

An Objective Examination  
of the Dismissal of  
**Professor Gerhard Ruediger**  
from Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary

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When the year 1978 was just coming into its own, then Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary student, now Pastor Mark Jeske took advantage of a unique opportunity by coordinating a research paper on the subject of the Protestant Conference with the fiftieth anniversary of that conference's publication, Faith-Life. For the reader who is unfamiliar with this controversy which shook the synod to its very core, Pastor Jeske's survey of the circumstances serves extremely well by way of general overview and introduction. Self-admittedly, Jeske's treatment of the controversy is incomplete. He sought to divulge the basic story to the unfamiliar reader. This essay means to examine more closely just one facet of the Protestant story. The writer would highly recommend Jeske's overview to the reader who is unacquainted with the Protestants. The goal of Jeske's paper was to "narrate and analyze the events of the early crisis years as coherently as possible, and thus to make the basic story known to the casual reader and perhaps to clear away some of the clutter for the more serious student who wishes to pursue a certain angle."<sup>1</sup> The title page indicates which angle we wish to pursue in a little more depth--the Ruediger case, as it came to be known.

Just as there were certain circumstances obtaining in 1978

which prompted an overview of the Protes'tant controversy (the golden anniversary of the conference's publication), so the topic of this essay also is not mere happenstance. Although it may not be apparent to anyone except present-day members of the Protes'tant Conference and the occupants of Church History chairs in conservative Lutheran seminaries in the Midwest, Faith-Life is presently near the conclusion of a series of articles which (with that publication's intentional bias) review Prof. Gerhard Ruediger's removal from his professorship at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary. For the most part, that series of articles is a reprinting of identical articles which appeared in the same publication decades ago, only auf deutsch. Yet, as the publishers of Faith-Life continue to fan embers long devoid of any spark, it is this essayist's desire to print certain facets of the Ruediger story which undoubtedly will not appear in Faith-Life's reprinting and perhaps have never been aired at all.

There is more to the turning out of this paper, however, than simply the fact that Faith-Life is running the story again. Having attended Michigan Lutheran Seminary from 1977-78 through 1980-81, this writer found himself in the same class as a young man named Tom Ruediger. Tom is the grandson of Prof. Gerhard Ruediger. Tom also was and remains today a close friend. To have lived with him as a roommate in the dormitory, known his brother Tim quite well, and visited a number of times in the Paul Ruediger home have, throughout the years, all contributed to at least an appreciation and shallow understanding of the

type of man Prof. Ruediger must have been. It is from a personal interest in the Ruediger family that this essay originates.

The title of the essay will indicate, however, that personal interest in the family will not give the writer license to bias any of what he presents. The purpose of this work is to be true to the title and to give an objective examination of Prof. Ruediger's dismissal from the Seminary. It might surely be said of such a work that it must somehow smack of judgment, defamation, or of the tactless continuance of a dead issue. None of these, however, are reasons for the writing of this paper. As will be demonstrated throughout the body of this essay, there have been bottles of ink spilled from the Protestant side of the fence on the Ruediger case alone. There has scarcely been the cartridge of one, cheap, ballpoint pen expended by anyone else to begin to try to at least explain (not defend or accuse) how a WELS Seminary Professor could be ousted from his chair and thus (as well as subsequently) be disgraced. Pointing the finger and looking for a place or a person on which to lay the blame would be out of place, if not totally arrogant, boorish, and sinful. To judge the hearts of those with whom we have never personally met or conversed, especially after sixty-two years, would be unthinkable. May such neither be written in nor interpreted from this essay. We mean only to present three varying viewpoints, two of which may not have been seen for quite some time, with hopes of making anyone who stumbles onto these incidents of the 1920's at Wauwatosa more informed and better equipped to be objective and not judgmental.

## I. The Interested Party - Faith-Life

For the fact that Prof. Ruediger was never an outspoken proponent of the Protes'tant cause after his removal from the Seminary, it seems that Faith-Life spends a disproportionate amount of column space on his story. They do, however, have their reasons. As we begin to unfold the somewhat complex story of the events leading to Ruediger's dismissal, it will become clear that Ruediger was an excellent opportunity for the Protes'tant Conference (to be subsequently referred to at times as simply "the Conference") to decry the hierarchical hidiousness they perceived the synod officials, Beamtentum, to display. This first of three major divisions will include perhaps a more complete exposition of the actual events which took place, including how the conference reacted to these occurrences at the time and how they still feel about them today.

It will doubtless be of some help to initially give a brief biography of this man about whom we are writing, Gerhard (add a "t" if you prefer the strictly German spelling) Ruediger.

Ruediger's birthdate was December 2, 1881. By birth he was a Minnesotan, the son of immigrant parents from Silesia in Germany. His father Wilhelm was a Missouri Synod pastor who had completed his studies under Dr. Walther at the St. Louis Seminary. Gerhard had a younger brother, Valerius, with whom he worked on the family farm until the age of twenty-three. Gerhard began college at the age of twenty-four, a little later than other boys normally began that road. His stay there was

brief and he switched schools early during his freshman year, opting to attend Dr. Martin Luther College. Already then a person couldn't avoid noticing that Ruediger had a pretty good head on his shoulders. As evidence of this, the reader is directed to Appendix A for a sampling of the verse which this "Minnesota farmboy" was able to produce. For further academic pursuit, Ruediger attended Concordia College in St. Paul, Minnesota. At the time this was a preparatory school for the ministry and Gerhard spent two years of study there. Leaving St. Paul in 1911, Ruediger spent the next three years at the Wauwatosa Seminary, graduating from that institution in 1914 at the age of thirty-two.

