

The Erosion of Missouri's Pastoral Education System

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Church History Paper
Lutheranism in America - CH 331
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May 1, 1997

Through most of its history, The Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod has been blessed by a superior worker training system with which few could compare. From its founding in 1847, through the early twentieth century, the Missouri Synod built a nationwide, church-controlled pastoral education system unique in the history of Lutheranism in America. It's historical purpose was to train scholarly theologians, strong in the Biblical languages.

While its two ~~mainland~~ seminaries remain intact after 150 years of service, most men who enroll at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis and Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne each year step onto their first synodical campus. The "preferred route" of a six to eight year preseminary education strong in the biblical languages has now become a seven week "quickie-course" in the summer months before Seminary begins. The colleges in the Concordia University System are struggling for credibility as worker-training schools. The preparatory high schools are virtually extinct.

The once-lauded system of education has eroded away. This paper will explore how Missouri's Pastoral education system has wandered from its historical purpose.

Its Beginnings in Perry County

The Saxon immigrants who would help found the Missouri Synod arrived in Perry County, Missouri in 1839. Many among their group were professional men, who intended to establish a self-contained community upon arrival in the new land. As many immigrants would, the Germans would band together in the new country, holding to the mother tongue. This was not only natural, but also deemed necessary to preserve the

gospel and defend the integrity of the Lutheran Confessions against rationalism and unionism

Among the original colonists of 1839, fifteen were either ordained clergy or candidates of theology, all theological graduates of German universities. C. F. W. Walther was among them and soon became their spiritual leader.

A strong emphasis on education was apparent from the beginning. Parochial schools were almost understood as an automatic for these Saxon congregation. The importance of education was indeed so strong that a meager log cabin college was erected in Altenburg, Perry County, Missouri before ¹⁸³⁹1939 was out. These Germans weren't yet thinking of a "system" of higher education. This was a private undertaking, spearheaded by Walther and three other pastors, in whom the tradition of higher education was so ingrained that even the wild, frontier surroundings of Perry County couldn't deter them.¹

Drawing from Luther's and Melancthon's high regard for classical schooling as a foundation for a learned ministry, the Saxon pastors hoped the same for the next generation. They followed the pattern of German education, establishing a German Gymnasium. At first the four pastors did not limit their focus to ministerial education, but they intended it to be a more general training in preparation for university study. The boy learned religion, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, German, French, English, history, geography, mathematics, physics, natural history, introduction to philosophy, music, and drawing.²

Within five years, the school's purpose was redirected. The great need for pastors surely had something to do with the change to a preparatory school for the parish ministry. A theological division was added as soon as the students were ready to begin the formal study of theology. Those not intending to become pastors were not turned away, however. They just wouldn't receive the aid that the other students would.³

Through Walther's religious periodical, *Der Lutheraner*, another group of Confessional Lutherans ^{was} were drawn to the Saxons. These men, often called "Loeche" men after the pastor who sent them to America, had their own seminary in Fort Wayne. These two groups became the charter members of the German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States. The new synod, often referred to simply as

“Missouri”, was organized in Chicago on April 26, 1847. One of the top priorities on the synodical agenda was to adopt the Seminary in Fort Wayne and the Altenburg school. Loehe handed the reins of his seminary over to the synod. After some initial reluctance, the supporting congregations of the Altenburg school agreed to transfer the school to St. Louis and synodical control, with some stipulations. They wanted a guarantee that the special school’s character would be carefully maintained. The deed of transfer became a very significant document:

After the honorable German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States pursuant to resolutions formulated in 1847 in the convention held in Chicago requested the undersigned congregations “whether they were inclined to transfer the control and supervision of the *Gymnasium* and theological seminary located in Altenburg, Perry Co., Mo., to her,” after due deliberation and in accord with formulated resolutions by us in so far as it can or may be regarded as our institution up to this time, we transfer herewith the afore-named college in Altenburg to the honorable German Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States in the best condition, so that it may be from this day on only the property of said Synod and from henceforth be under its control and supervision.

Nevertheless, in agreement with Chapters I and II of our synodical constitution we attach the following conditions to this transfer:

1. That always it serve the Lutheran Church and train pastors and teachers only for it.
2. That as the only medium of instruction in the college the German language be adopted and continued without interruption. We grant, nevertheless, that the customary use of the Latin language in some lectures at the *Gymnasium* and universities in Germany may be adopted also in the Seminary.
3. That the institution remain what it is at present, namely, a *Gymnasium* with a theological seminary. In it [the *Gymnasium*] the study of disciplines preparatory for theology and teaching in lower higher schools shall be pursued; young men, who have dedicated themselves to the scholarly study of theology, shall there [in the seminary] receive their final training.

Also such young people who are not minded to dedicate themselves to Lutheran theology may attend the *Gymnasium*. However, all legacies made to the institution and donations made to it shall be used exclusively for the benefit of such young men who are preparing themselves of the service in the Lutheran Church, and those exceptional individuals who are attending the *Gymnasium* in preparation for another

vocation shall be excluded from the use of these designated legacies and donations.

If in the course of time outward means permit it and other circumstances should arise, which seem to the Honorable Synod as useful and conducive to the growth of the institution, also to *extend* it into other faculties [*Facultats-Wissenschaften*], we are beforehand in full agreement therewith, however, with the express proviso that not only thereby the present, prevalent main function of the institution be retained and in no manner be jeopardized thereby or in any fashion suffer harm, but that all property shall belong to the Lutheran theological institution itself and be used only for its benefit....

