

A HALF CENTURY OF FAITH-LIFE

An Analysis of the Circumstances Surrounding the Formation  
of the Protes'tant Conference.

Mark A. Jeske

April 22, 1978

CONTENTS

Introduction

- I. *Vorgeschichte*
- II. The Watertown Thievery Case
- III. The Fort Atkinson Case
- IV. Professor Gerhard Ruediger
- V. The Beitz Paper and the *Gutachten*
- VI. Prof. John Philipp Koehler
- VII. Overall Observations and Analysis

Appendices

- A. A chronology of the years 1924-1930
- B. A roster of the pastors involved in the Protes'tant Conference
- C. A translation of the 1926 Beaver Dam *Protestschreiben*
- D. A translation of the 1927 Elroy Declaration

End Notes

Bibliography

\*\*\*\*\*

A HALF CENTURY OF *FAITH-LIFE*:

An analysis of the circumstances surrounding the formation of the Protes'tant Conference.

Introduction

It was exactly 50 years ago this Easter, in April, 1928, that the first issue of *Faith-Life* appeared, following upon two years of intense synodical turmoil. While it would not be totally accurate to peg the beginning of the Protes'tant Conference at that particular juncture, nevertheless the paper was a significant step for the fledgling group, and did much to propagate their ideas, polarize the undecided, and crystallize the Protes'tant identity. It is remarkable how little the paper's format, appearance, and content have changed over the years and bears convincing testimony to the singleness of purpose, convictions, and common ideals of the Conference.

A study of the puzzling events which contributed to the launching of that periodical and which followed upon it ought in some degree to be part of every WELS pastor's training. For the Wisconsin Synod it was an episode of vast impor-

tance, even though the ripples it made outside its own circles were tiny. For one thing, the controversy did much to clarify and develop WELS' own identity; it is only natural that the long Synodical Conference association with big Missouri should have contributed to some lagging in the Synod's administrative development. Sustained criticism from without caused a good deal of introspection and self-analysis, much of which was healthy.

For another thing, the controversy deserves attention simply because of the gaping hole it tore in Wisconsin's ministerium; in all about 40 pastors left, as well as several teachers (see Appendix B). The Western Wisconsin District alone lost about 10% of its pastors in the late 1920's, and there were many more who sympathized with the Protestants but drew up short of making the break. The dissension, bitterness, and tension were felt throughout the Synod. Families were divided and congregations were split, and instead of blowing over, the Controversy simmered far into the 1930's.

A further motivation for study is that the Conference, though dying, will die only very slowly. The practical problems involved in membership transfers are greatly reduced nowadays; nevertheless, these people are WELS relatives, just as the Edomites were to the Israelites, and they ought to be acknowledged. It is noteworthy that they to this day consider themselves a Conference of the Wisconsin Synod, and never took the usual steps for self-preservation as a separate church body (e.g. establishing a seminary), as did the GLC.

One of the most compelling reasons for studying the Protestant Controversy is that there are valuable lessons to be learned, lessons which apply directly to WELS in 1978. It is a sobering thought that the foundation for the schism was not doctrinal, but practical in nature; it is a corrective to any *Pochen auf die reine Lehre* (boasting about pure doctrine) as Koehler used to say, as if mere subscribing to orthodox dogmatics textbooks were sufficient, and practice would then take care of itself.

Research into the Controversy can be frustrating, which may account for the general lack of knowledge about it in WELS circles, at least among the younger pastors. The mass of material facing the student is so formidable that one is not sure where to begin. *Faith-Life* itself occupies a whole shelf--there must be at least 500 issues, and the subject matter is usually so detailed that someone without the necessary background of names and dates is simply overwhelmed.

But while piles of documents, diatribes, and correspondence abound, there is a dearth of careful historical overview. The Protestant side is, to be sure, presented in *Faith-Life*, but enough of a bias is detectible to cast suspicion on its objectivity. This is not said in criticism--it was nearly impossible to remain unbiased in a Controversy as bitter as this one. On the other hand, an official evaluation on the Wisconsin side never appeared, probably out of fear of being pilloried in *Faith-Life*, a desire to avoid further alienation, and the general lack of clarity. Besides, the Synod resolved in 1929:

"...that no more articles shall be published concerning this Controversy, neither by Synod itself, nor by such as are in the service of Synod."<sup>1</sup>

Another obstacle to obtaining a clear picture of the times is the gap of 50 years. The principals in the controversy are all dead, and the next generation can never see things in exactly the same way. It is difficult after 50 years to read between the lines, to see past the terse, businesslike resolutions, to look at photographs of the leaders and imagine them in heated debate.

Especially frustrating are the labyrinthine convolutions of each of the various cases. After half a century it is simply impossible to unravel the hopelessly tangled dealings and ascribe credit or blame. Countless meetings were held, charges made, aspersions cast, and letters written, and anyone who claims to have a perfectly clear picture of the Western Wisconsin District in the 1920's is fooling himself.

Perhaps the greatest difficulty of all for a Wisconsin man is to understand the Protes'tant mind-set. The more one reads in *Faith-Life*, the more one is convinced that there are differences not only in historical evaluation, but also in preconceptions and approaches. From the outset it ought to be recognized that the two sides do not always operate from the same premises, that they view the same events through lenses of different colors. The historian must attempt to stand in Protes'tant boots and feel their unrest, pressures, and tension, and at the same time feel the frustration and despair of WELS officials who had to watch congregations and pastors slide away from the fold. The Protes'tants were convinced of the rightness of their cause to the point that they were willing to be suspended rather than to yield principles of conscience. The Protes'tant attitude is inconceivable unless its connection to the Wauwatosa Gospel of the 1920's is grasped, unless one can rise above the individual historical events and consider the *hoe- here Fragen* (higher questions) that bothered them so much.

Two periods in the Protes'tant half century are of especial interest to WELS observers: the initial storm in 1924-1929 and the reconciliation attempt of 1958-1961, in which the suspensions imposed by the Western Wisconsin District were rescinded. Both are complicated, involved stories, and in order to avoid superficiality and pointless generalizations this paper will restrict its scope to the former topic, viz., an analysis of the circumstances surrounding the formation of the Protes'tant Conference.

This paper makes no boast of completeness; it is not the final word, nor does it attempt to be the definitive statement of anyone except the author. There is much research yet to be done, since not enough basic work, especially in statistics, has been put together on this snarled puzzle. The goal of this paper will be to narrate and analyze the events of the early crisis years as coherently as possible, and thus to make the basic story known to the casual reader and perhaps to clear away some of the clutter for the more serious student who wishes to pursue a certain angle. This is a story in which the clash of personalities played a prominent role, and fascinating little sidelights abound; because of the endless ramifications of the individual cases, however, the general story line will have to be pursued at the expense of personal inclinations.

### I. Vorgeschichte

It would be a gross oversimplification merely to state that the Protes'tant Controversy began after the Watertown thievery case, just as it would be simplistic to say that an assassination at Sarajevo started the First World War. The Controversy might be viewed as having arisen from three general contexts: post-war American society in general, Midwest German-American Lutheranism, and the Wauwatosa Seminary in particular.

The national mood of the decade from 1915-1925 seemed to be quite united in its fluctuations. Historians describe a happy consensus in the war effort which swept the nation--Liberty bonds, Liberty gardens, and Liberty loans were all popular measures for contributing to the war effort. Propaganda and sloganeering were very effective. The euphoria dissolved, though, as the nation realized after the war that the world was still not safe for democracy, that this war had probably not ended all wars, and that the atrocious carnage had not really accomplished a great deal.

America's inquisitive involvement in European politics turned to a sour isolationism, reflected in the failure of Wilson's plans for American leadership in the League of Nations. The Yankees turned their backs and were quite content to let Europe stew in its quarrelsome juices. But this post-war depression gave way to a new optimism as free enterprise was given its head under Harding; there began a new era of good feeling. Sinclair Lewis' character, George F. Babbitt, was a merciless caricature of American jingoism, back-slapping boosterism, and senti-

mental superficiality. This epidemic of light-headedness might explain some of the rather flippant remarks and actions of the Western Wisconsin District officials.

Another undercurrent flowed in a somewhat different direction. One of the social reactions to the "Second Industrial Revolution" was a rising fear of a society dominated by machines; the short stories of Sherwood Anderson are eloquent testimony that Henry Ford's innovations in assembly-line techniques were not universally perceived as blessings. While much of America gladly acquired the tastes and habits of an industrialized consumer society, there were some who saw in all the prefabrication, programming, and progress a cheapening of human values. There are articles in the early issues of *Faith-Life* which have this anti-machine flavor.

As the casual toleration of large German ghettos in midwestern cities turned to anti-Teutonic pressure during the war, the German Lutherans by and large renounced old loyalties and eagerly fell into the Yankee step. Congregations organized Liberty Loan drives, for instance, and generally went out of their way to prove that they were good citizens. The war was the single most important factor in hastening the metamorphosis from German to English in Midwestern Lutheran circles; whereas after 60 years of existence in the Promised Land WELS had only a tiny handful of congregations with English services, by 1930 German was clearly on the wane. While the dramatic shift from German-ness to American-ness did not influence the Controversy directly, it did have a definite unsettling effect, especially in the pre-Protestant years of 1915-1925. Local arguments over English services and ministry could be amazingly acrimonious, and not a few congregations in WELS got their start as an opposition altar to stubborn Dutchmen of the established congregation.

The second major context of Protestant *Vorgeschichte* is Midwestern American Lutheranism, specifically the Synodical Conference, of the early part of the 20th Century. Several observations can be made here. For one, Wisconsin's dependence on Missouri ought not be overlooked (for one who grew up after the Milwaukee Convention of 1961 this state of affairs is difficult to grasp at first). Missouri in 1922 had nearly three times the number of congregations that WELS has today, and the fact of her suzerainty over the Synodical Conference, under the energetic leadership of Franz Pieper, cannot really be challenged. Missouri, for example, had on a number of occasions gone to St. Louis for a *Gutachten* (opinion) when there was a dispute, and so Gotthold Thurow, president of the Western Wisconsin District in the mid-1920's, undoubtedly had no qualms about going to Wauwatosa when he needed help. He was merely following Missouri precedent.

In conservative organizations, and especially in conservative religious organizations, there is bound to be a strong anti-establishment tendency; one senses, for example, in some outlying areas of WELS today a definite antipathy to the "*Pastoren ohne Amt*" at "3512." Organizational bigness, *Beamtentum*, and bureaucracy will always make some people gag, and in Missouri this tendency was sharpened by their opposition to Grabau's highly centralized church polity in the Buffalo Synod. A slight misinterpretation of Walther arose and the legend grew that Missouri had always taught that only the *Ortsgemeinde* (local congregation) had the Keys. An example of this subtle aberration would be the essay presented by A.H. Lange at the 1937 convention of the North Illinois District, "The Local Congregation--The Only Society Instituted by God Himself." *Christian News* has recently come out strongly against proposed constitutional amendments designed for greater centralization in the LC-MS.

A development of major significance for the Protestant Controversy was the 1917 Wisconsin-Michigan-Minnesota merger and the subsequent division of Wisconsin into three districts. Officials in the Michigan, Minnesota and Nebraska Synods by and large continued uninterrupted under the district system, but in Wisconsin the number of offices was immediately trebled. The unfortunate result was that a num-

ber of untested men were occupying critical offices when the storm broke. Edward Fredrich considers this event the principal long-term cause of the Controversy:

"The impression emerges...that the conflict was basically an anti-establishment reaction to the realignment and augmentation of administrative machinery in our circles occasioned by the shift from federated to merged synodical structure."<sup>2</sup>

Incidentally, it is ironic to note that President Bergemann, who had labored and traveled extensively to smooth the transition, was reviled by Protestants as bureaucracy incarnate. The combination of rapid internal growth, the shift from German to English, the drift from rural to town orientation, the shift to districts, and the organic merger contributed mightily to a gut feeling that Wisconsin was getting too big for its britches.

There was some legalism, too; the Ministerium idea had apparently not died completely, and there was a raft of essays in the 1920's directed against the lack of spirituality shown by those who should have known better. August Pieper and J.Ph. Koehler were stinging critics of anything which hindered or conflicted with the Gospel, as the following articles demonstrate:

1. Pieper, "*Menschenherrschaft in der Kirche*."<sup>3</sup>
2. Koehler, "*Gesetzlich Wesen Unter Uns*."<sup>4</sup>
3. Koehler, "*Unser Schuld am Weltkrieg*."<sup>5</sup>
4. Pieper, "*Eine Zeitpredigt an die Diener der Kirche*."<sup>6</sup>
5. Pieper, "*Die Verachtung der Gnade ist der Tod der Kirche*."<sup>7</sup>
6. Koehler, "*Die Heiligung geschieht nicht mit Hurra*."<sup>8</sup>

Pieper, in particular, had a sharp tongue and could and would flay his colleagues mercilessly; after the 1919 Convention Pastor Richard Siegler actually demanded an apology from him for slander.

The final element in the Protestant *Vorgeschichte* to be considered is the Wauwatosa Seminary. After Hoenecke's death in 1908 the directorship passed to John Schaller; Im. Frey points out:

"The logical solution would seem to have been the appointment of one of the remaining professors, Koehler or Pieper, to the presidency,<sup>10</sup> but there seemingly was no willingness to make a choice between the two."<sup>10</sup>

That was surely an understatement. Both men had strong personalities and had developed loyal followings in the student body. For 28 years the Koehler-Pieper axis strongly influenced the Seminary, and events and people inevitably just aligned themselves between the two poles. While we would hesitate to use the term "factions" or "partisans," it is a fact that students were prone to take sides over the teaching methods of the two men.

Pieper's approach was practical, and no student ever graduated without taking with him vivid recollections of "Pips'" forceful lectures, incisive comments on anything and everything, penchant for hyperbole, and lack of reservation about using the first person pronoun. His assertiveness, though, was balanced by an equal bent for public self-deprecation. At the casket of his friend Gotthold Thurow he paused, pondered, and then turned about and exclaimed to the startled congregation, "*Der ist nichts! Ich bin auch nichts!*" ("He is nothing! I, too, am nothing!") He knew that his own pride had on occasion not particularly helped the controversy: as an old man he confessed to this writer's grandmother, "*Früher konnte ich mich geistig nicht bücken; jetzt kann ich mich leiblich nicht bücken*" ("Before I couldn't bend intellectually; now I can't bend physically.")

Koehler, on the other hand, came off as the reflective intellectual. He had a broad spectrum of interests besides his beloved history. The story is told of one occasion when the Chicago Symphony came to town. Koehler listened to the performance, and then made his way backstage and argued with the conductor over his interpretation. Koehler, in diametric opposition to Pieper, did not care to dwell

on specifics; he much preferred to deal with the theoretical, the overview, the generalization. He loved to set forth broad principles without going into too many details; his judgments were understandable only after a good deal of preliminary work and reflection on the part of the student.

Unfortunately, most did not grasp the full implications of his lectures, and Koehler knew it. The remark is attributed to him that only three students ever really understood him, and two of them were his sons, Karl and Kurt. He was very sure of his judgments, to the point of authoritarianism. One of his students writes:

"Koehler praised Christian meekness and no doubt strove to cultivate it, and yet at times he could be arrogant and abrasive...Koehler attacked dogmatism, but he himself could be very dogmatic about his historical judgments."<sup>11</sup>

He was very conscious of his insights, and his student disciples reflected that self-confidence. Admiration of him then, as well as later on in *Faith-Life*, was largely uncritical. The consensus among the student "elite" was that "the men with brains, who could understand 'J.P.', followed him, and the dumbbells followed 'Pips'." Unfortunately Koehler, like Pieper, was capable of overstatement in the heat of passion, and his eager students seized on these slips in later years as proof of Koehler's support for their positions. For instance, Koehler would thunder, "*Die Dogmatik ist verflucht* (cursed)!", meaning "*Dogmatismus*," but his disciples took that as proof that all dogmatics was corrosive of true Biblical theology. Another time he asserted, "*Die Geschichte ist ein Mittel zur Heiligung*," an obvious misstatement, but not everyone might have realized it at the time.

The two stood together, however, on formal theological approaches, and the historical-exegetical flavor of the *Quartalschrift* articles and seminary courses won the nickname "The Wauwatosa Gospel." The term unfortunately means different things to different people; the writer, as far as he can determine, received a steady diet of studies determined and governed by Scripture alone in his three years at Mequon. The Protestant followers of Koehler, however, are unanimous in asserting that the Wauwatosa Gospel was repudiated once and for all by the Synod in the 1920's, culminating in the dismissal of Koehler from the Seminary. Leigh Jordahl goes to great lengths in his introduction to Koehler's *History* to demonstrate that the insights and freshness of the Wauwatosa Theology have passed completely to *Faith-Life*, and that the Wisconsin Synod has lapsed back into lockstep orthodoxy (which he calls "orthodoxy," meaning it in a pejorative way, little realizing, however, that most Wisconsinites would consider it a compliment.)

