

Church History Project: 1997
Interview with Prof. Daniel Deutschlander

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The times were confusing. Doctrinal matters of discipline were snowballing in the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The Wisconsin Synod had broken ties of fellowship several years earlier, after many warnings and pamphlet wars. What is a conscientious student of theology to do? Such was the quandary Prof. Deutschlander found himself in during his college years at Concordia, River Forest, Minnesota.

The interview on tape covers bits of his life from grade school to his graduation at Northwestern College. It contains, as he says, “just a few of the things” he went through emotionally and spiritually. If his style of presentation does *not* captivate one (which is difficult for this author to imagine happening) then certainly one will at least gain an appreciation of orthodox synod schools, teachers, and pastors, who would rather lose popularity than the treasures of the Scriptures, and the doctrines contained therein, as have been cherished by Christian saints of all ages.

When heresy begins to set in, how grand and intricate the lies can become. Lies to self. Lies to others. Lies to God. Tietjen is an appropriate example of such. As far as Prof. Deutschlander’s tale goes, those at the Concordia college sound too confused to be trusted. Martin Luther stated in one of his sermons (somewhere in the Lenker Church Postils set) that all men are liars. Therefore, Scripture demands we trust no one but God. Out of trust in God

who avenges, we are to give others the benefit of the doubt. For that same God commands us to put the best construction on everything and to rejoice in the truth. Prof. Deutschlander seemed to be on the moral borderland during his years at Concordia. Who could he trust? And who must he defy as testimony to the truth? Let us ever pray God not abandon us to such wastelands of temptation, and the light of His Word remain to dispel all lies and cleanse and sanctify us all, that we not become liars in the most horrid sense.

There are several other events mentioned in the dialogue. The Preus brothers and their defection from ELS. A “discipline case” that was “solved” in the sense of being whitewashed. LC-MS opinion of WELS as being lazy and not good for anything in God’s Kingdom. Some of these things are covered by student commentary on the video. General statements will be made here.

Firstly, it strikes this author how proud LC-MS was (and is) of working for the Lord. Certainly, they have done such. The Concordia school systems have been a service to the church at large. Their educational giants have been even blessings to our Synod, providing insight from Steockhardt, translations from Chemnitz, dogmatics texts from F. Pieper, just to name a few. Their mission work overseas has allowed us open doors and fellowship with Lutherans in Africa and Asia. As a synod, they have certainly served the Lord with might and diligence.

Yet, as Martha, they seem to have forgotten the first love—that precious thing Jesus commends Mary for, sitting at His feet. The Preus and Barry presidencies would not have been hindered (in this author’s opinion) from dealing

with false doctrine had not the job of Martha been foremost on their mind. With a synod headquarters stuffed full of accountants and financial advisors, all with a desire of good stewardship, how could they take the time to sit and listen to the Lord—both His rebuke and promise to see them through the difficulties of separating themselves from heretics? They were too busy. And thus, WELS became easy prey for “ribs” about “being lazy,” “not being studious enough,” “not doing the work of the Church.”

As our Synod prepares to enter the next Millenium, (earthly calender, not the heavenly one, lest any Chiliasts decide to use this project for support), there is much excitement about starting new missions, new projects, new programs for helping the Church and society (Kingdom Workers, WELSMen, college campus expansion, worker training expansion, places like Calvary Academy, etc.), let us not forget the first and foremost pleasure: sitting at Jesus' feet.

Martha's work can be ended quickly by lack of materials, financial trouble, failing stock markets, plagues, death, disease, war, etc. Mary's choice of what was better “will never be taken from her.” Let us cherish, then, Jesus' teachings and our orthodoxy with them. Such precious truths will never be taken from us, even though all other things may fail.

The interview was taken on May 3, 1997, at approximately 11:30 AM. New Ulm, MN. Prof. Deutschlander's living room. The camera was borrowed from Jeff Haldorson. The tape was finished May 4, 1997. It runs about 55 minutes.

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