The seven years which followed were spent in various locations in Michigan. Assigned from the Seminary as a pastor/teacher, he served at Marion Springs, a small rural community in central lower Michigan. His first five years of service there were put in at St. Peter's, a Wisconsin Synod parish on the north side of town. When, however, the church burned to the ground, St. John's, the Missouri Synod church only a quarter mile south merged with St. Peter's and Ruediger stayed in service to that merged congregation for another year. Just about the time that he had purchased an eighty acre farm in Marion Township, he took a call to Hopkins, MI, and again only a year later received the call to the Church History chair at the Wauwatosa Seminary.<sup>2</sup>

How it was that a man from the sticks in Michigan received a call to be a professor at Wauwatosa is variously explained. From the brief biography above there may be a little of a clue

as to how his qualifications became apparent. Wilhelm, Gerhard's father, was a student under Walther, as were August Pieper and J.P. Koehler, and if Faith-Life's speculation is correct, that Pieper, Koehler, and Wilhelm Ruediger were classmates, it isn't too much of a surprise that the faculty had their eye on their former classmate's son. There was another factor, however, which popularized Gerhard Ruediger, namely, his homiletical skill. From the record it seems that he was a festival preacher quite in demand. Even A. Pieper himself heard and was impressed with the preaching of his former student. F-L reports, "On hearing him preach, August Pieper went about effusing, "Den muessen wir haben!"<sup>3</sup> Here is raised a point which ought to be remembered as we get deeper into the story. Pieper seems to have been instrumental in securing a call for Ruediger to the Seminary. Neither is this just a F-L point of view. With this fact several members of the Ruediger family readily concur.

In F-L, Vol. XI, no. 1, a "Chronology of the Controversy," was printed giving the big events in the Protes'tant story. Having historically now gotten Ruediger to his professorship at the Seminary, we'll quickly review the incidents leading to his dismissal; quickly, only because the reader can easily find volume upon volume if he wishes to examine all the events in their full blown context. How Ruediger hit it off upon entering his new calling at the Seminary we are not made totally aware of. If there were any strife beginning to mount, the Watertown thievery case certainly brought it to the fore. The Conference doesn't at all deny that it was Ruediger who called for the infamous "Transcript Meeting" in June of 1924. Leigh



Jordahl writes, "Professor Ruediger, who had arranged for the Watertown meeting, was consequently charged with responsibility as a troublemaker. It was also maintained that Ruediger had discussed the case in his seminary classes, had made slanderous charges against Synod officials and had neglected his academic duties."<sup>4</sup> Not only was Ruediger meeting with opposition for his involvement in the Watertown case, but also for his reference's to the Synod being under God's judgment. The term Verstockung, or hardening, was one which was being tossed about quite casually and frequently by a number of men in Synod in those days, and even before the Beitz paper, the issue of hardening was causing lines to be drawn.

Official heat began to beat down on Ruediger already in October of 1925, almost a year and one half before his ousting. His removal from the Seminary was demanded by the Joint Synodical Committee, but for a time was put off. Not for long, however, for already in July of 1926 did the Board and Faculty of the Seminary meet jointly and come to the decision that they would ask Ruediger to resign unless he were willing to sign a confession penned by Pieper. Not all the Board members were convinced that this was the best way that they could proceed, and the motion to ask Ruediger to resign was reconsidered. He was asked to take a year's leave of his teaching duties at the Seminary. Sensing the opposition around him, F-L reports that he wrote his own confession, dated September 18, 1926. This confession satisfied everyone on the board and the faculty except Pieper. Supposedly Ruediger's own confession was not inclusive

enough of the offenses which Pieper had in mind and which he would have enumerated in his draft of his colleague's confession. Nevertheless, Pieper, Henkel, and Meyer handed Ruediger a written absolution, including how satisfied they were with the extent of his confession and their willingness to help him recover his good name and teaching status. A little over a month later, the Joint Synodical Committee met again and suggested that the Seminary Board again ask Ruediger to resign, citing the fact that confidence in him had been too greatly shaken for him to continue as a professor at the Seminary. The board agreed and approached Ruediger, but the professor, now again beset by his colleagues and "bosses," refused to resign. With such a stalemate the board did not put up for long. On the 31st of January, 1927, Prof. Gerhard Ruediger was deposed. Four days later, the Northwestern Publishing House circulated a one page sheet on which were typed out Ruediger's confession, the absolution of his colleagues, and the ouster notice from the Seminary Board.

Ruediger's own reaction to these proceedings is recorded in F-L. It is not only F-L which consistently comes down hard on August Pieper. Ruediger and Pieper, to make a gross understatement, did not get along toward the end of Ruediger's tenure. Concerning the charges raised against him by the board, Ruediger wrote, "Now of course the Seminary Board, at Pieper's instigation, had to deal with me because of the Watertown Meeting. Pastors Hoenecke and Knuth were chosen to do this. No doubt these people tried in their own way, to deal uprightly. But that was impossible from the outset because of Pieper's ban. There was also pressure from the entire officialdom, and from

the 'spirit' generated by Pieper throughout the entire synod."<sup>5</sup> These comments were solicited from Ruediger by F-L after his dismissal. The Conference also published Ruediger's response to the charges of his three colleagues, Pieper, Meyer, and Henkel. Their charges were as follows: 1) that without a call Ruediger had convened the Watertown meeting; 2) that he acted unjustly in calling a one-sided, partisan assembly; and 3) that by publishing the transcript of the meeting he had strengthened the divisions in Synod and done harm to the kingdom of God. Ruediger's reply: "Really only Prof. Pieper is under consideration here. Professor, you are the last one to have any business to judge whether someone 'has a call to do something.' Calling the Watertown meeting a 'one-sided, partisan assembly' is ridiculous on your part. And you should know better. You owe me this first of all, to own up to this."<sup>6</sup> As F-L here presents it, and as others will substantiate, the clash was primarily between Ruediger and Pieper. F-L will repeatedly pick up on that point in its castigations of Pieper.

