

THE SEMINARY AND WORLD MISSION

IN OUR DAY

An essay read at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, Mequon, Wis.
in 1988 by Pastor Edgar Hoenecke of San Diego, California

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The Importance of the Seminary

The Wisconsin Synod has great reason to thank God for more than a hundred years of sound teaching and guidance of our theological seminary. This is noteworthy in the history of the modern church! The straying of many formerly orthodox church bodies from orthodox teaching and practice is due to the aberrations of their theological faculties.

The fear was expressed by some of our leaders that going out into the world in foreign missions would possibly dilute, or even lose, sound teaching in our synod. Actually, this danger was proved to be not nearly as great as that of succumbing to new notions in theology here at home.

From its very beginning in 1850 our synod had to contend with heterodox influences which stemmed from our heterogeneous origins. In all these struggles it was God who awakened confessionally strong leaders who guided the young synod on a Scripturally sound course and into orthodox intersynodical affiliations. In retrospect this development of our Wisconsin Synod into a leading orthodox Lutheran church which has not yielded to the allurements of popular doctrinal trends is nothing short of a miracle of the grace and patience of our God!

Another miracle that is just as great is the fact that, at the very time of our synod's recent struggle to maintain her orthodox Lutheran identity, the synod also embarked on a major world mission outreach! And that in the 95th year of her existence! No longer would we have to suffer the slur, "The Wisconsin Synod has the pure Gospel, and is sitting on it." - Within the span of only three decades Wisconsin, once ranked as a poor performer in the support of world mission, has gone to the top of the list of Lutheran synods in per communicant offerings for world missions!

During those thirty years of mission awakening it was largely the influence of the theological professors which brought about the change. At the very time when our seminary faculty took a leadership position in steering the synod through the theological turbulence brought on by the drift into the historical-critical approach to Holy Scripture, the same faculty staunchly supported identical obedience to the Scriptural injunctions to share the pure Gospel with all the world.

These truly remarkable developments have certainly been brought about by the gracious and faithful guidance of God.

All credit belongs to His patient love and faithfulness, not to the theological acumen or perseverance of our leaders. We note in passing, but offer no explanation for the fact, that the same implicit obedience to the explicit commission to go into all the world with the Gospel was not always as evident in our synod as unquestioning faithfulness to the doctrine, taught in Holy Scripture.

Rather, we thank God that our beloved synod, finally, was led to such consistency and, like 90 year-old Sarah, has become fruitful in bearing many spiritual children, also on foreign soil, in keeping with God's unfailing promise!

The Struggle for Greater Mission Emphasis

During our long history the struggle for keeping the mission mandate in highest priority has gone on, even during the period of developing a truly orthodox identity. There were times when so many other pressing needs demanded first consideration and absorbed the synod's material resources, that those who still insisted that the Lord's great mission commission should be obeyed, were identified and stigmatized as "the mission brethren."

This is recorded by Prof. J.P. Koehler in his history of the Wisconsin Synod. Reporting that the synod resolved in 1883 to look for a place to work among the American Indians in response to President Joh. Bading's urging, he writes, "There was something not entirely sound about the synod's heathen mission endeavor, the idea that a church is not living up to its mission unless it engages in heathen mission work according to the Lord's Great Commission, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature.' That idea is dogmatism with a streak of pietism, and it provoked the criticism of Professor Hoenecke.- These mistakes, outside of being a part of the general slipshod management, also arose from a lukewarm attitude of the synod's leadership that dreaded the added cost to the budget. But the constituency showed enthusiasm for the undertaking, and so the "mission brethren" had to be given free rein." (J.P. Koehler, History of WELS, p.198)

Not only the leadership was lukewarm in the days of the beginning of the Indian Mission. It is difficult to follow the venerable professor's own thinking on the matter, as we read more of his remarks, "In outward matters the Church is subject to natural developments like the rest of the world under God. Not all groups and organizations have the same tasks. There are (church) organizations, like peoples, that remain small in number and in that have a token of their mission to do intensive, rather than extensive, work by which the world may even profit more. The Wisconsin Synod had a college that was off to a good start along fundamental lines. To maintain and develop that was mission enough for a while." (Ibid., p.196)

One of Professor Koehler's former students has written an apt rebuttal to the professor's reasoning, which takes care of the matter quite effectively, "One can understand that our fathers placed emphasis on the strengthening of the cords. But all Scripture is written for our learning and guidance. The Isaiah passage (54:2) does not limit; it directs us to do both and neglect neither one, as the Germans are wont to put it: "Das Eine tun, und das Andere nicht lassen." (K.F.Krauss, Our World Missions, WLQ, '72, # 4, p.275)

Thus our synod's first venture into heathen mission, as it was then called, continued to be hampered by criticisms. At almost every convention suggestions were heard to close the Apache Indian Mission, largely because of the cost of its operation and its inability to report dramatic results.

Still, this first mission enterprise for years became a convenient reason for not venturing into other heathen fields. This deprived the synod's membership of the great joy in helping to bring in the promised harvest of souls. It is interesting to note that in the same year, 1893, in which Wisconsin opened its first heathen mission in Arizona, the Missouri Synod with whom we were affiliated sent several missionaries to Japan as the first of more than a dozen overseas fields which were opened in the following years.

WELS Presidents Urge Mission Outreach

Lest the impression be given that our synod's leaders were not concerned about carrying out the Lord's Great Commission, we want to report the following.

President Johannes Bading (1860-1863, 1867-1889) was the first of our synod presidents to urge heathen missions. In 1876 the synod sent Missionary Drewes to our western states to open work among the Indians. But this effort was given up when the heathen missionary settled down in California to gather Lutheran settlers there into congregations.

At the synod convention of 1883 President Bading made another attempt to lead his synod into heathen mission. The "mission brethren" found him to be a strong advocate of their cause when he prevailed on the synod to appoint a commission to explore opportunities for an Indian mission.

Japan, which had been opened to Christian missions, was also considered. But the commission concentrated on finding a mission site in our West and in 1884 proposed opening our own heathen mission among the newly settled Apache tribes of Arizona. Without delay two seminary students were selected to prepare for the work. They were sent out to Arizona in 1893 to begin work on the San Carlos reservation:

In 1889 President John Bading asked the convention not to consider him for re-election. He explained that his Call to his large St. John congregation in Milwaukee required his full attention. This large city congregation was launching a major church building program at the time.

One can understand that this plea was more than valid. He had just led his synod through the difficult struggle to preserve the freedom of the Christian day school from state control. It must have been very stressful to do justice to both his congregation and his synod during these years.

Then there was the other matter which added much stress during his years in office. This was his struggle to move his synod to a greater mission outreach. Not ten years before, in 1876, his synod sent a missionary west to search for a mission site among the Indians. It had failed.

Although there were a number of pastors among the synod leaders who did not share his mission enthusiasm, he carried on in his efforts to move the synod to follow Jesus' clear mandate, "Go you into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature!"

He was not charged openly with making obedience to this mission mandate tantamount to a third "mark of the Church." But the small group of likeminded pastors and people were marked as "the mission brethren," as those who by their persistence were displaying "pietism with a hint of legalism."

