

Two Pastoral Educators: John Meyer & Carl Lawrenz

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“Remember your leaders who spoke the word of God to you. Consider the outcome of their way of life and imitate their faith,” Hb 13:7. That exhortation provides the scriptural warrant for what we propose to do in this essay. The two imperatives (μνημονεύετε, μιμῆσθε) together with the participle (ἀναθεωροῦντες) are present tenses. The verb in the relative clause (ἐλάλησαν) is an aorist, suggesting that the speaking happened and it’s done. So, to paraphrase, “continue to remember and keep on imitating those who spoke the word of God to you.” In this case, we have two men in our purview to remember and to imitate, John Meyer and Carl Lawrenz, both of whom served in the president’s office on this campus during the past 75 years. Our purpose will be to “consider the outcome of their way of life,” especially the influence and the impact they had on this seminary and in the Wisconsin Synod during their 82 years of combined service as members of the seminary faculty and the 37 years during which they served as two of the seminary’s eight presidents on this campus.

My assignment for this third essay directed me “to review the life, teaching courses, administrative priorities, and synodical influence of two men, two seminary presidents, whose teaching tenures spanned 53 of the Mequon Seminary’s 75 years. This presentation is made for anecdotes and remembrances as well as biographical information.” The stated objective is to help the pastors who graduated during the past 20 years as well as the students currently enrolled “to know two men who had significant influence during the Seminary’s 75 years in Mequon.” I had the distinct privilege of having both men as my teachers during my student days on this campus. One of them was also a colleague during the time that I served here in the decade of the 70’s and early 80’s.

I intend to begin with a biographical sketch of each man. Then, because both of them excelled as theologians, we will attempt to summarize their theology and to substantiate our observations by letting them speak for themselves. Both men had a profound influence on this seminary as well as the synod they served so faithfully and so long (125 years—Meyer 68 years and Lawrenz 57 years). That calls for a description of the influence they had on both seminary and synod. We will rely in part on others to help with that description. And then we will conclude with the anecdotes and remembrances. Thus we hope to show that these two outstanding theologians and capable administrators were also exemplary servants and unique personalities—indeed, leaders to remember and to imitate as we “consider the outcome of their way of life.” They “spoke the word of God” to us. Both men are equally deserving of the appellation Paul gave to Timothy, ἄνθρωπος τοῦ θεοῦ. (1 Tm 6:11; also Ps 90, the superscription).

John Peter Carl Meyer 1873 – 1964

John Meyer was born February 27, 1873 in the parsonage at Zittau, Wisconsin,¹ the son of Johannes Meyer and his wife Anna Meta nee Behnken.² Pastor Meyer (Sr.) was trained for the ministry in Germany at Hermannsburg, along with his predecessor at Zittau, Pastor Wiese, and his neighbor at Theresa, John Bading, a two-time president of the Wisconsin Synod. Meyer Sr. originally intended to serve as a missionary in Africa. But because of the influx of German immigrants coming to America, he came to Wisconsin instead. From Zittau he moved to Caledonia, Wisconsin. He died there in 1884 when John was 11 years old.

J.P. Meyer was confirmed at St. Mark’s Lutheran Church in Watertown, Wisconsin. He attended Northwestern College. He graduated from NWC in 1893 and from the seminary in Wauwatosa in 1896. His first call was to St. Stephen’s Lutheran Church in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin. While he was pastor at St. Stephen’s, he also served congregations at Town Trenton and Fox Lake.

In 1902 Meyer accepted a call to serve as a professor and Dean of Men at NWC. Tensions at the college had led to the resignation of Meyer's predecessor. Prof. Edward Fredrich notes that "in 1902, even John Meyer resigned the deanship before his first year in the post was completed 'because of nervousness.'"³ At the end of his year at NWC, Meyer was called to teach Latin and Greek at Dr. Martin Luther College in New Ulm, Minnesota. On November 26 of that year he married Lydia Reinke at St. Stephen's in Beaver Dam. Lydia gave birth to three sons, John, Henry and Arnold, and a daughter Lydia. Meyer's wife died in 1948. After his wife's death, his daughter, Lydia, lived with him and cared for him for the rest of his life. One surviving son, Rev. Henry, now 96, lives in retirement in Lake Mills, Wisconsin.

Prof. Meyer's services at DMLC were interrupted for three years in 1915 when he accepted a call to St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Oconomowoc, Wisconsin. The congregation needed an experienced and capable pastor to help resolve a problem that threatened to divide it. Three years later Meyer accepted the call to serve as president of DMLC and professor of pedagogy.

In 1920 Meyer was called to succeed his younger brother, Herman, at the seminary in Wauwatosa. His initial teaching assignment was Dogmatics and New Testament Isagogics. At one time or another during the 44 years he served at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary, he also taught courses in the Interpretation of Genesis, Ancient Church History and during my student days he also taught Symbolics. For 16 of his 44 years, he also served as president.

Professor Meyer's years of service to this seminary had a major impact on our synod as we will note in greater detail later. But so did Meyer's contributions to the church at large, both in the synod and in the Synodical Conference. In the 1920's he succeeded his brother, Herman, as a member of the Intersynodical Committee which produced the Chicago Theses.⁴ He also served as secretary of the Synodical Conference, a synodical vice-president, a member of the synod's Board of Education, the Northwestern Publishing House Board, the Editorial Board of the *Northwestern Lutheran*, the synod's Standing Committee on Matters of Church Union and the Advisory Committee on Doctrinal Matters. The letter M, identifying Meyer as the author, appeared frequently on the pages of the *Northwestern Lutheran*. He was the author of more than 250 articles in the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*.⁵

During the time that Prof. Meyer lived on this campus, he made his home initially in the house now occupied by Prof. Tiefel. He moved from that house into the apartment next to the arch to make a larger home available for Prof. Lawrenz's growing family. Meyer lived the last years of his life in the house where Prof. Bivens now lives. (Prof. John Lawrenz told me that Prof. Meyer's move from his original home into the apartment "was an act of selfless generosity that my parents often cited....Dad saw what Meyer did as an example for other professors to follow when a colleague had housing needs, and there were older men whose family had grown and left a larger home relatively empty").

Prof. Meyer died on November 10, 1964 (the anniversary of Luther's birthday). Two weeks before his death, he preached his last sermon at St. Marcus in Milwaukee where he had been the pulpit assistant for 37 years. On the previous Friday he taught his full schedule of classes here at the seminary. His funeral was conducted at St. Marcus. His pastor, Paul Knickelbein, was the liturgist. Synod president, Oscar Naumann, delivered the sermon. Prof. Carl Lawrenz spoke on behalf of the seminary.

Carl J. Lawrenz 1908 – 1989

Carl Lawrenz was born March 30, 1908, to Herman Lawrenz and his wife Katharina nee Haberkorn at Lomira, Wisconsin (15 miles south of Fond du Lac). He spent his boyhood days on the family farm. He was baptized and confirmed by Pastor F. Pietz at St. John Lutheran Church in Lomira. After a year in the high school at Lomira, he attended Northwestern Preparatory School in Watertown and graduated from Northwestern College in 1929. In the fall of that year, 75 years ago this month, he was a member of the first junior class on this campus.

Following his graduation in 1932, Lawrenz was ordained and installed as pastor of St. Paul Lutheran Church in North Fond du Lac. During his 12 years of service to this congregation, he also honed his

pedagogical skills by teaching part time in the congregation's day school. After seven years of bachelorhood, he married Irene Zabel of Montello. (Until recently she lived in their retirement home in Lomira. She now lives on the east side of Milwaukee with a grandson.)

During his pastorate at North Fond du Lac, Lawrenz participated in an area Winkel which included Gustav Bergemann, pastor at St. Peter's in Fond du Lac and a former president of the Wisconsin Synod (1908 – 1933). Bergemann was the chairman of the seminary's Board of Control during the years Lawrenz served in North Fond du Lac. Bergemann was convinced that Lawrenz possessed the unique gifts that qualified him for a new position on the Seminary faculty as an instructor in Old Testament and Christian Education. Lawrenz accepted the call to the seminary and served on the faculty beginning in the fall of 1944 until his retirement in 1982. For 21 of those 38 years, 1957 to 1978, Lawrenz also served as president of the seminary. After he accepted the call to the seminary and before he began teaching, Prof. Lawrenz took courses at the University of Chicago, just as Prof. Meyer had done. He did so at Prof. Meyer's urging.