Continuing with several of F-L's quotations of Ruediger and remembering that these comments were procured only a year after the removal, while the wounds were still open and much healing still to be done, we turn to the confession itself. Here we see some of the stuff which keeps the Conference publishing. Ruediger's own purpose in writing the confession, even at a time when his bags were practically packed to leave Wauwatosa, was to clear away the past and make way for the future. He writes, "I took all the responsibility upon myself,

hoping thereby that others might be left undisturbed. There was also the tender hope of thereby making an approach toward peace. With a heavy heart I allowed this confession to be wrung out of me, hoping that even a hard-hearted Pieper might come to reason with time, and permit us to reason with him. But now everything was supposed to be alright, as Prof. Meyer testified repeatedly."<sup>7</sup> We hear from Prof. Ruediger once more in this regard, concerning the confession. "That Prof. Pieper pressured the board to print it and distribute it throughout the entire synod, even though I gave my permission--to that I say: only a person of very low morals deals that way; a decent heathen wouldn't act in such a way. But in respect to the confession wrung from me by Pieper: Professor, now I call you to account for this in the sight of God. May God not retain this sin against you, nor let his wrath strike your soul. With that, professor, we are through."<sup>8</sup>

After 1928, Ruediger, for all practical intents and purposes, removed himself not only from Wauwatosha but from the controversy. Having returned to the 80 acre farm he had purchased just previous to taking the Hopkins call, he spent 32 years in a unique role as a sort of permanent vacancy pastor at St. John in Marion Township. The men of the Conference, however, did not so quietly fade away but held the issue clenched in their jaws, not willing to give it up. Especially obvious is this from their treatment of the confession, absolution, and ouster notice which was published and distributed to the called workers in synod. Read here a few selections from the article in which the absolution was published (confer appendix

B for the German, confer below, section II for translation). "The utter hypocrisy of it. They were not prompted by heartfelt joy, by brotherly love, and gratitude to God to tender this thing to Ruediger and to broadcast it to th world. Even the uninitiated reader can tell . . .that its purpose is to nail down their charges against Ruediger and to commit him to them black on white."<sup>9</sup> The degree to which the men of the Conference were appalled at this absolution is unmistakably clear. Their fury toward the three professors who signed and delivered it is almost unimaginable, if their words accurately describe their feelings. "If on other occasions our blood has boiled, it froze when we beheld this absolution for the first time. We felt as tho we must rush to Wauwatosa and tell these men face to face: God do so or so to us if we fail to do our duty to tell you in his name that you are liars and blasphemers."<sup>10</sup>

From the fact that all indications point to it being Pieper who had the confession, absolution and ouster notice circularized throughout the synod, he has taken an awful lot of flack from Protes'tant writers through the years. Perhaps this comes for the most part from his, as the Conference men might put it, "antagonist" role in the J. P. Koehler story of a few years later. Nevertheless, F-L makes Pieper out to be the villain in the Ruediger case. Jordahl hints at what Protes'tant writers herald when he says, "Koehler, although well aware of certain less than admirable character flaws in Pieper, had high admiration for him. Pieper, unfortunately, also had a tendency toward superficiality."<sup>11</sup> It's interesting to note that much of what

F-L prints on the Ruediger case is not so much a defense of Ruediger as a searing critique of Pieper and his associates. That remains true to this day.

Philemon Hensel still writes and translates for F-L today, and although Ruediger and Pieper are long since passed, his disposition toward and impression of Pieper remains the same. Speaking of the time when Pieper was trying to get Ruediger to sign the confession which he [Pieper] had drafted, Hensel recalls, "He'd [Pieper] stick a gun between his [Ruediger's] ribs and say, 'Here, sign this.' That's the kind of bird Pieper was."<sup>12</sup> Some of the Protes'tants felt so strongly about how terribly Pieper was conducting himself in the Ruediger case that they actually started protecting him so that others wouldn't come to find out what a scoundrel they perceived him to be.

Again, Philemon Hensel states that Karl Koehler, an early and strong advocate of the Conference, had the opportunity to publish Ruediger's confession, but refrained from doing so not only for Ruediger's sake, but for Pieper's as well, thinking that the confession also put Pieper in a very unfavorable light.

The more one reads about this event in F-L, the more it seems to be true that Ruediger, as far as the Protes'tants are concerned, has now become a convenient means to a Protes'tant end. Consider how the following footnote in Jordahl's introduction takes pains to put Koehler in a favorable light, albeit at the expense of Ruediger. "Koehler had no part in the dealings with Ruediger. It is clear that he stood opposed to the manner in which Ruediger was treated. It is also clear that Koehler

had distinct reservations regarding Ruediger and his activities."<sup>13</sup> Yet F-L brings into its issues of the eighties Ruediger's sermons and papers as examples of orthodox theology and strong Lutheranism. Ruediger has been good for the Protes'tants. Have they been good to him? That question falls into the lap of the reader and remains there for his evaluation.

## II. The Disinterested Party - The Wisconsin Synod

It would have been just as easy to weave the story line of the Ruediger case through this section of the paper instead of through the Faith-Life section, in order to balance the length of these first two parts of the essay, but that would have given a false impression--that the Wisconsin Synod has as much to say about this case as does F-L. Such is by no means the case. Not only concerning the Ruediger case but concerning the whole Protes'tant Controversy is the Wisconsin Synod surprisingly (or might we dare even to say characteristically) silent. Leigh Jordahl seems untypically accurate when he says that "Wisconsin has always been extraordinarily reticent about such things as public recognition and publicity."<sup>14</sup> Concerning the Protestant Controversy in particular, he adds, "Nor has the story, from the Wisconsin side, ever been told."<sup>15</sup>

When Prof. J.P. Koehler reported to the Synod about the Seminary, his mention of the Ruediger case was brief and without detail. Perhaps this is understandable since he had been out of the country during a good part of the episode and, overall,

remained a little distant from the dealings with Ruediger. Here is a paragraph from his report. It's almost laughable to see that the Seminary was expressing its concern about the combination of the Church History classes rather than speaking a word about what had happened. Maybe they just wanted to be done with it.

