

THE WAR TO END ALL GERMANS
WISCONSIN SYNOD LUTHERANS AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

by

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ABSTRACT
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The First World War came to the United States to the consternation of many of its citizens, especially its German Americans. On the home front, government officials required complete adherence to the war effort. This also included religious adherence. The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, a German-speaking religious group, met tremendous difficulties during the war years. In addition to the crusade against all things German, the synod faced religious persecution because it doctrinally abstained from religiously sanctioning the war aims and programs of the United States. The repression of the synod came from both patriotic citizens and government agents who typically misunderstood or disdained the religious practices of the synod. The situation created predicaments for German Lutherans as they attempted to serve both God and country.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

APL	American Protective League: A citizen auxiliary to the Justice Department during the First World War with an estimated 250,000 members.
CPI	Committee on Public Information: The head propaganda organization of the federal government. It proactively sought cooperation with churches across the country to both "Americanize" and promote the war effort.
CPS	The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety: One of the many state organizations across the nation to promote proper war behavior and to police activities deemed harmful to the success of the United States.
DMLC	Doctor Martin Luther College: A teacher-training college for the parochial schools of the Wisconsin Synod.
OG	Old German Files: A 594 reel collection of microfilm of reports from the Justice Department and American Protective League Operatives, mostly concerning German Americans.
WELS	Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod: At the time called the General Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Other States, or the Wisconsin Synod for short. The synod was created through a federation of the Wisconsin, Minnesota, and Michigan Synods in 1892, whereby they fully amalgamated into one synod in 1917.

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Introduction

The Divide

*O*n 4 November 1890, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, "red hot and in fighting trim," swarmed to the polling places across Wisconsin.¹ They endeavored to elect candidates to the Wisconsin State Legislature who promised to strike down the "oppressive and tyrannical" Bennett Law, passed the previous year by a Republican legislature. The Bennett Law was a compulsory education law meant to battle child labor and illiteracy. However, its provisions deeply affected the church schools of the Wisconsin Synod. English became the only accepted medium for all core subjects, a clause meant to strike at the German-language education of the Lutheran parochial schools. Students could only attend schools within their education districts. This also caused problems for the parochial schools, which often drew students from a number of districts. Furthermore, compulsory school days did not recognize the Lutheran calendar, which made the "celebration of weekday church holidays impossible."² The election was a rout, with Wisconsin Synod towns like Berlin voting as high as 96.8% Democratic.³ The Republicans were buried by what Democratic Party members termed "the Lutheran land-slide."⁴

The election was a culmination of a year's worth of rhetoric and organization against the Bennett Law. The Wisconsin Synod created a committee within a month of its passage, which concluded, "the purpose of the Bennett Law was hostile to our schools and would bring terrible results." After giving twelve reasons to substantiate the claim, the synod published a statement:

¹ Edward C. Wall to Ellis Usher, 11 June 1890, in Usher MSS, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

² "Synode Ausschussbericht," *Gemeindeblatt* 24:22 (15 July 1889), 172. This likely referred to midweek observances for Lent and Advent, as well as Reformation celebrations.

³ Voting results found in Paul Kleppner, *Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics 1850-1900*, (New York: Free Press, 1970), 138.

⁴ H.C. Payne to E.W. Keyes, 7 November 1890, Keyes MSS, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

We are not enemies of the public schools; we consider them and declare them to be a necessary institution. We are ever willing to pay our taxes for the support of the public schools...But we insist upon enjoying the privilege of founding private schools with our own means of regulating and governing them, without external interference, according to our conviction.⁵

In February 1890, nineteen Wisconsin and Missouri Synod Lutheran congregations in Milwaukee passed a joint resolution which denounced the law and pledged to support only those candidates who promised its repeal. They believed a movement was afoot "to completely destroy parochial schools."⁶ The Milwaukee Democratic platform appeased this sentiment and condemned the law as "wholly uncalled for, and uselessly harsh and unjust; and infringing on the liberty of conscience and on the natural right of parental control over their children."⁷ The synod publication, the *Gemeindeblatt*, urged pastors to "watch their local papers so that they may continue to fight the enemy publicly where necessary."⁸ The synod committee volunteered to help such pastors wherever they needed it.

Supporters of the Bennett Law fought with the same fervor as the German Lutherans. To them, the future of the public school was at stake, and the parochial alternative was a thorn in the side to both the "little red schoolhouse" and Americanization. Not a day passed in February and March, 1890, without the *Milwaukee Sentinel* publishing an editorial or letters to the editor regarding the Bennett Law. The *Sentinel* defended the law, attacked its opponents, and gave exposés of American-born adults who could not converse in English. "The great principle...of the right of the state to control the secular education of children," the *Sentinel* argued, "has been challenged."⁹ In an argument which sounds ironic today, Bennett Law partisans asserted that the rapid growth of school-aged children attending parochial schools meant that the "Christianizing influences of the common school are being denied to an increasingly large number of the next generation." The common school "stood for knowledge, liberty and virtue," and in opposition "to ignorance, to

⁵ "Beschlusse der Synode uber die Schulfrage," *Gemeindeblatt* 24:22 (15 July 1889), 172.

⁶ "Bekanntmachung wegen des Bennett Gesetzes," *Gemeindeblatt* 25:15 (1 April 1890), 120.

⁷ Kleppner, 159.

⁸ "Sonstige Schritte der Schulbehörden gegen Gemeindeschulen," *Gemeindeblatt* 25:16 (15 April 1890), 126.

⁹ Roger E. Wyman, "Wisconsin Ethnic Groups and the Election of 1890," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 51:4, Summer 1968, 271; Kleppner, 160. The *Sentinel* specifically attacked Lutherans for their position on the Bennett Law. Explicitly referring to a growing political union between Lutherans and Catholics, the Republican organ warned Lutheran voters that they should not ally with "the devil's own grandmother" simply to win an election.

superstition, to immorality and wrong doing."¹⁰ The arguments could even get personal. Republican governor William Hoard publically stated that Lutheran pastors and congregations took an oath "to darken the understanding of young people." The *Sentinel* implied that the anti-Bennett Law movement was provoked by Lutheran pastors, whom the people followed blindly.¹¹ Both sides fought this way, however. After the monumental victory, the *Gemeindeblatt* offered a statement "with heartfelt thanks to God, who put to shame the purposes of the fanatic, native-born enemies of...the German parochial schools, and has given to us the victory in the fight against the enemies of the Church and to the citizens the victory of freedom and knowledge."¹²

The Bennett Law episode highlighted a religious fault line which continually factored into the politics of the late nineteenth century Midwest. The support of the Bennett Law predominated from evangelical Protestants—of which most Methodists, Congregationalists, United Brethren, Baptists, and revivalist Presbyterians can be classified. Evangelicalism was a pietistic religious and social movement with roots in both the Reformation era and Great Awakenings. Evangelicals emphasized a "personal, vital, and fervent faith in a transcendental God."¹³ Their religious customs focused on conversion and personal piety, a general informality and emotionalism in worship observances, and ecumenicism (endorsement of Christian unity with or without doctrinal agreement).¹⁴

¹⁰ Kleppner, 160, 168.

¹¹ "Allerlei zum Bennett-Gesetz," *Gemeindeblatt* 25:20 (15 June 1890), 156-157.

¹² "Das neue Schulgesetz des Staates Wisconsin," *Gemeindeblatt* 26:22 (15 July 1891), 172.

¹³ Wyman, 274; Kleppner, 173.

¹⁴ Brian W. Beltman, "Rural Church Reform in Wisconsin during the Progressive Era," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 60:1 (Autumn 1976), 12. The use of a blanket term for these religious groups has proven to be problematic. German Lutherans called these groups "sectarians," but this ecclesiastical term did not have much use beyond German Lutherans, and is no longer used by them today. Paul Kleppner, in his book *Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics, 1850-1900*, used the term "Pietists." While this term properly highlights the main issue—that of using secular control to enforce religious piety—it can cause confusion because many pietistic religious groups, such as the Mennonites, Hutterites, or the Amish, stressed personal piety but were withdrawn from society. Thus the term "evangelical" is being used, mostly along the same lines as religious historian William J. Phalen used in his *American Evangelical Protestantism and European Immigrants, 1800-1924*. Brian Beltman also favored this dichotomy in his article "Rural Church Reform in Wisconsin during the Progressive Era." Despite that this term is somewhat *ex post facto*, its usage in the mid to late twentieth century accurately exemplifies these groups. Perhaps the biggest stumbling block of this term is that "evangelical" is part of the current synod title—the Wisconsin *Evangelical* Lutheran Synod. The use of word "evangelical" by the synod, however, is very narrow: the church teaches justification by grace through faith. Evangelicalism in

Evangelicals viewed the world as sinful, but did not accept this fate. Instead, they felt compelled to purge the world of sin through earthly means. The life of an evangelical, then, became a series of efforts and opportunities to create the world anew to the glory of a personally knowable God. The first way to accomplish this was by changing hearts through conversion. Their informal worship setting and ecumenicism created an ideal environment to attract newcomers. When instruction and exhortation failed, evangelicals attempted to reform the "sinner" through what the *Gemeindeblatt* termed "Gewalt," or "violence" (secular laws).¹⁵ Few can summarize it better than the Presbyterian minister John Marquis in 1917, "It is the business of religion to make the world a dangerous place for evil and evil-doers."¹⁶ To this end, evangelicals used all possible means to purge the world from sin. They disregarded distinctions between church and secular, preached on "Christian living," and used terms such as "oneness of life."¹⁷ Wisconsin Synod writers used a now defunct term, "sectarians," to refer to evangelicals. "Sectarians" were Christians with "a legal mind," wrote the *Gemeindeblatt*. Therefore, "They believe that the kingdom of God...is a state with a law book that will live up to all of God's holy and righteous demands."¹⁸ Secular legalism became a powerful means to accomplish this goal, especially when pertaining to prohibition, gambling, and Sabbatarianism. As seen during the Bennett Law controversy, the common school system was another special reform tool of the evangelicals. Bible readings typically took up school time with the goal to inculcate a specific set of values in the younger generation. Curricular materials simply assumed a Protestant evangelical consciousness. Said a common school advocate in 1918, "The foundation of *American* and *true* Christianity lies in the free public school system instead of the parochial."¹⁹

Wisconsin Synod minister F. Schumann asserted that one could spot a "sectarian" preacher "if he lends himself to take over the role of a social

its broader sense usually entailed postmillennialism, personal "acceptance" of Christ, a focus on morals, secular legalism, and ecumenicism; all of these the synod rejected.

¹⁵ W. Hoenecke, "Etliche Fragen über Prohibition," *Gemeindeblatt* 53:3 (1 February 1918), 37-38.

¹⁶ F. Graeber, "Press Censorship and Religious Liberty," *Northwestern Lutheran* 4:13 (7 July 1917), 101.

¹⁷ Kleppner, 174.

¹⁸ W. Hoenecke, "Etliche Fragen über Prohibition," *Gemeindeblatt* 53:3 (1 February 1918), 37-38.

¹⁹ John Jenny, "Would Eliminate Parochial Schools," *Northwestern Lutheran* 5:8 (21 April 1918), 61-62; William J. Phalen, *American Evangelical Protestantism and European Immigrants, 1800-1924* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 2011), 7. Emphasis is mine.

reformer."²⁰ Because evangelicals usually viewed the state as a vehicle to purify society, their ministers preached that America was "God's chosen nation," and unapologetically entered the political fray to reform and uplift the society around them. At a time when postmillennialist beliefs were widespread, many evangelicals believed that the second coming of Christ would occur after the millennium—a thousand year establishment of the kingdom of God on earth through human effort. As one Illinois Baptist pastor put it, "Let us pray for His coming, and vote as we pray!"²¹ In February 1917, the *Gemeindeblatt* even published an exposé of a Methodist minister, R.D. Snyder, who believed that "many votes cannot be counted at elections because they are not correctly marked." Snyder conducted a "school of balloting" at his church, where he passed out sample ballots at the morning service, which were "marked during the day and turned in at the evening service."²² These ballots would typically be marked for the Republican Party of the late 19th century, which termed itself "the party of great moral ideas."²³ The party became a vehicle to transmit evangelical pietistic norms into the society around them. When an evangelical minister asked his parishioners whether a "Christian" could "go to the Lord's table on Sunday and vote for [Democrat presidential candidate] Cleveland on Tuesday," the response was overwhelmingly negative.²⁴

The German Lutherans who arrived in the United States during the nineteenth century encountered this American religious culture very much dominated by the pietistic characteristics of American evangelicalism. These Lutherans repeated to these "sectarians" what Luther told the followers of Ulrich Zwingli in 1529: "*Ihr habt einen andern Geist als wir*," (You have a different spirit than we).²⁵ The evangelicals also identified something different about these foreigners' beliefs and customs. At a Wisconsin Baptist convention in 1886, it was concluded that "Emigration from the Old World is pouring in upon its hordes of Papal and infidel propagandists....Their influx corrupts

²⁰ Heinrich Gieschen, "Sechsendsechzigste Conference der Wisconsin Synod," *Gemeindeblatt* 51:15 (1 August 1916), 229.

²¹ Baptist minister quote found in Edward P. Brand, *Illinois Baptists* (Bloomington, Illinois, 1930), 60.

²² Friederich Soll, "Die beiden Bäume," *Gemeindeblatt* 52:4 (15 February 1917), 57-58.

²³ Kleppner, 75.

²⁴ Cleveland quote found in Laurence M. Larson, *The Log Book of a Young Immigrant* (Northfield, MN: Norwegian-American Historical Association, 1939), 113.

²⁵ Quote can be found in Joel Fredrich, "A Different Spirit," *Essay File*, Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library, Node 566.

morality and Christianity among us."²⁶ As more and more of these German Lutherans and Catholics arrived, a major question became how much these newcomers would assimilate to the culture around them. To the frustration of many Americans, the German Lutherans of the Wisconsin Synod and Missouri Synod became famous, or infamous, for their steadfastness in their ethnic, cultural, and religious nature.

These German Lutherans, as well as American Catholics, had a "liturgical nature" which contrasted with the pietistic evangelicalism around them—even with so-termed "American Lutherans." These liturgical groups comprised the stronghold against the Bennett Law in 1890. The liturgical nature of the Wisconsin Synod stemmed from its belief that the "kingdom of God" should not be "of the world." This is strongly reflected in the beliefs and worship practices of the synod. Rather than deciphering God's will concerning current events and popular themes of society, Wisconsin Synod worship followed a yearly calendar based on prearranged Biblical stories and passages. Believing the Bible to be the inspired word of God and therefore completely infallible, the Wisconsin Synod stressed assent to its prescribed doctrines. Therefore, they placed emphasis on formal doctrine, traditional Lutheran Confessions, and ritual in worship practices—the liturgy. This contrasted with the emotionalism of evangelical worship. Wisconsin Synod minister Frederick Soll even admitted, "our sermons are correct, but cold and stiff."²⁷ Lutheranism's emphasis, rather than the *right behavior* of the evangelicals, was a *right belief* which came from God and the Bible. Where evangelicals condemned immoral behavior, the Wisconsin Synod reviled with equal fervency what they considered false doctrine—subordination of the message of "free salvation" by one of "Christian living."²⁸

Furthermore, liturgical Christians believed they lived in an inscrutable and sinful world created by an unfathomable God. Instead of viewing America as "God's chosen nation," they believed the postmillennial goal to create the kingdom of heaven on earth to be an impossible crusade.²⁹ Said Martin Luther in his work, *On Secular Authority*, "It is *out of the question* that there should be a common Christian government over the whole world, or indeed over a single

²⁶ *Minutes of the Wisconsin Baptist Anniversaries* (Milwaukee, WI: Wisconsin Baptist State Convention, 1953), 8.

²⁷ Friederich Soll, "Die beiden Bäume," *Gemeindeblatt* 52:4 (15 February 1917), 57-58.

