexpectedly came into possession of Bethany College in Mankato. Our theological students, however, have continued to receive their training at the Seminaries in St. Louis, Thiensville, and most recently two of our students at Springfield, Illinois. A few of our students from Bethany College, have also received pre-theological training at Northwestern College, Watertown, Wisconsin.⁹

While the synod expressed its appreciation to its sister synods, it realized the vital importance of having its own seminary. The synod realized that a church body cannot remain strong and healthy without its own seminary for pastoral training. An institution was needed that would inculcate the heritage and tradition of the church body.

Well as these institutions of our sister Synods have served us, nevertheless we have felt that eventually we ourselves ought to provide for the training of our future workers. There are special problems which continue to confront us as a Synod, problems which those not intimately acquainted with cannot be expected to take into account in a manner conducive to our needs. There is a very important background, too, such as the Norwegian language, theological literature in that language, Norwegian culture, the history of our Synod, and the understanding of our church people resulting therefrom. Without an acquaintance with this background and all that it implies, our pastors cannot be expected, especially in some fields, to work as effectively and fruitfully as the Lord of the Church would have them work. These things can with any great success be supplied our future church workers only in our own schools, where they are in contact therewith, and can be given special guidance by teachers with this background, having themselves lived through a large part of the history of our church.¹⁰

Concerning this point, President Aaberg wrote in 1978:

Of course, with the years, the necessity for a knowledge of the Norwegian language and Norwegian culture has all but faded from view. But that question of the Norwegian language and culture was not so much in mind when the board wrote this report as the understanding that as a synod, as a church community, the

ELS was unique. It had a particular heritage worth preserving, a particular mind-set which had its own contribution to make to American and world Lutheranism and to all of Christendom, and which was important to the congregations which were members of the Synod.¹¹ [Synod President Orvick referred to this as the particular flavor of the ELS.]

The synod also expressed a need for its own seminary because unionistic tendencies were at work even in confessional Lutheran church bodies. This was a very real issue with the doctrinal struggles that were occurring in the Synodical Conference.

Furthermore, there is the very vital consideration—the dangerous unionistic tendencies now at work even within that group of Lutherans which hitherto has stood as a bulwark of confessional Lutheranism in our country, which makes it increasingly imperative that we train our future pastors in our own Seminary.¹²

The turmoil within the Synodical Conference at this time certainly was responsible for the strong desire of many in the synod to establish their own seminary. The result was a real sense of urgency that had not been present before this period. Thus one can say that the establishment of the seminary was at least in part the result of the Synodical Conference conflict.

The Seminary Begins

In the summer of 1946 the synod convention resolved in the name of the Triune God to adopt fourteen resolutions relating to a new seminary, the first of which was: “To establish a full theological seminary course at Bethany Lutheran College, this course to begin in the fall of 1946.”¹³ On September 24, 1946,¹⁴ a dedicatory service officially opened Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. The service was conducted by the synod president, A. M. Harstad, who based his sermon on Titus 1:9. The *Lutheran Sentinel* reported concerning the dedicatory service:

The opening of the theological seminary of our Synod and the installation of Norman A. Madson as Dean of the Seminary

took place at divine services in the chapel of Bethany College, Mankato, Minn., Sept. 24, 10:30 a.m. The service was conducted by the Synod's President, A. M. Harstad of Madison, Wis. The sermon preached on the occasion as well as the address of Dean Madson are found elsewhere in this issue of the Sentinel. Immediately after the installation of the dean, the following professors at Bethany College were installed as professors in the seminary: Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker, Martin Galstad, B. W. Teigen, Paul Zimmermann and Alfred Fremder. Greetings on the occasion were brought by Prof. E. Reim of the Wisconsin Synod Seminary at Thiensville, Wis., by Prof. E. Bliedernicht of Dr. Martin Lutheran College, New Ulm, Minn., by Pres. W. A. Poehler of Concordia College, St. Paul, Minn., and by Pastor O. Kaiser of Milwaukee, Wis. Also, Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker read letters and telegrams on the occasion from institutions within the Synodical Conference, from the President of the Conference and from individuals. The Bethany College choir sang under the direction of Prof. A. Fremder. A large assembly was present. Many of the synod's pastors, as well as others, had come for the festive occasion. It was an event of great importance in the history of our Synod. God bless this new institution in our midst and grant it the support of our people both far and near.¹⁵

The opening of our Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary was a very significant event in the history of the ELS. It was a bold decision which meant that our students would attend the seminary of their own church body. The seminary proved to be a great blessing for the many students who attended the school as well as those who have been served by them as pastors.

The Madson Years

The first dean of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary was the Rev. Norman A. Madson Sr. of Princeton, Minnesota. Norman A. Madson (1886-1962) was born near Manitowoc, Wisconsin. He attended Luther Seminary at St. Paul, Minnesota, and was ordained in the fall of 1915. He became a traveling missionary on the Iron Range of northern Minnesota. After joining the ELS in 1925 he served as pastor at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, rural Princeton, Minnesota. In 1946 he was called as the dean of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary where he served until 1960. He

wrote numerous articles for the *Lutheran Sentinel* and the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. His publications include *Preaching to Preachers* (1952); and two volumes of chapel addresses, entitled *Evening Bells at Bethany* (1948) and *Evening Bells at Bethany II* (1952). Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, awarded him an honorary doctor of divinity degree in 1949. As a noted and dynamic speaker he was in demand as a preacher throughout the Synodical Conference. He inculcated in his students his own deep interest in and love for preaching. In 1918 he was married to Elsie Haakenson in Decorah, Iowa. This union was blessed with seven children, three sons becoming pastors. After his retirement in 1960 he spent his last two years on earth as a member of the Church of the Lutheran Confession (CLC).

In the report to the 1947 convention Dean Madson stated that our seminary is no longer merely a child of our fond desires but has become a living reality. In addition to Madson, a number of college professors assisted in teaching the seminary courses as was noted above. The student body that first year consisted of students of theology LeVine K. Hagen, Iver C. Johnson, Leigh Jordahl, Reuben Stock and Robert Preus. Robert Preus, a transfer student from Luther Seminary in St. Paul, became the seminary's first graduate. The Dean's report concerning the first year of operation ended with these words: "It is to the ineffable grace of our merciful Father that we commend our infant 'school of the prophets'. With the sainted Dr. Walther we also pray: 'God preserve unto us a pious ministry!'"¹⁶

Curriculum and Education

The curriculum of the seminary was developed in a three-year cycle with each course being taught once during the cycle. With this system first-, second- and third-year students all attended the same classes. This made it possible for the seminary to function with a smaller faculty and fewer students and still have an adequate number of students in the classroom for beneficial student interaction and participation.

In 1951 the enrollment of the seminary numbered sixteen. In his summary of the work of the seminary Dean Madson reiterated

the Latin motto for the seminary that he had put forth at its opening service in 1946:

Disce ut semper victurus:

Vive ut cras moriturus.

i.e.,

Study as though you are going to live forever (for you are):

Live as though you are going to die tomorrow (for you may).

It was noted that not only an ever-increasing number of young men from the ELS were enrolling in the institution, but also students from the other member churches of the Synodical Conference were interested in the school. Finally Dean Madson enunciated the advantages that Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary provided in comparison to larger and more prestigious institutions. He emphasized the personal attention given to the students and the close relationship between teachers and students at Bethany. These points remain among the chief advantages and assets of our seminary, the most important of which is adherence to the inerrant Scriptures and Lutheran Confessions.

While an institution with our limited staff cannot offer the varied courses of studies offered by the seminaries that number students in the hundreds, there are certain distinct advantages to be found in a smaller institution such as ours. There is, first of all, that more intimate contact between students and teachers so desirable in any institution of learning. This not only affords a more personal understanding of the individual student's needs, but it also allows for a more satisfactory meeting of those needs on the part of the teachers. In courses such as Homiletics (sermon preparation and delivery), for instance, it is self-evident that the personal attention which the teacher can give to the sermon outlines from week to week, and to sermons prepared for class delivery, will be more minute and helpful than that which could be given a class of seventy-five or a hundred students.¹⁷

Two new individuals were added to the staff of the seminary in 1952. The Rev. George O. Lillegard was installed as a professor of religion and Greek at Bethany Lutheran College and as a teacher in the seminary. Before this time he had been a missionary in China and a pastor at Harvard Street Lutheran Church, Cambridge,

Massachusetts. He authored many articles, including his monograph on the *Chinese Term Question* and the book of sermons entitled *From Eden to Egypt*. He served as professor until 1962.

Prof. Christopher U. Faye, who had once been a missionary in Madagascar but spent much of his career as librarian at the University of Illinois, was installed as a member of the seminary faculty in charge of the library and served until 1962. He brought order and organization to the seminary library. The next year, 1953, saw one of the largest classes graduate from the seminary. The class included: Gerhard Becker, Elmer Boniek, Otto Drevlow, Julius Larsen, George Orvick, Glenn Reichwald, Wilhelm Petersen and Arthur Schulz.

Dr. S. C. Ylvisaker continued to teach in the seminary until 1952, when he retired and moved to Bryan, Texas. He taught mainly exegetical courses and Greek and Hebrew courses as preparation for entrance into the seminary.¹⁸ Dean N. A. Madson, who gave the seminary its spirit and vitality, continued his work until 1959. President B. W. Teigen, whose presidency of Bethany Lutheran College, as well as of the seminary, continued until his retirement from that post in 1970, served also as Acting Dean of the seminary from 1959–1968. The Rev. Julian G. Anderson served as seminary professor and librarian from 1962–1968.

Church Fellowship Discussions

Throughout the 1950s the doctrinal discussions in the Synodical Conference had a profound effect on the synod, the seminary, its professors and its students. Controversy over the doctrine of church fellowship was threatening to rip the Synodical Conference apart.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) had been the bulwark of orthodoxy throughout the world. Yet in the 1930s this mighty defense began to crumble. In 1935 the Missouri Synod accepted separate invitations from the American Lutheran Church (ALC) and from the United Lutheran Church (ULC) to negotiate for the purpose of establishing pulpit and altar fellowship. The ELS and the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod (WELS) rejected those

invitations because they felt that the ALC and ULC wanted union even without real doctrinal agreement, which conjecture soon became evident. In the negotiations between the ALC and LCMS, the ALC drew up a document called the *Declaration*, which was ambiguous on many important doctrines (Scripture, salvation, church and ministry, Sunday, and the last things). Missouri's adoption of it in 1938 alongside its own *Brief Statement* (1932) began its slow but steady decline. Discussion between the two churches continued. In 1950 the LCMS and the ALC produced a new union document called the *Common Confession*. Still, it too was an ambiguous and compromising statement.¹⁹

The rift between Missouri on the one hand and the ELS and WELS on the other continued to widen. Missouri began to make a distinction between prayer fellowship and joint-prayer so that they could pray at meetings with church bodies with whom they were not in fellowship.²⁰ In 1945, forty-four of their pastors signed a statement known as the *Statement of the Forty-Four*, in which they openly rejected the old Missouri stand on church unity and related doctrines. There were even questions concerning inerrancy at the St. Louis seminary. As the hope of settling these differences gradually faded, the ELS with deep regret declared at its convention in 1955 that its fellowship relations with the LCMS were suspended. The synod resolved:

THEREFORE WE HEREBY DECLARE with deepest regret that fellowship relations with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod are suspended on the basis of Romans 16, 17, and that the exercise of such relations cannot be resumed until the offenses contrary to the doctrine which we have learned have been removed by them in a proper manner.²¹

Still, this suspension did not avert the loss of some members to both the Missouri Synod and the Church of the Lutheran Confession formed in 1960. The WELS broke fellowship with Missouri in 1961. At its 1963 convention the ELS withdrew from the Synodical Conference.

The Otto Years

In 1957 Professor Milton Otto (1914–1982) joined the staff and was named dean of the seminary in 1968. He continued as dean until 1981. Milton Otto was born at Cherokee, Iowa. He attended Christian Day School at Hanover Lutheran Church and later attended Concordia College, Seward, Nebraska, and Concordia College, St. Paul, Minnesota. He graduated from Concordia Lutheran Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, in 1940. After vicaring at Princeton, Minnesota, and teaching at Eau Claire, Wisconsin, he was called as pastor of English Lutheran Church, Cottonwood, Minnesota, and later he was called to the Saude–Jerico Parish of Lawler, Iowa. He served as president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod from 1954 until 1957 during the difficult years of the severance of fellowship with the LCMS. He married Marjorie Lund in 1942. Their marriage was blessed with five children.

During his years at the seminary, Dean Otto taught the core classes of the seminary. He is remembered for his pastoral care and evangelical heart. The spirit of a *Seelsorger* (one who cares for souls) was evidenced in his teaching and his faith life. His evangelical imprint is to be found on a whole generation of ELS pastors. One of his students, the Rev. Paul Schneider, summarizes this well:

Upon entering the seminary, this author was at first somewhat intimidated by what appeared to be a “stern German” Dean. But it did not take long before the warm heart of that man of God changed that first impression. What a blessing Professor Otto was both in and out of the classroom. His love for his students was only surpassed by his love for his Savior. And that love permeated the classroom. Professor Otto was clearly a Christian gentleman who was gifted by God to train future pastors in the school of the prophets.²²

Acknowledging Dean Otto’s valued service to the synod and the seminary, Wilhelm Petersen, the seminary president, reported to the 1983 convention: “Professor Otto will long be remembered by his students for his pastoral approach to theology, and by his colleagues for his theological acumen, balanced judgment, and Christian friendship.”²³

The Vicar Program

In the early years of the seminary, various methods were used to obtain practical experience for the seminary students. At times students spent the summer vacation serving in a particular parish. At other times students assisted in congregations during the school year. By 1958 there was general dissatisfaction with the internship provisions of the seminary program. There was a plea that a plan be developed whereby a student would obtain practical experience as *Seelsorger* during the first two summers of his seminary career.²⁴

Finally in the early 1960s the present vicarship program was developed. There was some discussion about the possibility of students vicaring their third year of seminary as was done in many Lutheran seminaries of our country. However the seminary's three-year cycle of courses made that impossible. Therefore the vicar year was established as the fourth year of seminary.

In general, students enrolling in the seminary were to have earned a B.A. degree and have a working knowledge of the biblical languages, Greek and Hebrew. The seminary course covered a three-year period in the classroom followed by the newly implemented fourth year of vicarage, in which the students work under the supervision of a more experienced pastor in order to gain actual field experience.

The Mequon Program or Bethany Program

When this present writer came to the Bethany campus, he heard of the "Macbeth Program," a humorous way of referring to the Mequon or Bethany Program. It began in the early 1960s. In 1962 it was reported to convention:

It should also be reported that we have been in consultation with the Committee of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod appointed to seek to provide instruction for men 21 years of age and older who wish to prepare for the ministry. Bethany has agreed to have these men take at least the first two years of pre-theological training at Bethany Lutheran College. If there is a need for these men to get three or four years of study before they enter the Thiensville Seminary, Bethany may also do that

work with possibly some help by way of a faculty member from the Wisconsin Synod. This program will get underway this fall, and it will be studied during the next two years as to whether it should be expanded beyond the two years which we are now offering of pre-theological education.²⁵

This was the origin of what came to be called the Mequon Program on the Bethany campus and the Bethany Program on the campus of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. While most of the students enrolled in this program later attended Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary at Mequon, Wisconsin, a few enrolled at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. The program began in 1961 and continued until 1988. The program was at its peak in the 1970s and early 1980s with 13 graduates in 1980. At least 139 men attended the program during its existence.²⁶

Many of the students enrolled in this program were second career students who had not attended the traditional pre-seminary training of the Synodical Conference churches that included four years of Lutheran preparatory school and four years of Lutheran college. At Bethany they received in addition to the required Greek and Hebrew courses the proper religion classes to prepare them for the seminary. The program was a blessing to the WELS in that it made it possible for many second-career students to enter the seminary. Also it was a blessing to the ELS in that it increased the college enrollment, brought a sense of maturity and stability to the junior college campus and provided men for our seminary.

The Weimar Ausgabe

The Rev. Milton Otto was the first clergyman of German extraction to be elected president of this once predominantly Norwegian church body and he was the first seminary dean of German background. He was a man who treasured the German heritage of the Synodical Conference. He was fluent in German and was well grounded in the theology of the German–American theologians. This writer received his first copy of Walther's *Postille* from Dean Otto with the encouragement to continue to read the writings of Walther. However, first and foremost Dean Otto was a

student of Luther and he encouraged his students to read Luther.

Therefore it was very fitting that the Weimar edition of Luther's Works would be a memorial to Dean Otto for future generations. With the approval of and a generous donation from his family, the Weimar edition of Luther's Works was ordered for the library of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. This edition became available again on the 500th anniversary of Luther's birth. It is the official edition of his writings and as more Luther material is gathered and edited, additional volumes are printed. This is certainly a fitting memorial to a man who was vitally interested in the seminary library. The *Weimar Ausgabe*, as it is called, greatly enhances the theological stature of our library and provides an added opportunity for Luther research. The first volumes of the seminary edition began arriving in 1983 in memory of Dean Milton Otto.²⁷

The Aaberg Years

The fourth decade of its existence brought maturity to the institution and a number of changes. Two of the changes proved decisive for the seminary's future: a separate presidency and a separate home. From 1946 until 1976, Bethany College and Bethany Lutheran Seminary had the same president. The president was responsible for both institutions and his concerns centered mainly on the college.²⁸ The dean of the seminary carried out the main administrative and educational duties of the seminary. In 1973 the Synod Convention resolved,

Whereas both the College and Seminary each deserve a full-time spokesman for its interests; Be It Resolved, that the President of the ELS appoint an independent commission to study the merits, feasibility and expedience of separating the office of President of Bethany Lutheran College, Inc., from the office of President of Bethany Lutheran Seminary and submit a report of its study to the 1974 Synodical Convention.²⁹

The Seminary Presidency

In 1974 the convention of the ELS resolved that the seminary presidency be separated from the college presidency and instructed

the board to proceed to call a man to the presidency of the seminary. In 1975 the Board of Regents had not yet called a president for the seminary. Therefore the convention urged the board to complete that task by the next convention. The Rev. Theodore A. Aaberg was called to be seminary president in May of 1976 and began his work on August 1, 1976. The Board of Regents expressed the great responsibility Aaberg was asked to assume and their confidence that the Lord had prepared him for that office, stating: "We believe that He has given you and has developed within you those talents, abilities and skills which are needed to fill this office in such a way that He will be served and glorified." The board also waived its own requirement that the seminary president hold an advanced degree, feeling his experience had given him the equivalent knowledge.³⁰ He was installed as the first full-time president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary by the Rev. Milton Tweit on October 28, 1976.³¹

Theodore A. Aaberg (1925-1980) was born at Wildrose, North Dakota, to Pastor Theodore Aaberg and his wife, Alette nee Greibrok. He attended Concordia Theological Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, and the newly organized Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota, graduating in 1950. From 1949 to 1968 he served as pastor at Scarville-Center Lutheran parish at Scarville, Iowa. He then accepted the call to the Norseland-Norwegian Grove parish, St. Peter. He had distinguished himself as a parish pastor and a theologian in the synod. He served as the president of the synod in the years 1962-1963 and as president of the seminary from 1976 until 1979. He was managing editor of the *Lutheran Sentinel* for several years and served on the Doctrine Committee. In 1968 he authored a major history of the synod entitled *A City Set on a Hill*. In 1951 he was united in holy matrimony with Melvina Olson of Garvin, Minnesota. Their marriage was blessed with five children.

At this time the Regents created the office of dean of students, to which position Professor Juul B. Madson, a member of the staff since 1970, was appointed. Professor Madson, a son of the first dean was called to the faculty as professor in New Testament studies after twenty-four years in the parish ministry. He served as dean of students and registrar until he retired from full-time duty in 1991.

He is co-author of two books: *Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker* (1984) and *Built on the Rock* (1993). Virtually everything of importance produced in the ELS in the past thirty years has been proofread and edited by him.

During much of this period Professor Rudolph Honsey taught the Old Testament courses in the seminary. While studying for his degree at Brandeis University he was pastor of Harvard Street Lutheran Church, Cambridge, Massachusetts. He is the author of an excellent commentary on the book of Job. Professor Honsey knew how to interest his students in the Hebrew language and make its teaching enjoyable. He was well loved by his students.

The First Seminary Building

During the early years of the seminary, classes were held in the classroom building (Luther Hall) of the college and in the ensuing years the seminary was moved to various locations on the college campus. The Rev. Paul Petersen reminiscing on his years at the seminary states:

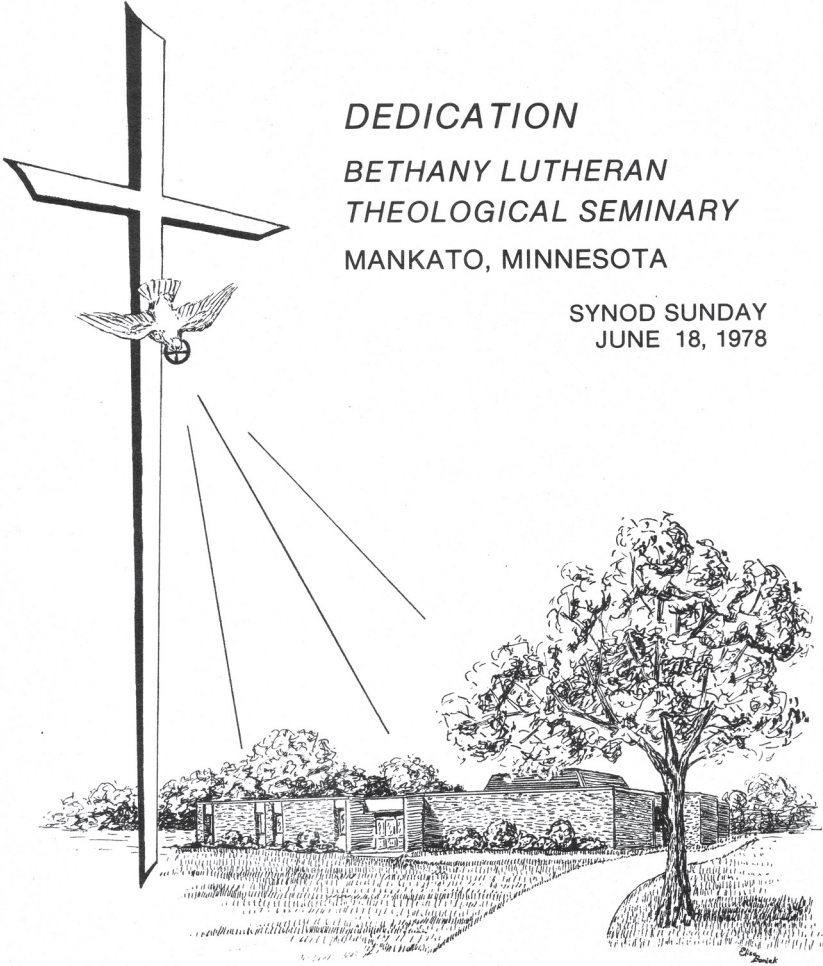
Students did not choose Bethany Seminary for its outward prestige. Facilities and accommodations were not plush. The one classroom devoted to the seminary was located on the top floor of the college classroom building. When the cold northwest wind blew its wintry blast, students were known to sit with overcoats and overshoes to keep warm. Yet the students did little complaining. They knew why they were there. They were preparing for the public ministry in Christ's Church. They eagerly devoured the instruction that went on in that unpretentious classroom.³²

The seminary in 1968 received new quarters prepared on the ground floor of the Old Main building of the college. This area had previously been occupied by the Lutheran Synod Book Company. Funding was provided for this project through the Lillegard Memorial Fund. At this time the seminary was located in the general area of the present college mailroom.³³ The library-lined walls of the large seminary classroom enveloped the students and professors. These accommodations were a welcomed improvement over the earlier home in spite of the fact that the students were virtually confined to

DEDICATION

**BETHANY LUTHERAN
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
MANKATO, MINNESOTA**

**SYNOD SUNDAY
JUNE 18, 1978**



the Old Main basement throughout the day.

Until 1977 the seminary had no permanent home; it was provided quarters by the college. The 1976 convention adopted a recommendation from the Board of Regents to authorize a special thankoffering known as “Gratitude for Grace” for the cause of higher education. It set a goal of \$600,000, two-fifths of which was to be allocated to the seminary. Pledges quickly exceeded that goal and at the next convention groundbreaking occurred for the seminary building just across the street from the college at 447 North Division Street (the present Communications Center). In his address at the groundbreaking ceremony on Thursday, June 23, 1977, “President Aaberg reiterated that this edifice would be used to promulgate the three-pronged watchword of the Lutheran Reformation: *Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone.*”³⁴

The cornerstone for the new building was laid on October 16, 1977. College President Bjarne Teigen preached for the cornerstone laying service using Revelation 21:1–6 as the text. A look at our synodical history shows that mid-October has a long and honorable tradition. It was on October 14, 1859, that the old Norwegian Synod sent the Rev. Laur Larsen to Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as a professor to assist in the training of its students at this seminary. On the same date the Norwegian Synod resolved to establish its own college in Decorah, Iowa, for the training of workers in the church. The school was dedicated on October 14, 1865.

From then on October 14 became an anniversary day to remember the fathers’ example of sacrifice and dedication to Christian education and the training of church workers. There followed the dedication of the synod’s seminary in Madison, Wisconsin, on October 14, 1876; the dedication on October 14–15, 1890, of the new college building in Decorah to replace the original one which had burned down; the dedication of the new seminary building at Hamline, St. Paul on October 14–15, 1899. The ELS, organized in 1918 to preserve and proclaim the doctrinal heritage of the old Norwegian Synod, has carried on its tradition of a mid-October remembrance of the zeal and dedication of the forefathers to Christian education, chiefly through the annual Bethany Day festivities. And now the cornerstone of the first separate ELS seminary building was

laid on October 16, 1977.³⁵

The following items were placed in the cornerstone of the seminary building according to the report of the Rev. Craig Ferkenstad: The Holy Bible; *Luther's Small Catechism*; *Handbook of Ministerial Acts* (ELS); *I Believe, A Study of the Formula of Concord*; a booklet on the ELS; copies of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* and the *Lutheran Sentinel*; catalogs of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary and Bethany Lutheran College; *The Bethany Scroll* of September 29, 1977; a copy of the sermon preached at the cornerstone laying; an Anniversary Thankoffering booklet; *Convention Echo* (ELS) of 1977; a copy of the *Mankato Free Press*; pictures of the seminary faculty and student body from 1976–77; the groundbreaking service and the cornerstone laying service; uncirculated 1977 coins; resolutions and news reports on the seminary opening in 1946; resolutions concerning the seminary and the seminary building from 1976–77.³⁶

The actual dedication service was held on Synod Sunday, June 18, 1978 at 10:30 a.m. The building was a sturdy, one-story, brick and stone structure containing two classrooms, a library, five offices and additional work and storage space.

The rite of dedication was read by President Wilhelm W. Petersen, using a prayer written for the occasion by Dr. Neelak S. Tjernagel. President Petersen preached the dedicatory sermon, "Two Pillars of Truth Upon Which our Seminary Must Continue to Stand" (John 20:31). The Rev. Alf Merseth, secretary of the ELS, served as liturgist. Music was provided by Mrs. Ruth Faye, organist, and the choir of Mt. Olive Lutheran Church in Mankato, under the direction of Prof. R. M. Branstad. President Armin Schuetze of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wisconsin, brought special greetings on behalf of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and Wisconsin Synod President Oscar Naumann.³⁷

The erection of its own separate building, together with the acquisition of its own institutional president, provided the seminary with a far greater sense of identity. Its students were able to live and learn in facilities under better conditions, suited for their needs and more favorable to the purpose of the institution.

Reichwald as President

Because of ill health President Aaberg tendered his resignation from the seminary presidency in August of 1979. On January 8, 1980, President Aaberg passed away, at the age of fifty-four, of sarcoidosis of the lungs, an illness that slowly robbed him of his oxygen supply. Professor Glenn Reichwald (1927–1995) who had taught Greek, Latin, German, religion, and history at the college and seminary since 1958, served as acting president of the seminary for the 1979–1980 school year. He was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and was a graduate of Concordia College in Milwaukee. After attending Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, for one year, he vicared in the Saude—Jerico Parish of Lawler, Iowa, for two years. Here he also taught school at Saude Lutheran School. He then entered Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary and graduated in 1953, serving as pastor in Gettysburg and Redfield, South Dakota. He received a Master of Science Degree in June of 1963 from Mankato State University. He did considerably more work beyond the master’s degree at the University of South Dakota, North Dakota University, Moorhead State College and the University of Minnesota. His STM degree was obtained from Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. He was the co-editor of the book *C.F.W. Walther: The American Luther*. In 1960 he was united in holy marriage with Ruth Marie Mau. Their union was blessed with four daughters.

Professor Reichwald was a hard-working and educated theologian. Throughout his life, he was an avid reader of the latest and best theological books, as his many book reviews in the *Quarterly* attest. “Professor Reichwald was a truthful servant of God, as the readers of his column in the *Lutheran Sentinel* know. He did speak bluntly when he saw people distorting the truths of God’s Word. He also had a caring heart for souls and for students. He was a faithful servant in the Lord’s kingdom.”³⁸

The Doctrine of the Church

During the 1970s and earlier there was considerable discussion in the ELS concerning the doctrine of the church. In 1978

articles in the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* were printed concerning this doctrine, indicating the intense discussions concerning church and ministry that were occurring in the synod. This doctrine was also the subject matter of the 1978 Reformation Lectures which had this theme: *The Pulpit and the Pew in Luther and the Confessions*. The first lecture dealt with the office of the ministry and the second with the role of the laity. The presenter was Dr. Herman A. Preus.³⁹ The discussion concerning the doctrine of the church came to a God-pleasing resolution at the 1980 synod convention when the ELS church theses entitled “The Doctrine of the Church,” mainly under the authorship of the Rev. Wilhelm Petersen, were adopted.

The Petersen Years

During the year that Professor Glenn Riechwald served as acting president, the Board of Regents called the Rev. Wilhelm W. Petersen to be the new president of the seminary; he began his work on August 1, 1980. He was born on October 17, 1928, in Scarville, Iowa. He attended Bethany Lutheran High School, Bethany Lutheran College, Northwestern College of Watertown, Wisconsin, and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. He graduated from college in 1950 with a B.A. degree and from the seminary in 1953 with a M.Div. degree. In 1989 he received an honorary D.D. degree from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana. On June 14, 1953, he was ordained at Our Savior’s Lutheran Church, Albert Lea, Minnesota. He served the following parishes: Oklee Parish 1953-1960; Grace Lutheran, Madison, Wisconsin, 1960-77; Mt. Olive Lutheran, Mankato, Minnesota, 1978-1980. He was president of the ELS from 1976-1980 and president of the seminary from 1980-1997. After his retirement from the presidency he continued to teach homiletics at the seminary until 2003. He was united in holy matrimony to Naomi Madson in 1953. This union was blessed with six children.

As president of an academic institution of the size of Bethany Seminary, President Petersen was not only responsible for administration but also did a considerable amount of teaching. His teaching skills centered in several fields: systematic theology (the

study of biblical doctrine in systematic form), pastoral theology (the application and use of theology in the parish ministry), homiletics (the art of preaching), and church history. He is remembered for his pastoral heart and his stress on pastoral theology. Throughout his career, he continually emphasized the Law–Gospel division of Lutheran theology.

