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The Impact or Influence of our Theological Seminary during the One Hundred Years of its History

# THE IMPACT OR INFLUENCE OF OUR THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY DURING THE ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF ITS HISTORY

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# ESSAYS

## THE IMPACT OR INFLUENCE OF OUR THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY DURING THE ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF ITS HISTORY

Wells have an unusual importance for mankind. It always has been so. There is no reason to believe that this situation will change.

Anyone at all acquainted with Holy Writ will know the significant role that wells played in the lives of the patriarchs. In general, wells were like an axis. Life revolved about them. The very survival of the progenitors of Christ was intimately tied up with wells. So significant were they to God's economy. How important it, therefore, also was to the effecting of the plan of salvation whether the water these wells brought forth was pure or contaminated.

From the foregoing it must then be evident that, in a sense, more than physical well-being and survival was dependent upon wells. The ancestors of our Savior needed to have wells, wells which supplied them with one of the most essential elements for the continuation of life. Small wonder that the concept and the picture of wells is in Scriptures so frequently transferred into the spiritual realm. Indeed, wells have an unusual significance for mankind.

Even if the historical incident which we had in mind in introducing our study in the foregoing way were unknown, it would be apparent why the picture employed would be applicable. Yet, as a brief review of some historical data will demonstrate, the employment of the value of wells in our study is of very direct relevance.

"We must dig a well in our own country!" That forthright and positive declaration, often also expressed in other words, we may say, under God, brought into existence a well from which we of the Wisconsin Synod have now been privileged to draw pure water for a century. I am, of course, referring to the persistent urging of President John Bading that our Synod, though in its infancy and numerically small, found its own theological seminary. True, Bading was not the first to encourage this. So far as this can be ascertained, the Synod's first president, John Muehlhaeuser, was the first to express himself publicly on this matter. At the convention of the Synod in 1853, at St. John's, Milwaukee, President Muehlhaeuser, in appealing to the Synod to consider the erection of its own seminary, pointed to the inability of the Synod to secure from Germany a sufficient number of pastors to meet the needs. Though this was not the last word on this matter from the first president, the determined efforts in this direction became evident once John Bading assumed the presidency of the Synod in 1860. Opposition to the plan was not wanting. It came primarily from those who desired to continue to employ the Gettysburg Seminary. But opposition only resulted in an intensification of Bading's labors. Together with others he contended that a seminary was necessary to effect a strong and united synod. The struggle was not in vain; the persistent pleas did not return void. Already after three years of Bading's incumbency, in 1863, the sorely needed well was dug. In the fall of that year a theological seminary was founded at Watertown, Wisconsin. It is not likely that the world noted what there happened. The beginning could hardly have been less auspicious: a faculty of one professor, a former "bush" pastor and Reiseprediger; a student body of two, soon to be reduced to one; a campus on rented property in a rented house; a sponsoring body which went begging for funds locally and in distant Europe; a moment in history when seemingly there were more important matters with which to be concerned, the Civil War.



No, it was not an imposing well that was dug. But it was a well, a well which not only would supply the young and struggling church body with shepherds trained in its own midst and in its own way but which also would avoid further infiltration of pastors with varying and often conflicting religious convictions. The century just concluded for this well can truly reveal its significance, for such a well is one of the means by which God made this century a century of grace.

There may be no connection between the words of President John Bading and a beautiful, restful spot on the sidehill of our Seminary campus. Student Marcus Fleischer may not have been aware of the fact that our Seminary was spoken of as a well by its founding fathers, but the Jakobsbrunnen which this long since deceased product of this well erected on the Seminary grounds a generation ago stands like a symbol of what this school was intended to be and what by the grace of God it has been—a well producing men of sound theological persuasion and with purposeful dedication for the dispensing of the water of life to parched and thirsting human souls.

Much more could be said regarding the historical aspect of our Seminary and its development into a well giving forth wholesome water. But that is not to be the burden of this treatise. What has been stated has been introduced more or less incidentally to emphasize the fact that a well was dug. What more needs to be said to develop our assigned topic will follow wherever it is relevant.

I. Though President Bading employed the illustration of a well to demonstrate graphically the nature and need of a theological seminary, it will be beneficial for our consideration briefly to concern ourselves with the term seminary itself and also a bit of history relative to seminaries, particularly in America.

Regarding the etymology of the word, the *Concordia Cyclopedia* tells us: "The designation itself is derived from the Latin *seminarium,* nursery of young trees." In the original edition of *Our Synod and Its Work,* Prof. Kowalke very nicely made the transfer to what today is considered to be a seminary in these words: ". . . it should not appear strange to us that the word 'seminary' came to denote an educational institution in which a group of human seedlings was being watched over and trained to become stalwart and capable men and women" (p. 186). The former source informs us that it is since the time of the Council of Trent (1545-1563) that the term in question "has been applied as official designation of institutions engaged in the training of clergymen, and not only in the Roman Catholic Church, but in the Protestant denominations as well."

Since these items have so much pertinence also to the situation within our own Synod, it will also be of significance for our discussion to adduce some data relative to the development of seminaries in this country.