An old error which found its beginning in Germany still persisted among those who thought they had found a Scriptural basis for their inactivity in heathen mission. It was this that the Great Commission was given to the Apostles and, therefore, did not apply to the Church any longer. Had the Apostle Paul not said this in Romans 10:18? - "But I ask, did they not hear? Of course they did. Their voice has gone out into all the earth, their words to the end of the world."

The other idea which has survived to our own day is that the church should wait with heathen mission outreach for a clear "Macedonian Call" to a specific field. Bading rightly understood that this special Call intended no restriction for the Church, when Jesus Himself had given His mandate with the promise of His supporting presence "to the end of the world."

These arguments were not new. Reinhold Gareis already cites them as reasons for the lack of missionary activity

of the Lutheran Church since early days. (Reinhold Gareis, Geschichte der evangelischen Heidenmission, 1901, p.7)

After President Bading's retirement in 1889, the work among the Indians was carried on under his successor, Pastor Philipp von Rohr. Referring to the way in which this work was conducted, Historian J.P.Koehler, writes, "The mistakes, outside of being a part of the general slipshod management (of the Indian Mission), also arose from a lukewarm attitude of the synod's leadership that dreaded the extra cost to the budget." J.P.Koehler, History of the Wisconsin Synod, p.198

This attitude toward the first and only heathen mission of the Wisconsin Synod continued to crop up during the von Rohr years and into the administration of his successor, President Gustav Bergemann, when he was elected in 1908. It was felt as a heavy burden, especially by the missionaries in Arizona, who were poorly housed and poorly salaried, plus being expected to save the synod money by building and doing all the repairs, in addition to their difficult assignment of preaching and teaching school.

President Bergemann Urges Heathen Mission

To set aside the impression that the synod's leaders were indifferent about carrying out the Lord's mandate to share the Good News with all the world, we will dwell on the long period of President Gustav Bergemann's service, from 1908 to 1933.

During his tenure he worked hand in hand with the theological faculty by assigning essays which would stir up a greater mission interest. He also encouraged those in the field by supporting the calling of capable missionaries into the work in the Indian Mission.

Pastor Bergemann was president during my early years and was remembered because of his friendly interest in us children when he came to Saginaw on synod business. His tenure in office carried him through the trying days of the First World War. During these years, 1914-1918, our German Lutheran churches had to suffer the propaganda which was targeted against everything German.

When, later, the churches thought they could go on as before the war, not adjusting even to English services, it was at Bergemann's invitation that Professor August Pieper of the seminary read his memorable essay, "The True Reconstruction of the Church" at the 1919 convention of the synod.

Pieper's Great Essay of 1919

The war had been a shattering experience for all of humanity! It had at last come to an end in November of 1918

after millions of young men had come to an untimely end on foreign soil, many of our own sons on the battlefields of Europe and in the seven seas. Millions had come home, but many were maimed for life and permanently affected by the horrors they had witnessed.

Hatred and brutality had been unleashed, decency and morality had been violated and many had lost faith and hope in the brutal bloodbath. Our Lutheran people and churches had not only been vilified in the general propaganda against everything German. People were looking for help in regaining at least something of the stability and peace of mind which prevailed before the war.

Reconstruction was the slogan of the day, a return to sanity and tranquillity. It was a most trying time for our Lutheran way of life and our churches, removed as they were by language and custom from the turbulent world.

At this critical time President Bergemann had assigned an essay to Professor August Pieper of the seminary to help our people to a true reconstruction and adjustment to the changed conditions. Even though the buzzword, popular at the time, was used, Professor Pieper carried his hearers deeply into the true meaning of reconstruction in spiritual things.

Pieper's essay was couched in his forceful, eloquent German prose, as he admonished and encouraged the delegates in three morning sessions. His theme was, The True Reconstruction of the Church. In brilliant rhetoric he exposed the ingrained insularity of our German Lutheran churches, blinded and stifled against any serious endeavor to share the Gospel with those of other cultural origins with whom we lived in this country and in the world. He said that true reconstruction could come only with a repentant admission of our flagrant failings and a resolute decision with the help of the Holy Spirit to reach out to the many other lost souls whose eternal welfare Jesus had laid on all our hearts and consciences. Let us hear a part of that great essay,

"Our missionary activity, including the Indian Mission, the Reisepredigt (mission to scattered Lutherans), even our educational institutions, until now have been but a miserable pitiful bungling, a botchery lacking both fire and force. At every convention we seem to be asking ourselves, do we actually want to do this work or do we not? Half a heart, half a job and half a result! We worked as though we were dreaming. Mary has become a poky dreamer sitting at the Lord's feet. She has developed the habit of only listening until her hearing has become dull, her heart languid and her feet and hands leaden and lazy. Wake up! Wake up, Mary! Rub the sleep out of your eyes and shake the lethargy from your limbs! It is time to get to work!

"Don't you see the vast throngs of English people milling about your house, crowding around your open door, - the unnumbered multitude of those who would like to hear

something of the glorious Good News which the Lord has poured into your heart? Don't you see the millions of children who are waiting for you to take them also on your lap in the Christian school to tell them, too, about this wonderful thing that had entranced and enraptured you? Oh, don't you see the shining eyes of the thousands of darkhaired lads and the shy, yearning glances of the blondhaired maidens, intrigued by your own beaming faces, who are eager to learn the good story of God's grace and to place themselves into the Lord's service in church and school, to shout it loudly to those others, the multitude who are even now streaming to your house?

"It is high time! The sun is still shining, daylight is still with us. But it is toward evening and the day is far spent already!" (Aug. Pieper, 1919 Essay, Conv. Proceedings)

This essay and the very convincing manner of its delivery to the convention had a profound effect. It was to be given the widest circulation in the whole synod. Pieper was asked to read it to as many conferences in person as his time allowed and other conferences were asked to set aside time for its reading. Its salutary effect was felt years later, and surely after we entered the seminary the year after its reading, in 1920.

Congregations in all parts of the synod took steps to introduce English services and a new effort was evident everywhere to reach other than German people. Remnants of the old insularity were found, as in the first church which I served from 1926, where the phrase "In dieser Gemeinde wird nur deutsch gepredigt." was still observed, because "that's the way it always was and that's the way it always will be." But, generally, there was a wholesome change, as in the minutes, essays and proceedings of the conventions.

Wisconsin and Overseas Mission Programs

Assistance to Lutherans in Poland

In response to a plea, already before the war, from a small group of confessional Lutherans at Lodz, the synod in 1922 sent Pastor Otto Engel to investigate. He was fluent in both German, English and Polish. As a result, what was known then as our mission in Poland was begun in 1924.

Our seminary had been involved in this mission opportunity and Professor J.P. Koehler was asked to visit the Poland mission on his history sabbatical in 1924 and also to ordain and install Pastor Gustav Maliszewski, a former school teacher, as head of the new Lutheran free church.

The seminary faculty worked with the mission board for years in keeping lively contact with this church which had suffered so much persecution and privation in the World War.