²⁸ A popular slogan which evangelicals used was "deeds, not creeds." This should not in any way indicate a solidarity between Lutherans and Catholics in this period. Rather, Republican strategists found that the best way to lower Lutheran voter turnout was to portray the Democrats as the party of "the antichrist."

²⁹ Kleppner, 73.

country or any considerable body of people."³⁰ These churches, then, especially the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, had a laissez-faire attitude toward government and morality—as long as the behavior was reciprocal. "Thank God Luther never was a politician," wrote a Wisconsin Synod pastor, "He was always nothing more—neither anything less—than a preacher of the Gospel."³¹ The secular state typically did not keep its end of the bargain. Pietistic legalism promoted by evangelicals "made sin what is not sin," and undermined the "freedom of a Christian."³² Liquor was fine in moderation, and beer drinking was a cherished German tradition for both Lutherans and Catholics. The "Puritan" Sabbath and other pietistic norms of conduct also found no place in Lutheran doctrine. Rev. Friedrich Schmid, the father of the Michigan Synod—eventually the Michigan District of the Wisconsin Synod—wrote already in 1833: "It is disheartening how most Christians...search from the outside to make themselves [holy]. They make laws which no one is in a position to obey."³³ While the theological arguments underlying the issues may have escaped some synod lay-members, prohibition agitation by evangelicals served as a constant reminder to what set them apart. The Wisconsin Synod understood the effects of their nonconformity. "Let us not be deceived," wrote Wisconsin Synod seminary professor August Pieper, "the sectarian churches consider the Lutheran church as a hindrance to culture, a danger to state and society."³⁴

While the word "counterculture" would not be coined until decades later, it is clear the Wisconsin Synod looked to establish a religious counterculture apart from what historian Martin Marty called the "evangelical empire."³⁵ As a counterculture, this group by conviction opposed nearly all means of integration into a broader American society. By doing so, they hoped to avoid following the same course as the "American Lutherans" who came before them, who—according to German Lutherans—subordinated Lutheran

³⁰ Martin Luther and John Calvin, *Luther and Calvin on Secular Authority* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 45;

³¹ Hans Koller Moussa, "The Birth of Freedom," *Northwestern Lutheran* 4:21 (7 November 1917), 171-173.

³² Murray Rothbard, *History of Money and Banking in the United States: The Colonial Era to World War II* (Auburn, AL: Ludwig von Mises Institute, 1994), 174.

³³ Karl Neidhard, "Reise Nach Michigan im Sommer 1834," *Michigan History Magazine* 35 (1951), 47.

³⁴ August Pieper, "The True Reconstruction of the Church," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 62 (Reprinted, 1965), 193.

³⁵ Martin Marty, *Pilgrims in their own Land: 500 Years of Religion in America* (New York: Penguin, 1985), 7.

tenets to evangelicalism. However, given the expansive nature of evangelicalism and its practice of ecumenicism, this remained a tall order for German Lutherans. A factor in favor of preserving this counterculture was that an overwhelming majority of Wisconsin Synod Lutherans worked as independent farmers or lived in small towns. This lifestyle involved less integration with the differing culture around them. Thus many German Lutherans consistently advocated the perceived paradox of being against both "big business" and "big labor," since both of these looked for an American cohesion for which the German Lutherans were not ready. This counterculture also explains the synod's dogged opposition to lodges and fraternities, which were well-known for their opposition to formal doctrine and their support of religious legalism—both major principles of evangelicalism. Membership in a lodge could even mean exclusion from the German Lutheran religious community. The biggest threat to the counterculture, however, always remained the public school, with its baldly stated goals of integration, and often "Christianization" into the evangelical mold. Correctly perceiving the common school as a system to inculcate evangelical pietistic norms, both Catholics and German Lutherans fostered parochial schools as vehicles to transmit their own religious values to their young in a country where they were a minority. Throughout all periods, German Lutherans passionately supported the Constitution of the United States because they believed its principles of freedom of speech, religion, and of limited government intrusion sanctioned their attempts to foster a distinct society on American soil.³⁶

While Catholics created their own geographic parishes and relied on an international church hierarchy to preserve their religious culture, German Lutherans did not have this option. The key component to the perpetuation of this counterculture, therefore, became the German language. After the *Northwestern Lutheran*, a Wisconsin Synod bi-weekly, discussed the assimilation of other German Americans, it claimed,

We...have done considerably better. Go into the country, where there are German churches with schools, and you will be surprised how German everybody is. I know [a synod town] where English had to be taught as a foreign language to the second generation when they entered school! [While] this is certainly not an accomplishment, it

³⁶ More extensive synod demographics can be found in Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans: A History of the Single Synod, Federation, and Merger* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), 2-5; Constitutional references will be listed on page 195 of this project.

may be rather pleasing in the eyes of such who accuse us German-Americans that we do not remain German enough.³⁷

Indeed, even by 1910, only three percent of congregations in the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods used English as their primary language.³⁸ This contrasted with the more rapid abandonment of the German language by Baptists, Methodists, and other German evangelicals who felt no fear of religious assimilation. Many Wisconsin Synod congregations still followed clauses in their constitutions requiring the German language. St. Peter Lutheran in Plymouth, Michigan, for example, still adhered to Article 3 in 1917, which read, "the church services as well as the instruction of the young must be held in the German language in this congregation."³⁹ At St. Paul Lutheran Church in New Ulm, Minnesota, 138 families were subscribed to the Wisconsin Synod's German language publication, the *Gemeindeblatt*, in 1919. Two had subscribed to the newly-established English bi-weekly, the *Northwestern Lutheran*.⁴⁰ English was practiced in varying degrees across the synod, however. After failed attempts in previous years, Grace Lutheran in Milwaukee, contemplated restarting supplementary services in the English language in 1913. The church secretary reported, "After many pros and cons, it was decided that this would be valuable and necessary."⁴¹ On the far end of the spectrum, St. Johannes (John) of Jefferson put English on the same footing as German in school in 1908 "because the younger generation was turning more and more to the English language."⁴² Their pastor, Hans Koller



0.1: Hans Koller Moussa,
Northwestern Lutheran Editor

³⁷ Frederich Meyer, "The German-Americans," *The Northwestern Lutheran* 3:17 (7 September 1916), 134-136.

³⁸ Language stats found in Mark Braun, "Being good Americans and better Lutherans: Synodical Conference Lutherans and the Military Chaplaincy," *WELS Historical Institute Journal* 19 (2001), 24. Most of the English speaking churches were located in missions outside the Midwest, such as Washington state.

³⁹ *Church History of St. Peter, Plymouth, MI*, (WLS Archives, Plymouth File), 26.

⁴⁰ Morton Schroeder, "Adolph Ackermann, Chauvinism, and Free Speech," *WELS Historical Institute Journal* 2 (1984), 13.

⁴¹ Quarterly Meeting Minutes of Grace Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, WI, October 1913.

⁴² Diamond Jubilee of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of St. John, Jefferson, WI, 1851-1926, 26.

Moussa, of Arab name and descent, became the predominant English writer for the *Northwestern Lutheran*.⁴³

As the Republican Party increased its reputation as the "party of great moral ideas," liturgical Christians generally cast their lot with the opposing party. The Democrats declared themselves to be the party of "personal liberty," and German Lutherans aligned with it to stave off political attacks on their liquor and parochial schools from the "pietist fanatics."⁴⁴ Being highly liturgical, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans voted Democrat "virtually to a man" during the late nineteenth century.⁴⁵ The towns of Theresa and Berlin, Wisconsin, both predominated by Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, consistently voted over ninety percent Democratic. This was the norm until 1896, when the Democrats nominated a populist, but pietist, William Jennings Bryan, as its presidential candidate. The voter turnout dropped in disgruntled Lutheran districts, and some even deferred to the Republicans. Even after the political environment turned ambiguous during the progressive era, polemics from both sides kept the struggle fully animated.

This religious political struggle often crossed ethnic lines, blurring the popularly accepted "immigrant and native" dichotomy of party politics. German evangelicals, such as Baptists, Methodists, and many Congregationalists, typically voted for the "party of great moral ideas."⁴⁶ During the Bennett Law contest, German evangelicals were even more adamant in their support for the law than their "Yankee" allies. Amid the struggle, the German United Brethren reported in a conference that "A foe to the common school has arisen in the *foreign* immigrant element, with *foreign* ideas and customs, who in the name of religion and personal liberty threaten the life of our time-honored American free-school system."⁴⁷ The use of the word "foreign" by this immigrant group is telling. The German United Brethren felt they could claim Americanism because

⁴³ James P. Schaefer, "Hans Koller Moussa," *Forward in Christ* 76:10 (May 1989). Moussa was exceptionally gifted. Chicago University, aware of his knowledge of no less than 14 languages, considered him a prospective president. He sometimes singlehandedly carried issues of the *Northwestern Lutheran* in its humble early days. His early death in 1928 at the age of 44 was deeply felt across the synod.

⁴⁴ Rothbard, 174.

⁴⁵ Voting records compiled in Paul Kleppner, *Cross of Culture: A Social Analysis of Midwestern Politics 1850-1900*, (New York: Free Press, 1970), 138, 333.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 37, 78. Kleppner's compiled voting records religiously homogenous towns to analyze these groups.

⁴⁷ United Brethren of Christ, Wisconsin Annual Conference Records, 1890, 41-42, MSS, State Historical Society of Wisconsin, microfilm, emphasis is mine.

of their "American" ideas and religious customs. In the "evangelical empire," immigrant groups with similar religious beliefs could be more easily assimilated than those who differed. Especially among the Germans, religion played a key role in determining how smooth the Americanization process could be.

As the Bennett Law controversy showed, both of these groups feared the other would subvert their value system. Liturgical Christians felt their institutions and ways of life were under consistent attack from the "pietist fanatics" who attempted to enlist *Gewalt*—governmental decrees—to reform their churches and society as a whole. On the other hand, evangelical Christians felt their way of life was threatened by the disparate institutions and "immoral behavior" of the liturgical groups, the Wisconsin Synod being one of them. As many evangelicals believed, the German Lutheran presence alone could even forestall Christ's second coming. This struggle ebbed and flowed throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and reached its crescendo during the "holy war" for Democracy, the First World War.

II. The First World War and a New Wave of Conflict

At the start of the First World War in Europe in 1914, the German ethnicity of the Wisconsin Synod naturally created animosity with groups more apt to support Great Britain or France. This ethnic divide during the war is self-evident, and, frankly, requires minute analysis. It cannot be avoided, nonetheless, and will play a major part in the narrative of the Wisconsin Synod's difficulties on the "home front." What histories have left mostly untouched, however, is the religious aspect of the wartime divide. This evangelical and liturgical division, very much alive before the war, reared its ugly head once the First World War moved to the forefront of political discourse. A plausible reason for this omission is that historians, like many contemporaries of the war, were so caught up in the ethnic features of the German Lutherans that many religious aspects to their objections and persecutions were left unconsidered. Both religious groups, however, displayed behavior during the war consistent with their religious nature.

The evangelicals were especially consistent. In an article titled "Religious Freedom Endangered," Wisconsin Synod seminary professor John Schaller discussed the activities of the "sectarian" churches during the First World War. "You get the impression," wrote Schaller, "that the church has outgrown the

real Gospel and has put on the habiliments of the political agitator."⁴⁸ The evangelical habit of "reforming" the world to meet "all of God's holy and righteous demands" led many to enter the political arena. During the war, God's "holy and righteous demands" called for a crusade to "civilize" Europe and to defend and spread democracy, the "holiest form of government." In short, the First World War was an opportunity to reform not only American society, but the world. This is plain in slogans such as "the war to end all wars." Most evangelical churches did not even wait for the declaration to get involved. In his book, *Is Preparedness for War Unchristian?*, Baptist clergyman Leonard Broughton concluded, "Preparedness...in this country is distinctly Christian, and in keeping with the highest principles of American statesmanship. And that a man, however sincere he may be, who sets himself against it, is not a friend of his country."⁴⁹ Another clergyman wrote, "Our moral sense as a nation is dulled. Morally we have lost our way. Our present lack of a national spirit is due also in part to a vast amount of well-meant but mistaken and really *unchristian* teaching about peace."⁵⁰

A typically informal worship routine and a chief focus on "Christian living" that often pertained to current events also made evangelical church bodies perfect candidates to assist the state in its war efforts. These churches eagerly enlisted to raise war funds, organized patriotic events, and roused the public's fighting spirit. In their minds, this was a requirement of all preachers on the home front. At a Methodist Episcopal Conference in Detroit, Bishop Theodore Henderson stated, "If there is any preacher...who doesn't see his way clear to espouse the cause of the Allies, if we can't regenerate him, we will eliminate him, and then turn him over to the Department of Justice."⁵¹ Congregationalist theologian Lyman Abbott also exemplified this church militancy, "in this hour every Christian Church should be a recruiting office for the Kingdom of God...The Christian Church and the Christian ministry should hear the voice of the Master saying, 'I have come not to send peace, but a

⁴⁸ John Schaller, "Religious Freedom Endangered II," *Northwestern Lutheran* 6:12 (15 June 1919), 92-93;

⁴⁹ L. G. Broughton, *Is Preparedness for War Unchristian?* (New York: Hoddler and Stroughton, 1916), 169.

⁵⁰ W.T. Manning, *The Present Crisis in the Nation's Life* (Pamphlet), emphasis is mine.

⁵¹ Ray H. Abrams, *Preachers Present Arms* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1969), 193.

sword."⁵² Preachers across the country happily accepted sermon texts and outlines from the federal government. Sermons even fell into the following rhetoric:

It is God who has summoned us to this war. It is his war we are fighting....This conflict is indeed a crusade. The greatest in history—the holiest. It is in the profoundest and truest sense a Holy War...Yes, it is Christ, the King of Righteousness, who calls us to grapple in deadly strife with this unholy and blasphemous power.⁵³

To be fair, this sentiment was not universal; some evangelical churches advocated peace or demurred from transforming the pulpit into a patriotic loudspeaker. A few religious groups, such as the Mennonites, attempted to conscientiously abstain from the war because of their doctrine of pacifism. These defectors also received the punishment due to them for their defiance.

Likewise, the Wisconsin Synod exhibited behavior consistent with its highly liturgical nature. Unlike the evangelicals, Lutheranism believed that force, such as laws and wars, cannot make people holy—only the gospel has that power. Therefore, the prospect of going to war to forcefully uplift Europe seemed very quixotic. Furthermore, while evangelicals could easily adapt their informal worship practices to preach patriotic themes and solicit war contributions, the Wisconsin Synod ministers would need to break the Lutheran church liturgical calendar to insert the government mandated texts and themes, which often conflicted with the synod's doctrine in the first place. Cooperation with government endeavors also caused trepidation over breaking the synod's beloved "dividing wall between church and state."⁵⁴ The synod labeled this development a "dangerous precedent with far reaching consequences...if officials were justified in this case to make such demands upon the churches according to their personal judgment, just where is the limit to this alleged privilege?"⁵⁵

This fact did not temper the charges against the synod for being unpatriotic, nor did it moderate the persecution of both its pastors and members. Seminary professor August Pieper summarized the situation well: "the sectarian (evangelical) churches of America cannot understand our Lutheran Church...which wants to preach nothing but the Gospel...[and] refuse as churches to place the holy ministry and the church officers in the service of

⁵² Liberty Loan Committee, Second Federal Reserve District, "Material for Clergy in Third Liberty Loan," 1918.

⁵³ R.H. McKim, *For God and Country* (New York: E.P. Dutton & Company, 1918), 116-117.

⁵⁴ John Brenner, "Liberty Church," *Northwestern Lutheran* 6:11 (1 June 1919), 82-83.