In the earliest years of American church history it was virtually a standard practice in the various church bodies to draw on the supply of clergymen in the fatherland to meet the needs here. For various reasons, reasons which also varied with the different ministeriums or synods, this method proved unsatisfactory. The fear which led to the founding of Harvard College, now University, namely "dreading to leave an illiterate ministry to the church when our present ministers lie in the dust," no doubt induced church bodies other than the Puritans to investigate ways and means to train their own clergy. In the Lutheran Church the method first employed was the laboratory method, the training of young men in the homes of older and experienced pastors. As it is rather obvious, from this it was but a short step to the actual founding of theological seminaries.

For a full appreciation of the impact made by our Seminary it will also be of more than passing significance to keep in mind a statement taken from Article IV of our Synodical constitution: "The object and purpose of the Synod shall be to extend and conserve the true doctrine and practice of the Evangelical Lutheran Church: . . . (b) by establishing and maintaining theological seminaries, . . . and other institutions of learning."

Since the *Quartalschrift*, now the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* has, since its inception in 1904 and uninterruptedly to the present, been intimately associated with our Theological Seminary, the foreword to the first issue also contains some words valuable to a discussion of the impact of our Seminary within and without our own circles. Dr. Hoenecke writes: "We are aware of the fact that we do not represent prejudices (Liebhabereien) and specializing, but the Scriptures themselves: The divine origin of the Scriptures by means of verbal inspiration, the divine authority of Scriptures, so that we permit ourselves to be guided by nothing else than the clear word of Scriptures, a position to which our policy of letting Scriptures be our interpreter of Scriptures as well as our stand, particularly in the doctrine of election, bear eloquent testimony."

A paragraph found in the current issue of our Seminary catalog reveals that the originally accepted aim of this school has not been altered in the course of its 100 years of existence. The catalog states: "From the beginning the aim of the Seminary was determined by the particular need of the Synod. It was not so much to furnish opportunity for specializing study in various branches of theology, but to offer a satisfactory preparation for those who desire to enter the ministry of the Lutheran Church. The students are trained to preach and teach the pure Gospel of Jesus Christ in conscious agreement with the Confessions of our Church and to do all their pastoral work in the spirit of the Gospel. Both the theoretical and practical courses of the Seminary are arranged to serve this purpose." The words on our Seminary cornerstone, "Sola gratia, sola Scriptura, sola fide," may well serve as a forceful reminder of the lofty aim of this institution.

In short, then, our Seminary was meant to be founded and by God's grace was founded on the foundation of the Apostles and the Prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone. But this is but another way of saying that the foundation on which our Seminary is built and on which it rests is the Gospel. And what neither imposing structures nor a world-renowned faculty can do, this Evangel can, yes, must do. It is the power of God, the omnipotence of God. A seminary established on the power of the Gospel simply will make an impact. In an address at the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the dedication of the new seminary building at Wauwatosa, Prof. John Meyer stated: "Since our Seminary stands solely in the service of the Gospel of the free grace of God for the sake of the substitutionary merit of Christ, so the work that is done here is nothing else than a part of the battle between spirit and reason." Hence he could rightly assert that our Seminary's task is the conquering of the natural man through the Holy Ghost and could call our Seminary a monument to the victory over the natural man wrought by the Holy Ghost (*Quart.* 1918, p. 282).

II. From the foregoing it can, therefore, readily be seen why the topic for this essay was formulated as it was. This was not done without justification. Doing so simply assumed that a theological seminary, in view of its purpose, particularly a theological seminary dedicated to the aim to which our Seminary is dedicated, will make an impact, both within its own constituency and also beyond this.

And so we do not blush nor offer excuses for concerning ourselves with such a topic as the one in question. We state this because it might at first



appear to be presumptuous on our part to speak of our Seminary as making an impact. Indeed, there may well be those who will say, "The Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, that little institution of that small church body, that should make an impact!" Particularly can one anticipate such an attitude in a day when the status of a seminary is to a great extent measured by the number of degrees in the possession of its faculty, its literary accomplishments, its contributions to solving world problems, its participation in the ecumenical movement, its readiness to afford a forum for whatever is new in theological thinking.

Even if we do not permit ourselves to be influenced too much by the opinion of others, we may nevertheless be somewhat hesitant to speak of an impact made by our Seminary. We may regard it as foolish boasting.

But let us reserve our judgment for a moment. A more intensive investigation of this matter will throw a different light on this question.

By God's grace our Seminary, though the product of a church body which in its infancy would hardly dare consider itself conservative, emerged into a bulwark of sound doctrine. Already in its infancy this institution, though intimately involved in the struggle of its sponsoring body, gave indications of becoming the type of theological seminary intended by those who promoted its cause.

Thus our Seminary came to be, not in consequence of but rather like its present location, a city that is built on a hill. Such a city cannot be hid. Like a light on a candlestick, "it giveth light unto all that are in the house."

Our Seminary does not exist in a vacuum. It was never intended to be a monastery, to exist in seclusion. It has ever been a light and as such was bound to make an impact. Thus we have wanted it to be.