The blessings of the Lord crown this institution forever and ever. St. Louis, Mo., and Altenburg, Perry Co., Mo., [sic] 8 Oct. 1849, and 4 June 1850.⁴

The school's primary purpose remained the training of church workers, but the leaders wouldn't turn away non-ministerial students who desired a thorough Christian education in the classical tradition. Walther didn't envision isolating the school from the community, but was eager to establish a cultural bridge between the German-speaking community and its American neighbors. He wrote in the *Der Lutheraner* a few weeks after the laying of the cornerstone in St. Louis: "The preparatory college is to be an institution in which, generally speaking, the subjects of the German gymnasium are taught, but with such changes as are indicated by...the language, the constitution, and other conditions of our new fatherland. For this reason the following subjects are included in the curriculum: the English language...geography and history of this country, chemistry, the sciences, and political economy. Because of this the gymnasium will approach the character of the institutions in this country known as colleges. . ." ⁵ Walther stated explicitly that "not only the college department, but in certain respects also the Seminary, is open to boys and young people of other than the Lutheran confession, and to other than German-speaking people."⁶

The other students didn't descend upon Concordia in droves. By 1855, 8 of the first 93 students were non-Lutherans and 25 were non-ministerial.⁷ Because of the small number of English-speaking students and the development of secular education in the area, the college rethought its acceptance of non-ministerial students. By 1859, Walther

had concluded that the scope of the gymnasium should be limited to the preparation of pastors. Immanuel Academy opened in 1857, an English private school designed for lay education. Even though this was not a Missouri school, it had close connections with the gymnasium in St. Louis. Walther encouraged parents to send their non-ministerial students there instead.⁸

The school had a focused vision, but it couldn't supply the pastors needed for the young synod. Fortunately for the Missouri, St. Louis wasn't their only source of pastors.

The "Practical" Seminary

Walther and most of the Synodical leadership knew the importance of a classical education which emphasized the biblical languages. In an ideal situation, all of Missouri's pastors would be of that stripe. In the first half of Missouri's history, however, they couldn't afford that luxury. In its early years, the immigrants were pouring into America, and there weren't enough pastors to shepherd them. Fortunately, Missouri had inherited the Loehe seminary at Fort Wayne, where the bulk of its early pastors were trained. This Seminary's beginning differed from the one in St. Louis.

Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau, Bavaria formally organized the seminary in 1846, with the help of Friedrich C.D. Wyneken in Fort Wayne. When the Missouri synod was formed the next year, a request was made that the seminary at Fort Wayne be deeded to the new synod. This was done, and on September 7, 1847, the seminary passed into the control of the Missouri Synod.

Fort Wayne was known as a "practical" seminary. On account of the urgent need of pastors in the early years of the synod, the original purpose of the seminary was to train young men by means of a much shorter course of studies than those at St. Louis. Preaching and teaching were its practical concerns, while the ideal scholarly theology of St. Louis took a back seat. Springfield, then, served in a complementary capacity to St. Louis and was designated the "practical" seminary in contrast to the "theoretical" seminary at St. Louis.

The practical seminary was a boon for the young synod, which had plenty of parishes to fill. In fact, before Missouri could train many of its own home-grown pastors, Loehe sent nearly 100 students to Fort Wayne, in addition to financial support. While these graduates were warmly welcomed by the constituency, the ideal of a well-trained ministry predominated. There was naturally a concern about this dual path to the ministry, especially considering Fort Wayne was the larger of the two divisions.⁹ What should be done?

One earmark of a well-managed educational system is constant self-evaluation. This the Synod has done throughout its history. There are few periods in its history, especially this century, when the structure of the system remained static for very long. The first major change was soon to come.

The 1860 convention formed a commission to discuss the restructuring issue. Many proposed a combining of the two schools for the purpose of unity and purity of doctrine and to raise the standards of the “practical” course. Efficiency and economy were also in the mix. In 1861, the schools were indeed brought together, but these reasons proved secondary.

The Civil War was the catalyst in moving the seminarians from Fort Wayne to St. Louis. Indiana did not grant draft-exempt status from the war. Missouri did. St. Louis was a military center in the beginning of the war, so the obvious move was to send the younger gymnasium students to Fort Wayne.

Even though the two seminaries shared the same property and most of their professors, the theoretical and practical divisions remained intact. As the space became tighter, the synod decided to move the “practical” seminary to a new location in Springfield, Illinois in 1875. Many hoped that this would only be temporary and that soon only the preferred route into the ministry would be needed. This was Walther’s hope, which is evident in a letter written to C. M. Zorn in November of 1876:

Just between us, the greater share of the so-called ‘practical’ preachers in our synod are always our weak side (since more and more become such). Not only did they lack almost all *Geistesbildung* before they entered, but they also were weak ‘*an Gaben und Charakter.*’ They threaten to become our Achilles heel. In their narrow-mindedness they often see heresy where nothing of the kind exists. I ask you only to have patience with the narrow

ones; but with the insincere (*unlauteren*), if this becomes manifest, 'machen Sei kurzen Process.'¹⁰

While hoping that Springfield would soon discontinue, Walther deeply appreciated the indispensable service the practical seminary had provided, as is evident from another letter that same year in which he wrote, "...we must thank God for Springfield".¹¹

During the fourteen years in St. Louis, the practical division continued to graduate larger numbers than the theoretical, 268 to 155 respectively. For years afterward, graduates of the "practical" division had a majority voice in Synod. There is no evidence, however, that they formed a bloc in any sense. Carl Meyer writes, "...they did determine the stance of Missouri, emphasizing orthodoxy rather than scholarship and orthodoxy, as Walther wished"¹²

Springfield's Seminary continued to provide an opportunity to enter the holy ministry to young men of more mature years, who were not able to enter the ministerial course provided at the preparatory schools and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. The rapidly expanding economy of America and the successive waves of immigration made it necessary to graduate as many candidates as possible. The "preferred route" of training, however, continued to be through its preseminary schools.

Colleges

When the gymnasium department of the nine-year Concordia College in St. Louis transferred to Fort Wayne in 1861, a preparatory institution had, for the first time, its own geographical location. For the next 20 years, it was the Synod's only gymnasium. In 1881, the Indiana school officially became designated Concordia College. The American designation "college" concealed the German structure of the gymnasium. The sexta through prima years of the gymnasium provide six years of preparatory education leading to St. Louis. With this pattern established, many more "colleges" would soon be established or adopted as feeders for the seminary in St. Louis.

