

# Our Transition Into English

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## Preface

During the first decades of the Quarterly's first century WELS was an immigrant church. One of the greatest practical problems which it faced was the difficulty of making the transition from the German language of the immigrants who had founded the synod to the language of their American neighbors. The urgency of the situation was compounded by the fact that the children and grandchildren of the immigrants were rapidly becoming "English." In the first decades of the 20th century WELS was an immigrant church seeking to become "native." Now a century later WELS is looking at the problem of linguistic transition from the other side of the wall. WELS is now a native church, seeking to become a church for immigrants as well. Today WELS is in the linguistic mainstream of American society. We have moved far enough from our beginnings that German has been dropped from the list of required subjects for men training to be pastors. Only one of our vicars regularly preaches in German. More WELS congregations have Spanish services than German. The question for us is no longer "How do we get into the linguistic mainstream?" It is "How do we serve those not yet in the linguistic mainstream?"

As we wrestle with this issue, it may be helpful to us to remember how this problem looked to our ancestors, who not so long ago were looking at the issue from the opposite side of the language barrier. Seeing the problem of language transition through their eyes may help us view today's version of the same problem through the eyes of today's immigrants. To this end, as part of our centennial observance, the *Quarterly* presents this condensation and translation of August Pieper's "*Unser Übergang ins Englische*," which first appeared in the 1918-19 issue of the *Theologische Quartalschrift*. Some portions of the article which pertained largely to the author's contemporary situation have been omitted, but many of his subjective observations about the nature of the problem and how it should be handled have been retained. We leave it to our readers to take advantage of 20-20 hindsight to form their own conclusions about which of Pieper's concerns proved to be valid and which of his predications came true. In certain respects we cannot view the problem through the same lenses which he looked through. For him English was a second language to which he lacked the emotional bond that one has with one's native tongue, and he saw the potential and problems of the English language through this filter. The great majority of us experience English as our mother tongue. Also when Pieper wrote this article, the Lutheran church had much less experience with the potential and the pitfalls of organizations in the congregation. We, nevertheless, leave his observations intact in the hope that viewing this problem as it was seen in the past through other eyes will help us view it through the eyes of others also in the present.

What stands out in the article is the love for the truth and the love for souls - all souls. We sometimes hear the mistaken notion parroted that the WELS became seriously interested in mission outreach in the second half of the 20th century. WELS began as a mission church and remained a mission church. Its concern with the language question was evangelical then, as it is now. *J. Brug*

## Our Transition Into English

The problems accompanying our church's transition into English cry out for discussion and solution. The shifts in language use among our people and in social relationships in our country bring these problems to our attention. Up to now we have deliberately sidestepped the issues they raise, but the problems we now face force us to confront these issues. Since the topic is of such uncommonly practical significance and of such immense scope, we will consider it in three aspects:

- The situation that now faces us;

- The pros and cons of moving from German to English;
- The manner of making our transition into English.

### **The situation that now faces us**

When our German forefathers came to America with the Lutheran gospel, and frequently with segments of German congregations, it was taken for granted that they would conduct their gospel ministry in German. From the flood of German immigrants in the 1850s -1880s they built a church that was completely German. America was happy about these tens of thousands of new citizens and offered no resistance when they built a German-language church. Thousands of German congregations were established all across the country. Thousands of parish schools were established that were at least partly German, as well as a considerable number of German-English secondary schools, primarily for training German-speaking pastors and teachers.

It was only natural that this first generation of pastors and teachers trained on American soil would preach and teach in German. The membership of our congregations was still German, and the continuing flow of immigrants from the fatherland guaranteed that this would continue. Down to the 1880s many of our parish schools still used German mathematics textbooks, although most schools made some provision for English instruction in reading, language, geography, and history. Naturally our children were the first to learn English - through their friends and in parish and public schools. They began to be English, and that process accelerated as the influx of German immigrants slowed and then stopped.

Our parish schools kept pace with this development and became German-English schools. Math, history, and geography were taught in English, and considerable effort went into teaching English reading, writing, and speech. Only our religion instruction continued to be in German, in addition to German reading, writing, and elements of grammar. Our worker-training schools gave preference to English over German, except that in teaching German and the ancient languages we retained German as the medium of instruction. This was done to facilitate the increasingly difficult task of equipping our future pastors to acquire German language skills.

Because of our educational system and because of increasing contact with the English-speaking majority of Americans (especially young Americans), a generation grew up which was more English than German - with a single exception. Because the religious training of this rising generation had been almost exclusively in German, the language of its public worship and its private devotions was German. Our older members - not just German immigrants, but most of the children of parents born in this country - speak a broken but passable German, in addition to good everyday English. When they talk with their God, however, they use the language of their mother and of their heart. For the majority of our Lutheran people today - young and old - German is still the language of religion and of the church. English simply does not satisfy them; it actually puts a damper on their life of faith and obscures religious truth. That accounts for the fact that to this day our church life has remained almost totally German.

But project this current situation into the next generation, and you get a different picture. The younger generation of parents has already become more and more English; the language spoken in their homes is predominantly English. Their children hear and learn German from them, but they never learn to speak it fluently. Even though our parish schools, now primarily English, still teach German, they could never train these children to speak German fluently. Now that German is no longer the language of the family and of the family altar, many Lutheran teachers have difficulty expressing themselves in German, even in religion classes, especially with the children of younger parents - with the exception of pastors, teachers, and active, involved lay people. When English is spoken at home, in school, and in daily conversation, and German is used in church and only a little in school, the result will be a generation which for a while may still be content with German services, but which desires and needs English and will soon reject German.