Any strangeness regarding this last statement surely must disappear when we take into account the intent of Jesus' words, "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven." How clearly and forcefully these words manifest that an institution like our Seminary, where the Gospel rules, not only automatically makes an impact but also that all concerned with this school and its operation will actually strive toward that end. If then in its 100 years of existence our Seminary has succeeded in this, we must without claiming any credit for this, simply confess that we have done that which was our duty to do. Though speaking thereof naturally calls for humility, it does not demand timidity.

Considering how self-evident it is that an institution like our Seminary will exert an influence, brings to mind another factor responsible for the exerting of an influence. This is a matter that lies in the very nature of such an institution. Those who go forth from our Seminary go into the Church and into the world as ambassadors for Christ. A seminary, its unique character, its distinctive features, its doctrinal position leave a definite imprint on its graduates. In them and in their work their alma mater is virtually being broadcast to the world. The words of Hosea, "Like people, like priest," here come to mind, or as this thought has been expressed in the adage, "Qualis rex, talis grex." The very words directed to a candidate at the time of ordination give evidence of this. We remind such prospective shepherds, "Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine, continue in them; for in so doing thou shalt save thyself, and them that hear thee." Paul's farewell words to the elders of the congregation at Ephesus are also pertinent, "Take heed unto thyself and unto all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made thee an overseer, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood."

Were we to say no more relative to a seminary's making an impact, we would have to consider ourselves remiss in the effecting of our assignment.

Forcefully the words of the Apostle run across our minds, "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." If by God's grace the influence exerted by our Seminary has till this time been what our fathers and we would have it be, then let us also briefly note what this impact could have been and could be if this well were not zealously guarded. How serious a matter this is can be gleaned from these words of Luther: "Our professors must be watched." That such an admonition warrants constant attention we feel should become apparent in noting what a man, quite well known to us, Pastor Grueber, remarked at a convention in Fort Wayne in 1941, "We must watch our seminaries."

In seeking to impress the importance of this on our minds, we shall simply offer pronouncements from the pens of others which ought indeed convince us on this matter. The Apology, in speaking on the Mass (Art. XXIV), has this to say: "Neither were the bishops ignorant of these abuses, and if they had corrected them in time, there would now be less discussion. Heretofore, by their own connivance, they suffered many corruptions to creep into the church. Now, when it is too late, they begin to complain of the trouble of the church, while this disturbance has been occasioned simply by these abuses which were so manifest that they could be borne no longer."

An article in *The Confessional Lutheran* (4/47, p. 38) makes this statement: "Atheists and communists are not so dangerous as those preachers who instill doubt and contempt in the minds of men. Congregations that would not tolerate a communist or atheist to lecture in their pulpits, graciously receive and pay an infidel in ministerial garb."

The same periodical brings an excerpt from a presidential address of Dr. C. F. W. Walther (1874). In answer to the question, "From what has the decay in our dear Lutheran Church in our old German Fatherland proceeded?" Dr. Walther said, "It wasn't the Lutheran people, it wasn't the Lutheran pulpits, it wasn't the Lutheran children's schools either. No. As the building of our Church proceeded from its higher institutions of learning, so its decay also began there. It couldn't be otherwise. Such as the teachers in our congregations and parochial schools are, such is the Church which they plant; however, such as the teachers in the higher institutions of learning are, such are the teachers in the congregations and parochial schools which they instruct and train. The higher schools are either the foremost workshops of the Holy Ghost, or the foremost workshops of the devil in tearing it down; either wide open doors of paradise, or, if God's pure Word does not reign, as Luther says, 'great gates of hell.' Now what follows from this? First of all, we dare accordingly never forget of what importance our higher institutions of learning are for the preparation and training of the teachers of our congregations and schools—no other church institution being comparable with them. The future of our Church in this country, its weal or woe, its further blessed influence or its unfruitfulness, its further extension or its ensuing standing still, its life or its general paralyzation, in short, its florescence or its decay, depend for the most part on the state of these schools. As dear as the welfare of our Church and its growth are to us, so earnestly should we as a whole see to it and be anxiously concerned and leave nothing undone that we are able to do toward attaining this object— that our higher institutions of learning may indeed in the most correct and most suitable manner aim at the highest and most thorough training of its students; and thereby, however, in no wise, perhaps in carnal rivalry, there be engendered or nourished a spirit of intellectual pride, but rather that in all our institutions the Word of God be and remain the Book of books, that the spirit of the Gospel and the fear of God, and the simplicity and humility which are inseparably connected with such fear of God, may rule therein and permeate



every teacher and scholar as well as all teaching and learning" (10/55, p. 109-110).

We shall also give ear to some sage words of our former president, John Brenner. In 1918, at an occasion previously referred to, he said: "Satan is alive to the importance of the theological seminary. He knows that the simplest way to poison a stream is to place poison in the spring from which it flows. For this reason, he has ever attempted to pervert such schools to his own vile use. And in many cases he has been successful. . . . Through such schools Satan spreads broadcast the seed of doubt and unbelief and wages war against Christ and His Church. Think of the influence men coming from such schools will have on the life of those whom they teach! No wonder that churches are dying, in spite of all appearance of life; that they are drifting away from the Cross into a simply heathen moralism. The temptations to professors and students are strong; every appeal is made to the carnal mind within them to draw them away from the Truth" (*Quart.* 18, p. 276).