During the late nineteenth century, when the membership rolls of the Synod were swelling with the large-scale German immigration, the school system of the Synod began to grow also. Many parents wouldn't send there fourteen year-old boys to distant Fort Wayne. Other simply couldn't, considering the limits of transportation at the time. Out of necessity, schools started to pop up around the country. The preparatory school in Milwaukee began in 1881. Synod assumed control six years later in 1887. Also in 1887, the school in Bronxville, New York was started. Nine years later, it officially became a synodical school. 1896 was also the year that St. Paul's College in Concordia, Mo. became synod property. Synod itself pushed for a school in Minnesota, founding Concordia College St. Paul in 1893. In that same year St. John's College in Winfield, Kansas was opened. The English Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Missouri, Ohio, and Other States, a smaller sister of German Missouri, operated this school until 1908. Synod took control three years later. In a period of twelve years, four preparatory schools joined Fort Wayne as the preministerial schools of the Synod, five if you include St. John's in Winfield.¹³

There was more to come. In 1905, the Oregon-Washington District founded the Portland Concordia. In 1923, Synod accepted the title and all financial responsibilities. In 1906 the Pacific Coast opened its own school at Oakland, Calif. 1921 saw the Synod's expansion into Canada with a school in Edmonton, Alberta. The 1923 convention allowed Texas to open a school in Austin.

Only in a few cases did Synod establish a school itself. The majority were founded by Districts, individual pastors or laymen. The burdens of these local schools often became too much for the districts and were then offered to the Synod. It seemed advantageous to continue them all considering transportation was poor, mothers were reluctant to send their fourteen-year-olds too far, and needed recruitment of pastoral students would become easier and more productive.¹⁴ The Missouri Synod never purposely planned for the vast system of small colleges it would come to support. They emerged one by one in response to the needs of the synod and grew as the synod grew.

None of these started as a full gymnasium in its own right. Most often, the progymnasia included only two or three years of schooling. The students would then head

off to Fort Wayne to join the Quarta or Tertia class there. Milwaukee was given approval in ¹⁸⁹¹1991 to extend itself to a full gymnasium. The other schools would soon follow.¹⁵

Major Change Begins

The 1849 deed of transfer stipulated that classes would be given in German. In the view of its founders, the safe-guarding of doctrine demanded such a restriction. English certainly wasn't foreign to the systems' classrooms, but after World War I, it would soon dominate. The type of system had remained relatively unchanged for nearly eighty years, except for the number of schools. Now changes would come in bunches. As a result, its tightly knit system educational system would never be the same.

The accreditation demands of the states didn't have room for the gymnasium pattern of education. The schools would officially become high schools and junior colleges as they were molded to the shape of American institutions.

The first major curriculum study in a generation was brought to the synod in 1926. Previous studies simply meant to tweak the system. With accreditation in view, room would have to be made for the arts and sciences. Latin and German were de-emphasized; the sciences were strengthened; and the place of Greek and Hebrew was also evaluated.¹⁶

Curriculum wasn't the only item on the table. In overtures to the 1929 convention, much concern was raised that the training of the preseminary schools wasn't meeting the needs of the changing American environment. Many factors demanding extenuation of the program were given: Life was growing increasingly complex and pastoral problems were becoming more complicated. The educational level of the American people had been constantly rising, and the educational standards of other professions (law, medicine, engineering, education, etc.) had been greatly increased in the past decades. An increasingly cultured audience would demand greater knowledge and culture in its pastors.¹⁷ It was resolved to create a survey committee to "survey the entire educational situation" and report its findings and recommendations to the next convention.

P. E. Kretzmann chaired the committee which found that the objectives adopted in 1926 for pre-ministerial education were not clearly understood, or at least not accepted in uniform agreement by everyone in the system. They used much ink to stress the importance of Greek and Hebrew: "The study of these two languages, the original tongues in which God gave to men the revelation of His grace in Christ Jesus, is indispensable to every pastor who wishes to make the most of his Bible interpretation, to every one, in fact, who has taken a full course in theology."¹⁸ They repeated the aims and objectives passed by Synod six years earlier in 1926. Specific Aims in the area of Hebrew and Greek were as follows:

Hebrew.

To give all the students a reading knowledge of elementary Hebrew to the extent that they may read and translate with reasonable fluency Old Testament books having the difficulty of Genesis; to train the students in the use of the grammar as a tool and reference book for more advanced reading.

Analysis of Work in Hebrew:-

Fundamentals of grammar.

Prose, historical and descriptive.

Simple Hebrew poetry. (senior college). [The senior college was proposed by this committee.]

ACTION.- Aim adapted to "the difficulty of Genesis." Remainder of paragraph with addition of words "and poetry" to be reserved as aim of senior college course.

Greek.

To lay the foundation of the philological understanding of classical Greek by rational drill in the *fundamentals* of Greek grammar, to read enough selections from Greek authors to enable the normal student to develop a fairly reliable *Sprachgefuehl*, to teach the fundamentals of New Testament Greek (with some reference to the Septuagint and Patristic Greek), and to have the students do some independent cursory reading of the easier parts of the New Testament.

Analysis of Work in Greek:-

Reading-material not included in project.

Fundamental prose. (Grammar: Translation Method, with some direct work.)

History and description. (Grammar: translation Method.)

Advanced prose and poetry. (Grammar: Composition Method.)

New Testament philology, grammar, and reading.

ACTION.- Four years is the normal amount of time to be devoted to the study of Greek in order that the aims set forth may be attained. Teaching

of Greek in Sophomore high was considered an unsatisfactory arrangement.¹⁹

The schools were to teach Greek for four years starting with the third year. Hebrew was taught the fifth and sixth year. This is the same curriculum found in the 1860 catalog for Concordia College, St. Louis.²⁰ Most schools had always followed such guidelines. A few of the new schools must have been coming up short. The committee recommended that the faculties of the Synod's educational facilities consider these outlines and not merely directive.²¹ Under the topic "The Place of Languages in Ministerial Training", the committee wrote:

If in our ministerial training, both pretheological and theological, we lose sight of the objectives accepted by Synod in the meeting at St. Louis in 1926, we shall lower the standard which our Church in America has upheld since the founding of the first Concordia at Altenburg, in 1839, and which the Lutheran Church of Germany and the Scandinavian countries established and maintained with consistent endeavor these four hundred years. The training that we have hitherto offered is in keeping with the humanistic ideals of the age of the Reformation. This means, briefly stated, that the social sciences, the natural sciences, and mathematical learning were made secondary and subservient to linguistic training in our pretheological schools.