Wisconsin Cooperates in the Nigerian Mission

Another opportunity for helping to reach out into the world with the Gospel was seized by the synod when sixteen orphaned churches of a British mission in southern Nigeria appealed to the synodical conference.

The year after the mission was opened as a Lutheran mission by Dr. Henry Nau, Pastor William Schweppe of our synod was called as the director. He remained at his post until the break-up of the synodical conference in 1963 and then served in our Central African mission until his death in a car accident while en route from an outlying mission in 1968. This terminated thirty-two years of faithful service in African missions.

His work lives on in a group of Nigerian congregations who appealed to us and are continuing to be served, also by professors on leave from our seminary.

President Bergemann and the Great Depression

The Great Depression of the early 1930s was ushered in by the stock market crash in late 1929. It was a depressing period in American and world history. Four years later Adolf Hitler was named chancellor of Germany and the persecution of the Jews begins. Josif Stalin ascends to power in Russia with the bloody purge of all opposition to the atheistic Communist party. Franklin Delano Roosevelt begins his first of three terms in the White House. A "bank holiday" is declared to put an end to the deteriorating economic state of the country and the "New Deal" inaugurates many new programs to stimulate American business.

It was a period of almost hopeless frustration and it seized hold of the people like some malignant seizure of defeat and depression. This was also sadly reflected in the ability of the faithful church members to support the work of the Lord, to say nothing about the sad outlook for any thought of mission outreach.

During this most depressing time President Bergemann had to face his synod in convention in 1931. His stirring words of encouragement are unforgettable, especially for a young pastor attending his first synodical convention.

President Bergemann based his opening address on the words of the Great Commission in Matthew 28 and Mark 16. He said, "The preaching of the Gospel was and is and ever will be the one great and peculiar mission of the Church. Not until the Church has gone into all the world and has preached the Gospel to all creatures, has it performed its mission! - It is indeed a great task. When we ponder the greatness and the difficulties of this task our courage

begins to wane and delight in His work becomes indifference. We are in danger of doing the Lord's work slothfully. It may even come to pass that the blessing is turned into a curse.

"We are standing in this danger!

"In fact, Jesus Christ, our Savior, who was with our fathers, has not deserted us. He has faithfully fulfilled His promise, 'I am with you always!' Even on this day He is among us. He blessed our institutions and made them instrumental in giving us messengers of the Gospel. Again and again He opened doors for us. - Every door opened, every blessing received, every victory won ought to give us new courage for our task and increase our joy and pleasure in the work of God. - Is this our attitude?

"We are in danger of losing both. We look upon our assigned task, - it has increased; upon the field, - it has expanded; upon the possibilities of other missions, - they are at hand; upon our budget, - it has grown and passed the million dollar mark; upon our treasury, - it is depleted.

"Worse than that, there is a large deficit. And more depressing is the fact that this deficit, keeping pace with the work and expenditures, has increased year by year. - Our hearts are heavy and our vision is blurred. We have become weak, we have begun to do the Lord's work slothfully. - We have said that the deficit must be wiped out. For this reason the budget must be reduced and, correspondingly, the extent of our work must be curtailed. We cannot undertake additional work in the fields. According to this program we have worked during the past biennium.

"What has been the result? Through our institutions the Lord gave us a large number of laborers; He has not withheld blessing. But we are not in a position to make full use of this blessing for the building of the Kingdom. To only one-half of the candidates for the ministry we could say, 'Go and preach the Gospel!' To the others we were obliged to say, 'For the present you must go and seek labor elsewhere.' To this end our program has brought us.

"No, this condition cannot be explained as coming from the enduring Depression. It was in the years of prosperity we embarked on a course which led to this end. Our condition is indeed a precarious one! - Not having cherished the blessing, we must suffer the curse! God keep us from such an end!

"Let us then take Him at His Word, 'Lo, I am with you always!' - Our heart must marvel and be enlarged until it breaks forth and courageously proclaims, 'With God we will perform our deeds!' We will cover the deficit and the necessary budget with commensurate contributions and sacrifices. - We will miss no opportunity to expand our borders in full confidence of His promise, 'Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world!' and obedient to His command, 'Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature!'" (WELS Proc.1931)

This last earnest appeal of President Bergemann was made in August of 1931, the low ebb of the Great Depression. It was feared that the banks would begin to call in their loans to the synod. By December 31st the debt had reached the all-time low of \$ 752,649! Again the salaries of our missionaries and professors had to be cut by another 20%!

In early 1932 another desperate effort was launched to rouse the membership into action with an "Every Member Canvass." It failed to achieve its purpose and this failure only seemed to depress the spirits of all of us.

This feeling was a part of the general depression at the time. Many banks and business ventures were failing in those closing months of the Hoover administration. When Franklin Delano Roosevelt launched his campaign in 1932, he promised a change which he called "The New Deal" and he was elected by a large majority of disillusioned voters. Four days after he took office on March 4th, 1933, he declared a four-day "bank holiday" to stem the tide of bankruptcies.

When President Bergemann opened the 1933 convention, it was with another sad report, "Under existing circumstances there has been no thought of expanding into new mission fields or parish schools. We have again not been in a position to issue Calls to most of this year's graduates! - The harvest is so great, but it must go to waste, because the workers whom the Lord has given us cannot be put to work!" (WELS Proc.1933)

Professor Zich's Essay on Defeatism

He turned once more to the theological seminary to ask Professor August Zich to address this Depression convention with an essay titled "Defeatism in the Church." Only God's Word of admonition and encouragement could avail against the disillusioned spirit which prevailed in the synod.

Professor Zich explained that the cause of a defeatist attitude in the Church can be traced to the lack of simple faith in the promises of our Heavenly Father. This doubt is always destructive because it robs people of the certainty of the Lord's assurance, "in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." (Ro.8:28) The only remedy, then, is sincere repentance, confessing our failure to trust Him to lead us, and pleading for the power of the Holy Spirit to build our plans and hopes on His assurances, "All power is given unto Me in Heaven and earth, - Go ye in that faith, - and I will go with you."

Like that of his older colleague, Professor Pieper in 1919, Professor Zich's admonition and exhortation were well

received. The essay did much to lift the spirits of the delegates. This was shown in their voting for a number of programs which also involved slight increases in the budget.

But it again was most disheartening in such instances to have the projects and hopes of the convention dashed when one of the trustees stated that nothing could be authorized which exceeded the austere limits of the budget as it had been presented. The remaining synodical debt and the large interest payments to retain our credit simply had to be given rigid priority.

The convention elected Pastor John Brenner, a member of the board of trustees, to succeed President Bergemann after sixteen years of faithful service during the years of the World War and the Great Depression. This final convention was indeed a sad finale to the career of this fine Christian gentleman who had led his synod with a firm, evangelical hand for eight terms in office.

A most Welcome Change of Direction

During the following biennium, 1933-1935, a new spirit was stirring in the synod, partly it was a general upswing of hope which was felt in the entire country at the beginning of President Roosevelt's first term.