An article in *The Fundamentals* by Howard Crosby (Vol. VIII) also deserves to be heard: "It is a lamentable fact that in too many of our seminaries where preachers are prepared for their work, the Word of God is not taught, but in its stead the philosophic schemes of so-called 'fathers' and great divines are given as the basis of doctrinal belief. It is true, that these schemes are brought to the Scriptures for support, and texts are quoted in their defense. It is true also that some of these schemes are consonant with Scriptures more or less. But, with these admissions, the mistake still exists, that the Word of God plays a secondary part in instruction. It is not taught; that is, it is not made the authoritative textbook. It is even sometimes introduced as a subject for criticism, and men like Reuss and Robertson Smith are brought in as the critical guides or, at least, helpers. As if a school of the prophets was intended to examine the credentials of God's Word, and not to take it humbly and gratefully for personal use and for use before the people. Some theological schools might without exaggeration be called 'schools for the turning of believers into doubters.' The excuse that men who are going to be preachers should know all that is said against the credibility, genuineness, and authenticity of the Scriptures, is a flimsy one. If that were the object, these objections would be considered only by way of parenthesis, and the overwhelming evidence of the Scriptures would be the main current of thought; but this is not the way it is done. On the contrary, the objections are magnified, and their authors are commended to the students for their perusal, and the hint is often thrown out that conservative views of the inspiration of God's Word are antiquated, obsolete, and marks of ignorance. We have thus, in the very places where, most of all, we should expect to see the profoundest reverence for God's Word, and its faithful study for the understanding of the divine will, the machinery for undermining the doctrine of Scripture inspiration and authority, on which all Christian truth rests, and that, too, in the young minds which are being prepared to become Christ's preachers to a sinful and dying world. It is a most painful thought, and it becomes the Church of Jesus Christ to arise to a sense of the evil, and to correct it before the whole Church is poisoned by this insidious influence. We wish our young Timothys to go out to their work with the one controlling desire to put God's Word before the people and to avoid questions and strifes of words which do not minister to godly edifying, knowing that the power to convert and edify is not the wisdom of man, but the power of God."

We conclude this portion of our study with a very brief but telling quotation from the pen of Dr. J. H. Fritz, "Heresies are brought into the Church by the theological seminaries and spiritual leaders. . . ."

III. Cognizant of the fact that a theological seminary will make an impact and that our Seminary, too, has done this, yes, has made its own peculiar

impact, both within our own constituency and also beyond this, we do well to analyze what it has been which has given our Seminary its character and has been responsible for the manner in which it exerted its influence.

Though the first factor we shall mention hardly qualifies as being the foremost, it is one which has very directly had an influence on the shaping of the Seminary's products and so indirectly on the impact made by our Seminary. The seeming triviality of this factor, we believe, will disappear once it is noted how valuable it can be in the shaping of theological character. Though this factor could and perhaps has been with some justification placed as well on the debit as on the credit side of the ledger, we deem it that the plus outweighs the minus.

What then is this peculiar factor? It is the nature of Seminary life, in and out of the classroom, a type of, let us call it, rather free, unregulated life which it appears has always prevailed at this institution. Until we read what Prof. John Schaller had to say on this matter, we hesitated to mention it in this essay. But in his opening address in September 1918, Prof. Schaller spoke words which we feel indicate some real importance of the factor in question. Here are those words: "What can we, your teachers, contribute thereto that you be fortified against special temptations to indifference and unfaithfulness? We could surround you with a restraining circle (Bannkreis) of laws, regulations, and rules and thus enforce a certain form of outward conduct and apparent success in learning. But as every enforced accomplishment of man is generally wanting when it comes to ethical value, so such success could in your case satisfy us even less since you will after a short time, from the Seminary immediately be placed into difficult and responsible work. Therefore, we desire from the beginning to influence your wills in a different manner, namely with the power which inheres in the Word of God" (*Quart.* 1918, p. 260).

Though it can indeed be argued whether such a policy does not have adverse effects and though we readily grant that at times advantage may be taken of it, we are convinced that it has in no small measure contributed to that independence, call it rugged individualism if you will, which not only has characterized the products of our Seminary, but, more important, their approach to the study of Scriptures. But let us hear more from Prof. Schaller on this score. He continues: "We shall in the course of our joint study never cease to make you conscious of the fact that your professors are not doing the studying for you. Whatever you acquire during your Seminary days shall be self-acquired. You can bring no greater disgrace upon us than if in the future you become known as such who depend upon their teachers. We do not wish to make mimics of you, who rely on us as your source of knowledge, who mechanically accepted what they were told. Whatever you at your dismissal from the Seminary take with you by way of theological knowledge shall have become your possession because you became convinced that thus it is written. If in this you follow the guidance of your instructors, you will later have the good sense ever to refresh, renew, and intensify your knowledge even if no professor is at your side."

Although, as Prof. Schaller then admits, the above has by no means been the only goal which our Seminary desires to achieve, we are perhaps now convinced that it is nonetheless a vital factor. Certainly, it has had its part in that goal of this institution: to produce independent Bible students. And whatever tends in that direction is not inconsequential.