The Lawrenz family lived initially in the apartment above the dining hall (now the kitchen). Later they moved into the home now occupied by Prof. Tiefel. Five Lawrenz children grew up on this campus: John, currently a member of the seminary faculty who has just returned from serving as a counselor in the Ukrainian Lutheran Church (he recently accepted the call to head the Asia Lutheran Seminary in Hong Kong); Kathryn Weaver, a teacher at Wisconsin Lutheran High School; David, who owns and operates an automobile business in Michigan; Stephen, a missionary in the Lutheran Church in Central Africa, Zambia Conference, at Lusaka; and Mary Schmal, also a teacher at Wisconsin Lutheran High School.

During the years that Prof. Lawrenz served on this campus, 1249 men graduated and entered the public ministry. In 1982 when he retired, 1267 ordained men were serving in congregations, classrooms and other offices in the synod.⁶ It is a safe assumption that at the time of his retirement; between 90 and 100% of the clergy serving in the WELS could claim Prof. Lawrenz as one of their teachers.

I am not aware that any compilation has ever been made of all the boards, committees and commissions on which Lawrenz served during his years as a member of the seminary's faculty. He served as president during the crucial and agonizing years of controversy which ended in termination of fellowship with the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and the demise of the Synodical Conference. But he was also at the helm here during the years of rapid mission expansion in the synod ("in every State by '78") and the burgeoning enrollments on this campus. When I graduated in 1953, Lawrenz was the newest and the youngest of the eight faculty members. When he became president in 1957, there were still 8 faculty members. When he retired in 1982, 16 professors made this hill their home. In 1957, there were 32 graduates. In 1982, Lawrenz delivered his final graduation sermon to 60 men who had just been assigned their first calls.

In addition to his faculty and administrative responsibilities, Lawrenz served on the synod's Board for Parish Education, the Board for Worker Training (later the Commission on Higher Education), and perhaps most critical and exhausting of all, he served as a member and chairman of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations during the years when there was sharp division within our own synod about our protracted fellowship with the Missouri Synod. This was especially true after the synod in convention in 1955 had charged the Missouri Synod with causing divisions and offenses contrary to Scripture. The convention's decision to hold in abeyance the judgment that Missouri was persistent in their error and therefore to delay formal termination of fellowship with Missouri to give that synod an opportunity to respond in its 1956 convention prompted more than 50 delegates to protest the postponement. One of the protestors was Prof. Lawrenz's predecessor in the president's office, Prof. Edmund Reim. He resigned as chairman of the Standing Committee on Church Union, and two years later at the 1957 convention of the synod in New Ulm, he resigned as professor and president of the seminary. Lawrenz served as interim president until the Board of Control called him to serve as president later in that year.

Reim's resignation propelled Lawrenz into the forefront of the inter- and the intra- synodical strife, a Catch-22 situation if ever there was one, a situation that called for leadership of the first order. More about Lawrenz's leadership skills later. The inter-synodical strife led to termination of fellowship with Missouri in

1961 and to withdrawal from the Synodical Conference in 1963. The intra-synodical strife led to the founding of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in 1960.

Back in the classroom, Prof. Lawrenz continued to work especially in the two areas for which he was originally called, Old Testament and Christian Education. After Reim's resignation, he also taught the senior Symbolics course covering the Formula of Concord which Reim had taught previously. My guess is that few if any of the students in his Genesis classes will ever forget the emphasis on the revelation of God's plan of salvation in the ten *toledoths*, or the essential meaning of the *Tetragrammaton*, "the God of free and faithful grace."

The Lord of the Church called this ἄνθρωπος τοῦ θεοῦ to his eternal home on October 14, 1989, in his hometown of Lomira. Funeral services were held on October 17 in the church in which he was baptized and confirmed. His pastor and former student, Nathan Retzlaff, conducted the service. Later that same week, on October 20, a memorial service was held at the Seminary. Lawrenz's successor in the president's office, Prof. Armin Schuetze, preached the sermon. Professor Oscar Siegler, who had served for many years with Prof. Lawrenz on the Commission on Inter-Church Relations recalled his colleague's many years of faithful service to the synod in that unenviable position, and the synod's president Carl Mischke led the congregants to thank God for the many years of Lawrenz's leadership in the synod at a most critical time in its history.

The "Memoriam" Prof. E. Fredrich wrote for the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* included an interesting sidelight: "A circle encompassing the place names in this vita—Lomira, Watertown, Mequon, North Fond du Lac and then Mequon and Lomira again—would have a radius of only about 25 miles. But under God's providence the life lived there was to extend its influence far beyond the circle's border."⁷ And I might add, even to this very day.

Meyer and Lawrenz – Proponents of the Wauwatosa Theology

What made Meyer and Lawrenz outstanding leaders at the seminary and in the synod was not their evident administrative skills as seminary presidents. More than anything else it was the theology they embodied and taught as men of God, wholly dedicated to their task as pastoral educators. We have come to know that theology as "The Wauwatosa Theology."⁸ To understand and appreciate properly the roles Meyer and Lawrenz played and the influence they had as seminary professors (and still have), requires that we have a degree of familiarity with the Wauwatosa theology. Graduates of this seminary have more than just a passing familiarity with it. They are steeped in it. They were prepared for it at NWC and MLC, and they began to imbibe it here as juniors even before they became familiar with the term.

The three men whose names are invariably and inseparably associated with "The Wauwatosa Theology" are J.P. Koehler, August Pieper and John Schaller. They fashioned what was later dubbed the Wauwatosa theology during the three decades they served together at the seminary prior to its move from Wauwatosa to Thiensville/Mequon. Koehler began his service at the seminary in 1900, Pieper in 1902 and Schaller in 1908 as the successor to Dr. Adolph Hoenecke. From 1908 to 1914 they were the entire faculty.

Before we attempt to define the Wauwatosa theology, it will be helpful to view it in a larger context by recalling what has to be its most influential antecedent. Before the turn of the century, the most prominent confessional Lutheran in America was Dr. C.F.W. Walther, president of the Missouri Synod (1847-1850 and 1864-1878) and of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis (1850-1887). He was also the first president of the Synodical Conference (1872). All three of the Wauwatosa theologians were Walther's students at St. Louis.

In observance of the 175th anniversary of Walther's birth and the 100th anniversary of his death, Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch wrote a Foreword to Volume 84 of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* entitled "The WELS' Walther Heritage." According to Gawrisch, "Carl Ferdinand Wilhelm Walther lives on in the theology of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. As a tribute to Walther, the *Quarterly*, beginning with this issue, is publishing in translation a testimonial by one of his students, Professor August Pieper." Gawrisch goes on to note that when the synod's seminary reopened in Milwaukee in 1878, Dr. Hoenecke's two colleagues on the

faculty, Eugene Notz and August Graebner, were also Walther's students. Both Dr. Martin Luther College and Michigan Lutheran Seminary also had "Walther-trained men as presidents."

In a concluding paragraph, Gawrisch adds,

In 1920 the chair of dogmatics at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary passed from Schaller to J.P. Meyer, a student of Hoenecke. In the 44 years of Professor Meyer's service to the seminary the Hoenecke heritage and the Walther heritage, both of which were rooted in the Scriptures, merged, so to speak, like two streams that come together after rising high in the mountains from a common source.⁹

When John Schaller, one of the three Wauwatosa theologians, died in 1920, he passed on more than just "the chair of dogmatics" to J.P. Meyer. He also passed onto him the legacy of the Wauwatosa theology. How do we define that? Prof. E. Fredrich has said that there are many definitions of the Wauwatosa theology as there are definers. In the simplest of terms, it involves a hermeneutical principle that emphasizes the importance of the historical-grammatical method of interpretation. It makes exegesis rather than dogmatics the queen of theological disciplines.

But that must be understood in a much broader historical context. In the dedicatory preface to *The Wauwatosa Theology*, Wayne Mueller summarizes that context in this way:

In the first 30 years of this century, these professors at the Wisconsin seminary in Wauwatosa refreshed the church with a direct appeal to the Bible. They honored the disciplines of confessional, historical, and systematic theology, but they set exegetical theology on center stage. They honored the church's fathers in their writings but did not deify them. They studied the Lutheran Confessions but held them to their place as *norma normata*. In church and ministry, they distinguished biblical doctrine from deeply rooted European ministry traditions. God gave them grace to allow his Spirit to do the talking.¹⁰

In an essay Pastor Peter Prange (a great grandson of J.P. Koehler) delivered to the Arizona-California District Convention, June 14-16 of this year, he offered a succinct six-point definition of "The Wauwatosa Gospel or Theology":

- A. An historico-grammatical approach to Scripture.
- B. Stressed church, world and cultural history.
- C. Encouraged and practiced synodical self-criticism.
- D. Promoted a God-pleasing ecumenical spirit.
- E. Derided dogmatism and legalism, and preached an evangelical doctrine and practice.
- F. In short, they trusted the power of the gospel to produce faith and fruit among God's people.