Having been named by his parents after the founding president of the Missouri Synod, Carl Ferdinand *Wilhelm Walther*, theologian Petersen understandably developed a strong and vital interest in the topic so dear to this noble spiritual forebearer and so ably set forth in the latter's priceless volume: *The Proper Distinction Between Law and Gospel*.⁴⁰

The Lord's Supper Discussions

In the 1980s there was considerable discussion concerning the doctrine of the Lord's Supper both within the ELS and outside of it. Several articles concerning the Sacrament are to be found throughout the issues of the *Quarterly* during this period. In fact, the entire December 1988 *Quarterly* was reserved for the Doctrine Committee's presentation of the Lord's Supper entitled, *The Theology of the Lord's Supper*. This essay summarized the biblical and confessional doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The words of institution as spoken by the pastor by virtue of our Lord's original institution effect the real presence of Christ's body and blood in a valid administration of the Lord's Supper (consecration, distribution and reception). One cannot fix from Scripture the point within the sacramental *usus* when the real presence of Christ's body and blood begins, yet we know from Scripture and we acknowledge in the Confessions that what is distributed and received is the body and blood of Christ.⁴¹

Changes in the Faculty

In the early 1990s there was considerable turnover on the seminary faculty. Both Professor Madson and Professor Honsey retired from active duty. Professor Mark Harstad, who originally came on campus in 1980 primarily to instruct in the seminary, later

concentrated his teaching in the college department. New full-time additions to the faculty were Professor Adolph Harstad in 1991 in the field of Old Testament studies; Dr. Thomas Kuster in 1991 in the field of communications; and Professor John A. Moldstad, Jr., in 1993 in the field of New Testament studies. Before coming to the seminary, Professor Harstad had been a missionary in Zambia and pastor in Alma, Michigan, and Escondido, California. Previously, Dr. Kuster had been a professor at Dr. Martin Luther College, New Ulm, Minnesota, and had served parishes in Michigan and Wisconsin. Professor Moldstad, who served parishes in South Dakota, Arizona and Wisconsin before being called to the seminary, has produced an informative book on the doctrine of predestination with special reference to the election controversy among the Norwegian Lutherans.

The Second Seminary Building

During these same years the need for a larger seminary building was recognized. When the headquarters of the synod was moved to Bethany in 1986 it took over one large seminary classroom for office space and required more secretarial space for printing, mailing, copying, etc. In addition to this, Bethany College was rapidly growing. The 447 Division Street seminary building was now needed by the college for extra classroom space and expanded administrative work.

The seminary library had become too small to accommodate the need for study carrels, computer lab, new books, and the storage of periodicals. The fire marshal had informed the seminary that it was not in conformity with space requirements. In general the seminary had become overcrowded and lacked sufficient space for both the synod and the seminary.

In 1994 a plan arose to remodel the first seminary by building an addition to it. However by 1995, new opportunities made it possible to plan the construction of a new seminary building. The synod began a two-year special offering commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the seminary referred to as "Messengers of Peace." This special offering was to provide financial support for the new

seminary building.⁴²

Major assistance for the construction of this building was provided by grants from the Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation. The special synod-wide offering, “Messengers of Peace,” with a goal of \$400,000, was completed in 1998. It far exceeded its goal and these funds were matched through grants from the Schwan Foundation.⁴³

The cornerstone laying for the new seminary–synod building was held on September 23, 1996. President Petersen preached the sermon and President Orvick presided at the laying of the cornerstone for the new building. The seminary and the synod offices were able to move to the new building in the fall of 1996.

On Sunday afternoon, June 15, 1997, at 2:30 p.m., the dedication service for the new seminary building took place. With these words President Orvick began the dedication sermon: “A seminary probably has a greater impact upon the theology and the future of a church body than any other factor, because this is where the future pastors for generations to come learn the teachings of Scripture and what the church body stands for. We therefore give thanks to God that our Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary has through the fifty-one years of its existence been blessed with professors that are totally committed to the inspiration, inerrancy, and infallibility of the Holy Scriptures.”⁴⁴ The *Lutheran Sentinel* reports concerning the dedication:

Synod Sunday Festival service began at the Bethany Lutheran College Trinity Chapel at 2:30 p.m. on June 15, 1997. The Rev. Raymond Branstad served as the liturgist, President Wilhelm Petersen was the lector, and Professor Dennis Marzolf was the organist. The pastor’s chorus, conducted by Chaplain Mark DeGarmeaux, also participated in the service. President George Orvick preached the sermon on Luke 15:1–7. Referring to the Good Shepherd window in the seminary building, Pres. Orvick reminded the people that Jesus, the Good Shepherd, is the pattern for the parish pastor. He led the apostles by God’s Word, He cared for the sick and troubled sheep, and He sought those who were lost. This is the type of pastor which will be trained at the new seminary building. At the end of the service the worshippers walked to the new seminary building for the rite of dedication at 4:00 p.m. The Rev. Raymond Branstad, chairman of the Board of Regents, performed the rite of dedication,

and Pres. Orvick served as liturgist. After the dedication, the worshippers toured the new building and headed to the Bethany campus for a chicken supper.⁴⁵

Weather reports had predicted thunderstorms for the dedication afternoon, but the severe weather never materialized and the rite of dedication was performed outdoors. Several hundred people gathered outside the new building to hear the words, “We dedicate this building and all that is in it to the glory, honor, and worship of God, in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

A new seminary building had certainly been the hope and dream of many individuals. Two people however stand out as having the vision and foresight to work to make this dream a reality: Seminary President Wilhelm Petersen and Synod President George Orvick. President Orvick was the elected leader of our synod for nearly thirty years during much of the latter part of the twentieth century. His leadership and administrative skills were a great blessing to both our synod and the seminary.⁴⁶

New Facilities

The new seminary building provided ample space for the synodical offices and archives. It houses the headquarters of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. In the building the offices of the synodical president, deferred giving counselor, and business administrator are found. The majority of synodical committee meetings occur in the seminary conference room.

Adequate classroom space was provided for the seminary; in addition a chapel, a student lounge, a library, and professors’ offices were included. The beautiful chapel is named the Good Shepherd Chapel because of the stained glass window that predominates in the worship area. As was stated earlier, the window reminds the seminary students that the heart of all Christian preaching is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for us, and it points out that the seminary is training its students to be shepherds under the Good Shepherd. It is really a joy for the professors and students to be able to work and study in such a fine new facility.

As one views the Minnesota River Valley from the seminary

atrium, he is reminded of Psalm 121. The cliffs and hills bordering the Minnesota River Valley illustrate for one the power and majesty of God our Helper and Redeemer, as this Psalm points out: “I will lift up my eyes to the hills – From whence comes my help? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” Our seminary is located in these hills protected by the Lord; it is a city set on a hill which cannot be hid, and a light proclaiming the Gospel in a world covered with darkness.

In the atrium of the seminary building there are several pictures which emphasize the history and the purpose of the seminary. First there is a picture which includes the three great leaders of confessional Lutheranism. The painting depicts Martin Luther, through whom God restored the Gospel in the Reformation; Martin Chemnitz, the leading light in Lutheranism after Luther—so much so that there was the saying, “If the second Martin (Chemnitz) had not come, the first Martin (Luther) would scarcely have stood” (*Si Martinus non fuisset, Martinus vix stetisset*); and C.F.W. Walther, the principal founder of confessional Lutheranism in this country. Their confession centers in the sacrificial death of the Lamb of God on the cross and His glorious resurrection, by which the whole world was declared righteous in Christ.

Also there are pictures of the three founders of the Norwegian Synod: H.A. Preus, the early leader and longtime president of the synod; J.A. Ottesen, the model pastor and *Seelsorger*; and U.V. Koren, the great theologian of the synod. These men were students of Johnson and Caspari, who sought to imbue their students with a spirit of orthodoxy which blended the passion and fervor of a revival preacher with the intellect of an orthodox dogmatician. This is still the purpose of our seminary. Concerning these historic pictures, President Theodore Aaberg stated in his final seminary report to the convention:

The pictures hang there for a purpose. They are there to remind all who enter of our Synod’s rightful claim as the theological successor of the old Norwegian Synod. But they are there also to remind us of the theology itself espoused by these men and by the Synod they represented. They remind us of our duty to ferret out and to teach that theology to our students in the Seminary, and they in turn to their [future] congregations.⁴⁷



The present seminary building

Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary today is located at 6 Browns Court on the campus of Bethany Lutheran College in Mankato, Minnesota. These institutions are situated on McMahon Hill, near the geographic center of the city, overlooking the Minnesota River Valley. Located approximately 80 miles southwest of Minneapolis–St. Paul, the city of Mankato has become a regional center for southern Minnesota and has an area population of about 50,000.

The Recent Years

The Rev. Wilhelm Petersen served as president of the seminary until the spring of 1997. The same day that the new seminary building was dedicated (June 15, 1997), the Rev. Gaylin Schmeling was installed as president of the seminary. At the installation service the Rev. George Orvick, synod president, served as liturgist and the outgoing seminary president, Wilhelm Petersen, preached the sermon based on Matthew 28:18–20 emphasizing that pastors to be trained at the seminary need to be mission-minded and doctrine-minded.⁴⁸

President Schmeling was born on September 27, 1950, at Litchfield, Minnesota. He grew up on the family farm near Hutchinson, Minnesota. In 1974 he enrolled at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato, Minnesota, graduating in 1978 after vicaring at a five-point parish in northern Iowa. His first call was to a two-point parish, English Lutheran Church of Cottonwood, Minnesota, and Zion Lutheran Church of Tracy, Minnesota. In the spring of 1986 he was called to Holy Trinity Lutheran Church in Okauchee, Wisconsin (near Milwaukee), where he served until 1997, when he was called to be the president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. Since 1985 he has been a member of the Doctrine Committee of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod and its chairman since 1986. He received his STM degree in 1993. He has been a contributor to a number of theological periodicals and has written a book on Baptism and a devotional book on the Lord's Supper. In 1973 he married Rebecca Christensen. Their marriage was blessed with two sons, Timothy and Samuel, both of whom are entering the pastoral ministry.

The Present Faculty

As the sixtieth anniversary of the seminary is celebrated, the faculty consists of three full-time professors, Adolph Harstad, Michael Smith, Gaylin Schmeling, and a number of adjunct professors from the college. Professor Adolph Harstad leads the Old Testament studies. Professor Harstad has distinguished himself as an author, producing two excellent commentaries on the book of Joshua, the first published by Northwestern Publishing House and the second a commentary of over 900 pages recently published by Concordia Publishing House.

President Schmeling teaches the core classes in history and dogmatics. In this he has been assisted by Professor Erling Teigen and Professor Adolph Harstad. In dogmatics Professor Teigen teaches prolegomena (the nature and character of theology), Scripture, God and man. The symbolics courses are taught by Professors Michael Smith, Adolph Harstad, and Gaylin Schmeling. First-year homiletics is taught by Professor Adolph Harstad and second-year homiletics is taught by Professor Gaylin Schmeling. Third-year homiletics is led by Professor Thomas Kuster, who is called to both the college and seminary and who also leads our communication courses. Professor Dennis Marzolf teaches liturgics.

In 2002 Professor John Moldstad was elected as the president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. As a result of financial restraints and other considerations, a third full-time professor was not called. However, the Lord richly blessed our seminary in 2006. The Lord made it possible for the seminary to call a third full-time professor in the area of New Testament studies. Professor Michael Smith of Bethany Lutheran College accepted the call to this position and will lead the New Testament studies of the seminary. We are looking forward to having him be a part of our staff. He will be serving the seminary in a full-time capacity beginning with the 2006-07 school year. Professor Smith was installed during the sixtieth anniversary celebration of the seminary on June 18, 2006. Professor Smith had been a Bethany College professor since 2002, and before that he had served parishes in Suttons Bay, Michigan, Fort Mohave, Arizona, and Holland, Michigan.

The Lord has blessed the seminary with faithful secretaries. When the Rev. Theodore Aaberg became the president of the

seminary, his wife Melvina began to serve as the seminary secretary. For many years she was the only secretary for the seminary and the synod and did a massive amount of work. She kept the seminary in order and provided for the synod's needs. Melvina served for twenty-eight years and retired in August 2004. Now she assists part-time as the secretary for the museum and archives. In 1996 Mary Jane Tweit became the second secretary for the synod and seminary. She faithfully served until 2004. Since August 2004, Elsa Ferkenstad has been employed as the secretary for the synod and seminary.

The Present Course of Study

The Evangelical Lutheran Synod (ELS) operates Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in order to train men for the public ministry in the ELS as well as to serve the synod's theological needs. Both the synod and the seminary are committed to the Holy Scriptures as the inspired, infallible and inerrant Word of God. The Bible is the sole authority for faith, doctrine and life. The Lutheran Confessions are the correct understanding and exposition of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures. All teaching and training in the seminary, as well as approval and recommendation of graduates for the office of the public ministry, are therefore based on God's Word, with the doctrine of justification as the heart and center of the seminary's existence and work.

The seminary is preparing men to proclaim the good news of salvation found in our Triune God—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. This great Three in One God is revealed to us by God the Son, the Word Incarnate, in His written Word, the Holy Scriptures. The central message of this inspired and errorless Word is the God-Man Jesus Christ and His redemptive work for our salvation, as Johann Gerhard writes, “For the entire Scripture advances Christ. He is the kernel of the Scripture.”⁴⁹ He loved us so much that He lived a holy life in our place and gave Himself into death as the one sufficient ransom to free us from the domination of sin, death, and the devil. He took upon Himself our sin, death, and hell so that we could have His righteousness, life, and heaven. This wonderful treasure is offered to us in the means of grace, the Word and Sacraments, and is received by faith alone in Him as the Savior,

which faith is worked, strengthened, and preserved through these same means of grace.

There are certain prerequisites or requirements for entering the seminary. In accordance with the Word of God in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9, the basic requirements for admission into the seminary are a proper Christian life and a heartfelt desire to enter the public ministry of the Word. Academically one should have a baccalaureate degree from an accredited college or university and at least two years of Greek and Hebrew, the languages of sacred Scripture. It goes without saying that a potential student will have basic people skills and common sense. “Three things are necessary to the ministry: grace, learning, and common sense. If you have not grace, God can give it to you; if you have not learning, man can give it to you; but if you have not common sense, neither God nor man can give it to you, and you will be fools forever.”⁵⁰

The seminary provides a four-year course of study: three years of classroom work followed by a year of practical training in a parish. The seminary curriculum is divided into the four major areas of theology: **biblical**—the study of the Holy Scriptures; **systematic**—the study of the doctrines, or teachings, of the Bible and the Lutheran Confessions; **historical**—the study of the Christian Church from the time of the apostles to the present day; and **practical**—the study of biblical principles applied to daily life. This training helps them mature as theological students.

Biblical Theology: Biblical theology focuses on understanding the Holy Scriptures. The isagogics courses provide an introduction to the individual books of the Bible. Attention is given to each book’s authorship, the time and circumstance of its writing, and the preservation of the texts. Exegetical study is a “drawing out” or “extracting” of the true meaning of the biblical text, and this is why a knowledge of the biblical languages is so important. Exegesis then is a study of the original Hebrew or Greek texts in order to understand the precise meaning of the words, phrases, and sentences. Key Old and New Testament books are studied in the original languages. Through biblical theology the student obtains the correct meaning and understanding of the biblical text.

Systematic Theology: This is the study of biblical doctrine in a systematic, logical and orderly form. Hermeneutics is the study of the principles employed in the translation and interpretation of the Scriptures. Dogmatics is the systematic, detailed study of the doctrines of the Christian church which have been drawn from the Bible. Here the articles of faith are dealt with according to a proper order: God, Man, Sin, Redemption, etc. In this way they may be logically presented with other doctrines for the purpose of teaching these truths according to the admonition of St. Paul, “Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 1:13). The doctrines are formulated in clear, concise statements that set forth the true teaching of Scripture at the same time that they expose and reject unscriptural teachings. Symbolics courses acquaint the student with the confessional teachings of the Lutheran church (the Book of Concord and other doctrinal statements of the Lutheran church) as well as those of other Christian denominations and non-Christian religions. They also provide a study of the historical context of the Lutheran Confessions for a more complete understanding and appreciation of the heritage of the Lutheran Church.

Historical Theology: Historical theology traces the story of the Christian church from its beginnings up to the present. Here the student sees the doctrines of Scripture applied to the life of the church throughout its history. A major purpose of historical theology is to reveal the gracious, always-present hand of the Triune God ruling over His church. The student is to realize that the exalted Lord Jesus Christ is in control of His church, working all things for its good (Romans 8:28), and thus is fulfilling His promise that “the gates of hell will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18).

Practical Theology: The courses under this division of theology deal with the art of applying scriptural doctrine to real life situations. In this discipline the knowledge acquired in biblical, systematic, and historical theology is applied to daily life in the parish. Practical theology, or pastoral ministry, concerns establishing and maintaining the faith of Christians through pastoral care. Since the care of souls has many aspects, the courses under practical theology are quite

diverse. For example, homiletics deals with the preparation and delivery of Bible-based sermons, while pastoral theology focuses on the proper relationship and interaction between the pastor and the people entrusted to his care. In every area of practical theology, a proper division of Law and Gospel is to be maintained in accord with the apostolic admonition: “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Luther writes, “Place any person who is well versed in this art of dividing the Law from the Gospel at the head and call him a doctor of Holy Scripture.”⁵¹

Three-Year Cycle: A three-year cycle of classes makes up the seminary curriculum. The courses, therefore, are taught once in every three-year cycle with the exception of hermeneutics and homiletics which are taught yearly. In this system, first-, second-, and third-year students attend the same classes. Operating with a three-year cycle of classes allows the seminary to function with a smaller faculty and relatively few students. It also allows for an adequate number of students in the classroom for interaction and participation.

Field Work: Prior to vicarage and concurrent with their classroom education, seminary students participate in a field education program in one of the congregations of our fellowship in the general Mankato area. The purpose of this program is to provide the students with supervised, firsthand experience in various aspects of the parish ministry throughout their seminary career.

Master of Divinity Paper: All students of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary are required to write a major theological paper and successfully defend it before a faculty committee in order to fulfill the requirements for graduation with the Master of Divinity degree. Prior to the beginning of the spring semester of the middler year, the seminary student will propose his paper topic. In conjunction with classroom assignments or special theological interests the student does extensive reading in the four areas of theology: biblical theology, systematic theology, historical theology, and practical theology. The student may select a topic for his paper suggested by such readings. By February 15 of his senior year, the

student will be prepared for his oral defense.

Vicarage: The seminary course includes one year of vicarage, which follows completion of the three years of classroom study. The vicarage provides the student practical experience in working with people in a local congregation or parish under the supervision of a pastor.

The vicar program is under the auspices of the seminary through the dean of students and is considered part of the seminary training. The seminary faculty in consultation with the supervising pastor evaluates a student according to the following criteria: academic ability, personal suitability and pastoral skill.⁵²

Seminary Assistance

The cost of higher education is increasing at a tremendous rate. It has become almost impossible for students to attend college without student loans or outside support. These same trends have influenced the seminaries of our country, our seminary included. Also more and more students are married and have families. This entails many financial responsibilities. Often students and their families are at a subsistence level economically.

Considering these financial issues, the seminary has been striving to cover as much of the tuition costs of the seminary as possible with scholarship funds. In the last few years virtually all the tuition costs have been thus covered. This virtual tuition-free situation is a great blessing for our students. It makes it possible for them to work fewer hours to provide for themselves financially and it gives them more opportunity to prepare for the important task of proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ crucified. The seminary continues its policy that students that do need employment for financial reasons should keep their outside employment to a minimum (not to exceed 20 hours per week) while the seminary is in session.

In the fall of 1997 the seminary initiated a student housing and utilities assistance program. This program supplements the students' income by assisting in payment of the cost of housing. Now there is greater certainty that our students have adequate housing

than was the case in the past. Another program that interests many congregations in our synod is the student adoption program. In this program a congregation is assigned a particular student for whom it then provides support and encouragement. Some congregations provide gifts, cards and encouragement on holidays and birthdays, others provide groceries and incidentals periodically for the seminary student, and still others provide funding for a portion of the tuition for the student. In addition a special student support fund has been established for the purpose of assisting students in unexpected or catastrophic needs.

All these programs are possible through the generous support of the congregations and individual members of our church. Our seminary belongs to our church body, and the people of the synod have shown their gratitude for the Lord's salvation through their support of the seminary. In addition, the seminary receives support from Thrivent Financial for Lutherans and other organizations. The Marvin M. Schwan Charitable Foundation supports the seminary in a significant way. Grants from the foundation have provided support for the seminary operations, for our seminarians and their families, and funds to increase our library collection. One individual who needs to be mentioned in this connection is the Rev. Richard Wiechmann, who is our synod's Deferred Giving Counselor. He has worked untiringly to increase the seminary's endowment that provides support for our students. It was Pastor Wiechmann's dream that our seminary would become virtually tuition free and he has worked to make that a reality. He has a heart for our students and desires to provide for their needs.

Seminary Services

Vicar Workshop and Call Day: The July issue of the 1978 *Lutheran Sentinel* reported a new feature in the seminary program which was a vicar workshop prior to graduation in May:

In addition to presentations and discussions between returning vicars and seminary professors, the workshop program included presentations by Prof. N. S. Holte, Acting-President of Bethany College, speaking on behalf of the ELS Board for Christian Service, and the Rev. W. W. Petersen, President of the ELS.⁵³

The vicar workshop continues to be an important aspect of seminary life. The main purpose of the workshop is a debriefing for the vicars. Each vicar gives a report on certain phases of his vicarage. The report is beneficial to the student body and it helps the professors assess the individual's vicarage. The president of the synod gives a presentation to the vicars concerning the pastor and his relationship to the synod. In addition to this, brief presentations are given on our synod's pension fund, insurance plan, and deferred giving.

A new feature of the vicar workshop, begun in 1998, is the formal call service for vicars and candidates. At this service the vicars and candidates receive their assignments and scriptural encouragement as they go forth in their important work of proclaiming the Gospel.

Seminary Retreat: The annual seminary retreat began in 1998 as a retreat for both students and their wives. Appropriately, it usually occurs around Valentine's Day in the Twin Cities. The purpose of the retreat is to prepare the students and their families for life in the parsonage. Also it is to assist them in personal finances and increase their awareness of Christian stewardship.

Summer Institute: The Summer Institute is normally a three-day seminar providing continuing education for our pastors. While a pastor is continually teaching, he should never end his own learning. This is one of the avenues that the seminary provides for the pastor as a professional to further his education. The institute has been held throughout the country in order to make it possible for more of our pastors to attend. However its usual location is on the seminary campus.

In the future the seminary hopes to provide a longer institute and possibly a summer quarter of several weeks where elective courses would be offered in various theological disciplines. Courses available for our lay leaders would also be beneficial. In addition, the seminary could begin retreats for senior citizens and other age groups in an Elderhostel setting. Here various theological topics would be discussed.

International Students and International Work

The seminary has always had an international flavor. In its early years, seminary graduates Otto Drevlow and Gerhardt Becker served in the Nigeria mission of the Synodical Conference. Desmond Jose, a native of Cornwall, England, was called to be a pastor in the Cornwall mission. Peter Chang attended our seminary and returned to Hong Kong, where he established a thriving Lutheran mission.

Roger Falk desired to proclaim the Gospel among the Japanese people. He was called to the Wisconsin Synod mission in Japan, where he faithfully served for most of his ministry. John Shep, who was of Ukrainian ancestry, founded the Thoughts of Faith organization which has brought the Gospel to Ukraine and the Czech Republic. James Krikava, Steven Sparley and Matthew Luttmann have worked in the Czech Republic. David Lillegard, Theodore Kuster, James Olsen, Martin Teigen, Timothy Erickson, Daniel McMiller, Timothy Bartels, Kurt Smith and Terry Schultz have served in South America. Juan Rubio from El Salvador attended the seminary, graduating in 1978.

In recent years, there have been students attending the seminary from throughout the world. The president of the Confessional Lutheran Church in Latvia, Gundars Bakulis, is a graduate of the seminary, as is the case with Egons Mudulis who serves as a pastor in Latvia. Both Andreas Drechsler and Andreas Heyn from the Evangelical Lutheran Free Church (Germany) attended the seminary. Tor Jakob Welde, our second Norwegian student (the first being Gunnar Staalsett), is pastor in Avaldsnes and Bergen, Norway. Mark Tuffin, Timothy Hartwig and Bradley Kerkow, who were members of our sister church in Australia, attended our seminary, and now both Timothy Hartwig and Bradley Kerkow serve in the ELS. The same is true of Young Ha Kim, who is at present a missionary in Korea, and of Jong In Kim, who is pastor of Asian Mission Church in Irvine, California.

Our faculty has had the opportunity to lecture in our sister seminaries world wide. Professors have taught in the Lutheran Seminary in Lima, Peru; Biblicum, Ljungby, Sweden; *Lutherisches Theologisches Seminar*, Leipzig, Germany; St. Sophia, Ternopil, Ukraine; the Lutheran Seminary of Central Africa, Lusaka, Zambia; and India.

Library and Rare Books

Seminary Library: The seminary library had its beginning before the seminary itself was founded. The libraries of retired or deceased pastors began to arrive at Bethany twenty years before Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary was established.

One pastor's library in particular, that of the Rev. Markus Fredrick Wiese, stands out as massive in size, scope and theological depth. Pastor Wiese was born on May 11, 1842 in Falster, Denmark and was a pastor at Western Koshkonong, Stoughton, Wisconsin, from 1892–1917. Others who have made substantial donations to the collection are: Niels P.N. Hvale, 1850–1926; Sigurd C. Ylvisaker, 1884–1959; Johannes T. Ylvisaker, 1845–1917; and Herman A. Preus, 1888–1985. Many other pastors and members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod have also made generous contributions from their personal libraries. A number of people assisted in organizing and cataloging the books of the seminary, but one name stands out, that of Professor Christopher U. Faye. Professor Faye, a distinguished rare book cataloger from the University of Illinois, began the cataloging of the collection in the early 1950s.⁵⁴

Today, the seminary library is found in two locations. The larger part of the collection is located on the lower level of the seminary building and the other part of the collection and the rare book collection are found in the Memorial Library on the college campus. The seminary library holdings include 14,000 volumes and 100 periodicals. The seminary library is fully computerized and the library card catalog is accessible on the Internet. It is the hope of the seminary that the library may function as a media center for our students and for area pastors. It is intended to be a center of scholarly research.

Rare Books: The Rare Book Collection of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary includes primarily Lutheran Reformation books from the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. Of the 923 titles in the collection, the oldest volume is the first Lutheran book of doctrine, *Loci Communes (Common Places)* written by Philip Melancthon in 1521. The seminary's collection includes the 1536 edition of this work published in Wittenberg. Two additional works of significance in this collection are a first edition of the

Book of Concord published in 1580 and the *Apology to the Book of Concord* published in 1584. The collection contains also the first Latin translation of the Book of Concord, at least one volume of the Jena edition of Luther's Works, other works of Melancthon, works of Brenz (Commentaries), works of Flacius (*Clavis Scripturae*, etc.), works of Hesshusius, works of Chemnitz (*Loci Theologici*, *Postille*, *Harmonia Evangelica*, *De Coena Domini*, *Examen*, etc.), works of Arndt (*Sechs Bücher vom Wahren Christenthum*, *Paradiesgärtlein*, etc.), works of Gerhard (*Loci Theologici* Steinmann and Cotta editions, *Harmoniae Evangelicae*, *Schola Pietatis*, etc.), works of Calov (*Biblia Illustrata*, etc.), works of Quenstedt (*Theologia Didactico-Polemica*, etc.), works of Dannhauer (*Hodosophia*, etc.), works of Hollaz (*Examen*, etc.), and works of Walch. Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary maintains and directs the operation of this Rare Book Collection.⁵⁵

The Board of Regents established the Theodore A. Aaberg Memorial Fund for the Rare Book Collection shortly after he died. The purpose of this fund is to acquire valuable rare books. Such books are indispensable for scholarly research.

The Public Ministry of the Word

In the early 1900s questions began to arise in the Synodical Conference concerning the doctrine of the church and the doctrine of the public ministry. The questions centered on the following issues:

- a. Some restrict the concept of a divinely instituted church local (the Church of Christ as it appears on earth—ἐκκλησία, Matthew 18) to the local congregation and consider all gatherings of believers, groups of Christians beyond the local congregation, such as synods, conferences, etc., a purely human arrangement.
- b. Others find in the descriptive name of church (ἐκκλησία, they who are called out) a term which applies with equal propriety to the various groupings into which the Holy Spirit has gathered His believers, local congregations as well as larger groups.
- c. Some restrict the idea of a divinely instituted ministry to the pastorate of a local congregation and consider such offices

as teachers, professors, synodical officials, etc., branches of this office without a specific command of God, established in Christian liberty.

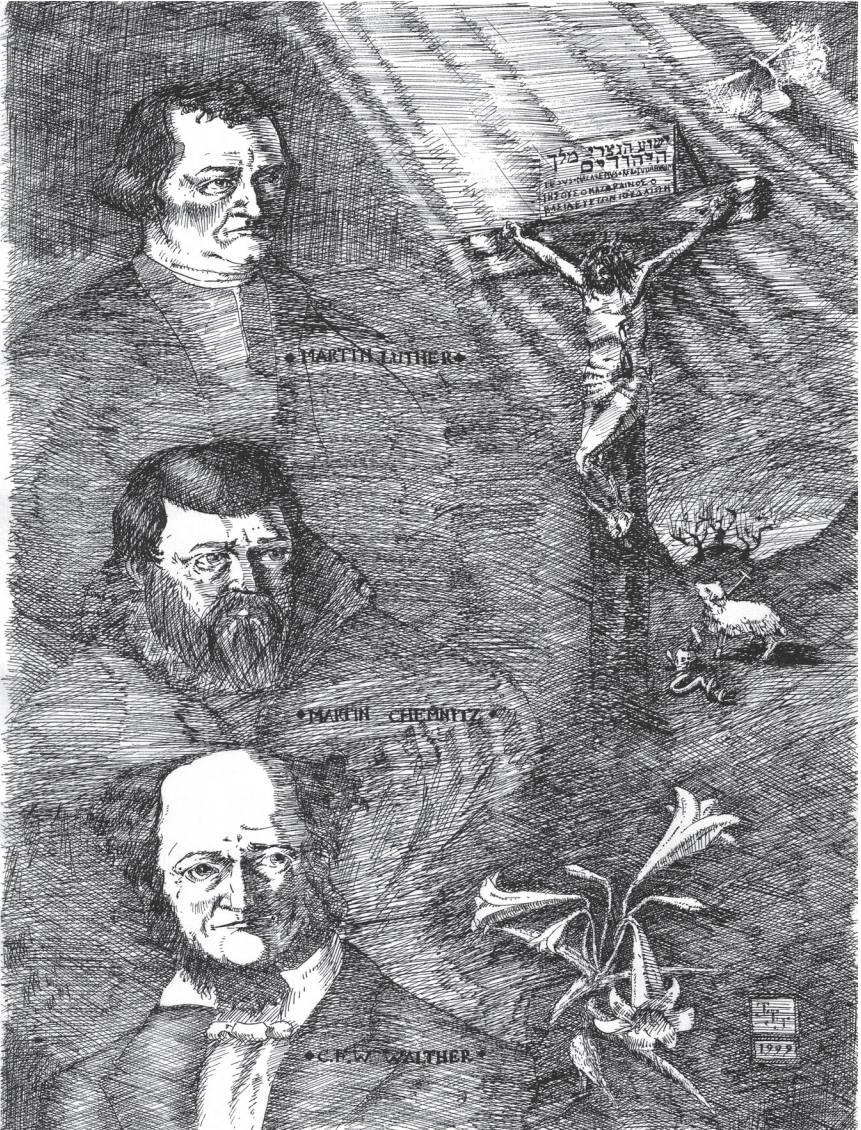
d. Others see in “ministry” a comprehensive term which covers the various special offices with which the ascended Lord has endowed His Church.⁵⁶

In addition to this, outside of the Synodical Conference there were questions concerning the office of the keys. Individuals such as Johannes Grabau (1804-1879) maintained that the keys (proclaiming the Gospel, administering the Sacraments, and forgiving or retaining sin) had been given only to the ministerium and were handed down through the rite of ordination. The Synodical Conference maintained that God gave the keys to the church and therefore to each Christian. The authority to administer the keys publicly is conferred by God on those who are properly called into the public ministry through His church.