What is to be said at the present time with regard to this policy? Shall we lower the standards of our language requirements in keeping with certain modern demands? Shall we devote more time to the natural sciences, especially with intensive and detailed laboratory work, or to the social sciences, particularly in the specialized fields? Shall we make accreditation according to the standards of the various American associations our goal and modify our courses in keeping with the general cultural objectives so strongly emphasized in our days? Let our answer be: Whatever we may do, it must not be done to the detriment of the languages in our preparatory institutions or to the hindrance of the best work in theology in our Seminary at St. Louis.²²

The second major assignment for the committee, and arguably its toughest, was exactly how to enlarge the pretheological training of the system and rearrange the institutions. Considering every proposal and memorial, the size of the supporting constituencies of the institutions, and budget restrictions, among a host of other factors, the committee came forward with these recommendations: Enlarge the courses at Fort

Wayne, Milwaukee, St. Paul and Winfield, Kansas to four year colleges in addition to their high schools; keep Concordia and Bronxville as six-year schools; close Portland; reduce Oakland and Conover to four years; and keep Austin as a four year course.²³

When addressing the Seminary at Springfield, the committee hit its most controversial cord, and they knew it. The 1926 convention had debated for hours if Springfield should be closed. Although the committee didn't officially recommend the closing of Springfield, it proposed a subcommittee be formed to study the school's necessity, and, in effect, hopefully come to that conclusion. It listed the following reasons:

- 1) The original purpose for which the institution was established has been achieved.
- 2) The Seminary at St. Louis will be able to furnish all the candidates we shall need from now on .
- 3) The existence of the Springfield seminary makes for a double standard in our ministry.
- 4) The difference between an eleven-year course [with the proposed senior college] and a six-year course is too great.
- 5) The institution cannot meet the historical standards of the Lutheran Church in regard to the ancient languages.²³

These recommendations proved too radical for the Synod to adopt at the 1932 convention. It resolved instead to keep the system as is and appoint a new committee of thirteen to replace the Survey committee of nine to study these points even further. This committee would be called the Committee on Higher Education.²⁵

When the Synod met in Cleveland in 1935, the Committee on Higher Education came to the Convention with many similar conclusions to what the Survey Committee had come to three years earlier. It was generally agreed that ministerial education needed to be expanded for all the reasons mentioned above. The problem of how to do it surfaced numerous opinions. Some wanted to add two years to one or more institutions, putting eight years of preseminary work on one campus. Others wanted to turn one or more institutions into four year colleges, and reduce the others to four year academies or high schools. A third plan was to eliminate all the high school departments and extend the junior colleges to four years. The fourth rejected plan was to establish

one central senior college, retaining the junior colleges as feeder schools. This had been the Survey committee's plan three years earlier. By no means did these plans die with this convention. Most were implemented later.

The synod adopted the committee's recommendation: All high schools and junior colleges remained as is. The changes at the colleges would not involve any structural changes. Instead, they believed the way to expand the system would be to add a preseminary year to the schooling at the seminary in St. Louis.²⁶ The most important aspect of this plan was no doubt its cost-effectiveness. It was, after all, 1935. The Great Depression still had its grip on the Synodical treasury.

Due to this constriction of the Synod's budget, and the declining enrollment of the smaller schools especially, the committee recommended the closing of Concordia, Portland, Oregon and St. Paul's College, Concordia, Missouri. Even in these tough times, however, the Synod again found it unwise to close any schools.²⁷ The CHE also mirrored the Survey Committee in its recommendation to close the Springfield Seminary. Strong feelings on both sides divided the convention nearly evenly. Many thought this was the best time to follow Walther's ideals of a thoroughly educated clergy. The defenders of Springfield were just as adamant that Springfield was serving the Synod very well in educating its special students. Springfield was tired of having its fate questioned at every convention. This was the third time in less than a decade that it was placed on the chopping block, and it wanted off. Its board of control included this statement in its report:

Closing Springfield.- We had hoped that Synod's action in 1932 would serve once for all to lay this vexing question [to rest]. It has not, and therefore we again ask Synod to *declare decisively that there is not only room in Synod's educational program for the system represented by the Springfield college and seminary, but that this system can best be served, and its program best be carried out, by restricting it to one institution - The Springfield seminary.*²⁸

The first ballot on the floor stood 266 to 265 in favor of closing Springfield. In a later session the hot topic was reconsidered, and it was resolved, by a vote of 256 to 283, *not* to close Springfield.²⁹ It's interesting to note that eight extra votes were found for the second vote, all presumably voting for keeping the school.

Curriculum and structure were again topics of review in 1938. The most substantial note concerning curriculum was as follows: "The chief changes in the preministerial curriculum consist in the transfer of Hebrew from the junior colleges to the Seminary at St. Louis".³⁰ This essentially subtracted one year from the Hebrew curriculum.

General Education

Easily the biggest concern of the 1938 CHE was the question of general higher education. "Should the synodical schools open their doors to non-ministerial students?" A related question was "Should the schools welcome women into their classrooms?" It was true that the Synod had always welcomed a few, usually local students, who did not aspire to be church workers. Yet each school was different. The schools received from the former English Synod - Conover and Winfield - always had general higher education and coeducation. On the other end of the spectrum was Concordia, Milwaukee. Girls didn't join their ranks until 1965.³¹

The Christian education of its lay people was not taken lightly. Yet the Synod still held to the opinion that its primary duty, educationally speaking, was to train preachers and teachers of the Word. All other education on its campuses was purely incidental. Only in special cases did a school add courses outside the preseminary curriculum. To ask Synod to financially support such "general" students and their courses simply wasn't feasible.