⁵⁵ John Schaller, "Religious Freedom Endangered," *Northwestern Lutheran* 6:11 (1 June 1919), 86-88.

the government to recruit men, sell bonds, and the like." In some cases, "in the superheated atmosphere...and with a keen sense of being coerced," some synod churches "almost unjustifiably submitted under duress and, lending the machinery of the church to the government, rendered whatever aid they could with good conscience."⁵⁶

As a religious community keen to preserve its distinct nature against integration, the prospect of a nationwide war effort could only produce difficulties. Wars require incorporation and solidarity to achieve victory. Hence, "national duty" would require many in the church to step outside its protective environment. The war "emergency" also brought about reinvigorated attacks against the synod's parochial schools and German-language church services, both of which were condemned as the enemies of "American unity." The worst by-product of the war, in the synod's opinion, was the attempt to create a religious cohesion for the war effort. Historian Ray Abrams put it this way, "What the churches had failed to accomplish in the furtherance of church unity in half a century of virtual peace came about almost overnight in a united effort to help kill the Germans and thereby promote the best interests of the kingdom of God."⁵⁷ This became apparent in the government controlled religious care of the soldiers, who were often given the generic choice of "Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish" for their ministers. Later in the war it even developed into common appeals for a national church—a postmillennial and ecumenical dream. Joint patriotic worship activities prevailed throughout the war years, and Wisconsin

⁵⁶ August Pieper, "The True Reconstruction of the Church," *Theologische Quartalschrift* 62 (1965), 193.

⁵⁷ Abrams, 80. A very popular book, *Religion and the War*, published in 1918, exemplifies the religious atmosphere of the time. After degrading the "narrow minded" and "dogmatic" churches who were a stumbling block to "Christian Unity" during the war, author Williston Walker laid the groundwork for which all Christian churches should unite after the war: "All of these elements—the intellectual, the pietistic, the aesthetic or symbolical—have a rightful place in religious life, but they are all *subordinate*, to the one great dominating element, the *moral*. And it is because of a failure to adequately recognize and practice this element that so many supposedly Christian nations are today in deadly conflict. All of them persist in their theological beliefs; all of them persist in pietistic communion; all of them persist in rite and ceremony; but some of them at least fail even to approximate the exemplification of their fundamental and *ethical requirements* of their faith. Their theology, their pietism, their worship,—their religion,—have not been *moralized*; and unless we are willing to make, both in belief and practice, the religious basis of word-organization truly ethical, we will fall as lamentably in the future as we have in the past." Emphasis is mine. Therefore, whenever the synod said they rejected ecumenicism, it was because they understood what ecumenicism meant: a subordination of salvation " by grace through faith *alone*" to a foremost emphasis on "moralizing" and "Christian living" to "earn" salvation.

Synod Lutherans were called "scabs" when they declined to participate.⁵⁸ "That's their thing," claimed the *Gemeindeblatt*, "Lutherans may not, without denying our faith, make common religious cause with them."⁵⁹

Critics might argue, as many did, that the German Lutherans exploited their tenets as a safe cover for their pro-German leanings. While this argument should not be ignored, it oversimplifies the circumstances and makes religious conviction a moot point. The best way to judge the consistency of the synod is to examine their actions in comparable situations, but without the prospect of war with Germany. For one, the Spanish-American War of 1898 provides this opportunity. In an article posted on 15 July 1898, the *Gemeindeblatt* discussed the decision of the United States to declare war. "Whether this was wise is something we have not to judge," claimed the *Gemeindeblatt*, "Indeed we cannot, without having inspected the relevant documents."⁶⁰ This is hardly the case of a church playing the role of head cheerleader. Later in the war, it claimed, "War is a disaster, every war for every nation, even if its fleet and army rushes to victory, war is an evil...People in war believe they are free from all the commandments of God." It then gave sympathy to the "terrible losses suffered by the enemy...to the thousands who are wounded and maimed...Last week in the besieged city by our troops 15,000 old people, men, women, and children have fled and have saved nothing but their bare lives." Yet, the *Gemeindeblatt* claimed Christians should "be still and know that he is God," and that the government does have the authority to declare war.⁶¹ Had this article been published during the First World War, the writer would most likely have been indicted under the Espionage or Sedition Act. Another example goes back all the way to 1868, when the Wisconsin Synod officially broke ties with the German state churches. With rhetoric sounding plainly similar to that in 1917-1918, the synod described these bodies as "a misuse of the power of the state over the church," whereby "consciences were enslaved and the church robbed of its

⁵⁸ "Sectarian 'Tolerance,'" *The Northwestern Lutheran* 4:17 (7 September 1917), 131.

⁵⁹ "YMCA," *Gemeindeblatt* 52:12 (15 June 1917), 182.

⁶⁰ "Kriegs und Sieges Predigt," *Gemeindeblatt* 33:14 (15 July 1898), 105.

⁶¹ "Kriegs und Friedenspredigt," *Gemeindeblatt* 33:20 (15 October 1898), 153. Another aspect of consistency with this war was the service to the soldiers. Like in World War I, the sole Wisconsin Synod pastor who served the soldiers, F.J. Eppling, worked separate from the government issued chaplains and held his own religious services. He even "feared the regimental chaplains want to give me trouble." At the request of the soldiers which he served, Eppling preached in German. One point of difference, however, is that the synod did not seem to have qualms receiving government assistance. Eppling rode down with the governor of Wisconsin seemingly free of passage.

possessions...Therefore not only a manufactured doctrinal union, but also an enforced organizational union are to be categorized as definitely worthy of condemnation."⁶² That these words referred to churches in Germany makes this statement even more convincing.

At a time when civil liberties were rarely put into practice, and instead served simply as a catchphrase, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans received a rude awakening for their wartime dissent and their slow—or nonexistent—assimilation into American culture. Their story is mostly told through the words of detractors, investigators, and other government officials who left extensive records of their thoughts and activities concerning the German Lutherans. Throughout the struggle, the Wisconsin Synod Lutherans espoused their own version of patriotism, which differed from that imposed upon them. The narrative originates from this divergence.

⁶² Edward C. Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans: A History of the Single Synod, Federation, and Merger* (Milwaukee, WI: Northwestern Publishing House, 1992), 35.

Chapter 1

Neutrality Betrayed

*T*he outbreak of war in Europe in 1914 surprised few of those who followed European affairs. Conflicts over colonies and an escalation in military preparations created an air of tension which finally detonated after the assassination of the Archduke of Austria. The unprecedented amplification and carnage of the conflict, however, both shocked and horrified onlookers. The Battle of the Marne, which in 1914 halted Germany's progress into France, resulted in half a million casualties. At the very beginning, the American people shuddered at the thought of participation and resolved to steer clear of the conflict.

In the interconnected world of 1914, however, such non-intervention was difficult to put into practice. The predominant European ethnicity of Americans stirred emotions and often aligned individuals with one side in the struggle, more often with the Allied Powers. Initial German successes in the war were also counterproductive in this way, as an invasion of Belgium and France allowed partisans for the Allies to pin Germany as the aggressor. The emerging economic giant of America also made it a possible balance of power in the struggle for supplies. The British, with a superior fleet, blockaded all merchant access to German ports in an attempt to wear down Germany in a war of attrition. The Germans responded by using the *Unterseeboot* to disrupt trade routes to the Allies. Of the two, the latter strategy was considered much less humane and antagonized Americans to a greater extent. As months went by, the war was increasingly viewed as less of a commercial rivalry than a struggle between the democracy of the Allies and autocracy of the Central Powers. The beloved neutrality at the beginning of the war began to slip away. By the fall of 1915, a nationwide survey of clergymen showed that over eighty percent

preached preparedness for war.¹ Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, however, remained steadfast in their favor of neutrality. Their anguish, while it slowly dissipated, played a key role in drawing the lines on the home front.

II. Distant Guns Felt at Home

The Wisconsin Synod (WELS) never believed humankind could overcome its wretchedness through civilization. The outbreak of a brutal war in what were deemed the most civilized societies only confirmed their belief in the total depravity of human nature. Wisconsin Synod pastor Carl Buenger declared peace under the auspices of civilization to be as fragile as a "*Seifenblase*" (soap bubble), because "all enlightenment and civilization by no means improves the corrupt heart of man from sin."² All culture is but a thin veneer, claimed WELS minister Hans K. Moussa, as he described the "pained surprise of those who thought modern civilization was so far advanced that war was outgrown."³ These and other publications point to an unfavorable sentiment toward the European War from its beginning. Consequently, none of the synod publications promoted Germany's righteous cause in the war. Instead, they criticized all claims that God favored either nation as "the typical heathen idea of a *tribal God*."⁴ Writers claimed the war started for economic reasons, as Moussa stated, "but whenever these very same [business] interests would not benefit by the avoidance, there will be war." As the American neutrality became more fragile, this rhetoric against business interests would only increase.

While the synod may not have parroted Germany's cause in the war, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans naturally felt partiality to their former homeland. This sentiment was felt by the older generation especially, since most of this generation either hailed from Germany or still had relatives living there. For instance, Pastor F. Mueller of the Missouri Synod, the sister synod of the WELS, had 15 cousins in the German army.⁵ A myriad of relief efforts attempted to alleviate the hardship and suffering felt in Germany. While Hans K. Moussa

¹ E. Hershey Sneath, *Religion and the War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1918), 82-83. Several other surveys during this time show similar patterns. Another vote in Brooklyn of over twenty denominations tabulated 157 in favor of preparedness while only 14 opposed. A poll of Presbyterian ministers by Chicago's *The Continent* in 1915 found "an overwhelming majority" favoring preparedness.

² C. Bünger, "Europas Völkerkrieg," *Gemeindeblatt* 49:19 (1 Oct 1914), 295.

³ Hans K. Moussa, "Lessons of the War," *Northwestern Lutheran* 1:17 (7 September 1914), 137.

⁴ Hans K. Moussa, "The Fifty-fifth Psalm," *Northwestern Lutheran* 2:7 (7 April 1915), 50-51.

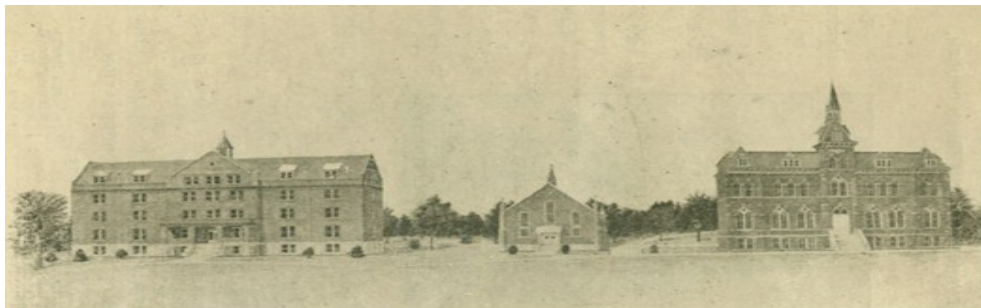
⁵ A.E. Farland Report, 2 October 1918, OG 241115.

claimed that sympathy was felt for all war victims, including the piteous "appeals...of Belgium, Serbia, and Northern France,"⁶ German Lutheran pocketbooks did not match the rhetoric. Adele Falde, the editor of "College Notes" at the Wisconsin Synod's Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota, summarized more candidly the feelings of Wisconsin Synod Lutherans:

Societies all over the United States are formed and are collecting for a good cause. An Englishman will collect for the Red Cross in England. A Frenchman for the Red Cross in France. We, being Germans, would materially help the Germans...We were visited by two young ladies from Mankato, selling rings made of iron to aid the Red Cross in Austria-Hungary and Germany...They were sold at the price of a dollar apiece, a very small amount considering the good that a dollar will do. Why not all buy a ring?"⁷

German Lutherans also partook in event benefits for the Red Cross in Germany and Austria. The Dr. Martin Luther College choirs participated in such an event at the New Ulm Turner Hall on 19 October 1914. Other organizations received assistance from the synod. Congregations from Milwaukee, for example, created a special collection to help war-weary members of the Lutheran Free Church in Germany, which was a separate entity from the German state churches and affiliated with the synod.⁸

Within the first week of the war, the British cut the transatlantic cable to the United States somewhere east of the Azores. This maneuver blocked German sources of war news from reaching the United States. Hence, most items published in the American press reflected the heavy editing of Allied censorship. This caused the German American population to turn to other



1.1: Dr. Martin Luther College, 1917

⁶ Hans K. Moussa, "Helping the War Victims," *Northwestern Lutheran* 3:16 (21 August 1916), 122.

⁷ *DMLC Messenger* (December 1914 and March 1915), found in Morton Schroeder, "Adolph Ackermann, Chauvinism, and Free Speech," *WELS Historical Institute Journal* 2 (1984), 10-19.

⁸ Quarterly Meeting Minutes of Grace Lutheran, Milwaukee, WI, 12 October 1914.

sources for war news. Travelling speakers from Germany found receptive audiences in Wisconsin Synod circles. Dr. Eugene Kühnemann, a celebrated German scholar, gave presentations for WELS congregations concerning the conditions of East Prussia—the former homeland for many WELS Lutherans—which was invaded by Russia in August and September 1914. "His enthusiasm is contagious," wrote Rev. Hans K. Moussa.⁹ Elsewhere, a Mr. Hirsch from Konstanz, Germany visited Grace Lutheran in Milwaukee and held an "interesting meeting about the need of those who suffer" in the school auditorium on 6 April 1915.¹⁰

This thirst for war news without the Allied bias also spurred a revival in the German language press, which either reinterpreted Allied news sources or received reports from correspondents. The *Gemeindeblatt* twice reposted dispatches from the German Kaiser, which were unavailable in the English language press, and painted a better situation for Germany than otherwise reported.¹¹ Secular newspapers like the *Minneapolis Freie Presse* and Milwaukee's *Germania Herald* also experienced a revival in readership, and papers like these became the only trusted source of war-related news for many German Lutherans. The most famous, or infamous, of the proponents for Germany was an English language weekly called *The Fatherland*, edited by George Sylvester Viereck. *The Fatherland* educated Americans on the virtues of the German position and attempted to expose the conspiracy to draw America into the war. Started in August 1914, more than 100,000 copies were in circulation by October.¹² Viereck gave his newspaper free to ministers, particularly Lutheran ministers, hoping these influential individuals would relay its sentiments to others. Many synod ministers likely subscribed to these various papers. A WELS congregation in Marshall, Wisconsin, read the *Milwaukee Germania Herald* "almost exclusively," reported a federal agent. Rev. Hans Eggert from Bay City, Michigan won a wardrobe from *Viereck's Weekly*, the new name for *The Fatherland* starting in 1917.¹³ The only price was attention from the Justice Department, since as a reader of *Viereck's Weekly* he became suspected of pro-German leanings. Four other WELS ministers—Martin Sauer,

⁹ Hans K. Moussa, "Helping the War Victims," *Northwestern Lutheran* 3:16 (21 August 1916), 122.

¹⁰ Quarterly Meeting Minutes of Grace Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, WI, 6 April 1915.

¹¹ "Unseres Kaisers erste Siegesdepesche," *Gemeindeblatt* 50:5 (1 March 1915), 71;

"Neujahrsbotschaft des Deutschen Kaisers," *Gemeindeblatt* 50:7 (1 April 1915), 107.

¹² U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on the Judiciary, *Hearings on Brewing and Liquor Interests and German and Bolshevik Propaganda*, 66th Cong., 1st sess., 1919, p. 1420; Wm. S. Fitch Report, 28 April 1917, OG 13652.

¹³ *Viereck's Weekly*, 31 Oct 1917, Found in OG 12294, Page 25.

Paul Budach, John Glaeser and Henry Viestens—later came under investigation because they subscribed to the *Milwaukee Free Press* before the war.¹⁴ Thanks to these investigations, however, evidence exists of their readership of these papers.