Young unmarried adults no longer speak German at home or at work. They speak English not only with one another, but even with their German-speaking parents. Even young men and women studying for the public ministry have adopted the language in which they feel comfortable. Outside of the classroom one rarely hears them speak a word of German. Their written assignments show that their English skills are quite acceptable, but

they have to fight an ongoing battle with German grammar. At a time when our ministry is still German, most of them enter the ministry with German skills that are limited. One can foresee the time when the children of our children will give up what remains of their German language skills and speak only English.

It is as clear as day that our church will have mismanaged its work unless it facilitates a transition into English in its public ministry (in sermons, prayers, hymns, and congregational meetings). That places before us, however, an uncommonly difficult assignment.

This transition to another language cannot be carried out uniformly with our members. The older element is still completely German and - in its religion - wants to live German and to die German. And rightly so. The younger generation now in control, although able to use English more or less competently in its everyday business, learned as children to talk to God only in German. Till the day they die they will want to satisfy the deepest needs of their soul in the language they once learned and still love. Even for many of our young Christians, who are already more English than German, religion in the English language is a hindrance to their life of faith. In this younger segment, however, there are many who, for one reason or another, want and need worship services in English, and this number is growing day by day. Many of our young people cannot understand German church language - sermon, Bible, hymnal, catechism - but they don't understand English church language either. These disparate elements are combined in a single German congregational family.

This problem would be a difficult one even if we pastors were capable of providing for the spiritual needs of a congregation in process of becoming English. With few exceptions, however, this is not the case. We have pastors who are completely incapable of preaching and catechizing in English and of providing for the spiritual needs of their flock in English. There are many more whose English in pulpit and classroom is clumsy, whose pronunciation is faulty, whose English language skills are simply inadequate. A predominantly German congregation may not wish to call a pastor with particularly strong English skills. And the result could very well be a slow but gradual loss of English-speaking members to English sectarian churches, or to unionistic lodge-ridden Lutheran churches, or to lodgery itself.

As we face this problem, our goal must be twofold. On the one hand, we dare not reduce the quality of spiritual care we offer to those members who are German and will remain German. On the other hand, we must begin to supply equally strong spiritual ministry to the growing English-speaking segment of the membership. We will need to train larger numbers of pastors and teachers, so that in an older congregation an English-speaking pastor can be called to work alongside the German-speaking pastor, or one can be called as the pastor of a newly-established English congregation. The day is past when we can train and send out pastors and teachers able to preach and teach only in German. We must supply bilingual servants of the church, workers who can serve the many congregations which are German now and will be for many years, and who can do so energetically and effectively in their preaching, teaching, and care of souls. At the same time they must be ready to assume a ministry in English as soon as and to the extent that the need for it arises in their congregations.

Preparing such bilingual workers is a huge assignment. At our worker-training schools it will mean curricular changes, enlarging faculties, recruiting larger numbers of students, and expanding physical plants. Another task we must assume is to provide a properly functioning church home (inside or outside of the German congregation) for our young people who are becoming English. It is inevitable that often this will cause upset, difficulty, even danger. The greatest danger is that in the transition to English we may lose something of the gospel. We need, therefore, to grasp the far-reaching significance of this language transition and to work earnestly to find practical solutions.

The two-language development in our church has placed us in a situation which is difficult in and of itself. What has now complicated the situation is that recently, in several states, the government has entered the picture by prohibiting the use of German in worship services and church meetings and as a means of instruction, even religious instruction. Strict enforcement of these regulations has partially been blocked by religious groups - unfortunately not by Lutherans, but by Catholics, Jews, and others. In some states the religious freedom Lutherans once enjoyed to conduct worship services and religious instruction in German has up to now not been completely restored. German textbooks were suddenly ordered out of schools, and English ones introduced. Those congregations which received limited permission to conduct German services did so under the condition

that they immediately introduce English hymnals. The Minnesota Commission on Public Safety forbade Dr. Martin Luther College to use German as the instructional medium in all classes except religion. During the war [World War I] this commission had unlimited authority in such matters for all schools in Minnesota.

In response we must make something clear. Since the Scripture directs us, for the Lord's sake, to submit to the governing authorities in all matters not pertaining to our relationship with God, even though their demands are unconstitutional and even tyrannical, we will obey their orders as a cross which God has laid upon us for despising his gospel. We will do this as long as it does not, in effect, destroy our public preaching. If, however, this governmental mandate forbidding public worship and religious instruction has the effect of annulling God's command to preach the gospel to every creature or hinders us from carrying it out, then we must obey God rather than men.

Let me speak concretely. If using the German language is the only way we can preach the full gospel to an assembly of even two or three Christians or provide meaningful instruction for a class of only two or three Christian children, we must obey God and suffer whatever consequences the government may decree. A sermon or a class presentation in an unknown language is no preaching, no teaching at all. Since God has clearly commanded the public preaching of his word, no government - even under the pretext of preserving the peace - has the right to prohibit it, to stop the mouth of Peter or Paul or Stephen or whomever. Acts 4:19f and 5:28f apply here. The most precious gift which God in pure mercy has given us in this country is our religious liberty, guaranteed to us by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Are we going to play the coward at the first sign of opposition to our ministry and to surrender this gift without a struggle? As *citizens* we will submit even to laws that seem unconstitutional and tyrannical, until such a time as a higher court rules that they are unconstitutional or illegal. As *Christians*, however, when God's command and governmental decree come into conflict, we will obey God and suffer the fury of the opposition. "The apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name. Day after day, in the temple courts and from house to house, they never stopped teaching and proclaiming the good news that Jesus is the Christ" (Ac 5:40-42).