In dem routinemaeszigen Gang der Arbeit kam durch den Abgang Prof. Ruedigers die Aenderung, dasz alle drei Klassen im Geschichtsunterricht wieder zusammen waren. Was die Zahl betrifft, ging das; aber dem Unterricht in der Kirchengeschichte ist es wegen des groszen Gebiets und Materials nicht dienlich, wenn der Unterricht nicht in geschichtlicher Reihenfolge bleibt.<sup>16</sup>

Tangible evidence as to Ruediger's involvement in the Watertown case hardly needed proving from the Wisconsin Synod side. Ruediger had admitted to having meetings in his home before the actual Transcript Meeting took place. The Wisconsin charge against Ruediger for calling the meeting and solidifying the controversy also seems to be entirely justifiable. Ruediger himself admits to calling the Watertown Transcript Meeting in his first statement at that meeting: "I have been calling this meeting and I am responsible for it to a certain extent. The object of this meeting is merely to get clear on this matter. It is a very long story and we have to arrange [?] accordingly. I would advise simply that one of the professors would tell the story step by step and that we view his points from every angle so that in the future we are prepared to meet contradictions."<sup>17</sup> That he called the meeting, yes, the Synod had that on him. But from the transcript alone, that is about all they had. In a transcript of seventy-one pages, Ruediger makes six short statements. He called the meeting but had little to do



with the course that it took.

But ask any Wisconsin Synod person today who is at least somewhat knowledgeable about the Protestant Controversy and the Ruediger case and they'll probably only remember that Ruediger is the man who had his picture in the class composite only for a few years, he caused some trouble, and he was dismissed. Or you might find, if the person has read anything amongst the very little that has been written on the subject, that he remembers that Ruediger was the clumsy-looking one who told dirty jokes in class and wore socks which didn't match. Such are the things which happen when the facts haven't been recorded or at least sought out.

To this writer's knowledge, the most that has been written on the Ruediger case from the Wisconsin side is six pages in Mark Jeske's essay, referred to previously. His is a review of fifty years of F-L and one doesn't have to read too far to note the distinctively Wisconsin slant to his writing. This is not to fault that slant, either, since he is Wisconsin Synod born and bred. That slant might, however, give the first time reader the wrong idea, if not at least take away any chance at objectivity. Jeske refers to Ruediger's confession as "pitiful, abject."<sup>18</sup> Perhaps this is a bit harsh when one considers that after this very confession, Prof. John Meyer repeatedly reassured Ruediger that everything would be fine.

Something that seems to be still up in the air is the question of who wrote this confession on Sept. 18 of 1926. Jeske and others, mostly Protestants, claim that this was Pieper's wording to which Ruediger simply undersigned his name. Ruediger,

in his own writings in 1928, took full credit for this confession, referring to it by date. Appendix D indicates that, regardless of who wrote the version which became a synod mailing, before it was printed, the confession was reviewed and someone on the Wisconsin side made it "better." Ruediger was not only allowed to take the [die] responsibility for the Watertown meeting, he was to take all [alle] the responsibility for it.

A pro-Wisconsin position is also obvious from Jeske's reporting on the absolution given by Henkel, Meyer, and Pieper. In contrast to the abject and pitiful confession which was put forth by Ruediger, the three professors graciously forgave their erring brother. Furthermore, the person who circularized the synod with the confession, absolution, ouster document is referred to as some unknown individual, when a preponderance of evidence indicates that it was Pieper who put the pressure on to get the thing published and into everyone's hands, seemingly not so much for information's sake but to defend the ouster action of the board and indirectly of the faculty. Again, the previous remarks are not to judge against Jeske or anyone else, for they are merely interpreting the research they have done or the opinions they have solicited. This is how we come to have a Wisconsin side to the story.

A crucial bit of documentation for understanding the Wisconsin side of the case is the circular mentioned, which included Ruediger's confession, the Faculty absolution, and the ouster notice of the Seminary Board. The absolution has long been available in the pages of F-L, but the confession and the ouster, as of recent years, have seemingly disappeared. Certainly

there are a number of copies still extant but they most likely lie stuffed away in some attic or basement of those who were the synod's called workers in February of 1927. According to Philemon Hensel, if the Protestant Conference had the document, they would be publishing it in connection with their recent rerunning of the Ruediger story. Since Karl Koehler saw fit not to republish it in the early days, the Conference no longer has a copy of it. Nor is it included in the vertical file at the Seminary. This writer did, however find a copy in the correspondence file of former WELS President Bergemann. This is not intended as a pat on the back but rather demonstrates the lack of publicity and knowledge generally prevalent on the specifics of the Ruediger case. This writer's translation of the document found in Appendix B is here offered.

The Confession of Prof G. Ruediger,  
published by the Seminary Board  
with the consent of Prof. G. Ruediger,  
and delivered to all the pastors and teachers  
(male and female) of our synod

To the faculty and the Board of Control of the Evangelical Lutheran Seminary at Wauwatosa, WI:

Since my conscience compels me, I desire to make this confession before the faculty and board of the Seminary. Were I not to do this, I could neither live nor die in peace.