This doctrine was discussed in the 1930s and 1940s, but no conclusion was reached because the doctrine of church fellowship came to the forefront in Synodical Conference relations. The departure of the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod from the biblical doctrine of church fellowship led to the demise of the Synodical Conference.

With the break-up of the Synodical Conference in the early 1960s the study of the doctrine of church and ministry resumed in the ELS. In 1980 theses on the church entitled “The Doctrine of the Church” were adopted by the ELS. It was assumed that theses on the doctrine of the public ministry would be soon in coming. This was not the case because the synod was engaged in a discussion on the Lord’s Supper for most of the 1980s and 1990s.

In the early 1990s the study of the doctrine of the ministry continued in the ELS. A number of papers were written on this subject and the General Pastoral Conference took up the topic. In 2005 a statement on the public ministry entitled “The Public Ministry of the Word” was adopted by the ELS.



Our Lutheran Fathers

The Reformation Lectures

The annual Reformation Lectures are sponsored jointly by Bethany College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. The purpose of these lectures is to increase an interest in and knowledge of the Reformation period. In the Reformation the article of justification by faith alone was restored to its truth and purity. We are declared righteous by nothing we do or accomplish, but alone on the basis of Christ's redemptive work which is counted as ours through faith in the Savior. He accomplished salvation for all on the cross and announced it to all by His resurrection, thus declaring the whole world innocent. This treasure is brought to us personally through the means of grace and is received by faith alone in the Savior which is worked through those very means of grace. The first Reformation Lecture was held in 1965 with Dr. Herman Sasse of Adelaide, Australia, lecturing on "The Impact of Bultmannism on American Lutheranism." The format of the Reformation Lectures has always been that of a free conference and thus participation in these lectures is outside the framework of fellowship. These lectures have had a beneficial effect on confessional Lutheranism in America.⁵⁷

The Lutheran Synod Quarterly

A professional periodical for the clergy of the ELS was slow in coming, as was the case with our own seminary. The first issue of the *Clergy Bulletin* was dated August 21, 1941. This issue was one page in length and contained this introduction.

That the Lord will use this humble sheet to the glory of His name is our sincere prayer as we send out this first "Clergy Bulletin." May it under His guidance serve to keep us better informed and better equipped for work in our Synod . . . It is also our fervent wish that our pastors will make intelligent use of the Bulletin, realizing that it is a means by which one can reach other pastors in Synod. This thing can be made a real clearing house of information, but may we all remember that before anything can come out of a house it must first go in.⁵⁸

The early issues of the *Clergy Bulletin* were usually one

or two pages in length and consisted mainly of news items. One could find notes from the treasurer concerning “dry” seasons and the needs of the synod, dates for committees and conferences, and various other announcements. On September 18, 1941, there was this “LAST MINUTE FLASH: It is still not too late for students to enroll at Bethany.” By 1943 this statement was added to the heading of the magazine: “Published by authority of the General Pastoral Conference of the Norwegian Synod.”

The *Clergy Bulletin* did not contain the name of an official editor until September of 1948. That year the Rev. F.R. Weyland of Thornton, Iowa, was designated the editor of the publication. The Rev. Weyland continued as editor until 1951 when he was succeeded by the Rev. J.B. Madson (1951-53), the Rev. R. Branstad (1953-55), the Rev. T. Teigen (1955-58), the Rev. A. Merseth (1958-60), the Rev. P. Madson (1960), the Rev. G.O. Lillegard (1960-62), the Rev. M.H. Otto (1962-69), the Rev. J.B. Madson (1969-76), the Rev. T.A. Aaberg (1976-79), the Rev. G.E. Reichwald (1979-80), the Rev. W.W. Petersen (1980-97), the Rev. G.R. Schmeling (1997–present). As is evident, in more recent years the publication of the *Quarterly* has usually been connected with the faculty of the seminary.

The General Pastoral Conference in September of 1960 decided to change the name and format of the synod’s magazine for pastors. However, it was not until June of 1961 that a new name *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* was found on the magazine which in the meantime had become a quarterly. Other names offered for the magazine were *Synod Theological Magazine* and *Lutheran Theological Journal*, but *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* was chosen.

In 1997 the present editor was called as a professor and president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. In the first issue of the *Quarterly* edited by him this note is found:

The Lutheran Synod Quarterly is issued by Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary as a testimony of its theological convictions, as a witness to the saving truths of the inerrant Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions, and in the interest of the theological growth of the members of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. This was the purpose of the *Quarterly* while President Wilhelm Petersen was its editor and this continues to be its purpose. As President Petersen enters his retirement, we

thank him for his faithful work and for a job well done during his seventeen years of editorship. We wish him God's blessing as he continues to write and teach for the edification of Christ's body the church.⁵⁹

In 1998 the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly* took on a new look. The color of the *Quarterly* became its now familiar light blue, Luther's seal became its regular logo, and it was bound in a more professional manner.

As the staff of the *Quarterly* looks to the future it finds encouragement in the words of Nehemiah 4:16-18. Nehemiah directed the workmen in Jerusalem to build the walls of the city with one hand, and hold a sword in the other ready for battle. They were to use the sword and the trowel. This is the purpose and goal of the *Quarterly*. As the Holy Spirit builds the walls of Zion, the church, the servants of the Lord are directed to use both the sword and the trowel (*Luthers Schwert und Kelle*), both doctrine and defense. The *Quarterly* will continue to use the trowel proclaiming that a man is justified or declared righteous alone through Christ's righteousness which is ours by faith in Him as the Savior. At the same time it will continue to use the sword battling false doctrine as it rises on every side. Remember Luther's sword and trowel.⁶⁰

Board of Regents

The twelve-member Board of Regents is responsible for the oversight, operation, and administration of the seminary. Valuable assistance is provided by the Board of Regents for the seminary administration. The board consists of men with various talents needed for the supervision of an educational institution in a time like ours. Considering the size of our institution, the valuable insights and advice of these men cannot be overrated. The board meets quarterly during the year and the president of the seminary submits a report to each meeting.

The members of the Board of Regents in the year 2006 are: The Rev. John Moldstad, Sr., McFarland, Wisconsin, chairman; Mr. Harold Theiste, Plymouth, Minnesota, vice-chairman; the Rev. Kenneth Schmidt, West Bend, Wisconsin, secretary; the Rev.

Mark Bartels, Madison, Wisconsin; the Rev. Herbert Huhnerkoch, Kissimmee, Florida; the Rev. J. Kincaid Smith, Mankato, Minnesota; the Rev. Joel Willitz, Lakeland, Florida; Dr. Willis Anthony, St. Peter, Minnesota; Mr. Jon Bruss, Hartland, Wisconsin; Mr. Paul Chamberlin, South Chatham, Massachusetts; Mr. James Minor, Plymouth, Minnesota; and Mr. Roland Reinholtz, Middleton, Wisconsin. The Rev. John Moldstad, Mankato, Minnesota; the Rev. Lawrence Burgdorf, Earth City, Missouri; Mr. Lyle Fahning, Burnsville, Minnesota; and Mr. William Overn, Eagan, Minnesota, serve as advisory members to the board.

Encouraging Our Youth in the Lord's Service

The seminary faculty would like to encourage the young people of our synod to consider entering the public ministry of the Word because our world is in desperate need of the Gospel of salvation. All around us there are people lost and dying in sin. None of us would walk or drive past an individual injured or dying without doing anything to help. We would do what we could. Then how much more shouldn't we strive to assist those dying in sin which will condemn both body and soul to hell.

The only hope for our lost and fallen race is found in the Gospel of Christ which the public ministry proclaims. Jesus came into this world to save all people from their sinful lost condition. The Psalmist says, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us" (Psalm 103:12). The Father lifted our sins from us, took the whole filthy load and laid it upon His own Son. At the cross Jesus removed them from us as far as the east is from the west, blotting them out with His own blood, drowning them in the depths of the sea (Micah 7:19). That wonderful treasure is brought to us personally through the means of grace, Word and Sacrament, and is received through faith in the Savior.

The means of grace are the greatest treasure there is because here Christ is present for us with all His blessings. Without Jesus, life has no meaning or purpose and our end is destruction. Without Him there will always be something missing in our life. There will be a craving within that will not be satisfied with wealth, power and

prestige. Only Jesus can the heartfelt longing still. With Him as our Savior we have peace and purpose in this life and the blessed hope of the life to come.

This is the priceless treasure that those in the public ministry dispense. There is no greater work than this. The most important earthly occupation will benefit only for this life. A physician can care only for the body; he can make only the body well. But the called servant of Christ distributes the medicine for immortality, the antidote against dying in hell and the promise of living forever in glory.

Is there a need? Is there really a need for our young people in the Lord's service? Oh yes, there is a need for pastors, teachers and missionaries in our synod right now. There are pastoral vacancies in our synod. Our mission board wants to begin new missions and our congregations desire to begin new schools or enlarge their present staff, calling more Christian day school teachers. All around us the souls of men are dying. They are going headlong to destruction. We have the Gospel which alone can give them life, and the Master calls for us to help.

The faculty would ask each member of our synod to encourage the young men in his family and congregation to consider the pastoral ministry. Here they will feed the flock of Christ on the green pastures of Word and Sacrament. They will use the strong medicine of the Law, for they must point out sin and error. Yet their main purpose will be to dispense the sweet balm of the Gospel, to bind up the wounded, those broken in sin and enduring all the problems and troubles of life. They search for the lost and gather the flock. They shepherd the sheep until the Lord calls them home, and then they comfort those who remain.

We would urge each member of our synod to encourage the young men and the young women in his family and congregation to consider the teaching ministry. Here they are fulfilling Christ's directive to his public servants, "Feed my lambs" (John 21:15). They will nourish and strengthen the little lambs in our schools with the precious milk of the Word.

The gracious Savior who laid down His life for our salvation is calling for pastors and teachers to shepherd and nurture the flock

purchased with His own blood. We would like to encourage every young person in our synod—and not merely the young people—to consider this vital work which the Savior has placed before us. There is no greater work!

A Look to the Future

We are now celebrating the sixtieth anniversary of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary and sixty years of God's grace centered in the Savior. He is the Christ, the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8). He took upon Himself our flesh made from dust so that through union with His divinity He might conquer sin, death, and all our foes in the flesh and raise us to His divine glory, eternal life in heaven. We have seen His love, grace, and compassion throughout the past sixty years and He will continue to care for our seminary and our church, all the way through this earthly journey.

As we face the future, the prospects of the church are, humanly speaking, not very promising. Our situation is much like that of the Irish missionaries in the sixth century. Their missionary houses were some of the last Christian outposts on a continent that had lapsed into paganism. In much the same way our ELS and the other members of the CELC are outposts in a world gone pagan. Still those ancient missionaries did not say woe is me and hide in their monasteries. They did two things, they preserved and they spread. They preserved the Christian literature of the ancient world and they spread the Gospel. Likewise we will strive to preserve the Word of God in its truth and purity in our seminary and we will teach our students to spread the Gospel to the ends of the earth. We will make our stand with Augustine, Luther, and Koren. The strength to go forward and do all things through Him—that strength He gives us in the life-giving Word and the holy Sacraments. As we move forward may our prayer be that of the sixteenth century theologian and hymnist Nikolaus Selnecker:

*Lord Jesus Christ, with us abide,
For round us falls the even-tide;
Nor let Thy Word, that heav'nly light,
For us be ever veiled in night.*



*In these last days of sore distress
Grant us, dear Lord, true steadfastness
That pure we keep, till life is spent,
Thy holy Word and Sacrament.
(ELH 511:1-2)*



The 2005-2006 Student Body (Back row) Luke Ulrich, Jonathan Brodhagen, Robert Oberg, Peter Faugstad, Brian Klebig, Christian Walz, Daniel Oberer; Boyd Longshore (Front row) Dale Jaech, Jacob Sampe, Michael Muehlenhardt, Andrew Schmidt, Kyle Madson, Christian Eisenbeis

Appendix I

Graduates and Faculty of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

1947

Robert D. Preus

James Hanson

Richard A. Newgard

1948

Levine K. Hagen

Iver C. Johnson

1955

Keith Olmanson

Desmond Jose

1949

Leigh D. Jordahl

Reuben Stock

Neil N. Hilton

1956

Richard Kuehne

Herbert Larson

Robert A. Moldstad

Victor I. Theiste

1950

Theodore A. Aaberg

John Moldstad, Sr.

1957

Norman A. Madson, Jr.

1951

Neil Jordahl

Ruben Ude

1958

Robert Thorson

Gerhard Weseloh

1952

Hugo J. Handberg

Stanley Holt

Paul G. Madson

Paul G. Petersen

Lyle Rasch

1959

Gunnar Staalsett

1960

David Lillegard

1953

Gerhardt Becker

Elmer Boniek

Otto Drevlow

Julius Larsen

George M. Orvick

Glenn E. Reichwald

Wilhelm W. Petersen

Arthur Schultz

1961

No graduates

1962

George H. Gullixson

Theodore F. Kuster

Peter Chang

1963

James Olsen

1954

Richard Hawley

1964

No graduates

1965

No graduates

1966

Wayne L. M. Halvorson

Thomas A. Kuster

Erling T. Teigen

1967

Rodger M. Dale

James Lillo

Steven P. Quist

1968

No graduates

1969

Roger Falk

Paul Jecklin

1970

M. Dale Christopherson

Paul J. Haugen

Ronald L. Mathison

David J. Nelson

John K. Schmidt

Frederick W. Theiste

1971

Warren A. Granke

Tosten D. Skaaland

John E. Smith

1972

Martin Teigen

1973

Mark Marozick

Thomas Mickelson

Christian G. Morales

Paul Schneider

John Shep

1974

Mark O. Harstad

1975

Howard F. Aufderheide

Wayne Dobratz

1976

Erwin J. Ekhoﬀ

Theodore G. Gullixson

Dennis Schlicht

E. C. Frederick Stubenvoll

1977

Charles J. Keeler

Nile B. Merseth

Steven P. Petersen

Kenneth V. Schmidt

1978

Theodore E. Aaberg

Timothy E. Erickson

Michael C. Krentz

Gaylin R. Schmeling

Otto Trebelhorn

William B. Kessel

Juan Rubio

1979

Bruce R. Bestervelt

Jerrold R. Dalke

Philip M. Vangen

1980

Joseph P. Burkhardt

Craig A. Ferkenstad

Matthew E. Luttman

Daniel P. Metzger

John A. Moldstad, Jr.

1981

Daniel N. Faugstad

1982

Roger R. Fehr

Russell R. Halverson

Gregory J. Haugen

Bradley J. Homan

David C. Thompson
 John R. Wilde
 Richard C. Long

1983

John S. Dukleth
 James A. Krikava
 Glenn R. Obenberger
 Thomas E. Petersen
 Martin J. Doepel
 Allen J. Quist

1984

Darryl L. Bakke
 Thomas H. Fox
 Daniel J. Larson
 Daniel F. McMiller
 Steven R. Sparley
 Kenneth E. Mellon

1985

Timothy J. Bartels
 Markos DeGarmeaux
 John J. Petersen
 Thomas L. Rank
 Donald L. Moldstad
 Frank Fiedler III

1986

Harvey Abrahamson
 Richard Gudgeon
 David J. Hoyord
 Robert A. Lawson
 Jonathan Madson

1987

Mark F. Bartels
 Michael K. Smith

1988

Micah W. Ernst
 Daniel K. Schroeder

1989

Daniel A. Basel

Michael A. Madson
 Richard P. Tragasz
 Gregory R. Bork

1990

James M. Braun
 Mark A. Wold
 Kurt A. Smith

1991

Victor Settje
 Richard Fyffe

1992

David L Meyer
 Alexander K. Ring

1993

Kent T. Dethlefsen
 Mark W. Tuffin

1994

Jon S. Bruss
 James R. Krueger
 Roger C. Holtz

1995

Joseph C. Abrahamson
 Ronald E. Pederson
 Ernest B. Geistfeld
 Gundars Bakulis
 Gene R. Lilienthal
 Michael J. Langlais

1996

Erik Gernander
 Jerome Gernander
 Konstantin Mamberger
 Anthony Pittenger
 Terry Schultz
 Stephen Schmidt
 Bruce Schwark

1997

No graduates

1998

Aaron Hamilton
Jesse Jacobsen
Timothy Zenda
Paul Sullivan

2005

Daniel Finn
Samuel Schmeling
Sam Piet Van Kampen

1999

Steven Brockdorf
Arlen Dethlefsen
Paul Fries
Cory Hahnke
Phillip Lepak
Bernt Tweit

2000

Matthew Brooks
Matthew Crick
Charles Howley
Bradley Kerkow
Shawn Stafford

2001

William Grimm
Timothy Hartwig
Karl Hermanson
Lawrence Wentzlaff

2002

Michael Dale
Kurt Kluge
Robert Lawson, Jr.
Gregory Schmidt
Egons Mudulis, Latvia
Tor Jakob Welde, Norway

2003

Andrew Palmquist
Glenn Smith

2004

Christopher Dale
Erich Hoefl
John Merseth, Sr.
Timothy Schmeling



Current Seminary Faculty (L to R) *Professor Adolph Harstad, Professor Erling Teigen, Professor Dennis Marzolf, Dr. Thomas Kuster, Professor Michael Smith, President Gaylin Schmelting*

Faculty

The following have served on the theological faculty of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary since it began in 1946. Not all of them were called to teach primarily in the seminary, but as theologically-trained members of the college faculty, assisted in the seminary.

Theodore A. Aaberg + * President
 Christian Anderson +
 Julian G. Anderson * +
 Raymond M. Branstad, President
 C. U. Faye + *
 Alfred Fremder +
 Martin Galstad +
 Adolph L. Harstad *
 Mark O. Harstad *
 Robert Hoerber +
 Rudolph E. Honsey
 Iver C. Johnson
 William B. Kessel
 Thomas A. Kuster
 George O. Lillegard + *
 Juul B. Madson *
 Norman A. Madson, Sr. + * Dean
 Norman A. Madson
 Dennis Marzolf
 David Moke *
 John A. Moldstad *
 Milton H. Otto + * Dean
 Joseph N. Petersen +
 Wilhelm W. Petersen * President
 Steven L. Reagles
 Glenn E. Reichwald +
 Gaylin R. Schmeling * President
 Michael K. Smith *
 Bjarne W. Teigen + President
 Erling T. Teigen
 S. C. Ylvisaker + President
 Paul A. Zimmerman

+ deceased

* called to the seminary

Appendix II

The Reformation Lectures at Bethany Lutheran College and Theological Seminary

The annual Reformation Lectures are sponsored jointly by Bethany College and Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. The purpose of these lectures is to increase an interest in and knowledge of the Reformation period. Below you will find the topics and lecturers for the Reformation Lectures.

1965- "The Impact of Bultmannism on American Lutheranism," Dr. Herman Sasse, Adelaide, AUS.

1967- "The Word as Truth, the Word as Life," Rev. Kurt Marquart, Toowoomba, AUS.

1969- "The Present State of Confessional Lutheranism," Dr. Wm Oesch, Oberursel, GERM.

1970- "Lutheranism & the Defense of the Christian Faith," Dr. John W. Montgomery, Deerfield, IL.

1971- "Confessional Lutheranism's Answer to Today's Problems," Dr. Hans Kirsten, Oberursel, GERM.

1972- "Studies in the Lutheran Heritage: Law, Love & Order," Dr. N.S. Tjernagel, Rochester, NY.

1973- "How is the Lutheran Church to Interpret and Use the Old and New Testaments?" Dr. Robert D. Preus, St. Louis, MO.

1974- "Means of Grace, Church and Fellowship," Dr. Manfred Roensch, Oberursel, GERM.

1975- "The Lutheran Doctrine of the Two Kingdoms," Bjarne W. Teigen, Mankato, MN.

1976- "Quest for True Lutheran Identity in America," Prof. E.C. Fredrich, Mequon, WI.

1977- "The Doctrine of Justification," Prof. Kurt Marquart, Ft. Wayne, IN.

1978- "The Pulpit and Pew in Luther and the Confessions," Dr. Herman A. Preus, St. Paul, MN.

1979- "The Lutheran Theology of Certitude," Dr. Wilbert Kreiss, Chatenay-Malabry, FRA.

1980- "Luther on the Christian's Cross & his Final Deliverance," Dr. David Scaer, Ft. Wayne, IN.

1982- "Luther and the Christology of the Old Testament," Dr. Raymond Surburg, Ft. Wayne, IN.

1983- "Luther & the Doctrine of Justification," Dr. Gottfried Hoffmann, Oberursel, GERM.

1984- "Law & Gospel in Luther & the Confessions," Pres. Armin Schuetze, Mequon, WI.

1985- "Martin Chemnitz—The Second Martin," Dr. Eugene Klug, Fort Wayne, Indiana; Dr. J.A.O. Preus, Garfield, AR.

- 1986- "Luther, The Shepherd of Souls," Dr. George R. Kraus, Fort Wayne, IN.
- 1987- "C. F. W. Walther," Dr. Robert Kolb, St. Paul, MN; Dr. August Suelflow, St. Louis, MO; Prof. Arnold Koelpin, New Ulm, MN.
- 1988- "Luther the Musician," The Rev. Kurt Eggert, Milwaukee, WI.
- 1989- "Luther the Missionary," Dr. Eugene Bunkowske, Fort Wayne, IN.
- 1990- "Luther the Educator," Dr. James Kittelson, Columbus, OH.
- 1991- "Christian Martyrdom," Dr. Paul Maier, Kalamazoo, MI.
- 1992- "Scripture, Doctrine, Confession," Dr. Robert D. Preus, Ft. Wayne, IN.
- 1993- "Studying the Bible Under Martin Luther," Dr. Robert Kolb, St. Paul, MN.
- 1994- "Luther, Erasmus, and Calvin," Dr. Heiko Oberman, Tempe, AZ.
- 1995- "Hermann Sasse," Dr. Ronald Feuerhahn, St. Louis, MO.
- 1996- "Luther and the Fanatics: The Gospel Under Fire Then and Now," The Rev. Harold Senkbeil, Elm Grove, WI.
- 1997- "Philipp Melancthon, the Second Reformer," Dr. Oliver Olson, Minneapolis, MN.
- 1998- "Luther's Legacy: The Luther-Erasmus Debate Revisited," Prof. Arnold J. Koelpin, New Ulm, MN.
- 1999- "Eschatology," Dr. Charles Arand, St. Louis, MO; Dr. Stephen Minnema, Mankato, MN; Prof. John Brenner, Mequon, WI.
- 2000- "Biblical Interpretation," Dr. Kenneth Hagen, Lake Mills, WI; Dr. John Brug, Mequon, WI.
- 2001- "Luther as a Historian," Dr. James Kiecker, Milwaukee, WI.
- 2002- "Lutheran Missiology," Dr. K. Detlev Schulz, Fort Wayne, IN; Prof. David Haeuser, Lima, Peru.
- 2003- "Reformation Legacy of the Norwegian Synod," Rev. Rolf Preus, E. Grand Forks, MN; Pres. em. George Orvick, & Prof. Erling Teigen, Mankato, MN.
- 2004- "The Reformation Legacy on American Soil: Pieper, Hoenecke, and Krauth", Dr. Lawrence Rast Jr., Fort Wayne, IN; Prof. Lyle Lange, New Ulm, MN; Prof. David Jay Webber, Ternopil', Ukraine.
- 2005- "Luther and Education", Dr. Mark Lenz, New Ulm, MN; Dr. Paul Lehninger, Milwaukee, WI; Prof. Dennis Marzolf, Mankato, MN.

Appendix III

Heads of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary

	President	Dean
1946	S.C. Ylvisaker (1946-1950)	Norman Madson (1946-1959)
1948		
1950		
1952	Bjarne Teigen (1950-1970)	
1954		
1956		
1958		
1960		
1962		
1964		
1966		
1968		
1970		
1972	Raymond Branstad (1970-1976)	Milton Otto (1968-1981)
1974		
1976		
1978	Theodore Aaberg (1976-1979)	
1980	Glenn Reichwald (acting president, 1979-1980)	
1982	Wilhelm Petersen (1980-1997)	
1984		
1986		
1988		
1990		
1992		
1994		
1996		
1998	Gaylin Schmeling (1997-present)	
2000		
2002		
2004		

President S. C. Ylvisaker, 1946-1950

President Bjarne Teigen, 1950-1970

President Raymond Branstad, 1970-1976

Dean Norman Madson, 1946-1959

Dean Milton Otto, 1968-1981

President Theodore Aaberg, 1976-1979

Acting President Glenn Reichwald, 1979-1980

President Wilhelm Petersen, 1980-1997

President Gaylin Schmeling, 1997-present

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- ¹ Henry Eyster Jacobs, *A History of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the United States*, 5th ed. pp. 403-404.
- ² H. Larson and J.B. Madson, *Built on the Rock*, pp. 27-32.
- ³ Paul Ylvisaker, *A Blessing in the Midst of the Land*, p. 20.
- ⁴ The writer received this anecdote from President Emeritus George M. Orvick.
- ⁵ Since 1927 the college has had seven presidents or acting presidents: Rev. Holden Olsen, 1927-1929; Rev. W.E. Buszin, 1929-1930; Dr. S.C. Ylvisaker, 1930-1950; Rev. B.W. Teigen, 1950-1970; Rev. R.M. Branstad, 1970-1977; Rev. T.A. Aaberg (acting), 1977-1978; Prof. N.S. Holte, 1978-1982; Prof. M.G. Meyer, 1982-2002; Dr. Dan Bruss, 2003–present.
- ⁶ 1931 *Synod Report*, p. 131.
- ⁷ 1942 *Synod Report*, p. 58.
- ⁸ 1943 *Synod Report*, p. 70.
- ⁹ 1944 *Synod Report*, p. 51.
- ¹⁰ 1944 *Synod Report*, p. 51.
- ¹¹ *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 61:14, p. 214.
- ¹² 1944 *Synod Report*, p. 51.
- ¹³ 1946 *Synod Report*, p. 65.
- ¹⁴ Bethany Lutheran College and the new seminary would have opened earlier that fall, but the polio epidemic was raging across America. *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 29:17, pp. 266–67.
- ¹⁵ *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 29:21, p. 330.
- ¹⁶ 1947 *Synod Report*, pp. 51–53.
- ¹⁷ 1951 *Synod Report*, p. 72.
- ¹⁸ Peter T. Harstad (ed.), *S.C. Ylvisaker*, p. 41–42.
- ¹⁹ Gaylin R. Schmeling, “Two Thousand Years of Grace,” 2000 *Synod Report*, pp. 71–72.
- ²⁰ This occurred at the 1943 LCMS convention at Saginaw, which also opened the doors to scouting.
- ²¹ *Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. 14:10-11, p. 106.
- ²² *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 79:5, p. 8.
- ²³ 1983 *Synod Report*, p. 85.
- ²⁴ 1958 *Synod Report*, p. 57.
- ²⁵ 1962 *Synod Report*, p. 57.
- ²⁶ Erling Teigen, “Answering the call of our Lord,” *Bethany Report*, (Winter 2002), p. 20.
- ²⁷ *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 66:6, p. 14.
- ²⁸ See Appendix III.

- ²⁹ 1973 *Synod Report*, p. 61.
- ³⁰ Board of Regents Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, letter to the Rev. Theodore Aaberg, May 25, 1976.
- ³¹ *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 61:14, p. 226.
- ³² *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 79:3, p. 7.
- ³³ H. Larson and J.B. Madson, *Built on the Rock*, p. 226.
- ³⁴ Juul B. Madson, "Preparing Messengers of Peace," 1996 *Synod Report*, p. 63.
- ³⁵ This is a summary prepared by Seminary President Emeritus Wilhelm Petersen.
- ³⁶ Found in the cornerstone laying bulletin of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, October 16, 1977.
- ³⁷ *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 61:14, p. 201.
- ³⁸ *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 79:2, p. 11.
- ³⁹ Herman Preus, "The Pulpit and the Pew in Luther and the Confessions," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. 19:1.
- ⁴⁰ *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 79:8, p. 8.
- ⁴¹ Gaylin R. Schmeling, "The Theology of the Lord's Supper," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. 28:4.
- ⁴² 1995 *Synod Report*, pp. 45–46, 174–175.
- ⁴³ 1997 *Synod Report*, p. 35.
- ⁴⁴ George M. Orvick, "Seminary Dedication Sermon," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. 37:3.
- ⁴⁵ *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 80:8, p. 5.
- ⁴⁶ For an outline of the life and work of President Emeritus Orvick, see *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 85:6, p. 5f.
- ⁴⁷ 1979 *Synod Report*, p. 78.
- ⁴⁸ Wilhelm W. Petersen, "Seminary President Installation Sermon," *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. 37:3.
- ⁴⁹ *Denn die ganze Schrift gehet auf Christum, derselbige ist der Kern der Schrift.* (Johann Gerhard, *Postille* I:67).
- ⁵⁰ G.H. Gerberding, *The Lutheran Pastor*, p. 51.
- ⁵¹ *Darumb, welcher diese Kunst, das Gesetz, vom Evangelio zu scheiden, wohl kann den setze obenan, und heisse ihn einen Doktor der heiligen Schrift* (WA 36:29, 32–34; St. L 9:802).
- ⁵² Much of the material under the heading "The Present Course of Study" is to be found in the 2004–2007 Academic Catalog of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.
- ⁵³ *Lutheran Sentinel*, Vol. 61:14, p. 232.
- ⁵⁴ From the "Rare Book Collection" brochure of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.

- ⁵⁵ From the “Rare Book Collection” brochure of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary.
- ⁵⁶ *Proceedings of the Synodical Conference*, 1948, p. 141.
- ⁵⁷ See Appendix II for a list of topics and lecturers for the Reformation Lectures.
- ⁵⁸ *Clergy Bulletin*, Vol. 1, No. 1.
- ⁵⁹ *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. 37, No. 3, p. 1.
- ⁶⁰ For a more complete history of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, see Gaylin R. Schmeling, “The Sixtieth Anniversary of the *Clergy Bulletin/Lutheran Synod Quarterly*,” *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*, Vol. 41:2.



Norman A. Madson, Sr.

Life of Norman A. Madson, Sr.

1886–1962

Dr. Norman A. Madson Sr, the first Dean of Bethany Lutheran Seminary, was born November 16, 1886, to Andrew and Mary (Hoverson) Madson in rural Manitowoc, Wisconsin. The eleventh of fourteen children, he was baptized and confirmed in Gjerpen Lutheran Church. In 1907 he graduated from an academy of the old Norwegian Synod at Wittenberg, Wisconsin. Thereupon he enrolled at Luther College in Decorah, Iowa, from which he graduated in 1911 and at which he remained to teach for a year. He then spent the following summer at the University of Chicago before entering Luther Seminary in St. Paul, Minnesota (1912-1915). Upon graduation from the seminary he served for a time as assistant pastor at St. Mark's Lutheran Church in Chicago and then as missionary on the Iron Range in northern Minnesota. He then returned to Luther College, where he taught American History for two years.