The war in Europe continually made its presence felt in the minds of Wisconsin Synod Lutherans. Military companies became a popular activity for students at the two WELS colleges. Dr. Martin Luther College (DMLC) drilled every Tuesday and Thursday, and around 100 students joined the company. The company thought highly of itself; said a member, "Judging from the material that has been given us this year, we may expect to reach a standard which will put us on the level with any other organization of the kind."¹⁵ A military band also organized at DMLC during the neutrality period. At Northwestern, the 150 boys who drilled caught the attention of local Congregational pastor N.C. Daniell, who pleaded to authorities to confiscate the students' rifles. As a justice department agent investigated the situation, Professor J.H. Ott, the librarian at Northwestern, kindly reminded the visitor that according to the Constitution the government has no authority to depose of their rifles.¹⁶ This tension over Northwestern's rifles went much deeper than their constitutionality. As steadfast partisans for peace and neutrality, Wisconsin Synod Lutherans bitterly sparred with those who by 1917 sounded the drums of war. As the neutrality became more fragile, the stakes became higher and the feud between the war and peace parties became more passionate.

III. Partisans for Peace

Although a strong neutrality sentiment pervaded the United States early in the war, the neutrality position was increasingly on the defensive. Some, like former President Theodore Roosevelt, needed no convincing, as he told reporters from the beginning he would "declare war on Germany tomorrow."¹⁷ Numerous defense leagues created a physical presence for war agitation. The most prominent was the National Security League, with a membership over 100,000, which drilled regularly and published names of "un-American"

¹⁴ Wm. S. Fitch Report, "Milwaukee Free Press," 23 March 1917, OG 20117.

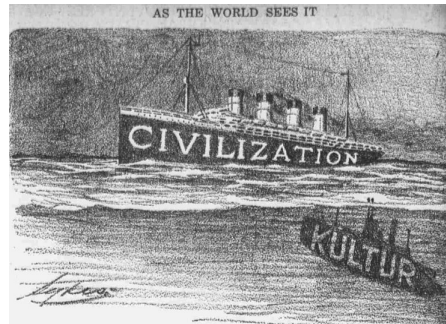
¹⁵ *DMLC Messenger* (March 1914, October 1915, and September 1916) found in Morton Schroeder, 11.

¹⁶ Wm. H. Steiner Report, 3 April 1917, OG 1396; Wm. H. Steiner Report, "Dr. Ludwig Bleek, And Rifles at German Lutheran College," 27 April 1917, OG 1396.

¹⁷ French Strother, *Fighting Germany's Spies* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1918), 45.

representatives who did not vote for defensive measures. A splinter group from the Security League, the American Defense Society, with Theodore Roosevelt as president, was far more vigorous in war preparation. Furthermore, a heavy majority of American newspapers favored the Allies and highlighted German atrocities in acts of war or on the high seas. In opposition, WELS critics felt the neutrality was being undermined by the press' non-neutral nature. They attacked the "subsidized press" for provoking the American citizenry and then either minimized Germany's war crimes or defended them. Synod members consistently defended the war's original perception as a commercial war, rather than the struggle between the darkness of autocracy and the light of democracy. Until the bitter end, most German Lutherans were baffled and frustrated at the credulous American citizens who refused to heed their admonitions and were so easily swayed by propaganda.

The first major dispute came over Germany's treatment of neutral Belgium. Germany's Schlieffen Plan called for the German army to pass through Belgium as a shortcut to Paris. When Belgium refused the German army passage, Germany invaded and occupied Belgium to open the route. Allied newspapers seized this opportunity to brand Germany with barbarism. Like most occupation armies, German soldiers were guilty of a wide array of abuse and maltreatment of the native population. However, sensationalized reports surfaced of German soldiers tearing children from mothers' arms and murdering them in cold blood, among other unspeakable tragedies. Germany's alleged treatment of Belgium firmly convinced many Americans to support the Allied cause. In response, German



1.3: Raemaker: *Kultur in Cartoons*

Lutherans accused the press of misrepresenting the situation in Europe for propaganda purposes. The *Gemeindeblatt* questioned the reports of "atrocities so hair-raising they are difficult to believe" and noted, "very few proper witnesses attested to these."¹⁸ It accused the press of preying on the ignorance of the people. In another article, it shared correspondence with the editor of a Belgian newspaper who claimed he "traversed [Belgium] by length and breadth, but of starving women and children, I've never seen anything." While French

¹⁸ "Belgien," *Gemeindeblatt* 50:3 (1 Feb 1915), 41.

and English papers illustrated a severe famine in Belgium, this correspondent contrarily stated, "I've eaten in small towns and villages, always very good and extremely cheap."¹⁹

In an article titled "Belgien und der Kongostaat," Rev. Walter Hoenecke attempted to expose the not so blameless character of "innocent Belgium." Inside, he described the atrocities of King Leopold, the father of current Belgian King Albert, as "The vast natural resources of [Congo] have been exploited without regard for the population, forcing the inhabitants to slavery services and slaughtered en masse, often under cruel tortures." How terribly they treated the native population was "evident from the fact that the population since 1885 has fallen from 18 million to 4 million, but for Belgium it has earned billions of francs." Once again the English language press came under attack, noting that English language papers "overflowed with indignation over the Belgian Congo atrocities" until they needed the friendship of the Belgians, "then of course they were silent."²⁰ The Belgium situation received such a response from Wisconsin Synod writers because they understood how vital an issue it was for Allied propaganda. Indeed, when war eventually arrived, American soldiers were continually inspired by stories of Germany's oppression of innocent Belgium.

The eventual cause of American entry into the war, neutral shipping rights, received by far the most attention from the Wisconsin Synod. Both sides violated United States shipping rights in the war. Great Britain used its superior fleet to blockade all maritime trade to the Central Powers, from war supplies to foodstuffs. Germany, having the inferior fleet, chose to use its *Unterseeboot*, or submarine, to equalize the war of supplies. The nature of submarine warfare, however, repulsed many Americans, because submarines often killed without warning. Since a visible presence of a blockading fleet was not present in the Allied trade routes, United States merchants and industrialists were drawn to the profitable prospects of supplying a nation at war. These divergent interests naturally lead to complications. Germany warned all vessels trading with its enemies that no weapons of war would be admitted within a specified zone around England and France. This did little to stem the tide of trade, and merchants found creative ways to mask their activities. A very popular method was to use civilian vessels to transport supplies. In May 1915 a German

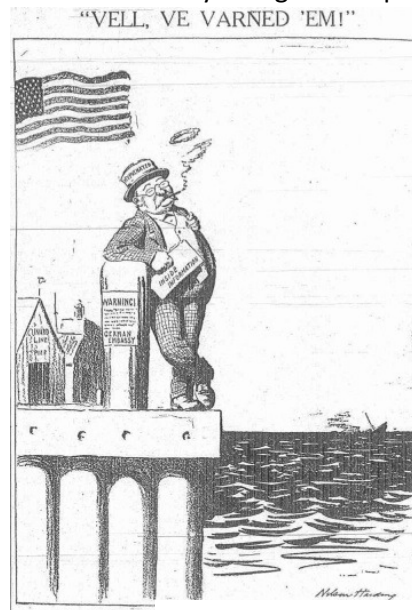
¹⁹ "Wie es nach sieben Monaten Krieg in Deutschland aussieht," *Gemeindeblatt* 50:12 (15 June 1915), 182.

²⁰ "Belgien," *Gemeindeblatt* 50:3 (1 Feb 1915), 41; Walter Hönecke, "Belgien und der Kongostaat," *Gemeindeblatt* 50:5 (1 March 1915), 70.

submarine suspected a civilian vessel, the *Lusitania*, of doing just that. It fired upon and sunk the *Lusitania*. While the assumption was correct—the *Lusitania* was carrying guns and ammunition—1,198 civilians died as a result, including 138 American citizens.²¹ The ensuing firestorm made Germany relax its submarine warfare for a time. As war supplies continued to be shipped across the Atlantic, neutral shipping would remain at the forefront of public discourse throughout the neutrality period.

Many German Americans angered their fellow citizens by attempting to justify the *Lusitania's* sinking. They pointed to the fact that the *Lusitania* put its passengers in danger by carrying munitions, and that Germany had given ample warning to all prospective passengers. A popular cartoon circulated depicting a German American telling himself after the sinking, "Vell, ve varned 'em!"²² While the Wisconsin Synod never officially defended the *Lusitania's* sinking, it made reference to it in a *Northwestern Lutheran* article, which depicted a Methodist Episcopal Conference's resolution condemning "in unsparing words the inhuman torpedoing and unchristian sinking of the steel steamship *Lusitania*."²³ The article highlighted six ministers who bolted the meeting after fighting in vain to have the resolution tabled. Most synod members, being well read in the German language press, likely adhered to what they read—that supplying a belligerent with weaponry and ammunition was a virtual participation in war, and that Germany was justified in sinking vessels which carried those munitions.

The most telling sign of the Wisconsin Synod's attitude towards the *Lusitania* was their continued condemnation of "illicit" weaponry trade. They believed profiteering from the European war to be immoral and non-neutral in nature. Even before the *Lusitania* affair, the *Gemeindeblatt* posted an article



1.3: Life Magazine, 10 May 1915

²¹ Louise Doswald-Beck, *San Remo Manual on International Law Applicable to Armed Conflicts at Sea* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 124.

²² *Brooklyn Daily Eagle*, 8 May 1915.

²³ "Pro-German Clergymen Bolt Chicago Meeting," *Northwestern Lutheran* 2:10 (21 May 1915), 80.

titled "The Sin of America." Inside, it described the "shame of hypocrisy and idolatry of money" of those who enriched themselves from the killing in the European war.²⁴ The war supplies found their way strictly to Allied nations, allowing the Allied powers to "continue the war of extermination against the Germans." This was a flagrant breach of neutrality because "neutrality means favoring neither party." Since the bullets they sold killed people with whom America was not at war, the *Gemeindeblatt* called these profits "Blutgeld," or "blood money." With powerful enemies on all sides, Germany "will with American money and possessions be completely destroyed." At the Thirteenth Biennial Convention of the Wisconsin Synod in September 1915, the delegates unanimously adopted a resolution along similar lines:

The Joint Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan and other states in session assembled at Saginaw, Michigan, unanimously declared it is not within our providence as part of the Christian Church to decide the question whether or not our government according to so-called international law is guilty or not, during the present war, of partisanship in protecting and furthering the traffic in arms and ammunition. But, whereas, the sufferance of said traffic in arms and ammunition is virtually a participation in war, and also a gross transgression of the Divine commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," we, bound in conscience by the eternal laws of God, feel compelled to declare to our government that not only all traffickers in arms and ammunition of this country are, but also our government is guilty of the blood shed in this war. We solemnly disavow and repudiate such traffic and protest against it most emphatically.²⁵

The convention then formally requested all synod members to pray without ceasing, both in public services and privately, that "God on high may make the war to cease and grant peace on earth again."

As the tide of mainstream opinion in the United States turned overwhelmingly to the Allies, the Wisconsin Synod Lutherans remained firm in their position. Nearly every act in the war turned into an opportunity for dispute. When the ancient French convent of the Celestins was destroyed by German bombardment, the English language press described the event as further proof of the "Huns'" disregard for civilization. Instead, the *Northwestern Lutheran* focused on the "scandal of permitting the building, which was classed as an historic monument, to be used as a barrack, which contributed to its destruction."²⁶ Among the numerous civilian massacres committed throughout the war, the *Northwestern* specifically focused on reports that Russia exiled to

²⁴ "Die Sünde Americas," *Gemeindeblatt* 50:6 (15 March 1915), 86-87.

²⁵ A.C. Haase, "Thirteenth Biennial Convention of the Joint Ev. Luth. Synod of Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, and Other States," *Northwestern Lutheran* 2:18 (21 September 1915), 142.

²⁶ "Historic Convent Destroyed," *Northwestern Lutheran* 3:15 (7 August 1916), 120.

Siberia all the Lutherans of German extraction within its empire, which would be "nothing short of murder and robbery of the baldest sort." The maltreated Lutherans were never mentioned by the English Language press, for "it might be interpreted as undue sympathy for Germany....It makes one's blood boil at the injustice of it all."²⁷ The silence of the English language press on issues like this confirmed German Lutherans' belief that it was attempting to mislead the American people into a war with Germany. To counter this, the *Northwestern Lutheran* advertised a book in 1916 titled *War Echoes, or Germany and Austria in the Crisis*. The book was priced at \$1.25, and it received high praise from the *Northwestern*:

We have not seen another publication on the great World's War that can compare with this in thoroughness, comprehensiveness, and excellence. Every American not conversant with the German language should read this book and have their eyes opened on such questions as "The Causes of the War," "Why Belgium was not Protected," "Reasons for Germany in the World War," "Reasons for Great Britain in the World War," "Neutrality in the United States," and dozens of other questions answered by...famous authorities, together with the most important official documents bearing on the subject.²⁸

German Lutherans often chose to vote with their money when they disapproved of the actions of their financial institutions. Many banks throughout the neutrality period invested in Allied War Bonds, firstly to help the Allied cause and secondly because it included a high return of investment. WELS minister Otto Engel, like many German Lutherans, pulled his funds from these misbehaving banks. He wrote to his friend, Rev. Hermann Zimmerman, "Certainly I have taken gold out of deposit from the bank and advise others to take the same course. It is also in order to occasionally have a little 'talk' with the banker."²⁹ In Milwaukee, such a furor was raised "against the sale of any Anglo-French bonds that...not a single Milwaukee bank openly handled any Anglo-French bonds."³⁰ Many banks on the eastern seaboard, especially J.P. Morgan banks, invested substantially in Allied bonds. Therefore, an Allied victory would ensure that these investments would be paid in full. Thus the German Lutheran rhetoric against Wall Street emerged because many of these institutions understood that American involvement in the war would further protect their investments.

²⁷ "An Atrocity?" *Northwestern Lutheran* 3:17 (7 September 1916), 130-131.

²⁸ "War Echoes, or Germany and Austria in the Crisis," *Northwestern Lutheran* 3:22 (15 November 1916), 174.

²⁹ Otto Engel to Hermann Zimmerman, 17 September 1915, OG 5025.

³⁰ U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Judiciary, *Hearings on the National German-American Alliance*, 65th Cong., 2d sess., 1918, p. 115.

This anti-bank rhetoric should not be strictly construed as opportunistic of the German Lutherans, as many assumed. The Lutheran religion maintained a streak of anti-bank sentiment ever since Martin Luther published his thoughts in "A Treaty on Usury." While many protestant denominations had already given up the battle against usury by Luther's time, many Catholics and Lutherans theologically contested the practice well into the 19th century. C.F.W. Walther, the most influential Lutheran in America and highly revered by the Wisconsin and Missouri Synods, in 1869 put the taking of interest in the same category as "theft, robbery, adultery, and idolatry" and claimed that "banks are nothing but institutions of usury."³¹ This sentiment may have dimmed as the nature of lending changed,³² but reverberations still existed prior to the war. This is especially true for the western regions of the synod—Minnesota and the Dakotas. In these states, the Nonpartisan League was a political force, and some Lutherans were drawn to its anti-banking tenets. Furthermore, banks—especially nationally prominent ones—stood as a natural obstacle to the Wisconsin Synod's attempt to create a distinct society on American soil.

With a presidential election forthcoming in 1916, most understood its significance on the future course of American participation in the war. Dissatisfied with the current regime's policies, most German Lutherans favored Republican challenger Charles Evans Hughes. A member of the Wisconsin Democratic State Campaign Committee reported that Lutherans from Sheboygan, Calumet, and Waupaca counties were especially active and "willing to condemn Wilson."³³ Nearly every German language newspaper endorsed Hughes, so much so that the *New York Times* dubbed him the "German favorite son." The *Gemeindeblatt* and *Northwestern Lutheran* did not endorse Hughes, however, and instead warned that some in the church had dangerously breached the political divide. John Brenner in the *Northwestern Lutheran* admitted, "many of our Lutheran brethren have in these last years acted

³¹ C.F.W. Walther, *Die Wucherfrage: Protokoll der Verbundlungen der deutschen evang. Luth. Gemeinde U.A.C. zu St. Louis, Mo., uber dieste Frage nebst einigen Auszuegen aus den Schriften von Theologen vor und nach den Reformation und andern dieselbe betreffenden Documenten* (St. Louis, Mo: August Wiebusch und Sohn, 1869), 32, 56.