Points B,C and D are essential aspects of the Wauwatosa gospel, but generally they do not receive the attention they deserve because of the primary emphasis on the historico-grammatical approach to Scripture.

In the 1988 Fall Pastors' Institute lecture, "The Wauwatosa Theology: The Men and Their Message," Prof. Martin Westerhaus expands upon Wayne Mueller's observation:

The Wauwatosa emphasis on direct, coherent Bible study in the original languages came as a negative reaction to what is variously referred to as "father-theology," "citation theology," or "tradition theology." Reference is made to a method of teaching theology at seminaries and then to a method or style of producing conference and convention essays.

Westerhaus then quotes at length August Pieper's "Anniversary Reflections" reproduced in 1987 in four issues of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. In that series of articles Pieper offers a sharp critique of the method of teaching theology which prevailed during his student days at Concordia Seminary. It emphasized dogmatics almost to the exclusion of exegesis.¹¹ In a concluding summary, Westerhaus asks, "What was the Wauwatosa theology? What did these three Wauwatosa men seek to accomplish?" He answers, "First, they retained and passed on both to their students and to succeeding faculties the theology of Luther, the Lutheran Confessions, and Lutheran orthodoxy."¹² At the heart of their effort was their emphasis on *ad fontes*. For them these fountains were always first and foremost the Scriptures and only secondarily the fathers.

The "succeeding faculties" to which Westerhaus refers include the two pastoral educators who are the subject of this essay, John Meyer and Carl Lawrenz. The Protestants insist that Prof Koehler's dismissal from the seminary in 1929 was in effect a repudiation of the Wauwatosa Gospel.¹³ But they are mistaken. I can personally attest to the fact that the Wauwatosa theology was alive and well in my two professors, Meyer and Lawrenz. I learned it from them, not the term perhaps, but the spirit of it as they exemplified it.

Peter Prange says, "In my opinion, to suggest that the Wauwatosa Gospel is a 'possession' of one church body or another is imprudent in the first place and against the spirit of that Gospel itself. It is instead a matter of possession for each individual Christian in so far as one deals evangelically with fellow human beings."¹⁴ Both Meyer and Lawrenz knew what it means to deal evangelically with fellow human beings. Whatever other weaknesses they may have exhibited, an unevangelical spirit was not one of them. Evidence of that will become apparent when we let them speak for themselves as well as from the anecdotes with which we conclude.

Before we proceed, and as something of an aside, let me add that, from my point of view, where there is no clear understanding of the doctrine of objective justification and its implications, there can be no Wauwatosa gospel. If justification is the *articulus stantis et cadentis ecclesiae*, that should be self-evident. And if a gospel spirit is one of the hallmarks of the Wauwatosa gospel, then a distorted gospel cannot produce an undistorted gospel spirit. Dr. Adolph would, I think, agree. He wrote, "*Die Hervorhebung der allgemeinen Rechtfertigung ist noetig, um den realen Inhalt des Evangelium zu bewahren.*"¹⁵

Meyer and Lawrenz Speak for Themselves

The time has come to let Meyer and Lawrenz speak for themselves. That will not be easy, certainly not because they didn't have much to say. The range of subjects on which they wrote is phenomenal. The pages of material in their books, essays and articles number in the thousands. So where do we begin? That calls for subjective selectivity. Because we claim that both men as pastor educators exemplified the spirit of the Wauwatosa theology, my selections will have as their purpose to substantiate that claim. Meyer first.

Most if not all of you are familiar with Meyer's Dogmatics notes. They have served as the textbook for Dogmatics since the 1920s. In and of themselves they really do not offer evidence of his exegetical approach to the subject. You had to hear him teach the subject in class to detect his Wauwatosa gospel spirit with its emphasis on exegesis. A prime example of the Meyer approach to theology, in my estimation, is *Ministers of Christ*, his commentary on Second Corinthians. It represents exegesis at its best. Meyer's purpose is twofold. He makes first century Corinth and the Christian congregation there come alive for his readers with his isagogical insights and his simple and clear explanations of the concrete situations that necessitated Paul's writing of this epistle. Secondly, with his careful and thorough exegesis, he helps us grasp and understand the thoughts and the words the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to put down on paper. Meyer also helps us appreciate the fact that the Wauwatosa gospel is not just about hermeneutics and exegesis. It's first and foremost about redemption and reconciliation.

On pages 98 to 118, along with his commentary on 5:18-21, Meyer offers a discursus on "Objective and Subjective Justification." His skill as a theologian is evident on every page, for example, in his explanation of "a confusion (that) inadvertently crept into the English translation of F. Pieper's *Christliche Dogmatik*." Meyer quotes the German text and then adds, "The conciseness and perspicuity of this statement is lost in the English translation" (p. 100). He goes on to explain the imprecision of the English translation. He devotes the next 11

pages to a study of ἀλλάσσω and its cognates, especially καταλλάσσω. (If it weren't for the legalism, I'd say no student should be permitted to graduate from this seminary without becoming familiar with those pages.)

Now let's let Meyer speak for himself.

We thus see that καταλλαγή does not denote a change in the nature of the sinner, in the attitude of his heart. That change will take place when he is led by the Spirit to accept in faith the offered καταλλαγή. The change occurred in the standing of the sinner before his Judge. Before Christ's intervention took place God regarded him as a guilt-laden condemned culprit. After Christ's intervention and through Christ's intervention He regards him as a guilt-free saint. The *nature* of the sinner has not been changed. God did not undergo a change, did not experience a change of heart. The *status* of the sinner was changed. (p. 106)

And again:

A καταλλαγή took place. It was brought about by the death of God's Son. This does not mean a change in our personal attitude towards God, not a change in His personal attitude toward us. In spite of the fact that we by our sins had aroused His righteous wrath, He had never wavered in His love toward us; and the more we burdened ourselves with sin and guilt, the more we displayed our aversion to His holy will, all the more His pitying love rose to ever greater heights in its efforts to save us, and finally brought the unbelievable sacrifice of His own Son. Thus the status of enmity was changed into one of peace. That is the καταλλαγή. (p. 114)

And in a sentence that has provoked a great deal of comment and criticism, Meyer writes: "Objectively speaking, without any reference to an individual sinner's attitude toward Christ's sacrifice, purely on the basis of God's verdict, every sinner, whether he knows about it or not, whether he believes it or not, has received the status of a saint" (p.103, 104).

Before we move on, we should point out that what Prof. Meyer didn't write also speaks volumes about the man. As far back as the '40s, Meyer was asked to write a dogmatics textbook as part of the observance the Synod's centennial in 1950. Finally in 1947 he agreed reluctantly to begin. In the January 1948 *Quartalschrift*, he wrote, "To the Members of the Wisconsin Synod: You have by resolution requested me to publish my 'materials on dogmatics' in the form of a 'textbook'. I must admit that from the beginning I fell hesitant about accepting the invitation, and I have not yet been able to overcome that feeling." After commenting on the importance of dogmatics in the seminary's curriculum, he goes on to say, "The essential part of the course as given in the classroom with its intensive study of Bible passages according to text and context cannot be preserved satisfactorily in a book." He then comments on what takes place in the classroom and adds, "I fear that publishing my 'material on dogmatics' as a 'textbook' will prove unsatisfactory."

Then Prof. Meyer gets at the real reason for his reluctance to produce a dogmatics textbook.

There is, furthermore, the danger of a wrong study and use of dogmatics. The subject, by its very nature, engages the intellect preeminently in defining concepts and formulating propositions.

While this is perfectly legitimate, it may, as the past history of the Lutheran Church on the European continent has shown, lead to "dead orthodoxy" with its attendant evils.

He then offers several examples and concludes, "What we need most today in our theology is not dogmatical acumen of a kind, but a nourishing with the bread of life and a refreshing with waters drawn from God's living fountain. A healthy body will more readily shed disease germs.—If dogmatics is used to lead directly into the Scriptures, it will be of benefit."¹⁶

Having said that, Meyer agreed to provide a sample for the *Quartalschrift*. The first installment, Prolegomena, appeared in January, 1948. It covered 23 pages and concluded with a five-part outline of the

entire project. And that was the end of that—until after his death in 1964. Among other things found in his study was a “completely elaborated and carefully typewritten” manuscript “ready for the printer.” It includes that section of dogmatics entitled “Of God, the Author of Salvation.” (The Revelation, Essence, Attributes and Will of God plus The Holy Trinity). The *WLQ* Editorial Staff resolved to preserve the manuscript for posterity. It appeared serially in five installments beginning in July 1965.