Koehler was an implacable foe of dogmatism, formalism, and legalism. His approach, summed up in one sentence, would be: "*Das Evangelium schafft seine eigenen Formen* (the Gospel creates its own forms)."<sup>12</sup> Koehler, as well as Pieper and Schaller, had been trained at St. Louis, and while expressing great admiration for Walther, became increasingly dismayed with Walther's "preoccupation with citation theology"<sup>13</sup> and with the frequency with which he leaned on the church fathers for support. Koehler saw in Missouri a cocksureness (*Pochen*) about pure doctrine which obstructed a thorough contextual study of Scripture by placing a premium on incautiously gathered proof passages. For him the Election Controversy of 1881 showed the weakness of too exclusive a reliance on dogmatics. In all fairness to Missouri it might be pointed out that a major concern of Walther's was to present his Synod as a legitimate transplant of Old Lutheran Orthodoxy in America in as stark a contrast to General Synod "American Lutheranism" as possible. Perhaps he did refer somewhat consistently to the 16th and 17th Century orthodox dogmatists, but the aim was to trace Missouri as a clear lineal descendant of Luther, not to demean exegetical theology.

It would be a mistake to conclude that Koehler disapproved of the methods of teaching dogmatics of his Wisconsin colleagues. Hoenecke, Schaller, and since

1920 John Meyer were all competent exegetes and preserved the exegetical/dogmatical balance. A more likely target would be Walther's successor, Franz Pieper and the second generation Missourians who got into the habit of quoting Walther himself quite a bit. At least partly seriously August Pieper said once:

*"Wir konnten die Missourier nicht mit der Bibel<sup>14</sup> überzeugen; da wir ihnen aber Walther vorlasen, da glaubten sie uns."*

While a Wisconsinite would hardly agree with Jordahl's critical comments on F. Pieper's *Christian Dogmatics*,<sup>15</sup> it is doubtless a good thing that the exegete George Stoeckhardt was a strong influence on the St. Louis faculty.

Such, then, is the context in which the Protes'tant storm broke. The Pieper-Koehler polarization on the Wauwatosa faculty has been occasionally overstressed in ascribing causes, but neither should it be ignored, and while Koehler himself did not assume center stage in the Controversy until it was near its height, those most involved claimed him as their spiritual father.

## II. The Watertown Thievery Case

History repeats itself in strange ways; as Michener says, it's never the same, but patterns do reappear. At Northwestern College in the 1880's there was an incident in which nearly the entire dormitory sneaked out illegally one night to give a charivari to a newly married student named Knoche. They were noticed and disciplined by the Faculty and the ringleaders were expelled. The Board intervened and overruled the Faculty; as a result, all the sentences were reduced and the Faculty admitted that the penalties had been over-hasty and severe.<sup>16</sup>

Some forty years later NWC was again the scene of Board-Faculty trouble that shook the Synod. It certainly began innocently enough. On March 28, 1924, a routine investigation of a theft began a chain of confessions, "squealing," and further probing until the tutors, working into the night, had assembled 27 boys who had recently stolen something. It is possible that the tutors, three of whom later became Protes'tants, were a bit more vigorous than necessary; while some of the suspects had been roused out of bed for early-morning questioning, however, the tutors and Faculty emphatically denied that third-degree methods had been used or that confessions had been browbeaten out of anyone. Most of the thefts were quite petty--candy bars, gum, pencils and the like--but there was a group of three who had made repeated trips to town to steal, and working together they had assembled loot worth at least \$81.

Here is where the confusion began. Monday morning the Faculty met after having dismissed classes for the day and deliberated its course of action. The long-standing procedure was that stealing merited suspension; because of the youth and number of those involved, however, the Faculty decided to hear all cases individually. The result: eight expulsions, eight suspensions (only until the end of the year), and eleven campus arrests. It is noteworthy that the Faculty's action was unanimous throughout, with one exception--Dr. Ott insisted that each suspension be recorded in the minutes with the rider attached, "subject to the approval of the Board." This was done, the Faculty never dreaming that the Board would break its tradition of leaving discipline in the Faculty's hands;<sup>17</sup> there had been no interference in Faculty actions for at least fifteen years.

Members of the Board heard of the investigations almost immediately and from the start took the position that the Faculty's actions would have to be overruled. The Board at this time consisted of Pastors John Brenner, Hans Koller Moussa, Carl Buenger, C. Gausewitz, Julius Klingmann (chairman), and Pres. G.E. Bergemann (*ex officio*), and four laymen: Mr. Ernst von Briesen, Fred Gamm, W.H. Graebner, and Dr. T.C. Abelmann. Pressure on the Board began to mount as involved parents made their feelings known, among them Pastors K. Toepel, Lescow and O.B. Nommensen. The reasons for the Board's position were the following:

1. The Faculty had proceeded with the suspensions without giving the par-



ents opportunity to speak in the boys' behalf. The Faculty responded that the facts were never in question, and that their demeanor had always been as evangelical as possible. The parents' presence would have changed nothing.

2. The treatment given the accused students by the tutors was uncalled for. The Faculty strongly denied that any unchristian investigation techniques had been used, that the serious extent of the stealing necessitated prompt inquiry (although the students at the time called it the "Inquisition," according to a member of the Class of '24).
3. Kowalke, as inspector-in-chief, ought to have directed the investigation. Perhaps; regardless, he didn't find out about it until Monday morning.
4. The penalties were too severe. The Faculty contended that this was a matter of judgment--they had acted almost unanimously, and suggested that the Board bring its complaint to the Synod. Praeses Bergemann is reported to have replied, "You ought to have admonished the boys and then reinstated them as the Lord did to Peter."<sup>18</sup>
5. The Faculty acted too quickly. The Faculty replied that the epidemic proportions of the stealing demanded prompt attention, and that it would have been cruel to keep them all in suspense while the parents were being assembled.
6. The final decision to suspend belongs to the Board. This was the Board's weightiest argument--the college statutes bear out their contention. The Faculty admitted that the statute was there, but argued that administration of discipline was essential to the Faculty's work. All professors feared a breakdown in discipline if they would be reversed publicly.

There followed a series of tense Board/Faculty confrontations. The Board insisted on its reopening and reviewing every case, and the Faculty pleaded that they be spared that public humiliation. All was in vain, however. The Watertown Transcript (more on this later) attributes the following selected quotations to some of the principals which demonstrate the tension and hard feelings of that ill-fated Easter season:

Rev. Moussa: "I am disgusted with this Faculty."

Prof. K. Koehler: "Rev. Moussa was the main mischief-maker."

Pres. Bergemann: "If that is not the statute, then it is high time that it be made the rule and that the law be laid down to this Faculty."<sup>19</sup>

Neither side would budge, and the Board resolved that the "campus arrest" verdicts stand, that the suspensions be commuted to campus arrest, and that all expulsions be reviewed. All were permitted to return to class (five did so immediately and a sixth returned the following year). The more aggressive professors thought they had an ally in Rev. Brenner, but he stood with the Board's resolutions; the only dissenting voice was Dr. Abelmann.

Profs. K. Koehler and Herbert Parisius had stated their unwillingness to continue at NWC if the Board persisted, and when the resolutions were passed and enforced, the following was received:

"Northwestern College Board  
Pastor J. Klingmann, Chairman  
Sirs:

We herewith resign as teachers in your employ. Our resignations to go into effect at once.

Added to what we protested and pleaded in the course of the recent proceedings, there now weighs upon us the utterly ruthless and unchristian nature of the Board's procedure, persisted in, against our hopes, to the very end.

We so charge you before God, and shall bring this and all other charges respecting your incompetence before the body which you professed to represent.

Herbert W. Parisius  
Karl Koehler"<sup>20</sup>

Neither Board nor Faculty can claim to be 100% right in this matter, although at this juncture the Board's actions certainly appear more reprehensible. What undoubtedly happened was that the Board made a quick statement immediately and then could not back down; nevertheless, to embarrass and humble an entire faculty before the whole Synod and before an intently watching student body was most unwise. The Board forever laid itself open to Protes'tant charges of power politicking, lovelessness to the brethren, and making a *Machtfrage* out of a disciplinary case. At this point it is surprising, not that two professors resigned, but that only two resigned; the Board, according to Kowalke, did not object too strenuously to what they regarded as Koehler's "threat" to resign.<sup>21</sup>

The one serious error in the Faculty's judgment was its willingness for all those years to administer discipline in a manner which sidestepped the letter of the statutes. Their own case would have been immeasurably strengthened if the Board had not had recourse to the letter of the law. If discipline was still as open a question as it was made out to be, the Faculty ought to have cleared up its relationship with the Board long ago when so touchy a subject was involved.

Without a doubt, personalities were involved to a greater extent than observers in the 1970's realize. Dr. Abelmann made the illuminating remark, "I think that if a Koehler had not been involved in this, the controversy would not have been at all."<sup>22</sup> One of the Board members (probably Bergemann) had protested Koehler's original nomination to the faculty. Dr. Elmer Kiessling (a pastor in Libertyville, Ill., at the time) says, "Koehler...was a gifted, strong-willed man who had very definite views on education and a minimal tolerance for synodical officials."<sup>23</sup> His description tallies with that attributed to Prof. John Meyer, "...a professor with dominating influence who had to have (and usually got) his way."<sup>24</sup>

The matter was not destined to fade away gently and unobtrusively. On NWC Graduation Day, June 12, 1924, Prof. Gerhard Ruediger of the Seminary issued a call for a general informative meeting to hear the Faculty's point of view. The Board members considered the meeting out of order and refused to attend, with the (usual) exception of Dr. Abelmann. An afternoon session was held in the Wethonkita Club rooms and in the evening in the college chapel. As could be expected, the Board came in for considerable criticism.

Karl Koehler was clearly the focus of attention, and the Faculty's case was presented with vigor from the one who had given up his position for the sake of conscience. Seven men at the meeting later became Protes'tants; the stenographic record of the speeches which was then circulated guaranteed that the number of sympathizers would grow. This meeting, the "Watertown Transcript" meeting, was especially unfortunate because it fanned the flames anew, broke faculty unity, and marked the first public emergence of a third party (dubbed the "Bolsheviks"). There had been private meetings before (notably in Ruediger's house), which explain how so many like-minded men could have assembled, but now there was some clear leadership. An us/them mentality developed, and from the official standpoint:

"It was soon apparent that a group within the Synod was working harmoniously in opposition to conditions and officials within the Synod, that they constituted a bloc--a determined and united clique."<sup>25</sup>

The tension continued. At the Joint Synodical Committee meeting in October, 1924, the Faculty conceded that the letter of the law was in the Board's favor, but contended that the authority to discipline ought to rest with the Faculty. At

this meeting Karl Koehler uttered publicly the harsh condemnation which would be heard again and again: "*Die ganze Wisconsin-Synode liegt im Gericht Gottes der Verstockung*" ("The entire WELS lies under God's judgment of hardening").<sup>20</sup> The sides were being drawn, the issues were emerging, and a potential disaster was looking for a place to happen.

In order to round out the Watertown story we shall have to jump ahead a bit. The Joint Synodical Committee Meeting in October, 1925, did not fully resolve the problem, either, and a committee was appointed to revise the troublesome statutes. The revision was adopted by the 1927 Synod Convention, and Article XIV, Section 1 read as follows:

"The President of the Institution shall be the Executive Head of the Institution in all its departments, exercising such supervision and direction as will promote the efficiency of every department; *he shall be responsible for the discipline of the Institution in all its departments...*"<sup>27</sup> (emphasis mine).

With the passage of time the strained relations eased and the two groups once again enjoyed harmony and cooperation. In March and again in November of 1926 discipline cases arose involving Faculty and Board, and to the credit of both bodies both cases were disposed of in an orderly manner; the Board seems to have retreated strategically and trusted the Faculty to use its own judgment. Contrary to later District developments, both parties at Northwestern strove to avoid public confrontations and the breach was healed.

Two tragic postscripts must be added. In 1926 Prof. Sigmund Probst resigned because "the ruthless action of the Board took from him both pleasure in teaching and the hope of being able to teach effectively."<sup>28</sup> On October 10, 1928, Prof. Elmer Sauer was suspended from teaching for practicing fellowship with Pastor William Hass of Oconomowoc, a pastor currently under suspension. Thus in four years Northwestern College lost four professors to the Controversy, none of whom was a slouch academically. Koehler was a forceful and energetic teacher who, incidentally, developed the system of combining the study of religion and history which is still in use today. Parisius' talent was such that, after being suspended from the Synod for accepting a call to the suspended Rice Lake congregation, he left the ministry and wound up in Washington as Assistant Secretary of Agriculture for the Roosevelt administration. His picture appeared on the cover of *Time Magazine* during the 1930's, doubtless for his leadership in one of the nationwide agricultural projects. Many a student from those years said that what Greek he knew came from Elmer Sauer; a member of the Class of 1929 remembers several classmates who regarded Sigmund Probst as the best teacher they had in all their years at Northwestern. The effect of these losses on Northwestern's stability was disastrous, and coupled with other retirements, departures, and deaths, the College Faculty was in constant flux for many years. But the storm had only begun.

### III. The Fort Atkinson Case

Although from all appearances the NWC Faculty and Board were sincerely interested in restoring harmonious relations, many observers in the Synod were unable to resist the temptation to take sides. Actions of synodical and district officials came under intense scrutiny, and pressure began to build. In August of 1925 the Synod convention celebrated its 75th anniversary; the proceedings certainly describe a smoothly running machine, but later issues of *Faith-Life* printed reminiscences of some who saw at Grace Church, Milwaukee, a good deal of *Beamten-tum* and *Macherei*. Critics were soon to get a test case for their charges of bureaucratic tyranny.

A problem arose at St. Paul's School in Fort Atkinson, centering around two single teachers: Gerda Koch, daughter of Rev. Heinrich Koch of Reedsville, and Elizabeth Reuter, daughter of Prof. Fritz Reuter of DMLC. These girls became in-

creasingly disturbed about a lack of spirituality which they saw in their church's activities, and late in 1924 they made their concerns known to the pastor, A.F. Nicolaus.

In all fairness to the girls, it might be pointed out that as the German congregations came out of isolation they frequently picked up sectarian customs in the rush to Americanize. These were acquired innocently enough and took a great deal of time and effort to shake off. For instance, beer would be a regular feature of church picnics; one year at St. Marcus, for instance, a repeated patron of the beer tent actually took a swing at Rev. August Pieper. Church bowling alleys were common--even Praeses Bergemann had one in Fond du Lac. Old-timers remember a Bingo poster in front of Mt. Lebanon Church in Milwaukee that was bigger than the church sign itself. Bingo in Lutheran churches had reached such epidemic proportions that a Milwaukee pastoral conference in 1939 passed resolutions condemning the practice in severe terms and urging the brethren to "abate the offense."<sup>29</sup>

There were a number of things at St. Paul's which irritated the young women, and which, from the vantage point of 50 years, do seem regrettable. They claimed that only a handful of young people attended the pastor's devotions at Walther League meetings while a considerable number stayed outside until the social activity began. The choir had made plans to sing at St. Paul's, Oconomowoc, which had recently left the Wisconsin Synod and joined Missouri in the rending intersynodical clash involving the pastor; prudence would have dictated avoiding such a loaded situation. The girls believed in corporal punishment for recalcitrant smart-alecs; their frame of mind could not have been improved when several women from the Ladies' Aid marched into Gerda Koch's classroom one day and broke her stick in front of the students. Church bazaars and suppers were such a common thing that Miss Koch made a special complaint to Pastor Nicolaus; he merely replied, "*Es macht den Frauen Spass; dann lass sie doch.*"<sup>30</sup> He was one year from retirement and undoubtedly did not want to rock the boat; most remember him as a fatherly, kindly old Christian gentleman.

He tried in vain to convince the girls that their complaints involved adia-phora, but they were convinced of the advanced spiritual decay of the congregation. They felt that short skirts and bobbed hair were an affront to St. Paul's Scriptural admonitions to feminine modesty, that the choir sang largely *Schundzeug* and dance music, and that there were public examples in the congregation of unchristian life going unreproved; they claimed that there was no difference between these members and "*die schlimmsten Weltmenschen*" (the worst kind of worldly people).<sup>31</sup>

Failing to get action from Nicolaus, the teachers began to stay away from all organizational meetings and finally also from church; the kicker was that they advised their pupils to do the same. They allegedly diverted money from the schoolroom's mission boxes to their own charities. The crisis came at a rather tense confrontation with the church council; Miss Koch had whispered, "Beware of false prophets!," an obvious reference to Pastor Nicolaus, and when challenged she refused to disavow having called him a false prophet. They were thereupon forbidden to continue teaching.

With surprising cheek the girls had written to Praeses Thurow and Director Bleifernicht of DMLC with their complaints, and after some investigation the district officials were convinced that the girls were in the wrong. All Nicolaus really wanted was that the girls retract the implied charges of being a false prophet, but they refused: "Even if forced to go back on their words, they would consider him such in their hearts."<sup>32</sup> But meanwhile Bliefernicht, doubtless hoping to kill two birds with one stone, suggested to Immanuel's Lutheran of Marshfield, who happened to be in straits for two teachers, that they call the girls. They did, and the girls promptly accepted and left Fort Atkinson abruptly. To condense a painful and involved story, Pastor Oswald Hensel of Immanuel's (as well as Seminary professor Gerhard Ruediger) became the girls' ardent champion against

"synodical tyranny"; the girls insisted that the Ft. Atkinson vacancies ought not to be filled because of the spiritual deadness. St. Paul's quite understandably was provoked at its discipline procedure's being disrupted and refused to grant them a peaceful release. Committee after committee, at least ten in all, began to deal with the girls, seeking retraction of their public condemnations. The girls stood fast against all, including Miss Koch's father and J.P. Koehler himself.