The second factor to be mentioned may also, at first, appear to be absurd. We have reference to our periodicals, specifically the two which were, in the one case in its inception and early years, in the other case from its inception uninterruptedly till now, virtually identified with our Seminary.



Aware of the small circle of readers today enjoyed by these periodicals, the *Gemeindeblatt* established in 1865 and the *Quartalschrift,* now the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly,* existing since 1904, it may appear nothing short of ridiculous to speak of an impact made by these publications within our own Synod to say nothing of an impact in a wider circle. Even without knowing whether in their earliest years these periodicals enjoyed a proportionately far greater reading membership, there can be no question about it that they did, particularly in the earlier years, exert a great and also wholesome influence. And we can add, whatever influence that was must also be credited as an impact made by our Seminary. The *Quartalschrift* has always been the responsibility of our Seminary faculty. In its first years, the same was true of the *Gemeindeblatt.*

Until the *Quartalschrift* appeared on the scene, it was in no small degree the *Gemeindeblatt* which was the medium for developing our Synod, in its beginnings definitely in the camp of liberalism, into one characteristic for its conservative position in doctrine and practice. Aware of the background of many who formed the clergy of our Synod, we can appreciate how through this publication they could become acquainted with the conservative theology which prevailed at the Seminary. When we, for example, think of the series of articles on the Confessions featured in the *Gemeindeblatt,* beginning already with the second issue of the first volume, we can sense how much this periodical had to do with the developing of our own clergy into a more and more conservative one.

But it was also through the medium of the *Gemeindeblatt* that we, to a large degree, in the controversies raging in the Church of that time, raised our banners, carried on polemics, if you will. When the Fritschels, Sigmund and Gottfried, were making propaganda for their position regarding the Open Question, is was especially in our *Gemeindeblatt* that we revealed this stand as heretical. When the conservatives in our Synod noted that a separation from the German mission societies which had mothered us was demanded in the interest of sound confessionalism, it was once again the *Gemeindeblatt* which rendered a yeoman's service by way of indoctrinating our constituency. Likewise, when in the 1860's our Synod had to declare itself over against the General Synod and also sever all connections with the General Council, many articles in the *Gemeindeblatt* attest this periodical's prominence in this trying situation.

But that this churchpaper should play such an important role in the shaping of our Synod and in its relationship toward other church bodies, need not surprise us. It had to follow from the goal which the editors set for themselves. In an early issue it is stated: "Doctrinal articles shall occupy the foremost place in our publication. They ought to be the items therein most desired and appreciated by our readers. Without clear, thorough indoctrination, no edification, at any rate, no proper one; mere excitement of the emotions, touching the hearts, affecting and stirring of the mind are not edification; so-called edifying articles, which have that and nothing more in mind, edify, establish the faith. If indoctrination alone edifies, then doctrinal articles are necessary" (*Quart.* '36,18f.).

When the *Quartalschrift* made its appearance, the character of our Synod had, to be sure, quite definitely been established. Yet it surely was one of the goals of this publication to give expression to our distinctive theology, the Wauwatosa theology as it was often called, to a readership also beyond our own circles. The foreword of Volume I, No. 1, makes this statement: "It shall bring treatises of doctrine in general. That thereby special attention must be given to contributions which will be of interest for the Lutheran Church of our land, or in particular for our synodical circles, is self-evident. . . ."

After spelling out more specifically the publication's purpose for the Synod's own constituency, the article continues: "No less for the other goal, and that is the one which God's so apparent operation and performance has placed before us in the Lutheran Church in our land. God is permitting it that through our synods a strong movement in the direction of unity in doctrine is in progress. And to serve this movement shall also be our objective, in forthrightness, in honesty, and Christian love, and therefore also without in any way surrendering where for conscience' sake, convinced by the clear testimony of God's Word, we cannot yield" (*Quart.* 1904, p. 2).

Reflecting upon the third factor which we believe was largely responsible for the impact in question, we cannot but think of the poet's words, "God moves in a mysterious way His wonders to perform." The matter in question is primarily one of historical development, but how forcefully it demonstrates that God is in control of history.

Surely we must recognize the guidance of the Lord of the Church that in the early history of our Synod God brought into our fellowship a man who, under God, could establish our church soundly doctrinewise. The need for this turn in our development is so apparent that no more will be said about it.

One truly wonders, however, what direction our Synod might have taken if the developments following the efforts of a dogmatician had not been what they were. The *Dogmatics* which were written may undoubtedly be regarded as one of the *magna opera* if not the *magnum opus* of our Synod. That our Seminary, however, in spite of the timeliness and importance of this work, did not become dependent on it nor rely on it to its own detriment, may, for one thing, be due to the fact that a span of time, six years (1914) to be exact, elapsed between the death of the author and the publication of the dogmatical work. These years seem to have been just sufficient to prevent an attachment to a literary production which in the final analysis would have stunted our spiritual growth.

Closely allied with the former, possibly even more consequential, is the fact that the transition from German into English for our Synod followed shortly upon the death of the author of the *Dogmatics*. We venture to say that this has been a vital factor in keeping us from falling prey to a devitalizing curse so frequently found in churches and so feared by our pioneers, an excessive loyalty to the fathers.