Deep financial problems had generated the whole question of general education. The depression years of the thirties brought huge declines in enrollment. A surplus of pastors didn't help recruitment. Some schools were greatly overstuffed, dormitories were vacant, and students bills went unpaid. In this emergency, self-preservation became a dominant consideration. The *ideal* of a fully preministerial student body and curriculum was forced to share space with the *practical* need of survival.

To fill unoccupied space in dormitories and classrooms, institutions began to solicit nonprofessional students, often without prior approval. Some argued that they

could consider recruiting more for the ministerial courses, but considering there was an oversupply of pastoral graduates at the time, that would be foolish. Concordia, St. Paul even opened up their institution to secular conventions, banquets and the like to help pay the bills. The considerable vacant space in all the junior colleges, except in Milwaukee, lead boards of control and faculties to request larger freedom with regard to the reception non-ministerial students. After all these tuition paying students would lower the maintenance cost to the Synod.³²

It was generally agreed throughout Synod that the thousands of LC-MS youths should receive a Christian high school and college education if at all possible. The opinions as to how to do so were numerous. Some believed the synod schools should take in as many as possible. Others saw that plan as being much ^{too} costly. It would jeopardize the primary purpose of the schools. Still others contended that Synod's current institutions should do their best to balance the two.

No one was kidding themselves into thinking that this would just be a temporary question. How the Synod would handle general education would have far-reaching effects into the future. Whatever the decision would be, there would be a degree of permanence. They couldn't drag their feet, either. Something needed to be done. Before offering any recommendations, the committee wanted to make one thing clear:

We hold that the original character of our institutions as schools of the Church must be preserved at any cost. Whatever expansion or extension of courses may be granted must not be permitted to interfere with the prime purpose of these schools: the training of servants of the Church. We may not suffer anything to enter our educational system that would threaten its spiritual vitality and its Lutheran confessionalism.³³

Synod reluctantly approved limited curriculum changes for the smaller, more distant schools such as Bronxville, Oakland, and Austin "without additional net cost to Synod." The requests of larger schools such as Milwaukee, Fort Wayne, and Concordia for general education was tabled for later evaluation.³⁴ It was understood that this would be on an experimental basis. Synod wasn't yet ready for large-scale acceptance of general education. This question needed more study.

In 1940 Dean Theodore Hausmann of Concordia College in Bronxville was commissioned to conduct a thorough study of the educational structure of the synod. He analyzed the effect of introducing general and co-education in the late 1930's. The recruiting of non-ministerial students was very successful, or very scary, depending how one looked at it. By 1940 more than one-third of the entire enrollment in the 10 preparatory schools were "general" students.³⁵

The Board for Higher Education's report to the 1944 convention was, in essence, a 147 page summary of Hausmann's findings. Together with Hausmann, the BHE strongly encouraged general education on the high school level. That was no surprise. The big question was how to pay for it. They concluded that general education should be financed as much as possible as Christian Day School are supported: by the local congregation.³⁶ General students should not deplete the synodical treasury. They didn't directly, since they paid tuition, unlike worker-training students. It couldn't be denied, however, that they received synod's financial support in many indirect ways. While general education was allowed to continue in synodical schools, it should be tightly controlled. With that in mind, the Board issued a warning:

...An entirely different situation would present itself if the ministerial group were to become in numbers and influence a submerged minority in the student body. It is entirely possible that the humanistic and pretheological character of our institutions then would give way to either a technical or highly vocational type of education, depending on the direction the school would assume as it developed.³⁷

Unfortunately, this warning was more prophetic than the BHE would have liked.

The highlights of the Board's recommendations were as follows: 1) Synod reaffirm the training of its church workers as the basic and primary purpose of the Synod schools. 2) The largest and best feeder schools should remain strictly pre-ministerial. Those included Milwaukee, St. Paul, Fort Wayne, and Concordia. One reason for this was the large communicant constituencies that supported them. 3) Strict standards and limitations be set on Synod schools with general education so that they wouldn't interfere with the integrity and efficiency of pre-ministerial education. 4) Synod neither directly nor indirectly pay for general education out of the Synodical treasury.³⁸

No matter how well they tried to control general education, the simple fact remained: pre-ministerial students were sharing their campuses with non-ministerial students. It wasn't just a matter of difference in the degree of purpose. Each school would become dual-purposed, struggling to keep ministerial training their top priority.

Restructuring was again a major concern for the BHE. Now that transportation was much less of a problem, did the Synod need five midwestern colleges? Or two seminaries 100 miles apart? The Board concluded that the present capacity of their educational institutions was too large for the current and future needs of Synod. Everything pointed to a reduction in the number of institutions for a more effective and economical ministerial program.

The committee knew its proposals wouldn't be popular. Nevertheless it recommended closing Concordia in Portland and St. Paul's College in Concordia, Mo. And again, it saw best to transfer the students of Springfield to St. Louis and use the physical plant for another purpose.

The Portland school had many strikes against it. Its per student ^{cost of} education was among the highest in synod, while its quality of education among the lowest. The loss of its classes would barely put a dent in the numbers heading to St. Louis, not to mention there was an oversupply as it was. And much building would be have to be done on campus. The committee initially recommended its closure, but the faculty made an impressive presentation on the growing number of Lutherans in the Northwest and their growing interest in the school. The school would remain open. The committee changed its mind about Portland, which would end up being one of the weakest feeder schools. The committee stood firm regarding St. Paul's Concordia, Mo. and the Springfield Seminary. Their excellent reasons for closing the Springfield Seminary will be discussed later.

Their recommendations were again defeated. They weren't the first committee to realize it's tough to shut down a school. Structurally speaking, the system remained pretty much as is following the 1944 convention. More change would come soon enough.