It ought to be clear to all that the anglicizing of our culture and the decline of German will continue with an iron inevitability. The strong overcomes the weak. We might be able to prolong the process of transition, but we cannot prevent it. It needs to be said that this is God's design and his will.

### **The pros and cons of moving from German to English**

What Luther gave the German people with his Bible and his other writings is more than Christian talk in word and phrase. He poured God's word into German speech with a clarity, power, and fullness which no other language has produced. And the Christianity of Luther is Pauline Christianity. In Paul God's revelation reached its peak. Paul has the essential message of all his predecessors, but he received more than Moses and David and Isaiah and John and Peter and all of them together, even as he worked harder and suffered more than they all. In Paul God spoke his last word to the church. There is no dogmatics like Romans, no ethics like the Corinthian epistles, no poetry like Ephesians, no polemic like Galatians, no pastoral theology like Timothy and Titus. In its essence the New Testament is Pauline.

What Paul, among all the other apostles, was for the entire world of the future, that Luther was among all the messengers of the gospel in these last days of the world. By God's eternal, gracious decree, Luther was the apostle for all peoples of the end-time - the Germans, the Scandinavians, the Dutch, the English, the Americans, and all who live around them. Luther was no more a creature of his time, the product of his circumstances, than Paul was. He was God's predestined prophet for the last times. By saying this we are not assigning to Luther the place of Christ or of the inspired Scripture, nor even identifying him with the apostle Paul. We rank Luther under Christ and under Paul, in contrast to the reformers who taught falsely about the righteousness of faith.

It was primarily Luther who created the German language and made it the classic language of religion. Luther's whole intellect, feelings, and will were saturated with and under the control of the gospel. He made the

Hebrew and Greek Bibles speak German and made them speak evangelically. It is stupid and thoughtless to say that one language is as good as another to define and transmit the gospel. Luther's German is a better vehicle of the gospel than any other modern language. Luther didn't really translate the Hebrew and Greek, he Germanized it, putting it into the language people speak at the market, or of a mother talking to her child. The church of the German Bible enjoys an unusual blessing.

English, on the other hand, is a practical language, well-suited to the outstanding character trait of the English - materialism, the desire for what earth has to offer. In this culture it is simply taken for granted that making money and getting rich are just plain common sense. English is a precise language. We need not fear that in the transition to English we will lose the clarity and precision of the doctrinal concepts of orthodox Lutheranism. That is partly because so much of the English vocabulary is borrowed from foreign sources, especially Latin, which is a precise language. But the blessed warmth, the childlike quality, the bridelike beauty, the motherliness and fatherliness of the Hebrew, Greek, and German gospel can never be fully replicated in English. English has no equivalent, e.g., for the German "*herzlich*" (the Hebrew *racham*) used so often in the German Bible to describe the sinner's intense inner reaction to the deliverance a merciful God has prepared (cf. Ps 18:2).

You cannot read a single page, even a single column in the King James Version or the Revised Version - especially in Paul's epistles - without bumping up against words and phrases that are unenglish, artificial, unclear, and difficult. The shortcomings of the English Bible are primarily two. For the most part, it translates the idioms and expressions of the original languages too literally, often literalistically, and this makes it difficult, if not incomprehensible, for the reader. And secondly, the English Bible too often lacks the vitality, the freshness and power of the original Hebrew and Greek.

There is an antique quality to the language of the King James Version, which has been remedied only slightly in the Revised Version. The English language changed much more thoroughly and much more rapidly than German did, and in so doing it distanced itself from the language of its Bible. By contrast, Luther's German Bible helped to create the German language. That accounts for the fact that Luther, permeated with the message of the Scripture, filled with the spirit of Paul, could produce a truly German Bible that is immediately understandable to Germans of every place and time. The translators of the King James Version, on the other hand, used many words and expressions from a centuries-old language which quickly went out of use. Wherever you look in the English Bible, you come across words and expressions which at one time were perfectly good English but are no longer in common use (cf. the jaw-breaker "but nourisheth and cherisheth it," Eph 5). The English pastor preaches in a language different from his Bible.

This shortcoming has found its way into the language of English worship. It is nothing less than torturing a language to pray:

Heavenly Father, who inhabitest the high and holy place and wast justly wroth Thou abhorrest iniquity and lovest righteousness . . . world without end. Amen.

Prayer language like that pushes God into the distance; it builds a wall between the believer and his God. English-speaking people all over the world have one kind of language in their Bible, their worship, and their prayers, but use a different language in their everyday life. And isolating one's "Sunday language" from the rest of his life will play a major role in lessening the effect religion will have on a person. If the language of our Bible, of our worship services, of the sermon, of the catechism, of our hymns and prayers is to take hold of our heart and dominate our thinking, feeling, and will, then it dare not seem strange to us, or obscure, old-fashioned, and awkward.

If the English-speaking segment of our membership is to have the gospel as abundantly as those who retained German, then let there be no secret about the fact that we need a new English Bible. We must undertake a revision much more extensive than the American Revised Version. What we really need is for God to give us an English Luther, filled with his spirit and a master of the English language, somebody who can make Moses and the prophets, Christ and the apostles speak English, just as Luther made them speak German.