By a combination of circumstances totally inexplicable to this writer, the girls were called again for the 1925-1926 school year: Miss Reuter taught at St. John's, Wauwatosa (Pastor Hermann Gieschen), and Miss Koch at Christus, Milwaukee (Pastor P.J. Bergmann). Whatever the reasons, it seemed a strange move; in utter disgust St. Paul's withdrew from the Synod. The girls' error must finally have impressed itself on the District officials, and the *Gemeindeblatt* and *NWL* reported in May of 1926 that the girls were to be considered "ineligible for teaching for the time being."<sup>32</sup>

In June the Western Wisconsin District met for its regular convention at St. Stephen's, Beaver Dam. The quasi-suspension of the two girls was reaffirmed because of their refusal to retract their slander of Pastor Nicolaus and because their distorted views of Christian freedom were not suited for classroom teaching.<sup>33</sup> Under the leadership of Oswald Hensel all the discontent with official District actions now surfaced, and fifteen pastors and two laymen signed a four-point *Protestschreiben* criticizing the way in which Thurow and the District had dealt with the girls (see Appendix C). Behold here another of the perplexing contradictions of the Protes'tant story--after having called the girls while they were being dealt with (a most unbrotherly action) Hensel criticized the District for meddling in the congregation's dealings before the Matthew 18 injunctions had been completed!

Oswald Hensel was a remarkable character. A bachelor, he had taught at Michigan Lutheran Seminary until 1920, and apparently had quite a reputation, for he was called to NWC in 1920 to replace Prof. Henkel, who had gone on to the Seminary; his declension of the call put him in august company (John Brenner, E.Ph. Dornfeld, and Paul Pieper had declined before him).<sup>34</sup> It is curious to note that that Protes'tants, usually rather quick to point out personal flaws in their adversaries (they took Klingmann, NWC Board Chairman to task for sending his son to a public high school, where there were dances, instead of to NW Prep) were somewhat reticent about Hensel's reputation for drinking. Immanuel's, Marshfield, was one of only a few larger Protes'tant congregations; after Hensel's early death it wound up in Missouri. His interest in Miss Reuter deepened to the point that they were married; after he died she moved to the West coast and became a college teacher.

With the perspective that only 20/20 hindsight can bring, let us analyze the Fort Atkinson fiasco. A number of critical junctures appear:

1. Even the Protes'tant apologist Jordahl admits that the women "by any traditional Lutheran standards exhibited an overt pietism...took quite legalistic positions...displayed little of the old feminine virtue of quiet modesty."<sup>35</sup> It must be clear that the women's conduct in the congregation was inexcusable--if conscience prohibited them from exercise of their duties as St. Paul's saw fit, they had no right to continue to draw salary and at the same time foment trouble. Regardless of their opinion of Pastor Nicolaus, no minister of the Gospel deserves subversive activity designed to alienate his people's affection and support.
2. The intrusion of Bliefertnicht can only be countenanced with the charitable observation that he meant well and perhaps had some precedent for sidestepping the District office in presenting a call list. Carelessness of the proper channels will always bring problems, later if not sooner.

3. Pastor Nicholas was the wrong man for the hot seat. His failure to smell trouble and his casual brush-off of the girls' appeals bore bitter fruit.
4. The Beaver Dam protest marked the formal appearance of a Protes'tant slogan: "*hoehere Fragen.*" By this they meant that the details of any given case were dispensable--the important thing was to get at root causes, "*grundlegenden Prinzipien.*" Nothing infuriated them more than the comment ascribed to John Brenner, "*Die Vorgeschichte geht uns nichts an*" (the prior history does not concern us). Pastor Theophil Uetzmann analyzed the Fort Atkinson situation in this way:
 

"I believe that the lady teachers were pietists, but the Lord used them to uncover a worse condition than pietism, namely rank worldliness and Pharisaism in the pastor and congregation."<sup>36</sup>

Herein lay a major impasse between Synod and Protes'tants: the former felt that it had to deal conclusively and energetically with details of the crises, whereas the latter would consciously take indefensible stands primarily to get at the "higher questions." Protes'tant subscription to the Beitz paper would be the clearest example. Here in Fort Atkinson, one cannot escape the conclusion that Hensel and the other fourteen pastors were not as interested in healing the breach as in provoking a quarrel with the District officials, specifically, as we shall see, with Thurow. The girls did not have a leg to stand on, and the *Protestschriften* served only to create a need for more official actions, which could then be dissected, examined and criticized. One does not see in Beaver Dam an outstanding example of love for the brotherhood.

#### IV. Prof. Gerhard Ruediger

Concomitant with the Watertown Thievery Case and the Fort Atkinson Case there arose a chain of puzzling and unfortunate events around the figure of Wauwatosa Professor Gerhard Ruediger. Here was another instance of the wrong man in a hot seat, in this case the chair of history. Called from Hopkins, Michigan, in 1921, after only seven years in the ministry, he was back in Michigan in 1927.

Ruediger had tossed his hat into the "Third Party's" ring very early in the trouble; his home was the scene of a number of the first gatherings of discontented Third Party "Bolsheviks." It was he who had called the "Watertown Transcript" meetings, and he did not hesitate to make his views public in his classroom. He was one of those called in to deal with the Fort Atkinson girls and he took their part against the congregation and District.

Unfortunately, Ruediger was in waters over his head when it came to the Controversy. He made little contribution to Protes'tant thinking, wrote little for *Faith-Life*, and once out of Wauwatosa passed quickly from the scene. His case, however, was used by the Protes'tant writers as further evidence of officialdom and behind-the-scenes manipulation on the part of the Seminary Board.

His students remember him as an affable, if somewhat gauche, figure; equally prominent were his beaming countenance, corncob pipe, and socks that never seemed to match. He fancied himself as quite a theologian: "*Jungens, wir haben die ganze Nacht Theologie geschwätzt.*" One wonders about his theology--he used to come to class and state unequivocally, "*Wir liegen alle unter dem Gericht der Verstockung*" ("We all lie under God's judgment of hardening"). August Pieper would then come in next hour and assure the uneasy students, "*Meine Herrn, Sie sind nicht verstockt-- Sie sind liebe Kinder Gottes*" (You aren't hardened; you are beloved children of God"). Ruediger would toss off one of his cryptic pronouncements, and when questioned about it by a student he would reply, "*Das kann ich Ihnen nicht erklären; das müssen Sie mit dem Glauben verstehen*" (I can't explain it to you; you must understand it in faith"). When Prof. Henkel heard of this kind of methodology he

snorted, "*Das ist das schlimmste Gewissensverbindung*" (binding of consciences).

Ruediger simply wasn't too deep a thinker, and his rather clumsy presence in the sorest spots of the Controversy only rubbed in salt instead of Gileadic balm. His patronizing platitudes only irritated people. He was capable of such theological silliness as this (spoken at the Watertown Bolshevik meeting):

"Gentlemen, we have come to a certain juncture in church history (which is a very valuable thing to know). I am teaching that stuff and I meet ever so many similar situations in the history of the church that I claim I can size up this situation. We have come to the point in the Wisconsin Synod where we have not very much life left. We have threshed out doctrines, we have made confessions, and we are just about at the end of our power. We have come to this point, where one if he wants to enter heaven has to enter it by force. It is almost impossible at the present time to be saved. That is what I preach to my boys."<sup>37</sup>

It was no secret that Ruediger made no friends in Wauwatosa with his support of the two teachers and his breezy statements about obduracy. Neither the Seminary Board nor his colleagues appreciated his involvement in the Controversy, especially since his comments aggravated rather than calmed the situation. It was widely rumored that the Board was displeased with him and was hoping for his resignation; the Board at this time consisted of Pastors Walter Hoenecke and H. Knuth (executive committee), Pastor Hermann Gieschen, Teacher J. Gieschen, and Mssrs. R. Freihube, W. Michler, and the ubiquitous Ernst von Briesen.

During the 1925-1926 school year quite a number of the brethren took upon themselves to admonish Ruediger for his various indiscretions; his colleagues were not silent either. On July 27, 1926, there was a joint meeting of Board and Faculty in which his case was thoroughly discussed and the heat really put on him to resign; he stood fast, and must have known that his days were numbered. That fall he was induced to write a pitiful, abject "confession" of his sins, sins of discussing the cases in his Seminary classrooms, making slanderous charges against Synod officials, and neglecting his academic duties. It has been suggested, probably with a good deal of truth, that the text was provided by August Pieper.

For every confession there must be an absolution, and Pieper, Meyer and Henkel graciously forgave Ruediger for his actions;<sup>38</sup> unfortunately, copies leaked out, and later on, in February of 1927 some unknown individual took it upon himself to distribute the printed copies of both confessions and absolution throughout the Synod. It was not J.P. Koehler's style to deal in this way, and he refused to sign the absolution; this is one of the early indications of the widening rift between him and the rest of the faculty. The incident provided further grist for Protestant mills, further indisputable proof that Synod officials were tactless, unfeeling, unjust, and devious. Karl Koehler made the careful and reasoned observation: "Pieper and Meyer stand charged before God and the Church as hypocrites and blasphemers by virtue of their absolution."<sup>39</sup> In the eyes of the Board this lamentable episode only confirmed their conclusions that Ruediger was not apt to teach, and in January, 1927, Hoenecke and Knuth advised him that he had been dismissed because of a loss of confidence in him. He thereupon returned to Marion Springs, Michigan, his first parish, whose members called him as their pastor again; he retired in 1959 and was buried a WELS member.

Had these sorry events occurred at any other time in the Synod's history they would have quickly and quietly faded from memory, but 1926 was no time to gad about other districts chattering about *Verstockung* and agitating against Synod officials in Seminary classrooms, of all places. All things considered, it was probably better that Ruediger was out of Wauwatosa; that said, however, a number of aspects of the way his case was handled do leave something to be desired:

1. The hedging and leaked reports of Board deliberations certainly did not build up Ruediger's reputation;

2. Insisting on a written confession was cruel--the man had feelings;
3. Printing and disseminating the documents was crueler yet. Ruediger may well not have belonged at the Seminary, but circularizing the Synod only gave the Protes'tants more to criticize;
4. A better job of documenting reasons for his dismissal might have been done. If the man was teaching false doctrine or slandering his brethren or guilty of neglect of duties (as could likely have been demonstrated), then these charges ought to have been documented and cited as evidence of his being unfit to teach. As it was, the break was ragged, protracted, and sensational instead of quick, clean and quiet.

These criticisms are levelled not *von oben herab* nor in a spirit of condescension nor with a smirk nor to sling blame, but rather to make a stab at understanding why tempers ran so high, to try to understand what induced a group of very intelligent men to hack off their fraternal bonds, often lose their congregations, and either change synods or take secular jobs. The more deeply one probes into the tangled events of the mid-1920's the stronger become one's conclusions that there was no black and white contrast of absolutely right and totally wrong, only various shades of gray. At all events, the Ruediger case added one more martyr to the Protes'tant pyre; many more were to follow, and that is another story.

#### V. The Beitz Paper

There would still have been a Protes'tant Controversy without a Beitz Paper. The sides were drawn in that summer of 1926, both camps were watching the other for mistakes, and a serious attempt had been made at Beaver Dam to crystallize Protes'tant discontent and rally around Hensel and the girls. There were too many intrinsic weaknesses to the issue, however, and three months later occurred an event much more suitable for confessional alignment--the reading of the Beitz paper. In spite of all the attention given in later years to Koehler's dismissal from the Seminary, *this* was the decisive moment in the formation of the Protes'tant Conference: it was a clear-cut issue, it provided a confessional document, and it raised the *hoehere Fragen* with which they wanted to deal.

William F. Beitz was ordained in September, 1917, and spent the first half-dozen or so years of his ministry in Tucson, Arizona. He then accepted a call to the mission congregation at Rice Lake, Wisconsin, and was installed on December 28, 1924, by Pastor Motzkus, where he served under the supervision of Pastor John Abelmann of Wilton (who had chaired the Transcript meeting and became a Protes'tant himself.) Joh.P. Meyer mentions in passing that although he had graduated from the Wauwatosa Seminary, his background had been United Lutheran; he had come to the Wisconsin Synod from the ULC Seminary at Mayville, Illinois (now part of the Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago).<sup>40</sup> One of his nephews remembers him as kindness personified, one who would never speak maliciously or harshly of anyone.

Beitz had been assigned a paper on Christian citizenship for the September meeting of the Wisconsin River Valley Conference at Schofield. He was also up for an exegetical paper at the October mixed conference to be held at Rusk. As September drew near he had not as yet finalized his opinions on the citizenship paper, but took his exegetical paper to Schofield and the brethren voted to allow him to substitute it. Although Beitz was a signer of the Beaver Dam *Protestschriften* and a personal friend of the other Protes'tants, all denied prior knowledge of or collusion in the paper.<sup>41</sup> It was a bombshell.

The paper was worded in such a way (and, of course, delivered in such a context) as to provoke ardent admiration as well as immediate criticism. Heated discussions arose into October concerning the merits and flaws of the paper, and he was asked to read it again at Rusk. Each time he was urged to moderate some of



the harshest criticisms or qualify his sweeping condemnations, but each time he held fast and would not retract so much as an *umlaut*. The already dangerously deep rift between the "Protestler" (as August Pieper had first called them at Beaver Dam,) and the Synod men grew wider by the week as charges and counter-charges flew back and forth. Beitz and his group of defenders had no intention of backing down, which they would have considered knuckling under to the legalistic Synod politicians, but sought instead to use the paper as an instrument to provoke reactions and get at the *hoehere Fragen*. Copies began to circulate and were read with avid interest; Beitz was a provocative writer in every sense of the word, and other pastors of the District began to take sides.

Because of the extensive influence which the paper had in determining the allegiance of a good many men, and because the Protestants chose this juncture at which to take their stand, a closer look is in order.

On the one hand, the paper, entitled "God's Message to Us in Galatians: The Just Shall Live by Faith," had several commendable features. It was an earnest call to repentance, an earnest attempt to stem the inroads of formalism and externalism into Wisconsin Lutheranism. It was surely designed to strengthen spirituality and oppose the workings of the *opinio legis* in all of us. Had it been read under different circumstances, the criticism it provoked might have been less insistent; several WELS pastors who read the paper in later years claimed (in print!) to have benefitted from its law-preachment.<sup>42</sup>

On the other hand, this writer is reasonably confident that in 1926 he would have found himself among Beitz' critics; the beneficial and salutary point of the paper are greatly outweighed by the misleading and confused pronouncements which govern its thrust. In his "Brief Review," Prof. Meyer made essentially the same point in a courteous and gentle way: "Many...passages that delight a Christian's heart might easily be gleaned from 'God's Message'. Unfortunately, however, they do not represent the keynote struck by the essay."<sup>43</sup>

In his pamphlet *Das Gutachten im Lichte des Wauwatosa Evangeliums* Paul Hensel goes to great lengths to demonstrate that Beitz went no further than had Pieper in the 1910's to rebuke legalism in the Synod. His observations are interesting, but his conclusions are unwarranted, for he fails to take several very important points into consideration:

1. Pieper was known for his penchant for hyperbole, flair for the dramatic, and sharpness of tongue, but people remembered also his warmth in presenting the Gospel. Beitz was a near-unknown--this was only his second year in the District;
2. Pieper spoke at the 1919 Synod convention after 40 years in the ministry. Beitz' comprehensive condemnations bespeak a lack of theological maturity;
3. Pieper had wide experience in Synod affairs--he had served both rural and urban parishes, on numerous committees and boards (including NWC's), and of course at the Wauwatosa Faculty since 1902. Beitz had spent most of his brief ministry in Arizona, far from the synodical machine he castigated so severely, and his critics wondered how he could speak of the Synod and its pastors and elected leaders with such knowing disapproval.
4. Pieper preached Law during a time of relative complacency--the Synod probably needed a little stirring up. Beitz, however, was not pouring oil on troubled waters, he was pouring gasoline on a fire that had been burning brightly all by itself.