The Short-lived Senior College

Missouri's "preferred route" of pastoral training was still the envy of other denominations. Complaints were growing, however, that it did not require a full four-year college course for admission to the seminary, as other denominations had. For many years, the BA degree was awarded after two years of work at the Seminary in St. Louis. In 1947 the synod directed the Board for Higher Education to carry out a plan to retain a distinct two-year preministerial course at all existing junior colleges and create a separate "senior college", offering the BA degree after four full years of college training. It was the standard American system pushed by many 15 years earlier. The primary reason the BHE proposed the Senior College, however, was to counter-act the problem of general education. In the 1946-47 school year, general education students passed the 50% mark in the entire preseminary system.³⁹ The worker-training students were outnumbered on their own campuses. The BHE hoped this senior college could help to reestablish a common purpose among the students before entering St. Louis.

At the centennial convention in 1947 the establishment of a senior college for the upper levels of college education for ministerial students was approved. The synod pointed towards a new single-purpose institution focusing on academic excellence, growth of spiritual maturity, development of leadership qualities, instilling love for the work of the parish pastor, and developing loyalty to the church.⁴⁰ Concordia Senior College opened its door in 1957 as a completely new institution for ministerial education. It worked well for a decade, funneling students from the junior colleges to the St. Louis Seminary.

This "preferred route" of high school-junior college-senior college-St. Louis Seminary was destroyed with a resolution of the 1967 New York Convention. Ironically, the blame for the collapse of the preseminary system rests squarely on the shoulders of the seminaries. Since the decisions of 1967 have been the most destructive in the history of the entire system, a little space should be given to the factors leading up to them.

The Hausmann Report of 1944 was the handwriting on the wall. It had warned that the changes occurring at Springfield could only cause problems.

For nearly 90 years, the students at the Springfield seminary entered with a simple elementary education. That's all that was required. When the American public became more educated, Springfield adapted its entrance requirements, its curricular structure, and courses to the altered circumstances. Starting in 1935, there began a progressive increase in the entrance requirements. 1935 was the first time that two years of high school were required. Six years later a high school diploma was needed.

In connection with higher requirements, the level of academic work on campus increased. In 1910, two years of academy work preceded the three years in the seminary. In 1930, a third academy year was added. In 1935, with two years of high school required, one academy year was advanced to college-level work. In 1939, two years of both academy and college work became the standard. The curriculum also changed. Exegetical languages were introduced in 1930.

The minimum age for enrollees was raised with entrance requirements, but not high enough. When only high school graduates were allowed, the minimum age was 18. That's the normal age of a high school graduate. Consequently, the school encouraged normal-aged graduates to begin studies, essentially changing the original purpose of "training young men who later on in life decide to enter the ministry".⁴¹

In 1910, there was a difference of four years in requirements to complete the ministerial training of each school. In 1939, there was only one year difference. The distinction between St. Louis and Springfield was narrowing.

These changes in Springfield's school carried a number of serious implications, which the BHE pointed out. Whether involuntarily or not, The Springfield Seminary encouraged the undesirable trend of accepting 18-year-old students who were graduates of public high schools. The path could be considered more attractive to young men because it was shorter, easier, and cheaper than the St. Louis course. It would be especially attractive to those who didn't want such a heavy dose of ancient languages.⁴²

Their next point is worthy of quoting:

The maintenance of Springfield presents Synod with a dual system of theological training, if not in extensive reality at the moment, then in well-developed embryonic form, with the probability that future years will see the full development of two contrasting types of training - the one, academic, scholarly, squarely in the Lutheran tradition, with great stress on the classical languages, and based on an integrated preparatory school course under church auspices; the other, conforming the current sectarian elimination of primary stress on the exegetical languages, and based on a mosaic of widely differing public high school educations, often filled with wholly irrelevant courses.⁴³

Their last argument centered on the inevitable fact that Springfield was on its way to offering the BA degree to its men before they entered the seminary portion of training. Springfield was no longer serving the emergency purpose it had originally done so well. It might soon draw too many students away from the "preferred route" to St. Louis. These are the reasons the committee recommended it be closed. As was stated earlier, that recommendation was shot down.

The concern over the BA degree brings us back up to 1967. Springfield's course had still been advancing. It came to the point where it's seminary was admitting many candidates with bachelor's degrees from secular colleges and universities. When it was observed that college graduates were entering both Springfield and St. Louis, some voiced complaints that the graduates of the senior college in ^{Fort Wayne} Springfield couldn't attend the seminary of their choice, but were unwillingly pushed into St. Louis.⁴⁴

The 1967 New York convention authorized graduates of Concordia Senior College, Fort Wayne, to attend the seminary at Springfield.⁴⁵ This turned out to be a huge blow to the entire system. Concordia Seminary in St. Louis saw its synod-produced students heading for Springfield for the first time. To compete, St. Louis made a huge mistake and opened its doors to graduates from secular colleges. It was now possible to enter either seminary of the Synod without attending a college of the Missouri System.

This was the beginning of the end for the Senior College specifically, and the whole system in general. In the very next year, the preministerial enrollment in the junior colleges and the senior college began a steady decline from which they would

never recover.⁴⁶ The damage was done. While other changes had bled the system of some of its vitality up to this point, this one went straight to the jugular.

The 1975 Synodical Education Task Force believed that “it may be somewhat speculative to state that there was a direct correlation between the 1967 convention action officially authorizing Senior College graduates to study at Springfield and the [subsequent] enrollment decline at the Senior College.”⁴⁴ Honestly, what’s to speculate? The green light was given to bypass the “preferred route” to the ministry. The path of least resistance suddenly became much more attractive. The ideal system was lost. With four-year graduates of other colleges bypassing Fort Wayne on their way to the seminaries, the senior college had lost its distinctive mission. Enrollments dwindled. It closed in 1975. The senior college program transferred to Concordia College in Ann Arbor, transforming that institution into a four year college.

High School Closings

When the senior college was dying on the vine in the late sixties and early seventies, the high schools were cut down one by one. The high school department at the Fort Wayne Concordia had been discontinued in 1950 on an experimental basis.⁴⁸ Ever since, there were plenty who wanted to cut all the schools loose.