During my student days, we were aware of the synod’s request for a dogmatics textbook, and we were also aware of Prof. Meyer’s reluctance to write it. He shared his reasons with us on more than one occasion. He had no desire to be the Franz Pieper of the WELS. He didn’t want to be responsible for a “Nixie dixit” cult within the synod. (Nixie was Prof Meyer’s nickname. Tradition has it that the name derived from the Latin word for snow, a respectful reference to his full head of white hair.) So while Meyer did not produce a dogmatics textbook, he did leave enough of a manuscript to enable us to appreciate his unique way of doing dogmatics. As we said, what he didn’t write speaks volumes about the man.

Evidence of Meyer’s careful precision as a theologian abounds on page after page in his writings. For example,

Forgiveness of sins was not only secured and provided for the sinners, it was pronounced over them. Their sins were nonimputed to them; they were imputed to Christ. This applies to the whole world, to every individual sinner, whether he was living in the days of Christ, or had died centuries before His coming, or had not yet been born, perhaps has not been born to this day. It applies to the world as such, regardless of whether a particular sinner ever comes to faith or not.

Note the significance of the clause that begins with the word “perhaps.”¹⁷

The two doctrines frequently cited in connection with the Wauwatosa Theology are church and ministry. What we believe and teach relative to church and ministry emerged as a result of a restudy of those two doctrines, a restudy that relied solely on sound exegesis without reference to what the church fathers had written. Thus the doctrines of church and ministry serve as the Wauwatosa Theology’s exhibit A. The last essay which Prof. Meyer prepared was delivered at the Arizona-California District Convention in June, 1964. It was titled “Synod and Congregation.” It is vintage Meyer, the fruit of many years of study and controversy. It serves as one of many examples that reveal how thoroughly the Wauwatosa theology infused his thinking and his method.

To try to summarize what Meyer said would take us too far afield. I will confine myself to one observation about the essay. But before I offer that observation, here is Meyer’s brief introduction.

What is the relation between Synod and Congregation? To be specific: What has the Word of God to say about them? Is the one, as is sometimes maintained, a divine institution, while the other is a mere human arrangement? Does the one exist by divine command, while the other was developed by men in their Christian liberty? Does the one act with divine authority, which must be obeyed at the peril of one’s salvation, while the other has nothing but human agreement to back up its decisions—decisions which may therefore be ignored at will, if they seem to you to be unsuitable or inconvenient?

Both are organizations through which the Church of Christ on earth operates—so much is clear and admitted by all—but what is their *raison d’etre*? Specifically: What is their mutual relation?¹⁸

The essay contains six parts. Part VI is application. It contains only one scriptural reference (“Be not ye called master, for one is your master, even Christ”). In the other five parts, according to my count, 95 Bible passages are cited plus numerous other verses that are referred to but not quoted or explained. Many paragraphs which do not quote a passage offer either an interpretation or an explanation of the context of a passage cited previously. Only one other authority merits attention in the 32 pages of the essay, and that is merely a passing

reference to Dr. George Stoeckhardt. It reads, “The word which Paul here uses (the reference is to Rm. 6:4-5) means literally, we have grown together—Stoeckhardt: *verwachsen*—we have become joined to Him, have become one in nature.” Meyer would never disparage the role and the importance of church fathers. (After all, he did teach Symbolics.) But neither would he allow their authority to supplant the supreme authority of God’s Word.

The Mantle Passes From Meyer to Lawrenz

Now it is Prof. Lawrenz’s turn to speak for himself. My guess is that the majority of you are familiar with his expertise as an exegete from his course on Genesis, and if you were not one of his students, then from his commentary on the first four chapters of Genesis, (now available in a book just published by NPH with John Jeske as co-author). At the time he retired in 1982, we expected that he would continue with the Genesis project. And for a time he did. But the project was never completed. His daughter, Mary Schmal, told me that after her father was diagnosed with cancer, he no longer had the strength to continue the task.

Lawrenz once asked me to read a segment he had written, and to edit it with a view toward style. The exegesis was so compelling that it required special effort to concentrate on the style of his writing, much less critique it. Many of us wish he had carried the project through to completion. Significantly, Lawrenz credits John Meyer, his mentor, with numerous insights he included in his commentary. For example, on page 120, footnote 127, Lawrenz says, “This insight among many others has remained in the memory of the writer from the lectures of Prof. Joh. P. Meyer, who offered the Genesis course to the Junior Class at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary during the school year 1929-30.” For Lawrenz’s expertise as a Genesis exegete and scholar, his colleague, Prof. E. Fredrich, respectfully referred to him as a “Genesis specialist.”¹⁹ As an Old Testament exegete, Prof. Lawrenz perpetuated the August Pieper tradition at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

The copy of the Genesis commentary in the library’s essay file does not include a date. The likelihood is that it dates back to the 1970’s. Lawrenz’s applications reveal again and again that he was in tune with the tenor of the times. The six pages of commentary on Genesis 1:26-28 conclude with this observation about procreation.

God meant it to be different with the reproduction of human beings. That human children continue to be born on earth is, of course, due to the continued effectiveness of the divine blessing spoken upon the first man and woman at creation. But it was and still is God’s will and desire that his blessing of fruitfulness should be effective only through a man and woman who have become one flesh in holy wedlock as a lifelong union. This needs stress in our day when not only more and more children are born out of wedlock, but even in marriage the idea of obtaining children through surrogate mothers and surrogate fathers is being sanctioned. Experiments are even entertained of producing human offspring through cloning, and in test tubes and plastic wombs. (p. 57)

Similarly, in his comments on Genesis 2:24 (“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife...”), Lawrenz offers this relevant observation about the institution of marriage at a time when talk about alternative life-styles and same sex marriages was still in the gestation stage.

Marriage is not a product of human progress or social development. Neither does it lie within man’s option to modify marriage, to terminate it at will, and so to develop different life-styles to take its place. No, marriage is bound up with the very creation of mankind. “For this reason, ‘*al kēn*, namely for the reason that God especially made man and woman for each other, a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife. Marriage continues to be established before God just as the first marriage was established. (p. 113)

The footnotes in the Genesis commentary show that Lawrenz was thoroughly familiar with contemporary German and English authors who wrote commentaries on Genesis—both with those who respected the inspiration and the authority of God’s Word as well as with those who didn’t.

In addition to Old Testament, Lawrenz was called to teach the course in Christian Education. He was in his sixth year of teaching when I was a junior in 1950. Many of us in that class were of the opinion that Christian Education was the shortest of all our 50 minute classes. Most of us had writer’s cramp by the time the period ended. In 1976 at the Professors’ Conference at NWC (a conference that included the faculty members of the Synod’s seminary, colleges and preparatory schools), I was asked to present a paper on “Teaching for Cognitive and Affective Outcomes.” The first place I turned for help was to the notes I had taken in Lawrenz’s Christian Education class. In assigning the paper, Robert Voss, the executive secretary for the Commission on Higher Education, noted that in our schools there appeared to be an overemphasis on teaching for cognitive outcomes at the expense of affective outcomes. After rereading the outline and notes for Lawrenz’s course in Christian Education, I concluded that the overemphasis on teaching for cognitive outcomes was definitely not because of an imbalance between the emphases as we learned them from Prof. Lawrenz. Whether as pastors we put into practice in catechism classes what we learned in our Christian Education classes is another question. In my case, it took a while.

What kind of teachers were Meyer and Lawrenz? The consent is probably unanimous that both men were first rate scholars with an impressive and encyclopedic knowledge of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. Yet inside and outside the classroom, both men exhibited and exemplified the kind of humility that Jesus calls for in Matthew 18:4. It would have been beneath their dignity to flaunt their scholarship or their position as faculty members. Some of us can recall vividly how Professor Meyer would step quickly and unaffectedly to the door of the classroom building to open it and hold it for students on their way to morning chapel.

While their talents were similar, their teaching methods and styles were not. Meyer represented the old-school lecture style of teaching. He allowed little or no time for questions or for classroom discussion. When the bell rang for the start of the period, Meyer was already standing behind the podium. He was still there when the bell rang ending the period. Lawrenz’s style was refreshingly different. It was transitional. He lectured, yet he also allowed for a modicum of class participation. Most if not all of Meyer’s students appreciated what they learned from him in dogmatics classes and respected him accordingly. Few of them approved or appreciated his teaching method. Lawrenz was similarly respected, and generally more appreciated by his students for his teaching method than his colleague.