Critics claimed that Beitz' paper contained false doctrine; while no one can peer into his heart to see if he really believed what the words say, the fact remains that he never withdrew or altered any of his statements, and thus took his stand on what he had written. It is not sufficient for an essayist to toss off

inflammatory statements, especially in a time of controversy, and then simply to announce; "You must read between the lines and try to understand me." A conference paper ought to be as clear and unambiguous as possible; it ought to explain and elucidate Scriptural teachings, not confuse and obscure them. When a sizeable number of the brethren disagree strongly with what has been stated, true humility leads one to ask himself, "Have I understood these teachings clearly? Have I presented them correctly?," and not, "If you don't understand what I have written, it is because there is no light in you," as Beitz later asserted."<sup>44</sup>

Take, for instance, the paper's statements on repentance. Charity demands that one concede that Beitz himself may have held the correct beliefs, but the bare words, the *Wortlaut*, are at best misleading, and at worst, false doctrine. Consider the following statements:

"True, heartfelt repentance is not obtained from the individual commandments as most of us have learned to know them in our Catechism, or Catechetical course."<sup>45</sup>

"You will find repentance at the foot of the cross."<sup>46</sup>

"Look to see how Peter preached on the day of Pentecost. Look at him preaching later in Acts. At Paul. At Philip. At John. At Christ Himself, and show me where you find law preached to bring about repentance as we are taught at our schools and seminaries."<sup>47</sup>

"If we are of a broken and contrite, smashed spirit we are in extreme, excruciating pain, in sorrow and in battle of soul, in agony; we are hopeless, shattered, despising self, in misery, perhaps entertain thoughts of suicide."<sup>48</sup>

These statements reflect two theological weaknesses: one, an excessive dependence on feelings of remorse as guarantee of the sincerity of one's repentance, and two, that repentance is effected by the Gospel. Nowhere in the paper is the cross of Christ seen as forgiveness, only as a club. Scripture (Ro 3:20, Ro 7:7) and the Lutheran Confessions (F.C. Art. V) demonstrate that the function of Law is to convict of sin and the function of Gospel is to announce forgiveness. The *Formula* quote seems to have been written specifically for this Controversy:

"Hence we reject and deem it as false and detrimental when men teach that the Gospel, strictly speaking, is a proclamation of conviction and reproof and not exclusively a proclamation of grace."<sup>49</sup>

Another example of bad exegesis can be seen from the title itself. When St. Paul in Galatians 3:11 says, "The just shall live by faith," he is speaking of the *organon leptikon* by which the righteousness of Christ is apprehended. Beitz, however, uses Gal. 3:11 as a pretext for a long sermon on sanctification; to "live by faith" for him means an earthly life governed by faith.

A major and a telling charge brought upon the paper almost immediately was that of *Herzensrichterei* (judging of hearts). Beitz overdid his law-preaching to the point of denying people's Christianity; he failed to see that a person could be weak in faith, tending to legalism, and erring, and still be a Christian. He equates Wisconsin Synod Lutherans with the "generation of vipers" whom John the Baptist inveighed against. Consider the following (the curious punctuation is Beitz's):

"We assent to his divinity, but isn't it, like our whole professed Christianity, most head matter?"<sup>50</sup>

"We know that for years the Lord has been looking for the fruit on our fig trees of Christianity and found 'nothing but leaves,' empty forms, to cover our nakedness and fruitlessness, our life of faithlessness."<sup>51</sup>

"Isn't it rather true, '*Ichabod*' is written over the portals of our houses, our churches, our synods, our schools, our hearts?"<sup>52</sup> (Note: "*Ichabod*," i.e. "no glory," was the name given by the wife of Phinehas to the child she bore when we heard the news that the Philistines had defeated the Israel-

ites and seized the Ark. In I Sm 4:21 she gave an exegesis of the name, "The glory is departed from Israel." *Chabod* was a technical term for God's physical presence, and its departure was a sign of spiritual death.)  
 "Note, how we have drifted into empty forms. We worship the institution though the Spirit be long departed."<sup>53</sup>  
 "We professed 'just,' Christians live no longer by faith."<sup>54</sup>  
 "Christianity has become to most church members driving a sharp bargain with the Lord: a barter. Getting by with as little as possible."<sup>55</sup>  
 "We have advanced so far on this road of spiritless Christianity that to the average professed Christian Christianity is a set of rules, laws, and ceremonies to follow."<sup>56</sup>

Beitz does not distinguish carefully between the new man and the old man in a Christian, and the picture he paints of the Lutheran Church is consequently a gross distortion. Christians are not perfect, but they do possess the pure and perfect Word of God, and it is that Word which will act as a corrective to the Old Adam and as the visible norm to which we must subscribe. For that reason, in theological dealings with others we can evaluate their spiritual status only by their stated confession, since all Christians are subject to fluctuations in sanctification. The *Gutachten* states frankly, "*Ist es keine Frage, dass wir Christen alle ... auch ein Stück Gesetzchristentum an uns haben.*"<sup>57</sup> In his "Brief Review," Prof. Meyer put it well:

"It is clear that there were many shortcomings on the part of the Christians in the various congregations, which (St. Paul) had to censure, yet he always sought and found occasion to thank God for His spiritual blessings with which the congregations were endowed."<sup>58</sup>

One wonders how Beitz, with most of his nine-year ministry spent in Tucson, could have known the 500-odd Synod pastors and their congregations well enough to make such sweeping, devastating condemnations.

The paper did not deal only in generalities, though; on page 20 of the Hensel edition Beitz takes off after the Seminary Faculty (doubtless Ruediger and Koehler were exempt).

"Proved by that Spirit how little teaching really stands the test? How little teaching is true witnessship? How much more is drudgery, lifelessness, formality, death, life-killing, self-glorifying! How few real teachers we have that are worthy of the name 'teachers,' even at our seminaries. How many teachers 'so-called' are putting in time watching the clock, looking for the pay-check, are mere time-servers."<sup>59</sup>

The Protes'tants were later to criticize the Seminary Faculty for not having dealt with Beitz as a brother before condemning his paper in the *Gutachten*; it is ironic that Beitz, the martyr-hero, slung the mud of the above paragraph while the Faculty's back was turned, without any attempt at brotherly admonition.

The Faculty was vigorously upbraided and held accountable for the supposed low level of spirituality in the Synod--Beitz had "proved their spirits" and they were found wanting. Spiritual evils which he saw in the church also were laid to the account of the pastors. "We must have emptied the Gospel of its life-giving power or our appeal would bring more response."<sup>60</sup> But, as Meyer points out, "The low ebb of spiritual life in any congregation is no infallible criterion by which to gauge the spiritual life of the pastor."<sup>61</sup>

Beitz professed great loathing for dogmatism and formalism, but even J.P. Koehler saw that in the extreme statements which his former student had made "*Es fehlt in Beitz's Schrift selbst das richtige interrelation of facts, die richtige exegetical, historical, expository method, die er selbst empfiehlt.*"<sup>62</sup> His antipathy to formalism expressed itself as antipathy to all forms; his suspicion of

method-ism led him to suspect all methods. Imagine the reaction which the following caustic remarks must have provoked from the audience galleries:

"Our preparatory and college courses are usually only a rehashing of the husks of the Catechism course. Our dogmatical stress at the seminaries only serves that same purpose. It is only the advanced Catechism course and bleeds the life of Faith in Christ of the life-giving Blood, till we finally have the skeleton, the forms, the dogmas, the doctrines, the shells, the husks, left; but the Spirit is departed."<sup>63</sup>

Throughout the paper there runs a theme of rejection of any man-made discipline; even homiletics takes a beating as detrimental to what he envisions as true pulpit freedom--standing up on a Sunday morning with a central thought and placing the rest in God's hands. While Beitz may have felt that he himself was far enough advanced to preach without text or outlines, he certainly could not have conceived of the chaotic schwaflings that would have ensued had his ideas been adopted on a synodical scale.

The foregoing is a rather negative appraisal of the Beitz paper; surely Beitz could not always have meant what the English words say. Had the paper been read in 1978, it would perhaps not have spread too far outside the conference. Unfortunately, the Protestants decided to take their stand on the paper, flaws and all, but yet only as a springboard to get at the *höhere Fragen*. Paul Hensel said, "No one has any right to offer any criticism on this paper whatsoever,"<sup>64</sup> and: "It is our bible. We would not yield one comma, not a flyspeck to you. It is sacred. You men first straighten out the havoc you have wrought in the church and then we'll talk again."<sup>65</sup>

At Third Party meetings there was a good deal of satisfaction with the paper, and the hope was expressed that it would bend the stiff neck of the Synod to the ground. The paper certainly came at a politically opportune time, for it necessitated more official reactions, which could then be analyzed and jumped on. It can be noted frankly that the Protestants were not interested primarily in peace, but in fomenting a crisis which would cause the entire Synod to see its legalism and repent.

While it is a little risky to assign motives to the various pastors for having subscribed to the paper, it does seem that its careful exposition of theology was not a major factor. Koehler himself later wrote:

*"...so kann die Schrift als ordentliche Lehrschrift für die Öffentlichkeit nicht bestehen...Das Verstehen macht Beitz schwer, denn er redet oft in Uebertreibungen und Allgemeinheiten."*<sup>66</sup>

A prime motive for subscribing must have been the feeling that it would be a magnificent opportunity for striking a blow against *Beamtentum* (officialdom); suspicious of administrative centralization, bureaucracy and bigness, they just weren't thinking of the implications, and then it gets hard to back down. Once a public stand is taken in the heat of argument, retreat without losing face is near impossible.

The seriousness and intensity of the smoldering resentments now began to escalate as event followed event and shock wave followed shock wave. That same September saw Ruediger's confession and absolution, and in November the Third Party met in Pastor J. Abelmann's church in Wilton. Not a great deal was resolved, but they emerged strengthened and further committed to their cause of exposing the *Gesetzlich Wesen* in their midst. In a number of respects the Wilton meeting might be regarded as the birth of the Protestant Conference.

On January 31 Ruediger was dismissed, and three days later his confession and absolution were distributed throughout the Synod. On February 8 and 9 the Protestants met at Oswald Hensel's church in Marshfield and for the first time celebrated *Gottesdienst und Abendmahl* (a worship service with Communion); the situation was becoming increasingly more polarized, and the communion service was

interpreted by the other pastors of the District as a clear testimony that the Third Party regarded itself as a distinct group, separate from the Synod.

In April the Beitz paper was read a third time at a Conference in Marshfield and the same storm of opinion arose. For the first time Praeses Thurow was in attendance, along with his two vice presidents, Nommensen and Kuhlow. Thurow realized that the matter was not going to be resolved by floor discussion and it was at Marshfield that he made the fateful decision to solicit the opinion (*Gutachten*) of the Wauwatosa Faculty for the final, official word. More on this later.

The Controversy now began to inflict permanent, public damage. Pastor William Parisius (later to jump to Missouri) had left his parish at Globe (rural Neillsville) to go to a congregation at Naugart; old Pastor H. Brandt from Neillsville was serving the vacancy. The Globe congregation, however, perhaps influenced by Parisius' Protes'tant sympathies, did not honor the District's call list and instead called Pastor W. Motzkus of Cameron, one of the signers of the Beaver Dam *Protestschreiben*. Motzkus accepted. Thurow was understandably upset, since the signers were still being dealt with earnestly and were still being urged to withdraw the painful thorn from the District's side. Brandt himself needed no urging, since he was no Third Party sympathizer, and on Thurow's instructions refused to install Motzkus. In a calculated move, Oswald Hensel openly defied Thurow and installed Motzkus on April 10, 1927. A crisis was at hand.

Ever since the federation merger in 1917, the Synod had granted the districts the right and duty of maintaining and supervising doctrine and practice in their own areas of jurisdiction, and had resolved formally that the district officials should deal directly with problems. The 1926 Beaver Dam convention of the Western Wisconsin District expressly affirmed its support for that policy in its rejection of Point #3 of the *Protestschreiben*:

*"Aber es wurde von der Synode beschlossen, dass alle Praesides der Allgemeinen Synode Auftrag und Vollmacht erhalten, abschliessend mit etwaigen Protestierenden zu verhandeln."*<sup>67</sup>

Thurow now felt his back to the wall, and decided on a move that would stop the problem from growing any greater. After a tense exchange of correspondence, he suspended Hensel and Motzkus in early June from District, and hence from Synod, membership. A few days later Immanuel's of Marshfield followed its pastor and withdrew from the District, placing the matter before the Joint Synod. Incidentally, G.A. Krasin, the congregation's president, had been one of the lay signers of the *Protestschreiben*.

June, 1927, was a bad month for the Protes'tants. Following the two suspensions and withdrawal, the Wauwatosa Faculty issued the *Gutachten* on the 11th, which will be discussed separately below, and on the 12th Pastor Hans Koch of Friesland was suspended. A few comments are in order here, since *Faith-Life* made a great to-do about this "Friesland case."

Koch had been installed at Friesland in the fall of 1925, and he did not waste any time in creating a difficult situation for himself. He shared Beitz' views on pedagogy and discarded the catechism in favor of using the Bible itself; this would, I suppose, not be a bad idea in itself except for two things: very few pastors have such a command of the Bible and its doctrine that they can systematize it for confirmands as well as Dr. Luther, and his attitude bespoke deeper problems on the use and value of confessional statements and writings.

He apparently carried out Beitz' homiletical principles, too: *"Besonders aber waren seine Predigten den einzelnen Gliedern unverständlich."*<sup>68</sup> To accommodate his unique views on Law and Gospel he coined the term "Gospel Law." According to the councilmen who were recommending his resignation, "He preaches no Law. 'Er sagt, das Gesetz könne nichts ausrichten, das Evangelium müsse alles tun, auch uns zur Erkenntnis unsrer Sünde bringen.'"<sup>69</sup> The capper for the congregation was Koch's involvement with the Protes'tants and his signature on the *Protestschreiben*.

At the council's invitation, several informational meetings were held with Thurow in attendance to present the Synod's viewpoint; August Pieper was invited, too. Pieper, as could be expected, stole the show and his aggressive presence was so overwhelming that the congregation completely repudiated Koch's stand and Koch himself was induced to write a confession reminiscent of Ruediger's. Shortly thereafter he resigned, evidently feeling that his recantation had been extracted under duress, and penned the following lines in reference to his former flock:

"I resigned definitely, because I was convinced that a congregation moved by such fleshly and corrupt reasons, such Pharisaism in flatly rejecting the truth of the Gospel--and all that without the least sign of repentance-- I believed such a congregation unfit to vote on my resignation."<sup>70</sup>

Koch was suspended on June 12, 1927, bringing the count to three.

A brief excursus is in order concerning these suspensions. In 1927 there was a great deal of confusion about the use of the terms "suspension" and "excommunication" (*Bann*), and if reports from the field are to be believed, the WELS brethren today do not share opinions 100% on the subject. The majority of Synod pastors at that time held that suspension did not involve excommunication; some, however, used language that made it seem as if they were reading the Third Party out of the Christian Church. In a lengthy account of the actions of the special Western Wisconsin District meeting in November, 1927 (to be discussed later), Pastor Robert Ave-Lallemant quotes August Pieper as taking the hard line, that suspension equalled *Bann*: "We also deny them all their Christianity."<sup>71</sup> Not a few agreed with him, and some immoderate language on convention floors and in official correspondence did not lead the Protes'tants to appreciate *Beamtentum* any more.

Ought the suspensions to have been pronounced in the first place? The Joint Synod Peace Committee in 1933 thought not<sup>72</sup> and the Union Committee, reviewing the case in 1961, didn't think so either.<sup>73</sup> It was pointed out that a great deal of uncertainty beclouded terminology and usage, that the ratifying vote at the November, 1927, Watertown meeting was not unanimous, and that the interpretations put on the resolutions were varied. The official version was always the same: "Pastor \_\_\_\_\_ hat sich von uns getrennt" (has separated himself from us); the Protes'tants took vigorous exception to that attitude: "In point of fact, the Protes'tants were expelled," writes Jordahl.<sup>74</sup> The reasons given for the suspensions are not as black-white as we might prefer.

On the other hand, the Protes'tants used the suspension question as a tactical ploy to force the District to take political action when they in reality were the aggressors. Their "underdog" image was thus enhanced, and their charges of power politics appeared just that much more convincing. Had this writer been a pastor in the District in 1927, he would probably have counted himself among Thurow's supporters. The suspensions did not drive the Protes'tants out of the Synod; they merely recognized a chasm which already existed. To be true to their pronouncements of God's hardening of Wisconsin Synod hearts, the Protes'tants ought to have withdrawn gracefully, but to their discredit they vitiated the positive, constructive criticism which they had to offer by the way in which they provoked synodical discipline. It is historically misleading to see in the *Gutachten*, the November Watertown meeting, the Elroy Declaration, or the Koehler suspension either the cause for the split or even its catalyst. The split would have come sooner or later without any of the four. By June of 1927 the Protes'tants embraced all of the essential elements which characterized them in later years. In case after case, the individual Protes'tants knew who the brethren were that were under discipline and knew that the District (rightly or wrongly) forbade pulpit and altar fellowship on pain of suspension, and in case after case they deliberately flaunted their fellowship involvement with disciplined Protes'tants, daring Thurow to act. The shock which many then expressed upon being suspended rings hollow across half a century--what really did they expect?

The figure of Praeses Gotthold Thurow looms large in these crisis years of 1926-1927, and perhaps some observations on his presidency are in order. He had served congregations in Bay City and Milwaukee, and then accepted a call to Wisconsin Rapids, where he got along famously. One of his closest friends there was his Marshfield neighbor Oswald Hensel; it was likely with Hensel's support that he was elected president in 1924. It is supremely ironic that the two should have been such close friends; Thurow in 1924 promptly named Hensel as conference visitor and as Mission Board chairman his good friend John Abelmann. Dr. Kiessling quotes a speech of Hensel's rhapsodizing about Thurow, urging fraternal obedience, and addressing him as "our bishop."<sup>75</sup> Thurow was a leaner--he leaned on his wife, who had money from a La Crosse broom factory, he leaned on Brandt and Hensel in Wisconsin Rapids, and later in Waterloo he leaned on Nommensen and Kuhlow. He was emotional rather than intellectual, and he was vulnerable to people who knew how to play on his sympathies.