The prep school system had indeed started to suffer with the onset of community Lutheran high schools within the Synod. In 1943 there were only three high schools. In 1960, there were fourteen, with another five operated jointly by the Synodical Conference.⁴⁹ Enrollment had dropped rapidly as the community high became a viable alternative. The ministerial student enrollments line up as follows in 1965: Seminaries - 949; Colleges - 1199; high schools - 742.⁵⁰

It was clear that the high schools wouldn’t produce their “quota” in the upcoming years, especially if attrition was figured in. As the number of ministerial students declined, the cost to operate the schools increased. Money was always a factor. In addressing these concerns, Synod had this response:

The Synod should continue to utilize those synodical high schools that are enrolling justifiable numbers of pastoral training students. . . . However, when a constituency does not make reasonable use of synodical high school for the training of pastoral students, or when the Board for Higher Education regards the cost in money, staff, or space as unjustifiable in the light of the total needs of the church, that high school should be subject to programmed elimination by the Synod on recommendation of the Board for Higher Education.⁵¹

The synodical high schools were lined up for "programmed elimination" one by one. 11 high schools operated in 1966. Austin was discontinued in 1967. Bronxville closed its high school in 1969, Winfield in 1971, Seward and Oakland in 1972, and Milwaukee in 1973. St. Paul combined with a local Lutheran high school in 1967, and was erased from synod's rolls in 1971. Only four were left standing in 1973. Synod had dropped seven high schools in seven years.⁵² Only St. Paul's, Concordia, Missouri remains today. And it can hardly be called a strong feeder with only three students listed as pastor track for the 1994-95 school year.⁵³

By phasing out the high schools from its campuses, Synod hoped to make room for the junior colleges to go four-year. When synod phased out the high schools because it felt that not enough ministerial students were making use of the schools, it only encouraged more "general" college students to fill the vacancy left by the younger students' departure. The schools were caught in a Catch-22. They increased the enrollment of general students to help cover costs, but the Synod subsidy to each college was based on the percentage of church-work students enrolled. Financial support from the synod decreased. In 1970 the synod covered 40.5% of all institutional expenses; in 1972, 37%; and in 1975, 27.5%. Consequently, the colleges were obliged to compete with each other for the limited supply of potential church-work students and also to increase tuition and step ^{up} efforts to recruit more general students. Again, it was a case of survival. These changes at the college level were, of course, not planned by the Synod, but they were deemed to be necessary.⁵⁴

Total college enrollments remained at approximately the same level throughout the 70s, but the proportion of non-church-work students continued to increase, reaching 50% in 1984.

Who's Going to Pay For It?

The problem of financing its schools has always haunted the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. Fiscal emergencies caused the opening of its schools to large-scale general education in the late 1930's. The lack of subsidy available was the driving force behind dropping most of its high schools. The lack of money available to its schools is a festering problem to this day.

It actually wasn't until 1950 when Synod first asked its church-work students to pay tuition. The Missouri Synod took tremendous pride in paying the way for its church workers. Rightly so, considering how difficult a task that must have been at times. But it couldn't keep it up forever.⁵⁵ The subsidy kept declining. For the 1963-64 school year, student fees covered 38% of the schools' income and subsidy covered 47%. By the 1973-74 school year, the sources of income flip-flopped. The students picked up 45% while synodical subsidy dropped to 34%.⁵⁶ These were the years of massive high school closings.

In 1981, the Synod passed this resolution, which gave the seminaries some hope:

...That the Synod instruct the Board for Higher Education to provide 40% of the educational and general budget of the two seminaries for the 1982-83 fiscal year; and be it further resolved that the Synod instruct the Board for Higher Education to increase the support granted to the seminaries by no less than an additional 5% per year until the Synod is providing at least 65% support for the educational and general budget of the two seminaries.⁵⁷

The subsidy continued to plummet. In 1986, the average subsidy for the colleges was 23.08% and the seminaries received 31.58%.⁵⁸ By 1992, the colleges received between 5 and 15%, and the seminaries received only 23% subsidy.⁵⁹ There have been numerous overtures to the past few conventions for Missouri to reevaluate its priorities. The synod is encouraging the schools to find whatever help they can elsewhere. Missouri is struggling to support its schools, and there's no sign of it getting any better.

Currently

This last section is mostly a collection of statistics regarding the most recent decade of pastoral education in the Missouri system. The numbers don't look promising.

Regarding general education, the percentages of non-church-work students continues to rise. Today, church-workers include not only pastors and teachers, but also directors of Christian education, deaconesses, social workers, directors of parish music, directors of Christian outreach, parish assistants, and ~~lay~~ ministers. Of the 12,431 students enrolled in the Concordia University System in 1994-95, 9112 were not church-work students. That's 73% general students.⁶⁰ Looking at ministerial students specifically, the numbers have been cut in half in the last ten years. During the 1984-85 school year, 518 students were listed as ministerial. By 1994-95, the number had dropped to 258. In the same period of time, the total enrollment almost doubled.⁶¹

Regarding their church affiliation, the 1992 synodical report reveals some startling statistics of its students. Concordia College, Seward has the largest percentage of LCMS students enrolled, 89%. Most of the institutions outside the midwest are quite another story, however. Selma, Alabama; Portland, Oregon; and Bronxville NY, have only 12%, 19%, and 23% respectively of their students who are LCMS. In fact, 60% of the students who attend Concordia, Portland aren't even Christian, but unchurched! And yet, the students of Portland and Bronxville receive the highest amount of synodical moneys (Synod, college, or district) of any institution, and the highest percentage aid of any college - 40% of tuition. Where did that money go? Not to ministerial students. Portland sent only 2 on to St. Louis that year. Bronxville sent 7. The best "feeder" school was Concordia, Ann Arbor ^{which} sent 15 students onto the Seminary in 1992.⁶²

This sad state of affairs in the colleges can't help but affect the seminaries of Missouri as well. These last statistics, unless otherwise noted, were obtained through an interview with a current professor at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

The source of first year students at the Seminary gives a good sense of how badly the preministerial system had been failing. In 1987, 67.2% of the entering class came

from LC-MS schools. That percentage has steadily declined to 39.2% for 1996. That is, 50 students out of 126 came from a synodical school. 5 came from Valparaiso. 5 came from 5 other Lutheran colleges. The remaining 62 students came from 56 secular colleges! That's a total of 71 different colleges that produced 126 new students for this past school year!⁶³ The seminary does not, however, just take anybody. An enrollee must have been an LC-MS member for at least two years before allowed entrance.