Especially during the past year I have not fulfilled the duties of the high and greatly responsible office into which God has placed me with the necessary diligence or with earnest conscientiousness. By such conduct I have gravely sinned against the grace of God and against his church.

Especially since the terrible Watertown incident, but also already before that, I have denied the love and esteem rightly due the professors of the Seminary, the individual members of the Board, and other colleagues. I have thereby gravely sinned against the Word of God, "All that you do, do in love," and, "The just will live by his faith."

I've said many bad things before the students. By saying these things I've caused damage to them and to the institution.

The same is true of the unfortunate Watertown meeting of June 12, 1924, for which I herewith assume all responsibility. Even though it didn't take place from the presupposition that the synod was bankrupt, nor in order to strike out at the called workers regarding their call and work, or by any means to rend the synod, and even though it wasn't at all intended to be a public affair or a mass assembly, such as it was it mattered little. In so much as I am under consideration, I did not act out of love toward the Watertown board members, but have wrongfully let them go unheeded. My participation came for the most part out of carnal passion and out of human anger, which don't produce what is right before God. I have, then, caused a split, given offense, at the very least made more difficult the settlement of the incident, and thought, written, spoken, and done much evil.

On account of all these sins God's righteous judgment is now upon me, resulting in strife and chastisement. However, I put my hope in the great mercy of God and believe, that God has already forgiven me for Christ's sake, and that he'll give me opportunity to do much good, so that he'll even allow these serious happenings to serve me and others for the best.

And so I ask that you also forgive me for Jesus' sake, as difficult for you to do as that may be, and that you would help me, that I might become a changed man.

signed, G. Ruediger

Dear brother Ruediger,

We, your brothers in Christ--

we who as your colleagues felt in the due course of time, compelled before others (concerning the offense given by you in the Watertown case) to have a brotherly discussion with you and to bring you to recognize that

1) the well-known Watertown meeting of June 12, 1924, though perhaps not according to the intention and the sentiment of the participants, nevertheless, in fact, was unauthorized, was partisan in its composition, and in its development was a grave violation of the eighth commandment, and that

2) your statements before the students of the Seminary concerning the hardening of the Wisconsin Synod and concerning your being tried are in no manner justifiable,

--we most sincerely rejoice and praise God that you through his grace recognize and confess the sinfulness and offensiveness of the way in which you acted (as characterized above), and we assure you of our heartfelt forgiveness and our willingness, in a brotherly way, to help you with the removal of the offense

and with your efforts toward the restoration of the disturbed brotherly relations and of peace in church affairs. Pieper, Henkel, Meyer

Decision of the Seminary Board of January 31, 1927, concerning Prof. Ruediger

Although Prof. Ruediger's sins, through repentance and confession, have been forgiven and absolved, nevertheless, through his own actions, confidence in him as a teacher at our Seminary has been shattered in such a way and to such a degree (as was especially demonstrated to the Board at the hearing of his case in the session of the Joint Synodical Committee in October, 1926), that the Board feels itself compelled to decide that Prof. Ruediger may no longer be allowed to be a teacher at our Seminary, and herewith, the board decides that his functioning at the Seminary has now come to an end.

Three comments seem to be in order, one for each section. First of all, concerning the confession, one wonders what it was that left Pieper dissatisfied about the contents and the sincerity of the confession. Poor classroom work, disrespect, malicious conversation, the Watertown case, his own human anger, everything seemed to be there. Perhaps Pieper was looking for a withdrawal of the talk about Verstockung. It seems that could be included under malicious talk. It couldn't very likely have been that there was dissatisfaction in that nothing was said about the Beitz paper since that document was only read for the first time in the same month when Ruediger wrote the confession, September of 1926. Perhaps it was lacking any specifics on the Fort Atkinson case and Ruediger's taking up of their position. Yet, the entire faculty, save Koehler who didn't feel that things were being carried out with the necessary propriety, signed the absolution and committed themselves to helping the man bring forth fruits of repentance. From the document itself and from evidence to be cited later from the family, the impression this writer has is that the words are laced with

much sincerity.

Secondly, the absolution does seem a bit strange at first reading. Assuming that there were no premeditated plans of circularizing the document, why the specific list of the charges? It seems only to be a way of propagandizing the Seminary faculty's position against the Watertown Meeting. It would seem that since the confession and absolution were mailed out together, there would be no need for repeating the charges and only a promise of forgiveness. Whether the willingness to help Ruediger become a changed man was accompanied by actions of all or any of the faculty or not is hard to say, so we won't.

Thirdly, the dismissal does seem to be something based on grounds other than any of the problems cited in the absolution. It does give the impression, however, that the Watertown Meeting was not the only place where the eighth commandment was being abused. The committee meeting of October, 1926, gives the impression that mixed or distorted rumors were filling the air. A good name for Ruediger must have been nowhere to be found, even after the supposed "clean slate" of the confession and absolution. Though he felt he had reason to oppose those who sought his resignation, he was only one man. Being given no choice in the matter, he was quickly, and from the vantage-point of sixty years, rather quietly deposed.

Not many in Wisconsin have second-guessed either Pieper or the Board for their actions. Neither will we. I believe that the facts from the Wisconsin side, the disinterested party, are before us. That will suffice.

### III. The Related Side - The Ruediger Family

It might seem that interviewing the son of Prof. Ruediger would decimate the objectivity of this paper. Yet, it is not meant to be that this section is the conclusions that we draw from sections I and II. Section III stands on its own. It adds a third side to the story which hopefully will increase the objectivity of the paper in that now all sides are being represented. Having said that, much of what will follow is the result of a telephone interview with Paul Ruediger, Missouri Synod pastor in West Branch, Michigan, son of Gerhard Ruediger.