Unfortunately, he was not equal to the task of the presidency; elected in a time of smooth sailing, he floundered as crisis followed crisis. At Fort Atkinson he tried desperately to handle the situation by himself, but was outmaneuvered by the Protestants, who took advantage of his lack of administrative ability and experience. His official correspondence could be patronizing and clumsy and must needlessly have aggravated those being dealt with. Consider the following example:

11 July, 1927

"Dear Brother Beitz,

Your letter received. We cannot comply with your request to have your paper printed and mailed to all pastors, etc., as thereby we would become partakers of your sin in spreading false doctrine; however, we stand ready to help you from the error of your ways and designate Friday of this week, July 15, as the date on which we shall be ready to discuss your paper at Rev. Kuhlow's parsonage at Jefferson, Wis., 1 PM. Would you please favor us with an immediate reply?

Fraternally yours,

G.M. Thurow

O.F. Kuhlow

W. Nommensen"<sup>76</sup>

To return to the narrative. As mentioned, it was at the Marshfield Conference of April, 1927, that Thurow decided to go to Wauwatosa for a definitive statement on the vexing Beitz paper, the fires from which were beginning to rage out of his control. While the practice of seeking a faculty *Gutachten* was almost nonexistent in the Wisconsin Synod, Missouri pastors and officials were not so chary about going to St. Louis, due no doubt to the enormous influence which Walther had exercised over all phases of Missouri's activities. Besides, August Pieper was a personal friend of the Thurow family.

And so the appeal went to Wauwatosa. With the penetrating hindsight of 50 years this decision looms as a colossal mistake in tactics--the Synod had charged each district with the supervision of doctrine and practice, and to wheel in the big guns was to invite countercharges of meddling and authoritarianism. He further weakened his already wobbly position by this silent proclamation that he was unable to keep his house in order. On the other hand, Thurow's appeal was surely motivated by a sincere desire for a competent theological evaluation of the paper and also by a hope that the great prestige of the Wauwatosa Faculty would bring the rebels into line. It is a fact that the *Gutachten* did help to clarify the thinking of many pastors.

The faculty accepted the challenge and decided that each of the four should prepare a separate opinion; the best of these would then be selected, edited, and submitted. As it turned out, Koehler never prepared a draft, and Pieper's was chosen. On June 7, 1927, the "*Gutachten der theologischen Fakultät von Wauwatosa*

*Über die Konferenzarbeit:* God's Message to us in Galatians: The Just Shall Live by Faith," was signed by the entire faculty. This fact is of the highest importance, for it demonstrates clearly that Koehler's analysis of the language of the paper, its wording, led him to condemn what Beitz said.

There was one hitch: Koehler stipulated that the *Gutachten* was to be kept under wraps until he had a chance to deal with Beitz personally to see if he had understood him correctly, and he then set off on that mission. The *Gutachten*, though, with his signature, was sent to Thurow, who immediately had it published and circulated. Imagine his relief at having in his hands a formal, analytical rebuttal to the troublesome Galatians paper which embodied as it did all of his own misgivings and publicly vindicated his official position. Thurow could not have been enjoying the hot seat, and he must have been comforted that the Wauwatosa theologians stood with him to a man.

Imagine now Koehler's surprise when he arrived to find that the *Gutachten* with his signature had gotten to Beitz ahead of him. Koehler never forgave his colleagues for "double-crossing" him, and this incident marked a major degeneration in inter-faculty relations. In particular, the rift between him and Pieper widened, both privately and publicly.

It did not behoove Koehler, however, to assume the wounded air of someone who has been horribly wronged. His personal ethics and scruples are curious, to use a polite word. In troubled times it's bad enough when inflammatory and vigorously polemical writings are smeared all over the Synod, but when its statements are so unclear that a Seminary professor had to make a personal visit with the author to ascertain his intentions, it hardly deserved his later support against the *Gutachten* which, for all its strong language, was at least Scriptural. An important factor in Koehler's attitude was his personal hermeneutical approach to polemics:

"Fairness demands that we seek to understand our opponent not as his words can or even must be understood, but as he wants them to be understood."<sup>77</sup> Koehler's antipathy to dogmatism here seems to have spoiled his appreciation of the importance of confessional writings. Charity does demand an effort to understand an opponent's intent, but love for God's Word must also demand critical analysis of human documents involving that Word. While Koehler's attitude would be helpful in dealing with the individual, it ignores the painful fact that erring and ambiguous doctrinal statements, however well-intentioned, can corrode the faith of others if permitted to stand unchallenged.

The *Gutachten*, now being read avidly by every Synod pastor, was a thorough, strongly worded condemnation of dozens of Beitz' statements. It follows the order of Beitz' arguments, and its main points might be systematically reduced to six "Augustanaesque" antitheses:

1. We condemn the paper's confusing of justification and sanctification.

*"Der Referent begeht dem Grundfehler, dass er eine Heiligungsforderung daraus macht (i.e. Gal. 3:11), die nämlich, dass wir Gerechtfertigten ein Leben im Glauben führen sollen."*<sup>78</sup>

2. We condemn the paper's categorical condemnation of the Synodical Conference, Wisconsin Synod, and its congregations as unjust. Short of public heresy on their part we owe it out of brotherly love to our members to consider them Christians. *"Der Referent hat uns mit der Zuhörerschaft des Johannes in ein Bett geworfen und seine Predigt: Ihr Otterngezüchte, auch auf uns bezogen hat..."*<sup>79</sup>

3. We condemn the paper's confusion of the doctrine of repentance. *"Er hat die Busse der Bussfertigen mit der Busse des Gottlosen verwechselt."*<sup>80</sup>

4. We condemn the paper's notions on homiletics. To discard specific textual study and outlining *"ist eine selbst von den Methodisten aufgegebene, gefährliche, gemeindeverderbende und nicht zu duldende Schwärmerei."*<sup>81</sup>



5. We condemn the paper's rejection of dogmatic, cognitive exposition of Scriptural truth. Beitz was reminded of his ordination vow of allegiance to the symbolical books. "*Die Lutherische Dogmatik ist durchweg Schrifttheologie.*"<sup>82</sup> "*In des Referents Verwerfung des Katechismus und der Dogmatik offenbart sich auch ein gut Teil Schwärmerei.*"<sup>83</sup>

6. We condemn the paper's careless defamation of the Synod's pastors. If Beitz had complaints against specific pastors, he ought first to have dealt with them himself before publicly scolding the Synod across the board. To proclaim that the pastors and Synod have fallen from grace without having first undertaken private admonition "*ist grobe Verleumdung von Amtsbrüdern und Schmähung der gauzen Synode.*"<sup>84</sup>

The *Gutachten* freely admitted that pastors especially were always in danger of falling into legalistic practices, that no human being was free from the *opinio legis*, but drew the line when "*auf den folgenden Seiten begegnen wir bedingungslosen Verneinungen unsers Christentums.*"<sup>85</sup>

The only major objection to the *Gutachten* of any substance is that it uses needlessly polemic language. Surely even antithetical statements must have as their ultimate aim the winning of the erring brother, and the *Gutachten* freely uses terms loaded with pejorative connotations. Two examples:

"*Und das alles verdammt der Referent skrupellos und nicht ahnend, dass er damit Gott lästert.*"<sup>86</sup>

"*Vollausgewachsene antinomistische Schwärmerei tritt uns darin entgegen.*"<sup>87</sup>

The above statements may well have been true, but they're fighting words, words that generate more heat than light.

At all events, Koehler's talks with Beitz led him to conclude that the offensive statements in the paper could be understood in an acceptable way. He still held Beitz half-responsible for the strife and would have preferred his withdrawing the paper, but took the line that the bare words did not constitute false doctrine. Upon returning to Wauwatosa he attempted to circularize the Synod with a notice disavowing his signature on the *Gutachten*, but was dissuaded by his colleagues.

That July the District Officials suspended two more Protes'tants--Beitz and William K. Bodamer, son of the Lodz missionary, a pastor in Prairie du Chien. On August 17-23 the Joint Synod met at St. Lucas, Milwaukee, for its biennial convention. Pastors Paul Hensel, Paul Kionka, and Heinrich Koch submitted a memorial requesting the right to bring their grievances before the entire Synod, but the synodical committee to deal with the memorial, either out of deference to District jurisdiction or reluctance to handle a hot potato or both, tossed the memorial back into the District's lap:

"Your Committee can, after well-considered and conscientious deliberation, only come to the realization that the very next court to undertake this accusation is the Western Wisconsin District itself, and that consequently the General Synod would be meddling (*in ein fremd Amt greifen würde*) if it wanted to concern itself with the present accusations."<sup>88</sup>

On October 18 the Joint Synodical Committee met; Koehler there defended Beitz against the "slander" of the *Gutachten*. His presentation, the *Ertrag*, was based on notes taken from his meetings with Beitz in June and July.

On November 15-18 came another watershed event: the special convention of the Western Wisconsin District in Watertown. It was to be the last general meeting attended by both parties; as it was, the Protes'tants came only reluctantly. The mood of the sessions was heated and irritable; discussions frequently degenerated into shouting matches, and calm, rational deliberation gave way to angry charges and countercharges. Parliamentary procedure repeatedly broke down, and a voice heard repeatedly belonged to Prof. Pieper. One of the observers, Pastor

Theophil Uetzmann, later observed, "It was like hell to attend those meetings. The ignorance, legalism, injustice, and church politics was so outstanding that a blind man, if any Christianity is in his bones, should have seen it."<sup>89</sup>

From the outset it was evident that Thurow could not control the meeting, and a reluctant Bergemann was named chairman. Beitz read his paper for the fourth time, and from the way the galleries moved forward and listened it appeared that there were many who had not as yet read or studied the paper very thoroughly. A great deal of discussion ensued, but they only proved the general rule that in times of stress the convention floor cannot handle doctrinal questions in dispute (cf. the Pennsylvania Ministerium and the General Synod in 1866).

The Watertown convention did not appear to change anyone's mind, but rather strengthened the two sides in their convictions; in that respect it served a salutary function in hastening the inevitable. Since Beitz stood by every jot and tittle of his paper, the body formally rejected it as a document of *doctrina publica* and resolved that anyone who subscribed to it would be regarded as one who had broken fellowship, i.e., the suspensions were only recognizing breaks of fellowship which already existed. A "*Zwölferkomitee*" was formed to deal with dissidents in order to persuade them not to take a step which the District would recognize as permanently divisive. The *Gutachten* was adopted as an expression of the body's opinion on the matter.

The Protes'tants were understandably put out (no pun intended), since they felt that they had been denied the floor and an opportunity to present their views. Three weeks later they met at Elroy, Wis., on Dec. 13-14, and drew up a brief position paper of four points, the "Elroy Declaration," (see Appendix D). The upshot was that they refused to attend further meetings or dealings until the Beaver Dam and Watertown resolutions were rescinded and the Synod displayed a "new attitude." The Third Party was now committed unequivocally in writing, and there could and would be no retreat from that position. At this meeting Beitz and Paul Hensel were directed to write a fuller exposition of their position.

On January 18 the Protes'tants met again, this time at Wilton. One of the resolutions was to begin a periodical to be called *Faith-Life*, named, no doubt, after the theme of the Beitz paper. The periodical's purpose, in the words of John Abelmann:

"We must publish our story to the world and let it judge what a pope-ridden, and therefore decadent, church can no longer judge."<sup>90</sup>

At Wilton, oddly enough, they took the offensive against the Synod. A number of charges were leveled against the Northwestern College Board and specifically against the custodian of the College's trust funds. Allegedly the Board had frittered away \$60-80,000 in bad investments. A thorough investigation by various committees of the Board led by President Kowalke revealed that a number of mortgages had been bought on Wisconsin and Dakota farms, and the only prospect of loss was on a Watertown chicken farm which was paying only 50¢ on the dollar. The custodian was exonerated and the Board's investment policies were reviewed and revised. As Kowalke's dry wit puts it:

"These investments (i.e. the chicken farm) that were turning sour were not an indication of dishonesty on the part of the custodian of funds; they were a gentle breeze that forewarned of the wholesale collapse that began in October, 1929."<sup>91</sup>

In February the District held another special session, but the Protes'tants refused to attend. All actions of the November, 1927, meeting were ratified, and the suspension toll now stood at seventeen pastors, one teacher, and five congregations. President Kowalke reported that the charges against the Board and its investments were unfounded.

April, 1928, saw the appearance of three important documents. One was Paul

Hensel's *The Wauwatosa Gospel - Which Is It?*, which included the Beitz Paper, the *Gutachten*, and a lengthy article by Hensel defending the Beitz Paper and showing how Beitz hadn't said much that August Pieper had not said previously. Another was Prof. Meyer's "Brief Review," a carefully written, courteous evaluation which sought to be gentle with Beitz the man while refuting what he said. This paper is seldom referred to and would seem to this writer to have been a better choice as the official Faculty position than Pieper's paper.

The third publication was Volume I, Number 1 of *Faith-Life*. This periodical through half a century has proved to be the common denominator, the cynosure, the unifying factor of the Protes'tant cause, and has enabled them to make a louder splash than one would think possible from their numbers. It has proven invaluable in researching the Controversy because of the dearth of official Synod accounts, and it frequently included as supplements various significant documents and correspondence which otherwise would have been very hard to find. It makes no pretense of disinterested objectivity, but rather burns with a passion for the crusade against synodical authoritarianism.

The Controversy involved communicators, men whose speech could be vivid and compelling, but also cutting and inflammatory; it involved writers, notably the Hensels, who knew how to wield a pen. Unfortunately, the *Faith-Life* tempers never cooled off, and articles would appear, aimed squarely at WELS, which were scathing, bitter, sarcastic and totally unworthy of a message directed from one Lutheran pastor to another. The paper was not exclusively polemical---there appeared frequent devotions and exegeses---but its unwavering thrust over the years has been to jab at the Wisconsin Synod for its hardness of heart and to preserve un-sullied its vision of the Wauwatosa Gospel.

#### VI. John Philipp Koehler

We come now to the sad, puzzling story of Prof. John Ph. Koehler. In many respects, Koehler's actions constitute the most difficult aspect of the entire Controversy to understand; he seems to have preferred neutrality to active polemizing, and was drawn into the conflict somewhat against his will. He relished the role of aloof observer, analyzing events according to his historical-exegetical method without being personally involved. He preferred low-key, behind-the-scenes dealing, and the heated public confrontations must have grieved him. Koehler was a victim of his own lack of commitment---it proves the axiom that you cannot maintain a position in the middle of the road when there is heavy traffic. He wound up in the Protes'tant camp, but it was certainly only reluctantly, since he disagreed with a number of the principal points of their platform. The Synod in the late 1920's was afraid of a massive schism, and its mood was, "He that is not for us is against us." Koehler saw much in synodical actions which he could not endorse, and the rift deepened when the Synod and especially the Seminary faculty realized his lukewarmness. Most emphatically to be rejected is the con- 92 tention that the Synod repudiated him and all he stood for (as Jordahl contends). WELS theologians today may not talk about the historical-exegetical method as much as Koehler did---they just put it quietly into practice.

The rift between Koehler and his colleagues had deep roots. Long before the Controversy began the two Seminary giants, Koehler and Pieper, would consciously or unconsciously draw students into their particular orbits. This is perfectly natural; students always feel drawn to strong teachers who can help them cope with and assimilate the world of theology. Those who enjoyed vivid, dramatic lectures and did not mind an occasional hyperbole for effect ("*Seit 1876 haben wir solche Gelehrten wie ich bin*"<sup>93</sup>) followed "Pips," while those who considered themselves thinkers and intellectuals, who liked lectures involving abstraction and theory, favored "J.P."

Since it developed that the protesters were generally Koehler admirers and

looked to him and his principles for inspiration, and since the opposite was true of synod officials, i.e., that they were prone to look to Pieper for theological leadership, bonds developed between Koehler and the Protes'tants of a merely tactical nature. Then, too, since Koehler's sons Karl and Kurt both favored the Protes'tant cause (Karl edited *Faith-Life* in the early years), family loyalty drew him closer. In summary, then, the Synod, whether it admitted it or not, regarded Koehler's refusal to choose a side as a choice in itself.

Following the hectic years of 1926-1927, the two sides began to diverge markedly. After 1927 the Protes'tants stayed away from Synod and district meetings (see the Elroy Declaration) and most also refused to deal privately. Any chance of reconciliation at this point was out of the question; both sides now settled back in the trenches and sniped--the Protes'tants hoping to draw further suspensions, the Synod trying to stanch the bleeding. From June, 1928, to June, 1929, no major disruption occurred except for the suspension of Elmer Sauer from NWC in October, 1928. The Western Wisconsin District Convention on June 20-25, 1928, concerned itself mainly with repairing the damage to the Mission Board, gathering fragments of splintered congregations, and with the exasperating inter-synodical cases of Pastors William Parisius and A. Zuberbier.