During World War I Rev. Madson entered the U.S. military chaplaincy in 1917 and served at Camp Jackson in North Carolina. During this time he was married in 1918 to Elsie Haakenson in Decorah, Iowa. Following the war, the newly married chaplain accepted a call in 1919 to serve as pastor of St. Olaf Lutheran Church in Bode, Iowa. In 1925 he left this parish for conscience reasons to join a reorganized minority group then known as the "Little Norwegian Synod." (This group for doctrinal reasons had refused to go along with a unionistic merger of several Lutheran church bodies.) He then accepted a call to serve Our Savior's Lutheran Church of rural Princeton, Minnesota, laboring there as an undershepherd of Christ for twenty-one years. While at Bode and Princeton the Madson family grew to seven children (four sons and three daughters), three of the sons themselves becoming pastors.

In 1946, at the peak of his ministry, the Rev. Madson was called to be Dean of the about-to-be-established Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary in Mankato, Minnesota. Here he served out the remaining fourteen years of his public ministry. In 1949 Dean Madson was conferred an honorary Doctor of Divinity degree from Concordia Seminary, Springfield, Illinois. In his earlier ministry he

had served as secretary of the Bethany Lutheran College Association, editor of the *Lutheran Sentinel* and *Luthersk Tidende*, president of the synod, member of the Norwegian Synod Union Committee, member of the Board of Regents, and other offices. He was the author of several books: *Ved Bethlehem's Krybben* (At Bethlehem's Manger), *Evening Bells at Bethany* volumes I & II, and *Preaching to Preachers*. He also authored a number of religious poems and translated several hymns. As a powerful preacher he was in demand for special occasions. During his lifetime he became the only man to have delivered a commencement address at all four seminaries of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference.

Dean Madson in his last years had grown impatient with the doctrinal troubles that had plagued the Synodical Conference for quite some time. His disagreement with his synod's position moved him for conscience sake to leave the synod he had served so faithfully till then, and he became a member of the newly formed Church of the Lutheran Confession. He died on December 10, 1962, and was buried from Immanuel Lutheran Church in Mankato. Dean Madson knew himself to be a poor sinner in need of that Savior whom he through his ministry had so faithfully proclaimed. The words of St. Paul's valedictory, used as his funeral text, applied also to him: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith" (2 Timothy 4:7).

Christmas Sermon on Luke 2:1–14

by Norman A. Madson, Sr.

Prayer:

*In this our happy Christmastide
The joyful bells are ringing;
To praise be all our powers applied,
God's grace and mercy singing;
In Him by whom the world was made,
Now in a lowly manger laid,
Rejoice we in the spirit;
Thy praise, O Savior, we will sound
Unto the earth's remotest bound,
That all the world may hear it.
(ELH 150:1)*

And when we make this confession on the day of Thy birth, O precious Redeemer, may it be something more than the meaningless mumble of faithless lips. Let it be the sacred part of an adoration in which the very angel hosts before the throne shall find delight, since it comes from hearts which have tasted that the Lord is gracious. Hear our prayer, and through Thy Holy Spirit grant its fulfillment, O Christ Child of Bethlehem. Amen.

Exordium: When we were asked, in the days preparatory to our confirmation, how God had most clearly manifested to us His goodness and mercy, what did we reply? “By sending His only begotten Son to be our Savior.” Then followed very properly that Bible passage which Luther, with his keen sense of spiritual values, has chosen to call “The little Bible.” – John 3:16: **“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”**

The very act of creation, the declaration of His glory in the never-ending marvels of nature, the unerring exactness of the hand which guides the unnumbered heavenly bodies on their destined

courses – all pale into insignificance when compared with that wonder of wonders which reveals itself in the lowly manger-bed at Bethlehem. Here God becomes man! And for what purpose? To redeem a fallen race.

Had not God's infinite love found a way, every mortal would forever have remained "the creature that weeps." But divine love did find a way. In distant Nazareth, with its unsavory reputation, God had found His chosen vessel for the mystery of the incarnation. A virgin by the name of Mary was to be the mother of God's eternal Son. And it is the birth of that God-man in commemoration of which we are gathered as a Christian congregation today. The story, though hoary with age, is still fresh as is the sparkle of the morning dew. Why? Ah, friends, that which satisfies man's most fundamental need will never grow old. You have an immortal soul which must be provided for, dear hearer, and unless the blessed Christ-child be brought into the picture you will remain an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, a stranger from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world.

Is it any wonder, then, that our pious forebears have so been gladdened by the Christmas Gospel that they have been wont to greet their pastor in the pulpit on this day with a song of praise? Shall we remain cold and indifferent to its wondrous message? No, we will do as did they, arise and join our hearts and voices in the singing of our festival stanza:

*Rejoice, rejoice this happy morn,
A Savior unto us is born,
The Christ, the Lord of glory;
His lowly birth in Bethlehem
The angels from on high proclaim,
And sing redemption's story.
My soul, extol
God's great favor,
Bless Him ever for salvation,
Give Him praise and adoration!*
(ELH 142)

Text: *And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed. And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria. And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city. And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; because he was of the house and lineage of David: To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child. And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn. And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:1-14)*

FELLOW REDEEMED, grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the blessed Christ-child of Bethlehem. Amen.

Over twenty centuries have gone by since the heavenly messenger over the plains of Bethlehem announced that which meant more to the troubled shepherds than anything else. What was it? It was the proclamation of peace. At long last that fullness of the time was come when the promised seed of the woman was to appear on the scene to bruise the head of the serpent. The sons of the first Adam were to become worthy of son-ship with God!

“But,” you ask, “has that promise of peace been fulfilled? And if so, what then about all the strife and discord, war and bloodshed, hatred and destruction which have walked over the face of the

earth ever since like privileged criminals?” If you are not going to be among those of whom old Simeon speaks when he says concerning the little Christ-child in his arms, **“This child is set for the fall – of many”** (Luke 2:34), there is one thing which you will have to learn at the very outset, and that is, to distinguish between that which is temporal and that which is eternal, that which has value for this world only, and that which has value also for the world which is to come. For when Christ was ushered into the world, and peace was promised a world at enmity with God, it was not a carnal, an earthly peace, but a spiritual and divine peace, which you may have in your heart the very moment when death and destruction are reigning all about you. It is the peace concerning which the Savior Himself said shortly before His crucifixion: **“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid”** (John 14:27).

It is true, men have lived and dreamed of a carnal peace ever since there were arrows sharpened for battle, guns loaded for the front line positions, four-engined bombers headed for the cities marked for destruction. And they will go on dreaming of this peace while the earth remaineth. Do you believe that such a peace will ever dawn? Then let me tell you at once that you are living in a fool’s paradise. That kind of peace has not been promised you by the Savior. But He has promised you that which will mean more to you than anything else, if you have learned to know your lost condition under the condemnation of the law. From that terror of conscience He has promised you

A Peace Pact Eternal

First of all we ask,

I. What is meant by A Peace Pact? If men would but read their Christmas Gospel with just a bit of reflection, they ought to learn to see the difference between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world. The world was practicing power politics when Christ was born; it is practicing the same today; and it will remain the world’s way unto the end of time. It knows no other way. **“The kings of**

the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors” (Luke 22:25). If you are living in the hope of some sort of an earthly millennium, you had better read what Christ has to say in the 24th chapter of Matthew about conditions which shall prevail when He comes to judge the living and the dead, or what Paul has recorded on the same score in 2 Timothy 3. It is anything but a pleasant picture.

Go back in thought to that day of which our text speaks when it tells us about the decree that went out from the mighty Caesar Augustus that all the world should be taxed, or more literally, “enrolled.” What did it matter to the proud emperor on the Capitoline Hill in Rome that his decree might mean inconveniences unnumbered for the poor people who would have long distances to go in order to get back to their own city? He didn’t envisage the virgin mother, heavy with child, who simply didn’t dare, who didn’t want, to do anything but to obey the decree. Mary’s folks were God-fearing people, who had learned from God’s law to obey the powers that be. And that was as it should be. That obedience rests upon a sure foundation – the Fourth Commandment.

When you are tempted to grow impatient with temporal governments and their ways with men, then take comfort from what is recorded of these children of God (Joseph & Mary) from the despised Galilee of the Gentiles. There was unquestioned obedience on their part toward the government. But, in obeying, it seemed (it seemed, I say) as though their obedience was not taken into account by their heavenly Father. For what happened when they finally reached their home town, the city of David? **“There was no room for them in the inn”** (2:7b). But not one single word is recorded of Mary’s discontent or of Joseph’s bad humor. Why not? When you do anything in obedience to God’s command, you may possess your soul with patience. It lies in the very nature of faith that it does not know how to grumble. It still confesses with faithful Samuel: **“To obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams”** (1 Samuel 15:22).

But it is the peace pact eternal which is now our concern. By His prophet Ezekiel God had promised Israel: **“I will make a covenant of peace with them; it shall be an everlasting covenant”** (Ezekiel 37:26). And when the angel Gabriel came to Nazareth to

announce the coming of the Messiah, what does it tell the virgin mother? “**He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end**” (Luke 1:33). Here you have God’s Word of assurance that there is such a peace pact, and that it may be had in Christ. But when men begin to speak of any lasting peace outside of Christ, they are not reckoning with a fallen creature. And, what is more, they are not dealing with man’s greatest problem. For what is that? Is it the settlement of international wars, yea, even “all-out” wars such as the present conflict? No, man’s greatest problem is that one little, but very nasty word called sin. The peace pact eternal must deal with that problem. If it does not, it is not worthy of the name “peace.”

But as the citizens of Bethlehem had no room for the Savior of the world on the night of His nativity, so even among those who would be known as His disciples today, how few there are who really grasp the full meaning of the words He spoke at the very end of His earthly sojourn: “**My kingdom is not of this world**” (John 18:36). But, my dear hearers, if the Christ-child is not going to become a rock of offense to you, you must ever bear in mind this fundamental fact. The peace pact eternal is a spiritual possession which only they can enjoy who are led by the Spirit of God. Do not seek to make of the Babe in the manger an earthly sovereign, for then He will leave you as He left the marveling thousands in the wilderness, who were at the very point of taking Him by force and making Him their king. It will remain eternally true: “**The kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace and joy in the Holy Ghost**” (Romans 14:17). It is in the realm of your heart that Christ wants to be enthroned.

*How silently, how silently,
The wondrous gift is given!
So God imparts to human hearts
The blessings of His heav’n.
No ear may hear His coming,
But in this world of sin,
Where meek souls will receive Him still,
The dear Christ enters in.
(ELH 137:3)*

But now we ask,

II. How is this peace pact established? Since it has to do with sin and its removal from the souls of men, we must not become disturbed at the mention of our sins in connection with the Christ-child. For it was to seek and to save that which was lost that He came. His coming had no other purpose. Or, as Paul puts it in his epistle to the Galatians, **“When the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons”** (Galatians 4:4–5). When Christ came **“he took not on him the nature of angels, but he took on him the seed of Abraham”** (Hebrews 2:16). That is what the name “Immanuel” means – “God with us.”

And that is the marvel of the incarnation, that He who was God from all eternity, He by whom the worlds were made, now appears upon earth as an infant in arms. And it didn’t only mean this, that the divine took upon Himself human form, but it meant infinitely more. For we are told that He was not only made of a woman, but He was made under the law. That yoke which had been hanging around the necks of all mortals, proclaiming them to be sinners under the curse, was now to be placed on Him, and borne by Him as man’s substitute. The law, which we had most miserably failed to keep, was now to be kept to the letter by Him, so that the heavenly Father would not have a single charge to prefer against us at His judgment seat. The very name which the angel gives this Child is significant in this regard. **“Unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord”** (2:11). And the name Jesus means literally “Jehovah is salvation.”

Was it any wonder that the shepherds were sore afraid at the sudden appearance of the heavenly messenger? Why is it that so few mortals experience so little real sorrow over sin? It is because they have not taken time to consider the dread consequences of sin. Could they but see themselves as forever shut out from any possibility of salvation, terror would seize upon them like an armed man. And only he who has come under the conviction of sin will truly appreciate the liberty wherewith Christ by His coming has made us

free. It is therefore not strange that Martin Luther, who knew what it meant to have a terror-stricken conscience under the tyranny of the papacy, should have devoted more of his time to the study, and complete explanation, of Paul's epistle to the Galatians than to any other single book of the Bible. Here the Gospel-loving Reformer is at his very best. To quote but one of the countless passages to be found in those 770 quarto pages of his commentary, he has our Savior say the following: "The law kills you; I on the other hand judge, condemn, and kill the law, and liberate you from your bondage" (Walch Edition of Luther's Works, IX, 481).

O, the wealth of joy and blessing which was contained in these fourteen words: "For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior" (2: 11). How was the peace pact established? Also by decree, but quite a different decree than the one issued by Caesar Augustus. The decree from Rome required an arduous journey for the lowly couple from Nazareth. The decree from heaven offers all men without money and without price salvation full and free. And that is ever the nature of God's Gospel: It asks nothing of you but that you believe the promises of Him whose word is not yea and nay, but ever yea and Amen.

Now that Christ is come, there is not an enemy on earth or in the lowest depths of hell which you need fear. Whenever the hosts of evil assail you, reminding you of your many sins, do not deny the sins, but do as did good old Luther: "Sins, yes, but they have all been laid upon Christ. He is my advocate, who has given me the blessed assurance: 'There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit' (Romans 8:1). You had better speak to Him." What better counsel could be offered a troubled soul?

But, finally, we ask this morning:

III. How may I be certain that I am included in this peace pact eternal? Again I would ask you to read the Christmas Gospel with reflection. What does it say? "**Fear not; for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people**" (2:10). You are a human being, are you not? Then it is meant for you. Was

it not your form He took upon Himself? Was it not your sins He came to remove? Are your sins perhaps so great or so many that the Christ-child is unable to bear them? Then God would be a liar when he assures us: **“But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”** (Romans 5:20). Then it would be but a most vicious exaggeration when He tells us that **“the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin”** (1 John 1:7) Then it would not be true, after all, that God really wants to reason with us after this fashion: **“Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as wool”** (Isaiah 1:18). Then it would have been far better that we had never entered this house of worship today.

But, thanks be to God, all those precious promises attached to that Child are as true as they are comforting. For it will continue to be true while the earth remaineth: **“This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners”** (1 Timothy 1:15). It was the one and only reason for His coming to earth. Do not fly in the face of the most significant fact that has ever been recorded on the pages of the world’s history, but accept it in child-like faith unto the salvation of your soul, ever confessing:

*As darkest night must fade and die
 Before the sun’s appearing,
 So fades my grief away, when I
 Think on these tidings cheering,
 That God from all eternity
 Hath loved the world, and hath on me
 Bestowed His grace and favor;
 I’ll ne’er forget the angels’ strain:
 Peace – peace on earth, good will to men,
 To you is born a Savior!
 (ELH 150:5)*

Amen!



Milton H. Otto

Life of Milton H. Otto

1914–1982

Milton Henry Otto was born on December 6, 1914, in Cherokee County, Iowa, the son of Henry and Anna Otto. He was baptized into the Christian faith at Hanover Lutheran Church where he also received Christian Day School education. He later attended the Concordia Colleges of Seward, Nebraska and Saint Paul, Minnesota, and in 1940 he graduated from Concordia Seminary in Saint Louis, Missouri. After his seminary graduation he vicared under the Rev. Norman A. Madson at Princeton, Minnesota, and later taught school at Concordia Lutheran Church in Eau Claire, Wisconsin. It was at Concordia in Eau Claire that the Rev. Otto was united in marriage to Marjorie Lund on August 9, 1942.

He then served as pastor of English Lutheran Church in Cottonwood, Minnesota, and later of Saude–Jerico Parish of Lawler, Iowa. During his years in Iowa he also served as the president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod from 1954–57. In 1957 he was called to teach at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary where he taught dogmatics, church history, practical theology, and homiletics, and also served as dean of the seminary. Professor Otto's years at Bethany also found him teaching in the college in religion or language courses, and serving on various faculty committees.

His talents were used in many synod capacities where he served on numerous boards and committees. His many duties also included working on two revisions of the Explanation of the Catechism and editing and proofreading of the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. In the early 1960s he was asked, with the Rev. Stuart Dorr, to explore possible mission sites in Hong Kong and in the Philippines.

During the difficult years of the 1950s and early 1960s when the question of church fellowship was so prominent, he faithfully served as a member and chairman of the Doctrine Committee, and helped the synod remain faithful to the Word.

Even after his retirement in 1981, Professor Otto continued to lend valuable assistance as a resource person and consultant in homiletics, or sermonizing. Students and colleagues still found their

way to his door seeking counsel, as he was known as a good listener and his advice was valued. In the *Lutheran Sentinel*, September 1982, then President George Orvick stated that “at the present time about two-thirds of the pastors of our synod received much of their theological training from him or under his direction.” Milton Otto was an example to all of quiet service and humility, and of faithfulness to the Word of God.

Professor Otto was called home on August 20, 1982 and was laid to rest in the earth to await the resurrection in Christ the Savior whom he confessed throughout his life and in the final hours before his death when his last words were “I am ready to die.”

Easter Sermon on Luke 24:1–12

April 5, 1953

by Milton Otto

Prayer: O most gracious and merciful Father in heaven, who didst give Thine own holy and innocent Son into death for the sins of the world, we thank Thee that Thou on this day didst again raise Him up from the dead as an incontrovertible sign that He had fully satisfied Thy wrath over sin with His sacrifice of Himself. We now pray Thee: quicken our hearts by Thy Holy Spirit that we may confidently believe that in Jesus we have a Savior who is mightier than sin, death, and the devil, that for His sake we today are accounted just and holy in Thy sight, and that when our final hour comes we can close our eyes in the confident hope that we can die to live forever. Hear us for the sake of all He did and suffered in order to redeem us. Amen.

Text: *Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them, came to the tomb bringing the spices which had been prepared. But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, "Why do you seek the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, saying, 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.' "* And they remembered His words. Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles. And their words seemed to them like idle tales, and they did not believe them. But Peter arose and ran to the tomb; and stooping down, he saw the linen cloths lying by themselves; and he departed, marveling to himself at what had happened. (Luke 24:1–12)

In the name of the risen Savior, Christ Jesus, who suffered, and died, and rose again, so that we might never really die at all. Fellow festival-worshippers:

I wonder if we can even faintly imagine the sorrow that had fallen upon those who believed in Jesus after His cruel and shameful death on yonder Good Friday. It was not just the humiliating way in which He was put to death; it was not just the death of one near and dear to them: it was the death of Him of whom they say, “We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel” (Luke 24:21). Every last follower of Jesus was lost in this midnight of doubt and hopelessness. With Him dead, they felt they still were without a Savior. How important then, and necessary that Jesus should again rise from the dead!

That is the event we today are celebrating—“Christ the Lord is risen again.” It was an event which caused no little consternation among Jesus’ enemies when they heard of what took place to the accompaniment of an earthquake at Jesus’ tomb; it was an event which, in the course of time led the erstwhile timid disciples literally to turn the world upside down; it is an event which is the cornerstone of our faith today. For, it has made all the difference in the world, that Jesus after three short days, again came back from the dead. Now there is hope where before there seemed nothing but despair; life and joy in place of death and unmitigated sorrow.

But, let us go back to that first Easter morning. As we study the account of what then took place we shall center our attention on the words which the angel addressed to the women at Jesus’ tomb: **“Why seek ye the living among the dead?”**

I. We first shall note how that question came to be asked on that first Easter and then how it can be asked today. Our text informs us that early on Sunday morning a number of women went out to perform a last loving service to the body of their deeply mourned Friend. Jesus had died at about three o’clock on Good Friday, so there was not much time between then and six o’clock, the beginning of the Great Passover Sabbath on which, according to Jewish law, no body was to be left unburied. Their last rites by force of circumstances had to be brief and hasty. Now the women came to

complete the burial preparations, and bring along spices and special ointments for that purpose. They seemed to have forgotten all about the large stone covering the entrance to the tomb until they were almost there. And they must not at all have been aware of the guard set about the sepulcher and the governor's seal on the stone. They very likely were so depressed by their sorrow over their loss that they hardly knew their own minds.

But then, they make a perplexing discovery. First of all, when they arrive at the site they find the stone rolled away from the tomb. And what to them was worse, the tomb did not contain what they expected; they "found not the body of the Lord Jesus." All that had happened to their Jesus before and culminating in His death was bad enough, but what a shock it was to them when now even His dead body is gone. In place of what they thought they should find there are two heavenly messengers in shining white garments. One of them answers their many unspoken questions and alarm with another question, "Why seek ye the living among the dead?" (24:5) That already gave a hint of what had taken place. They were looking in the wrong place for one who was alive; only the dead dwell in tombs.

Jesus was not there, so He must be—but the angel does not keep his startled and scarcely breathing audience in suspense, he comes with a most astonishing announcement, "He is not here, but is risen" (24:6a). Nor should this surprise them, for he adds, "Remember how he spake unto you when He was yet in Galilee, saying, the Son of Man must be delivered unto the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again" (24:7). As impossible as it at first must have seemed to them, it nevertheless is recorded of these women, "And they remembered His words" (24:8). If that were true that He had risen again, but it must be, for Jesus had said He would rise again, His tomb is empty, the angel said He was living, He had risen—then everything is changed. Almost beside themselves for the significance of this turn in events they reported back to the eleven disciples and to all the others that had followed Jesus what they had just seen and heard. But no one else believed them, instead these treated their message as mere idle tales. Even Peter, after seeing for himself that the grave is empty,

though showing no signs of violence, does not know what to make of it.

What had happened we, of course, know. Jesus had on this morn again risen from the dead. True to His Word, He was not to be “holden” of death. But, while this was what the disciples wanted more than anything else, it was nevertheless so unexpected that it left them dumbfounded. Jesus living! It just could not be true. They were still looking for Him among the dead. And yet miracle of miracles it was true, as these very women, as Mary Magdalene, as Peter himself and the other disciples except Thomas were to see before the day was over. He was risen indeed.

Now think what this meant to those first disciples—Jesus made the nigh impossible come true—He came back from the dead as He said He would. Then, why, everything He said of Himself and what would yet take place had to be true too. He must be the Savior of sinners, the Christ who was to redeem not only Israel, but the entire world. He must in His own right be able to forgive sin and to save. He must be the mighty God Himself with whom nothing is then impossible. How foolish they were to have looked for the living among the dead; how much needless grief and sorrow they had to bear because they had forgotten what He had more than once told them about His dying and coming back to life again on the third day. He was dead, but see He liveth!

II. Why seek ye the living among the dead? This question can also be asked today. The fact of Easter, or Jesus’ resurrection from the dead, is not to be denied. All four Gospels record it as having taken place; the whole New Testament is based on His having returned from the dead. Further, in the case of the disciples it made heroes out of former cowards, made bold confessors out of those who up to that time had been rather unreliable followers. We too know that Jesus has risen from the dead—that is why we are here this morning, to sing our praises to God for His wondrous grace. And yet we must ask, **“Why seek ye the living among the dead?”**

Consider the problem of sin—after having committed some grave offense, or finding our conscience suddenly awakened or in general depressed because of our sinfulness, what do we do? Do we

look for help and comfort to the dead and ineffectual things we have done or can do? Do we not look for life and hope in the wrong place, forgetting that Jesus lives? Scripture says, Jesus “was delivered for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). He who as the Lamb of God was put to death for the sins of the world on Good Friday on Easter came back from the dead to show that His Father accepted His sacrifice as sufficient to atone for all our sins. He whom our sins nailed to the cross and who was made to bear the full wrath of God because of it, has come back showing that He was stronger than the sin which seemed to have crushed Him.

Yes, the once doubting Peter later tells the Jews, “Let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36). We then have a Savior in Jesus; He has already paid the penalty for our sins, why then look for hope among the dead, for that is what everything else is beside Him? We have a living Savior who with open arms invites every sinful mortal to come to Him for pardon, peace of soul and mind, and life itself. But He had to rise again to be such a sin-cleansing Savior, as it is written, “If Christ has not risen, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins” (1 Corinthians 15:17).

Again, when confronted with the problems of life, by disappointments, misfortunes, and ills of various sorts do we not seek help in what we or others can do, in the dead things of this world which do not suffice? **“Why seek the living among the dead?”** That is not where Jesus is to be found. He is not a dead and helpless Savior, but has been “declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead” (Romans 1:4). He is the living compassionate Savior, who according to Scripture “ever liveth to make intercession for us” (Hebrews 7:25). He is most vitally interested in the weals and woes of those who have accepted Him as their Savior—He lives to help and bless those who by faith in Him are His own, to rule over all things for the benefit of His church of believers. Why sit in the gloom of helplessness and despair when He is nigh at hand, ready to comfort and relieve? He is risen, He lives. And if He could conquer even our sin there is nothing in our lives that He cannot overcome. Only believe like the women on that first

Easter, not like the eleven disciples who were far the unhappier for their unbelief.

Or, do we as Christians sometimes forget that our Savior lives and become so earthbound that He is almost forgotten? Do we seek our life here among the dead and passing things of this world? The Apostle writes, "If ye then be risen with Christ (have come to believe in Him) seek those things which are above" (Colossians 3:1). Our very lives ought to be a constant reflection of the living Savior in whom we trust, as Paul says, "that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Again, when confronted with the death of a believing loved one which may becloud our life with darkness and overwhelm us with a multitude of unanswered questions, do we seek life and hope in things that are seen, in this perishable and decadent world? As the angel said to the women, so we can well say, Remember what Jesus said to the penitent and believing thief when He was yet on the cross, "Verily, I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43). And forget not what His Apostle says, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him" (1 Thessalonians 4:1). Jesus came back as the victor over death, and His resurrection as a pledge for the rising again of all who believed in Him as their Savior and Lord.

Yes, when our own end comes, we cannot want to seek our life in the dead works we have done; that would be seeking the living among the dead. When Jesus died in our stead and again rose on the third day, He broke the power of death, took away its sting, so that it now is but a soft sleep to those who look to Him for life and salvation. In fact, the Bible says, "He hath abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel" (2 Timothy 1:10). And on the last day we shall be raised again with glorified bodies like unto that of our risen and victorious Savior.

Since the Christ who died for us on Good Friday also rose again for us on Easter Day, we never reach the point where we are entirely without hope, without comfort and help. He today is at the right hand of the Father, with all authority in His hands,

with no problem of ours too great or too insignificant for Him. The Scripture says, “Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 33:19). He is well able to do that, and also willing to bless us in evil as well as in good days, “according to His riches in glory” (Philippians 4:19), for when He died we won grace to cover our every need.

May we then believe as did the women at the tomb, that in Jesus we have a victorious and ever-living Savior, who has in our stead conquered sin, death, and hell, and who makes that victory ours when in confident faith we accept it as having been won for us. Then every day shall be a joyful Easter for us, our life here below a truly blessed and happy one, and our dying an entrance into that life into which our Savior has gone ahead of us, waiting to receive us and bless us for all eternity. God grant us such a lasting Easter blessing for our risen Savior’s sake. Amen.



Theodore A. Aaberg

Life of Theodore A. Aaberg

1925–1980

Theodore Arne Aaberg was born January 29, 1925, at Wildrose, North Dakota, to Pastor Theodore Aaberg and wife, Alette nee Greibrok. He was baptized into the Christian faith in his infancy by his father and confirmed in August 1940 by Pastor Ralph Radtke at St. Matthew's Lutheran Church (LCMS), Wildrose. He attended the elementary school at Wildrose, and he received his high school education at Concordia Academy, Portland, Oregon. After attending Bethany Lutheran College, Mankato, he enrolled at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in September 1945. He served two years of vicarage in Iowa as Christian Day School teacher in the Saude-Jerico parish, and as vacancy pastor in the East and West Paint Creek churches. He also served during the summer of 1946 as assistant to the pastor of St. John's Lutheran Church, Austin, Minnesota. He then transferred to the synod's newly organized Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary at Mankato in 1948, graduating in 1950.

Upon receiving a call from the Scarville-Center Synod parish, he was ordained on August 28, 1949, by President Adolph M. Harstad. He served as pastor at the Scarville-Center Evangelical Lutheran parish, Scarville, Iowa, from 1949 to 1968, when he became pastor at the Norseland-Norwegian Grove parish, St. Peter, Minnesota, where he served until 1976. At that time he accepted the call as president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, Mankato. During his presidency the first seminary building was erected on Division Street. Because of ill health he resigned this office in August 1979. He was also acting president of Bethany Lutheran College for a short period from August 1977 until January 1978.

On October 8, 1951, he was united in marriage to Melvina Olson of Garvin, Minnesota. Their marriage was blessed with five children: Theodore Edward, Sarah Ann, Marie Elizabeth, Jonathan Daniel and Joel Christian.

Theodore Arne Aaberg served the Evangelical Lutheran Synod in various capacities. He was president of the synod in the

years 1962–63, after which time it became necessary for him to resign because of a rare lung disease diagnosed at the Mayo Clinic as sarcoidosis.

For several years he was managing editor of the synod's periodical, the *Lutheran Sentinel*, and in 1968 he authored a 300-page history of the synod, *A City Set on a Hill*. He also wrote numerous papers on doctrinal and historical topics and was essayist for the 1962 convention of the ELS and for the Lutheran Free Conference in 1966. At various times he served as a member of the Board of Regents of Bethany Lutheran College and also as a member of the synod's Doctrine Committee.

In the early part of his pastoral ministry, and in his concern for sound instruction of the children and youth of the church, he reopened the Scarville Christian Day School. He also served on the Synod's Youth Board.

He died on January 8, 1980, at Immanuel–St. Joseph's Hospital, Mankato, as a result of his long-standing illness. His funeral was held at Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Mankato, where he was a member. His pastor, the Rev. Wilhelm Petersen, conducted the service.

Pastor Theodore Aaberg held firmly to the sacred Scriptures which made him wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. He was committed to the inspired Scriptures as the only infallible source for Christian doctrine and life, and to the *Lutheran Book of Concord* because it confesses these divinely revealed doctrines. He manifested this commitment to the Gospel of Christ in his pastoral work and in the administrative and teaching duties that he carried out on behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: Whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation. Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today and forever” (Hebrews 13:7, 8).

Golden Anniversary Sermon on Matthew 5:6

Synod Sunday, June 30, 1968

by Theodore A. Aaberg

Prayer: Heavenly Father, give us sinners an appetite and a thirst for the food and drink of Thy table which Thou has prepared for us, and then as those who do hunger and thirst, do Thou fill us with the righteousness which Thou hast promised, that we may be blessed here on earth and hereafter in heaven. We ask this greatest of blessings today, not only for ourselves who have been privileged to gather here for the festival, but also for each member of each congregation throughout the synod. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Grace be unto you and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Text: *Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.* (Matthew 5:6)

Heavenly Father, sanctify us through Thy truth, Thy word is truth. Amen.

In Christ Jesus, dear festival worshipers:

It is easy enough to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod, so far as doctrine is concerned. If one sets forth God's grace to lost sinners, justice has been done to the basic history of the synod, not only for fifty years, to 1918, but for 115 years, to 1853. The fathers walked a plain path in their doctrine, and it is not hard to trace it.