In addition to what has already been mentioned biographically about Prof. Ruediger, Gerhard was a man who had a fiery temper, and yet there was a mystique about him. F-L says of him that you'd have thought he found no personal joy in his own salvation but that you would have had to just sense it within him. This seems to correspond to the fact that there always was a certain mystique surrounding his personality, certain parts of which remain a mystery to this day.

We would like to add to what has already been written in the first two sections of this paper only three major thoughts on the dismissal of Prof. Ruediger from the Seminary. They are his involvement in affairs in which he had no place, his confession, and his relationship with August Pieper.

With character insights that only a family member would be truly qualified to render, it appears that in addition to being like a bear robbed of her cubs when crossed, Ruediger

was a man much like the traditional WELS pastor or layman of today; he was one to cheer for and to defend the underdog. Ruediger was also a man who would feel compelled to step into those situations where nothing was being done to solve a problem. Viewed in that light, many of his actions become not necessarily excusable but at least explainable. Put a man like that in the arena of the Watertown Case and what will happen. He would (and Ruediger did) take the side of those being oppressed, in that case the side being that of the faculty members who carried out discipline in what was controversially judged to be an inappropriate manner. Put him in the Fort Atkinson arena and it doesn't take long to see that if a couple of seemingly defenseless girls were being assailed for taking a stand on their beliefs, Ruediger would be at their side, and he was. Let a Beitz paper be published and read and let Beamtentum nail him and his minority following and where would a Gerhard Ruediger be found? Exactly where you'd expect and exactly where he was found in that shibboleth issue, siding with Beitz. In all these three instances, even his later family recognized that he was playing with fire at which he would have done better never even to have looked at, but that's the kind of person he was, one who would become frustrated if nothing were being done where something should be done, one who would side with the underdog perhaps without thoroughly analyzing whether the position of the underdog was the correct one.

Concerning the confession, Paul Ruediger gives the insight that G. Ruediger had a bit of a fiery temper, a little bit of insufficiently bridled impetuosity, but was not a devious per-



son. Prof. Ruediger was not one to write a confession for writing a confession's sake. He was eager to clear the air, sincere in his regret over what he had done. This confession was not just a piece of paper composed to appease men, it was most likely just what the word says, a confession, a heartfelt expression of having done wrong against God and his fellow man. Gerhard Ruediger actually felt more fit to be a professor after his confession and absolution than he perhaps had ever felt since he began occupying the Church History chair in 1921. But then, according to the recollection of the family, Pieper turned on Ruediger in bitterness.

It would be hard for anyone in the Wisconsin Synod to see August Pieper in a strongly negative light. We (I include myself as a Wisconsin Synod writer) usually think of him as a stalwart as far as orthodox theology is concerned, remembering his study under Dr. Walther, his clear exposition of church and ministry, and especially his Isaiah II exegetical commentary. The Ruediger family is not unaware of that background nor is it unappreciative of it. But the Ruediger's today were raised with a different impression of Pieper than most Wisconsin or Missouri people. It appears that the strong, indomitable spirit of August Pieper found an antagonistic counterpart in Gerhard Ruediger. If a pillar like Pieper were going to go off great guns about something toward which Ruediger was unfavorably minded, then Pieper would be receiving a volley of return fire equally as fierce from Ruediger on the issue. Neither of the two was a person to back down at the anticipation of a fray.

From the family's point of view, there was more than shaken

confidence and unacceptable professorial work involved in Pieper's antipathy toward Ruediger. I will only quote the telephone interview with Paul Ruediger for one brief statement which came in response to the question, "What was Pieper's attitude toward your father?" After a brief pause, the response came, "He hated my father." <sup>19</sup> Evidently Ruediger was one of the few men who had detected this character flaw in Pieper, that a fragment of his strong orthodox personality was a touch of German arrogance, and Pieper knew Ruediger had detected it. Thus did Pieper feel compelled to be done with Ruediger.

The Ruediger family does not have a pejorative attitude toward Pieper today, as does F-L. They, too, are somewhat mind-boggled that the same man who had earnestly clamored for G. Ruediger to receive the call to the Seminary, a man who was a theological giant the Nikes of which has been absent in Lutheranism for a good number of years, could have such an inconsistency in his character as to harbor such ill will toward their ancestor. They genuinely recognize that sin was present on both sides of the fence and sincerely trust that on both sides of the fence, it was sin now long since forgiven.

#### Conclusion

Having such a heading would normally mean that at this point, the writer would choose that side which most closely represents his views on the matter. That, in keeping with the title of the essay, will not be done. He will, however add

one closing encouragement. In Matthew 7, our Savior said, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged." In the same chapter, however, he intimates that we will have to do some judging. To recognize false prophets is to make a judgment about their message. We are to look at their fruit and so to know them. And so, I believe that Jesus is not saying that we are to make no judgments at all, but rather, that we are not to judge hearts when we don't have a trustworthy look at the fruits. I contend that sixty-two years has almost exclusively made reliable observance of the fruit in this case an impossibility. We in 1989 are hardly in a position to judge a Ruediger, a Pieper, a Henkel, a Meyer, a Knuth, or a Hoenecke. Let's not judge. Let's be as well-informed and as charitable as is scripturally possible, and then let's move onward.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup>Mark Jeske, A Half Century of Faith-Life, p. 7.
- <sup>2</sup>Paul Ruediger, Letter containing brief biography of G. Ruediger.
- <sup>3</sup>Faith-Life, LXI, #4, p. 11.
- <sup>4</sup>Leigh Jordahl, Introduction to Koehler's History of the Wisconsin Synod, p. xxvii.
- <sup>5</sup>Faith-Life, LXI, #3, p. 11.
- <sup>6</sup>Ibid., p. 15
- <sup>7</sup>Ibid., #4, p. 8.
- <sup>8</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>9</sup>Ibid., III, #9/10, p. 16.
- <sup>10</sup>Ibid.
- <sup>11</sup>Jordahl, p. xix.
- <sup>12</sup>Philemon Hensel, phone interview.
- <sup>13</sup>Jordahl, p. xxvii.
- <sup>14</sup>Ibid. p. ix.
- <sup>15</sup>Ibid. p. xxvi.
- <sup>16</sup>1927 Wisconsin Proceedings.
- <sup>17</sup>Watertown Transcript
- <sup>18</sup>Jeske, p. 35.
- <sup>19</sup>Paul Ruediger, phone interview.