The summer of 1929 began ominously; things were happening too fast. Primarily at Prof. Pieper's insistence, two Seminary Seniors, Marcus Koch and John John, were not graduated or assigned calls; the stated reason was their overt Protes'tant sympathies. Prof. Henkel died on July 5.

On August 1 Koehler published his *Beleuchtung*, i.e., elucidation, of the Beitz paper. Apparently his meeting with Beitz two summers ago had changed his outlook considerably, for he now stated that Beitz' paper, though flawed, could be understood in a proper way, and that the *Gutachten* which he once signed

"...verkehrt die klare Rede Beitz's an mehreren Stellen, so dass es einen Anhalt zu seinem Urteil gewinnt, den es sonst nicht hätte."94

That paper was the *coup de grace* to Koehler's continued presence in the classroom, since it was a direct frontal attack on August Pieper, publicly countenanced a document repudiated by one of the districts, and expressly rejected a document adopted by that district. Pieper and Meyer wrote a rather vigorous reply, the *Antwort*, dated August 9. The *Antwort* was basically a restatement of the *Gutachten*, except that some rather broad suggestions were thrown out to the effect that Koehler's historical method was misleading him. On August 13 Koehler was notified by Walter Hoenecke that the *Beleuchtung* had, in effect, made it impossible for him to continue teaching, and he was given a sort-of leave of absence for the 1929-1930 school year. The reasons given by the Board were not generally recognized as satisfactory; a few days later a special synodical committee reported:

"Verbal discussion between the committee and members of the Board has established beyond a doubt that the Seminary Board, in its judgment on Prof. Koehler's further activity at the seminary, was led by reasons other than those clearly stated in the document handed to the Synod. Be it therefore resolved:

1. That the Board forthwith communicate with Prof. Koehler and clear up the misunderstanding."

The Board had acted so quickly that Koehler had not as yet even read the *Antwort*; not that it would have mattered a great deal--the tepid support he gave the Beitz paper would have been interpreted on all sides as a firm alignment. In the late 1920's, being sort-of-Protes'tant was as impossible as being sort-of-pregnant--it had to be one or the other.

Much ink could be spilled at this point in hashing and rehashing the comparative merits of the *Beleuchtung* and *Antwort*, but the temptation will be fought.

Later analyses in *Faith-Life* notwithstanding, these documents were not determinative events, but rather confirming events which only gave expression to the split that had already opened in faculty ranks. To this writer the impression is inescapable that Koehler was of more use to the Protestants as a martyr-figure who lent the movement credibility and a famous name rather than as a spokesman or apologist for the Cause. The picture is of a saddened, sobered, grandfatherly professor who didn't feel comfortable on either side, who would much have preferred to avoid committing himself.

On the day following Koehler's being relieved of duties, the Joint Synod convened at Saron Church in Milwaukee. The delegates must have buzzed with the news; four days later the new Seminary buildings at Thiensville were dedicated with the office of director vacant. That Koehler should have been removed from office only a few days before the dedication was supremely ironic, since it was partly due to him that the Seminary had a Wartburg-like design.

Koehler continued to reside in Thiensville in the director's quarters west of the *Pustloch* during the school year. Numerous attempts were made to iron out the difficulties, but Koehler steadfastly refused to deal with any committee:

- a. As long as the *Gutachten*, which slandered Beitz, was permitted to stand;
- b. As long as the Board resolution stood which had ruled him unfit to teach;
- c. As long as the Board subscribed to the *Antwort*.

After frustrating and fruitless negotiations in which neither party would budge, Koehler was formally dismissed from his post on May 21, 1930. He thereupon left Thiensville for Neillsville to live with Karl, who was pastor of a group that had broken from St. John's in town. Obviously reluctant to take the final step, the Synod at length severed fellowship with Koehler "since he is openly practicing brotherly fellowship with those who have severed relations with us."<sup>96</sup>

A brief epilogue might here be added for the sake of rounding out the story. The 1929 Synod convention at Saron was the first time that the Controversy had been officially dealt with at any length at the synodical level. That year, however, five memorials and two letters had been introduced which concerned various aspects of the Protestant problem, and so a high-level committee was formed to handle the matter. Several extremely significant resolutions were passed, among which were:

- "#1. To confess publicly that this Controversy is a manifestation of lack of spiritual knowledge and brotherly love in our midst and therefore an earnest call to repentance. (This resolution was passed with a rising vote.)
- #4. We trust that the respective districts have acted in good faith, and we respect the suspensions pronounced by them...
- #5. ...the Synod herewith appoints a committee to which appeals may be made by anyone for information, investigation, or settlement of individual cases. (Note: This committee was referred to either as the "Peace Committee" or "*Verständigungskomitee*.")
- #7. It is the urgent wish of Synod that in the future no more articles shall be published concerning the Controversy..."<sup>97</sup>

The *Verständigungskomitee* strove mightily for four years but availed nothing; even a mere five or six years after the major conflicts, the committee members had to throw up their hands at the complexity of the cases. At the 1933 Synod convention the committee asked for its release, making the following recommendations (translated and condensed):

- "1. The Watertown (1927) Resolutions and the Fort Atkinson discipline cases can no longer be recognized on the basis of the proceedings;
2. The above statement is to be understood in the sense that we still regard the people in question as under discipline."<sup>98</sup>

The Synod went so far as to resolve:

"That it be the sentiment and understanding of this body that the Western Wisconsin District of its own free will and accord reconsider the Watertown Resolutions and the suspensions in the Fort Atkinson cases."<sup>99</sup>

But it didn't, and there the matter lay for 25 odd years. At a special convention in Baraboo the District in 1933 again upheld its suspensions and its subscription to the *Gutachten*; again there was no Protes'tant representation.

In October of 1929 the stock market crashed, strapping the Synod with a \$750,000+ debt run up in easy dollars. There were some Protes'tants who were certain that this was clear evidence of God's wrath and judgment over Synod sins; so bleak was the outlook that some gloomy observers predicted an imminent demise. But to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of the Synod's death were greatly exaggerated, and it staggered through the Depression with help from above. The financial worries must have taken the pastors' minds off the Protes'tant schism, at any rate.

It was rough sledding for the Protes'tant Conference, too. After a heady initial exodus from the Western Wisconsin District, the secessions slowed to a trickle. It must have been bitterly disappointing; this writer's grandfather, a Milwaukee pastor at the time, later recalled that the widespread groundswell of support which the Protes'tants had expected never materialized, and the movement never caught hold outside of that one district. None of the Milwaukee congregations was affected, although there were some sympathizers; the Protes'tant congregations were almost all small, rural parishes or small splinter groups. The fact led one WELS pastor recently to theorize that pastors of small congregations, who probably didn't have enough to keep them busy, would be much more likely to brood and *kvetch* about the dealings of district officials than pastors of large congregations who simply wouldn't have the time to scrutinize every application of Matthew 18 in their district.

It must have given frustrated synodicals some grim satisfaction to watch the Protes'tant Conference undergo defections of its own in the 1930's. Although the Conference's platform was stated in positive terms, viz., the preservation of the Wauwatosa Gospel, in reality its primary internal cement in the 1930's was opposition to specific ideas and men in the Wisconsin Synod. Church history reveals that a negative common denominator is usually not sufficient to make for permanent unity, and thus it is not surprising to see the inherent centrifugal forces throwing off one-time supporters. The movement was always top-heavy with clergy, and too many chiefs without an adequate supply of Indians kept intra-Conference frictions alive. Many had to leave the ministry, or else make some kind of provision for a tent-ministry. Over the years the steady attrition of pastors, lack of growth, disdain for structure and organization, and lack of interest in founding a seminary reduced the movement from near-breakthrough proportions in 1929 to a small handful in 1978.

Shortly before Wisconsin's break with Missouri there was an attempt at reconciliation on Wisconsin's part; after some exploratory correspondence conducted in part through Pastor E. Arnold Sitz, Koehler's son-in-law, and after a thorough review of the documents, the Synod's Union Committee (now the Commission on Inter-Church Relations) in 1961 recommended that the Synod reaffirm its 1933 resolution urging the Western Wisconsin District to reconsider its suspensions.<sup>100</sup> Although the suspensions were thereupon rescinded by the District "of its own free will," correspondence bogged down and was at length abandoned. The chasm in 1978 is as deep and as wide as ever.

Is there any hope for reconciliation? In this writer's opinion, the possibilities are almost nil, short of a major change in Protes'tant thinking, which does not seem likely. For one thing, the Protes'tants have a 50-year-old Cause--the inertia would be hard to break. These men believe strongly that Conservative Lutheranism needs to hear their voice, and *Faith-Life* will be published as long as

there is still one loyal disciple of the "Wauwatosa Theology." There has been no noticeable slackening of invective; to judge from their articles in *Faith-Life*, Marcus Albrecht and Gerald Hinz have not mellowed much. Perhaps the major obstacle to reconciliation is the Protestant insistence that Wisconsin acknowledge all her sins of the past and make public repentance for them; there are, however, not too many pastors left in WELS who have a clear idea of what happened, and still fewer who care to dig into the documents to try to untangle the individual cases. A canon of Protestant hermeneutics is that all such cases must be unrolled and reviewed--but not only is such a task unlikely to be agreed to, it is nearly impossible because of the passage of time and the death of the principals. The two groups will continue to go their separate ways, each quite sure that it is the bearer of the pure Gospel.

While a great deal of energy and time had been expended by the Synod in attempting to cope with this challenge, the Controversy did not overly preoccupy WELS thinking nor did it deflect it measurably from its path. 1927 was a great leap forward for synodical education; in the 1930's everything took a back seat to the financial backlash of the Depression, and in the late 1930's the trouble with Missouri began to bulk increasingly large in WELS thinking. By 1933 most WELS pastors had had a bellyful of wrangling and striving to understand and evaluate the accusations and charges, and the vast majority were glad simply to devote their undivided attention to the work of the Gospel ministry. No Protestant would have approved of the 1933 Baraboo convention, but a Wisconsin pastor who was there recalled the sense of joy and relief when the matter was put aside once and for all.

The most noticeable impact of the Controversy on WELS was on its literary output--after a quarter century which had seen such monumental productions as *Ev. Luth. Dogmatik*, *Lehrbuch der Kirchengeschichte*, *Jesaias II*, and *Biblical Christology*, there set in a severe drought of book-length original thought in print which lasted until Meyer's *Ministers of Christ* appeared in 1963. The reasons for the silence are understandable, if not commendable. The Synod had resolved in 1927 "that no more articles be published" which touched on the Controversy;<sup>101</sup> in this way incipient Beitz papers were stifled, but so were incipient masterpieces. To their credit, Wisconsin pastors honestly did not want to erect further barriers to reconciliation; no one was likely to have felt too great a need for writing historical analysis, since everyone was pretty well fed up with the whole mess; and besides, who wanted to stick his neck out and get clobbered in *Faith-Life*? *Gott sei Dank* that the *Quartalschrift* continued.

A few *Quarterly* articles did appear which treated controverted doctrines, among them Meyer's "Jesus' Call to Repentance,"<sup>102</sup> Walter Hoenecke's "*Ist das Evangelium eine Predigt zur Busse?*" ("Is the Gospel a Preaching of Repentance?")<sup>103</sup> and Pieper's "*Der Antinomismus.*"<sup>104</sup> In general, however, it was the Protestant side of the Controversy which was presented more articulately, as a shelf-full of *Faith-Life* attests.

#### VII. Overall Observations

This paper's generally critical attitude toward the Protestants ought not to leave the impression of utter rejection and disparagement; there is much about the individual Protestants which can be admired. They were men of strong convictions who honestly felt that they were right, that they had been cruelly wronged by the Synod. They were consistent--they stuck to their guns to the point of losing synodical membership, and sometimes their congregations and ministries. Their appreciation for theological literature outshone that of WELS for some time. In addition, these men were not run-of-the-mill pastors--they were gifted, highly intelligent writers and thinkers, and their articles, though sometimes abrasive and cheap, were never dull. One almost wishes that the *Northwestern Lutheran* would

more often feature a writing style with that kind of crackle and incisiveness.

The Protes'tants must, however, be faulted with serious shortcomings in their doctrine and practice; a number of these have already been discussed, and so the observations that follow will be restricted to points not yet mentioned and ought not to be regarded as a definitive list of Protes'tant errors. Perhaps the most serious of these errors lay in their concept of Church and Ministry. Their fellowship principles, to use polite words, were not very Lutheran. The idea persisted that a pastor could be in fellowship simultaneously with a synod and with pastors suspended by that synod; the Protes'tants must have felt that since they had not subscribed to the early suspensions, they could safely ignore them. Prof. Elmer Sauer, e.g., was disciplined for practicing pulpit fellowship with the suspended Pastor Hass in Oconomowoc. How could anyone reasonably have imagined that a confessional church body could tolerate a triangular relationship like that?

The principle of "selective fellowship" crops up throughout Protes'tant history: the LCA professor Jordahl has preached for Marcus Albrecht, Theophil Uetzmann used to preach at an ALC church in Marinette, and they contend that nothing is wrong. "Are you saying that these men are not Christians? Who do you think you are?" would be a Protes'tant reply. The proper use of confessional statements is not understood.

There is a noticeable parallel to Theodore Graebner's concept of the superiority of the local congregation over the synod in Protes'tant thinking on the Church. While no statements were made during the early years of the Controversy which overtly denied that a synod, too, possesses the Keys, the Protes'tants' strongly anti-establishment tendencies led them to limit the churchly functions of the Synod. Whether or not the suspensions were just, though, they were approved formally on three separate occasions by the vote of a considerable majority, and as such deserved to be recognized as authoritative within synodical membership.

The Protes'tants could be quite rigorous in their judgments of their fellow pastors; overly tender consciences regarded legalistic tendencies as automatic proof of spiritual deadness. They lost sight of the humanness of others, especially those in authority, and instead of attempting to correct practices to which they objected by cooperating and working from within, they preferred open defiance, provoking a crisis. If that statement sounds harsh, just consider Oswald Hensel's intervention in Fort Atkinson. Perhaps Matthew 18 hadn't been followed to the letter in dealing with the two girls; nevertheless the officials were trying to do what was right in God's sight and what was best for the congregation. To defend the girls was to countenance their intemperate, subversive activities.

One aspect of *Faith-Life* which eventually soured a good many sympathizers was the caustic, strident, abusive language which appeared not sporadically but regularly. This writer ran across so many sarcastic, abrasive articles that he has lost all desire even to pick up a copy of *Faith-Life* for the next five years. Consider, for example, this paragraph from a review of Meyer's *Ministers of Christ* which appeared while his body was still warm in the grave:

"Did the man (Meyer) not realize that he was cutting off the roots of sprouting life, stunting growth in his students and stifling his own spiritual life? Instead of training carrier pigeons he was raising parrots."<sup>105</sup>

The Protes'tant heirs of the Wauwatosa Gospel sometimes garbled Koehler's emphases; the result was a caricature of Koehler's original point. He, for example, would inveigh against dogmatism, but his Protes'tant disciples somehow construed that as a condemnation of the Catechism. Oswald Hensel, Hans Koch and Otto Gruendemann were some of the Protes'tants who discarded the Catechism outright. Paul Lutzke wrote:

"Had Luther lived in our day of university schooling, it is questionable whether he would have written his Catechism."<sup>106</sup>



And thus one of the Lutheran Confessions was dispensed with.

*Faith-Life* would readily pronounce synodical reports and actions as un-factual and manipulative, but Protes'tants themselves were not above exploiting a situation for its propaganda value. A phrase that recurs in Protes'tant writing is that the Wisconsin Synod must repent over the Valders grave of the wife of Pastor Gruendemann; she died as a result of being evicted from their Town Gibson parsonage. Thus WELS heartlessness and legalism are shown to have wrecked families and increased human suffering.

The facts in the case suggest an entirely different conclusion. Gruendemann had been ousted in November of 1934 not by the Synod, but by his own congregation. He, however, refused to vacate the parsonage. When his called successor, Pastor Walter Kleinke, arrived, there was no place for him to stay, and he had to board with the members--a few weeks here, a few weeks there. Despite numerous pleas Gruendemann remained ensconced in the parsonage, and finally had to be evicted forcibly in July, 1935. His wife died in childbirth in December, thirteen months after the original suspension. If stress was in fact a major factor in her death, her husband's stubbornness must bear a major portion of the responsibility.

Some important general questions might well be treated now. Why did the movement catch on so strongly and quickly? How could it spread so fast and resist all efforts to check it? Why has it lasted so long? What gave the Protes'tants their appeal?

This writer has pondered these questions for some time now and has concluded that there is no one single factor to which one can point as the direct cause of the Controversy; rather, it was a composite phenomenon, shaped by a number of things all happening at once. If any one of the factors had not occurred, the split would have taken place anyway, just in a slightly different way.

One factor in their early gains was good P.R.; the Protes'tants cashed in on their image as martyrs, sprinkling the soil of the Church with their blood. Persecution makes saints; everyone roots for the underdog. No matter how the Synod officials had handled the cases, they would have been criticized by some as bullies and meddlers.