³² The theological issue of usury became much more complicated after the emergence of the market economy. During the early days of the Christian church, however, money was truly a "barren" commodity, meaning that the borrower typically did not employ the money to invest, but to subsist.

³³ Otto LaBudde to Husting, 31 October 1915, Found in James J. Lorence, "Dynamite for the Brain: The Growth and Decline of Socialism in Central and Lakeshore Wisconsin," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 66 (Summer 1983), 250-73.

unwisely by their love for the land of their birth, or, we will admit, by the sense of justice." While many of these individuals petitioned the government prefaced as "American citizens," the fact remained that "the name of our church was brought into connection with them and that the appearance was thus created that the Lutheran church was now beginning to enter the field of politics."³⁴ Pastors mistakenly believed their activities away from the church to protect neutrality would have no bearing on their occupation in the pulpit. Rev. Hans Moussa, however, cautioned the WELS pastor that his "office is not to be stripped off and put on at his pleasure, like a garment."³⁵ Brenner believed this participation in political activity to be spiritually dangerous. He wrote, "Christ says, 'My kingdom is not of this world,' thus teaching the separation of Church and State....The Church cannot find a quicker method of self destruction than political activity."

The synod had an ambiguous score according to its own criteria. When it came to official church activity, however, the synod's pastors conducted themselves far better than other church bodies in keeping politics out of the pulpit. Synod pastors followed principle in late October 1916, when various Milwaukee meetings formulated to encourage Republican voting among religious organizations for the election. The *Milwaukee Journal* reported on the meeting's resolutions, noting,

While clergymen of the more *pietistic* bodies—the Evangelical Synod, the Evangelical Association, the German Reformed church, and a Methodist conference—affixed their signatures, no pastor of either the Wisconsin or Missouri synods (the two most numerous German Protestant church bodies in the state) would so violate the orthodox principle of noninvolvement in partisan politics.³⁶

The synod members also generally avoided work with the National German-American Alliance, and frustrated their otherwise successful efforts to court religious groups to form a solid bloc of German Americans to fight for neutrality. Like all unifying efforts, members of the Wisconsin synod generally showed disdain for the organization. It then admonished other religious bodies, both pro-war and against, for "prostitution of our one and only duty as preachers and spreaders of the Gospel."³⁷ The *Northwestern Lutheran* even highlighted

³⁴ John Brenner, "Urges Lutherans to Political Activity," *Northwestern Lutheran* 3:18 (21 September 1916), 139.

³⁵ Hans K. Moussa, "Private Affairs of the Pastor," *Northwestern Lutheran* 2:16 (21 August 1915), 126.

³⁶ *Milwaukee Journal*, 24 October 1916, emphasis is mine.

³⁷ Hans K. Moussa, "The Political Campaign," *Northwestern Lutheran* 1:22 (21 November 1914), 177.

Milwaukee clergyman Paul B. Jenkins's sermon on the subject of preparedness, and claimed that by "entering the arena of political controversy he, by pulpit utterances, courts contradiction: how will he fare when it suits his pleasure to deliver the message entrusted to him by the Master?"³⁸

However, many ministers naively believed that their private indignation over the breach of neutrality could be separated from their public proclamation as pastors in the pulpit. These auxiliary activities of ministers and other workers during the neutrality period came back to haunt many after the declaration of war. For these individuals, it would have been prudent to heed the admonisher's warning in the *Northwestern Lutheran*. Since they were in a position of leadership in their communities, however, many felt compelled to work for the interests of their people. Many preachers rebuked various political figures for their activities and decisions that were contrary to the interests of German Americans. After an election speech by President Wilson which attacked all "hyphenated" Americans, Rev. Henry Boettcher of Gibbon, Minnesota fired a letter to the Democratic National Committee:

If ever I have been sorry for a deed, it is that I helped elect Wilson [in 1912]. ...I have been as good an American as ever any of the Wilsons were. Yea a better American, because none of my ancestors raised a hand against the Stars and Stripes, like Wilsons ancestors....And to be called an undesirable citizen by a man, who's [*sic*] only boast is, that he is a fine breed Englishman, who feels at home in English surroundings, is indeed strong! ...He deliberately insulted us! He knew better, he knew that he wronged us, but purposely he did do it, because he hated us, since we had not his English blood in our veins.³⁹

President Wilson and Minnesota Congressman Franklin Ellsworth received another letter from Professor Ackermann of Doctor Martin Luther College. After expressing the anti-war sentiment of his community, he chastised their decisions during the neutrality period: "Americans were warned to keep out of the danger zone in Mexico, why not warned to stay off ammunition ships? Wall street and ammunition manufacturers is [*sic*] not the voice of the people."⁴⁰ While their English grammar may have been sloppy, these religious leaders may have possessed the strongest English skills available in their communities to petition the government.

While none of the Wisconsin Synod pastors were able to hold an audience with any congressional committees, a member of the Synodical

³⁸ "Politics and the Pulpit." *Northwestern Lutheran* 3:5 (7 March 1916), 34.

³⁹ Rev. Henry Boettcher to the Democratic National Committee, 22 October 1916, found in Nathan Meyer, "The Presidential Election of 1916 in the Middle West" (Ph.D. diss., Princeton University, 1966), 250.

⁴⁰ *Brown County Journal*, 17 February 1917.

Conference, Professor Frederick Bente of the Missouri Synod's Concordia Seminary, presented at a Senate Foreign Relations Committee concerning the prohibition of exportation of munitions of war. Bente, like many WELS ministers, believed his personal activities could stay separate from his religious occupation. He told the committee, "I represent here strictly by delegation the American Neutrality League. I am not delegated exactly by Concordia Seminary nor by the synod, although I know that practically every Lutheran in the country would identify himself with the stand which we take on this question."⁴¹ The Neutrality League took a stand against "the sale of munitions to belligerents in any war which the United States is not a party." In his speech, Bente attacked the duplicity of the nation in publicly proclaiming neutrality and praying for peace while furnishing weapons to one of the warring parties. Despite Bente's claim to be solely representing the American Neutrality League, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge's letter to Theodore Roosevelt shows the difficulty of disconnecting from one's religious profession:

The German-American propaganda has become pretty bad. We had them before the Foreign Relations Committee the other day on the question of prohibiting the export of war munitions, when a man from the Lutheran Seminary in St. Louis, named Bente, addressed us. He had been born and brought up in Germany...[and] had an accent so strong that you could tumble over it, and he proceeded to lecture us on Americanism, patriotism, what true Americanism was, and what the opinions of George Washington were...They are now engaged in telling us how loyal they are to the United States.⁴²

Perhaps no Wisconsin Synod member was busier during the neutrality period than Rev. Otto Engel of Norwalk, Wisconsin. A young man—31 years old in 1916—he was nonetheless very influential in his congregation and the town of Norwalk. Engel held personal acquaintances with many Germans and Austrians, including the mayor of Vienna, and he received much of his war news from his correspondence with them.⁴³ He deplored the influence of British propaganda on the American citizenry, and created the American Liberty League to counteract it. Engel served as president of this league, which included the following in its constitution:

Believing that the British propaganda...is bending every effort to speed the day of an Anglo-American entente, the Liberty League has been organized with the object of

⁴¹ United States Senate, Committee on Foreign Relations, *Prohibition of Exportation of Munitions of War*, 3 February 1915, State Department Records, National Archives, Group 59, Roll 0151.

⁴² Henry Cabot Lodge to Theodore Roosevelt, 22 February 1915, found in *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884-1914* (New York, 1925), II, 457.

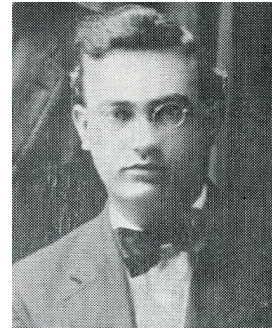
⁴³ Wm. S. Fitch Report, 10 April 1917, OG 5025; Marlborough Churchill, "Memorandum: Rev. Otto Engel," 10 August 1918, OG 5025; Wm. H. Steiner Report, 4 October 1918, OG 5025.

guarding our American rights against pro-ally influences....We must enlighten our American people on what is behind this war, thus frustrating the scheme of forcing us into an alliance with England. This effort is patriotic, for we are striving to develop a genuine American national type, while the Tories insist that we be and remain merely a British off-shoot.⁴⁴

The American Liberty League sent "thousands of letters to Lutherans and also Wisconsin members of Congress."⁴⁵ Engel arranged many writers to pen circulars arguing for strict neutrality to be distributed all over the country. As the league gained influence and the neutrality situation worsened, Engel began reaching out to Congressmen across the United States. After receiving a circular from one of his best writers, Engel assured him this message would reach important decision makers:

Dear Friend: I return to you the list of Secretaries of the 65th Congress, after I have made a copy of those People's Representatives under consideration, I will mail 2000 letters containing your pamphlet as soon as the printed matter has come into my possession. The 2000 stamped envelopes are being addressed now: Professors, Mayors, Pastors, Teachers, Doctors, etc.⁴⁶

These pamphlets from the American Liberty League included "The Lusitania Case," "Neutrality and Public Opinion," and "Strict Accountability, or the Underlying Intention." Through his work with the American Liberty League, Engel became a prominent figure for peace. Wisconsin Lutherans often sent their petitions to the government through him, hoping through his influence to be heard. Despite his successes, his actions caused concern among members of the synod. Ernest von Briesen, a prominent lawyer and leading member of the synod, "several times called Engel's attention to his class of work." Von Briesen wrote Engel a letter severely criticizing him for taking part in politics and asked him to "immediately discontinue his activities in political matters."⁴⁷ Engel neglected to heed these warnings, however, and this decision cost him much agony after the declaration of war.



1.4: Rev. Otto Engel

⁴⁴ Pamphlet of the American Liberty League, found in OG 5025, p. 17. Rev. Engel was a very well-informed man. He subscribed to dozens of newspapers in the United States, Asia, and South America. Those who knew him said he was always "reading or writing." He also contributed to Juergen Neve's 1915 history of Lutherans in America. Neve inserted Engel's contributions relating to the Wisconsin Synod verbatim.

⁴⁵ Frank F. Wolfgram Report, 7 November 1918, OG 5025.

⁴⁶ Otto Engel to Ernst Goerner, 27 March 1917, OG 5025.

⁴⁷ Frank F. Wolfgram Report, 18 February 1919, OG 5025.

Sometimes congregation members pressured their ministers to represent them. At a quarterly meeting at Christ Lutheran Church in West Salem, Wisconsin, Rev. Herman Zimmermann "was instructed to send a petition to President Wilson and [La Follette], [Husting] and Esch" to reflect an anti-war letter read in Congress.⁴⁸ In West Salem's case, the anti-war position taken by Lutherans caused conflict in the community. The same meeting "discussed...several people from the English here in the village [who] have insulted our Pastor, or even lied [about] him, in regard to the war. Those who insulted the Pastor should, at least, take back what they have said." Pastor Zimmerman appears to have weathered this storm, as indicated in a personal letter from Otto Engel: "I congratulate you on the successful finish of the slander affair. I am enclosing the newspaper clippings as per your request. That is the way to go after the ultra-patriots, right from the start."⁴⁹ Because Zimmerman and his church made enemies in the West Salem community, and because of his association with Engel, he too would come under much persecution after the declaration of war.

When the war in Europe erupted, Ludwig Bleek, a citizen of nobility in Germany, was visiting London. When England did not allow him passage back to his homeland, he and his wife moved to the United States. After spending some time in New York, Bleek heard of a German American community in Watertown, Wisconsin and decided to relocate there. Once in Watertown, he associated himself with the city's intellectuals, especially the professors at the Wisconsin Synod's Northwestern College. Bleek also brought a lot of baggage to Watertown, in the form of government investigators. Since Bleek was a German citizen, the government considered him to be a potential German spy or saboteur.⁵⁰

While visiting Watertown, the investigators considered the city "the center of an intensely Pro-German, anti-administration movement."⁵¹ During the Bleek investigation, officials came across his closest friend, President August

⁴⁸ Quarterly Meeting Minutes of Christ Lutheran Church, West Salem, WI, 1 April 1917. Translated by Prof. Arnold Koelpin, 20 July 2012. Zimmermann had been in contact with these representatives and others prior to this. He received letters from Wisconsin Congressman John Esch and Senator Robert La Follette in April 1916. Zimmermann also sent an editorial to the *Milwaukee Free Press* in February 1915 which favored an arms-embargo. He was also one of the many Lutheran subscribers to *The Fatherland* and later *Viereck's Weekly*, and held many pamphlets from Engel's American Liberty League.

⁴⁹ Otto Engel to Herman Zimmerman, 26 April 1917, OG 5025.

⁵⁰ Chas. P. Tighe Report, "Neutrality Matter," 16 March 1916, OG 1167.

⁵¹ H.G. Clabugh Report, 17 February 1916, OG 1167.

Ernst of Northwestern College, a Wisconsin Synod school. The German American Club of Watertown, which Ernst presided, also caught their attention. This club functioned somewhat as a literary society; its official purpose was to encourage the use of the German language. During the neutrality period, however, it often held meetings which favored Germany. A minister of a local Congregational church, N.C. Daniell, volunteered accounts to investigators concerning four pro-German meetings previously held by the club. One of these meetings was held on 1 August 1916 at the Hotel Waukesha in Watertown, and included a special guest—a "Hindoo [sic] named Krishua."⁵² The subject of his lecture was "British Misrule in India." Krishua spoke strongly in favor of Germany's "more lenient" system of colonization, and ridiculed England's. He said they were prohibited in India from hanging up pictures of Lincoln or Washington on their walls. Daniell described Krishua as an anarchist, and that "Professor Ernst of the college is very pro-German and seems to be at the head of the Watertown Germans, and Dr. Bleek is a close confidential associate of his." Other speakers at these meetings included Dr. Herman and Professor Huth, other faculty members at Northwestern. When Bleek was interviewed by government officials, they tried to obtain information about these professors, but Bleek was very short with his answers.⁵³ The government's investigation of the German American club at Watertown, while the country was still technically neutral, gave a foretaste of the repression to come to German Lutherans once the United States declared war.



1.5: Prof. August Ernst

When one attempts to comprehend the synod's position and rhetoric regarding the European War, there are both simple and complex explanations. Clearly, the thought of fighting a war against relatives and their former country made war unthinkable in their minds. Additionally, a pride in German civilization and culture—*Kultur*—led some to believe that the Germans, not the Allies, were fighting on the side of progress. At the same time, the German Lutherans' anti-war rhetoric never drastically differed from their characteristics prior to the war,

⁵² Chas. P. Tighe Report, "Neutrality Matter," 16 March 1916, OG 1167;

⁵³ Wm. S. Fitch Report, "Dr. Ludwig Bleek, and Rifles at German Lutheran College," 24 April 1917, OG 1167.

and often coincided with them. The sentiment against banks and speculators, as previously discussed, had occupational and theological roots. Furthermore, with an American religious environment divided into two distinct camps—reformer and reformer—it is natural that the reformers—the evangelical organizations—could be tempted to partake in the reconstruction of the globe. The quixotic war objectives of "a war to end all wars," and "a war to save democracy," signified a reformer's dream. With God securely on the side of democracy, peace advocates could even be labeled "unchristian." The Wisconsin Synod, rather than viewing war as a medium to positive change, typically considered it a corrupting mechanism. Recall the words of the *Gemeindeblatt* concerning the War of 1898, "War is a disaster....People in war believe they are free from the commandments of God."⁵⁴ After viewing the war's effect on the Christian Church as a whole, the synod's beliefs were regrettably confirmed.