Doubtlessly, however, the item now to be considered was chiefly responsible for preserving us from becoming followers of men as well as being governed in our theology by a dogmatical approach. This is that noteworthy development that our great systematician was not followed by another expert in this field. In the theological leaders He gave us God indeed gave our church a diversity of gifts, gifts of which we may say that they complemented one another.

Once the doctrinal position of our Synod had been well established and clarified, there arose into prominence two men who pioneered the way for a truly sound approach to the interpretation and utilization of Scriptures. In the case of Prof. August Pieper it was the insistence, in his case a passionate insistence, upon the importance of the Word. In the case of the other, Prof. John P. Koehler, it was the equally important historical approach, the studying of Scripture and for that matter all history in the light of the constant struggle between Christ and Antichrist, between sin and grace.

We shall at this point hear a portion of our Synod's centennial book, *Continuing in His Word*: "These are the years in which the distinctive characteristics of our Seminary began to emerge. For even as human beings have their individual marks of appearance and action, by which they may be distinguished from each other though they be brothers and sisters of the same family, just so institutions of learning have their own peculiar qualities, which blend with each other and finally become the mark of a separate and distinct individuality. In the case of our Seminary, Hoenecke had supplied the clear and sound doctrinal position. His theology was pre-eminently Scriptural in its quality. The references to the works of earlier theologians were definitely of secondary importance. But his field was nevertheless that of systematic theology. And there (the danger is always present of bowing to precedent, of emphasizing tradition, of stressing system—if not in the work of a pioneer teacher, then in the attitude of his followers. Here the emphasis on a sound historical and grammatical interpretation of Scripture, on a thorough introduction of the student into the full and coherent content of Scripture, and on an unrelenting effort to determine what the words of Scripture mean to say, rather than what man would like to have them say—the things which were the distinctive contribution of Koehler and Pieper—served to create the pattern of a balanced theology which our Seminary is trying to follow to this day" (146-7). From this, and in this peculiar manner, there developed what has truly been responsible for the impact made by our Seminary, that is a deep respect for the Word of God. The historical-exegetical method of Bible study compelled the old hermeneutical principle, "Let the Scriptures interpret themselves," to be more than a mere fine-sounding slogan. "To the law and to the testimony," not, "to the fathers," has been the guiding principle of the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary and, thank God, is still that today. Where that principle reigns, scholarship and theological acumen will have their place but will never be permitted to become dictators. Reason and methodology will there have to be satisfied to occupy the position of handmaidens. And that is indeed as it should be. Only such a position is in keeping with Paul's injunction: "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (II Cor. 10:5).



In due appreciation of this unmerited heritage President Naumann recently stated, ". . . the great blessing of the Synod in its Seminary has been that the Bible reigns as undisputed queen of its theology." The current president of our Seminary, Prof. Carl Lawrenz, put it thus: "In spite of the many changes introduced into the curriculum of the theological seminary in recent years, exegetical courses—the interpretation of Scriptures in the original languages—still predominate at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. Our chief aim here is to graduate pastors who are thoroughly at home in this matrix of Christianity."

IV. By means of a survey of the various factors which were responsible for the impact made by our Seminary within and without our own circles, we have already, at least in some degree, indicated what this impact has been. At any rate, in view of the former, the actual impact itself assumes lesser importance. Nevertheless, it will not be without definite value to pay closer attention to certain areas where the aforementioned factors so evidently were responsible for the influence exerted.

When we now, in view of these last remarks, pass by, merely by mentioning it, that area which pertains to the very products of our Seminary, we surely do not hereby intend to relegate this significant factor into the category of the nonessential. (Since the graduates of our Seminary through their being in the public ministry are in reality our Seminary's portrait to our church and also to the world, the imprint this school makes on these men is indeed of prime importance. In more ways than one, these products both in their life and in their work reflect the training and preparation accorded them.) Yet, partly because we have earlier in this study dealt with this matter, we now by-pass it in favor of other matters.

Though the two, self-evidently, cannot be entirely separated, the impact of our Seminary on the Synod as a whole, rather than on the products of our Seminary, shall be given more attention. Better to understand the situation as it prevailed in the days of our Synod's infancy, we must take into account the status prevailing in Europe at the time when the German mission societies were sending to this country the men who became our founding fathers. In a history of the Wisconsin Synod, based upon the more expansive study of Prof. J. P. Koehler, Prof. Alexander Sitz has this to say: "Orthodoxy had either given way to unbelief or had degenerated into orthodoxism, an insistence on dogmas and forms that betrayed a lack of spiritual life. Pietism had arisen as a protest against this attitude, but because of its own inherent weakness, its leaning to sentimentalism and its lack of appreciation of the true significance of the Word of God, it could not restore sound life. The controversy between orthodoxism and pietism ended in futility. The result was a general weariness that shrank from all controversy and a tendency toward unionism" (*NLuth.* 1940, p. 130).