But if it is easy to celebrate, it is also difficult, for there is more to setting forth the grace of God to lost sinners than simply presenting the content of that doctrine. It must be so done as to meet the needs of the time. Our spiritual forefathers were sorely tempted to give up a clear, honest confession of the doctrine of grace. We

today as a synod may not be tempted so much to compromise the truth through a unionistic church merger, but we are tempted to spiritual indifference, weariness, and loss of appetite for the Gospel by the very fact that we have enjoyed its rich blessings for so many years. Let no one therefore think that it is an easy matter to celebrate properly this festival of joy. Jesus' Words must stand clearly before us: "*Take heed therefore HOW ye hear: for whosoever hath, to him shall be given; and whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken even that which he seemeth to have*" (Luke 8:18).

It is a joy to celebrate a church anniversary, and a double joy to celebrate the anniversary of our synod. It is truly remarkable that the organization which was established on a June day fifty years ago under such adverse circumstances, should not only have continued, but even prospered to this day. Our joy, however, must be tempered with spiritual duty and spiritual responsibility.

We have, indeed, a responsibility to our spiritual forefathers like unto that expressed by Pastor Bjug Harstad, the first president of the reorganized synod. As he expressed his thanks to the pastors and delegates of the 1922 convention in Madison for working together to build up the old synodical house, he said: "We old ones, as Wiese and myself, who will soon be meeting the departed fathers, would dread facing them if we had not continued their work and contended for the spiritual truths of the old body."

There is, however, a much greater responsibility upon us today than that owed to men, namely, our responsibility to God who has given us such a treasure of doctrine. Surely it is from Him. "... *What hast thou that thou didst not receive...*" (1 Corinthians 4:7)? And the greater the gift, the greater the responsibility: "... *For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required...*" (Luke 12:48).

If possibly we came here this morning with a somewhat thoughtless, aimless spirit, let us proceed now in all earnestness and seriousness. But let there be no fear or despair in our seriousness, for God in the Gospel sets a wonderful table before us for our anniversary and bids each of us to sit down in the good company of one another, with Christ at the head, and to enjoy ourselves and to be filled with His blessing. For our text speaks of

The Table Furnished by God

I. What of the Table?

Does God, can God, furnish a table? The Israelites asked the question in a spirit of rebellion during their wilderness journey, as related by the psalmist: “*Yes, they spake against God; they said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness*” (Psalm 78:19)?

The question was asked many years later, not in a wilderness, but in a land of rich soil; yet a land which had not been subdued, and which confronted its inhabitants with many spiritual and physical trials. The question was asked in a service under the oak trees in West Koshkonong of the settlers who had come from Norway earlier, and were now, on September 2, 1844, attending services conducted by a regularly trained pastor, the first such service for them since they had left Norway. The question: “*Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?*” by J.W.C. Dietrichson to the sixty communicants in the confessional sermon was not asked in the rebellious spirit of the Israelites, but in the spirit of strength and assurance that God could indeed furnish such a table. We know this, for the text for the sermon which followed was none other than Matthew 11:28, “*Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.*”

What kind of a table does God furnish? To be sure, His table includes all blessings, material and spiritual. “*The eyes of all wait upon thee and Thou givest them their meat in due season. Thou openest thine hand and satisfieth the desire of every living thing*” (Psalm 145:15-16). “*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights...*” (James 1:17). But the table of our text is a spiritual one, for it speaks of hungering and thirsting after righteousness. A righteous person is one who having been declared righteous by God can stand in the presence of the VERY GOD, who has said: “*Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord, thy God am holy*” (1 Peter 1:15-16).

God has twice furnished such a table of righteousness. He did it first when He made man, creating him in His own image. That the sweeping condemnation of man had to be made later: “*There is none righteous, no, not one*” (Romans 3:10) was not God’s fault, but man’s alone.

But God has again furnished a table of righteousness, through the gift of His Son. As announced to Satan in Eden: *“I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed, it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel”* (Genesis 3:15), so it was accomplished in Christ, for *“God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them....”* (2 Corinthians 5:1).

This is the righteousness of God, that Jesus, made under the Law, lived a holy life in every sinner’s stead; that Jesus, delivered for our transgressions, died for the ungodly. This is the righteousness of God, that God has accepted that payment, and has declared every man to be righteous in Christ, even as Paul states: *“Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men unto condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life”* (Romans 5:18). This is the table furnished by God, of which the psalmist says: *“Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like the eagle’s”* (Psalm 103:5).

II. What of the Guests?

There are restrictions, not of the kind so often imposed by men between one another, but restrictions nonetheless. Only they partake of Christ’s righteousness who “hunger and thirst” after it. It is as Mary sings: *“He hath filled the hungry with good things: and the rich he hath sent empty away”* (Luke 1:53).

To be sure, all are invited; earnestly and seriously, by God. God would have all men to be saved. *“Lo, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come buy wine and milk without money and without price”* (Isaiah 55:1). God’s grace is universal, for all men, and this provides the assurance that it is for the individual, for you and for me.

But only they who “hunger and thirst after righteousness” shall be filled. Christ says: *“...I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance”* (Mark 2:17). To hunger and thirst after righteousness is to come as one who is empty so far as any righteousness of his own is concerned, but who ardently desires to be righteous before God. He hungers and thirsts after righteousness

who earnestly desires that *“righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe...”* (Romans 3:22).

When the publican with downcast eyes said: *“God be merciful to me, a sinner”* (Luke 18:13) he was hungering and thirsting after righteousness. When the woman who was a sinner stood at the feet of Jesus in the house of Simon the Pharisee and said not a word, but with flowing tears washed the feet of the Savior, she was hungering and thirsting after righteousness. The thief on the cross, crying out to that miserable worm on the other cross: *“...Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom”* (Luke 23:42).

To hunger and thirst after righteousness, then, is nothing else than to repent and believe the Gospel. Such a one not only longs for the righteousness of Christ which is by faith, but also ardently desires to do right in his life. For he who believes in Christ, hates sin and loves righteousness. It is a very part of his faith. Scripture says that the believer has been *“...created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that he should walk in them”* (Ephesians 2:10). The desire and effort to be righteous in one's life, even as he is righteous by faith in Christ, is so much a part of true faith that Christ, who closed the door of heaven to the self-righteous Pharisees who trusted in their works, could still say: *“The hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear the voice of the Son of God and shall come forth, they that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation”* (John 5:28–29). Luther could therefore tie the Christian life right into the explanation of the article of redemption and, after having spoken of his being redeemed by the blood of Christ, go on to say: *“In order that I might be His own and live under Him in His kingdom and serve Him in everlasting righteousness, innocence and blessedness.”* Therefore let no one think that he truly hungers and thirsts after the righteousness of Christ which is by faith alone unless he also earnestly desires to serve God by a holy life.

Such hungering and thirsting after righteousness is God's work in man. It is the Holy Ghost who through the Means of Grace brings man to see his own unrighteousness, and who creates in him

an appetite, a thirst, a longing for the righteousness of Christ. “*You hath he quickened who were dead in trespasses and sins; ...But God who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ. (by Grace ye are saved:)*” (Ephesians 2:1, 4–5). It is likewise God who continues to create anew in us that appetite which does not grow tired of Christ’s righteousness, which does not grow weary of striving for righteousness in his life, but which cries out: “*Feed me now and evermore.*” A table of righteousness is prepared by God in Christ. Guests who hunger and thirst for that righteousness, again by the work of God. To this His own work God adds His blessing: “*Blessed are they ... for they shall be filled.*” Again, God’s work. “They shall be filled,” not fill themselves, but be filled by another.

III. The Promise of His Table.

They shall be filled. Filled for this life. Filled with the righteousness of Christ. He shall have Christ’s righteousness for his very own, so that even here on earth from day to day, he stands by faith in God’s eyes and in God’s judgment as one who is holy and righteous.

Having Christ’s righteousness as his own, he is “filled” in this life also in the sense that he is satisfied; he neither desires nor needs anything more so far as the real issues of life and death are concerned.

*We have all things, Christ possessing;
Life eternal, second birth;
Present pardon, peace, and blessing,
While we tarry here on earth.*

He shall likewise be filled with a righteous life. Having put on Christ, he shall through Christ draw strength for a holy life. And though this life shall have many imperfections, and consequently often be a sorrow for him, he shall be filled, be satisfied also here, for “*Jesus is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification and redemption*” (1 Corinthians 1:30).

But more, he who hungers and thirsts after righteousness

shall be filled in the hereafter. Jesus said: *“I am the bread of life; he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst”* (John 6:35). He could speak of the water in Jacob’s well and say: *“Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again”* (John 4:13). But of Himself he could say: *“I am the water of life ... Whosoever shall drink of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life”* (John 4:14).

The curtain of heaven is drawn back for us in Revelation and we are told of those arrayed in white: *“These are they which came out of great tribulation and have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the lamb”* (Revelation 7:14). And of them it says: *“They shall hunger no more, neither thirst anymore”* (Revelation 7:16). They shall be filled. *“The lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters...”* (Revelation 7:17).

They shall be filled: *“As for me”* says the psalmist, *“I will behold thy face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness”* (Psalm 17:15).

Here then is the simple, comforting Gospel truth: *“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.”* Is not this word spoken by our Savior on the mountainside of Galilee a good word, and the right word for our synod on its Golden Anniversary? Full of comfort, and yet so fashioned as to rid us of any spiritual indifference, dead orthodoxy, or self-righteousness which may have found its way into our heart, for it speaks not of hunger and thirsting in the past but today. Is it not a word of joy, of true joy, the true joy which our Savior wants us to have in our church work as spoken to the seventy who were to rejoice above all else in that their names were written in heaven? And in that joy of heaven, are we not summoned to the spiritual responsibility which this day and the years ahead demand of us?

*Thou art my host; for me, Thy guest,
A table Thou providest.
Though foes be near, I am at rest;
Thou still with me abidest.*

*With oil annointest Thou my head;
On me Thy blessing rich is shed,
My cup with bliss o'erfloweth.*
(ELH 368:5)

God grant us all such a festival of joy! Amen.





Glenn E. Reichwald

Life of Glenn E. Reichwald

1927-1995

Glenn Erwin Reichwald was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin on May 2, 1927, to Ervin and Elsie (Neitzel) Reichwald. He was brought to the Sacrament of Holy Baptism on May 22, 1927, at Immanuel Lutheran Church of Milwaukee. His father died when he was a small child. Glenn was confirmed in his Christian faith on April 6, 1941.

On July 2, 1960, he was united in holy marriage with Ruth Marie Mau at Immanuel Lutheran Church of Long Prairie Township, Minnesota. Their union was blessed with four daughters. In July of 1994 they were saddened by the loss of their daughter, Mary Sargent.

Glen was a graduate of Concordia College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He attended Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, for one year, then vicared for two years in the Saude—Jerico Parish of Lawler, Iowa. He also taught school at Saude Lutheran School. After this he entered Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary graduating in 1953. Then he was ordained into the public ministry and served Lutheran parishes in Redfield and Gettysburg, South Dakota. He received a Master of Science Degree in education from Mankato State University in June of 1963. He did considerably more work beyond the master's degree at the University of South Dakota, North Dakota University, Moorhead State College and the University of Minnesota. His S.T.M. degree was obtained from Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

In 1958 he was called to Bethany Lutheran College as an instructor of history, geography, political science, Greek, Latin, German, and theology. Beginning in 1965 he taught classes in the seminary. He also was an instructor in the "Mequon Program" at Bethany which prepared older men of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod for entrance into their seminary at Mequon, Wisconsin. When the president of the seminary resigned because of ill health, he served as acting president of the seminary for the 1979–1980 school year. Professor Reichwald taught for thirty-five years at Bethany until he retired in 1993. He continued to teach part-

time at the seminary.

Professor Reichwald was co-editor of the book *C.F.W. Walther: The American Luther* commemorating the one hundredth anniversary of Dr. C.F.W. Walther's death, and he wrote many scholarly articles for the *Lutheran Synod Quarterly*. He served our synod as the writer of the "Periscope" column that appeared in the *Lutheran Sentinel*. He wrote about the direction in which various church bodies were going, which helped his readers understand the theological climate of the times.

For a number of months Professor Reichwald had been filling a pastoral vacancy at Grace Lutheran Church (WELS) in Le Sueur, Minnesota. He was taken suddenly from this life on Wednesday, December 20, 1995 after having returned home from conducting Advent worship services.

Professor Reichwald was a truthful servant of God, as the readers of his column in the *Lutheran Sentinel* know. He had a caring heart for souls and was always concerned about his students. He was a faithful servant in the Lord's kingdom.

Sermon on Mark 2:13–17

by Glenn E. Reichwald

Text: *Then He went out again by the sea; and all the multitude came to Him, and He taught them. As He passed by, He saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him. Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi’s house, that many tax collectors and sinners also sat together with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him. And when the scribes and Pharisees saw Him eating with the tax collectors and sinners, they said to His disciples, “How is it that He eats and drinks with tax collectors and sinners?” When Jesus heard it, He said to them, “Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance.” (Mark 2:13–17)*

Dear Friends in Christ,

“Follow Me!” How often we hear these words in various forms and in various ways in our life. “Follow me!” How often we are called upon to dedicate our lives, our time, and our talents to this or to that cause. There are people around us, tugging at our sleeves and calling to us to join them. By their words, by their life style, and by their examples, they beckon to us and tell us that their way is the real way – really living. We have the voice of materialism coming at us and calling “Follow me!” We have the commercials of television and magazines telling us that we are living only half a life unless we get this or that little thing and devote ourselves to getting it. There are the wild tunes of pleasure calling “Follow me!” calling especially to the young, telling them to engage in the wild and weird whirl of pleasure that entertains for the moment and yet leaves empty when one asks, “To what good?”

This wild din of voices goes on around us all of the time, day in and day out. And here we are, the children of God. Amid these many voices there is another voice, and we know that voice – Christ’s – calling to us, “Follow Me!” As we move along through life, may we hear among the many voices the only one that counts,

the voice of Christ, which calls: **FOLLOW ME.**

I. The call of the Savior is one of love.

Our text recounts the calling of Levi or Matthew as a disciples of Jesus. He saw Matthew as Matthew sat in receipt of custom. Matthew, simply stated, was a government customs agent. As the caravans came across the Fertile Crescent, he collected a tax for the Romans as they passed. He had, therefore, a good job. He also had the name of publican, with which we are more familiar. Thus as a tax collector, or publican, he was lumped in a group which was called sinners. The reason? The tax collectors often collected extra, not for the government, but for themselves, a one hundred percent profit.

And yet Jesus' "Follow Me" tore Matthew away from everything. Matthew had evidently found a better job – with Jesus. People change jobs because they do not like their old job, or the new job pays better, or the new job represents an advancement. Why did Matthew leave his job? Jesus' comment to His critics at the end of our text tells us why – that those who are sick need a physician and not those who are well. Matthew had followed Jesus on that basis. He saw himself as sick, with Jesus as the physician. That sickness was the sickness of sin. It is not just the external rash of sins which break out on the surface of people's lives: the lying, the bickering, the cheating, the immorality, the self-righteousness, and the like. It begins in the sinful heart of man, for Christ said that it is from the heart that the individual sins come. "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, thefts, false witnesses, blasphemes" (Matthew 15:19). This is the real healing that men need, from themselves.

And this is what Matthew saw in Christ! He saw Jesus as Jesus, the One so named by God's angel – "He shall be called Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). He saw Him as the virgin-born son of God, who was, as Old Testament prophecy has stated, "Emmanuel," i.e., "God with us." As the divine Savior, Matthew in faith had heard earlier Christ's invitation, "Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." "You will find rest for your souls" (Matthew 11:28-29b).

Thus, when Jesus' further invitation came, "Follow Me" away from everything to be an apostle, Matthew had to come. His feet followed his heart.

Where is our heart? Where our heart is, there our feet will follow. Perhaps Matthew had one advantage over us. When Christ met him as a publican, Matthew could not argue about his apparent sin. It was there. And the Gospel was good news, a news that refreshed him with its forgiveness. It should refresh us too! We are sinners and that good news is for us. Christ has saved us from our sins.

II. But when Christ calls us after Himself, then it also means we must leave something behind.

He who is committed commits himself, his life, and his talents. Matthew, when he heard the call "Follow Me" dropped everything. He did not ask for time, for he had no time to lose when the Savior called him. And that is as it ought to be. Scripture reminds us: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). Christians are a new creation. We are, Scripture says, "His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works" (Ephesians 2:10). Thus Matthew did not quibble when Christ called him as an apostle. He did not ask about the salary, the hours, the fringe benefits, the working conditions, or the chance for advancement. Christ called, and he dropped everything.

This, unfortunately, is not the reaction of many when Christ calls them to be a Christian or to special work. They are unwilling to leave, or drop, what they are doing, to change their direction of life. The reason is simple enough. For many church membership has become belonging to an organization rather than commitment. Sociologists would say that the congregations have become institutionalized, that is, they become organizations which function. They have meetings, they have gatherings, and people come and go as they choose. Membership starts to become a formality, and people, while they do not drop their associations in the organization, do not get too excited about it either. It is just nice to have around.

But Christ said, "Follow Me." And that implies motion and movement and commitment. The reason that many do not get

excited about their church membership is that they forget that it begins with Christ and His sacrifice on the cross. It begins with His calling us to faith and forgiveness and to His service. “Follow Me!” The call of Christ is one among the many voices calling us, and yet it is the one of primary importance. The Christian congregation, the assembly of Christians around the Gospel and the sacraments, is not just one organization among many to which we belong. It is THE organization, for there we meet our Savior.

Hence when Christ says, “Follow Me,” He is calling us away from everything else to Himself. He is calling us away from sinful self to His way. Remember our Baptism, and the covenant there established. “We were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

Christ says, “Follow Me!” This is not easy. Think of the temptations our Savior endured. They came from the best arsenal of Satan. He tempted Christ with the need for food – “Turn these stones into bread.” He tempted Christ with the glory of the world and the glamour of the moment – “Jump off the tower of the temple,” a certain way to draw people to Him. He offered Christ the wealth and pomp of the world – and Satan does reward those that are his, but to their damnation, so that the good they receive destroys instead of blessings. Christ answered each of these temptations with a message from the Bible. He had the right perspective. And we would do well to learn from Him.

Nor is it a matter of Christ being someone special. Certainly He was. But this has always been the real struggle of God’s children, to walk away from everything for Christ. Moses, the baby of the bulrushes, was raised in the court of Pharaoh of Egypt. All was his. Yet he walked away from it. Why? “By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin” (Hebrews 11:24–25). He wanted to be numbered with God’s people. He was not just formal in his religion. He was committed.

“Follow Me!” May we turn our eyes away from our own interests and chart the course of our lives by Christ and for Christ.

III. But when Christ says, “Follow Me!” He also looks for us to continue in this world as Christians.

When Matthew, or Levi, was called to follow Christ as an apostle, He did not head out into the wilderness, or some out-of-the-way place to get away from the world. He did not isolate himself to get away from it all. Rather, when he had fallen into step behind Christ, he looked around and thought about others who did not know Christ. He was not content to walk alone with Christ. And the nearest people to him were his former business companions. And so he called them together in his house that they might meet Jesus. They were sick and they needed a physician for their souls, Christ. Matthew shared. Out of this came blessing.

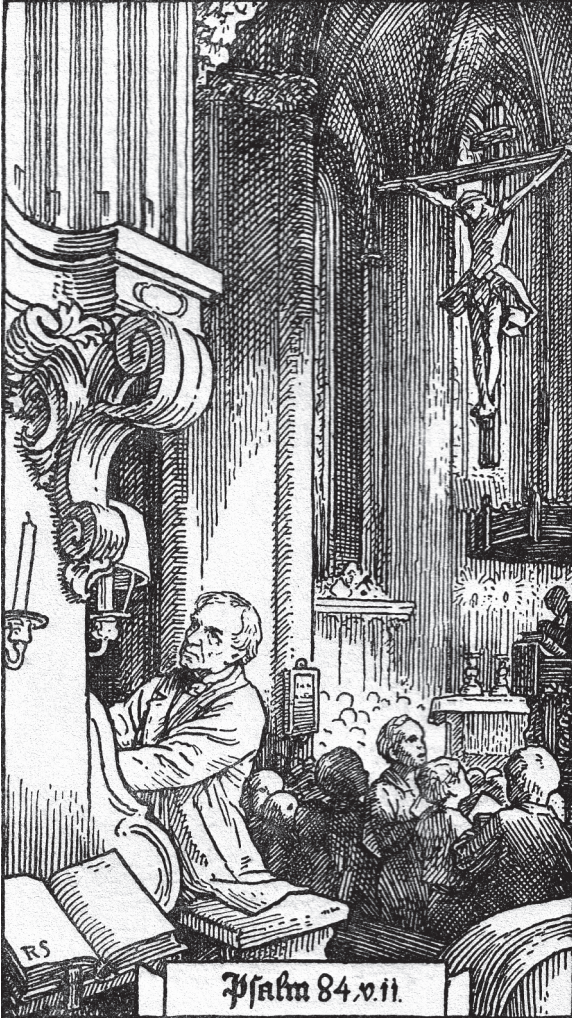
We Christians are in the world, and we are to use our time. Christ prayed for His disciples: “I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one” (John 17:15). It is strange what does happen. Too often Christians go to extremes. They so completely identify with the world that they cannot be identified as Christians, or they become so exclusive and separate that they never become the light of the world or the salt of the earth.

Matthew would serve Christ, and serve Him well as an apostle. But Christ is served well in many ways. It is not only apostles or missionaries or preachers who do this. When Christ healed the demon-possessed man in the land of the Gaderenes, the man begged Jesus that he might go along with Him. But that man came from a land that had begged Jesus to leave, so Jesus told the man rather: “Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you” (Luke 8:39).

Matthew used a meal to introduce Christ. The demonic-possessed man was to talk right where he was. Wherever we are, and whatever we do, we are to be Christians. We are to follow Christ, and we are to shine out for Christ. Is not meal-time a good time to talk religion, or Christ? Is it not the act of a friend to speak a word about Christ? Is it not wonderful to show the power of the Gospel by living as a Christian? The ancient heathen saw how different the Christians were. The heathen were used to philosophers who expounded great ideals, who debated about morality and purpose in life, and yet often

did not practice what they preached. The Christians? The heathen said, “Behold how they love one another.” Is the world a better place because of you? Is your family circle a happier Christian family because of you? Christ’s love for us moves us. “For the love of Christ constrains us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:14–15). We share through faith in the wonderful death of Christ; now we are to be alive for Him in this world, that others may come to life, and hear Christ’s words, “Follow Me!”

“Follow Me!” Count among your blessings as a Christian that you know the meaning of those words. See their importance for you. Make yourself the voice of Christ through your lips and life, and then others may know what it means to hear Christ’s words, “Follow Me!”





Wilhelm W. Petersen

Life of Wilhelm W. Petersen

1928–present

Wilhelm Walther Petersen was born on October 17, 1928 in Scarville, Iowa. He was baptized by his father, the Reverend Justin A. Petersen, who was pastor of the Scarville Synod Congregation. He received his elementary education in the Scarville Christian Day School and continued his education at Bethany Lutheran High School in Mankato, Minnesota. Upon graduation from high school he enrolled in Bethany Lutheran College and graduated from the junior college department in 1948. In the fall of 1948 he enrolled at Northwestern College in Watertown, Wisconsin and graduated with a Bachelor's degree in June of 1950. He then entered Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary and graduated in June 1953 with a M.Div. degree. In 1989 he received an honorary doctorate from Concordia Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

He served a summer vicarage at Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Albert Lea, Minnesota. Following the vicarage he accepted a call to the Clearwater Lutheran Parish, Oklee, Minnesota which consisted of the Clearwater, Oak Park, and Nazareth congregations.

In 1960 he accepted a call from the ELS Home Mission Board to start a mission congregation on the west side of Madison, Wisconsin. In 1978 he accepted a call to Mt. Olive Lutheran Church, Mankato, Minnesota where he served until 1980, when he accepted a call to be president of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary. He served in that office until 1997. His final year of teaching at the seminary was 2003, at which time he retired after 52 years in the ministry.

In 1976 he was elected president of the ELS and served in that capacity until 1980. He also served on the Doctrine Committee of the ELS for several years.

On July 19, 1953 he was married to Naomi Madson. This union was blessed with six children. He is now retired and lives in North Mankato.

Seminary Graduation Sermon on Luke 24:46–47

June 18, 1989

by Wilhelm W. Petersen

Text: *Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures, And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day: And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. (Luke 24:46–47)*

In Christ Jesus, dear fellow-redeemed and especially you, the graduates, of Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary, grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Along the road of your lives the Holy Spirit implanted in your hearts a desire to study for the ministry. You did not have a Damascus road experience, as did Saul of Tarsus, but through your study of the Word and perhaps the influence of Christian parents, or a pastor or teacher, the Holy Spirit worked in your hearts the desire to become a pastor. The seminary has helped you fulfill that desire by providing you with a theological training designed to equip you for this important work, and now the long awaited day of graduation has arrived.

This is indeed a happy day for you, your families, and the congregations to which you have been assigned. It also gives us at the seminary great joy to recommend you for graduation and a call into the ministry. This graduation service reminds us that the seminary plays a vital role in the life of our synod. Luther emphasized this importance many years ago when he said, “When we are dead and gone, whence would come our successors if not from the schools? For the sake of the church we must have and maintain schools.” It was in that spirit and conviction that our synodical fathers established this seminary some 43 years ago and ever since that time it has been carrying out its important task of training pastors for the ministry.

As you stand ready to assume the pastoral office, our

Lord makes it clear in our text what He wants the content of your message to be, namely “repentance and remission of sins.” From His perspective that’s where it’s all at, and on the basis of our text as we gather our thoughts around the theme, **Repentance and Remission of Sins**, let us consider first of all that the Holy Spirit works repentance through the preaching of the Law and that He works forgiveness of sins through the Gospel.

As I was preparing this sermon I received something in the mail that caught my attention and impressed upon me all the more the importance of preaching repentance and remission of sins. It was a periodical entitled *Explorations*, published by The American Institute for the Study of Religious Cooperation, and its purpose is to bring Christians and Jews closer together theologically. This particular issue contained an address to seminarians entitled “Rejoicing in the Gifts.” The speaker identified what he perceived to be the greatest gift, namely “the faith vision that God is One.” He then went on to speak about monotheism (the idea that God is one) and concluded by saying, “learn anew what it means that God is not Jewish, or Christian, or Buddhist, or Communist, or any other label we devise; God is God and God is One ... respect those with whom you disagree and never abandon your own Jewish or Christian vision of the Integrity of Reality; learn something from others of God’s children on this pitifully shrinking globe. A true monotheizer respects the humanity and the gifts of all peoples.” In his message there was nothing about the triune God, Christ, sin and grace, heaven or hell.

This is a far cry from the words of our Savior where He makes it clear what He wants pastors to proclaim, namely repentance and remission of sins. We learn from Scripture that this is done through the faithful preaching of Law and Gospel. The apostolic injunction is, “Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Our Confessions put it this way, “These are the two chief works of God in men, to terrify and to justify and quicken the terrified. One or the other of these works is spoken of throughout the Scripture. One part is the Law, which reveals, denounces, and condemns sins. The other part is the Gospel, that is, the promise of

grace in Christ” (AP, Art XII, par. 53).

It is through the preaching of the Law that the Holy Spirit effects true repentance. Through the Law He reveals our sin problem and our inability to solve it by ourselves. The Law also reveals God’s wrath against sin and works sorrow and terror in our hearts. St. Paul says that the Law is to be preached in such a way that “every mouth may be stopped, and all the world becomes guilty before God” (Romans 3:19). Yes, the Law puts all of us in our place and shows us that “before his bar all guilty stand,” and that we stand condemned in God’s sight.

We have examples of pointed Law preaching in the Scriptures. On Pentecost Day the apostle Peter preached in such a way that his hearers “were pricked in their hearts” and asked, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” The prophet Nathan was very specific when he pointed to David who was guilty of adultery and murder and said, “Thou art the man” so that the king exclaimed, “I have sinned against the Lord.” And the Savior turned the searchlight of the Law on the heart and life of the woman at the well which revealed her sordid past so that she realized her need for the “water of life.”

This same Law of God exposes us for what we really are. It opens the book of our lives and lays bare every single thought, word, and deed in our lives. Any cover-up on our part is as ridiculous as it is futile; we only deceive ourselves. Nothing lies hidden before the all-seeing God. It is so true as the hymn says,

*The law is but a mirror bright
That brings the in-bred sin to sight
That lurks within our nature.*
(ELH 227:3)

The importance of proper Law preaching is brought out by Christ who says, “They that be whole need not a physician but they that are sick... I am not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance” (Matthew 9:12–13). And our Confessions say, “Hearts that do not feel God’s wrath spurn consolation.” One of our synodical fathers put it this way, “If we preached only concerning forgiveness of sin (righteousness) but not concerning repentance, then that

doctrine would neither be understood, nor would it bear fruit. For without repentance there is no faith and consequently no justification by faith ... and to such souls ‘justification by faith’ will be only an empty phrase or a soft pillow—oftenest both.” No, as long as one does not realize his lost condition he will have no interest in the Savior of sinners. Just as one will not appreciate food unless hungry, water unless thirsty, he will not feel the need for the “bread of life” and the “water of life.” It is only

*When sinners see their lost condition,
And feel the pressing load of sin,
And Jesus cometh on His mission
To heal the sin-sick heart within,
All grief must flee before His grace,
And joy divine will take its place.*
(ELH 111:1)

But do not confuse Law preaching with moralizing and tirading against the evils of the day. That type of preaching will only make hypocrites out of people, causing the hearer to think that because he doesn’t do those terrible things that the minister is talking about, therefore he is not as bad as others, and may be tempted to pray as did the Pharisee in the temple, “God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are” (Luke 18:11).

No, the Law is spiritual and it gets to the heart of our problem, which is the heart. The Bible describes our sinful heart as being “deceitful above all things and desperately wicked” (Jeremiah 17:9) and that “out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts...” (Matthew 15:19). Pointed Law is proclaimed in Scripture when it is written, “Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him” (1 John 3:15) and “Whosoever looketh after a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). St. Paul confessed “I had not known lust except the law said, Thou shalt not covet” (Romans 7:7). Who of us can say that we have even come close to measuring up to the demands of God’s holy Law! And in case we might be tempted to think that we

are doing pretty well, then heed what the apostle says, “Whosoever shall keep the whole law and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all” (James 2:10). That should put all of us in our place!

True Law preaching—important as it is—is as our Confessions say a “foreign work” and its purpose is to lead us to Christ’s “proper work,” which is the proclamation of forgiveness to the penitent sinner. Luther said it so clearly, “Where the law exercises its office alone . . . there is only death and hell, and man must despair like Saul and Judas as St. Paul says, the law slays through sin. Moreover the Gospel offers consolation and forgiveness in more ways than one, for with God is plenteous redemption.” If we only had the ministry of the Law, then we would have only sorrow, misery, despair, and condemnation.

But the text clearly says that remission of sin is also to be preached. It tells us, first of all, how this forgiveness has been obtained. “It was necessary for Christ to suffer and rise from the dead on the third day” (24:46). The whole purpose of His death and resurrection was to obtain for us sinners the remission of sin. He “was delivered for our offenses, and raised again for our justification” (Romans 4:25). Through His death He paid the full penalty of sin and His resurrection from the grave is God’s declaration that He accepted the sacrifice of His Son as full payment for sin and has declared the world forgiven. Yes, “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them” (2 Corinthians 5:19).