The Protes'tants were so fiercely loyal to their Cause that outsiders had to be impressed. Most of the Synod's pastors had studied under Koehler and were convinced of his orthodoxy, and when the Protes'tant platform appeared to be so pro-Gospel and used all the terminology which Koehler had used, there would always be some who thought that the Protes'tants had something.

As mentioned earlier, there were some less-than-spiritual practices in the Synod at the time, and the Protes'tants chafed and raged at what they considered formalism and external Christianity. The history of the Church is full of examples of splinter groups which separated themselves over a felt lack of spirituality in the larger body: the monks, Hus, Wesley, and the Pietists, to name only a few. As a church body grows, there grows along with it the danger that the church will cease to use forms and forms will use the church; perhaps Midwest Lutheranism of the 1920's was ripe for some shaking up; perhaps there was more *Pochen auf die reine Lehre* than there ought to have been.

People, pastors included, are drawn to strong figures who have answers to difficult questions. In times of trouble people are just as likely to gravitate toward leaders whom they trust as toward abstract ideas. It is easier to align yourself with people than with doctrines. The Koehlers and Hensels were highly respected men, and each exercised a sphere of influence in his respective conference. That the Controversy had splinters in the two theological training schools meant that the students would not be unaffected, and many carried into the ministry impressions and loyalties which had taken shape in these formative years.

If one contributing factor to the trouble were to be isolated as most significant, it would be the undercurrent of discontent running through the Synod at

the time. Anyone with a gripe felt an immediate kinship with the radicals, who exhibited a certain *esprit de corps* anyway; the impression over half a century is that the movement's theology was not its prime drawing card. Uetzmann, for example, had written to the Peace Committee:

*"Wer bekennen uns zu dem Beschluss der Synode, dass Pastor Beitz seine Schrift unklar, verwirrend, und infolgedessen irrefuehrend sei...Der Angriff P. Beitz auf die Professoren unseres Seminars und ihre Unterrichtsmethoden bedauern wir sehr und weisen ihn zuru"ck."*<sup>107</sup>

Thanks to the one-sidedness of the published accounts of the Controversy, other Lutherans have a distorted view of what occurred. In addition, someone who has no real understanding and love for a synod-wide 100% confessional subscription, consistent synodical discipline, and the Wisconsin desire for uniform doctrine and practice, would naturally side with a movement which in his understanding was an attempt to "break the stranglehold of dogmatics on theological study."<sup>108</sup> An ALC or LCA observer will never be able to understand anyway how organic union can be given a status inferior to uniformity of doctrine and practice, and thus the *Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church* concludes, "In the end the Wisconsin Synod repudiated the total thrust of the Wauwatosa Theology."<sup>109</sup> Koehler is made out to be a modernist who rejects the philosophical idea of an absolute truth in his efforts at "real" exegetical and historical research.<sup>110</sup>

On the positive side, there are a number of important lessons to be learned; these must be learned, or the Controversy will have failed to correct the historical tensions from which it sprang. As Santayana pointed out, those who ignore the past are condemned to relive it. Alexander Solzhenitsyn offered a very apropos Russian proverb: "He who dwells on the past loses an eye (as do the Protes'tants). But he who ignores the past loses both eyes." God preserve the Wisconsin Synod from falling into that second category.

Any WELS student of the Controversy must end up convinced of the need for a careful observance of good order, of using proper channels even in peacetime. In the 1920's there were any number of unfortunate examples of procedural short cuts, personal interference, and outright meddling; it's no wonder that personal concern for the spiritual welfare of those being dealt with usually went out the window and the controverted points degenerated into a *Machtfrage*. The survival of evangelical practice in a large organization is absolutely dependent upon a careful use of structural machinery.

It is in that respect that the Synod is most to blame. While responsibility for provoking the crises and for continued intransigence is properly ascribed to the Protes'tant ledger, the Synod was by no means an innocent party. As Prof. Habeck wryly remarked, "To say that there was no asininity on the part of the Synod would be an overstatement."<sup>111</sup> There was a regrettable willingness to take sides in every incident even though rumors and half-truths were constantly bandied about and passed off as facts. For instance, gossip had spread at the time of Koehler's dismissal in 1930 that he had to leave because of emotional imbalance.<sup>112</sup>

Another valid criticism to be charged to the Synod is a demonstrated lack of carefulness in the dealings. It is, of course, not difficult at all after 50 years to sit back and smugly chide all and sundry; that does not excuse the officials, however, from their responsibility for their actions. As early as 1933 the *Verständigungskomitee* had gone on record before the convened Synod as expressing doubts about the wisdom of all of the District's moves.<sup>113</sup> As one reflects on the tangled chain of events, all kinds of breakdowns in procedure appear: the failure to notify President Kowalke in the Watertown Thievery Case, Bliefernicht's intervention in the calling of the Fort Atkinson teachers, circularizing the Synod with Ruediger's confession and absolution, J.P. Koehler's bypassing of Thurow in his dealings with Beitz, Thurow's over-hasty dissemination of the *Gutachten*, etc., etc.

Haste in a controversy is thrice accursed.

Accursed also is the near irresistible temptation to drift into polemics. The writings of the time on both sides were incautious, and intentionally or not were divisive rather than irenic. In his *Antwort*, for example, Pieper criticized the Beitz paper for its "*unterh ndische Ver ffentlichung*," that it was "*unter der Hand der Chippewa Valley-conferenz untergeschoben* (foisted upon)."114 The Vice-President of the Northern Wisconsin District, Pastor Arthur Gentz, calmly observed, "*Faith-Life* thrives on scandal, reeks with lies and malicious slander."115 Some of the unhappy choices of wording in the *Gutachten* have already been mentioned. Prof. Pieper was undoubtedly correct in most of what he said, and the Synod ought to be grateful to him for his perceptive analysis of the weaknesses of the Beitz paper and his strong leadership in general, but equally important in times of controversy is how one expresses his ideas. Unfortunately, connotation occasionally says more than denotation; polemics are generally more destructive than instructive.

It is important that observers after half a century be careful in their judgment lest they repudiate the positive insights of the Wauwatosa Gospel along with its sometimes erring exponents. Those who have enjoyed the Gospel's freedom for a long time as a matter of course must be conscious of the constant danger of legalistic intrusions and incursions, and Koehler's writings help to further an awareness of it. Any church body that attempts to maintain orthodox standards of doctrine and practice through discipline must undergo self-criticism and be open to the criticism of others--this is both healthy and necessary as a check on the overzealous Puritan in all of us.

One lesson to be learned is the need to be gentle in dealing with brethren in the faith, no matter how pigheaded and stubborn they may seem. Christian love demands that one always leave the other man room to back down gracefully, to save face, to change his publicly stated opinion without having to look like a fool. G.A. Zeisler was certainly no model pastor--he had to resign at Minocqua and again at Golgotha, Milwaukee, for conduct unbecoming a minister of the Gospel--but he didn't deserve to be humbled in public. In Beaver Dam he once made a statement which Pieper considered to be ridiculous. Striding the length of the church, the august professor chucked him under the chin and proclaimed to all: "*Wenn mein junger Schueler nicht mit mir uebereinstimmt, dann ist er eben ein misraterener Schueler.*"116 Recent incidents in Wisconsin Synod history reveal the need for patient, gentle, compassionate dealing, viz., the Brookfield case, the humanist charges from California, and the Colorado antinomianism case.

The most central lesson of all was enunciated by Prof. John Meyer some years after the Controversy. In three words he put his finger squarely on the sorest weakness, one from which neither side could claim to be free. He said: "Prize the brotherhood!"117 While the Synod may have been a little quick with the first suspensions, the Protes'tants were equally quick to defy Thurow and openly to practice fellowship with those under discipline. It is tragic when those in disagreement watch each other like hawks, ready to pounce on any slip. "When you see a fault in a brother," said Meyer, "correct, don't judge. Criticize symptoms, don't judge hearts."

Believe it or not, some positive side benefits of the Protes'tant Controversy can be noted. The Wisconsin Synod, because of its conservative confessional stand, can expect a good deal of criticism from Lutherans on the left; the attendant danger is that the Synod be driven too far to the right. It is good to sustain criticism also from the right, and in that respect *Faith-Life* can help to maintain a balanced Wisconsin perspective. *Faith-Life's* steady stream of criticism has also served a salutary purpose as an antidote to cocksure, self-satisfied smirking on WELS' part. Humility becometh a synod, and *Faith-Life* has certainly labored long and hard toward that laudable goal.

The Wisconsin Synod can be grateful to the Protestant Conference for its translation of a number of Koehler's chief writings. Alex Hillmer translated the classic *Gesetzlich Wesen Unter Uns*, Elmer Sauer translated *Galaterbrief* and *Epheserbrief*, the First John commentary is appearing now, and the outline of his *Kirchengeschichte* appeared recently, as well as numerous other documents and letters. The *piece de resistance*, a volume which should be on every WELS pastor's bookshelf, is the translation, revision and expansion of *Geschichte der Allgemeinen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin und andern Staaten*. It appeared serially in *Faith-Life* from 1938-1944 and in bound form in 1970. It is a penetrating, thoughtful, scholarly work and bears reading and rereading by anyone concerned about the transmission of the confessional Lutheran heritage through the centuries.

In retrospect, I suppose that, once begun, it was better that the Controversy end in a split, although the bitterness, recrimination, and bad blood are highly regrettable. By 1927 there was no unity any longer, and a superficial patch slapped on the leak without a radical internal reassessment by one side or the other would only have resulted in an even greater explosion later, if not sooner. It ought to be recognized that there were and are two distinct hermeneutical preconceptions, two distinct approaches to the problems, and to gloss over these divergent views in pursuit of reunion would do injustice to the Protestants' honest convictions and to WELS' own official pronouncements. Unfortunately, peaceful coexistence is unlikely, as the present Shiocton problem indicates, and *Faith-Life* will doubtless continue in its holy mission to

"break down the influence of the misleaders of the church and free their followers from their thralldom, to break down within our Lutheran church, and wherever else it may flourish, the spirit of self-righteousness and self-sufficiency which breeds uncharitableness and unwarranted judgment of others, and thus leads to controversy."<sup>118</sup>

May the Lord of grace and glory use this Controversy, which has served to drive his saints apart from each other, to lead them to despair of their own resources and to drive them to Him who alone can unify and sanctify and glorify.

\*\*\*\*\*

Appendix A: A Chronology of the years 1924-1930

- |      |           |  |
|------|-----------|--|
| 1924 |           |  |
|      | Mar 28-30 | Watertown thievery incident  |
|      | Jun 12    | Meeting of the Third Party in Watertown (The "Transcript Meeting")                                 |
|      | Oct       | Joint Synodical Committee Meeting: first mention of <i>Verstockung</i>                             |
| 1925 |           |  |
|      | Jan       | Honorable release of two Fort Atkinson teachers withheld; teachers leave for Marshfield            |
|      | Aug 19-25 | Jubilee Synod Convention, Milwaukee  |
|      | Oct 20    | Joint Synodical Committee accepts report of <i>Dreierkomitee</i> formally resolving Watertown rift |
| 1926 |           |  |
|      | Feb 2     | The Fort Atkinson teachers suspended from teaching   |
|      | May 16    | <i>NWL</i> prints notice of suspension of teachers   |
|      | Jun 16-22 | Beaver Dam Convention of W. Wis. District; teacher suspension ratified; <i>Protestschreiben</i>    |
|      | Sep       | Beitz paper delivered at Schofield   |
|      | 18        | Ruediger signs "confession"  |
|      | 26        | Ruediger granted "absolution"  |
|      | Oct       | Beitz paper delivered at mixed conference at Rusk  |

1926 Nov 14-17 Protes'tants meet formally at Wilton

1927  
 Jan 31 Ruediger dismissed from Wauwatosa  
 Feb 3 Printed copies of "confession" and "absolution" circulated throughout Synod  
 8-9 Protes'tant meeting at Marshfield; *Gottesdienst und Abendmahl*  
 Apr Beitz paper read at Marshfield  
 10 Oswald Hensel installs Motzkus at Globe  
 Jun Oswald Hensel suspended by W. Wis. District officials  
 5 Immanuel's, Marshfield, withdraws from Synod  
 7 *Gutachten* signed by Wauwatosa faculty  
 11 *Gutachten* circulated throughout Synod  
 12 Hans Koch suspended, Friesland,  
 Jul Koehler's talks with Beitz; *Ertrag* prepared  
 Beitz suspended  
 21 Bodamer suspended  
 Aug 17-23 Synod Convention, Milwaukee  
 Oct 18 Joint Synodical Committee; Koehler reads *Ertrag*  
 Nov 15-18 Special W. Wis. District Convention at Watertown: Beitz paper read for 4th time and rejected; *Gutachten* accepted  
 Dec 13-14 Protes'tants meet at Elroy: Elroy Declaration

1928  
 Jan 17 Protes'tant meeting at Wilton; investment charges  
 Feb Special W. Wis. District meeting at Watertown; all actions ratified. No Protes'tants attended.  
 Apr First issue of *Faith-Life*  
*The Wauwatosa Gospel* "Which Is It?"  
 "Brief Review"  
 Jun W. Wis. District meets at Menomonie  
 Oct Elmer Sauer suspended from teaching at NWC

1929  
 Jun Seminary graduation: Marcus Koch and John John not graduated  
 Jul 5 Prof. Henkel dies  
 Aug 1 Koehler issues *Beleuchtung*  
 9 Pieper and Meyer issue *Antwort*  
 13 Koehler suspended temporarily from teaching  
 14-19 Synod convenes at Saron, Milwaukee  
 18 New Seminary buildings dedicated at Thiensville

1930  
 May 21 Koehler formally removed from office (suspended from Synod membership in Aug., 1933)  
 Jun 7 Koehler issues *Witness, Analysis, and Reply*  
 24-27 W. Wis. District meeting at Baraboo

Appendix B: A Roster of pastors involved in the Protes'tant Conference  
 (Author's Note: This list was compiled as a by-product of the research from scraps of information and some personal recollections on the part of those interviewed. It is intended as a help, not as an exhaustive roster. The author extends his apologies for any inaccuracies.)

Pastor	Location before split	Date of departure	Where ended up after split
1. Abelmann, Erwin	Alma (mission)	1928	Alma
2. Abelmann, John H.	Wilton	1928	Wilton
3. Albrecht, Henry	Boyd/Taunton, MN	1936	Taunton; Boyd stayed with WELS

4.	Albrecht, Marcus	Akaska, SD	1950	Mindoro
5.	Arndt, Arthur	Apache Mission	1929	Resigned
6.	Ave-Lallemant, Robt.	Platteville	1928	He left ministry shortly thereafter; after vainly calling Mo. pastor, cong. returned to WELS
7.	Baumann, Erwin	Wabasso, MN	1936	Wabasso
8.	Beitz, William F.	Rice Lake (mission)	1927	La Crosse mission. Tent ministry. Left Prot'stants in 1964
9.	Bodamer, Wm. K.	Prairie du Chien	1927	Prairie du Chien. Cong. eventually went to ALC
10.	Dux, Ed. D.	Marathon/Rib Falls/ Warrens	1930	Left the Conference early
11.	Gieschen, Gerhard	Edgar (Rib Falls)	1928	Principal at Marshfield; Neillsville; (Augustana Seminary??)
12.	Gruendemann, Otto	Gibson	1935	Ousted by cong. 1934; evicted 1935
13.	Hass, William P.	Oconomowoc	1927	Oconomowoc. Cong. returned
14.	Hensel, Oswald	Marshfield	1927	Marshfield. Cong. to LCMS
15.	Hensel, Paul	Liberty/Valders	1934	Valders. Liberty returned
16.	Hillmer, Alex	Bylas (mission)	1929	Sturgeon Bay
17.	Hinz, Gerald	Livingston, MT	1961	Shiocton
18.	Kehrberg, Otto	Mosinee	1928	Mosinee
19.	Koch, Hans W.	Friesland	1927	Ousted by cong.
20.	Koehler, John Ph.	Wauwatosa	1930	Neillsville (1933 susp. from Synod)
21.	Koehler, Karl	NWC, Watertown	1928	Neillsville
22.	Koehler, Kurt	Palouse, WA	1930	?? (to LCA?)
23.	Lutzke, Paul	Elroy	1928	Elroy
24.	Maier, Albert	East Fork, AZ	1929	House church in West Allis
25.	Mielke, Louis	Shiocton	1936	Shiocton
26.	Motzkus, W.	Cameron	1927	Globe
27.	Parisius, Herbert	NWC, Watertown	1928	Rice Lake
28.	Probst, Sigmund	NWC, Watertown	1931	Woodland, CA. Joined LCMS
29.	Reuter, Frederick	White, SD	1937	White. Became head of a school for boys.
30.	Ruediger, Gerhard	Wauwatosa	1929	Brant/Marion Springs, MI
31.	Sauer, Elmer E.	NWC, Watertown	1928	Pasadena, CA. Taught Greek at a junior college.
32.	Schroeder, Philip J.	Klondike (mission)	1928	Klondike. Withdrew signature from Beitz P. & Elroy D; returned to WELS, 1936. Later prof. at St. Louis
33.	Schuetze, Gerhard	Belview, MN	1936	Left ministry. Cong. stayed
34.	Uetzmann, Theophil	Manitowoc	1938	Manitowoc. Cong. returned to WELS; he left Prot's.
35.	Wagner, Erwin	Black Creek	1938	Black Creek
36.	Zeisler, Gustav A.	Minocqua (mission)	1929	Resigned from Minocqua; to Golgotha, Milw. Left there under cloud. Cong. merged with Gloria (ALC) to form Memorial Luth.