Seminary and Synodical Influence

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary observed its 125th anniversary in a jubilee service of thanksgiving and praise on April 24, 1988. Pastor Richard Lauersdorf, the synod’s first vice president, served as preacher for the occasion. In that sermon he said, “Not much reflection is required to realize that as the seminary goes, so also goes the church, that as future shepherds are fed, so they will feed, that what is taught to them will be taught by them.”²⁰ If it is true that as the seminary goes, so goes the synod, it is likewise though not equally true that as seminary presidents go, so goes the seminary. Seminary presidents at this seminary are not only teachers and administrators. They are leaders. They have a definite influence on their colleagues, all of whom recognize that the president serves in that capacity, not by their choice, but by God’s choice. Meyer and Lawrenz were no exceptions. They led. Their influence on seminary and synod is still evident to this day.

Until his death in 1964, Prof. Meyer served as a connecting link to the seminary’s beginning.²¹ He had learned his dogmatics from Dr. Adolph Hoenecke. He served 12 years as pastor and professor prior to Hoenecke’s demise: And 12 years after Hoenecke vacated the chair of dogmatics at the seminary, Meyer assumed that position. Prof. Lawrenz’s “In Memoriam” to Prof. Meyer notes that “Except for an interval of twelve years Dr. Hoenecke and Professor Meyer spanned a whole century of our Seminary’s existence.”²² The influence that Dr. Hoenecke had on Professor Meyer was something that Meyer in turn passed on to his student,

Carl Lawrenz. As noted previously, that influence was notable for its biblical fidelity, doctrinal integrity and confessional clarity. It was readily apparent during the time that I served on this campus. The pages of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* testify to the fact that the Hoenecke/Meyer influence is still alive and healthy today.

Prof. Meyer served here during the two divisive crises that confronted the synod during the 20th century, the Protes'tant controversy and the struggle versus Missouri to preserve the theological orthodoxy of the Synodical Conference. The Protes'tant Controversy led to the dismissal of a friend and colleague, seminary president J.P. Koehler. Meyer's role in that controversy produced conflicting opinions.²³ But it is doubtful that even Solomon could have found a peaceful solution to the problem. We will add a comment later about Meyer's view of the controversy.²⁴

The conflict with the Missouri Synod which began in the 1940's and ended with a termination of fellowship in 1961 had to be just as personally painful for Prof. Meyer as the Protes'tant controversy had been. The president of the Missouri Synod, John Behnken, was Meyer's first cousin. Two years before the separation from Missouri Prof. Meyer experienced once again the departure of a colleague, seminary president Edmund Reim, and another split within the synod. Yet it was especially during the early years of the controversy that the synod looked to Prof. Meyer as defender and spokesperson for the orthodox Lutheranism of the Synodical Conference. Prof. Mark Braun provides evidence of that in "A Tale of Two Synods." Page after page includes references in the footnotes to articles from Meyer's pen. The periodicals section of the bibliography lists 85 articles by Meyer, 84 of them from the *Quarterly* and the *Northwestern Lutheran*.²⁵ To say merely that Meyer was influential in that critical time would be an understatement.

Prof. Meyer was an influential figure in the synod in more ways than as a teacher at the seminary and a leader in times of crisis. We have already listed in the biographical section some of the synodical boards and committees on which he served. In addition to his service on intersynodical, doctrinal and union committees, he also served for many years on the synod's Board of Education, a service that doubtlessly has been overshadowed by his other roles, but at the same time, a service which in and of itself is deserving of the synod's respect and gratitude.

Add to all this Meyer's contributions over the years to the *Northwestern Lutheran*. Three series of articles from his pen are book length. One is an extensive exposition of the Augsburg Confession, another an exposition of the Smalcald Articles and the third treats the subject of Eternity. The Augsburg Confession series is available in book form from the Northwestern Publishing House. All three are available in the seminary library's essay file.

Equally as influential at the seminary and in the synod is the role played by Prof. Carl Lawrenz during the 38 years that he taught on this campus (1944-1982). His special gifts were recognized already in 1945 when he was selected to serve as chairman of a committee charged with the responsibility to resolve a prolonged and sometimes heated controversy about foreign missions. In *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans* Prof. Edward Fredrich provides the details of the controversy together with the final resolution of the matter at the synodical convention in 1947.²⁶ The findings of the Lawrenz committee prevailed and subsequently prepared the way for the synod's first efforts in heathen missions in a foreign land (Japan in 1952 and Lusaka, Zambia, in 1953).

Prof. Lawrenz's service on that special committee proved to be a precursor of things to come. The struggle with Missouri had begun to take shape early in the decade of the forties, especially following the Missouri Synod's convention in Saginaw in 1944. By the time the struggle reached its climax in 1961, Lawrenz had become the chief articulator of the Wisconsin Synod's position, especially after seminary president Edmund Reim's resignation.

It was the best of times, and it was the worst of times. Best of times in the sense that the synod emerged as a defender of the faith. Worst of times in the sense that the synod was a house divided. Lawrenz's role propelled him into the middle of the fray. He was a man over whose head the clouds of controversy swirled almost constantly. In essay after essay he set forth clearly the theology formerly confessed by the synods of the Synodical Conference exposing Missouri's drift away from confessional Lutheranism: Missouri theologians took sharp issue with him. At the same time he became a lightning rod in his own synod.

The lightning struck a devastating blow following the synodical convention in 1957. Thirty pastors and teachers had affixed their names to a memorial “A Call for Decision.” The memorial was an appeal to the synod in 1959 to follow through on its 1955 resolution to declare the Missouri Synod persistent in its error and for that reason to suspend fellowship with the Missouri Synod—a resolution which had been held in abeyance to provide an opportunity for the Missouri Synod to respond in convention in 1956 to the charges our synod had made against it. When the Call for Decision memorial was rejected, most of the signers of the memorial protested and subsequently withdrew from the synod for reasons of conscience.

What ensued presented Prof. Lawrenz with one of the most stressful and trying experiences in his entire ministry. As a member of the synod’s Standing Committee on Matters of Church Union, he had been asked to serve as the chairman of an executive committee that was given the onerous task of meeting with protestors in an effort to resolve differences. As chairman, Lawrenz drafted “A Report to the Protest Committee.” As much as anything else that came from his pen, that document bares his heart and reveals the measure of the man. Three paragraphs in the introduction provide substantiation for that conclusion. Lawrenz wrote:

We would like to remove what troubles the protesting brethren and allay their apprehensions so that they might again be able to stand shoulder to shoulder with us in upholding our testimony on the divisive issues which have arisen between our Synod and the Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. We feel the deep urgency for this all the more keenly because we are convinced that we still have a common stand with all the protestors on the issues themselves; thus we long for an understanding with them.

This longing arises, first of all, out of a deep fraternal concern for our protesting brethren, whose continued fellowship is not a light matter with us. But our longing for an understanding arises likewise out of a deep need of our own, as members of our Synod’s Union Committee, in pursuing the responsibility which our Synod has placed upon us of continuing our discussions with Missouri. For as we continue our effort to break through with our stand on the issues in the Synodical Conference, we would appreciate the full support also of our protesting brethren, instead of having our testimony weakened by the appearance that there is no longer harmony and unity in our midst on the stand that we represent over against Missouri. Moreover, we deplore any needless disharmony in our own midst that would discourage and arrest a growth of understanding in our own Synod concerning the divisive issues present in the Synodical Conference, concerning their continued seriousness, and concerning the great need of resolving them.

Because of these considerations we would plead with our protesting brethren that they would give full thought to what we in turn feel constrained by our conscience to say in respect to some of the main points of their protest.

Lawrenz then proceeds to answer four questions which were at the heart of the issue between the synod and the protestors. The protestors had singled out one clause in particular which they advanced as evidence that Prof. Lawrenz was advocating an unscriptural position in his interpretation of Romans 16:17-18 and its application. Lawrenz had said that it is appropriate to continue to admonish those in error until we “reach the conviction that admonition is of no further avail.” The protestors argued that Lawrenz was “holding a brief for gaining a conviction by some kind of clairvoyance concerning the future fate of admonition that one has given or is giving.”

In answer to that charge, Lawrenz appended to his “Report to the Protest Committee” an excerpt from a letter he had sent to Pastor Rollin Reim, the son of Prof. Edmund Reim and one of the protestors who withdrew from the synod. In that letter Lawrenz explains more fully what he had intended to say in the controversial clause about reaching “the conviction that further admonition is of no further avail.” He was more than willing to change the offensive wording. In the concluding paragraph he writes, “All three illustrations ought to show

that we seek to say the identical thing though we employ different terminology. The way you express it requires Christian judgment as well as it does in the manner in which we say it.”²⁷

Following a discussion of this issue that I once had with Prof. Lawrenz in the faculty lounge, he gave me a copy of the letter he had sent to Pastor Reim. As he handed the letter to me, he said (and I can still hear the tone of voice with which he said it), that Reim had not responded directly to it. He was still feeling the pain of that entire experience more than a dozen years after the founding of the Church of the Lutheran Confession in which Rollin Reim had played a prominent role. I can think of only a few occasions in the past when the synod relied on the leadership of one man to the extent that it relied on Prof. Lawrenz in the crisis years following the resignation of president Edmund Reim.