“Remission of sin” is the heart and center of the Gospel and it is to predominate in our preaching. It is the only solution to our problem of sin and death. Through the Word of the Gospel this treasure is brought to us and made our own. Yes, God is “surpassingly rich in his grace” and brings this grace to us in various ways, through the spoken Word, Baptism, Lord’s Supper, the Keys, and mutual conversation and consolation of brethren, as Luther says in the *Smalcald Articles*. While the Law is to be preached in such a way as “to drive the greatest saint to despair” so the Gospel must be preached so as “to give the greatest sinner hope.” Daniel March in his classic description of the Bible says among other things, “It is strict enough to denounce the very shadow and semblance of sin; it

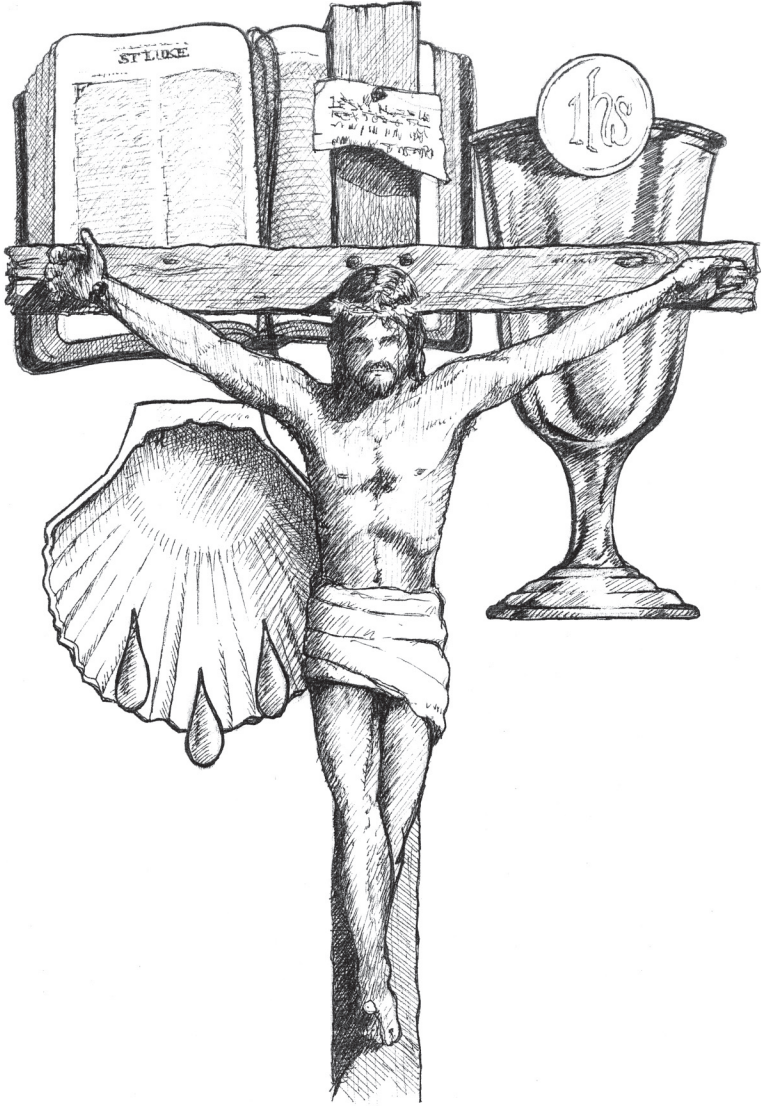
is liberal enough to save the chiefest of sinners.” Therefore, open the floodgates of the Gospel and don’t be vague or merely generalize it. No, personalize it. Say to the penitent as did Jesus, “Be of good cheer **thy** sins are forgiven” (Matthew 9:2). Say to the penitent as did Nathan to a repentant David, “The Lord also hath put away **thy sin**” (2 Samuel 12:13). Like the angel who proclaimed to the frightened shepherds on Bethlehem’s plain, “Fear not: for behold, I bring **you** good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto **you** is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:10–11). Tell them that “where sin abounded grace did much more abound” (Romans 5:20) that “their iniquity is pardoned and that they have received of the Lord’s hand double for all their iniquity” (Isaiah 40:2).

Send your people home from the worship service with the happy assurance that they have a Savior from sin. Tell them that where they have failed in their lives they have a Savior who led a perfect life in their stead and that this counts as though they had kept that law perfectly.

Don’t make the tragic mistake that a preacher made some years ago when he decided to preach two Sunday evening services on that classic Law and Gospel text Romans 6:23 which says, “The wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” The first night he preached on the first part of that text and thundered away with the Law. It so happened that a man burdened with guilt came to that service hoping to find peace for his soul, but he found it not. He did not hear one word of Gospel, and consequently was driven to despair and went out and took his own life. When the pastor heard about this he realized what a terrible mistake he had made; he even suffered a nervous breakdown over it. As you go over your sermons make certain that there is clear gospel and that no one goes home without the ringing assurance that his sins are forgiven. “Don’t be stingy with the Gospel.”

Preaching “repentance and remission of sin” through the Law and the Gospel is “an especially brilliant light which serves the purpose that the Word of God may be rightly divided and the writings of the holy prophets and apostles may be explained and understood correctly” (FC, SD, V, par. 1). That kind of preaching

will truly benefit God's people and will also bring forth the "fruits of repentance" which will be reflected in a godly life and a life of service to God and our fellowman. May God bless you as you go forth to proclaim the most important message that fallen sinners can hear. "Unto him that loved us, and washed us from our sins in his own blood, and hath made us kings and priests unto God and his father; to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (Revelation 1:5b-6).



The Means of Grace



Juul B. Madson

Life of Juul B. Madson

1920–present

Juul Benjamin Madson was born November 17, 1920, at Bode, Iowa, the eldest son of Pastor Norman Madson and his wife Elsie Haakenson, and baptized at St. Olaf Lutheran Church on December 5. His confirmation took place in June of 1935 in Our Saviour's Lutheran Church, of Princeton, Minnesota. He attended the following schools: Our Saviour's Lutheran Grade School, Princeton, Minnesota; the Public Grade School in Decorah, Iowa; Bethany Lutheran High School and (Junior) College (AA degree), Mankato, Minnesota (BA degree); Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Thiensville [Mequon] Wisconsin, (Candidate of theology degree); Mankato State University, Mankato, Minnesota; Concordia Lutheran Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri.

He served as president of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod 1966-1970; as pastor of the following parishes: First Shell Rock Lutheran and Somber Lutheran, Northwood, Iowa, 1945-54; Lakewood Lutheran, Tacoma, Washington 1954-60; First American Lutheran, Mayville, North Dakota, 1960-67; English Lutheran Church, Cottonwood, and Zion Lutheran, Tracy, Minnesota 1967-70; as professor of New Testament studies (especially the Greek text) at Bethany Lutheran Theological Seminary 1970-94; and as chaplain at Bethany Lutheran College 1989-94.

He has served on the ELS Finance Board and on three successive synodical catechism committees, and is at present a member of the ELS Doctrine Committee, Synod Review Committee, Archives and History Committee, and is an assistant editor of the *Lutheran Sentinel*. Among his special interests have been language, poetry (particularly hymnic poetry), music, sports and gardening.

He is co-author of two books: a 1984 biography of Dr. Sigurd Christian Ylvisaker, first long-time president of Bethany Lutheran High School and College; and a 1993 history of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod entitled *Built on the Rock*.

On September 14, 1946, he was married to Clarice Elaine Huso of Northwood, Iowa, a graduate of Bethany Lutheran College, who in their later years in Mankato was employed as an assistant to

the librarian. Their marriage was blessed with nine children: Linda Kathleen, Mark Daniel, Paul Michael, David Huso, Jonathan Noel, Timothy Juul, Matthew Abel, Joseph Benjamin, Jennifer Laura. Son Jonathan Noel entered the public ministry and is currently the pastor of Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, Okauchee, Wisconsin. Son Paul Michael, an architect in the Twin Cities, died in midlife of cardiac arrest while on a bicycle trip to New Orleans with one of his sons.

Professor Madson and Clarice live in retirement as members of Mt. Olive Lutheran on the east side of Mankato, from where they seek to keep in touch especially with the life and work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Sermon on Luke 7:36–50

by Juul B. Madson

Prayer: Dear Father in heaven, we thank You that through your holy Law You strip us of our self-made righteousness and through the wonder-word of the Gospel bestow on us the righteousness of your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. May we truly sorrow over our sins which grieve You and would condemn us, and may we rejoice in Your grace which alone saves us from our sins. Through your Holy Spirit engender in us the faith which saves and the love which flows only from that saving faith. Only then shall we gladly hear Your command to go into all the world and preach that saving Gospel to every creature. We ask it in Jesus' name. Amen.

Text: *Then one of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner; when she knew that Jesus sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and kissed His feet and anointed them with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, "This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner."*

And Jesus answered and said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he said, "Teacher, say it." "There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?" Simon answered and said, "I suppose the one whom he forgave more." And He said to him, "You have rightly judged." Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon. "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint

My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.” And he said to her, “your sins are forgiven.” And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, “Who is this who even forgives sins?” Then He said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you. Go in peace.” (Luke 7:36-50)

Fellow redeemed in Christ,

“This is a faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners” (1 Timothy 1:15). That is why Christ has given the command, *“Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).* For you and I and all our fellow men are sinners. Because sinners come in various shapes and sizes, the sinfulness of mankind is not always as readily discernible to us as it is to God. And sinners can be classified in several ways. One such attempt to categorize them would result in four classes: 1. Outwardly bad people who are repentant, 2. Outwardly bad people who are unrepentant, 3. Outwardly good people who are repentant, and 4. Outwardly good people who are unrepentant.

The first two classes of outwardly bad people would be the ones which we might readily classify as sinners, whereas the outwardly good people are also known to God as being by nature sinful. And because He came into the world to save sinners, He must deal also with them. Although Jesus’ ministry was often characterized by His association with notorious publicans and sinners, He did not neglect the other kind of people that likewise needed to be saved – namely, the respectable ones. His was no one-sided ministry!

Because our text for today shows us the two extremes of the fourfold classification of sinners, let us consider from this Word of God that

Our Savior’s Concern is for All Kinds of Sinners

A concern we are to share if we would heed His mission command as shown by His dealing:

**I. With the unrepentant good man, and
II. With the repentant bad woman.**

I. Christ's concern in His dealing with the unrepentant good man.

The scene of our incident is the home of Simon the Pharisee, to whose home Jesus had accepted an invitation to dinner. Though the spotlight in this story centers eventually on the sinful but repentant woman in our text, it is made quite clear that Christ was also very much interested in Simon's true welfare and was aware of his need to be called to repentance. The message of all God's prophets and apostles has been: "Repent!"

It was not unexpected that at such a dinner as described in our text uninvited guests would also enter the banquet hall to gaze at the reclining guests and even to enter into conversation with them. It was likely the hope of our host, however, that such notoriously bad people as the sinful woman of our text would have enough sense to make themselves scarce at an event of this nature.

But Simon wasn't so fortunate, and his blood pressure likely began to mount as he saw not only that the woman was drawing special attention by the manner in which she was carrying on, but also that Jesus was doing nothing to stop this repulsive activity or indicate His displeasure at this embarrassing attention.

Whatever the reason had been for Simon's including Jesus in the invitation to his home in the first place is not made known to us in our text. But we know that it certainly was not in order to deliver a renunciation of his Pharisaism. Though Simon himself is restrained enough not to give utterance to his thought at this point, the LORD in His omniscience knows what Simon is thinking in this matter: "If this man were really a prophet he would not only know this woman as a notorious sinner, but He would also avoid her for just that reason!"

While Simon doubted the genuineness of Jesus' prophetic office because he regarded Him as unable readily to discern this woman's character, the Lord by His parable and subsequent question directed to Simon showed that He was fully capable of reading not only the woman's character, but also Simon's innermost thoughts.

The parable of the two debtors and Jesus' application of the same to the present situation is first of all an indictment of Simon's attitude and a ringing call to repentance. It should help us also to recognize the fundamental error in Pharisaism, namely the attitude of self-righteousness. Simon rested securely in his own righteousness. In the words of the theologian Bugge: "Simon knew as little of distress on account of sin as he did of the forgiveness of sin." And Canon Farrar says in respect to this same Simon of our text: "A life of sinful and impenitent respectability may be no less deadly than a life of open shame." His Pharisaism and its spirit of self-righteousness found fault with a gracious Savior in the same way that a self-righteous member of a certain congregation found fault with his pastor's preaching by saying: "The trouble with your sermons, pastor, is that according to them any skunk can be saved."

So the first great need of all self-righteous persons, if they are to be saved, is that they recognize their own sinfulness and total inability to establish themselves in God's favor. Therefore Jesus addresses himself to this need of Simon. In the parable Simon would correspond to the debtor with the lesser debt. The one with the lesser debt is then the one who would show little if any love or appreciation for having the debt forgiven.

From Jesus' point of view, the whole question here boils down to love, but love which is the *outcome* of and a *response* to forgiveness, and not a love which *brings about* forgiveness. The loving gratitude of those who have debts remitted to them depends on their own estimate of the amount, rather than on the actual amount.

That is where the second sinner of our text differs remarkably from the first.

II. Christ's concern in His dealing with the repentant sinful woman.

We are not told explicitly of the earlier life of this woman which had made of her a notorious sinner – nor is it necessary that we know whether it was associated primarily with a life of adultery or thievery or slander. What is evident from the incident here and from Jesus' words is that the woman had been led to repentance before entering the home of Simon.

Her tears at the feet of the Savior may be the combined tears of continuing sorrow over her sins and newfound joy over their forgiveness, even as her anointing of Jesus' feet with precious ointment was but the outpouring of her gratitude to one who had not despised her but reclaimed her for His own. Whereas Simon had not extended even the usual courtesy of washing the feet of his guest, this woman would not allow either the customs of the day or her own inhibitions to stifle her expression of joy and thanksgiving – for remember that it was a great humiliation for a woman in those days to let down her hair in the presence of men. Simon fails to understand how Jesus can endure this display, because he fails to understand the heart of the Savior and to comprehend the love that fills His soul. And he fails to understand the expression of joy exhibited by one who has found her Savior.

The primary difference between Simon and the woman in his home was not in their social status, but in their spiritual status. This woman, for all her many transgressions, many of which were common knowledge to the local citizenry, was in possession of God's forgiveness and now lived accordingly, whereas Simon was not in possession of this great and free gift but rather thought he yet had to earn it. As proof of this distinction Christ points to the love displayed by the woman and to the lack of the same on the part of his host.

When Christ says to Simon concerning the woman that her many sins are forgiven for she loved much, he is not saying that her love brought about or earned that forgiveness. If that had been the case, He should have said, when he finally turned to the woman herself *"Your love has saved you."* But instead He says: *"Your faith has saved you"* (7:50). That is what He says of all who with Abraham are in possession of God's forgiveness, for of Abraham it is written and repeated in the Scriptures that *"he believed the promises of God and it was counted to him for righteousness."*

Since it is clearly written in the Holy Scriptures that *"God would have all (men) to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth"* (1 Timothy 2:4) His concern is also for you just because you are a sinner. And remember that God does not have to check the police blotter to learn of your transgressions. He looks into the recesses of

your heart and on the basis of His holy Law finds you guilty. But His Son's blood atoned for that guilt, and therefore in Him He says to you, as He says to the sinful woman of our text, "*Your sins are forgiven!*" And as surely as you, too, have believed this good news of the Gospel, Christ says to you, "*Your faith has saved you. Go in peace!*" And as you go, continue to sing with the hymn writer Magnus Landstad:

*When sinners see their lost condition,
And feel the pressing load of sin.
And Jesus cometh on His mission
To heal the sin-sick heart within,
All grief must flee before His grace
And joy divine will take its place.*

*Come Thou who spreadest joy and gladness,
Forever bide with me and mine,
And bring to those who sit in sadness
And gloom of death Thy light divine.
A voice comes from my soul within:
Thou blessed of the Lord, come in!*
(ELH 111:1, 9)

The Ecumenical Scene

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by Theodore A. Aaberg

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The Ecumenical Scene

Chapter One: Getting One's Bearings

The farmer who would plow a straight furrow ties a piece of cloth to the wire or post at the far end of the field, and, dropping the plow, points his tractor straight for the flag. He gets his bearings from that flag. Christians also have a flag from which they get their bearings for their faith and life, namely, the Bible, God's Word. Inspired of God, and therefore inerrant, the Bible gives the Christian a true bearing both as to what he should believe and as to what he should do.

This holds true in regard to ecumenism. What is ecumenism? Is a Christian to be ecumenical? If so, in what way? These questions confront the Christian on nearly every hand today and demand answers. The Bible has the answers, enabling the Christian to "plow a straight furrow" also in regard to this complex and often confusing issue of ecumenism. Scriptural ecumenism is, essentially, a moving out from the contemplation of the doctrines of the Church and of church fellowship and a seeking to put these truths into practice in one's relationship with others who also call on the name of Christ.

The doctrine of the Church is of major significance in ecumenism. We give the name "church" to buildings, congregations, and denominations. Scripture gives it primarily to *people*. Not to all people, or to any people, but to all those who in the poverty of their sins put their trust in Jesus Christ alone as their Savior. When Scripture says that ". . . *Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it*" (Eph. 5:25), it is speaking of the Church as people. Paul addresses the believers in Christ as the ". . . *church of God*. . ." (I Cor. 1:2; II Cor. 1:1). The Church is the communion of saints, the body of believers who have forgiveness of sins through faith in Christ.

The Church is one; its members are united with Christ and with each other. Scripture says: "*So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and everyone members one of another*" (Rom. 12:5). The Apostle Paul declares: "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one*

baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph. 4:4-6). This unity is set forth in Scripture in the illustration of a temple: "*Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit*" (Eph. 2:19-22).

The unity of the Church is a fact; it is the work of God and a gift of His grace. Clearly then, Christians have no ecumenical mandate from above to restore the unity of Christ's Church. But even so, there is still a great work for ecumenism to do. While all true Christians are one in Christ, and with each other, they are often outwardly divided, worshipping at separate altars. This is a great sorrow to the Christian. Who can begin to estimate the grief which Christians down through the centuries have experienced over the divisions which have taken place in visible Christendom? These divisions, after all, involve people, Christians; and Christians love one another. Such outward divisions have often been a hindrance in carrying out the work of Christ's kingdom, and, not least, an offense to the unbeliever. Most important of all, such divisions are displeasing to God and contrary to His will. He has specifically directed His followers to endeavour "*to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph. 4:3).

Scriptural ecumenism will seek to heal the divisions in visible Christendom by working diligently for the establishment of church fellowship between those who are outwardly divided. This goal has been stated well by the World Council of Churches (WCC) at its Third Assembly in New Delhi, 1961, namely, that

... all in each place who are baptized into Jesus Christ and confess him as Lord and Saviour are brought by the Holy Spirit into one full committed fellowship, holding the one apostolic faith, preaching the one Gospel, breaking the one bread, joining in common prayer, and having a corporate life reaching out in witness and service to all and who at the same time are united with the whole Christian fellowship in all places and all ages in such wise that ministry and members are accepted by all, and that all can act and speak together as occasion requires for the

tasks to which God calls his people. It is for such unity that we believe we must pray and work.¹

Ecumenism's essential task is to work for this outward unity and fellowship. How can this be brought about in a God-pleasing way? It is here that the doctrine of church fellowship enters into the ecumenical picture.

Before considering this doctrine we perhaps should ask: What about the matter of merging congregations, and also church bodies, into single organizations? There are those who consider this to be *the* task of ecumenism. They often quote from Jesus' High Priestly prayer, "*That they all may be one . . .*" (John 17:21), in support of their efforts. While Jesus does not rule out organizational unity, neither does He command it. The unity He speaks of in His High Priestly prayer is spiritual, not organizational, and it is effected on the basis of divine truth. (Cf. also John 17:17). Scripture is silent on the matter of church mergers. They are not in themselves a bad thing when carried out by those who are in church fellowship. Church mergers may often prove helpful in promoting the work of Christ's kingdom. But such mergers are not essential to ecumenism which seeks rather the establishment of church fellowship among those outwardly divided. How does one proceed to do this?

If one could know definitely who is a Christian it would be a comparatively simple matter to establish church fellowship between Christians and thus to bring about the healing of an outwardly divided Christendom. But faith is in the heart. Consequently, personal faith cannot be made the basis for church fellowship. When the Christian no longer needs to say: "I *believe* in the Holy Christian Church," he can establish church fellowship on the basis of an individual's faith. But then, of course, he will be in heaven and the goal of scriptural ecumenism will already have been fully realized and more.

Still the Christian on earth is not stymied in his effort to locate Christians for purposes of church fellowship. God has given His Word to man. There God has promised that when His Word is proclaimed it will not be without fruit. "*My word . . . shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*" (Isaiah 55:11). Consequently, the Christian knows that other Christians are to be found wherever the Word is being proclaimed. For this reason the Word and the

Sacraments are known as the “Marks of the Church.” They serve to mark or point out where the Church, that is, Christians, may be found. True, he cannot identify particular individuals in that group as Christians, nor can he tell how many in the group are Christians. It is enough to know with certainty that there are Christians there. The revelation of their identity can well be left to Judgment Day.

From this it would seem that the goal of ecumenism could readily be achieved. Since Christians are to be found wherever the Word is being proclaimed, all such groups using God’s Word should have church fellowship with one another, knowing there are Christians in each group. Indeed, this is the way it could and should be were it not for the fact of false doctrine. Jesus and His apostles spoke of false teachers who were already then present, and of others who would come in the future (e.g., Matt. 16:6,12; Mark 13:22; Acts 20:29-30; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; I John 4:1). They directed Christians not to allow false teaching in their midst or to fellowship with false prophets. Jesus said: “*Beware of false prophets By their fruits ye shall know them*” (Matt. 7:15,20). Paul writes: “*Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*” (I Cor. 1:10). Paul also states: “*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them*” (Rom. 16:17). The early Church, including the apostles, practiced this teaching: “*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers*” (Acts 2:42).

When a Christian, or congregation or synod for that matter, refuses the hand of fellowship to those who are using the Word but are also teaching or tolerating false doctrine in their midst, he is not denying the presence of Christians in that group or sitting in personal judgment on them. He is doing only what Jesus and His apostles have told him to do. God Himself, then, calls for Christians to establish and to exercise church fellowship with one another on the basis of a common confession of faith in Christ, based on the Word.

It should be noted that there is no difference between a confession of Christ and a confession of the Word, since it is in the Word that

Christ is revealed to man. To confess Christ is to confess the Word, and to confess the Word is to confess Christ. Jesus told the unbelieving Jews: *“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me”* (John 5:39). The entire Scriptures, both Old and New Testament, must be taken into account in one’s confession of Christ, and not only the four Gospels. Jesus used all of the Old Testament in speaking of the necessity of His suffering and death to the two Emmaus disciples. Luke states: *“And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself”* (Luke 24:27). Law as well as Gospel must be confessed, for Christ is the Savior from sin. A true confession of Christ is one which is in harmony with all of Scripture.

When Christians, including congregations and synods, agree on a confession of faith that is in harmony with all of Scripture, they are to establish church fellowship between themselves and to be diligent in the exercise of it. This was the basis for church fellowship in the early Christian Church, as noted earlier.

When we now add that there must be agreement in practice as well as in doctrine we are not setting up an additional requirement to that of Scripture for the establishment and exercise of church fellowship. Rather, we are emphasizing that the agreement in doctrine must be genuine so that the right conclusions are drawn from the doctrine for one’s life, and that these are actually put into practice. Jesus Himself said: *“Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven”* (Matt. 7:21). And the church sings:

*‘Tis all in vain that you profess
The doctrines of the Church, unless
You live according to your creed,
And show your faith by word and deed.
Observe the rule: To others do
As you would have them do to you.
(ELH: 418 v. 2)*

One’s confession of Christ may be formal or informal, depending on the time, circumstance, and person making the confession. The

organized nature of a congregation and a synod calls for a formal confession of faith. An individual's confession of Christ, on the other hand, may be very informal. If he holds membership in a church organization his confession, though informal, still should agree in substance with the formal confession of the church organization to which he belongs. This, however, is not always the case. There has been a breakdown of congregational, synodical, and denominational loyalties for many people today. Because of this, what the individual himself says about Christ may often be more important as a confession of faith than the fact that he says he belongs to such and such a synod or denomination. The person's religious affiliation will have to be dealt with somewhere along the line, but the existence of that affiliation must not lead us to underestimate the value of his own informal confession of faith.

Our Lutheran Church, as an organization, and with twenty centuries of Christian church history to draw on, rightly has a formal confession of faith. It takes the Ecumenical Creeds and gladly makes them its own. These are the Apostolic, the Nicene, and the Athanasian creeds which the Christian Church in its early centuries set forth in answer to the heresies of its day. To these our Lutheran Church adds the confessions which Lutheran Christians in the 16th century set forth on the basis of God's Word in answer to the false doctrines of Rome, the Reformed, and even some Lutherans.² Recognizing that the 20th century is 400 years removed from the beginning of the Lutheran Reformation, and that history moves, our Lutheran Church has not hesitated to update its confession of Christ by setting forth new doctrinal statements.³ Its purpose in doing this is not to supplant the original Lutheran Confessions nor to introduce new doctrines, but simply to confess in a relevant way the truth of the Scripture for the present time. These new statements, even as the old, set forth the divine truth of Scripture in both a positive and a negative way, with emphasis on what is most pertinent today.

As an example of an informal confession of faith we might think of a baptized child who calls God "Abba" (Father). The disciples made informal confessions of faith. When Jesus asked them if they also would go away, Peter replied: "*Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God*" (John 6:67-69). Thomas

said to the risen Savior: *“My Lord and my God”* (John 20:28). Not to be considered as informal confessions of faith are those doctrinal statements which church groups make but deliberately keep brief and simple in an attempt to gloss over and hide their glaring doctrinal differences.

In essence the formal confession of faith of our Lutheran Church is no different than the one-sentence confessions of Peter and Thomas, or the one-word confession of a little baptized child: *“Abba.”* As the entire flower is contained in the bud, and the entire tree and fruit in the seed, so the longest confession is contained in the shortest if both be true to the Word of God. And the short, informal confession of faith is to be taken at face value unless and until further developments prove it to be false. The Eighth Commandment, with its insistence that we put the best construction on everything, requires this.

Remembering that a confession of faith may be formal or informal will help one to avoid two extremes regarding church fellowship. The one is that of deciding in a mechanical way with whom one may fellowship, on the sole basis of whether or not the other party has formally accepted the formal confession of faith of our congregation or synod. The other extreme is that of deciding to fellowship with someone on the basis of a simple, informal confession of faith in Christ when one already knows that the individual or group definitely denies certain doctrines of Scripture.

But is it really necessary to be agreed in doctrine in order to have church fellowship? Are there not fundamental doctrines in Scripture in which agreement is required, and non-fundamental doctrines in which disagreements may be tolerated when it comes to the establishment and exercise of church fellowship? So far as saving faith is concerned, a distinction may be made between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines. One does not need to know that Scripture states that Jonah was swallowed by a great fish in order to believe in Christ and be saved. But in order to have saving faith one does need to know, among other things, that Jesus Christ is true God and man and that He died for one's sins.

But Scripture does not permit a distinction to be made between fundamental and non-fundamental doctrines in the sense that in one's confession of Christ one can deny or ignore what may appear to be an insignificant teaching of Scripture for the sake of outward peace,

unity, and fellowship. The passages quoted earlier bear repetition: *“And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine . . .”* (Acts 2:42). *Now I beseech you, brethren . . . that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you . . .”* (I Cor. 1:10). *“ . . . Mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them”* (Rom. 16:17). Consider also that portion of the Great Commission which says: *“ . . . Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you”* (Matt. 28:20).

In stressing the Scriptural requirement of doctrinal agreement for church fellowship one must bear in mind that among Christians, especially in congregations and church bodies, there will seldom, if ever, be more than a fundamental unity in doctrine and practice. This means that misunderstandings due to an incomplete knowledge and understanding of Scripture may well arise among those who are in church fellowship. It does not mean an outright denial of any doctrine stated in Scripture, or a rejection of the Scripture itself. The Church will bear with weak brethren in all patience and love. In so doing, the Church will also make clear who are the weak and who are the strong (cf. Romans, chaps. 14 and 15). But this is something other than saying that certain doctrines of Scripture are expendable, or than agreeing to disagree.

Scriptural ecumenism, in seeking church fellowship with all Christians, calls for Christians to work for a common confession of faith in Christ based on the Bible, God’s Word; a confession to the entire truth of God’s Word. When agreement in doctrine is reached, whether it be between individuals, congregations, or synods, this fact is to be recognized: any former or present spiritual connections not in keeping with that common confession are to be disavowed, and an exercise of church fellowship is to take place.

Christians who are in fellowship with one another in a certain area will unite in a congregation, with such like-minded congregations generally organizing into larger groups. They will gather to worship their Savior, to hear the Word, to baptize, and to partake of the Lord’s Supper. They will join hands in bringing the good news of salvation to others at home and abroad. Together they will show Christian compassion to the needy and perform other good works. They will make provision for the training of pastors, missionaries,

and teachers. They will join in a common defense of the Gospel in order to preserve the Word and Sacraments pure and unadulterated. In these and in other ways they will show both to themselves and to the world the unity which exists among them.

One can hardly overestimate the blessings of church fellowship. The hymn writer has caught the essence of such blessings when he writes:

*Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.*

*Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.*

*We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear,
And often for each other flows
The sympathizing tear.*

*When here our pathways part,
We suffer bitter pain;
Yet, one in Christ and one in heart,
We hope to meet again.*

*This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way
While each in expectation lives
And longs to see the day.*

*From sorrow, toil, and pain,
And sin we shall be free
And perfect love and friendship reign
Through all eternity.
(ELH: 420)*

Because of the nature and blessings of church fellowship, Christians will not permit earthly distinctions of race, color, or social rank to come between them in the exercise of that fellowship. Such differences, no matter how pronounced, will fade into the background. When a new Prime Minister of Great Britain, resplendent in morning dress, stepped forward on the day of his induction into office to partake of the Lord's Supper, he was joined at the communion rail by a dirty coal miner who was on his way home after a day's work in the mines. The Prime Minister quickly dismissed his protesting assistants who wanted to remove the miner, saying simply: "*The ground is level at the foot of the cross.*" So it is.

Because church fellowship is such a precious blessing, Christians will be diligent to promote, preserve, and protect the unity on which it is based. This accords with Scripture. Paul says: *I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*" (Eph. 4:1-4). If false doctrine should arise in their midst, threatening to destroy their unity of faith, they will, while combating the false doctrine, do everything they can to regain for the truth those who have come under the influence of false doctrine. Only as a last resort will they separate the erring ones from their fellowship, and then only when attempts to correct them apparently have failed.

The Lutheran Church confesses this Scriptural position on church fellowship and ecumenism in the 7th Article of the Augsburg Confession, which states;

...And to the true unity of the Church, it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments. Nor is it necessary that human traditions, rites, or ceremonies, instituted by men, should be everywhere alike ...

The contrast in this article is not between Gospel and Law, nor between some of Scripture and the rest of Scripture. The contrast rather is between "the doctrine of the Gospel" and "human traditions, rites, or ceremonies instituted by men." From this we conclude that by "doctrine of the Gospel" is meant Law and Gospel,

all of Scripture, and that this article teaches that while there must be agreement in doctrine for the establishment and exercise of church fellowship, there may be disagreement in human traditions, rites, and ceremonies without hindering that fellowship. It must be noted with regret that while this is the position of the Lutheran Confessions, the majority of the Lutheran churches in America have rejected this position, denying that church fellowship requires agreement in all the doctrines of Scripture.