In the synod this new attitude had its beginning in the spiritual awakening which had begun over a decade earlier as the result of the essay of Professor Pieper in 1919. This had now been rekindled by the essay of Professor Zich

The new spirit began to assert itself in the clergy of the S.E. Conference in Michigan. Those of us who had sat for three years under the fiery rhetoric of Professor Pieper had left the seminary with a resolute determination to do and to dare for our Savior. As novices in the ministry we were convinced that with God on our side we could change the attitude and performance of our synod. We were also certain that we could with God's help also inspire our people to support a true mission outreach. After all, our Wisconsin Synod was now approaching its 85th anniversary without any independently sponsored foreign heathen mission!

Some of us had been delegates at the 1931 convention and could not forget the sad voice of President Bergemann as he reported that most of the seminary graduates had not been given Calls into the work because of the desperate condition of the synod treasury. While we were more than ready to work with the new president, we grieved over the circumstances which contributed to venerable Pastor Bergemann's retirement from the office in which he had served so faithfully.

A Beginning: The Michigan Plan

The new direction in the synod began to take shape in the Southeastern Conference. The pastors in the Detroit circuit discussed the impasse to which the synod had come and wondered what they might do to get the synod off dead center. First, the woeful lack of information would have to be taken care of in some way.

To supply this need one of the pastors set up a sheet which diagrammed the synod's organization. Then he added a bar graph showing the synod's income from the churches and the cost of the five departments and their needs. A simple cartoon also depicted the two kinds of response from the synod members as the reason for success and failure.

One cartoon was that of a man cutting wood. The caption read, "Adolf says little, but he's bucking wood." Another showed a man leaning against a wall under a big sombrero. His initials were on its rim and the caption read, "Don't bother me; let George do it."

This sheet was passed around in the circuit with just a few explanatory remarks about the synod's current needs.

District President John Gauss saw it and asked that it be made available for other Michigan conferences. He also took it to a meeting of the Conference of Presidents.

At about the same time he began the practice of having each pastor report in person at his conference on his congregation's performance for the synod budget. Those who were in arrears were then invited to take a friendly walk during the noon break with him and another to discuss how he could help them to improve their synod offerings.

These things greatly improved Michigan's contributions for missions. The new synod president, Pastor John Brenner, inquired about it. And in 1933 he authorized the publication of the bulletin of what he called "The Michigan Plan" for all congregations who requested it.

Thus the "Michigan Plan" came into being. Reporting a 14% upswing in mission contributions at the next synod convention, he gave credit in large part to the new plan.

The bulletins were continued. But some help was given to the original author by others with brief articles, while he continued to supply the graphs and other illustrations.

Our seminary also helped with articles, as when our beloved professor John "Nixie" Meyer sent in the following note: "Until very recently there was always a shortage of

men for our work. Why? Because many people withheld their sons (from church work) because there was more material success luring them to other professions.

"What did God do? When we withheld our sons from His service, He sent us the First World War and we had to let our sons go to the shambles of foreign battlefields! God showed us that He can - very painfully, too - take our sons, if we refuse to give them to Him willingly. - After the war we gradually got more men.

"Yet, although our country, our Christians with the rest, was practically wallowing in money, the contributions for missions were far from keeping step with the general prosperity. We withheld our money from God! He then sent us the Great Depression and many lost practically all that they had. God can get at our money! - if we withhold it from Him, - get it so that it hurts, while we might have enjoyed the pleasure of giving it for His saving cause!"

The Synod Debt Must Be Retired!

Very slow progress was being made in the synod's deficit and debt reduction. At the 1935 convention President John Brenner reported, "Although our debt has not increased (It was still \$ 638,067 on July 1st), - the interest continues to devour no small part of our receipts. - Our task as Church demands that we restore the cuts in salaries and also **expand our missionary endeavors!**"

This set the mood for the entire convention. Still, with irritating regularity every proposal which involved any addition to the budget was met with the sobering objection, "We cannot afford any increase in the new budget. Only once during the past biennium were we able to pay salaries on time. To maintain our credit rating we must give priority to the interest payments, a sum of almost \$ 30,000 a year"

Six days of this frustration went by and the time had come to close. It should have come as no surprise when, on the last morning of the convention, a young pastor asked for the floor and said, "Since we have all seen from the opening day until now that our debt and interest are standing in the way of any progress in our synod's work and we ought to restore the salary cuts to our missionaries and professors, to say nothing about expanding our mission endeavors and calling our many idle graduates into the Lord's work, I want to make the motion that we take steps to retire our debt without delay!"

With a big smile creasing his face the president turned to the speaker and said, "I appreciate your spirit, but it is too late for this convention to take any action on your

motion. We're about to adjourn."

Near the rear door of the large New Ulm auditorium Mr. Frank Retzlaff, a New Ulm businessman and member of the Dr. Martin Luther College board of regents, stood hat in hand, about to leave for lunch. He raised his cane and asked for the floor. Then he said, "I like what that young man has just said and I second his motion." The motion had to be called despite the lateness of the hour, and it passed with a large majority. Another debt retirement was under way.

Man Proposes, but God Disposes

The delegates left New Ulm in 1935 with the determined resolve to do their utmost to retire the debt. The statement of President Brenner that we must "restore the salary cuts of our missionaries and other workers and also expand our missionary endeavors" fired them on.

The debt retirement program was put into the capable hands of a committee, headed by Professor E.E.Kowalke, and all congregations were promptly informed of the details of the program. This information was also included in the Michigan Plan bulletins with graphs and charts showing the progress and encouraging participation.

Over one-half of the congregations took prompt action, resulting in a steady flow of remittances.

One of the cartoons in the bulletins showed the WELS "mission train" stopped in its progress toward the mission fields by a deep wash-out, marked "the synod debt." Even though the mission train was full of ready candidates, it had to stand idle until the debt "wash-out" was filled in with offerings. This was going on gradually with every contribution which was sent in for debt retirement.

The early remittances seemed to promise prompt action in retiring the debt. However, because some of the churches delayed taking part in the program and others withheld what they had collected until all had participated, the flow of debt retirement funds dropped to a mere trickle by 1937.

This disappointing fact moved President Brenner to report at the convention, "Only \$ 98,000 of what has been subscribed so far has been sent in. Every congregation was left perfectly free as to the choice of a plan.

"And let us not say that this was not the right time for such an undertaking. This is refuted by the gratifying success which those had who went to work wholeheartedly. No, we failed only because there was a lack of brotherly cooperation!

"What lay behind the lack in individual cases only God can know; but He does know! - Everyone knows that our synod suffered hurt through this failure of achievement!" (WELS Proc.1937)

The committee suggested that the effort be continued for one more year. The delegates were of a different mind. After thorough discussion, the convention resolved, "that the debt retirement program be continued until it is brought to a successful conclusion."

This brought results. By 1939 all but 38 congregations were active in the program and \$ 249,000 had been sent in. The 1937 resolution was reaffirmed with a large majority! The delegates were determined that the debt wash-out would be removed and the 50 candidates who were still standing idle without Calls would be put to work!