It was in this unpropitious soil that the mission societies, the Baseler and the Langenberger, which above all mothered our Synod, were planted and grew. Needless to say, this did not augur well for us. The conditions prevailing in the first decade should, therefore, not surprise us. We indeed had the making of a truly liberal body. The attacks on us made by men of Missouri—and they were not infrequent—though not always executed with a becoming charity, were not without justification, and we can add, not in vain.

The very positions for which the Wisconsin Synod has become known, yes, even maligned in some quarters, were the very ones in which case it seemed the least likely that an orthodox position would be achieved. Where it apparently made little difference to some of the clergymen of our church's infancy that their congregations consisted of Lutherans and Reformed and where there seemed little hesitation to serve them according to both convictions, it would have seemed that our Synod was doomed to rank among the most unionistic bodies. Where there was no strength to make a clean break with the state churches of Germany but rather a readiness to seek and accept their continued financial assistance, a strong position relative to matters pertaining to the separation of Church and State did not appear to be indicated for us. Whereas the first name adopted by our Synod, The German Evangelical Ministerium of Wisconsin, as well as the first constitution approved made of us a Pastorensynode and operated as such, there indeed appeared to be nothing to indicate an eventual sound position on the doctrine of the church and the ministry.

But it ever holds, "Der Mensch denkt, Gott lenkt." In His mercy, the Lord definitely had an altogether different history in store for us from the one man would have deducted this to be in view of the origin and early history of our body. The trend in the new direction, to be sure, became evident already in the years prior to the founding of the Seminary, largely through the influx of men like John Bading, Philip Koehler, and G. Reim. At the risk of being charged with ungratefulness over against these pioneers who served us so nobly, we nevertheless must assert that it was primarily through the influence of our Seminary that confessionalism was fostered in our midst.

The first positive indication that the young Synod was in the process of making an about-face showed itself in a decision which truly required courage on the part of this struggling body. No small part of the funds necessary for the operation of our Synod, yes, also a sizable portion of the wherewithal required for the establishment of a seminary had come from Germany and elsewhere. Though it was a known fact that a trend in the direction of conservatism would not please the European benefactors, yes, would be and was interpreted as base ingratitude on our part, the still young Synod refused to permit this to influence its actions. When this matter came to a showdown and the break with the German churches was imminent, it was our Seminary which played a leading role in the action taken in 1867 which severed our connections with the Union in Germany.



What a vital part our Seminary played in the development of our confessional stand can also be seen in the actions taken over against other Lutheran bodies in America. This was in reality a two-pronged development. In the one direction was our conclusion with respect to the General Council. The founding of this body resulted from the reaction of the more conservative bodies in America over against the appearance of the Definite Synodical Platform, a document which Prof. August Pieper called a disfigurement of the Augsburg Confession. These bodies which had left the General Synod met at Fort Wayne to organize what was to be known as the General Council. Our Synod, too, was represented at this meeting and for all practical purposes became a charter member of the new body. It was, however, not long before liberal tendencies also asserted themselves in the General Council. It was in the well-known "four points," namely chiliasm, lodge membership, pulpit fellowship, and altar fellowship, where the laxity revealed itself. When in 1868 our Synod felt itself compelled to separate from this body, it was once again our Seminary that led the way, evident also in the fact that the *Gemeindeblatt,* edited by the Seminary, definitely asserted itself in the controversy.

These were indeed trying times for the young Synod. Numerically, there were losses among the laity as well as among the clergy. Added to all this there was an intensification of another problem. We may say in the proportion in which the Synod approached confessional soundness and solidity, in that proportion it became more difficult to solve its manpower problem. But, as we could expect, behind such a seemingly dark cloud there was a real silver lining. And herein, too, our Seminary asserted its positive leadership.

We have in mind our ever drawing nearer to and eventual agreement with the Missouri Synod, culminating in the founding of the Synodical Conference in 1872. As already mentioned, Missouri had been very critical, at times impatient and uncharitable, in its attitude over against our Synod with its unsettled doctrinal position. Yet what was transpiring in Wisconsin in the latter fifties and particularly in the sixties did not escape the St. Louis theologians. With this, there also became evident a more friendly attitude toward Wisconsin. Besides, Missouri's foremost theologian, with his energetic, fiery, and at times brusque disposition, and our dominant spirit, with his humble and gentle, yet winning character, seemed to make an ideal team to defend and extend sound Lutheranism.

This movement attained its climax in 1868 when at a meeting between the representatives of the two synods, conducted at Milwaukee, a statement of peaceable union (Friedliche Einigung) was adopted. Here was anything but a manufactured union. Through His divine guidance, bestowed upon those who diligently and thoroughly searched the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit effected a unity of doctrine which the parties involved now simply were confronted with and recognized by their affiliation. Prof. Sitz says of this, ". . . both parties recognized each other as orthodox, established altar and pulpit fellowship, and agreed to recognize each other's church discipline." It merits special mention that among the items in which the synods found themselves to be in agreement were those of the Open Question, the doctrine of the church and the ministry, inspiration, fellowship, and the Antichrist.