IV. On the Cusp of War

Despite the pleas for embargo, munitions continued to be exported to the Allies in increasing amounts. In February 1917 Germany took a calculated risk and resumed its unrestricted submarine warfare. Its generals understood that this likely would bring the United States into the war, but it also gave them a window to subdue a presumably ill-supplied Britain and France before the United States could play a major role militarily.⁵⁵ In response, churches across the nation sounded their war drums. At the suggestion of the influential New York Federation of Churches, for example, "War Sunday" was celebrated. *Literary Digest* reported that "in flag-draped pulpits the pastors of New York...sounded the call to arms."⁵⁶ Wisconsin Synod Lutherans also understood this likely would mean war with their former homeland. Even with war appearing inevitable, they held fast to their convictions to the bitter end.

The *Gemeindeblatt* made it clear it had not moved an inch in its sentiments. In its 15 April 1917 issue, the advertisement section included two books which displayed partiality to Germany. The first book, *The Journey of Captain Paul König*, featured a German submarine which evaded the British and French blockade to transport foodstuffs to a starving German population. The

⁵⁴ "Kriegs und Sieges Predigt," *Gemeindeblatt* 33:14 (15 July 1898), 105; "Kriegs und Friedenspredigt," *Gemeindeblatt* 33:20 (15 October 1898), 153.

⁵⁵ Joachim Schröder, *Die U-Boote des Kaisers: Die Geschichte des deutschen U-Boot-Krieges gegen Grossbritannien im ersten Weltkrieg* (Lauf an der Pegnitz: Europaforum-Verlag, 2001), 205.

⁵⁶ *Literary Digest*, 11 March 1917.

Gemeindeblatt gave it high marks: "The book will be immediately classified among the classics of sea literature."⁵⁷ A second book, *Ayesha*, featured German captain Hellmuth von Muecke's adventurous journey from the Keeling Islands to Constantinople, which was good for a "mischievous laugh in the middle of battle roar of the mighty struggle of nations."⁵⁸ Since the United States declared war on 6 April 1917 it would appear the *Gemeindeblatt* advertised books featuring the enemy of the United States. However, the 15 April date marks the end of the biweekly production period of the publication. This issue was likely printed a few days before the declaration of war; the next issue chose the less controversial route of advertising organ music.

A few days before the United States declared war, one thousand people packed the armory in New Ulm, Minnesota for a peace meeting. This meeting included speeches against the expected declaration, with two professors from the Wisconsin Synod's Doctor Martin Luther College—A.F. Reim and Adolph Ackermann—contributing. Ackermann made the most extended address of the evening. He discussed the situation of the country from the standpoint of the Constitution of the United States. "It has been said," Ackermann declared, "that we have not the right to meet to protest against war, but this is not true. I stand tonight on my Constitutional rights as an American citizen in addressing this audience." After reading extracts from the Constitution to prove his point, Ackermann gave the true meaning of treason, which friends of peace had been charged so repeatedly in the past. "Treason," he said, "is the act of causing war....Who then is guilty of treason if this country is plunged into war at this time?" To Ackermann, the answer appeared plainly obvious, since the shout of war was "being heard from all sides as jingoists were trying to force the nation into war." These jingoists were supported by a "subsidized" press which created war hysteria through slanted reporting. Throughout the public meeting, Ackermann and the other speakers repeatedly pledged their loyalty and often interjected patriotic songs and readings into their program. They considered peace to be the patriotic position because it promoted the best interest of the American people.⁵⁹

At the peace meeting, it was decided to send a delegation from New Ulm to Washington D.C. to attend a peace conference and to plead with representatives for non-intervention. Among the three delegates selected was

⁵⁷ "Die Fahrt der Deutschland," *Gemeindeblatt* 52:8 (15 April 1917), 128.

⁵⁸ "Ayesha," *Gemeindeblatt* 52:8 (15 April 1917), 128.

⁵⁹ "Patriotism Rings at Peace Meeting," *New Ulm Review*, 4 April 1917; *Brown County Journal*, 17 April 1917.

F.H. Retzlaff, a highly involved WELS lay-member who regularly attended synod conventions.⁶⁰ When they arrived in Washington, they met an atmosphere in the capitol city hostile to any peace movement and found all pro-war Congressmen and Senators intractable to persuasion. Amid the disappointment, the *New Ulm Review* singled out Minnesota Congressman Franklin Ellsworth of the second district, "who admitted that he knew that probably 85 percent of his constituents desired peace, but he hated the Kaiser and German *autocracy* and that he could not conscientiously vote against the war resolution."⁶¹

During the New Ulm peace meeting, professor Ackermann suggested that the war declaration be put to a popular referendum, believing the people would not choose war if asked. New Ulm did just that, which resulted in a 23 to 1 ratio favoring peace.⁶² Other cities with high densities of German Lutherans did likewise. In the city of Sheboygan, Wisconsin the ballots asked, "Shall the United States enter the European War?" These ballots were distributed to the churches. The local vote set for April 1-3 was interrupted before its completion, but the incomplete result was announced as 4,112 "noes" and 17 "ayes."⁶³ Manitowoc also held an unofficial referendum on the war, with 1,460 against and only 15 for the war. A vote in Monroe, Wisconsin revealed 954 votes against the war, while 95 voted in favor.⁶⁴ In the uncertain times of April 1917 only one thing was clear, this war would be extremely unpopular with German Lutherans and other communities. Government officials rightfully feared a non-cohesive home front in the upcoming war. The vast quantity and size of the government bureaucracies equipped to deal with home front issues make plain this fear.

⁶⁰ *New Ulm Review*, 4 April 1917.

⁶¹ *New Ulm Review*, 11 April 1917.

⁶² Results from Frederick Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (Dekalb, IL, Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 206;

⁶³ Karen Falk, "Public Opinion in Wisconsin during World War I," *Wisconsin Magazine of History* 25 (June 1942), 395.

⁶⁴ William Thomas, Jr., *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 21.

Chapter 2

The Machinery of Repression

After the United States declared war on Germany, a spy hysteria swept the nation. Every fire, every explosion in a munitions plant, or every accident on land and sea was straightway credited to the German spy system. If a cut in a child's hand did not heal, then the Germans had placed germs in the bandages. If a woman's headache did not dissipate with medicine, then the Germans had "doped" the particular pill or powder. Americans everywhere sifted through their food to make sure there was no broken glass intermixed. The press was the most important agent in spreading this fear of espionage. James R. Mock recalled that "it was difficult to find a newspaper published in April 1917 that did not have on every other page some reference to the malevolent work of the enemy within."¹ Many publishers looked to profit from this frenzy and produced histories of German machinations on American soil. A small sampling of these titles include, *Conquest and Kultur*, *Face to Face with Kaiserism*, *Fighting Germany's Spies*, *German Conspiracies in America*, *Germanism and the American Crusade*, *Germanism from Within*, *Pan-Germanism: its Plans for German Expansion in the World*, *The German American Plot*, and *The United States and Pan-Germanism*. Some of these titles estimated that over 200,000 spies were "honeycombing the country," actively working for the German government.²



Which of the Men You know is a German Agent?

2.1: Part of a full page advertisement in the *Milwaukee Journal* for the upcoming book, *Face to Face with Kaiserism*. late 1917.

¹ James R. Mock, *Words that Won the War: the Committee of Public Information* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1939), 32.

² George Creel, *How We Advertised America* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1920), 168.

Besides spies, Americans feared fifth column disloyalty. Not only were there "two million men of German blood inside our borders, guaranteed by the Kaiser to be loyal to Germany,"³ but it was generally believed that Germany paid and encouraged radicals and pacifists to undermine wartime unity. Eventually, the terms "German" and "radical," or "wide-eyed anarchist," became synonymous in public opinion. The region which caused the most consternation was the "polyglot" upper-Midwest, of which the German-speaking Wisconsin Synod Lutherans were naturally considered one of the worst offenders. Journalist and bureaucrat George Creel recalled the tenuous atmosphere of April 1917:

Who does not remember the fears of "wholesale disloyalty" that shook us daily? There were to be "revolutions" in Milwaukee, St. Louis, Cincinnati; armed uprisings here, there, and everywhere; small armies herding thousands of rebellious enemy aliens into huge internment camps; incendiaryism, sabotage, explosions, murder, domestic riot.⁴

Amid this hysteria, the federal and state governments instituted an immense system of wartime bureaucracy to both inspire and police the home front. Even before the declaration of war, representatives worked to create legislation which would give teeth to these organizations. On 5 February 1917, two months before war, Senator Lee Overman and Congressman Edwin Webb introduced similar bills to "define and punish espionage." On April 2, after President Wilson delivered his war message and war appeared imminent, Webb introduced a more expansive espionage bill, which after nine weeks of debate and amendment became the law of the land. The Espionage Act of 1917 made it illegal to "willfully make or convey false reports or false statements with the intent to interfere with the operation or success" of the United States.⁵ It also punished all attempts to cause insubordination, disloyalty, mutiny, or refusal of duty in the military or naval forces. The maximum penalty for breaking this law was a fine of \$10,000 or imprisonment of twenty years, or both.⁶

The Espionage Act originally included a "Card Amendment" which called for press censorship, but this clause raised such a furor from all types of publications that it was shelved. James R. Mock perceived the irony: "The press

³ Emerson Hough, *The Web: The Authorized History of the American Protective League* (Chicago: The Reilly & Lee Co., 1919), 58.

⁴ Creel, 166.

⁵ Despite unwavering arguments by WELS critics that the Espionage Act infringed upon freedom of expression, some historians argue that protection of speech was not time-honored, and did not even need to be invoked until WWI. Paul Murphy, in his work *World War I and the Origin of Civil Liberties in the United States* (1979) argued that freedom of speech as a civil liberty was born in the repression of WWI.

⁶ Mock, 23-25.

itself was the most important agency in spreading fear of espionage, and at the same time was attempting to limit the provisions of the Espionage Bill."⁷ The *Northwestern Lutheran* was one of those that voiced protest against the Card Amendment, arguing on the grounds of religious liberty:

There can be no violation of American traditions which will not work harm and injustice to the free development of the Church and the free exercise of its rights under the constitutional guarantee of religious liberty. Chief among these rights is the guarantee that it may teach its doctrines according to conviction, taking no regard of the wealth, rank, or station of those whose actions and opinions it must condemn as contrary to the Word of God.⁸

One foreseeable abuse of this law was for the government to police Lutheran objections to evangelical beliefs regarding "the Church, her nature, her functions and purpose." These objections could be interpreted as a reflection on the religious, even messianic, war aims proclaimed by president Wilson and mainstream America. Indeed, when the opportunity presented itself, Wisconsin Synod publications denounced all attempts to brand the First World War as a religious conflict, causing irritation to propaganda organizations. While the synod publications, the *Gemeindeblatt* and *Northwestern Lutheran*, escaped suppression, other German language and socialist publications like the *Milwaukee Leader* were censored and banned from the United States mails.

However, the Espionage Act was merciful in comparison to the 1918 Sedition Act. Agitation for a stricter statute came from law enforcement and vigilantes who were frustrated by the difficulty of securing convictions for disloyal Americans. The Sedition Act made unlawful any intentional writing, speaking, or publication of "disloyal, profane, scurrilous, or abusive language about the form of government...or the Constitution...or the military or naval forces...or the flag...or the uniform of the army and navy of the United States." This act clearly was meant to strike at the heart of "enemy propaganda," which "is especially dangerous in any country governed by public opinion."⁹ Three months after the act's passage, the *Milwaukee Sentinel* reported improved results in the courtroom, writing, "21 war cases tried, not one acquittal has resulted, the record shows."¹⁰ Armed with these statutes, the colossal home front war machine could successfully root out all disloyalty.

⁷ *Ibid*, 32.

⁸ "Press Censorship and Religious Liberty," *Northwestern Lutheran* 4:13 (7 July 1917), 101; See Chapter 3 for more detailed WELS criticism of wartime policies.

⁹ Hough, 57.

¹⁰ *Milwaukee Sentinel*, 9 August 1918.

II. The Department of Justice and the American Protective League

In 1976, nearly sixty years after the First World War, the FBI released to the National Archives partial wartime records of the Department of Justice and the American Protective League. This delay might be attributed to a number of factors. The suppression of socialist and communist groups was certainly a sore subject during the Cold War. The Department may have wished to protect its vigilante informants from retribution. Furthermore, it is likely that a delay occurred because the Bureau recognized it miscalculated the situation on the home front and investigated individuals it had no business looking into, while breaching the rights and privacy of these same individuals. That this happened in the formative years of the FBI further added to the discomfiture because these investigations were the impetus for the substantial growth of the Bureau in the first place. Had it not been for the reform of the FBI in the wake of Watergate, COINTELPRO, and other affairs, these records may have never been released.¹¹

During the war, the Department of Justice was certainly not embarrassed of its record. To them, the situation demanded drastic action. Allegations of disloyalty flooded the Justice Department. Attorney General Thomas W. Gregory noted, "every day hundreds of articles or passages from newspapers, pamphlets, books...reports from private conversations, etc., have been reported to officials of the department" with the hope for prosecution.¹² The department received 1,000 accusations of disloyalty a day in May 1917, a year later that number rose to 1,500. The department grew to meet these requests. Gregory boasted after the war,

It would have been difficult for fifty persons to have met for any purpose, in any place, from a church to a dance hall in any part of the United States, without one representative of the government being present. I doubt if any country was ever so thoroughly and intelligently policed in the history of the world.¹³

George Creel, the head of the Committee on Public Information, the government propaganda organ during the war, agreed: "Never was a country so thoroughly contra-espionaged! Not a pin dropped in the home of any one with a foreign name but that it rang like thunder in the inner ear of some listening

¹¹ William Thomas, Jr., *Unsafe for Democracy: World War I and the U.S. Justice Department's Covert Campaign to Suppress Dissent* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2008), 8. The Freedom of Information Act of 1974 pushed once sensitive documents like these into the public domain.

¹² Thomas, 32.

¹³ Gregory in a speech seven months after the war, found in Thomas, p.3.

sleuth!"¹⁴ The department relied heavily on tips from a variety of sources, from cooperative clergy to local officials. Its most useful tool, however, was a 250,000 strong volunteer home front army—the American Protective League.¹⁵

The American Protective League (APL) originated in March 1917, two weeks before the war. Mr. A.M. Briggs from Chicago created a local branch and took the idea to Washington, where he secured authority to establish it as a volunteer auxiliary to the Department of Justice on 22 March 1917. Within a month, the APL was organized in 280 cities and towns, which followed the model of Chicago and answered to the Justice Department. In Wisconsin, for example, the APL set up headquarters in 37 different cities and towns, which quadrupled the per capita average.¹⁶ Michigan's 43 outlets tripled the per capita average. The Wisconsin Synod's primary footprint—Wisconsin, Minnesota, Michigan, Nebraska, and the Dakotas—claimed over 130 APL headquarters, nearly half of the total. The speed of the APL's creation was spurred by "the knowledge of how widespread and unscrupulous was the German spy system, and how seriously it was affecting the temper and loyalty of aliens and naturalized citizens." From the start, the league listed its two main functions. The first was "to make prompt and reliable report of all disloyal or enemy activities and of all infractions or evasions of the war code of the United States." The second, "to make prompt and thorough investigation of all matters...referred to it by the Department of Justice."¹⁷ Thereby, APL agents worked undercover in close cooperation with the local agents of the Department of Justice.

The profile of the APL volunteers, according to its account, were successful men of affairs, "business and professional men....Men of proved judgment, intelligence, initiative, and energy."¹⁸ Most of these volunteers claimed to be either necessary to their families or past service age, but "still were fired with patriotism and filled with wrath at the progress of German propaganda and plotting in this country." A pent up feeling of being unable to fight the enemy overseas led many to search for the enemy at home. Indeed,

¹⁴ Creel, 167.