God must provide sanctified poets who will not only translate psalms and church hymns into English, but who can put them into idiomatic English.

English Christendom is essentially Calvinistic, as German Christendom is Lutheran. The two Protestant churches have been compared, and with some justification, to the sisters Mary and Martha. It certainly is true that a characteristic trait of the Lutheran Church is that, like Mary, she is not an outwardly busy servant of the Lord but rather a hearer, absorbed in what her Lord has to say. I fear, however, that in its lack of busyness the Lutheran church resembles Mary too much, but in its devotion to hearing it resembles her too little to receive the Lord's commendation. The Lutheran church's lack of outward activity, when compared with the Reformed, is unfortunately all too well-known, and she earns no praise for that. The apostle Paul, for whom Christ was everything - his very life - "worked harder than all of them." And historically the Lutheran church - in Germany and in America-has quickly grown tired of the Word and gotten fed up with it - and that is true both of its teachers and its hearers.

The Reformed church, on the other hand, not only shares Martha's busyness and her relative disregard of the Word, but out-does Martha, in that it virtually grants human reason, "good common sense," the dominant role in theology and church life. She thinks of herself not so much as a communion of believers but as an outwardly visible group which, through external personal piety, strict discipline, and thorough organization, displays its Christianity. The church body, the congregation, the individual Christians must show that they are pious and that they are efficient in their Christian activity. For this the church must be properly organized. Organize/organization is not a German, but an English Calvinistic catchword. English clergy is divided into higher and lower. Congregations are organized into church boards, men's organizations, women's organizations, young people's organizations, young women's groups, and on and on. Organizations, and more organizations - so that the church will be efficient and produce some visible results. That all this activism means the disintegration of the church as a spiritual communion, that it leaves little for this spiritual communion to do, that it destroys the unity of the church, that it makes of the congregation itself another equivalent human organization - all this does not bother a true English or English-American Calvinist.

And now organizations are proliferating in the Lutheran church! There is hardly a Lutheran city-congregation without organizations for women, younger members, young women, youth - each claiming its own share of congregational activity and credit for accomplishing it. Here are the active members of the congregation, the spiritual elite! We now have two sorts of congregational members: the run-of-the-mill and the special, the less active and the more active. The members of organizations, with whom the pastor has much to do, constitute his real work-force. And then there are those who are not members of organizations, whom the pastor gets to see less regularly and who don't work closely with him. Won't these offshoots draw life and strength away from the congregational tree? What pastor can afford to devote as much of his time to those who are not members of organizations as he does to those within the group? Wouldn't the time he spends in society meetings be better spent in personal study, in deepening his faith, in more extensive preparation for his sermons, in conscientious personal pastoral care to those who are not members of organizations (Ac 20:31: "warning each of you night and day with tears"), to Bible study for the congregation's confirmed youth? What place within the communion of saints is there for an organization whose primary goals are sociability, entertainment, and fund-raising? The drive to create organizations within the church is neither particularly Christian nor Lutheran, but purely human handiwork. It is something specifically Calvinistic, where it is the natural fruit of a false teaching about the purpose of the church. We have simply taken it over from them and introduced into our congregations an element that will serve not to unite the congregation but instead to divide it into society members and non-members.

Lutheranism has consistently distinguished between God's kingdom and the kingdoms of the world, between our heavenly calling and our earthly calling, between church and state. Calvinism, like Roman Catholicism confuses the two. Rome teaches that all segments of life on earth are subject to the rule of the church. According to Rome's teaching, even the government is to be viewed not as a strong power existing alongside the church, but as the servant of the church. Calvinism sees the situation exactly in reverse: God's kingdom comes to realization through the kingdoms of the world. Christianity, then, is not a power at work in

people's hearts, but it is a means to make the institutions of this world more Christlike. The gospel stands in service to the government and to society, to bring human relationships into proper order. The church therefore seeks to elect Christian candidates to positions of responsibility in city, county, state, and federal government, to make them more Christian. And when the government has Christianized all human relationships, then the thousand-year reign of Christ can begin!

We've just had additional evidence of this in the public reaction to the Allies' military victory over Germany. Religious groups, government officials, and the print media have praised this as a holy war of Christ against the powers of darkness. The League of Nations which is being formed can now inaugurate the prophesied (!) peace among nations, to bring about the fulfillment of what the Scripture has promised: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ" (Re 11:15; 12:10).

Obviously, the "kingdom of God" which the Calvinists want to establish on earth is not the kingdom described and fostered in the Scripture. God's kingdom is his gracious rule through Jesus Christ in the hearts of sinners. It is faith, acknowledgement of Christ, fear of God, love, hope, patience, chastity, truthfulness, humility - all in Christ Jesus. This world, which lies under the power of the evil one, is not destined to be the home of the kingdom of God. This world, with all of its laws and in all of its forms, is temporary and imperfect and purely external. We children of the kingdom, people in whose hearts Christ rules live in a world under God's curse, not as if it were our true home, but as pilgrims. Our life is hidden with Christ in God, and we have set our hearts on things above (Col 3:1). We are waiting for the Savior Jesus Christ, who will destroy the principles according to which this present world operates and will institute a totally new heavenly order of things.