Two other areas in which Prof. Lawrenz has proved himself to be an influential teacher of the church have to do with his understanding of the role of the law for New Testament Christians and the roles of man and woman according to God’s plan for his church and the world. As professor emeritus, his last contribution to the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* was a translation of August Pieper’s “Are there Legal Regulations in the New Testament?”²⁸ It was a theme that Lawrenz himself had treated frequently and extensively in the classroom and at pastoral conferences.

In 1978 Prof Lawrenz prepared a set of theses on the distinctive roles God assigns to man and woman in their relation to each other in this life. The theses were adopted by the Commission on Higher Education and then submitted to the synod for study and approval in 1979. The synod resolved that “the 1980 district conventions officially study the theses and submit summary reports to the Commission on Higher Education” and that a report on the results of the district studies be presented to the synod in 1981.

Those theses, together with Lawrenz’s exposition of them with its emphasis on a clear articulation of the biblical principles coupled with an evangelical application of the principles in the life of the church, have had a wholesome impact within the synod for more than 25 years. Thesis 5 illustrates the essential connection between the role of the law for New Testament Christians and the roles of man and woman according to God’s plan. In that thesis Lawrenz says,

To understand the apostolic directions properly given in Holy Writ to uphold the order of creation in the work and worship life of the church, we need to remember that, unlike God’s Old Testament people, the New Testament church has no binding legal regulations and prescriptions from God beyond that which is imbedded in the moral law, God’s immutable holy will for this earthly life.²⁹

Prof. Lawrenz’s widow, Irene, (or Snow White as we called her) shared with me several scrapbooks that she and her sister-in-law had compiled through the years covering her husband’s career. Several pages contained letters Prof. Lawrenz received at the time of his retirement in 1982. Most of them expressed appreciation for the influence he had on the men who wrote and for his services to the seminary and the synod. Typical of those letters was one from Pastor Robert Kleist. Speaking of the guidance that Lawrenz gave to the church, he wrote, “That we have remained a truly confessional church body is one of the blessings that a gracious Lord has bestowed on that guidance. Your faithfulness and steadfastness to His Word, especially in the years of controversy, of which I am a part, may be appropriately summed up as amazing grace.” The scrap book also included the letter I sent for the occasion. It says, “Your influence on our church is apparent to me almost every day as I go about my work.” (I was serving as a mission counselor in California at the time) “Your imprint on our men is unmistakable.”

When Pastor Peter Prange of Maryborough, Queensland, Australia, learned that I had been asked to make this presentation, he wrote this about his “personal memory.” “My wife and I fondly remember the invitation from Prof. Carl Lawrenz to come and visit WLS and to visit him in his home. We accepted, driving up from Kokomo, Indiana, to spend an afternoon with him. He was a gracious host and shared a number of things with me that were very helpful including materials on Fellowship and Church and Ministry. He and his family set such a Christian tone....From men like Prof. Lawrenz I saw modeled what conservative Christianity

should be, not only words and doctrinal positions, but also Christian love in action through patience, kindness and understanding.”

One more testimonial, this one from Prof. John Jeske.

Anyone who heard Carl Lawrenz speak at synod conventions during our confessional struggle with Missouri will recall his keen mind, as he analyzed doctrinal statements and evaluated Missouri’s reaction to our testimony. He was surely misunderstood by the other side as being overly critical. But what underlay his testimony was a simple faith in Jesus Christ, and a rock solid confidence

- that God has spoken to us in the Scripture, and
- that when God speaks to us he cannot lie, and
- that what God has spoken must be taken at face value.

Amen to that!

Administrative priorities were part of the designated assignment for this essay. Without being able to speak to either man personally, that is a tough assignment. It is probably superfluous to say that both men were capable prioritizers. The sheer volume of their work is testimony to that. They were called to teach at this seminary. That was always priority number one. Service to the church at large has always been expected from faculty members who serve here. Balancing the two, especially on the part of the president, calls for prioritizing.

There is little I can say about Meyer’s administrative priorities. As a student I knew him only as my teacher. But I served under Lawrenz during his administration. I saw him in action. How he balanced all his obligations is a mystery to me. I did witness some changes during that decade. When I came to the campus in 1971, Prof. Lawrenz had been taking sole responsibility for writing all the graduate and vicar biographies which were distributed to members of the Assignment Committee prior to the assignment of calls. He read them to us in a faculty meeting for comment and possible revisions. By the middle of that decade, the number of vicars and graduates had almost doubled, to more than 100. The time had come to divide the task among the members of the faculty. But he still did the compiling and the editing of the characterizations we submitted, and then read them to us for revision.

In Prof. Meyer’s day, there was no business office at the seminary. Nor do I recall that there was a secretary available to provide assistance. Pastor Richard Warnke, currently a missionary in Malawi, wrote,

When our class (WLS ‘69) was in Mequon, the administration, of course, was very different from today. Pewee (Prof. Lawrenz) was the president and the office staff consisted of Irene, his faithful wife. Heinrich Vogel was the ‘business manager’ doing all the work on a part-time basis that a whole office full of people does now.

During the years that I served here, another secretary, Mrs. Ganyo, was available to do typing for faculty members. In addition a business office had been added with David Martin serving as office manager. Martin’s wife, Von, also served in the business office. The new arrangements required administrative skills that were not required of Lawrenz’s predecessors.

J.P. Meyer – Anecdotes and Reminiscences

Among the notable and admirable traits Prof Meyer exhibited was his spirit of humility. We have alluded to it previously. We never knew him to put down a student in class (though there were probably innumerable times when he would have had good reason to do so). He epitomized deference by showing respect to all. Though he regularly addressed questions to students who drifted off in class, he had a way of doing so

without embarrassing them in front of their classmates—though I recall feeling embarrassed on more than one occasion.

However there was one incident when, according to Prof. Lawrenz, Meyer may have allowed his Old Adam to get the better of him. It happened in one of the inter-seminary meetings that brought St. Louis and Thiensville faculty members together to discuss issues, church and ministry in particular. Meyer and his colleagues noted a tendency to display an air of condescension on the part of some St. Louis professors, as though their Ph.D.'s and Th.D.'s were an evidence of superior scholarship. So at one of the conferences for which Prof. Meyer was scheduled to make the main presentation, he frequently employed Latin as his language of choice. During the discussion which followed he also responded to some of the questions in Latin.

While that may have been an incident in which Meyer's Old Adam did get the better of him, it may also have been his way of letting some of his St. Louis counterparts know that their patronizing attitude wasn't appreciated, and that it wasn't contributing anything to help resolve their differences.

In an essay I read in preparation for this assignment, I discovered that Prof. Meyer took courses from the University of Chicago in the years 1913 to 1915 (Biblical and Patristic Greek in 1913; Intermediate Hebrew in 1914 and Jewish History in the Time of Jesus, 1915). In 1913 the instructor appended a note to the report he sent to Meyer. The note read, "I congratulate you heartily upon completing the course. Your grade is 98+ on a scale of 100—the *best mark* attained by any student in this course."³⁰ That was not the kind of thing Prof. Meyer was prone to publish about himself—except perhaps indirectly on the occasion in St. Louis that may have called for it.

Several fellow pastors who knew that I was scheduled to make this presentation today shared some of their own reminiscences about Professors Meyer and Lawrenz. One thing they recalled about Nixie was his habit of never wearing an overcoat, even in sub zero weather. He walked to the Post Office on Main Street in Thiensville every day to get his mail. Only on bitterly cold days did he yield to old man winter by donning a pair of ear muffs and a scarf tucked into his suit coat—and overshoes if he had to plow through snow.

Before the advent of snow blowers, juniors had the responsibility for shoveling a path to the homes of the professors on snowy mornings before breakfast. In my day Prof. Meyer always had his sidewalk shoveled before the *Schneem7nner* could get to it. His sly smile was evidence of his satisfaction at beating us to the task.

Before Meyer vacated the president's residence for one of the homes on campus, his office was adjacent to the arch with windows facing the circular drive. By 5:30 in the morning the light was always on in his study. From our dorm rooms we could see him at his desk already at work. The same thing was true late into the evening. His example served as an unspoken exhortation to "redeem the time" so as to make the most of our ministry.