37.	Zimmermann, Martin	Burr Oak/Mindoro	1926	Burr Oak/Mindoro. Left Protes'tants in 1964.
<u>Related Suspensions:</u>				
1.	Parisius, William	Neillsville; Naugart	1928	Intersynodical case; ac- cepted by LCMS Northern District
2.	Zuberbier, A. A.	Hamburg	1928	Intersynodical case; ac- cepted by LCMS Northern District

Men with theological training but who were not ordained, who served in the capacity of pastor.

1.	Hensel, Joel	Michigan (Brant?)
2.	Hensel, Philemon	Manitowoc
3.	John, John	
4.	Koch, Marcus	Two Rivers
5.	Springer, John	Wabasso

Appendix C: A translation of the *Protestschreiben*, submitted to the 1926 Beaver Dam convention of the Western Wisconsin District.

*PROTESTSCHREIBEN*

Dear Brethren,

1. We cannot assent to the report of the committee, because the committee did not have the task of passing judgment on the girls, but rather to give a judgment on whether the notice of the officials at the stated time was appropriate and justified, since the proceedings had not yet come to a conclusion.

2. This notice contained no stated accusation and had to serve, therefore, to give free rein (*Spielraum*) to all sorts of suspicions and to undercut confidence on all sides.

3. Our position toward the entire Fort Atkinson case is this: we consider that the case is only one part of several broader (*hüthere*) questions. We are ready at the proper time to deal with the basic principles, in order to make earnest attempt to attain true unity.

4. And we invite the Fort Atkinson congregation to re-enter the Synod in order to take part in this attempt also.

Adolf Zeisler	S. Probst
O. Hensel	E.E. Sauer
J.H. Abelmann	H.W. Koch
W. Motzkus	O. Kehrberg
W.K. Bodamer	M.A. Zimmermann
Robt. E. Ave-Lallement	W. Hass
Paul Lutzke	Fred W. Krohn (point 1 & 2)
W.F. Beitz	G.A. Krasin (point 1 & 2)
	E. Abelmann

Appendix D: A translation of the Elroy Declaration, signed on December 16, 1927.

To the General Synod of Wisconsin  
Especially to the Western Wisconsin District  
For the hands of the Committee of Twelve

Brethren:

In answer to the most recently received invitations to a discussion of the standing differences during Christmas week, be apprised of the following:

We, the undersigned, strongly refuse henceforth to have anything to do with any committee of the General Synod or the District, or to appear before such a

committee for the purpose of providing further information

1. Since we have been totally caught up in our work at home which has been greatly neglected through the sad confusion, and in the light of the past we must regard any further dealings as useless and time-wasting;
2. Since the Committee of Twelve has in its hands in writing all necessary information for an evaluation of the cases, or at least might have been able to have them, had the Synod investigated the recommendations set forth in the material;
3. Since the Synod, both in Watertown and in Beaver Dam, has committed, or at least permitted in silence, unheard-of godlessness;
4. Over against you we unreservedly take our stand on the Beitz Paper and intend to persist in doing so.

We will find ourselves ready to present ourselves only when the resolutions adopted in Beaver Dam and Watertown, which were over-hasty and forced, shall be retracted, all cases from the beginning opened up again, and the Synod herewith displays an entirely different attitude, on a day which shows promise of more profitable proceedings. There sign the people whose names you find affixed on the separate, attached sheet.

E. Abelmann	G. Gieschen	J. Abelmann
P. Lutzke	P. Hensel	O. Hensel
W. Parisius	R.E. Ave-Lallement	W.K. Bodamer
W. Motzkus	Ph. Schroeder	W. Beitz
O. Kehrberg		

(Included also were the signatures of 17 laymen.)

\*\*\*\*\*

END NOTES:

- <sup>1</sup>1929 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 22.
- <sup>2</sup>E.C. Fredrich, "By God's Grace, Confessional in Doctrine," 1975 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 173.
- <sup>3</sup>*Theologische Quartalschrift (QS)*, Volume 8, page 1.
- <sup>4</sup>*QS*, 11:4.
- <sup>5</sup>*QS*, 15:1.
- <sup>6</sup>*QS*, 15:218.
- <sup>7</sup>1918 *Proceedings* of the Southeastern Wisconsin District, p. 15.
- <sup>8</sup>*QS*, 17:4; see also 1920 *Wisconsin Proceedings*.
- <sup>9</sup>*Faith-Life*, VII, #2, p. 7.
- <sup>10</sup>Im. P. Frey, "Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, 1863-1963," p. 209
- <sup>11</sup>Irwin J. Habeck, "Koehler's *History of the Wisconsin Synod*," p. 226.
- <sup>12</sup>Frey, p. 212.
- <sup>13</sup>Leigh Jordahl, "Introduction," *History of the Wisconsin Synod*, p. xi.
- <sup>14</sup>August Pieper, *Tischreden*, p. 1.
- <sup>15</sup>Jordahl, pp. xvi-xvii.
- <sup>16</sup>Erwin E. Kowalke, *Centennial Story*, p. 98.
- <sup>17</sup>Watertown Transcript, *Faith-Life* XIII, #7-9, part I.



- 18 Watertown Transcript, part II (evening session).
- 19 Watertown Transcript, p. 15 (*Faith-Life*, XIII, #9).
- 20 Watertown Transcript, *Faith-Life*, XIII, #9.
- 21 Watertown Transcript, XIII, #8.
- 22 Watertown Transcript, *Faith-Life*, XIII, #9, p. 16.
- 23 Elmer C. Kiessling, *The History of the Western Wisconsin District*, p. 14.
- 24 Notes taken by Prof. John Jeske at a lecture by Prof. John Meyer, 2/16/48.
- 25 A. Gentz, "Answer to the Appeal...", *Faith-Life*, XI, #8, p. 8.
- 26 Paul Hensel, "Why I am a Protes'tant," p. 7.
- 27 1927 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 23.
- 28 Kowalke, p. 188.
- 29 Resolutions adopted by the City Conference of the Southeastern Wisconsin District at the Annual Meeting, Jan. 24-25, 1939, at Ephrata Lutheran Church.
- 30 Gerda Koch, "A Notice of an Appeal," *Bericht der Dokumente*, p. 4.
- 31 Gentz, p. 9.
- 32 Gentz, p. 10. (cf also Kiessling, p. 19).
- 33 Western Wisconsin *Proceedings*, 1926, p. 32.
- 34 Kowalke, p. 163.
- 35 Jordahl, p. xxvi.
- 36 Theophil Uetzmann, letter to Rev. Arnold Schroeder, p. 2.
- 37 Watertown Transcript, *Faith-Life*, XIII, #9, paragraph 297.
- 38 *Faith-Life*, III, #9-10.
- 39 *Faith-Life*, III, #11-12, p. 15.
- 40 Joh. P. Meyer, "The Historical Background which led to the Formation of the Protes'tant Conference," p. 6.
- 41 *Faith-Life*, II, #11, p. 7.
- 42 For an example, cf Victor Prange, "A Review of the Beitz Paper," especially the conclusion on p. 16.
- 43 John Meyer, "Brief Review," p. 137.
- 44 Gentz, *Faith-Life*, XI, #8, p. 11.
- 45 Paul Hensel, *The Wauwatosa Gospel: Which is it?*, p. 11.
- 46 Hensel, p. 11.
- 47 Hensel, p. 11.
- 48 Hensel, p. 10.
- 49 Theodore Tappert, ed., *The Book of Concord*, p. 479.
- 50 Hensel, p. 3.
- 51 Hensel, p. 6.
- 52 Hensel, p. 6.

- 53 Hensel, p. 20.
- 54 Hensel, p. 3.
- 55 Hensel, p. 5.
- 56 Hensel, p. 4.
- 57 Hensel, p. 31.
- 58 Meyer, "Brief Review," p. 139.
- 59 Hensel, p. 20.
- 60 Hensel, p. 5.
- 61 Meyer, p. 142.
- 62 John Ph. Koehler, "Beleuchtung," p. 2.
- 63 Hensel, p. 4.
- 64 *Faith-Life*, II, #9, p. 5.
- 65 *Faith-Life*, II, #9, p. 5.
- 66 Koehler, "Beleuchtung," p. 4.
- 67 1926 WWDistrict *Proceedings*, p. 34.
- 68 *Bericht der Dokumente*, p. 61.
- 69 *Bericht*, p. 37.
- 70 *Bericht*, p. 63.
- 71 *Faith-Life*, I, #5, p. 2.
- 72 1933 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, pp. 113-114.
- 73 1961 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 195.
- 74 Jordahl, "Introduction," p. xxv.
- 75 Kiessling, p. 9.
- 76 *Bericht*, p. 27.
- 77 Quoted in Jordahl, "Introduction," p. xxii.
- 78 Hensel, p. 29.
- 79 Hensel, p. 83.
- 80 Hensel, p. 54.
- 81 Hensel, p. 44.
- 82 Hensel, p. 38.
- 83 Hensel, p. 41.
- 84 Hensel, p. 37.
- 85 Hensel, p. 31.
- 86 Hensel, p. 43.
- 87 Hensel, p. 56.
- 88 1927 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 96.
- 89 Uetzmann, Letter to Rev. Arnold Schroeder, Feb. 10, 1936.

- 90 *Bericht*, p. 50.
- 91 Kowalke, p. 187.
- 92 Jordahl, "Preface," p. vi.
- 93 August Pieper, *Tischreden*, p. 1.
- 94 Koehler, "Beleuchtung," p. 4.
- 95 1929 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 22.
- 96 1933 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 38.
- 97 1929 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 21-22.
- 98 1933 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 114.
- 99 *Ibid.* p. 114.
- 100 1961 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 195.
- 101 1929 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 22.
- 102 *QS*, January, 1929.
- 103 *QS*, July, 1932.
- 104 *QS*, July, 1928.
- 105 *Faith-Life*, XXXVIII, #1, p. 16.
- 106 *Faith-Life*, II, #2.
- 107 Paper submitted by the Manitowoc Conference to the Peace Committee, "In Bezug auf den in der Synode herrschenden Streit," n.d.
- 108 E. Clifford Nelson, *The Lutherans in North America*, p. 380.
- 109 Leigh Jordahl, "Protes'tant Conference," *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, III, p. 1978.
- 110 See Nelson, p. 380.
- 111 Notes from a personal interview, 3/19/78.
- 112 Jordahl, "Introduction," p. xxviii.
- 113 1933 Wisconsin *Proceedings*, p. 114.
- 114 August Pieper and John Meyer, *Antwort*, pp. 4-5.
- 115 Gentz, *Faith-Life*, #8, p. 11.
- 116 *Faith-Life*, II, #10, p. 12.
- 117 Notes taken by Prof. John Jeske at a lecture given by Prof. John Meyer on Feb. 16, 1948.
- 118 This "Purpose" of the Protes'tant Conference appears on the front of every issue of *Faith-Life*.

#### BIBLIOGRAPHY

(Note: Entries marked with an asterisk are not found in the Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary library.)

##### I. Surveys and general summaries of the Controversy

1. Albrecht, Marcus. "Centennial Letter," *Faith-Life*, XXIV, #2.

2. Fredrich, Edward C. "Wisconsin's Interchurch Relations in the First Third of This Century," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, January, 1977.
3. Frey, Immanuel P. "Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, July, 1963.
4. Hensel, Paul. "Wogegen Rebellieren Wir?" *Faith-Life*, II, #3.
5. Jordahl, Leigh. "Protes'tant Conference," *The Encyclopedia of the Lutheran Church*, Julius Bodensieck, ed. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1965.
6. Lehninger, Max. *Continuing in His Word*. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1951.

## II. Incidental References and Background Material

1. Engel, Armin. "The Bergemann Era, 1908-1933," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, October, 1975.
2. Fredrich, Edward C. "By God's Grace: Confessional in Doctrine," Essay delivered at the 1975 Wisconsin Convention, printed in the *Proceedings*.
3. Fredrich, Edward C. "Golden Jubilee History of the Minnesota District," Essay delivered at the Minnesota District Convention, Aug. 1, 1968, New Ulm, Minnesota.
4. Habeck, Irwin J. "Koehler's *History of the Wisconsin Synod*," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, October, 1971.
5. Koehler, John P. *History of the Wisconsin Synod*, ed. *Faith-Life*. St. Cloud, Minnesota: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1970.
6. Lehninger, Max. "Prof. John Philipp Koehler," *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, October, 1951.
7. Lemke, Lloyd. "J.P. Koehler's 'Gesetzlich Wesen Unter Uns,'" *Concordia Historical Institute Quarterly*, Winter, 1976.
8. Nelson, E. Clifford. *The Lutherans in North America*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1975.
9. Pelikan, Jaroslav. "John Philipp Koehler," *Concordia Theological Monthly*, January, 1952.
10. Schuetze, Armin. "By God's Grace: Confessional in Practice," Essay delivered at the 1975 Wisconsin Synod Convention, printed in *Proceedings*.

## III. Extended Analytical Treatments

1. Gentz, Arthur A. "Answer to the Appeal of Immanuel Lutheran Church...," *Faith-Life*, XI, #8 (August, 1938).
2. Gieschen, Claus. "Ten Lively Years, 1924-1933," *Faith-Life*, January-February, 1938.
3. Hensel, Paul. "Why I Am a Protes'tant," *Faith-Life*, February-December, 1934.
4. Jordahl, Leigh. "Introduction," found in Koehler, *History of the Wisconsin Synod*. St. Cloud, Minnesota: Sentinel Publishing Co., 1970.
5. Kiessling, Elmer C. *The History of the Western Wisconsin District*. Watertown, 1971.
6. Kowalke, Erwin E. *Centennial Story*. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1965.
- \*7. Meyer, Joh.P. "The Historical Background Which Led to the Formation of the

Protes'tant Conference," Essay delivered at a pastoral conference held at Redeemer Luth. Church, Merritt Island, Florida, October, 1976.

8. Prange, Victor. "The Progress of the Reconciliation Efforts of the Wisconsin Synod with the Protes'tant Conference, 1958-1962."
9. Prange, Victor. "A Review of the Beitz Paper." Essay read at the Central Conference meeting of the Western Wisconsin District, Oct. 26, 1960.

#### IV. Documents

1. *"Bericht der Dokumente und Korrespondenzen der beiden Extra Synodal-Versammlungen des West-Wisconsin-Distrikts der Allgemeinen Evangelisch-Lutherischen Synode von Wisconsin und anderen Staaten gehalten zu Watertown, Wisconsin vom 15. bis 18. November 1927 und vom 15. bis 16. Februar 1928."* Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1928.
2. The Elroy Declaration (German). *Faith-Life*, II, #9.
3. Faculty of the Theological Seminary of Wauwatosa. *Gutachten*. Marshfield: The Protes'tant Conference Press, 1928.
4. Gruendemann, Otto. "The Opinion." *Faith-Life*, XXXIII, #7-8.
5. Hensel, Paul. *The Wauwatosa Gospel: Which Is It?* Marshfield: The Protes'tant Conference Press, 1928.
6. Immanuel Lutheran Church, Marshfield, Wis. Issued the two "Blue Books" in 1927, "Why did Immanuel's Lutheran of Marshfield, Wis., conditionally sever relations with the Synod?" and "Why does the appeal of Immanuel's Lutheran of Marshfield, Wis., still lie before the general body and not before the District?"
7. Koch, Gerda. "A Notice of an Appeal," (Seminary vertical file), July-September, 1932.
8. Koehler, John P. *"Beitz' Schrift und das Gutachten Beleuchtet,"* Thiensville, 1929.
9. Koehler, John P. *"An die Gutachten- und Antwort-Leute in der Synode,"* July 10, 1930.
10. Koehler, J.P. "Witness, Analysis, and Reply," *Faith-Life*, III, #13.
11. Meyer, John P. "Brief Review of the pamphlet 'God's Message to Us in Galatians: The Just Shall Live by Faith,'" *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, April, 1928.
12. Pieper, August, and Meyer, John, and Henkel, William. "Absolution," *Faith-Life*, III, #9/10.
13. Pieper, August, and Meyer, John. *Antwort*. Milwaukee: Northwestern, 1929.
- \*14. Pieper, August. *Tischreden. Erste Auflage (ungesäubert)*, 1937.
15. *Proceedings of the Western Wisconsin District of the Ev. Luth. Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, 1926-1934.*
16. *Proceedings of the Joint Ev. Luth. Synod of Wisconsin and other States, 1925-1933.*
17. *Transcript of the Stenographic Minutes of the Watertown June 12, 1924, Meeting.* *Faith-Life*, XIII, #7-9.
- \*18. Uetzmann, Theophil. "Letter of Protest to the Manitowoc Pastoral Conference," Feb. 10, 1938.
- \*19. Uetzmann, Theophil. Letter of Rev. Arnold Schroeder, April 7, 1937.