Calvinism, on the other hand, teaches that the kingdom of God consists in reasonable, purposeful, good moral mechanisms which lead people to live moral, Christian lives, acknowledging the lordship of Jesus Christ. Calvinism is humanistic through and through. That's the unique quality of Calvinism in contrast to Lutheranism. It is not surprising that Calvinism has made its peace with the Masonic lodge, a fact which poses a dreadful danger for Lutheranism in America as it makes its transition into English. The rapid growth of deistic lodgery in the church spells the death of true Lutheranism and of the Pauline Gospel.

What has been described is not true in the same measure of all of Calvinism. The traits just described have not been fully developed in German, French, and Dutch Calvinism. What has been described is, however, characteristic of English and English-American Calvinism.

We German Lutherans are now entering a transitional period which will make us an English-speaking church. Under the conditions just described, what are our prospects for retaining sound Lutheranism, for holding on to the true gospel? It ought to be obvious that the Lutheran church in this country, despite the relative isolation caused by its Germanness, has adopted much of the Calvinistic spirit without even being aware of it. Emphasis on organizations within the congregation is neither evangelical, nor apostolic, nor Lutheran, but something specifically Reformed, every bit as much as holy orders within the Roman church are something specifically Roman. Just as this development flows from the false Roman teaching of sanctification and good works, so the Reformed emphasis on the importance of church organizations stems from the Reformed idea of the external nature of the church, the purposeful organization of the congregation, and the pious activity of each individual member of the group. The Scripture has no doctrine of external church organization. It says only: "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Co 14:40). Whatever external organization is deemed proper is sufficient for the congregation. The welfare of the communion of saints depends on the proper preaching of the Word, not on external regulations, not even on the form the public ministry takes in its midst. Beyond the preaching of the Word the Lutheran church is pretty much free of organizational structure. From a practical point of view, unfortunately, this freedom has often led to a degree of disorder. Discipline is not one of our strengths. Far too often laypersons and pastors and teachers do what they want. Our flesh turns Christian liberty into license. As a result if the Lutheran church were rated on its efficiency, it would have to be judged a colossal failure.

By introducing organizations into the congregation we have, without realizing it, moved toward externalizing the concept of church. We want to see the church, instead of *believing* it exists. In our few English congregations, a disproportionate amount of the pastor's time is claimed by the societies.

Another danger that accompanies our transition into English is that we might adopt the Calvinistic Sunday school as the primary educational agency for our children, to the detriment of the Lutheran elementary school. It is a testimony to Dr. Walther's genuine Lutheranism, to his thorough understanding of the gospel, and to his pedagogical insight, that he led German Lutherans in this country to adopt as their motto: "Next to every Lutheran church a Lutheran school! And every Lutheran child in a Lutheran school, at least until confirmation!" Today we are surrounded by a materialistic worldview. Parents are interested not primarily in the soul's welfare of their child but in his intellectual development, material well-being, and behavior. In recent years we have seen retrogression in our Lutheran school system. In just a few war years the Synodical Conference lost hundreds of Lutheran schools. If this can happen to the German Lutheran tree, what will happen to the English one? Now, now is the time to take steps to prevent the catastrophe of losing our Lutheran school system as we become an English church body. Once a majority of our English congregations are established without schools, then we will have to contend with our own brothers for the continued existence of the Lutheran school. And then time, as well as the spirit of the country, will work against us.

### **The manner of making our transition into English**

In spite of all that has been said, we must - and we want to - make the transition into English. For the Lutheran church in this country there is no future to working in German. God has arranged things that way, and anybody who doesn't see that is blind. After Jew and Greek had closed their hearts to the gospel, God rejected Hebrew and Greek as universal languages for proclaiming his gospel. Similarly, after the German people lost interest in Luther's gospel, God let Germany go down to ignominious defeat and directed us to the English language, not only as the world language of the future, but as the predominant language for gospel proclamation in our country. How marvelous are God's ways! The German language had to serve to plant the gospel in American soil and, so to speak, to naturalize it in this English-speaking environment. Through the Missouri Synod genuine Lutheranism sank deep roots in America. What Walther preached was Lutheranism; it was gospel - pure, blessed, powerful gospel. God blessed the labors of Walther and his coworkers and thousands of his students and established in this land a garden of God. Neither the time of the apostles nor the time of Luther had seen anything more glorious. By God's grace our synod became a part of that garden.

But soon came a period of spiritual satiety. Our people grew tired of hearing the Word. Pastors became overconfident and indolent. They stopped marveling at the wonder of God's mercy; they no longer searched for and discovered new and deeper insights into God's revealed truth - and suddenly we are confronted with the approaching end of German preaching of the gospel and of the German church in America.

While we would not want to try to prevent the transition into English, we must with all our strength strive to retain the blessings that have come down to us in German. The sources of our spiritual life all lie in German, not a single one in English. The literature of Lutheranism is German - Luther's Catechism, his hymns, his Bible. In addition to Luther's sermons, his 150 great doctrinal, exegetical, and catechetical writings are in German and cannot be rendered into English without losing their heart. The German 16th century, not the Latin 17th century, contains the light and the life of the Reformation. The pastor/theologian who through his ignorance of or imperfect knowledge of German cuts himself off from Lutheranism's original sources will have to work with deistic-Calvinistic English theological literature, which will attack his basic understanding of the gospel.

Our German church people who are in process of becoming English face a different problem. As their knowledge of German fades, they stand to lose their understanding of the uniqueness of the Lutheran gospel, unless we spiritual leaders succeed in preserving this in English. The big problems facing us in this language transition are not the ones caused by external pressure but by iron psychological laws. Problems caused by the government's overreaching or by a lawless mob we can deal with - either with boldness, or with humble submission - but we are helpless to oppose the laws of human nature.