¹⁵ Harold M. Hyman, *To Try Men's Souls: Loyalty Tests in American History* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1960), 271-272.

¹⁶ Report: "Total Towns Organized to Date," 26 June 1917, OG 15093. This report listed the towns in which the APL had headquarters. It also listed the APL executives and the Department of Justice officials to which the APL members reported their findings.

¹⁷ French Strother, *Fighting Germany's Spies* (Toronto: McClelland, Goodchild & Stewart, 1918), 195-198.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 197.

league members believed that war waged between two secret organizations—the German spy system versus the "loyal Americans under the unseen banner of the American Protective League."¹⁹ As Emerson Hough, the official APL historian described it, "It met that German Army as ours met it at Chateau-Thierry, and in the Argonne....Like to our Army under arms—the Army where any of us would have preferred to serve had it been possible for us—it never gave back an inch of ground."²⁰ The APL not only held its ground, but its crusade only increased in its vigor through the end of the war—and beyond.

An impromptu vigilante organization cannot coalesce without hiccups. The first major mistake by Bureau director A. Bruce Bielaski was to offer APL badges, at 75 cents apiece, to volunteers. These badges closely resembled Secret Service badges. Local APL chiefs ordered flocks of badges and disbursed them to members. Secretary of Treasury William McAdoo severely objected to this development because the Secret Service belonged to his Treasury Department and was therefore separate from the Justice Department. Furthermore, private individuals suddenly wielded badges that gave them the appearance of federal authority. At an incident on a train in South Dakota, one eyewitness described, "[I] was on a train in South Dakota near Brookings when a man who claimed to be in the Secret Service, entered the car, displayed his badge to everyone in it and talked in a loud tone of voice about his work, his loyalty and said he was looking for slackers."²¹ Other APL agents discovered that a slight wave of the badge could unlock information ordinarily considered confidential or gain them free admittance to theaters, subways, and parking lots.

The Justice Department tried to solve this problem in two ways. First, APL leaders scrambled to retrieve as many "Secret Service" badges as possible. The APL bulletin then reminded volunteers that "under no circumstances shall [members] state they are members of the Secret Service Department of the United States...members are not Secret Service Officers of the United States. It



2.2: Members of the American Protective League could receive a badge for 75 cents.

¹⁹ Hough, 89.

²⁰ Hough, 13.

²¹ R.M. Markham to J.F. McAuley, 1 Oct 1918, OG 22490, p. 103.

is absolutely necessary that members understand this to avoid...impersonating a government official."²² Secondly, the Justice Department worked to give the league more legitimacy. It investigated prospective members and made some swear to uphold the Constitution. By agreeing to improve its image, the APL gained even more authority from the Department of Justice to fight espionage.

Many APL agents felt no scruple with using illegal tactics to protect America. Even the "official" league historian boldly admitted, "It is supposed that breaking and entering a man's home or office place without warrant is burglary. Granted. But the League has done that thousands of times and has never been detected!"²³ He then gave a well detailed story of agents secretly breaking into an office, taking photographs of incriminating evidence, and sending the photos to the Department of Justice, whereby they made the arrest and found the evidence where it was described. "You think this case imaginary, far-fetched, impossible? It is neither of the three," claimed the author. Not all illegal searches went as planned, however. An agent named Werner Hanni, while investigating a Lutheran pastor in Emerald, Nebraska, tried to enter the pastor's empty house. The doors, however, "were all locked and the windows also and screens on each window, which were fastened from the inside."²⁴ One agent in Minneapolis had to crawl through a coal chute to get into a woman's basement, whereby he described the conversations upstairs as seditious.²⁵ After all that work, a report asserting the subject's innocence would have been surprising.

Investigations also included sloppy execution. In one case, APL members seized an abandoned suitcase in a downtown square. They "gingerly" brought it into a police station, where it was "carefully examined and was found to contain a quantity of men's soiled underwear."²⁶ Elsewhere, while investigating the loyalty of the headwaiter at a hotel, two agents became suspicious of each other's activity. Having both reported the dubious activity of the other, both men were brought into custody by the Department of Justice.²⁷ Investigative problems became so pervasive that an APL bulletin had to address them:

²² Joan Jensen, *The Price of Vigilance* (Chicago: RandMcNally, 1968), 16, 44, 48, 49, 52.

²³ Hough, 163-166. While seemingly under no pressure to justify these tactics, Hough nevertheless claimed, "It [the investigations] did not harm or unsettle any innocent man. It was after the guilty alone."

²⁴ Eberstein Report, 13 June 1918, OG 173400.

²⁵ Jensen, 152.

²⁶ *Portland Telegram*, quoted in Clark T. Irwin Jr., "From a Gilded Age onto a World War," in *Greater Portland Celebration* 350, comp. and ed. Albert F. Barnes (Portland, ME., 1984), 124.

²⁷ Mock, 14; Jensen, 49.

"Recent occurrences make it necessary to issue further instructions...No captain, lieutenant, or operative has the power to arrest....No dictographs shall be installed, telephone wires tapped, or similar methods employed without specific authority."²⁸ When legalities came between an agent and a spy, however, such formalities could be disregarded.

For many agents, America needed protection from more than German spies and sympathizers. Through proper policing, the APL sought to restore and protect traditional pietistic canons, especially in the liturgical strongholds of the upper Midwest. In a telling story of intra-ethnic conflict in Lake Zurich, Illinois, near the Wisconsin border, members of the German Baptist Church succeeded in passing a law to close the saloons in the town on Sundays. When they suspected that the German Lutherans of the town continued to operate taverns, the minister and deacon of the congregation both wrote the APL and complained of the conditions in Lake Zurich. A German-speaking agent visited the town and received tips from the Baptist minister where to find the liquor sales. He also suggested that the agent visit a church service and listen for disloyalty, to which the agent also obliged.²⁹ Eventually, the criteria for acceptance as an agent included "citizens of good moral character." Good moral behavior typically meant one was a "dry." Noticing this character in the APL, the War Department assigned APL agents the task to enforce liquor control around the soldiers' cantonments. Visiting a saloon in Montello, Wisconsin, an APL agent saw the owner, Rudolph Tagatz, serve a round of beer to three soldiers. The agent then reported Tagatz's reputation as "bad, both in loyalty and in character." He then recommended a prosecution "for the good of the community."³⁰

Agents also subscribed to the idea that the church could serve as an auxiliary to the government. Hence the APL enlisted many ministers, typically of evangelical church bodies, to report disloyalty in their communities. A minister at the evangelical United Brethren Church in Vermillion, South Dakota routed APL agents to Lutheran ministers in Battle Creek and Plattsmouth, Nebraska, vaguely telling agents that they both "show strong signs of disloyalty."³¹ Upstate, Rev. Harvey Kerstetter of a Methodist-Episcopal Church in Mobridge,

²⁸ *APL Bulletin*, 15 October 1917.

²⁹ Charles Schmid Report, 16 June 1918, OG 236002.

³⁰ W.E. Cox to R.B. Spencer, "Rudolph Tagatz," 30 October 1918, OG 315182.

³¹ A. Bruce Bielaski to M. Ebertstein, 8 June 1918, OG 209986.

South Dakota held close correspondence with agent E.W. Fiske, mainly in examining area Lutheran ministers.³²

A Lutheran coming under investigation became a common occurrence for the APL. In fact, Lutherans were the favorite target of the organization.³³ The prominent locations of APL headquarters in Lutheran towns was no coincidence. In his "official" history of the APL, Emerson Hough spared no hostility for the Lutheran church:

The pulpit was a recognized part of the German system of spy work in America....It is not just to accuse all Lutheran ministers of desecrating the cloth they wore. There are good Lutheran ministers who are loyal Americans without question. At the same time it is true that more charges have been brought against pastors of the Lutheran church, and charges more specific in nature, than against any other class or profession in our country....These are so numerous that one cannot avoid calling the Lutheran pulpit in America the most active and poisonous influence which existed in America during the war.³⁴

Certainly, the fact that many Lutherans were ethnic Germans contributed to this sentiment of the APL. Moreover, the APL's highly pietistic makeup likely contributed. Towns permeated by German Lutherans tended to be strongholds for anti-prohibition efforts and anti-sabbatarian ordinances. This new organization gave local leaders the opportunity to use the federal authority in these long-existing community struggles to tip the balance in their favor. Lutherans also rejected and criticized the efforts of evangelical church bodies to officially work with government war programs, and this antagonized and perplexed numerous investigators.

Voices against the policies and tactics of the APL were few and far between during the war. The most consistent defense of justice, however, came from John Lord O'Brian, head of the War-Emergency Division of the Department of Justice. After the war, he stated that "no other cause contributed so much to the oppression of innocent men as the systematic and indiscriminate agitation against what was claimed to be an all-pervasive system of German espionage."³⁵ Captain Henry T. Hunt of the Military Intelligence counter-espionage section also told authors that many "unfounded spy stories...started with the apparent

³² Rev. Harvey Kerstetter to E.W. Fiske, 9 Sept 1918, OG 22490.

³³ Hough, 69.

³⁴ *Ibid*, 70. Hough served as Captain with the Intelligent Service, so he likely had many personal brushes with Lutherans. Hough claimed there were over 1,200 total cases investigated. Since there were about six thousand Lutheran Congregations at this time, that makes for one in every five churches.

³⁵ Mock, 14.

object of removing or inconveniencing local political, business, or social rivals."³⁶ Unlike these two detractors, and like almost everyone else, President Wilson accepted the conspiracy thesis of German espionage. He thus allowed this counter-conspiracy system to flourish. Until the end of the war, he would emphasize the threat of subversion and the continued need of organizations like the APL to win the war.

III. The Committee on Public Information

During the Second World War, President Franklin D. Roosevelt inspired and reassured the nation through the medium of radio. While "wireless stations" had emerged across the country by 1917, the technology was not developed nor pervasive enough to serve that purpose in the First World War. Also unlike the Second World War, where the attack on Pearl Harbor roused the American nation, Wilson felt extreme pressure to cultivate—even manufacture—public opinion. As historian David Kennedy put it, "Here, the Great War was peculiarly an affair of the mind."³⁷ The result was the all-encompassing propaganda organization titled the Committee on Public Information.

President Wilson created the Committee on Public Information (CPI) through an executive order on 13 April 1917. Journalist and Democratic Muckraker George Creel received Wilson's appointment to chair the organization. To Creel, the task before him was both daunting and imperative to the war effort. Previous wars went no deeper than their physical aspects, but in this war "German Kultur raised issues that had to be fought out in the hearts and minds of people as well as on the actual firing line."³⁸ The minority against the war caused endangerment to the war effort, especially when "civilization [was] hanging in the balance."³⁹ Thus the CPI sought to control nearly every aspect which concerned home front morale. It published "official" accounts of war news, sought to counteract antiwar propaganda, and encouraged war funding and participation in patriotic and Americanization organizations.

Creel considered the Midwest—particularly Wisconsin, Minnesota, and the Dakotas—to be the area of most pressing need. Rival antiwar organizations, such as the Nonpartisan League and the People's Council of America, were most

³⁶ Jensen, 292.

³⁷ David M. Kennedy, *Over Here: The First World War and American Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 46.

³⁸ Creel, 3.

³⁹ Mock, 2-4.

pervasive in these states. Therefore, the CPI "attacked the [Midwest] at once."⁴⁰ The Nonpartisan League's "lie" about a "rich man's war" was the most stubborn belief of these inhabitants. The CPI counteracted this by making this topic the most frequent in its publications, and it worked with the APL and various state associations to root out meetings of the Nonpartisan League and similar organizations.

A volunteer organization called the Four Minute Men became the most visible presence of the CPI. Around 75,000 voluntary speakers were recruited by this organization, which gave an estimated 755,190 four-minute speeches to audiences totaling 314,454,514 people.⁴¹ Creel supplied speakers with weekly patriotic topics, whereby these speakers would find a public location to give a four minute speech. The most popular location became motion picture theaters, where speeches were given during "four minute intermissions." A Junior Division of the Four Minute Men was also instituted. This division worked with the public schools, which gave assignments and held contests for best speeches against the "Huns" or for the promotion of thrift stamps. This likely alienated many German Americans in the public school system. This could explain the spike in enrollment at Grace Lutheran in Milwaukee during the war, from 61 in 1914 to 114 in 1918, of which school officials labeled 46 "strangers."⁴²

Speakers were often drawn to the Four Minute Men by ambition. On more than one occasion the CPI reminded speakers in its official bulletin that they must keep their speeches to four minutes and to refrain from partisanship. Creel admitted that many men "had the deep conviction that they were William J. Bryans."⁴³ Those rejected by local officials sometimes even travelled to Washington D.C. to appeal to Creel by giving him a sample four minute speech. The CPI often catered to these ambitious speakers by furnishing dramatic speeches for them. The following "suggested speech" for the Second Liberty Loan could easily grab the audience's attention:

Ladies and Gentlemen: I have just received information that there is a German spy among us—A German spy watching us. He is around, here somewhere, reporting upon you and me—sending reports about us to Berlin and telling the Germans just what we are doing with the Liberty Loan. From every section of the country these spies have been getting reports over to Potsdam—not general reports but details—where the loan is going well and where its success seems weak....Don't let that German spy hear and

⁴⁰ Creel, 178.

⁴¹ *Ibid*, 90-93.

⁴² Quarterly Meeting Minutes of Grace Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, WI, October 1914 and April 1918.

⁴³ Creel, 88.

report that *you* are a slacker. Don't let him tell the Berlin government that there is no need to worry about the people in (name of town), and that they are not patriots.⁴⁴

The CPI and many evangelical churches felt no qualm in working together for the war effort. The CPI highlighted the war activities of churches and encouraged them to send in sermon extracts which set forth the ideals and war aims of the nation. The best of these sermons earned publication in the *Official Bulletin*. Even prayers were published, such as this one from Rev. Henry M. Couden of Minnesota: "Dear Lord, deliver us from the hyphenated American, the pro-German, the spy, the profiteer, the pacifist, the slacker, and all who would retard the prosecution of the war for human rights, human happiness, in the establishment of a permanent and world-wide peace, for Christ's sake, Amen."⁴⁵ The Four Minute Men also penetrated church doors. The Four Minute Men organized a church department to "present four-minute speeches in churches, synagogues, and Sunday-schools."⁴⁶ The idea spread across the country. Creel was especially appreciative of this development because it allowed him to reach out more successfully to rural communities. The CPI also urged ministers to use the *Official Bulletin* for patriotic talks to their congregations. While the CPI experienced much success with this program with evangelical church bodies, the WELS and other liturgical bodies like the Catholic Church adamantly rejected this development throughout the course of the war.⁴⁷

The CPI issued proclamations with an ominous threat of government enforcement. The organization itself could not arrest or prosecute, but it held close contact with the APL or law enforcement agencies which were prepared to force compliance with the Committee's wishes. For example, the CPI repeatedly wrote ministers across the country requesting them to preach in favor of Liberty Loan purchases or food and fuel conservation. All ministers who refused to reply and report, the letters claimed, would be "noted."⁴⁸ In one case, a Lutheran minister named George Meyer did reply to the CPI, but declined the request to

⁴⁴ Committee on Public Information, "The Second Liberty Loan of 1917: Bulletin and Sample Speeches," 103.L.8.2F, Folder 101, CPS Records.

⁴⁵ Creel, 89.

⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 270.

⁴⁷ A. Bruce Bielaski Report, "General Matters," OG 209513; U.S., Committee on Public Information, *The Four Minute Men of Chicago* (Pamphlet), 15.