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Appendix A

9. "Farewell Bream," Dichtung von G. Ruediger (Tertia). Musik  
von F. Reuter.  
Doppelquartett.

1. To-night repose and slumber  
My wearied eyes must fly,  
For memories without number  
Unwrapped before me lie.  
The moon is gently streaming  
Upon the blooming scene;  
The night wind whispers dreaming  
In hemlocks' mystic green.  
The rippling brook is wending  
Its solemn evening prayer,  
And elfin song seems chording  
On silver stringed lyre.

2. The dewy roses nodding  
At my last trodden path,  
And sleeping violets budding  
A mournful farewell bade.  
The air was incense laden  
By censers angels swung;  
A charm from distant Eden  
On placid nature clung.  
But lo, a lay heart-rending:  
"Here has thy staying been,"  
From azure vault descending  
Upon this hallowed scene.

3. Farewell, then, hills and meadows,  
Ye dales in woodlands fair;  
Fain would I roam forever,  
Here free of want and care.  
Farewell, my alma mater,  
Hemmed in thy vernal plait  
As by the rippling water,  
In moss a pearl is laid.  
Thy fledgling with devotion  
Shall keep thy image dear,  
And deeper with emotion  
Engrave each passing year.

—G. Ruediger. (Tertia.)

## Appendix B

### Bekennnis Prof. G. Rüdigers, mit Zustimmung Prof. G. Rüdigers vom Seminar-Board veröffentlicht und allen Pastoren, Lehrern und Lehrerinnen unserer Synode zugestellt.

Wauwatosa, Wis., den 18. September 1926.

An die Fakultät und die Verwaltungsbehörde des Evangelisch-Lutherischen Seminars zu Wauwatosa, Wisconsin.

In meinem Gewissen gedrungen, will ich vor Fakultät und Board des Seminars dies Bekenntnis tun, ohne das ich nicht ruhig leben und sterben könnte.

Ich habe das hohe und verantwortungsreiche Amt, in das mich Gott gesetzt hat, besonders im letzten Jahr nicht mit dem nötigen Fleiß und ernstlicher Gewissenhaftigkeit verwaltet und mich damit schwer an der Gnade Gottes und an seiner Kirche versündigt.

Besonders seit dem furchtbaren Watertowner Fall, aber auch schon zuvor, habe ich die Liebe und Achtung gegen die Professoren des Seminars, die einzelnen Glieder des Board und andere Amtsbrüder verleugnet und habe mich damit gegen das Wort Gottes: „Alles, was ihr tut, das tut in der Liebe,“ und: „Der Gerechte wird seines Glaubens leben“ schwer versündigt.

Vor den Studenten habe ich viele und arge Dinge gesagt, und dadurch ihnen und der Anstalt Schaden getan.

Daselbe gilt von der unglücklichen Watertown-Meeting vom 12. Juni 1924, für die ich hiermit alle Verantwortung übernehme. Wenn die auch nicht zustande kam aus der Voraussetzung, daß die Synode bankrott sei, oder um den berufenen Leuten in Amt und Arbeit zu greifen, oder etwa gar, die Synode zu zerreissen, auch gar nicht als öffentliche und Massenversammlung beabsichtigt war, so verächtelt das wenig. Soweit ich da in Betracht komme, habe ich nicht aus Liebe zu den Watertowner Boardgliedern gehandelt, sondern sie in straflicher Weise unberücksichtigt gelassen. Meine Beteiligung kam größtenteils aus fleischlichem Eifer und aus menschlichem Zorn, der nicht tut, was vor Gott recht ist. Ich habe da zerrissen, Ärgernis gegeben, die Beilegung des Falles wenigstens erschwert, viel Arges gedacht, geschrieben, geredet und getan.

Wegen aller dieser Missetaten kommt Gottes gerechtes Gericht jetzt über mich zur Strafe und zur Züchtigung. Ich hoffe aber auf die große Barmherzigkeit Gottes und glaube, daß Gott mir um Christi willen schon vergeben hat, und daß er mir Raum geben wird, vieles gut zu machen, so daß er auch diese schweren Vergehen mir und andern zum besten dienen lassen wird.

Und so bitte ich, daß auch Sie mir um Jesu willen vergeben, so schwer Ihnen das auch werden mag, und daß Sie mir helfen, daß ich ein anderer Mensch werde.

Es zeichnet

G. Rüdiger.

\* \* \*

Lieber Bruder Rüdiger!