The interaction which Lutheran church members have with the English-speaking segment of the population increases daily. The war with its fanaticism has accelerated the process. As German was neglected



and used less and less in home and school a generation has grown up which no longer understands the German gospel in catechism, hymn, and sermon completely, if at all. Because English was neglected in its religious training, this generation can neither derive full benefit from an English worship service, nor can it fulfill its role as witness to associates in the workplace and to friends.

There certainly are exceptional adults who understand the liturgy, sermon, and hymns better in English than in German. The overwhelming majority of our members, however, are German in their religion, want to live German and to be saved in German. As long as this group makes up the majority of our members, we dare not give up the German worship service. Indeed, the value of the German service, the Luther Bible, the German hymn and catechism must move us to devote our wisdom and our best efforts to keeping the coming generation of church members with the German church. The laws of psychology teach us that the process of making a transition from one language into another must be made as slowly as possible if we are not to lose the blessings brought from the former language and unconsciously to adopt the negatives that the new language brings with it. The more rapidly the language change takes place, the more we stand to lose of what constitutes true Lutheranism, and the more we will adopt an American gospel based on human reason. We surely ought not urge those members who are still German to adopt English worship, sermon, and Bible. Those of our members who are German by preference should be permitted to remain so.

But that does not mean that we can neglect English. Our German youth must also learn their religion in English, thoroughly and soundly. What would be ideal under the present conditions would be a bilingual Lutheran church - people who speak German in the family circle and yet feel at home in English - for the future as well. But I that's not the way it is going to be. English is going to completely displace German, more rapidly in one area, more slowly in another. And where German has already been displaced, as it has with many of our children, there we must, we simply must work only in English, and from our young people we must build a completely English church. It is tragic that in the church family these young people will be separated from their parents, but this cannot be avoided. Here we must choose the lesser evil over the greater. Are we to teach the English-speaking children of German parents the rudiments of German just so that they can enjoy the German service, Bible and hymnody? Only a fanatic for the German language would argue for that. We dare not force a person to do his religious thinking in one language, while he does all the rest of his thinking in another.

The need to provide completely English religious training for a large segment of our youth and the advantages of maintaining the German as much as possible in our German congregations confront us with the practical difficulty of working in two languages in education and worship. In large, well-trained congregations this difficulty could be met more easily by calling additional workers in church and school - if we had the additional workers, which unfortunately is not the case. In smaller congregations this would not be feasible, because of the cost. Their one pastor and one teacher presently serving the congregation will have their workload doubled. Besides, if the pastor is also the teacher, his workload could be quadrupled and, over the long haul, would prove to be intolerable.

These are practical difficulties that accompany our transition into English. It will mean double workloads for pastor and teacher, respectively, and larger duties for our members. Unless all involved accept these heavier responsibilities, however, the difficulties accompanying the transition simply cannot be met without harming the congregation. Will our pastors and teachers and professors, many of whom are already carrying overloads, be ready to accept an additional workload? We fear that in many cases the needed measure of the joy of self-sacrificing labor may be lacking. And if a called worker does not feel that joy himself, does he have any right to expect it of others? And, furthermore, might those who willingly accept heavier workloads break down under the stress over a period of time?

Here the only advice we can offer is that each called worker exert himself to the full measure of his gifts to fulfill his calling, asking God to supply the needed wisdom and strength. Seek the help of laymembers to do work for which they are suited. And let us all begin to work with real earnestness and with all of our energy to train pastors and teachers not only to replace those called away but to assist those who are still active. We pastors and teachers have been grossly negligent in this matter, and we are paying for that in our present worker

shortage and in the overloads we are asked to carry, if the church is not to suffer harm. Shouldn't this serve as additional incentive for us to urge the most gifted students in our confirmation instruction classes to consider studying at Watertown, New Ulm, and Saginaw and purposefully and patiently to encourage their parents to dedicate them to the work of ministry? These efforts will bear fruit, as this year's larger numbers of first-year students at our synodical schools testify.

Our mandate, however, is much larger than that. The assignment of the Lutheran church in this country is much greater than simply that pastors, teachers, and congregations begin to speak English instead of German. That would be relatively simple. Most of us can speak English, and those who can't can learn it without too much difficulty.

The current situation in America has laid a greater assignment upon the orthodox Lutheran church as it becomes English-speaking, one which cannot be deferred or delayed. That assignment is: *by means of the English language to carry the Lutheran gospel to the English-speaking American people who are still outside of our church.* We have failed to acknowledge this assignment, and our pitiful neglect is a matter of record. We have conducted mission work among America's blacks in the south and native Americans in the southwest, but not among Americans in general. We've conducted mission outreach in faraway places, but by packaging our message in the German language we have neglected to share our gospel with the Americans at our doorstep, the very people among whom we live. Our concept of ministry is deficient. The awareness that every pastor, in addition to his parish work, has been called by God to be a missionary to his neighborhood, to use every opportunity to preach the gospel publicly and privately to "every creature" in the world immediately surrounding him - this awareness needs to be aroused in our pastors. We have not succeeded in doing this. We educators have not properly emphasized this, influenced as we are by the synod's worker shortage and its linguistic isolation. The way we conduct our public ministry almost makes it seem as though God has forbidden us to preach beyond the borders of our church body and parish. We have an absolute horror of the sin of interfering in somebody else's ministry. We read 1 Peter 5:22 as though it says "Be shepherds of *that* flock which God has placed under *your* care . . ." (and we add the mental reservation: "and no other flock!"), although the apostle places the emphasis on "*Be shepherds* of God's flock!"