As a result of the failing college system, recruitment that at one time would have been the responsibility of the colleges is now, of necessity, part of the Seminary's ^{responsibility} faculty. The seminary has two full-time recruiters on staff who visit not only the Synod's colleges, but secular Universities where Missouri students attend. A related problem is screening of the students. When a student is first observable on the Seminary campus, much more effort is needed to evaluate each individual student.

Biblical languages ^{program} is the most prominent area that has drastically suffered since the system has lost its historical purpose. The exegetical department laments the substandard language learning of the students. But there's not much they can do at that level. Of the 126 new students who enrolled at Concordia, St. Louis for the 1996-97 school year, approximately one-third had Greek before. Of that same number, only one-fifth had taken Hebrew before.

The language departments at the colleges struggle to keep the Greek and Hebrew classes going not only because the numbers are small and the dollars are hard to come by, but also because a student may opt to wait to take Greek and Hebrew until he comes to the Seminary. In effect, there is a good percentage of students in the pastoral education programs at the colleges who do not take the biblical languages offered.

Those who come to the Seminary with no history of either Greek or Hebrew studies ^{are} is required to take only 9 quarter hours of each languages, that is, one year's worth. This can be done in the summer quarter or during the Fall or Winter quarter of the school year. Concordia Theological Seminary in Fort Wayne has roughly the same requirements.⁶⁴ The electives offered in both Greek and Hebrew are many, but since many of those taking these classes have only the minimum requirement to draw from, these classes cannot be considered "advanced" in any sense of the word.

As for Latin and German, a graduate of St. Louis can finish his education without ever learning a macron or an umlaut. No Latin or German is prescribed at the Seminary level. And currently no background in either language is required for entrance, although students are encouraged to take them at the college if at all possible.

Conclusion

Hardly seemed a convention has gone by in the recent history of the LC-MS that didn't have quite a few memorials requesting a reassessment of the higher education system of the Synod. The overtures to the 1995 convention were no different. Pastors and congregations are repeatedly asking the schools to realign themselves with the historic principles of ministerial education established 150 years ago. In its report to the 1995 convention, the Concordia University System responds to those overtures and anticipates what might be the concluding question of this paper:

What is the Concordia University system doing to provide a continued supply of church workers?

- Programs to prepare for church-service careers
- Courses to strengthen values and develop leadership
- Partnership with congregations in recruiting students at the congregational level
- Gathering the names of 140,000 LCMS youth in our congregations
- Brochures and video development about church careers
- Career workshops by colleges and Districts
- Church career mailings to junior high youth
- Promotion of congregational recruitment committees⁶⁵

Their intentions often look good on paper. But I'm not even sure that these do. I guess that's the best that can be done when the priority of producing well-trained pastors is far from what it used to be.

What lessons can we learn from the LCMS experience?

End Notes

1. Meyer, Carl S. Moving Frontiers - Readings in the History of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1964) p. 214
2. Meyer Moving Frontiers p. 214
3. Meyer, Carl S. Log Cabin to Luther Tower: Concordia Seminary During One Hundred and Twenty-five Years Toward a More Excellent Ministry 1839-1964. (St. Louis: Concordia, 1965) p. 7
3. Meyer Log Cabin pp. 17-18
5. Solberg p. 144
6. Solberg p. 145
7. Meyer Log Cabin p. 27
8. Solberg p. 146
9. Meyer Log Cabin p. 42
10. Meyer Log Cabin p. 50
10. Meyer Log Cabin p. 50
12. Meyer Log Cabin p. 63 As it has played out in history, scholarship in a seminary is no guarantee of continued orthodoxy. In fact, too much of an emphasis on scholarship may find itself at odds with orthodoxy if not careful. The influx of the historical-critical method in St. Louis in the 60's is evidence of that.
13. Meyer Log Cabin pp. 84,85
14. Hausmann, *Report of the Board for Higher Education to the Members of Synod - 1944* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1944) pp. 31,32
15. Solberg p. 153
16. Meyer Moving Frontiers p. 389
17. 1929 *Proceedings of the Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod*, pp. 57,58
18. *Report of the Survey Committee on the Educational Institutions of the Missouri Synod.* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1931) p. 16
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20. Meyer Moving Frontiers p. 219
21. *Report of the Survey Committee* p. 17
22. *Report of the Survey Committee* p. 14
23. *Report of the Survey Committee* pp. 18-19
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25. 1932 *Proceedings* p. 81,82
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37. Hausmann p. 19
38. Hausmann p. 23,24
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40. 1947 *Proceedings* p. 176
41. Hausmann p. 49-51
42. Hausmann p. 53
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45. 1967 *Proceedings* p. 142

46. 1975 *Convention Workbook* p. 294
47. 1975 *Convention Workbook* p. 294
48. 1950 *Proceedings*
49. Meyer Moving Frontiers p. 386
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51. 1965 *Proceedings* p. 140
52. 1975 *Convention Workbook* p. 283
53. 1995 *Statistical Yearbook -LC-MS* p. 12
54. 1975 *Convention Workbook* p. 294
55. 1950 *Proceedings* p253-254
56. 1975 *Convention Workbook* p. 275
57. 1981 *Proceedings*
58. 1986 *Convention Workbook* p. 287
59. 1992 *Convention Workbook* p. 119
60. 1995 *Statistical Yearbook -LC-MS* p. 12
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65. 1995 *Convention Workbook* p. 81

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*Statistics from registrars office of Concordia Seminary obtained through interview with a member of the faculty.

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