The Second World War Intervenes

For some time there had been rumblings and dire portents of another war in Europe as we heard the demented tirades of Adolf Hitler against the world. Only a month after our 1939 convention his screaming Stukas had added the rape of Poland to his conquest of the Rhineland, Austria and Czechoslovakia. A matter of two days later England and France declared war against Germany. Denmark, Norway, The Netherlands, Belgium fell in spring of 1940, and on June 13th the Nazis were celebrating the defeat of France in Paris.

Urged by President Roosevelt, Congress passed the Selective Service Act in September. Japan scuttled our Pacific fleet on December 7th, 1941, and we were at war with Japan. Four days later Germany and Italy declared war on the United States. With appalling speed our lives were changed! War-time regulations and rations took over everything.

The War's Effect on our Synod Program

President Brenner's opening address in 1941 reflected this change. He based his words on Isaiah 30:15 "In quietness and trust is your strength."

He said, "There is fear in the land! a mighty upheaval is shaking the world to its very foundations! - The future is dark, and no one is able to foretell what the conditions will be like when this bloody conflict is ended. - But our Lord has not lost His power; He still rules the nations! - God still governs the universe for the good of His Church! Then let us return to Him and find rest! This is His promise, "In returning and rest shall you be saved; in quietness and trust is your strength!."

Referring to our program, the budget and the debt retirement effort, he added, "Let us repent and bring forth fruits of repentance! We have this year closed our books with a balance. For this we thank God!. - And it is now but a small sum that is still needed to wipe out all our debt. Now is the time to do this."

He turned to our preoccupation with the war in 1943 and said, "Fifteen thousand of our members are absent from their homes and home churches, drawn into the Great War. It is not necessary to go into details to picture the destruction and horror of the war, for there is no one on earth that is not affected and moved deeply by it." See then, as our text states, that you walk circumspectly, not as fools; but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore, be not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is." (Eph.5:15-17)

Those were sobering times indeed! The outcome of the global bloodbath was still uncertain. Many of our members in service would lose their lives, either on horrible foreign battlefields or on the seven seas. Many would return home maimed and scarred for life, to spend their remaining years as wards of the government. The daily worry and anguish of all would be almost unbearable and depressing!

This was a time when the Lord spoke loudly and clearly of the vanity of human lives and plans without Him! "See then that you walk wisely, and not as fools, understanding what the will of the Lord is; redeeming the time!" Many who had been callous to His warning during the good times, now finally took heed and turned to the Lord with repentant hearts and prayerful lips, vowing to make up for the time lost, if only the horror of the war would soon end!

The war and the slaughter went on, the worry and the anguish raged on for another two full years. The crashing end, finally, came with the dropping of the first atom bomb on hapless Hiroshima on the closing day of the 1945 convention at New Ulm. Here in the same auditorium which, ten years earlier, had witnessed the beginning of the debt retirement effort, the synod was again in convention.

The Happy Convention of 1945

As our president's words had inspired us in 1935 for the task of removing the debt because it was a stumbling block for any mission progress, so we now met ten years later in the happy knowledge that the job was done. As then President Brenner had fired us on with his statement, "The Lord is still continuing the existence of the world **only for the sake of the preaching of the Gospel** which is, therefore the most important thing in our life. - If we

ourselves employ our time in hearing and teaching the Word at home, we cannot be neglectful of the souls of others. This is still the time of grace **for the entire world**, and God wants all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the Truth." (WELS Proc.1943)

With these words cheering us on we had finished the job entirely during the 1943-1945 biennium. We had worked and prayed, and the Lord heard our prayers. With the end of the war in sight, the end of the struggle to retire the debt had also come. We were ready to move forward.

Already in January of 1945 our trustees had announced that all but a trifle of the debt had been retired. Then, at the pre-convention session of the Synodical Committee, when the reports of all the synod's departments were carefully scrutinized before they were printed in the Book of Reports and Memorials, they reported, "The synod debt is gone!"

With this in mind we wrote our report on the Indian Mission and submitted it to the General Mission Board. They approved of it for submission to the May meeting of the Synodical Committee. It offered no formal resolution and included only the customary Scriptural exhortation. The Synodical Committee also endorsed it for inclusion in the printed Book of Reports and Memorials for the convention.

In the light of our president's stirring exhortation at the beginning of the biennium, in the happy glow of war's end and in view of the twofold endorsement of the mission board and the Synodical Committee, we were confident that it would meet full approval at the convention.

That the hope, expressed in the Indian mission report, was not at all out of place, seemed confirmed by the report of the president in his opening address, "During the past biennium the offerings of our Christians increased to such an extent that our books today show a sizeable surplus. - Yes, we should expand, God forbid that we deny our faith by becoming stagnant. But let our expansion be a steady progress in which the available manpower and the means to employ it keep pace with each other."

Finally, referring to missions, he added, "Until now we have not been planning to enter foreign fields; but the Lord may call us into such at any time. May we then be ready to respond to His call, willing to work and sacrifice!" (1945)

Now add to this the happy capping climax in the report of the Board of Trustees, "All accounts and requisitions could be paid as presented! All professors and all our missionaries are now being paid 25% above their base salary. The entire debt has been retired! And the budget reserve fund now amounts to \$ 350,000!" (WELS Proc. 1945)

The Mission Outreach Resolution
- 1945 -

In view of all these positive factors, the mood of the 1945 convention was definitely set to accept the challenge for some forward-looking action. This had been frustrated by the repeated deficits and the staggering debt for 10 long years. The intervening world war had delayed any thought of trying to reach out into a world in turmoil with all travel and communication at a standstill. These conditions of unrest had also slowed down the continuing efforts to achieve fiscal solvency in the synod.

All these factors were now removed and all indicators at the 1945 convention were clearly set at "Go!"

The report which triggered the action was that of the Indian Mission executive committee. It stated briefly why its authors felt called upon to revive the thoughts which had motivated the 1935 debt retirement resolution. These, briefly stated, were based on the Word from Isaiah 49:6 - "I will give you also for a light to the Gentiles, that you may be My salvation unto the end of the earth!"

The report now urged, "As your committee in charge of the only heathen mission, and that within our borders, which our synod conducts independently, we urge this session of our Wisconsin Synod to take thought and action in the matter of mission work among those who have no opportunity to hear the sound of the saving Gospel."

The reading of the report was barely finished when the chairman of the Indian Mission committee and the convention were stunned by the summary statement of the president, "You're out of order!" Why was it out of order?

To defend the report the shocked chairman of the Indian committee stated that it had been endorsed by both the General Mission Board and the Synodical Committee less than three months earlier. He added that what the report urged was only what the Lord has told us to do in His Word, the very thing which had motivated the debt retirement program.

Then he sat down and the whole convention became alive. Many asked for the floor to support and defend the reminder addressed to the synod by the Indian Mission committee. In fact, there were so many speeches encouraging the committee that someone later thought it had been staged. Another person dubbed it "the ill-advised enthusiasm which is so characteristic of our day."