This is not to say that through English preaching we should try to reach out for members of the English sects. It does say, however, that the mere existence of English Catholic or sectarian churches in our area should be no obstacle for a Lutheran pastor to begin English services, provided there are unchurched people whom he can reach with his preaching. That is always the case in larger cities, even in rural areas. Two-thirds of America's 110 millions do not hold membership in any church. Even if only half of America's population were unchurched, the work of evangelizing them is so great that we could "not finish . . . before the Son of Man comes." As congregations and as a synod we have failed to proclaim the gospel to these unchurched millions - almost as though, because they live next door to us, they are not included in "all nations." And then we seek to excuse our lack of outreach with the pitiful alibi: "These are fallen-away Germans, who know the gospel. If they want to, they can hear it, simply by attending our services."

As long as we conduct our services only in German, these people cannot hear the Lutheran gospel, because they can't understand German. Only rarely is the gospel they hear in Catholic and sectarian churches still the gospel of pure grace. More often what they hear is not gospel at all but discussions of politics, economics, and social service, spawned by corrupt human reason, simple morality dressed up to resemble Christianity and shot through with deadly error. With the exception of what they might have heard from a few uncorrupted English Lutheran preachers, the American public has not heard the Lutheran gospel, the gospel of the apostle Paul. And it is our fault that they haven't heard. Our fathers may have had some excuse for not conducting English services because of their immense workload of providing for the spiritual needs of German immigrants, but we cannot plead that excuse. Even if we are only moderately zealous in our work of training pastors and teachers, we can satisfy the needs of the German church without difficulty. We simply have no valid reason for neglecting this holy assignment, and it would be refusing to obey Christ's command, "Preach the gospel to every creature!" if we were to continue to withhold this blessing from the American people. When God sent the pure Lutheran gospel to this nation of a hundred million, was it his purpose to benefit only German

Americans, and then have it die out? Didn't he intend it rather for the entire American people? Did God intend the Lutheran church to propagate itself only through missions to blacks and Apaches? Who else other than we can still carry out God's commission? Surely not those church bodies which still claim the name Lutheran, but which have been eroded by lodgery and infected with a sectarian spirit!

Can't we interpret the signs of the times? Our work surely brings with it uncommon difficulty. God has not called us to preach to a Jewish nation hardened in unbelief, but neither have we been called to minister only to mistrustful native Americans. People dislike us and despise our gospel as something German - unjustly, to be sure, but actually and intensely. We work among people with a strong national consciousness, which has increased immeasurably during the war, people immersed like none other in serving mammon, people whose pharisaic-deistic religiosity and hatred of the Lutheran gospel rivals that of ancient Judaism. And all the while the unbelieving segment of the American nation no longer recognizes fleshly lust, fornication, adultery, and taking advantage of a neighbor by violence or by cheating as rebellion against God.

Don't we know how to interpret the signs of the times? Human relationships and people's outlook on life have been shaken by the war and are collapsing. Our world fundamentally mistrusts virtually everything that has come down to us from the past - not only existing social, political, and economic mechanisms but also established teachings of religion and philosophy, the ancient foundations of morality, even the wisdom of science. With Pilate, our world asks sarcastically: "What is truth?" "What is right?" The world we live in is once again, as it was at the time of Christ, intellectually, morally, and spiritually bankrupt. It doesn't know what it should do; it doesn't even know what it really wants.

Precisely this is what makes our day a time of opportunity for the gospel. It was a world which had become bankrupt which the apostle Paul conquered with the message of the cross. Outfitted with the battle equipment described in Ephesians 6, Paul stormed Satan's fortresses to demolish the arguments of the worldly wise and every pretension that set itself up against the knowledge of God, and to take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. His goal was to help the believers' obedience become complete and to punish every act of disobedience (2 Cor 10).

In the pure Lutheran gospel we have this same all-powerful, conquering sword of the Spirit at our disposal. When God's time came and human wisdom was bankrupt, Luther toppled Satan's fortress of the papacy with that same sword of the Spirit - a victory he could not have achieved by human ability. With that same sword we will win victory after victory among the people of our country, no matter how many obstacles and roadblocks Satan throws in our way. God give us the instruments for that - men who hold a corner of Elijah's cloak and a double portion of the spirit of Paul, men who, like Paul, enter spiritual combat armed with the weaponry of God and who know how to use it!

In our pastor and teacher training programs, the assignment God has given us for the people of our country should certainly serve as a special incentive to discard half-hearted methods and procedures and instead to throw ourselves into our task with full hearts. In view of the urgency of the situation, our pastors must get out of the habit of rarely, if ever, encouraging a young person in the congregation to enroll at one of our worker-training schools. The work immediately ahead for us will require larger numbers of pastors and teachers. Unless our pastors and teachers make it a rule each year to single out pious, gifted students in their classes and to introduce them to one of our synodical schools, the great work which God has laid at our feet will remain undone, and the present opportunity may pass us by forever. The shambles which the war has made of our world will eventually be repaired and reconstructed, but if we do only what comes naturally, the reconstruction will be faulty. Here is the opportunity for the church to help those who want to rebuild their lives to do so on the proper foundation. If we do not step in, others will, and the door of opportunity will be closed to us. The unbelieving world is already at work. Surrounded by the carnage of war, the Freemasons are building their Masonic national church, the sects their "American" national church, the syncretistic Lutherans their nationwide "Lutheran" church, and the pope a Roman national church. Shall we stand idly by and watch these misbegotten structures take shape? The present opportunity will not come again. The next great world reconstruction will occur on Judgment Day.