On February 27, 1953, the student body arranged a party to celebrate Nixie's 80th birthday. We asked his daughter, Lydia, to suggest something useful for a gift. Without second thought she suggested a new Webster's Unabridged Dictionary with a bookstand on casters. Former and current sem students don't need much of an imagination to envision the agenda for the party. The poets highbrow and lowbrow contributed. So did the exegete and an octet. Finally the time came for the presentation of the gift. It was standing in a corner of the old dining hall, covered with a sheet. At the appropriate moment while the Master of Ceremonies was speaking, a pull on a rope raised the sheet to reveal the gift. It was a Harley Davidson motorcycle, loaned for the occasion by Arnie Nemitz (Jr.), the bursar's son. After Nixie had a good chuckle, we gave him his dictionary. He thanked us graciously and then quipped, "I would have preferred the motorcycle."

The last time I had occasion to hear Prof. Meyer speak was as the essayist in June 1964 at the Arizona-California District Convention. The title of the essay was "Synod and Congregation."³¹ Nixie was 91. He presented the essay from the lectern in the mission chapel at East Fork on the Apache Reservation. About 45 minutes after he began, he came to the end of part IV. The chairman, president I.G. Frey, interrupted him and said, "Prof. Meyer, would you like to take a break here?" Meyer grinned and said, "Why, are you getting tired?"

Pastor Robert Hochmuth recalls an incident in January 1947. He was a Junior. His father had just passed away. On a Wednesday afternoon he had driven to West Allis to help his mother settle some legal affairs. By supper time it had begun to snow, hard. Hochmuth decided to wait until the following morning to return to the

sem. By then the infamous blizzard of '47 was in full fury. It produced 22 inches of snow shutting down and tying up everything for days. Hochmuth missed handing in an assignment on Friday of that week. On Monday he went to Nixie to explain that he had good intentions of being back on campus the previous Thursday. With a smile—a good natured, pedagogical one—Nixie commented, “Let this teach you the fallacy of human reason, even in physical affairs.”

On another occasion Hochmuth wanted to accompany a classmate, John Westendorf, to Michigan on a weekend when Westy was scheduled to preach for a special occasion at his home church. Knowing that they might miss some classes on Monday, Hochmuth asked Nixie if he would give his permission. With a kindly smile Nixie said, “Who made me your conscience?” Hochmuth did not go.

Unconditional grace was a theme Nixie never tired of emphasizing. When the bell signaled the end of the period in which the subject for the day was legalism, Nixie’s stock-in-trade conclusion was: “May God fill you with a hatred of legalism.” Legalism in every form constitutes a denial of unconditional grace.

In the spring of 1948, a group of students asked Nixie to conduct a forum to acquaint them with the issues of the Protes’tant Controversy, a subject which was not covered in Church History classes. Minimal familiarity with the faculty’s *Gutachten*, J.P. Koehler’s *Beleuchtung*, and the faculty’s *Antwort* was sufficient to make students aware that charges of false doctrine had been raised by each party to the controversy against the other. Prof. John Jeske still has in his file the notes he took during that forum. According to Jeske, Nixie, who had been one of the principals in the controversy, summed up his presentation with this observation: “As we look back, we see that there was really no doctrinal difference between us and the Protes’tants. In the last analysis, it was an error in judgment.” Then he asked, “What can we learn from this tragic affair? Treasure the brotherhood.” Indeed, treasure the brotherhood! That plea is as much in place today as it was then.

Carl J. Lawrenz – Anecdotes and Reminiscences

Prof. Carl Lawrenz has the reputation of being an astute theologian, a compelling teacher, a gifted administrator, as well as a calm, composed and collected leader at a critical and crucial time in the synod’s and the seminary’s history. But as I recall the years of my association with him, one additional thing that stands out in my mind is his pastoral heart. I met with him in the faculty lounge one day to tell him that my wife was scheduled for major surgery. Instantaneously the professor who often seemed preoccupied with other major issues was transformed into a compassionate pastor offering words of consolation and encouragement.

Speaking of hospitals, we visited him at Sinai-Samaritan Hospital shortly after he had heart surgery in April of 1979. When we entered the room, he was sitting on the edge of his bed. We voiced our surprise. In response he said, “Let me show you what else I can do.” He stood up, bent down, and touched his toes.

Three months later he was scheduled to participate in the Seminary’s Summer Quarter in Israel at Tel Michal, and he was determined not to let his heart surgery prevent him from participating. He must have used all his persuasive power to convince his doctor to allow him to go. During a side trip to an old archeological site at nearby Aphek (Antipatris), he fell about five feet from a wall. To the amazement of everyone, he got up, brushed himself off and continued on the tour. Whether or not he was stiff and bruised the next day he wouldn’t say.

One sunny Sunday afternoon in summer, Carl and Irene were driving around on campus in their son David’s bright yellow Excalibur convertible. I suggested that we should take his picture behind the wheel, and the next time he wrote an article for *The Northwestern Lutheran*, he could use the picture to accompany the article. The thought appealed to him, but he didn’t think the editor would go for it.

These anecdotes provide a glimpse of the human side of a former teacher and colleague. But our primary concern today is with his serious side—the side that has done so much to shape this seminary and the synod. That side of his character was evident already in his student days. The evidence suggests that he was always a serious and competent student. A testimony to that is the fact that he was chosen to present the English oration (“America’s Debt to Lord Shelburne”) at the Fifty-eighth Annual Commencement at Northwestern College on June 13, 1929. (His classmate, Hilton Oswald, gave the German Oration.)

Both as a teacher and as a writer Lawrenz impressed us with his analytical mind and his clarity of thought. Both traits served the synod well during the developing crisis within the Synodical Conference. His analysis of C.F.W. Walther's position on church and ministry offers a classic example of his analytical mind at work. Pastors who attended the Fall Pastors' Institute here at the seminary in 1979 saw that analytical mind at work in Lawrenz's lectures entitled "An Evaluation of Walther's Theses on the Church and its Ministry."³²

His clarity of thought is evident especially in his presentations on the issue of church fellowship. Nine of his essays in the Essay File in the seminary library deal with the doctrine of church fellowship. That same clarity is displayed in the exposition of his five theses on "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture."

A couple of examples serve to illustrate that the same traits which are evident in his writing were also characteristic of his teaching. Prof. Richard Balge recalled that, in a faculty meeting, Lawrenz once pointed out that while it is appropriate to apply the expression "secret society" to the lodge, the secrecy is not really the objectionable feature of the lodge. "After all," Lawrenz said, "the family is a secret society, and that is not objectionable." From his student days Balge also remembers a Middler Catechetics class in which Lawrenz presented a double-edged demonstration of the third use of the law, directing the second edge to the students. "It is the third use of the law when I warn my children not to play too close to Seminary Drive – because sometimes the students drive too fast on Seminary Drive."

Pastor Richard Warnke recalled that there were times when an administrative matter came up while Prof. Lawrenz was teaching a class. Warnke wrote,

Not surprisingly, Pewee was called out of the classroom on occasion to deal with some urgent administrative problem or question, always by Irene. One day, she came to the door to summon him, interrupting him in the middle of a sentence. When he returned 10 or 15 minutes later, he continued exactly where he had left off, right from the middle of the sentence.

Prof. Lawrenz's powers of concentration were phenomenal. He was capable of blocking out of mind everything that was going on around him. In the faculty lounge during morning breaks, while other faculty members gathered in groups to air their views about some current issue, Lawrenz frequently sat in his chair at the end of the table totally engrossed in thought, completely oblivious to what his colleagues were doing. Pastor Richard Warnke observed,

Of course, we all remember him as a unique character who was a combination of genius and impractical, keenly perceptive in theological matters but at times out of touch...He could stop and have a long and friendly chat with a person one day, and the next day ignore you completely because he had other things on his mind as he hurried by.

Today we are what we are as a synod in part because of the "other things" Prof. Lawrenz had on his mind when he secluded himself with his thoughts. Genius comes as close as anything else to characterize him.

Concluding Observations

In 1978 the seminary faculty was engaged in a long and arduous self-study mandated by the synod. The report that resulted from that Self Study says:

Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is a confessional school. As such it accepts Holy Scripture as the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God and recognizes the Confessions of the Lutheran Church as a true and correct exposition of that Word. Hence all the courses of the Seminary, theoretical and practical as well as the vicarship program, are arranged to maintain a scriptural

and confessional emphasis. This scriptural and confessional emphasis rules out the option of doctrinal picking and choosing by either faculty or students. Both are bound by the Word of God. Such a program is in conformity with that which the Apostle envisioned when he directed Timothy: “The things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also” (2 Tm 2:2).