But even when we have the right principles of church fellowship, do we not often fail to be all that we should be in regard to ecumenism? Do we not easily fall into indifference so that at times we may care little about the rest of Christendom? Are we not at times negligent in making efforts to achieve doctrinal unity with others so that we might eventually have church fellowship also with them? Does not getting our bearings in regard to ecumenism include a renewal not only in the Scriptural principles of ecumenism but a renewal of the spirit as well, through repentance and faith?

Chapter Two: The New Ecumenism

Ecumenism Not New

Ecumenism is not new. The apostolic Church was ecumenical. When the Church was established in Samaria, Peter and John came from Jerusalem to fellowship and to pray for the gifts of the Spirit on these new Christians (Acts 8). Peter preached and fellowshiped with Cornelius and other Gentile converts in Caesarea. When the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem took him to task for it, Peter rehearsed the whole matter for them. The Christians in Jerusalem were not only satisfied with Peter's action but joined in glorifying God for granting repentance unto life also to the Gentiles (Acts 10–11). If the apostolic Church had not been ecumenical to the core it could not, humanly speaking, have resolved the differences which arose between Jewish and Gentile Christians over the question of the ceremonial law.

The post-apostolic Church was ecumenical. When heresies arose which threatened its outward unity, the Church called representative meetings, or councils. After thorough discussion these councils

adopted doctrinal statements which in precise language closed the door to those errors which were troubling the Church. The statements adopted are today called ecumenical creeds, for example, the Nicene and the Athanasian Creeds.

The Lutheran Church is ecumenical. Luther desired and tried to restore the pure Gospel to the Roman Church rather than to form a new denomination. Even when ousted from the Roman Church, and when the Evangelical, or Lutheran, Church of necessity took form, Luther retained the correct, ecumenical doctrine of the Church as may be seen from his confessional statement:

I believe there is upon earth a little holy group and congregation of pure saints, under one Head, even Christ, called together by the Holy Spirit in one faith, one mind, and understanding, with manifold gifts, yet agreeing in love, without sects or schisms.⁵

The ecumenical nature of the Lutheran Church is evident also in the Augsburg Confession, Article VII, which, as already noted, requires agreement only in doctrine for church unity. No agreement is necessary in what is human in the church, such as customs and rites. The Marburg Colloquy, with its attempt to reach doctrinal agreement with the Reformed Church, and the repeated efforts of the Lutherans to get either the Pope or the Emperor to convene a free church council to discuss doctrinal differences also testify to the ecumenical spirit of the Lutheran Reformers.

Basis for Ecumenism Prior to the 20th Century

Ecumenism from the time of the Apostles until about the middle of the 19th century sought, for the most part, to establish church fellowship between Christian groups on the basis of agreement in doctrine. It is true that not everyone agreed on the source of that doctrine. The Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox Churches, for example, regarded tradition as well as Scripture the source of doctrine. It is also true that not all church bodies required full agreement in doctrine for church fellowship. Zwingli, of the Reformed Church, earnestly sought the hand of fellowship from Luther even though they disagreed on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. Yet even so, the basis for ecumenism was still agreement in doctrine, objective

Further, if doctrinal agreement was achieved, church fellowship resulted. If agreement in doctrine was not reached, the Christians involved went their separate ways. The same conditions prevailed if a church body became divided over doctrine and the breach could not be healed. It was understood by most people that they would then have to go their separate ways. Agreement in doctrine was the general prerequisite for church fellowship.

Even the matter of joint prayer was taken seriously by many who differed in doctrine. King Wladislaw IV of Poland called for a colloquy at Torun (Thorn) in 1645 in an effort to bring about a union of Roman Catholic, Reformed, and Lutheran. The colloquy never got off the ground because the Lutherans refused to accede to the opening of the council with prayer by a Roman Catholic bishop. The Lutherans held their opening service separately and the conference soon broke up.⁶ The British and Foreign Bible Society, organized on an interdenominational basis in 1804, did not have joint prayer at its committee meetings or annual meetings for the first 55 years of its existence. The American Bible Society, organized in 1816, soon decided to discontinue its exercises of prayer and preaching at its board meetings because of conflicting opinions of members regarding religious worship (Rouse-Neill, pp. 236, 315).

A New Element Introduced in Ecumenism

The widespread ecumenical activity of the 20th century is not due to a better breed of Christian but to a radical new concept of the basis for church fellowship. Present-day ecumenism of the type espoused by the World Council of Churches (WCC) got its start and made its so-called progress because of this new standard or basis for church fellowship. Ruth Rouse, after noting that “the second half of the 19th century was marked by many changes in the ecumenical climate,” states that one of the factors responsible for the “growth of the ecumenical idea and the progress made towards Christian union” was

...the appearance towards the end of the period of certain new conceptions of Christian unity and of the means by which it may be attained. These new conceptions created the atmosphere which made possible the Edinburgh World Missionary

Conference of 1910, and the emergence therefrom of the International Missionary Council, Faith and Order, Life and Work, and of the ecumenical movement as we know it today (Rouse-Neill, p. 324).

Personal faith, rather than doctrinal agreement, became the unifying element in the new ecumenism. Doctrinal agreement, even doctrine itself, was set aside as a prerequisite for church fellowship.

Samuel McCrea Cavert, a long-time American leader in new ecumenism, states that unity “lies in the *experience* of finding that God meets us in Christ and in our *response* to Him *in faith*” [emphasis ours]. Cavert does not write off doctrine altogether, nor even a continuing quest for doctrinal agreement, but he does reject agreement in doctrine, even doctrine itself, as the basis for church fellowship. He declares:

The development of a fully articulated theology, accordingly, is a function of the united church rather than a precondition of it. *The community of faith and love comes first*, [emphasis ours], and agreement in doctrinal statements grows out of this—*not vice versa*.⁷

Christians are indeed members of the one body of Christ (cf. Rom. 12; I Cor. 12; Eph. 4). They are such alone by personal faith or trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior from sin. But to make a Christian’s personal faith the basis for church fellowship is to ignore the fact that the Holy Christian Church and the faith of the heart are “outside the competence and the direct comprehension of men... It is Enthusiasm to build on subjective faith and love, for faith is hidden and love is variable. Both are in man.”⁸

Some advocates of the new ecumenism do indeed call for a minimal confession of faith by those who would join in church fellowship. H. Conrad Hoyer, after acknowledging that there are deep and serious theological differences between the churches of America, states:

Admittedly, there must be some criteria for judgment. A criteria (sic) that has gained general acceptance in recent years is the “evangelical principle.” According to this principle we recognize as brothers for Christian relationship purposes those who “acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.”

But even here the new ecumenism rejects agreement in doctrine as the basis for church fellowship. Furthermore it challenges the insistence on doctrinal agreement for purposes of church fellowship as being contrary to the doctrine of the unity of the Holy Christian Church. Hoyer writes:

. . . We question whether two Christians or two Christian communions, each claiming allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, can in good conscience write each other off, *or dare to refuse to relate to each other* [emphasis ours], since both are members of *one body*.⁹

To say, as Hoyer does, that if two Christians or two Christian communions each claim allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior neither can dare to refuse to relate to the other, is to ignore a key factor, namely, that such claim or confession must be in accord with the Marks of the Church, the Word and Sacraments. Jesus did not accept the mere claim of allegiance, stating rather: “*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*” (Matt. 7:21). Nor are Christians to accept another person’s mere claim of allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. True, Christians cannot read hearts as could Jesus, but Jesus has bound every believer to His word. Speaking to the Jews which believed on Him, He said: “. . . *If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:31-32). The Christian in claiming allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior will therefore gladly prove and demonstrate that allegiance by a confession that is faithful to all of Scripture. The Christian who extends the hand of fellowship will recognize that he also is bound in the matter by Jesus’ Word.

How could a Christian ever deal with false prophets if it were true, as Hoyer claims, that a Christian must relate to, or fellowship with, everyone who claims allegiance to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior? Jesus tells the Christian to beware of false prophets which come in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravaging wolves. How can one recognize such false prophets? Certainly not by their claims. Their claims are a part of their sheep’s clothing. Jesus says: “*Ye shall*

know them by their fruits. . . .” (Matt. 7:16). Not by what they say or claim, then, but by what they produce, by what they actually teach. In other words, the doctrine!

New ecumenism, with subjective faith and the mere claim of allegiance to Christ as the tools of its trade, simply makes all church divisions, past and present, not only unnecessary but unjustifiable as well. Divided Christendom not only can come together in one visible fellowship, but is in duty bound to do so, differences in doctrine notwithstanding. This is the new ecumenism—its principle, its message, its task and its goal.

The Source of New Ecumenism

The switch in ecumenism from the objective doctrine of the Bible to the subjective faith of the individual as the basis for church unity and fellowship came about as the result of a change on the part of many in regard to the doctrine concerning the Scriptures.

It is not our purpose here to trace in the church of the 19th and 20th centuries the marked decline of the doctrine concerning the Scriptures. This has been done elsewhere, and these studies are readily available to the reader. But the connection between the decline, on the one hand, of the doctrine concerning the Scriptures, and the rise, on the other hand, of the new ecumenism, should be noted.

Friedrich Schleiermacher (1768 – 1834), often called “the father of modern theology,” is largely responsible for the new ecumenism. Schleiermacher did not regard the Bible as the revealed Word of God, inspired and inerrant, and therefore the objective source and measure of all doctrine. For him, one’s own personal spiritual feeling and experience were the determining factors in regard to the truth. In the final analysis, man, rather than the Bible, became the final judge of doctrine. This subjective element constituted the basic part of the theology of also Kierkegaard, Barth, Bultmann, and others. It is the basic ingredient in neo-orthodoxy today.

When these false prophets set aside the Bible as the divinely revealed Word of God, substituting instead their own religious experience as the source of truth, they thereby set aside doctrine as objective truth, and with it the need for agreement in that doctrine.

After all, what was truth for one was not necessarily truth for another since the religious experience of one differs from that of another. How could one therefore demand agreement in doctrine for church fellowship? Instead, the sharing of a common Christian experience, or faith, was deemed a sufficient basis for church unity and fellowship. (On this basis it is said that it is presumptuous for anyone to say that he has the full truth, and also that it is in the coming together of all Christians and all churches that one gets the full truth.) Nineteen centuries of primary concern in ecumenism for the truth of God's Word was set aside with the assertion that in their faith in Christ Christians already have the basis for church fellowship and union. The new ecumenism was on its way!

Two Divergent Streams

Not all church bodies followed the theology of Scheiermacher. Instead, they continued to adhere to the position that the Bible is God's Word in which He reveals divine objective truth to man. Such churches continued to work in ecumenism, but to work for agreement in objective truth as the basis for church unity and fellowship.

Thus two divergent streams of ecumenism have been found in the church since the late 19th century. There is the Scriptural ecumenism with its insistence on agreement in the objective truth of God's Word as the basis for church unity and fellowship. There is the new ecumenism with its insistence that the basis for church unity and fellowship already exists in the personal faith and claims of allegiance to Jesus Christ on the part of the individual members of the churches. Whether an individual or church body regards the Bible as the divinely inspired and inerrant Word of God will largely determine which stream of ecumenism he will follow.

Chapter Three: Structures of Ecumenism

Promoting the New Ecumenism

The primary structure of new ecumenism is the World Council of Churches (WCC), with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. There

are also many national and confessional councils throughout the world which undergird the WCC. Acquaintance with these structures will enable the reader to appreciate more fully the substantial hold which the new ecumenism has obtained on the Christian world. It will also help one to understand and evaluate more readily the many ecumenical reports and projects appearing on the local, national, and international scene.

The World Council of Churches

The WCC did not spring up overnight. It was a long time in the making and has solid footing in organized Christendom. The ground was prepared, first of all, by organizations which were not primarily ecumenical in purpose. During the 19th century individual members from various churches and denominations organized Bible and Mission societies, the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), and the World Student Christian Federation. Since their membership crossed denominational lines, ecumenism became a by-product of these groups.

The Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 is regarded by many as the "watershed of the ecumenical movement." This conference of mission societies sought to find a way to avoid importing the church divisions in Europe and America to the mission stations in heathen lands. John R. Mott and J. H. Oldham, laymen from America, were the leaders of the conference. The conference membership was not ecumenical, the only mission societies invited being those working in heathen lands. The program specifically ruled out the discussion of any of the doctrinal differences which existed between participating mission societies. The ecumenical significance of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference lies chiefly in the fact that it set up a continuation committee, the first time this had been done by such a major conference. This move resulted in the formation of the International Missionary Conference (IMC) in 1921. The IMC, in turn, played an important role in the formation of the WCC in 1948. In 1961 the IMC joined the WCC.

The Faith and Order Conference was another movement which led to the founding of the WCC. Charles Brent, Episcopal missionary

bishop in the Philippines, saw a vision of one church at the Edinburgh Missionary Conference. Realizing that doctrinal differences did play a part in that picture he determined to call a conference, the specific purpose of which would be to discuss and seek to remove the doctrinal differences existing among the churches. Due to World War I the first meeting was not held until 1927, at Lausanne. This conference, called Faith and Order, had a confessional basis, namely, belief in Jesus Christ as God and Savior.

A third group involved in the organization of the WCC was the Life and Work Movement. Life and Work, in contrast to Faith and Order, concerned itself with social action and international problems. Nathan Söderblom, archbishop of Uppsala, was its guiding light. The social gospel, with its goal of having the churches work for the physical betterment of man, came into full flower under his leadership. The first Life and Work conference was held at Stockholm in 1925. Life and Work made no pretense at having a confessional basis. Behind the doctrine which is believed lies the faith by which one believes. "Unity in faith can therefore exist even where confessions of faith are different" (Rouse-Neill, p. 527). The reader will recognize this as the key element in the new ecumenism discussed in chapter two. Until the formation of the WCC, Life and Work collaborated closely with a non-Christian group, the World Alliance for Promoting International Friendship through the Churches.

In 1937 Faith and Order and Life and Work were both scheduled to meet in Edinburgh. The leaders, many of whom were active in both movements, felt that the two groups should join forces in one worldwide organization. They also believed the time was ripe for such a move. The chief architects of the plans which were drawn up for the organization of the World Council of Churches were William Temple, William Adams Brown, J. H. Oldham, and Samuel McCrea Cavert. Their plans were approved in 1937 by both Faith and Order and Life and Work.

The advent of World War II delayed the implementation of those plans, but on August 23, 1948, in Amsterdam, the WCC was organized. Present were 351 official delegates, representing 147 church bodies from forty-four countries. The WCC, in Article I of its constitution, defined its "Basis" as follows: "The World Council

of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour.” This basis was not intended to be a creed or full statement of the Christian faith, but was intended only, as the WCC Central Committee later pointed out, “to say what holds us together in the World Council, what is the starting point of our conversation and the foundation of our collaboration” (Fey, pp. 35-36). The reader will recognize that this purpose is in keeping with the new ecumenism discussed in chapter two.

W. A. Visser ‘T Hooft, General Secretary of the WCC from 1948 – 1966, states that the true significance of the organization of the WCC lies in this that “the Churches themselves accepted the responsibility for the ecumenical movement and, conversely, that the ecumenical movement received a firm foundation in the continuous life of the Churches” (Rouse-Neill, p. 721).

National and Confessional Councils

There are many national and confessional councils throughout the world which promote the new ecumenism and the WCC. It does not lie within the scope of this book to mention all such councils, but to note several which are of major significance to Americans in general, and to Lutherans in particular.

The National Council of Christian Churches in the United States of America

The National Council of Christian Churches in the United States of America (NCCUSA), organized in 1950, is successor to the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America. The Federal Council, organized in 1908, included in its membership nearly all the church bodies of the United States except the Roman Catholic, the fundamentalist Reformed, and the Lutheran bodies (The ULCA, now the LCA, was a member). The spiritual basis of the Federal Council was the recognition by its member bodies that Jesus Christ is “Divine Lord and Savior.” The Federal Council enthusiastically supported the new ecumenism and supplied both men and money for the promotion of it throughout the world. The Federal Council was largely responsible for keeping alive during World War II the

plans made in 1937 for the formation of the WCC.

When NCCUSA, or the National Council of Churches (NCC) as it is popularly known, was organized in 1950 it included not only the old Federal Council but also many national religious councils such as the Foreign Missions Conference, the Council for Home Missions, the Council for Religious Education, the Council for Higher Education, the Council for Missionary Education, the Council for Stewardship, and the Council of Church Women. The significance of NCCUSA is stated by Ruth Rouse, who writes:

Its consummation with a membership of 32 millions in December 1950 united practically all organized aspects of the Churches' common life in an ecclesiastically constituted organ of common action. This is a long step towards a practically united Church in the United States. It is the longest step, short of organic union, as yet taken in any country towards union amongst the Churches" (Rouse-Neill, p. 624).

The National Council of Churches is the chief promoter of the new ecumenism in the United States, and actively supports the WCC both theologically and financially. The *Christian Century*, its theological journal, is modernistic in theology.

The Lutheran World Federation

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF) was organized on a continuing basis at Lund, Sweden, in 1947. Before this it had met sporadically, beginning in 1923 at Eisenach, and had been known as the Lutheran World Convention and the Lutheran World Assembly. The LWF established its headquarters at the WCC in Geneva in 1947. The LWF includes in its membership practically all Lutheran Church bodies in the world except those which have either belonged to the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America or have shared its doctrinal position.

The LWF declared in 1947 that one of its purposes was "to foster Lutheran participation in ecumenical movements."¹⁰ The LWF has consistently promoted the new ecumenism, and many leaders in the LWF have served in high and responsible positions in the WCC. The LWF's present ecumenical stance will be described in the next

The Lutheran Council in the United States of America

The Lutheran Council in the United States of America (LCUSA), organized in 1967, replaced the National Lutheran Council (NLC). The NLC had been organized in 1918 as a service organization for Lutheran Church bodies in the United States. It soon moved into definitely spiritual areas, e.g., home and foreign missions (Wentz, pp. 24-25). Nearly all Lutheran church bodies in the U.S.A. joined the NLC except those which comprised the Synodical Conference, that is, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod. These bodies opposed the NLC from the beginning as a unionistic church organization.

During the 1950s most of the church bodies belonging to the NLC merged to form two large synods, the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and the America Lutheran Church (ALC). There was therefore little need for the NLC in its old form. It was dissolved, and LCUSA was organized in 1967 to take its place.

LCUSA differs from the National Lutheran Council in at least two respects. First, its constitution calls for compulsory on-going study of doctrine; secondly, it includes the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod as a founding member, and this despite the fact that the LC-MS steadfastly refused to join the old NLC on the basis that its doctrine of church fellowship, especially regarding unionism, forbade such membership. This change on the part of the LC-MS will be treated more fully in the next chapter. LCUSA, both in its theology and its leadership, supports the new ecumenism.

Opposing the New Ecumenism

New ecumenism, with its substitution of subjective faith for objective doctrine as the basis for church fellowship, met with widespread opposition from many quarters in Christendom.

The Orthodox Churches

The Orthodox Church, unlike Rome with its centralized authority, consists of a number of autonomous, or self-ruling churches. At the Moscow Consultation, celebrating 500 years of autocephalous (self-rule) existence of the Church of Russia, Orthodox leaders from throughout the world discouraged further participation of the Orthodox in the ecumenical movement “*on the grounds of its departure from the search for dogmatic unity and its concentration on social and political questions*” (Rouse-Neill, p. 666). While the small Greek-speaking Orthodox churches did join the WCC, the majority of Orthodox churches heeded the recommendation of the Moscow Consultation of 1948 and refused to participate in the WCC.

The Roman Catholic Church

The Roman Catholic Church strongly opposed both the new ecumenism and the WCC. This opposition was based on Rome’s claim of being the one true Church founded by Jesus Christ. For her, church unity depended on recognition of this claim by those outside the Roman Church.

Rome declined to participate in the 1925 Life and Work Conference and the 1927 Faith and Order Conference. The papal encyclical *Mortalium Animos*, 1928, condemned the new ecumenism and forbade Roman Catholic participation in it. Ten prominent Roman Catholics were invited to attend the WCC Assembly in 1948 as unofficial observers, but the papacy would not grant them permission to attend (Rouse-Neill, p. 689). This firm opposition to the new ecumenism and the WCC prevailed as late as 1954, when Cardinal Stritch of Chicago forbade Roman Catholic attendance at the Second Assembly of the WCC, which met in Evanston that year.

The Reformed Church

Among the Reformed one must distinguish between modernist and fundamentalist churches. The modernist churches either

themselves deny, or at least tolerate in their membership and leadership those who deny, such Scriptural doctrines as the verbal inspiration of the Bible, the Trinity, the creation, the depravity of man, the deity, the virgin birth and resurrection of Christ, the atonement, the resurrection of the body, and the everlasting life. The fundamentalist churches, while tolerating differences in other Scriptural doctrines which they consider non-fundamental, require adherence to the so-called fundamental doctrines mentioned above.

Modernist Reformed churches such as the Presbyterian Church USA, the American Baptist Convention, the Congregational Christian Churches, the Methodist Church, and the Protestant Episcopal Church actively support the new ecumenism and are members of the NCC and the WCC. Fundamentalist Reformed Churches such as the Southern Baptists, the Regular Baptists, and the Bible Presbyterian Church have strongly opposed modernism and this in turn has led them to oppose also the new ecumenism. The fundamentalists have remained aloof from the NCC and the WCC, and some of them have even formed opposition councils.

The American Council of Christian Churches

The American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC) was organized in 1941 by fundamentalist churches and groups, with Dr. Carl McIntire the leader. These churches had opposed modernism even to the extent of separating from their old denominations which were sheltering modernists and espousing the modernist theology. By means of the ACCC they sought to counteract the influence of modernism, and of the new ecumenism.

The National Association of Evangelicals

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) was organized in 1943 by fundamentalist pastors and congregations of church bodies holding membership in the Federal Council of Churches, later the National Council of Churches. Their purpose was to oppose the modernist leadership of the Council. Their opposition did not, however, include separating from the church bodies in which they held membership. The members of the NAE are therefore in the

position of both opposing and supporting modernism, the new ecumenism, and the WCC.

The International Council of Christian Churches

The International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC) was organized in 1948 in Amsterdam by fundamentalist church bodies from throughout the world. This council seeks to oppose on a world-wide basis modernism, the new ecumenism, and the WCC. Unlike the brief confessional basis of the WCC, the ICCC requires agreement in the following doctrines of the Bible: the plenary inspiration of the Scriptures, the Trinity, the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, Christ's atonement, His resurrection, the total depravity of man, salvation not by works but by grace through faith, the everlasting bliss of the saved and the everlasting suffering of the lost, the real spiritual unity in Christ of all redeemed by His precious blood, and the necessity of maintaining, according to the Word, the purity of the Church in doctrine and life.¹¹

The Lutheran Church

The Lutheran Church has been, and continues to be, divided in regard to the new ecumenism. The Lutheran Churches which have followed, or at least tolerated, the theology of Schleiermacher – and now neo-orthodoxy – have supported the new ecumenism and the WCC. These include the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKID), the state churches of Norway, Sweden, and Denmark and, in the United States, the Lutheran Church in America (LCA) and the American Lutheran Church (ALC).

The Lutheran Churches which have rejected the theology of Schleiermacher and present-day neo-orthodoxy have rejected also the new ecumenism and the WCC. The roots of this Lutheran opposition to the new ecumenism go back to Europe and the Prussian Union of 1817 in which Frederick William III forced a union of Lutheran and Reformed churches in Prussia. Opposition to this union led to the rise of confessional Lutheranism in Europe. Emigration later planted confessional Lutheranism in America. These confessional Lutherans in the United States established such church bodies as the

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, the various state synods which later amalgamated into the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod.

Confessional Lutheran churches in the USA refused to join the liberal General Synod or the lax General Council; instead they organized in 1872 the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, with Dr. C. F. W. Walther of the Missouri Synod as its first president. While small confessional Lutheran Churches throughout the world did not formally become members of the Synodical Conference, they did identify themselves with the doctrinal position of the Synodical Conference, thereby voicing also their opposition to the new ecumenism. Concerning such confessional movements in general, Ruth Rouse writes:

Those who insisted on unity in truth as the only path to Christian union could not but oppose what they regarded as the compromising disloyalty to truth and the wooly-headed or sentimental character of the type of ecumenism based on unity in fellowship and on a common Christian experience.

Concerning the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in particular, she writes (1954):

This body . . . is one of the largest and strongest Lutheran bodies in America, and has proved a serious obstacle to union even amongst Lutherans. It has taken up a rigidly confessional and uncooperative position on the basis of all the Lutheran symbolic books, and refuses to enter into any kind of cooperation or union with the World Council or any other body, such as would in its view compromise the revelation of truth which it has received through the Holy Scripture in their Lutheran interpretation (Rouse-Neill, p. 325).

Confessional Lutheranism, it should be noted, desired very much the reunion of Christian churches. Dr. Walther took the lead in seeking to bring into existence one Lutheran Church in America. To accomplish this he initiated free conferences for the discussion of doctrine, for it was on the basis of doctrinal unity and not subjective faith that true unity and church fellowship were to be established. In the meantime the hand of church fellowship was withheld until such time as doctrinal agreement might be reached. The withholding of

fellowship was criticized by unconfessional Lutherans and others as an act of lovelessness. Critics of such separation also asserted that if one's testimony was to be heard one must join with other church groups even though one might not be fully agreed in doctrine with them. A reading of books, both Lutheran and non-Lutheran, dealing with the history of ecumenism reveals, however, that despite such separation the position of the Synodical Conference, and the LC-MS in particular, was definitely known and understood, even if not accepted, by the other side.¹²

By adhering to the right principles of ecumenism and church fellowship the Synodical Conference, and especially the LC-MS, had a great influence throughout the world during the latter half of the 19th and first half of the 20th century in support of Biblical truth.

Chapter Four: Ecumenism Today

The New Ecumenism

Where does the new ecumenism, and in particular, its chief structure, the WCC, stand today?

Program and Membership

The WCC has been active the past two decades. It has held world assemblies once each six or seven years. It was organized in Amsterdam in 1948 under the theme, "Man's Disorder and God's Design." Subsequent assemblies have been held in Evanston, 1954, "Christ-the Hope of the World"; New Delhi, 1961, "Jesus Christ the Light of the World"; Uppsala, 1968, "Behold, I Make All Things New."

There has been a significant increase in membership. There were 351 official delegates representing 147 church bodies in forty-four countries at the first assembly in 1948. Twenty years later, at the Uppsala Assembly in 1968, there were 704 delegates from 235 member church bodies. The Uppsala Assembly has been called "the largest and most complete gathering of representatives of Christian Churches in over nine hundred years" (Fey, p. 415). The largest membership increases have come from the Orthodox Churches and

from the so-called Younger Churches of the Third World (Asia, Africa, and Latin America).

Confessional Basis

There has been a change in the confessional basis of the WCC. At its organization meeting in 1948 it adopted this statement as its basis:

The World Council of Churches is a fellowship of Churches which accept our Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour (Rouse-Neill, p. 705).

In 1966 at New Delhi it accepted this new formulation:

The World council of Churches is a fellowship of churches which confess the Lord Jesus Christ as God and Saviour according to the Scripture and therefore seek to fulfill together their common calling to the glory of the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit (Fey, pp. 306-307).

The Church of Norway especially promoted the reference to the Scriptures, and the Orthodox Churches the reference to the Trinity. On the face of it, this revised statement adopted in 1961 would seem to indicate that the WCC was making genuine progress in its confessional basis, becoming more and more Scriptural. But this is not so. It must be remembered that the confessional basis of the WCC, regardless of its merit on paper, is quite meaningless because the WCC by design makes no attempt to ensure that its member bodies measure up even to its simple confession. It is the church body applying for membership which determines whether or not it is able and ready to join and work on this basis. The WCC make no judgment on the matter (Rouse-Neill, p. 705). Thus the Quakers, with their rejection of the deity of Jesus, became members of the WCC in 1948, and remained members after 1961, even though they publicly objected to the words calling Jesus “God and Saviour” (Fey, p. 36). Many of the church bodies belonging to the WCC may have confessions on paper which declare the Scriptures to be the Word of God and Jesus the divine Savior, but in their public preaching and teaching they deny these sacred truths. Many of the WCC leaders are themselves modernists.¹³ The over-all

theological position of the WCC has not become more Biblical since 1948.

Doctrine

The Faith and Order section of the WCC has carried out many doctrinal studies, especially on the Word and on the Church. Whatever might be said for the studies themselves, the WCC has not become more sound in doctrine. Nor is this organization primarily concerned with seeking to remove doctrinal differences among its member bodies. This lack of concern becomes evident when one considers the course of church union between member bodies within the WCC.

Meredith B. Handspicker, Secretary of the Faith and Order section of the WCC from 1963-1967, writes:

Among most of the Churches which have already joined, or are about to join, [i.e., in various church unions] doctrinal issues seem to be least important This is not to say that doctrine is unimportant for these churches, but that it is not primarily a divisive issue From the beginning the issue which was most difficult to overcome was church order or polity” (Fey, pp. 162-163).

That which is divinely revealed, namely, the doctrine set forth in Holy Scripture, is either ignored or greatly minimized in church union between member bodies of the WCC. But the question of who laid hands upon whom in ordination, which is merely a church rite neither commanded nor forbidden in Scripture, becomes *the* issue in church union.

The Church of South India, organized in 1947, is unique in that for the first time it joined together churches which had no episcopate with a church which had bishops in the apostolic succession. This was accomplished by the expedient of recognizing as valid the ministry of all pastors, including those ordained without regard to the episcopate, but requiring that all future ordinations be made under the episcopacy.

The episcopacy is also winning out among other churches belonging to the WCC. Handspicker states: “In the course of time,

however, consensus has been developing that the historic episcopate, usually in a modified form, is a desirable element in the ordering of church life” (Fey, p. 163). This is true even where none of the merging churches is episcopally ordered, as for example in Australia, where a negotiating committee of the Presbyterian, Methodist, and Congregational Churches decided “to have a church order with bishops in the historic episcopate” (Fey, p. 163).

People will be under authority. When the authority of God’s Word is set aside, another authority must be found. Roman Catholicism has the pope. The churches making up the WCC are heading in the direction of having the episcopacy. From there it is a short step to submitting to the pope if one is otherwise so inclined.

Missions

The reader will recall that the Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 was called to deal with the vexing problem of importing church divisions to the foreign mission field. This conference provided the spark for the new ecumenism and the eventual organization of the WCC. The International Missionary Conference (INC), formed after the Edinburgh Conference, did not join the WCC in 1948 because it felt that it could carry out its missionary endeavors better as a separate organization. It did, however, establish a working relationship with the WCC. In 1961 the IMC was integrated into the WCC as its Division of the World Mission and Evangelism. It would seem logical to conclude from this that the WCC today would have an even greater missionary thrust than it had at its founding in 1948. But not so. The result has been the opposite. Missions, in the sense of what Jesus Himself directed, namely, that “*repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name*” (Luke 24:47), is not a major concern or work of the WCC today. Furthermore, church bodies belonging to the WCC generally are sending out fewer missionaries today than they did formerly.¹⁴

Why is this? Bishop Leslie Newbigin, a long-time leader in the WCC, writes: “A profound crisis of faith with the Western Churches has led to a loss of conviction that there is anything in the Christian faith which is so vital that without it men will perish” (Fey, p. 175). He also declares:

The questions which face the ecumenical movement now are... questions about the substance of the Gospel itself. The World Council of Churches has a Division whose aim is “to further the proclamation to the whole world of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to the end that all men believe in Him and be saved.” The questions that now have to be answered concern the content of that proclamation itself (Fey, p. 197).