It was neither one of these. It was a spontaneous and positive reaction to the Lord's mission exhortation after the many years of frustration and delay. This was evident in the formal resolution which was now offered from the

floor, "that the President appoint a committee to gather information regarding foreign fields that might offer opportunity for mission work by our synod." The resolution was adopted with a large majority of votes. (WELS Proc, '45)

Note: The "Statement of Pastor Arthur Wacker" might be inserted here to explain what happened after the 1945 convention in the matter of carrying out the resolution.

Our Own First Overseas Heathen Mission

The interesting story of the slow, but steady, progress of the synod from 1945 to 1953 when our first missionaries arrived in Central Africa is well-known. We need not repeat it here. Nor is it germane to the purpose of this essay. Our purpose is to relate the very important inter-relationship of the theological seminary with our world mission program.

By happy coincidence, or was it by the Lord's doing in approval of the synod's mission decision? - the year in which our mission was opened at Lusaka, 1953, was also the year when that great lover of missions, Pastor Oscar Naumann, began his first term as synod president. We state this because the influence of this devoted humble servant on the development of world mission in our synod cannot be overemphasized.

President Naumann was not only dedicated to the global outreach of his synod, but he inspired and promoted this development with all the means at his disposal. Many appeals reached his desk, as soon as it became known that our synod was embarked on a worldwide mission course.

He was most prompt in forwarding these appeals for full investigation to those who were charged by the synod to conduct the program. More than that, he was always ready, if and when his busy schedule allowed, to go personally to such fields and to support our request for action.

When these appeals involved further theological scrutiny, he was always on hand to enlist the expertise of our theological faculty. This had the double effect of helping us in individual appeals as well as enlisting our faculty in assisting us in setting up and overseeing the new theological training programs in our foreign fields.

This latter guidance program by the faculty was of indispensable importance to us. We were seriously aware of the pitfalls always present in transcultural beginnings, especially in theological training programs administered by missionaries. Consultations with the home theological base were always sought and cherished. We knew our limitations.

Our called men were happy to heed the warnings of our brothers at home to build on the solid ground of the Word and doctrine. By the grace of God this fine cooperation has produced remarkable results in training sound national

pastors, even theological professors. To have achieved this, also the founding of self-reliant national churches, within less than thirty years is nothing short of a miracle!

Under the guidance of the Lord of the Church this was accomplished through close cooperation on the part of the mission board, the synod president and, last but not least, the theological faculty. We would like to illustrate this in greater detail in the following section.

Synod and Seminary Cooperation in World Mission

During their concurrent terms of office presidents Oscar Naumann and Carl Lawrenz were more than co-laborers; they were also very good friends. They were acquainted with one another ever since college and seminary days. Both men were dedicated to upholding sound teaching and practice. Both held that obedience to "continuing in God's Word" in doctrine also included unquestioning compliance in Jesus' mission mandate. His parting instruction "Go ye and make disciples of all nations!" was to be done only by "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you."

As this Great Commission places obedience to God's Word above all rationalizing and calculation of our own ability, so it supplies His almighty assurance, "I will be with you alway, even unto the end of the world!" This was the firm foundation upon which both Naumann and Lawrenz built all policies and programs.

This had again been asserted by the Wisconsin Synod in its 1945 convention resolution to carry out God's mission mandate with firm reliance upon His promise to provide all the means to carry it out. This was obedience, surely not "dogmatism with a streak of pietism."

Both presidents, Naumann of the synod and Lawrenz of the seminary, subscribed to the "Underlying Scriptural Principles" regarding worldwide mission, as these were adopted by the synod at the 1965 convention. Out of these convictions came also the decision to include an essay on **The Extension of the Mission Endeavor** in the agenda of the global Conclave of Lutheran Theologians, which was held at Mequon in July of 1960.

Because the inclusion of this practical essay in the agenda was questioned by some who held that the gathering should restrict its deliberations strictly to doctrine, the following introductory statement is of interest here:

"This essay is not merely an interesting digression from the chief topic of this conclave of Lutheran theologians. It is the very **end-topic**, the practical exercise and application of the Scriptural truths which are here

expounded. It is important that the learned leaders of the Church recognize the full impact of this fact on all their deliberations. Otherwise, the dispute over dogma may soon degenerate into the sterile discourse of a debating society and the Church would merit the slur, that her meticulous definition of doctrine is merely a quibbling over words and phrases." (1960 Conclave Essay)

Naumann and Lawrenz Anniversaries

In 1978, just before your essayist's retirement from the Board for World Missions, both presidents observed anniversaries of faithful service. Naumann had finished 25 fruitful years as synod president and Lawrenz 20 years as president of the seminary faculty. What a tremendous force for good this team of leaders had been during the critical period of the break-up of the Synodical Conference!

And what incalculable blessings their loyal teamwork had produced for the Wisconsin Synod! Under their able guidance the administration of the Board for World Missions had worked in very close harmony to advance the cause which moved the heart of our Savior as He ascended to Heaven! It was indeed a golden era for our entire synod!

Some of these mission programs which involved both the mission boards, the synod praesidium and the seminary will now be described in greater detail.

Mission Seminars at the Seminary

Already in the first years of the expanded mission outreach, from 1955 to 1960, it became clear to the world mission board that provision would have to be made for adequate information, orientation and preparation of the candidates whom we would call into foreign fields. The very sketchy coaching and training which we could provide would be woefully inadequate.

When we appealed to the seminary faculty with our plan for time in their busy class schedule, they were happy to set aside an entire week for an annual Mission Seminar. The program was to involve both student body and professors in carefully prepared presentations by the board and all of the upper classes. The students formed committees for mutual research and presentation by means of charts and lectures on various phases of heathen life and culture. Entire mornings were spent on these student offerings and discussions.

In this way all gained insights into the requirements for overseas missionary service. We found this of great practical value in training and, eventually, in screening

prospects for our foreign fields.

The Epiphany season was chosen for these annual seminars to avoid disturbing the class schedule as little as possible and taking advantage of the semester break.

This mission seminar proved to be so valuable that a few years later the Board for Home Missions was also brought into the program. This also led to the combined meetings of the two mission boards for consultation and action on mutual problems, especially in the field of transcultural missions.

Contact with the Seminary Expands

The goal of training candidates at the seminary, either for the home church or for foreign mission fields, is winning souls for Christ with the Gospel. But there is a difference between the two in matters of language and culture. This soon led to the need for further contact between the mission board and the seminary.

The stateside seminary can do very little specifically in the matter of training candidates for work in a foreign language. There is simply too great a diversity of language and dialect. The seminary is limited to observing students for evidence of an aptitude for learning other languages, as well as for adaptability to other cultures. This is valuable when it comes to assigning graduates.

Another advantage of the closer contact of the mission board with the seminary students is easily overlooked. That is the matter of the student's wife or future wife learning about her role in a parsonage or a mission field. A student club, known as "The Sem Gems," is well suited to this. From time to time pastors and missionaries address the club to give both men and women an insight and guidance in their future fields of labor. This also helps to discover mission teams who would be well suited to the unique demands of the calling in a foreign culture.

Such screening of candidates is difficult under the best conditions. Mistakes in calling candidates who either for reasons of health or disposition are poorly suited to the difficult work can be costly because it involves a long period of learning language and adapting to culture to make a good foreign missionary.