⁴⁸ John E. Ferris Report, "Paul F. Mayott: Investigation for the Committee on Public Information," 27 Feb 1918, OG 126654.

preach "the doctrine of food conservation from the pulpit."⁴⁹ Meyer listed church and state scruples and claimed that all his time and strength were "occupied in supplying my people with spiritual food." The CPI created a carbon copy of the letter and sent it to A. Bruce Bielaski, chief of the Bureau of Investigation. Bielaski reassured the sender that "this matter will receive proper attention."⁵⁰ In another case, Creel forced his will on an upcoming movie, *The Spirit of '76*. This Revolutionary War film included the Wyoming Massacre, where British soldiers killed women and children and carried off young girls. Any Revolutionary War film unsettled authorities, since this might disturb Allied solidarity in the war. Making the situation worse, the producer, Robert Goldstein, purposely omitted the Wyoming scene when showing the movie to the CPI censorship board. Once this offense was discovered, authorities seized the reels under Title XI of the Espionage Act, the film company went into bankruptcy, and Goldstein was sentenced to ten years in a federal penitentiary.⁵¹

Creel, nonetheless, stood by his record during the war. "Our European comrades," claimed Creel, "viewed the [CPI] experiment with amazement...for in every other belligerent country censorship laws established iron rules, rigid suppressions, and drastic prohibitions carrying severe penalties."⁵² While "rigid suppressions" were not the norm, the historian David Kennedy could only see Orwellian Themes in the American World War I experience, with an "overbearing concern for correct opinion, expression, for language itself, and the creation of an enormous propaganda apparatus to nurture the desired state of mind to excoriate all dissenters."⁵³ The CPI may have accomplished this while bearing a benign face, but the implication of force lurking behind it could be tacitly assumed.

IV. Other Organizations

At the urging of President Wilson, various local and state organizations arose alongside the federal bureaucracy. Minnesota and Wisconsin were the

⁴⁹ Rev. George Meyer to George Creel, 19 July 1917, OG 43413. This brush with the CPI and the investigation were only the beginning of Meyer's troubles. His school was dynamited later in the war.

⁵⁰ A. Bruce Bielaski to N.I. Antrim, 2 November 1917, OG 43413.

⁵¹ E. W. Finch Report, "Committee on Public Information—Division of Films, 24 Jan 1919," OG 344061; Mock, 42, 148.

⁵² Creel, 23.

⁵³ Kennedy, 62.

first states to heed the call. The Minnesota Commission of Public Safety and the Wisconsin Council of Defense were instituted within the first week of the war. The goals of these organizations closely matched those of the Committee on Public Information, and in many ways they served as its handmaiden. The German Lutheran experience varied widely based on the assertiveness of their state organization. While the state organizations differed little in their propaganda and conservation efforts, their repression of "harmful" behavior varied considerably by state.

Minnesota Germans drew the short straw since their state was home to the most active organization. Some members of the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety (CPS) could make agents of the American Protective League seem like devoted constitutionalists. Judge John McGee, a dominant personality within the CPS, illustrates the organization well. He charged that the policy of the Justice Department had been a "ghastly failure from the beginning." What the government should have done, claimed McGee, was to organize firing squads across the nation immediately after the war was declared. "I know of no objection or reason why there should be any further delay in organizing the squad, or why they should not, when organized, work overtime in order to make up for lost time," asserted McGee.⁵⁴ The CPS, on the grounds of a wartime emergency, gave itself explicit powers to do almost anything. Among these powers included seizure of property, mass discarding of textbooks, requirement of anyone to appear before its agents, the issue of subpoenas by district courts, and the examination of the conduct of public officials.⁵⁵ The CPS remained exceptionally busy throughout the war; it processed an average of 18 sacks of mail weekly and investigated 682 cases concerning sedition.⁵⁶ Many of these letters came from citizens reporting disloyal neighbors or social enemies.

The Wisconsin State Council of Defense, although policing a state with similar demographics as Minnesota, was lenient by comparison. In fact, Governor Emanuel Philipp's unusual restraint earned him frequent criticism. His enemies suggested that his ties to German American interests were "rather too intimate for the times."⁵⁷ Council leaders prided themselves in their ability to reason the disloyalty out of dissenters. Magnus Swenson, the chairman of the

⁵⁴ Jensen, 120.

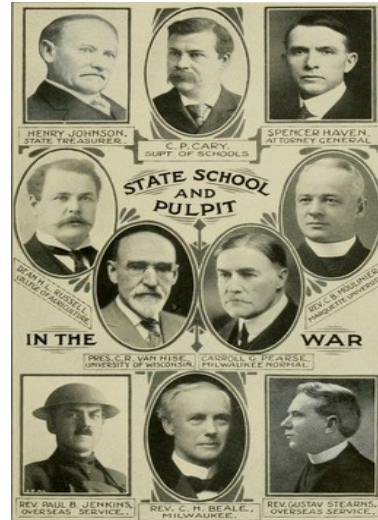
⁵⁵ La Vern J. Rippley, "Conflict in the Classroom: Anti-Germanism in Minnesota Schools, 1917-1918," *Minnesota History* 54 (1981), 171-173.

⁵⁶ Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, *Report of Minnesota Commission of Public Safety* (St. Paul: L.F. Dow Co., 1919), 29.

⁵⁷ Frederick Luebke, *Bonds of Loyalty: German Americans and World War I* (DeKalb, IL, Northern Illinois University Press, 1974), 296;

Council, shared his strategy for dealing with dissent: "First, stop their talking, then get after them with personal persuasion if possible."⁵⁸ Swenson then gave a story of his dealings with a Lutheran minister to display his comprehension of his fellow citizens. Upon a receipt of a report of disloyalty, the Council of Defense asked the "erring cleric" to come to the state capital and "have a talk with Mr. Swenson." The Lutheran minister arrived in a state of unmitigated alarm, admitting that he had shared his opinion that the United States should not have declared war on Germany. "Why?" Mr. Swenson asked, and he summarized the reply: "Out of a tremulous jumble of LaFolleteism, pacifism, and ignorance, the real reason presently emerged. The man honestly believed that the United States sought, in this war, to expunge Germany and German civilization from the world, by joining other nations in a plan of overwhelming conquest." Swenson "kindly" replied, "Sit down and let's talk it over." He then presented America's cause for war in "simple terms," to the listener's "growing astonishment...It was all new to him, as new as if he had been a resident of central Prussia." After his sit-down with Swenson, the Lutheran minister draped an American flag over his pulpit and "preached a sermon, alien in language, but otherwise one hundred per cent patriotism." Swenson likely rounded the edges of his story, and the pastor likely changed his behavior more out of fear than from his influence, but his account highlights the stark contrast between Minnesota and Wisconsin in dealing with disloyalty.⁵⁹

Like the national organizations, the state councils and commissions possessed moral and religious characteristics consistent with evangelical piety. Both Wisconsin and Minnesota used their wartime powers to create and enforce anti-saloon legislation. Wisconsin shortened their operating hours and



2.3: Posters like this one exemplify the cozy relationship between church and state in the Wisconsin State Council of Defense.

⁵⁸ Samuel Hopkins Adams, "Invaded America: Winning the Battle in the Middle West," *Everybody's Magazine* (February 1918), 32.

⁵⁹ Samuel Hopkins Adams, "Invaded America: Winning the Battle in the Middle West," *Everybody's Magazine* (February 1918), 31-35. The article never gives the name or location of the preacher, and no record has been found of the conversation, so the identity of the pastor is unknown.

discontinued the practice of free lunches in saloons. Minnesota skipped these formalities and simply closed saloons, forty-two of them in the Minneapolis area alone. The CPS claimed this maneuver protected the soldiers and increased the efficiency of workers. In one of its twenty-one official orders dealing with saloons, the CPS declared bartending to be unpatriotic "in lieu of the serious shortage of farm workers."⁶⁰ This moral philosophy naturally drew protestant evangelical ministers to the cause. Twenty-four ministers served on county boards for the Minnesota CPS, while forty-six served on the Wisconsin Council of Defense. None were from the Wisconsin Synod or its sister synod, Missouri.⁶¹ These organizations also encouraged activities to which these synods felt aversion. The CPS requested "all ministers in [Freeborn] County to speak patriotic sermons and to unite in one big loyalty meeting in the city of Albert Lea."⁶² This service was attended by over 1,500 worshippers, but the Wisconsin Synod nervously abstained. During a Liberty Loan drive, the CPS sent letters to each of the county directors urging them to use local talent, specifically "preachers...who are used to persuade and convince their neighbors."⁶³ Baptist minister R. Bedford of Luverne, Minnesota, for example, answered this call and delivered loyalty speeches until "he was no longer asked to do so, presumably because he was too forceful to suit those in the county who had charge of such activities."⁶⁴ Other ministers took up the pen, such as Methodist minister S.R. Maxwell, who wrote an editorial for the CPS which "exposed the Non-Partisan League." Ecumenical war efforts pleased the CPS the most, one headline of the *Official Bulletin* read, "Priests and Protestant ministers travel together for the Liberty Loan cause."⁶⁵ During a cold Wisconsin winter, an army colonel posted a notice in the local newspaper at West Salem, Wisconsin, and claimed Christ Lutheran and the two other churches in town "must [worship] together to save coal."⁶⁶ Wisconsin Synod Lutherans, conscience bound-not to confuse church and state convictions, not to mention distressed over a war against their

⁶⁰ Commission Report, 84-85.

⁶¹ Minister statistics compiled from the official histories and records of the Wisconsin Council of Defense and the Minnesota Commission of Public Safety, which listed board members from every county in their respective states.

⁶² Freeborn County General Liberty Loan Program, April 1918, 103.L.8.2F, Folder 101, CPS Records.

⁶³ Minnesota Public Safety Commission to County Directors for Liberty Loans, 8 Oct 1917, 103.L.8.2F, Folder 101, CPS Records; W. O'Brien to Public Safety Commission, 10 Oct 1917, 103.L.8.4.

⁶⁴ Robert F. Davis Report, 16 June 1918, OG 188937.

⁶⁵ *Rochester [MN] Post Record*, 6 August 1918.

⁶⁶ H.R. Zimmerman to Otto Engel, 1 March 1918, OG 5025.

relatives, could only have their duress increased from this outside religious pressure to conform.

Private patriotic organizations also preached and enforced the gospel of loyalty. The most prominent of these was the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion. A contributing factor to the Legion's strength was disappointment at the "inaction" of the Wisconsin Council of Defense. Thus the Legion attracted members with extremely bold objectives. Even director George Creel of the CPI admitted that their "patriotism was a thing of screams, violence, and extremes; they outjingoed the worst of jingoists, and their constant practice of extreme statement left a trail of anger, irritation, and resentment."⁶⁷ Wisconsin Synod minister Otto Engel also used choice words to describe the Legion to his friend: "Those people are traitors to the Constitution; they are traitors to the United States."⁶⁸ Legion members visited "hotbeds" of disloyalty attempting to intimidate them to change their behavior. During elections, members would often attend to polling places to discourage "Un-American," that is, Socialist, voting.⁶⁹ The Wisconsin Loyalty Legion came dangerously close to mob rule. Other vigilante activity across the nation, however, lost all sense of the rule of law.

V. The Mob Rules

As if organizations like the American Protective League, the Commission for Public Safety, and the Loyalty Legion were not enough, frustrated American citizens took it upon themselves to punish disloyalty. In one case, it turned deadly. A rowdy mob lynched a German American named Robert Prager on 5 April 1918 after dynamite went missing from a coal mine he worked at. It was unlikely that Prager was the thief; one year earlier, he volunteered to be in the United States army, but being blind in one eye his service was declined.⁷⁰ Prager's story is merely the most famous of countless mob infractions against German Americans. A rope was cast around the neck of a Wisconsin German American, John Deml, before the mob shrank from the "ultimate solution" and settled for beating and bloodying its victim.⁷¹ Tar-and-

⁶⁷ Creel, 180.

⁶⁸ Otto Engel to Ernst Goerner, 3 Dec 1917, OG 5025.

⁶⁹ Lorin Lee Cary, "Wisconsin Patriots Combat Disloyalty: the Wisconsin Loyalty Legion and Politics, 1917-1918," (M.A. thesis, University of Wisconsin, 1965), 49.

⁷⁰ For a detailed account of the Prager lynching, see Luebke, 3-24.

⁷¹ Luebke 249, 274.

feather "parties" were commonplace across the nation. In Ashland, Wisconsin, two tar-and-feather incidents occurred within a two week period. In one of those incidents, a professor from Northland College in Ashland was dragged from his home, beaten, given a "generous" coat of tar and feathers, and left by the side of the road a mile from town.⁷² In Milwaukee, a mob mounted a machine gun outside Pabst Theater to prevent the staging of the German-language production, *Wilhelm Tell*.⁷³

Other types of public humiliation were also used. Yellow paint on churches, monuments, and homes became the most common public mark of disloyalty. A "bond slacker" in Evansville, Wisconsin was taken from her home, placed in a lion cage salvaged from a junk dealer, and hauled around the city square.⁷⁴ This mob action actually inspired the APL to police more fervently. The APL's official publication, *Spy Glass*, claimed the organization could "forestall mob action by wiping out the conditions under which loyal and peaceful citizens sometimes resort to lynch law." Mob violence, therefore, was not the fault of the mob, but rather the disloyalty which provoked it.⁷⁵

Like government organizations, mobs specifically targeted Lutherans. In Illinois, a mob beat a Lutheran pastor and his wife because the minister preached in German.⁷⁶ In Peshtigo, Wisconsin, members from a German Lutheran church even joined a mob that forced one of their fellow Lutherans to purchase Liberty Bonds and to kiss the American flag.⁷⁷ Actions against Lutheran parochial schools were also common. In the worst case, two Lutheran schools—one in Herington, Kansas and the other in Lincoln, Missouri—were burned to the ground.⁷⁸ Another Lutheran school in Schumm, Ohio, was dynamited.⁷⁹ In Walla Walla, Washington, a German Lutheran school was boarded up. School was delayed while the obstructions were removed. The next night, the school was again boarded up by unauthorized persons. Pastor P. Schmidt made an appeal to Sheriff Duffy of Benton County, who informed him that he had no authority to act. Schmidt then made his plea to Mayor Shirk, who "did his duty as his

⁷² *Ashland Daily Press*, 1 April 1918.

⁷³ Ludwig Kreiss to Robert Lansing, 6 April 1917; State Department Records, 763.72111.4763.

⁷⁴ Falk, 403.

⁷⁵ *Spy Glass*, 10 Aug 1918.

⁷⁶ Bielaski Report, "Lawlessness," 20 October 1918, OG 290513.

⁷⁷ Luebke 282. The Peshtigo incident *likely* involved WELS Lutherans from Zion or St. John, these being the most prominent Lutheran churches in Peshtigo.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 281.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 281. The dynamited school belonged to Rev. George Meyer's congregation, mentioned earlier for penning a letter to the CPI.

name would indicate," an APL agent happily reported.⁸⁰ For some, going to school constituted an act of bravery. As WELS teacher George Pullman was instructing students, a bullet was fired through the window of the classroom. Fortunately, no one was injured.⁸¹

In early 1918, a yellow coat of paint was splattered on Wisconsin Synod minister A.C. Baumann's home in Prescott, Wisconsin. Yellow paint on one's home usually caused embarrassment and hurried labor to remove it. Baumann, however, left the new paint job untouched for quite some time and "stated that he is proud of it," according to the testimony of Rev. Iny, a local minister and member of the Wisconsin Council of Defense.⁸² In spite of this vandalism, Baumann refused to change his habits. He still "prefers to talk the German language on the street and in the pulpit, rather than the English language. He never attends any of the Loyalty meetings...associates with pro-Germans, and takes no interest in war work."⁸³ Baumann personified the character of many Wisconsin Synod Lutherans after the declaration of war, who, despite this machinery of repression, or in ignorance of it, displayed a combative nature toward the war policies with which they disagreed.

⁸⁰ E.L. Wells Report, 5 April 1918, OG 178895.

⁸¹ Esther Pullman Weidner, "Remembering George & Hilda Pullman," Balge Family Records.

⁸² C.I. Rukes Report, 11 Sep 1918, OG 188937.

⁸³ *Ibid*, 1.