New ecumenism and the WCC got their major boost sixty years ago from people and organizations who were trying to find a more effective way to bring the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the uttermost parts of the earth. Today new ecumenism and the WCC seriously question whether it is even necessary to tell the rest of the world about Jesus. Missions, which gave the impetus to new ecumenism, have now become a casualty of it.

Instead of missions to the heathen, the WCC now seeks dialogue with the adherents of non-Christian religions. And this, not for the purpose of witnessing to Christ and hoping for their conversion to the Christian faith, but to try to find common, mutual ground between the Christian and non-Christian religions, between Christ and Belial.

There is, in fact, a new concept of Missions in the WCC which seeks to remake society rather than to save souls for eternity. This new concept has led to an activity called Development rather than Missions, in which teachers and technicians in agriculture and other areas of endeavor are sent out to improve the earthly lot of the people of underdeveloped nations. These people have become the new “missionaries” of the WCC.

Political and Social Action

The WCC, through its Life and Work Division, has been actively involved in politics and social action since its organization. With the loss of conviction in doctrine and missions there has been a corresponding increase of activity in social and political fields. The Church, according to the WCC, is to humanize society by changing social and political structures. This is the program recommended by the 1966 Geneva Church and the Society Conference of the WCC, and adopted by the Fourth Assembly of the WCC at Uppsala in

The 1966 Geneva Conference stressed that “the Church must recognize the need for revolutionary change in social and political structures.” After noting that Christians in the past have usually done this through quiet efforts at social renewal, the conference stated that “today, a significant number of those who are dedicated to the service of Christ and their neighbor assume a more radical or revolutionary position.” The conference then went on to declare: “At the present moment, it is important for us to recognize that this radical position has a solid foundation in Christian tradition and should have its rightful place in the life of the Church and in the ongoing discussion of social responsibility” (Fey, p.254). This last statement put the Conference on record as recommending the Church’s participation in violent revolutionary change in social and political structures.

The WCC at its Assembly in Uppsala in 1968 made the position of the Geneva Conference on violent revolution its own. After declaring that “revolution is not to be identified with violence . . . ,” the Assembly did acknowledge that “the revolutionary change may take a violent form.” After stating that such changes are morally ambiguous, and that “the Churches have a special contribution towards the development of effective non-violent strategies of revolution and social change,” the Uppsala Assembly did give the green light to the churches to participate in violent revolutions, declaring: “Nevertheless we are called to participate creatively in the building of political institutions to implement the social changes that are desperately needed” (Fey, p. 256). Paul R. Abrecht, Executive Secretary of the Department on Church and Society of the WCC, in commenting on the Uppsala Assembly and the issue of revolution, states that in its declaration on the issue of revolution, the Assembly very largely confirmed the conclusions of the Geneva Conference in its own declaration on this problem” (Fey, p. 255).

The WCC’s approval of violent revolution in the name of social justice does not merely put the member churches of the WCC in the political sphere, which God has reserved to the state, but it also places them in active opposition to God’s Word, which calls for obedience to the “*powers that be*” (Rom. 13). Jesus would not set Himself up as a temporary probate judge to divide so much as an

inheritance between two brothers (Luke 12:14). The WCC which claims to “acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior according to the Scriptures” has put itself into the business of violent political revolution, even to the tearing down of earthly kingdoms, if necessary, in order to achieve social justice for all men the world over.

The Lutheran World Federation

The Lutheran World Federation (LWF), which numbers among its members all the major Lutheran Church bodies in the world except the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, has shown a marked spiritual decline along the same lines as the WCC.

That the new ecumenism thoroughly pervades the LWF may be seen in the resolution passed at its Fifth Assembly in Evian, France, in 1970, recommending church fellowship between all churches of the LWF:

In order to express more fully the fellowship within the LWF it is recommended: a) that the Assembly recommend to member churches that they declare through their competent authorities that they are in altar and pulpit fellowship with all member churches. Such a declaration should be made known to the General Secretary in order that it may be communicated to other member churches.

Only two members of the Assembly publicly opposed this resolution. The wording of the resolution “suggests that all member churches of the LWF are already in fellowship . . . and that the task of the individual churches is only to declare what already exists.”¹⁵ This is precisely the contention of the new ecumenism.

Dr. Scaer correctly notes that “this resolution was only one step, but it was the first towards one church and one world” (Scaer, p. 38). There already are Lutheran churches in the LWF which are in fellowship with Reformed churches, for example, the union churches of Germany. The carrying out of the resolution recommending that all churches of the LWF declare themselves to be in pulpit and altar fellowship with all member churches would put the entire LWF in fellowship with these Reformed churches.

In fact, the LWF is moving toward pulpit and altar fellowship between Lutheran and Reformed as such. The LWF sent on to its member churches with restrictions the recommendation of one of its committees that there must be a change in the confessions before Lutheran-Reformed fellowship is established. This change would be effected by an agreement which would include, according to the recommendation:

A statement that the doctrinal condemnations which refer to the other church and are expressed in the confessional writings of both churches have been rendered obsolete by theological development and that the remaining differences in ecclesiastical doctrine, order and style of life possess no church-separating significance (Scaer, p. 43).

This movement towards one church, and from there, to one world, was carried a bit farther by the greeting of Prof. Nikos Nissiotis, an associate general secretary of the WCC. According to the official minutes:

He wished the Assembly every success so that “the LWF may grow and make further progress for the sake of the ONE ecumenical movement acting within the ONE universal church and serving the unity of the ONE world” [Emphases original] (Scaer, p. 45).

The new ecumenism has likewise caused the LWF to set aside whatever concern for doctrine some of its members might have had and to embark on a social and political program in keeping with that of the WCC. This shift in concerns was evident before the meeting began when the site of the Assembly was changed from Porto Alegre, Brazil, to Evian, France, because of alleged atrocities of the Brazilian government.

This shift in concerns was evident also in the elimination of the word “mission” in the proposed name for a new division in the LWF. Fears were expressed that the word could make the work difficult in new nations of the “Third World” which were formerly under colonialism. Scaer notes, however, that “this opposition did not come as much from nations that were formerly colonies as from the formerly great colonial powers. Those who were supposed to

be offended by the word offered the least resistance to it” (Scaer, p. 35).

More serious was the redefining of theological terms and expressions in order to put a spiritual foundation under the social and political program of new ecumenism. Scaer writes that “the inaugural sermon interpreted the theme of the Assembly, ‘Sent into the World,’ as going forth to establish social justice, not to preach Christ.” Concerning the Assembly lecture delivered by Prof. Heinz Eduard Tödt, Scaer says: “No longer is the individual challenged by Christ to repent and believe, but all of humanity becomes the target of this activity of world improvement. Luther’s quest for eternal salvation must be replaced by the question, ‘How can I get along with my own existence and my fellowmen?’ . . . Justification is no longer a divine verdict from God on man, but an interrelation between men that should be carried out on a universal basis. This is the new interpretation of salvation” (Scaer, pp. 18-19). Prof. Gustaf Wingren, Lund, Sweden, in a lecture to Section II of the Assembly, used Article VII of the Augsburg Confession to support not only total Christian unity, but also reconciliation of mankind, He stated:

For the Lutheran World Federation it is important to know that its member churches possess in their own Confession a text (Aug. VII) which offers freedom from this ecclesiastical self-centeredness, a freedom to seek more than merely “unity of the churches” [Emphasis original] (Scaer, p. 23).

Those Earlier Opposed to the New Ecumenism

A number of churches refused to join or to cooperate with the WCC when it was formed in 1948. Yet now that the WCC has departed even farther from God’s Word, some of these same churches have either joined the WCC or are cooperating extensively with it. Noteworthy are the examples of the Orthodox Churches and the Roman Catholic Church.

The Orthodox Churches

In 1948 the Orthodox Churches opposed the ecumenical movement and the WCC, scoring in particular new ecumenism’s failure to search for doctrinal unity and turning its concentration

instead on social and political questions. They even went so far as to call this “a falling into the temptation rejected by Christ in the wilderness” (Rouse-Neill, p. 667). They described the brief Basis of the WCC (churches which acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior) as one which “lowers the Christian faith to such a degree as to be accessible even to the devils” (Fey, p. 304).

Yet such has been the change in attitude towards the new ecumenism on the part of the Orthodox Churches that today all of Eastern Orthodoxy, with the exception of the Orthodox Church of Albania, holds membership in the WCC. At the WCC’s Fourth Assembly at Uppsala in 1968, 160 out of 800 delegate seats were assigned to the Orthodox, making them one of the largest delegations in the Assembly.

The Roman Catholic Church

No less surprising is the increasing involvement of the Roman Church in the new ecumenism and the WCC. In 1949 the Roman Church issued “Instruction to Local Ordinaries, *Ecclesia Catholica*,” which acknowledged that discussions between Roman Catholics and other Christians on matters of faith and morals do and will take place. It then laid down the conditions under which such discussions might take place. There must be prior approval from competent church authority, there must be no “communication in sacred rites” (pulpit and altar fellowship), there may be a common recitation of the Lord’s Prayer or some other prayer approved by the Roman Church in opening and closing the meetings. A Romanist has described this document as being “the great charter of unionist activity” for Roman Catholics (Rouse-Neill, pp. 692-693).

Today the Roman Church carries on increased work with the Life and Work Division of the WCC, and is even a member of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC. It also carries on close work with the WCC itself through official observers at the WCC Assemblies. At the present time the Roman Catholic Church in the United States is seriously considering joining the National Council of Churches (NCCUSA).

Much of this change must be attributed to Pope John XXIII and the council which he convened, Vatican II. The documents of Vatican

II, while carefully seeking to avoid offending Protestants, do not reveal Rome to have budged from her previous position of claiming to be the Church, so that for her unity is a matter of other Christians acknowledging this claim and returning to “Mother Church.” But all in all, Rome has become increasingly involved in the WCC and the new ecumenism, and this involvement marks a significant change from her earlier position.

Confessional Lutheranism

The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, as noted earlier, had been an exceptionally strong bulwark against the new ecumenism. Its doctrine of church fellowship, especially in regard to unionism, kept it from joining the WCC, the NCCUSA, the LWF, or even the now-defunct National Lutheran Council.

For several decades, however, a change had been taking place within the Missouri Synod in regard to the doctrine of church fellowship, a change not hidden from the WCC. Samuel McCrea Cavert, in his book *On the Road to Christian Unity*, published in 1961, has a chapter on non-cooperating Protestants. After pointing out that Missouri’s doctrine of fellowship, requiring agreement in doctrine as a prerequisite of either cooperation or union, had kept the Missouri Synod out of the ecumenical movement, he noted that there were signs of change. Citing an article by Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, written as part of the study process preceding the 1957 Oberlin Conference of the Faith and Order Division of the WCC, Cavert said:

Dr. Richard R. Caemmerer gave an interpretation of “unity in doctrine” which affords hope that the impasse between that church and the ecumenical movement may be overcome. Citing the frequently quoted clause of the Augsburg Confession which declares that “for the true unity of the Church it is enough to agree concerning the doctrine of the Gospel and the administration of the sacraments,” he suggests that this does not mean that there must be “identical propositions” about gospel and sacraments. Instead, he sees the Confession of insisting that there must be agreement “with one accord to think and work *for* the teaching of the Gospel and the administering of the sacraments.” [Emphases Cavert’s] The Confession is

thus construed as holding that unity arises when Christians concentrate on the communication of the Word to the world. Dr. Caemmerer's article may be a signpost pointing to new possibilities of understanding between the most conservative of the Lutherans and the ecumenical movement (p. 99).

In the early 1960s the Missouri Synod developed its new "Theology of Fellowship" which set aside agreement in doctrine as a prerequisite for church fellowship. This not only served to bring an end to the Synodical Conference¹⁶ but also to pave the way for Missouri's participation in the formation of the Lutheran Council in the United States of America and its membership in the same.

While the Missouri Synod is not at present a member of the NCCUSA, the LWF, or the WCC, there is in principle, according to its new "Theology of Fellowship," no theological reason why it could not join any or all of these organizations of the new ecumenism. Dr. John Tietjen, president of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, in his book, *Which Way to Lutheran Unity*, published in 1966, has said as much. Commenting on Missouri's decision to participate in LCUSA, he writes: "The principle which has made it possible for the Missouri Synod to enter the cooperative agency could have far-reaching consequences for Missouri's relations not only with Lutheran groups but with other denominations" (p. 144).

The following Lutheran church bodies in the United States remain firmly opposed to the new ecumenism:

The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod;
 The Evangelical Lutheran Synod;
 The Concordia Conference, the Lutheran Churches of the Reformation, and the Federation for Authentic Lutheranism, all of which have been organized by former members of the Missouri Synod;
 The Church of the Lutheran Confession, organized by former members of the Wisconsin and the Evangelical Lutheran synods.

In addition there are the Church of the Lutheran Brethren and the Association of Lutheran Free Churches. These two church

bodies were never a part of Confessional Lutheranism. They have however, opposed modernism, and chiefly for this reason have remained outside the WCC and its related agencies. The Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod have formed the Evangelical Lutheran Confessional Forum. In this Forum representatives of the two synods meet annually for a review of doctrinal essays, discussion of various phases of church work, and fraternal consideration of mutual church concerns. These two church bodies are presently working for the establishment of the new organization of Confessional Lutherans to replace the now-defunct Synodical Conference.

Chapter Five: Charting One's Course

God has established the principles of ecumenism in His Word, primarily in the doctrines of the church and of church fellowship. (Cf. Ch. I). The Christian is to apply these divine principles in his personal, congregational, and synodical life. This is what we mean by "charting one's course."

The first thing "on the docket" is to recognize one's ecumenical responsibilities. One does not have to look far in any congregation or denomination to find the church member who is quite indifferent to any role that he should be playing in ecumenism. If you ask him about his church affiliation and why he happens to belong where he does, his reply will run along these lines: "I was born here. My parents were members here, and my grandparents before that. I've always belonged to this church and I intend to remain a member here as long as I live." The present mobility of the American people may have disrupted such comfortable church membership for many. Yet those who have taken up church membership in a new locality may have selected a certain congregation for such unecumenical reasons as these: the church is near our home; the buildings are imposing; the preacher is dynamic; everyone who is "somebody" belongs there, etc. The Gospel itself may not be wholly lost on such people but quite obviously they do not recognize that church membership and synodical affiliation are to be a reflection and an exercise of the Scriptural principles of ecumenism.

The Christian himself is to chart his ecumenical course. He should not accept the position of his pastor, congregation or synod on their mere say-so. After all, one's pastor, congregation, or synod can be wrong. Even if their teaching and practice are Scripturally correct, a blind acceptance of both without absorbing the Scripture on which they are based becomes widespread in a congregation or synod, its confession and practice, though outwardly correct, soon becomes an empty shell. When such confessions and practices are later tested, as indeed they will be, it takes but a few huffs and puffs to "blow the house down." It is difficult but essential that the church member himself thinks through and establishes his ecumenical position on the basis of Scripture Alone.

The Christian, in charting his ecumenical course, must steer clear of the new ecumenism. This does not mean that he cannot learn or benefit from it. There has been, for example, something wholesome and beneficial about new ecumenism's stress on the Church as the people of God, and one people at that. It is true that the new ecumenism wrongly equates the Church with the sum total of visible churches. It is also true that the Church as the one people of God is no new doctrine or discovery. It is all there in the Lutheran Confessions, including the Small Catechism. Yet because Christians who follow the Biblical principles of church fellowship must necessarily stress congregational and synodical affiliation there is a danger that they may at times neglect the doctrine of the Church itself. One can therefore appreciate the stress which the new ecumenism has laid on this doctrine.

Yet for all of that, the Christian must steer clear of the new ecumenism. This means declining to be a member of such organizations as the World Council of Churches (WCC), the National Council of Christian Churches (NCC), the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), and the Lutheran Council, United States of America (LCUSA). It also means refusing the hand of church fellowship to those congregations and church bodies which belong to these organizations.

There are appealing reasons for throwing in one's lot with the broad movement of new ecumenism. The new ecumenism has a very appealing basis, namely that church fellowship is based on personal, subjective faith. The Christian wants to think well of all people. How

can he think better of a man than to judge him to be a Christian? How can he better show that he regards him as a Christian than by fellowshipping with him? But personal, subjective faith cannot be made the basis for church fellowship because it lies outside the direct comprehension of man.

The new ecumenism appeals also because it offers an easy way to church unity. Every Christian “worth his salt” abhors the many outward divisions in Christendom. He longs for unity between the churches. The path outlined in God’s Word for such unity, namely, doctrinal unity on the basis of Holy Scripture, is long and difficult. A short cut appeals to the flesh. The new ecumenism offers that short cut. In making subjective faith the basis for unity it is saying that doctrinal differences should never have caused the divisions in the church in the first place, and should not now be keeping the churches apart. The lights are all green for a united church in new ecumenism.

The Christian is tempted to cast his lot with new ecumenism on the basis of numbers. Many churches are actually declining in membership. Even where there is some growth, the over-all percentage of church people in relation to non-church people in the world *is declining*. The strength of numbers that the new ecumenism affords is appealing to the Christian until he remembers that the church functions on a different basis, namely, “. . . *not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts*” (Zech. 4:6).

The Christian may be tempted to go along with new ecumenism out of sheer weariness. The generally accepted pattern of church fellowship today is based on the new ecumenism. There may still be different congregations and denominations in town, but almost without exception they are ready to fellowship with one another “at the drop of a hat.” Those who oppose such an indiscriminate exercise of church fellowship are under almost constant pressure to conform to this accepted pattern. Such Christians may well be tempted to throw up their hands and to go along with the new ecumenism, saying: “What’s the use of trying to buck the trend?”

Even if a Christian should refuse to join the new ecumenism for the above reasons, there is still the compelling argument that he should take part in order to testify to the truth. One dare not belittle the importance of testimony and what can be accomplished

by means of it. Indeed, true testimony is a Christian obligation and necessity. Jesus says: "*Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men him will I confess before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven*" (Matt. 10:32,33). The question in ecumenism, however, is not whether one should testify to the truth, but rather how and where that testimony is to be given. In making such decisions the Christian is to follow the Biblical principle that: "*to obey is better than sacrifice*" (I Sam. 15:22). If this means staying apart from others, as it does in regard to new ecumenism, then if there is any loss of testimony it must be Christ's concern, not the Christian's.

The basic reason for rejecting the new ecumenism and avoiding in spiritual matters those who support and promote it finally boils down to an acceptance of God's Word and a willingness to be guided by it. Over against all the appeal and enticement of the new ecumenism stands the plain word of Jesus: "*Beware of false prophets . . . Ye shall know them by their fruits*" (Matt. 8:15,16). There is also the divinely inspired apostolic injunction: "*Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them*" (Rom. 16:17).

It perhaps would not be amiss to point out that a Christian's opposition to the new ecumenism will be not only theoretical but also practical. This opposition finally involves people, places and things. And the practical aspects involve the local as well as the synodical and intersynodical scene. A case in point is "Key 73," the nationwide joint effort of the majority of churches in the United States to evangelize America for Christ in 1973. The provision of "Key 73" that each congregation or denomination may participate to the extent that it desires does not change the fact that participation in "Key 73" is itself joint church work with those not agreed in doctrine. The Christian will not confuse the worthiness of the work itself, in this case evangelism, with the unscriptural basis on which the joint work is carried out. On the local level of ecumenism it must also be said that most ministerial associations and the great majority of joint projects sponsored by the several churches of a community are predicated on the principles of church fellowship espoused by the new ecumenism.

A Christian will not object that his congregation refrains from participation in joint church worship and work where there is no doctrinal unity. Rather, he will appreciate the fact that his pastor, congregation and synod take the stand that they do. If he is confronted on the issue by well-meaning people from other churches in the community he will not apologize for his own or his pastor's or congregation's stand but seek in a kind way to make clear the Scriptural position in the matter. Such an effort will at least make for better understanding, if not agreement itself. This is Scriptural ecumenism in action.

The Christian who charts his ecumenical course on the basis of God's Word will steer clear even of many, who, like himself, oppose the new ecumenism. Foremost among such are the Fundamentalist Reformed churches and the ecumenical associations formed by some of them, the American Council of Christian Churches (ACCC), and the International Council of Christian Churches (ICCC). One will readily acknowledge the courageous battle which the Fundamentalists have been waging against the Modernists and their soul-destroying doctrines. But loyalty to God's Word requires one to recognize that while the Fundamentalists are true to God's Word in regard to many doctrines, they are false and unfaithful to the Word in regard to other doctrines such as conversion, the sacraments, the last things, and unionism. Their fellowship principle, "In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, in all things charity," does not square with Scripture.

The Christian will chart his ecumenical course so as to avoid evangelistic and Christian student organizations which are essentially Fundamentalist in character. This would include such groups as the Billy Graham and Oral Roberts evangelistic organizations, Campus Crusade for Christ, Inter-Varsity, Navigators, and others. As those who preach the Gospel these people and groups have the same obligation as others to proclaim the Word in all of its truth and purity even though they do not call themselves churches. The Christian may commend their zeal and acknowledge that they may often accomplish good but he will not make common spiritual cause with them because of the false doctrine that is a part of their Fundamentalism.

The Christian will also avoid the Pentecostal movement with its

false doctrines regarding conversion, sanctification, the sacraments, the last things, etc., and its legalism, emotionalism, faith healing, and speaking in tongues. This movement is not confined to Pentecostal churches as such, but is spreading across many denominations and even producing new groups. The “Jesus People,” for example, are essentially Pentecostalist in their religion. The Pentecostal movement therefore has considerable ecumenical significance, not least for Christian young people. The movement’s conservative image, enhanced by its present position of remaining largely aloof from the new ecumenism, may deceive even the watchful Christian into thinking that this is one movement in which he can participate. Not so. The Christian will steer clear of it.

What is left for the Christian who practices Scriptural ecumenism? Much every way! While Scriptural ecumenism often requires the withholding of the hand of church fellowship, it never requires, and more, never permits, the withholding of the hand of Christian love from anyone in the world. The Christian is to be active in works of love towards all men. He dare never excuse his failure to do good to someone on the grounds that he is not in church fellowship with him. Thus the whole world lies before the Christian who follows Scriptural ecumenism, waiting for his love. The sky is the limit!

Does such a Christian become a “loner,” cut off from the rest of the community? Not at all. Only the hand of church fellowship is withdrawn. There still remains the boundless area of social fellowship and civic responsibility where the Christian may and should work hand in hand with the very people he separates himself from in spiritual matters. By following such a course of action the Christian not only fulfills his civic responsibilities but also points up the distinctly spiritual nature of the separation in church relations.

Most important of all, the Christian in practicing Scriptural ecumenism faces the world in all the power, comfort, happiness and confidence of the gospel itself. His is no lost cause, no uncertain prospect. The cause is not his, but God’s! The outcome is not his, but God’s. His is the opportunity for joyful, faithful service to the Lord, his Maker, Redeemer, and Comforter, and to all men.

And so he worships with those who confess the same doctrine that he confesses. As he considers the many other Christian churches which also profess faith in Christ he wishes that he could worship

with all of them. But he does not despise the smaller group, the congregation or synod, where there is unity of faith. Here are brethren, true brethren. He relishes their fellowship to the full. Here is a bit of heaven on earth. How he guards that fellowship, how he tends to every little thing which might disrupt that fellowship. He thus comes to know from experience the truth of the psalmist's words: *Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!*" (Ps, 133:1). How he works within that congregation or synod for the spread of the Gospel that by the Holy Spirit many may be brought to faith and thus become members of the true Church, ". . . *living stones in the holy temple of the Lord*" (Eph. 2:19-22).

His wholehearted devotion to his brethren does not prevent his concern for the rest of Christendom. His Scriptural ecumenism will make him very sensitive to the spiritual plight of other churches and other people. He will therefore keep informed of spiritual trends and happenings that bode ill or well for members of other churches and will remember to speak a kind word of comfort, concern, approval or warning to a neighbor or acquaintance who is going to be affected by what has happened in his or her church or denomination. If he has the opportunity to discuss doctrine in meetings of mixed faiths where the hand of church fellowship is not a condition of participation, he will do so in a happy cheerful manner, confident that the Word will not return void.

The Scriptural ecumenist will, in fact, take the initiative and try to arrange such meetings. Truth has nothing to fear, and much to gain, from such forthright discussions of the Word. It may be an informal meeting of two neighbors over the fence, or on the back steps, or over coffee. It may be an impromptu discussion at a family reunion. It may be a meeting of pastors, teachers and others from various churches of the community. If the authors of *A Study of Generations* are right in their prediction that "the massive and decisive struggle in the last quarter of the twentieth century is going to be about beliefs,"¹⁷ then the climate and opportunities for such meetings will be very good.

Such is the course of action which the Christian will chart for himself in ecumenism. His earnest concern for the truth of God's Word, coupled with his Christian love and desire to share that truth

with everyone, will cause him to chart a course which will refute the tired, old accusation so often raised against him, that he is a separatist, an isolationist, and a bigot.

How can the Christian capture such a spirit? And having captured it, how can he retain and exercise it to the full? We submit that the key to arriving at and exercising a genuinely Scriptural ecumenism is to be found in the Means of Grace (Word and Sacraments), and , in particular, in the three great principles of the Lutheran Reformation drawn from the Means of Grace, Scripture Alone, Grace Alone, and Faith Alone.

When these principles are acknowledged and used by the Christian in the power of the Holy Spirit there will be something doing in the matter of Scriptural ecumenism. But they must be acknowledged and used in their true meaning. Scripture Alone: the Bible is God's Word, the same almighty Word which prevailed at creation; this Word alone is to determine articles of faith and no one else, not even an angel (Gal. 1:8); this Word is not a vain thing, for it is our life (Deut. 32:47). Grace Alone: all men's salvation, from beginning to end, is God's gift, due to His mercy, His grace alone, without any merit or deserving on man's part (Eph. 2:8-9). Faith Alone: God's forgiveness, based on Christ's atonement on Calvary, sealed by His resurrection from the dead, is bestowed on the sinner not through works, but by faith, and faith alone (Rom. 1:17).

When these principles are truly established within the Christian so that they become the very heartbeat of his soul, the Christian will never consent to the new ecumenism with its rejection of God's Word, its despising of the Gospel, its living for this life. But neither will he go off in a corner to mope over a lost cause. Strengthened in heart, encouraged in life, he will strike off on the ecumenical course that God has outlined for him in His Word, and he will do it with vigor.

Endnotes

¹ Fey, Harold E., ed., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, Volume 2, 1948-1968*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1970, p. 149. Future reference to this work will be noted in the text as (Fey, p. ____).

² The Lutheran Confessions, in addition to the three Ecumenical Creeds mentioned in the text, are: The Augsburg Confession, the Apology (Defense) of the Augsburg Confession, the Small Catechism, the Large Catechism, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord. It should be noted that the Formula of Concord, adopted in 1580, deals almost entirely with errors which had crept into Lutheranism. The *Book of Concord* is the title given to the volume containing all of the Lutheran Confessions.

³ Chief among such doctrinal statements would be “The Brief Statement,” adopted by the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod in 1932, and recognized also by the other synods of the Synodical Conference. Of more recent origin is “This We Believe,” a doctrinal statement of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, adopted in 1967.

⁴ *Concordia Triglotta*, St. Louis, Concordia, 1921, p. 47. *The Book of Concord, The Confessions of the Evangelical Lutheran Church*, trans. and ed. Tappert, Theodore G., Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1959, p. 32.

⁵ *Concordia Triglotta*, Large Catechism, Third Article, p. 691. Tappert, p. 417.

⁶ Rouse, Ruth and Neill, Stephen Charles, ed., *A History of the Ecumenical Movement, 1517-1948*, Philadelphia, Westminster, 2nd ed., 1968, p. 90. Future references to this work will be cited in the text as: (Rouse-Neill, p. _____).

⁷ Cavert, Samuel McCrea, *On the Road to Christian Unity*, New York, Harper & Brothers, 1961, p. 99.

⁸ Statement of the overseas Brethren to the Synodical Conference, *Proceedings, Synodical Conference*, 1961, pp. 12 ff; also *Report, Ev. Luth. Synod*, 1961, pp. 39-43; and *Proceedings, Wis. Ev. Luth. Synod*, pp. 117 – 182.

⁹ Hoyer, H. Conrad, *Ecumenopolis U.S.A.*, Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1971, p. 23.

¹⁰ Wentz, Abdel Ross, *Lutherans in Concert*, Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1968, p. 136. Future references to this work will appear in the text as (Wentz, p. _____).

¹¹ McIntire, Carl, *Servants of Apostasy*, Collingswood, N. J., Christian Beacon Press, 1955. pp. 367-368.

¹² Cf. previous quotation of Ruth Rouse in text. Also Cavert, Samuel McCrea from the work cited, p. 99. Also Wentz, Abdel Ross, from the work cited, pp. 7: 21-22; 54: 170-171.

¹³ For a survey of the theological positions of some of the leaders of the WCC see Hedegard, David, *Ecumenism and the Bible*, Billing and Sons Ltd., 1955, revised, 1964, pp. 162-193.

¹⁴ “Of interest is the decline in the percentage of the total (missionary) force represented by DOM-NCCUSA (Division of overseas Ministries-National Council of Christian Churches in the U.S.A.) and CCC-CWC (Canadian Council of Churches, Commission on World Concern) related agencies. This

is a situation first noted in 1960 and further analyzed in 1968 by Dr. David M. Stowe, then Associate General Secretary for overseas Ministries of the DOM-NCCUSA. His analysis (Missionary Research Library, occasional Bulletin, Vol. XX, No. 1, Jan. 1969) noted that the ‘center of gravity of Protestant missionary sending agencies is shifting constantly away from the “ecumenical” agencies toward conservative and fundamentalist ones.’ While the trend continues, without a breakout of the unaffiliated agencies into similar categories, the magnitude of the actual trend is difficult to determine.”

“The percentage of the total missionary force claimed by mission associations also declined during the decade. DOM-NCCUSA missionaries represent about 26 percent of the total force in 1969, down from 36 percent in 1959. Missionaries associated with the CCC-CWC are down from three percent to about one and a half percent.” – *North American Protestant Ministries Overseas, Directory*, compiled and written for the Missionary Research Library by Missions Advanced Research and Communication Center, MARC: Monrovia, California, 1970, pp. 6-7.

¹⁵ Scaer, David P., *The Lutheran World Federation Today*, St. Louis, Concordia, 1971, p. 38. Future reference to this work will be cited in the text as: (Scaer, p. ____). Dr. Scaer was an official observer of the LC-MS at the Fifth Assembly of the LWF at Evian, France, in 1970. The writer is indebted to Dr. Scaer for his analysis of the present-day LWF.

¹⁶ After years of fruitless discussions by the doctrinal committees of the constituent synods seeking to restore the doctrinal unity of the Synodical Conference, the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod and the Evangelical Lutheran Synod withdrew from membership in the Synodical Conference in 1963. The two remaining members, the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches, both of whom had become constituting members of LCUSA, dissolved the Synodical Conference in 1968. The Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Churches has since merged with the Missouri Synod.

¹⁷ *A Study of Generations, Report of a Two Year Study of 5000 Lutherans Between the ages of 15-16: Their Beliefs, Values, Attitudes, Behavior*, Strommen, Merton P., Brekke, Milo L., Underwager, Ralph C., Johnson, Arthur L., Minneapolis, Augsburg, 1972, p. 101.