Mission experts have written books about the problems which are met in finding people who can adapt "to become all things for all people." Some willing candidates incline toward a superior attitude toward those of another culture, develop a "Herrenvolk" posture in the field and thereby are less effective, even though they may be intellectually well

suited to acquire a foreign language.

The experts cite others who, at the other extreme, are happy to "go bush," that is, by trying to affect native dress and life styles, create the suspicion in the native population of condescending to the inferior native culture. This subtle change is quite apparent to even developing people, who know very well that the missionary is thereby denying his clearly more advanced life style. "Going bush" may thus repel, instead of attract people to the message which is brought.

All this and more is involved in preparing and finding proper mission candidates. It is not only a matter of young candidates for foreign fields. Our experience taught us that a number of excellent missionaries were called out of home congregations and positions of leadership and proved most effective in radically changed circumstances.

This proved true in several cases where the calling mission boards required men of proven theological competence for challenging assignments, such as setting up and leading theological training courses in culturally and intellectually undeveloped mission fields. The Lord moved several leaders, veterans with families, to accept these calls. This helped to expedite the theological training of nationals as pastors and even seminary professors.

These veteran leaders, also their younger colleagues in the mission fields, welcomed direct contact with the seminary at Mequon. Again, the faculty was prompt to comply with our request in 1965 for a periodic exchange program.

The Faculty Exchange Program

Originally, the world board had suggested establishing a chair of missions at the home seminary. The faculty gave full consideration to this proposal.

At a subsequent meeting the faculty spokesman assured us of their sincere concern to keep the matter of missions before the students. In fact, he said, we might lose some of this general mission emphasis in the regular courses, such as church history, exegesis, homiletics and catechetics, if they would relegate mission matters to a chair of missions.

The faculty responded with a very sensible counter proposal. They would ask the seminary board of regents to include experienced missionaries on candidate lists. This found ready acceptance by our mission boards.

Another counter proposal was made to plan periodic faculty exchanges between Mequon and the mission seminaries

on semester-long leaves of absence. This proved to be very helpful when Professor Lawrenz spent a semester at Lusaka seminary and Dr. Siegbert Becker a similar time at the Biblicum seminary in Sweden.

Instead of arranging for our mission seminary staff to spend a semester at Mequon, the seminary followed the earlier suggestion and called several of our experienced mission professors to the home seminary. This proved to be mutually beneficial, especially when professors Wendland and Johne returned for extra seminary service to two of our overseas mission fields after they had taught at Mequon.

Mission Seminaries Conferences

This happy rapport between the faculties also caused us to invite the Mequon faculty to designate a professor to attend our mission seminaries' conference in 1965. Even without the valuable essays which our foreign-based men heard, the three days of meetings were of great mutual benefit.

Our mission administration recalled the fears which had been expressed when we first ventured into foreign missions, that this could easily lead to a watering down, or even the loss, of sound doctrine. It was not because of the fear of incompetence in the foreign faculties, but because of the absence of the friendly supervision exercised at home. We were well aware of the heavy responsibility to preserve sound teaching and practice, when we founded seminaries and Bible schools and brought new national churches into being in foreign countries and cultures.

It is one thing to keep the church at home from straying into false trends, but quite another to expect and awaken the same awareness in new Christians who do not have the same background and contact of orthodox identity. In fact, the kinship which they feel with Christian people of other denominations and the desire which is generated by the Holy Spirit to extend the hand of fellowship to others, may prove too strong for them to discern and resist, even though such an association may be unionistic.

For these reasons our world board has, from the very beginning, appealed to our Praesidium and Doctrinal Commission to speed the day of a new Lutheran synodical conference.

This appeal was intensified when we had to deal with the case in one of the mission churches we were supporting, when it sent its leader to a sectarian conference in the United States on their invitation for fellowship and help. Only prompt action prevented an association which would have terminated our fellowship.

Seminary and World Mission Conferences

The first formal seminary conference was held at Hong Kong in 1971, another at Lusaka, Zambia in 1972, at Mito, Japan in 1974, and by far the largest at our Mequon seminary in 1976.

The first mission conference, devoted especially to administration and church organization, was convened at West Allis, Wisconsin, in 1975. Since then a number of seminary and mission conferences have been held, most of them at a motel at Leland in northern Michigan. All of them have been funded by gifts raised outside of the regular budget.

During the Easter recess of 1978 our seminary conference was attended by three theological professors from our mission fields on three continents.

This seminary conference was not only of enduring value for our widely separated mission seminaries. This conference at El Paso, Texas, also brought together representatives of our synod's worker-training division, our synod's board for Home Missions and executive committee members who oversee the work of our five world fields. The mutual understanding which it generated is of great value to our expanding field.

Orthodox World Mission Conferences

In lieu of the permanent Lutheran synodical conference which we proposed and still consider the best solution, the World Board resorted to a temporary alternative. We appealed for extra-budgetary funds to finance a series of overseas mission conferences.

This would be the counter-part of the world seminary conferences which had proved so helpful. Instead of the faculties of the Bible schools and seminaries, it would bring the superintendents and some of the national pastors together with the executives at home. Again, the home seminary was invited to send a representative.

The agenda and purpose of these mission conferences were to provide a forum for periodic discussion of sound teaching, fellowship, administration and self-help on the part of our mission churches, as also to pave the way for a more permanent orthodox forum of the future.

Our efforts were greatly encouraged at this time when President Oscar Naumann and President Carl Lawrenz made a few days' stop-over at Lusaka enroute to meetings with the Lutheran Church of South Africa.

This contact with two leaders of the home church who

made the effort of visiting the mission churches and schools in person was of meaningful importance to both missionaries, national pastors, evangelists and people in our African Lutheran Church.

In all these programs for periodic contact and guidance with the home church our board was motivated by the Word of God, "that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you would be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." (1.Cor.1:10)

This happy cooperation of our seminary faculty was again beautifully demonstrated in several overseas church support and guidance programs. One of these stands out from others because of the time and depth of the seminary's help in our contact with a group of orthodox Lutherans in Sweden.

The Sweden Counsel and Aid Program

As far as our mission board was concerned, the matter began in 1966 when the Commission on Interchurch Relations asked our board to authorize me to visit Scandinavian Lutherans on my extended assignment to deal with problems which had developed in our Confessional Lutheran mission. We had supported this church since 1924 and were interested in helping the group to achieve independence.

Our synod had also received an overture from some confessional Lutherans in Scandinavia and Finland. These I was instructed to visit.

On my visit to Dr. Tom Hardt at Stockholm, he urged me to run up to Uppsala to call on Dr. David Hedegard, who as a professor at the Lund University had just completed a New Testament translation into modern Swedish. When he retired from Lund University he had settled in Uppsala, but was ignored by the theological Uppsala faculty, in the words of his friend, Dr. Seth Erlandsson of the Uppsala faculty, "because of his "false view" of the Holy Bible; **he believed it!**"

My visit with Dr. and Mrs. Hedegard was very pleasant and most enlightening. He told me that there were many good Bible-loving leaders and people in Sweden who had encouraged him in his publications and yearned for a return to a truly orthodox Lutheran church. When I asked him about the future prospects for a confessional Lutheran free church, he said that this happy outcome was most unlikely. This is due to the fact that for Swedish people membership in the State Church was almost inseparable from citizenship.