Tangible evidence of the agreement reached was apparent in a decision closely affecting our Seminary. It was agreed that Missouri would utilize our Northwestern College for its pretheological students in the Wisconsin area and supply a professor on the Watertown staff, while our Synod, henceforth employing St. Louis as its theological seminary, would place a man on the St. Louis faculty. We might add that although this did mean the temporary closing of our Seminary, the fact that the agreement was not completely realized, indicates that our Seminary did not actually pass out of existence from 1870-1878.

Again, in all these discussions and decisions our Seminary occupied the position of leadership. That our Seminary in these early years of our Synod's existence made an impact is indeed stating the case mildly. Under God, we truly owe much to our Seminary.

But this is by no means restricted to the first 25 years of our Synodical existence. It was in the second quarter century when again the influence of our Seminary was brought to bear in a controversy which affected virtually the entire Lutheran Church in America, a struggle which sorely tried the recently founded Synodical Conference, of which Prof. August Pieper writes that it shook our Synod to the very foundation. As it will no doubt by now have been recognized, we are speaking about the great Election Controversy.

There was a strong movement among some of the Wisconsin pastors to side with Prof. A. Schmidt of the Norwegian Seminary at Madison and also a Missourian, Prof. F. Stellhorn, in favor of the "intuitu fidei" position on election, namely an election in view of foreseen faith, and to defect to the Ohio Synod, which as a result of this controversy left the Synodical Conference in 1881. In this struggle, which eventually cost our Synod a goodly number of pastors and portions of congregations, our Seminary adhered to and charted an orthodox path and doctrinally saved the day for our Synod.

We are timewise not sufficiently far removed for a thorough evaluation of the part our Seminary has played in more recent controversies in the Church at large and also in our own circles. Yet surely no one would question that our Seminary has continued to uphold the historic position of the Synodical Conference and has served as our vanguard in battling against the attacks, of more recent vintage, on inspiration, church fellowship, the Antichrist. The far-reaching decision resolved upon in this very hall in 1961 certainly gave evidence not only of the sound confessional position held by this institution but also of the fact that its impact still is on no small proportions. The fact that Neo-orthodoxy has found unwilling ears in our midst and that unionism has been resisted with might and main can to a great extent be attributed to the fact that our Seminary has continued to hold to the course charted by its earlier theological giants on the basis of the clear Word of God. In a "sola Scriptura" theology there is no room for theological experimentation and an exploratory type of theology. There the "thus it is written" is accorded the finality and decisiveness which truly is becoming it.

Such, then, is the well, so far as its nature as well as its impact are concerned, which was originally dug at Watertown and now flows at Mequon. Since a fountain does not send forth at the same place sweet water and bitter, it is truly a miracle of God's grace that our Seminary, founded by a church body such as we once were, should become a well giving forth sweet water, the water of life in all its truth and purity.

In reflecting upon this, our sentiments will surely be those of the Psalmist, "Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake" (Ps. 115:1). Far from assuming any credit for what our Seminary has become and still is, we will, in all humility, confess, "We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly" (Ps. 106:6).



May we, however, never take our Seminary and its sound confessional position for granted! Rather, may the ancient adage, "What you have inherited from your fathers strive to make it your own possession," indicate to us in which way we, at the occasion of our Seminary's Centennial, can render this institution the highest service—that is that we watch our Seminary! The men at our Seminary are also subject to all the temptations which befall others in similar posts. And these temptations are legion. In view of what we through this study have learned, our Seminary professors truly need our watchful prayers. May we not fail them! May we, assembled here, with one heart and with one voice make this our Seminary Centennial Prayer:

"The servants Thou hast called
And to Thy Church art giving
Preserve in doctrine pure
And holiness of living.
Thy Spirit fill their hearts,
Endue their tongues with power;
What they should boldly speak,
Oh, give them in that hour!"
AMEN.

ROLAND HOENECKE

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## THE AIM OF OUR SEMINARY: TO TRAIN CONSECRATED MEN OF GOD

"The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few." How frequently we have spoken or heard these words of our Savior in recent years, as we considered the vacancies in our congregations and the steadily increasing mission opportunities confronting us at home and abroad! But has there ever been a time in our Synod's history when these words of our Savior did not apply? No, I am not forgetting what happened in the thirties and forties, when almost entire classes of graduates of our Seminary stood idle in the market place waiting, sometimes for months or even years, before they received a call, with the result that some of them drifted into other vocations. Whatever reasons or explanations might be given for this—and the chief reason was lack of funds, due in part to the economic situation—we certainly would not want to say, there were no souls to save, no opportunities to open mission fields, that the harvest of souls was not plenteous during those years.

One thing that cannot but strike us, as we in this Centennial year of our Seminary look back over the past history of our Synod, is the fact that the truth of the Savior's words about the plenteous harvest was very keenly felt at its very beginning by our founding fathers. In convention after convention the complaint was voiced that many requests for preachers could not be met because of a shortage of men. It is therefore readily understandable that the fathers early expressed the need for and the desirability of a school to train men for the rapidly increasing opportunities.

The shortage of men was, however, only one reason why the young synod felt the need for a seminary of its own and early began to think seriously of establishing such a preacher-training institution. Indeed by depending not merely on the limited number of men sent over by the German mission societies, but by using also men from other backgrounds, some of whom were trained by individual pastors, they were successful in plugging up many a