And so, Lutheran pastors and teachers, district presidents and circuit pastors: "Buy, while the market is at your door! Harvest your crops while the weather is good and the sun is still shining; make use of God's grace and gifts while there is still time. Let your hands be busy. Lazy people are headed for an awful disappointment!" (Luther).

But we dare not be concerned only about larger numbers of workers. To do the English work that lies ahead of us will require *capable, qualified* workers. There is an important difference between natural and spiritual qualifications. As far as the former - the less important - is concerned: we can still use pastors and teachers who received their training in Germany in the German-speaking congregations which are dwindling - although that has made for its share of problems. At the same time, we could hardly make a more serious mistake than to cut corners in our pastor and teacher training programs in an attempt to accelerate production. We need workers, but workers who know what they're doing and why they're doing it. We need workers who in their theology as well as in their practice can stand on their own two feet, resist attack, and demolish every argument that sets itself up against the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We dare not give educated Americans reason to look down on the graduates of our schools as incompetent because their training was sub-standard. People won't accept intellectual and spiritual leadership from inept teachers. As we take up our ministry to the American people, we need workers who have received competent training in the sciences. We are interested in this also for the sake of the gospel. An untrained mind will not be able to explore the depths and heights and intricate details of the gospel. An untrained mind will not permit a pastor or teacher to become a master at expressing the truths of the gospel.

We certainly don't need pastors who are bookworms - least of all for our work in English. Our ministerium cannot use parish pastors who are little-minded and chair-bound, like pedantic university professors who live in their own little world. We need "modern men" in the best sense of that term, men who can move comfortably among people. This is not to say that the pastor or the teacher must be a "divine," a "clerical dude." A silk hat, black coat, buttoned-down vest, and clerical collar are not the measure of his worth, but rather his willingness to roll up his sleeves and accomplish something truly worthwhile in this world. Our need is for men who can accommodate themselves to any and every situation, who know how to become a Greek to the Greeks and a Jew to the Jews, men who can stand before authorities and judges and testify without fear. We need men who don't consider it beneath their dignity to enter the slums and seek out lost sons and daughters of the church, men who understand the rights of the laborer as well as those of the employer, men who recognize the misery and the hurts this life inflicts on people and can sympathize with them, especially in the misery sin has brought them. In short, we need men who, like Paul, can become all things to all men, so that by all possible means they might save some.

For a pastor the spiritual qualifications are far and away the most important. To train only his intellect, to give him a purely intellectual grasp of the gospel will not equip him to reach out to the American people. God doesn't want his gospel preached by people who are spiritually dead. He has not promised to use resounding gongs or clanging cymbals to accomplish anything for eternity. Only when our pastors can say with Paul, "God was pleased to reveal his Son in me" (Ga 1:16), can we hope for success in our work in English. The conviction must animate and inspire them, "I know whom I have believed" (2 Ti 1:12). "To me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Php 1:21). "I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Php 3:8). "I endure everything for the sake of the elect" (2 Ti 2:10).

In short, we need men like Paul - men who have acquired the wisdom and the skills our world has to offer, men who have been illuminated and moved by the Holy Spirit, men who will approach their task of preaching the message of the cross to the American people cheerfully and confidently. They know that as they wield the sword of the Spirit they will be victorious. They are not ashamed of the gospel of Christ in the midst of an unbelieving and perverse generation, nor do they apologize for the Lutheran gospel.

Such people don't grow on trees. We've got to ask God for them, and we've got to train them. It is an encouraging sign that in our circles there has been a renewed interest in Lutheran elementary education and in the training of future pastors and teachers. To meet the demands of our age, both our congregational schools and our worker-training schools need to be upgraded. The former must be concerned about their very existence as

English schools, the latter about adapting to new circumstances. It is generally admitted that we cannot lay too much emphasis on our pastor and teacher training programs. It has been demonstrated that there is much room for improvement at all of our synodical schools. This year's synodical convention resolved to meet certain external needs.

Curricular changes are under consideration to accommodate student bodies that are becoming English-speaking. This raises a number of questions for which there are as yet no answers. The inevitable bilingual nature of the work poses great practical problems. We'll need to arrange courses in such a way that when a student graduates from one of our schools he leaves not with a little knowledge about a lot of different things, but thoroughly grounded in what is indispensable. Our religion curricula in particular must be so arranged that the gospel becomes the strong bond unifying everything that is taught and learned, as well as the driving force in the hearts of students. Our entire training program, beginning in the home and extending through college and seminary, must so influence the thinking of students that their desire to serve the Lord as pastors and teachers will be strong enough to enable them to overcome obstacles and to resist allurements to choose other callings.

Pastors and teachers will need to work with new zeal to recruit additional students. Professors will need to devote all their energy to train these young Christians to be competent servants of the Word. And we all, filled with new spirit by digging ever more deeply into the truths of the gospel, dare not stop praying that a merciful God will, despite our unfaithfulness, preserve this one great treasure, the holy, powerful, blessed Luther gospel.

God of grace, grant your blessing to our church, presently German, as it becomes English!