Within two years the confessional group, headed by men like Hedegard, acquired a property near the university and founded **Stiftelsen Biblicum**, a Biblical research institute.

The financial support came from all over Sweden. Dedicated to objective research, it published Bible-believing books and articles and provided a center for Bible scholars at the Uppsala University. When the Lord took Dr. Hedegard to his eternal reward a year later, his friend, understudy and colleague, Dr. Seth Erlandsson, who then was pastor of a very large congregation in Old Uppsala, was elected as the director of Biblicum.

Copies of our Wisconsin Synod confessional literature, including **This We Believe**, were sent to Biblicum. In short order Dr. Erlandsson requested permission to translate and to publish it in Swedish. At the same time he referred to an essay written by Professor Dr. Siegbert Becker and asked that he come to Sweden for a series of doctrinal lectures to be given at various centers.

Dr. Becker consented to comply with the request, and the faculty and board of regents gave him permission to rearrange his class schedule at Mequon, so that he could go to Sweden. The funds for the trip were raised apart from the mission budget. Another special fund covered the cost of a Swedish language course for Dr. Becker because he did not want to lecture with an interpreter. This involved extra hours for the professor, but he was happy to be able to serve.

It was August, 1972 before the Beckers were ready to leave for Sweden. He was warmly welcomed by the Swedish confessional group supporting Biblicum, as also by the small congregation which had begun to worship under Erlandsson and a number of new orthodox Lutherans whom he had gathered in other Swedish and Norwegian communities.

Hundreds of people listened for hours to his lectures on doctrine. Swedish newspapers also carried articles on these presentations of Biblical teaching which were newsworthy in a land which had drifted into false teaching. His lectures were hailed as a refreshing sign of a revival of the true Lutheran heritage of the fathers.

His report to the synod was acted on promptly. The world board request was granted for the creation of the new Sweden Counsel and Aid Fund to be supported with gifts outside of the regular budget. A special committee would administer our Sweden contact and the minimal support that would be sent to the Swedish church.

Upon request both President Naumann and Professor Carl Lawrenz gladly accepted membership on this committee with the world board chairman, Dr. Becker serving as the liaison man and correspondent. Service on this committee was sheer pleasure. We always met in President Lawrenz's office, received the Swedish reports through Dr. Becker and allocated the funds for support.

This support was minimal. We learned that the pastors in the Swedish church were most reluctant to accept funds which might diminish our support for heathen mission. They would rather support themselves with jobs in secular fields, such as the postal service and various trades.

Several of the Swedish pastors visited our synodical leaders and the seminary and an active exchange ensued. During the Easter break at the seminary in 1973, Dr. Becker and the undersigned were sent to Uppsala because of several expected developments. The daily meetings were held in the **Biblicum Center**.

During this time Dr. Erlandsson formally severed his membership in the state church. He asked us to accompany him to the postal drop to make sure that he would not lose his courage, indicating the importance of this membership for a Swedish citizen.

At the same meeting the group of other pastors and lay people who had taken the same step formally organized their **Confessional Lutheran Free Church in Sweden**. One of the first actions of the new church was to authorize a new monthly periodical, **the Lutersk Sandebrev**, and a bulletin, called **Upprop**, the Challenge, was ordered to be sent to all known confessional Lutherans, announcing the new church and inviting them to join the fellowship.

At our synod's convention a few months later, the new free church in Sweden was accepted into fellowship with our synod and the world board was authorized to carry on the non-budgetary support program which had been established.

The further developments of this new "mission" church are not being supplied in this essay because of a lack of time and the fact that they are available in the regular reports. This rather lengthy report has been included here to demonstrate the extensive, time-consuming involvement of our theological seminary in this counsel and aid mission program. The dedicated service beyond the call of duty on the part of Dr. and Mrs. Siegbert Becker are especially noteworthy. This was also recognized on the occasion of the tenth anniversary of the free church at Uppsala in 1983. We all felt the great loss of Dr. Becker at this celebration. The Lord had chosen to take him home only months earlier.

The Seminary and the Interim Committee

An almost direct result of the cooperative efforts of the seminary faculty in the founding of the free church in Sweden was the creation of what was called the Interim Committee by our Board for World Missions.

Naumann from similar confessional groups and young churches were assigned to the world board for investigation and preliminary action. At first this was handled by the officers of the board. But when several appeals were in the process of investigation at the same time, a special committee was named to take care of them. The name "interim" was given to the committee because these fields would later be assigned to one of our standing executive committees.

These investigations as to doctrine and practice were usually made by consulting with the seminary faculty. This cooperative venture proved so successful that the committee, under a new name, has been made a permanent executive committee of the Board for World Missions. Thus it has added meaningfully to the close contact with the **faculty**.

The Theological **Quarterly** and Missions

It would be most remiss, were we to overlook the very significant contribution over the years of the **Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly**, the theological journal of the Mequon seminary. A number of articles, some by the professors, were published which greatly helped to clarify and assist the synod's worldwide outreach with the saving Word.

They all demonstrate the keen interest of the seminary in the global mission effort. A series of articles by Prof. Dr. Paul Peters especially brought into clear focus the deep concern of Martin Luther for sharing the Gospel with the whole world. Others, like those of Professor Ernst H. Wendland, grant the reader an arresting overview of the challenge facing the Church today, both as to the vastness of the untouched fields as also of the newly developed missiological methods suggested to expedite the harvest.

Several of these essays come to mind:

Luther's Practical Mission-mindedness - Dr. Paul Peters
 Missiology and the Two Billion - Prof. Ernst H. Wendland
 The Great Commission - Pastor Robert James Voss
 Our World Missions - Pastor Karl F. Krauss
 Home Mission Moods and Modes - Pastor Norman W. Berg
 Extension of Our Mission Endeavor - Pastor E. Hoenecke
 Theological Education by Extension - Prof. E.H. Wendland
 The Mission Mandate in Isaiah - Pastor Edgar Hoenecke
 Mission in the 1980s - Prof. Ernst H. Wendland

Acknowledgment

With sincere gratitude to God, above all, we would like to acknowledge the many years of faithful counsel and active

cooperation of our theological seminary for the cause of missions, both at home and abroad! Humanly speaking, without this we could not have carried out our heavy responsibility.

This is true, because we recognize the fact that we have been charged by our Lord and Savior to share His saving Word with all people by also observing His injunction of **"teaching them to observe all things, whatsoever I have commanded you!"** This made it obligatory for our Board for World Missions to lean heavily on those of the seminary faculty, so that we would be doubly sure to **"hold fast the form of sound words in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus!"** (2.Tim.1:13)

For especially this we here record our sincere thanks!

Seminary Essay, read at Mequon in 1988 and revised in 1993.

Edgar Hoenecke