That “Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary is a confessional school” faithful to the Word of God is something for which the Holy Spirit is responsible. And for that we cannot thank God enough. But the Holy Spirit is not and has not been a member of the faculty or a president of this institution. Yet he does have something to do with the calls extended to members of the faculty and to the presidents who serve here. He also bestows the gifts and talents they need to keep this seminary on track as a “confessional school.” But the Holy Spirit will surely not take it amiss as we single out and honor two pastoral educators, John Meyer and Carl Lawrenz, for the roles they have played under God in helping to make and keep this seminary what it has been during its 75 years on this campus. I’m not sure they would feel comfortable if they were here today. But they aren’t here and we are. And we have done what is right and proper. We have remembered two leaders who have spoken to us the Word of God. And we have considered the outcome of their way of life so that, with God favoring us, we can continue to imitate their faith for untold years to come.

Endnotes

¹ Zittau was in Winnebago County, west of Neenah-Menasha near Winchester. Zittau is no longer listed on the Wisconsin State map nor in the Synodical Yearbook.

² Meta Behnken was an aunt of Dr. John Behnken, long time president of the LC-MS. Prof. J.P. Meyer and John Behnken were first cousins. For a poignant and descriptive letter Pastor Meyer wrote to his fiancée in Germany in 1871, see Edward Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, NPH, pp. 74-77.

³ *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 127.

⁴ The Chicago Theses were the product of an ecumenical effort which began in 1916 in Sibley County, Minnesota (Gaylord, Arlington, Winthrop) to resolve the differences regarding Conversion and Election which had led the Ohio and the Norwegian Synods to withdraw from the Synodical Conference because of their espousal, among other things, of *intuitu fidei* in the doctrine of election. In *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, Prof. Fredrich calls the Chicago Theses a “failed effort at Lutheran unity.” “The ‘Chicago Theses’ endeavor must be reckoned as the last viable effort to enlarge the sway of the Synodical Conferences theological stance,” *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 179.

⁵ The number 250 is the number cited by Prof. Carl Lawrenz in the Meyer “Memoriam” he wrote for the *WLQ* (62:1, p.69.). Evidently it refers to the number of essay articles in the *WLQ* index. A Church History paper in the library’s essay file by Craig Engel notes that Meyer contributed 795 items to the *WLQ*. See: “A Student’s Perspective of Johannes Peter Carl Meyer based on recollections of some of his students,” p.8. That number apparently includes News and Comments items and book reviews from Meyer’s pen.

⁶ The 1982 *Statistical Report* lists 1119 ordained men serving in congregations, executive positions and at NPH; plus another 48 as teachers in area Lutheran high schools and at WLC, with three parish pastors serving also as teachers in area Lutheran high schools.

⁷ *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 87:1, p. 10.

⁸ Before I knew it as the Wauwatosa Theology, we called it the Wauwatosa Gospel. The terms are interchangeable.

⁹ *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 84:1, pp. 3-5.

¹⁰ *The Wauwatosa Theology*, p. 10. In addition, Volumes 86 and 87 of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly* contain a series of articles on “The Seminary Curriculum.” In the article “Systematic Theology at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary,” Prof. Wilbert Gawrisch asserts, “This emphasis on exegesis in the study of dogmatics is a unique heritage of the WLS....Biblical dogmatics is and must be based on exegesis.” Gawrisch makes this assertion about “a unique heritage” after comparing the Systematic Theology offerings at Missouri, ELCA and ELS seminaries to that of WLS. The CLC’s Immanuel Lutheran Seminary is the only seminary whose approach to dogmatics is similar to the WLS’s method, according to Gawrisch.

¹¹ Pieper says:

Walther naturally was the teacher of dogmatics, which was regarded as the queen of the theological disciplines. He also taught pastoral theology. The special emphasis put on pure doctrine, which now had become a synodical emphasis, and the towering personality of Walther together with the impractical arrangement of other subjects led to the result that only dogmatics and pastoral theology were actually studied and little or nothing was learned in other subjects....New Testament exegesis consisted mainly of dictated quotations from the Lutheran exegetes of the 16th

and 17th centuries....Actually, then, the students came out of the seminary without having the slightest ability in exegesis. In fact, they had not even studied a single book of Holy Scripture somewhat thoroughly. Our doctrinal battles were fought to a large extent with the 17th century fathers as our authorities....although we emphasized the *sola scriptura* strongly in principle again and again, we were bound inwardly more and more to the authority of the fathers and taken captive by them....We harvested what we had sown unwillingly and unsuspectingly. We had made a cult of the fathers.

Even after discounting Pieper's flair for overstatement, that still comes off as a serious indictment of Concordia's methodology.

¹² Martin Westerhaus, "The Wauwatosa Theology: The Men and Their Message," p.96. Westerhaus's contention that "they passed on...the theology of Luther" is a valid and important observation. The Wauwatosa Theology elucidates Luther's Theology of the Cross in that it provides an exposition in detail of what Luther set forth in the Heidelberg Theses, theses 19, 20 and 24 in particular. Nineteen states: "That person does not deserve to be called a theologian who looks upon the 'invisible' things of God as though they were clearly 'perceptible in those things which have actually happened'." Twenty states: "He deserves to be called a theologian, however, who comprehends the visible and manifest things of God seen through suffering and the cross." Twenty four states: "Yet that wisdom is not of itself evil, nor is the law to be evaded; but without the theology of the cross man misuses the best in the worst manner." Luther then proceeds in theses 25 - 28 to expound on God's work in us, the righteousness of faith.

¹³ Leigh Jordahl, *History of the Wisconsin Synod*. (St. Cloud, MN: Sentinel, 1970), Introduction, p. xxiv.

¹⁴ Peter Prange, "Pastor E. Arnold Sitz and the Protestants: Witnessing to the Wauwatosa Gospel," pp 3-4. Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary Library, Essay File, no. 2712.

¹⁵ Adolph Hoenecke. *Dogmatik III* (Milwaukee, WI: NPH, 1909), p. 355. My translation: "Insistence on universal justification is necessary in order to preserve the real substance of the gospel."

¹⁶ *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 45:1, pp. 1-3.

¹⁷ Meyer, J.P., *Ministers of Christ*, p. 109.

¹⁸ *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 61:4, pp 233-265.

¹⁹ Edward Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p.265 Another colleague, John Jeske, pays similar tribute to Lawrenz in the preface to *A Commentary on Genesis 1-11*. Jeske writes,

In the minds of a whole generation of pastors in the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod, the book of Genesis is intimately associated with the name Lawrenz....His knowledge of Scripture and of the Hebrew language was thorough, and his acquaintance with the literature of the field was impressive. But what impressed his students most of all was his childlike faith in the Savior, whom he had learned to know from the pages of the Old and the New Testaments. (p.8)

²⁰ *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 86:1, p. 66

²¹ The seminary was founded in 1863 with Prof. Moldehnke serving as the only professor. Prof. Hoenecke began his service at the seminary in 1866.

²² *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*. 62:1, p. 69.

²³ Craig Engel, "A Student's Perspective of Professor Johannes Carl Peter Meyer based on recollections of some of his students," Essay File no 2794. Herman John offers these comments about Prof. Meyer:

I have the highest regard for Professor Meyer. I am most thankful that my father never told me about his difficulties with Professor Meyer. It was not until after my father's death (in 1973) while I was going through some of my father's papers that I realized what a problem my father and grandfather had with Professor Meyer because my father took sides with Professor J.P. Koehler in the Protes'tant Controversy....Professor Meyer's involvement in the failure of my dad to graduate caused dad's parents and brothers and sisters to form a definite dislike for Professor Meyer.

²⁴ For an elaboration of Meyer's view of the Protes'tant controversy, see his essay, "Historical Background which Led to the Foundation of the Protestant Conference," Seminary Library Essay File no. 329.

²⁵ Mark Braun, *A Tale of Two Synods*, pp. 406-408.

²⁶ Edward Fredrich, *The Wisconsin Synod Lutherans*, p. 221.

²⁷ Carl Lawrenz, "Report to the Protest Committee," Seminary Library Essay File no 916. The "Call for Decision" memorial together with the synod's response to the protesters who signed it can be found in the *Proceedings of the Thirty-Fifth Convention*, pages 209-211.

²⁸ *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 86:1, p. 34.

²⁹ Carl Lawrenz, "The Role of Man and Woman According to Holy Scripture," Seminary Library Essay File no. 358.

³⁰ Stephen Meyer, "The Life, Ministry, Stories and Insight of Reverend Henry George Frank Meyer" p. 13. Seminary Library Essay File no. 2948.

³¹ *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, 64:4, pp. 233-265.

³² Carl Lawrenz, "An Evaluation of Walther's Theses on the Church and its Ministry." Seminary Library Essay File no. 1074.

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