Wir, Ihre Brüder in Christo, die wir seinerzeit als Ihre Kollegen uns vor andern gedrungen fühlten, betreffs des von Ihnen im Watertowner-Fall gegebenen Ärgernisses brüderliche Rücksprache mit Ihnen zu nehmen und Sie zu der Erkenntnis zu bringen,

daß die bekannte Watertowner-Versammlung vom 12. Juni 1924, wenn auch nicht der Absicht und Gesinnung der Beteiligten nach, so doch tatsächlich ungerufen, in ihrer Zusammenziehung parteiisch und in ihrem Verlauf eine schwere Verletzung des 8. Gebots war,

und daß Ihre Aussagen vor den Studenten des Seminars über die Verstockung der Wisconsin-Synode und über Ihr Verfolgtwerden sich in keiner Weise rechtfertigen lassen,

freuen uns von ganzem Herzen und preisen Gott, daß Sie durch seine Gnade das Sündliche und Ärgerliche Ihrer Handlungsweise, wie oben charakterisiert, erkennen und bekennen, und versichern Sie unserer herzlichsten Vergebung und unserer Bereitwilligkeit, Ihnen beim Abtun des Ärgernisses und bei Ihren Bemühungen um die Wiederherstellung des gestörten Bruderverhältnisses und des kirchlichen Friedens in brüderlicher Weise behilflich zu sein.

In brüderlicher Liebe zeichnen

Aug. Pieper,

Wm. Senkel,

Joh. Meyer.

Wauwatosa, Wis., den 22. September 1926.

\* \* \*

Beschluß des Seminar-Board vom 31. Januar 1927, Prof. Rüdiger betreffend.

Obwohl Prof. Rüdigers Sünde durch Buße und Bekenntnis vergeben und abgetan ist, so ist doch durch ihn selbst das Vertrauen zu ihm als Lehrer an unserm Seminar, wie sonderlich bei Verhandlung seines Falles in der Sitzung des Allgemeinen Synodalkomitees im Oktober 1926 dem Board bezeugt wurde, in solchem Maße erschüttert, daß der Board sich gezwungen sieht, zu beschließen, daß nicht gestattet werden darf, daß Prof. Rüdiger ferner Lehrer an unserm Seminar sei, und hiermit beschließt, daß seine Tätigkeit im Seminar jetzt beendet ist.

Pastor S. Rnuth,

Pastor W. A. Söncke.

An die Fakultät und die Verwaltungsbehörde  
des lutherischen Seminars zu  
Wauwatosa, Wis.

In meinem Gewissen gedrungen will ich vor Fakultät und Board des Seminars dies Bekenntnis tun, ohne das ich nicht ruhig leben und sterben könnte.

Ich habe das hohe und verantwortungsvolle Amt, in das mich Gott gesetzt hat, besonders im letzten Jahr nicht mit dem nötigen Fleiss und ernstlicher Gewissenhaftigkeit verwaltet und mich damit schwer an der Gnade Gottes und an seiner Kirche versündigt.

Besonders seit dem furchtbaren Watertowner Fall, aber auch schon zuvor, habe ich die Liebe und Achtung gegen die Professoren des Seminars, die einzelnen Mitglieder des Board und andere Amtsbrüder verleugnet und habe mich damit gegen das Wort Gottes: "Alles, was ihr tut, das tut in der Liebe", und: "Der Gerechte wird seines Glaubens leben", schwer versündigt.

Vor den Studenten habe ich viele und arge Dinge gesagt, und dadurch ihnen und der Anstalt Schaden getan.

Dasselbe gilt von der unglücklichen Watertown <sup>alle</sup> meeting vom 12. Juni 1924, fuer die ich hiermit die Verantwortung uebernehme. Wenn die auch nicht zustande kam aus der Voraussetzung, dass die Synode bankrott sei, oder um den berufenen Leuten in Amt und Arbeit zu greifen, oder etwa gar die Synode zu zerreißen, auch gar nicht als öffentliche und Massenversammlung beabsichtigt war, so verschlaegt das wenig. Soweit ich da in Betracht komme, habe ich nicht aus Liebe zu den Watertowner Boardgliedern gehandelt, sondern sie in straflicher Weise unberuecksichtigt gelassen. Meine Beteiligung kam grossenteils aus fleischlichen Eifer und aus menschlichen Zorn, der nicht tut, was vor Gott recht ist. Ich habe da zerrissen, Aergernis gegeben, die Beilegung des Falles wenigstens erschwert, viel Arges gedacht, geschrieben, geredet und getan.

Wegen aller dieser Missetaten kommt Gottes gerechtes Gericht jetzt ueber mich zur Strafe und zur Zuechtigung. Ich hoffe aber auf die grosse Barmherzigkeit Gottes und glaube, dass Gott mir um Christi willen schon vergeben hat, und dass er mir Raum geben wird, vieles gut zu machen, so dass er auch diese schweren Vergehen mir und andern zum Besten dienen lassen wird.

Und so bitte ich, dass auch Sie mir um Jesu willen vergeben, so schwer Ihnen das auch werden mag, und dass Sie mir helfen, dass ich ein anderer Mensch werde.

Es zeichnet

G. Kaediger.



## Anniversary Sermon\*

Preached at Elroy and Marshfield, Wisconsin, November, 1925

By GERHARDT RUEDIGER, 1881-1966

Tr. MARCUS KOCH, 1954

And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked; I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in fire, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see.

As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.

Revelation 3:14-22

THE SKY IS DREAR, the fields are bare—to early wintry winds blast at the door, the very soul shivers if it must wander along the frost-killed paths of the world. We have come into the House of God. Here it is warm and comfortable. Here let us tarry an hour and worship. In the spirit, however, let us fly far over distant lands and seas; we come to rest on an island. We must also turn back the clock of time for many centuries, for here we want to visit a man; we want to see and hear what he saw and heard. John is there, an exile, because of his witnesship for Jesus. He had been present on the Mount of Ascension and heard the words: 'All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth; therefore go ye into all the world; you will be my witnesses.'

That word had been fulfilled. They had witnessed to one whose name is Jesus. He is the Son of God who walked on this earth. He bowed himself in humility and shouldered the burden of all the world's sin. They had spoken of how this Jesus had carried this burden to the cross and suffered at the hands of the world as though He were the one sinner, yea, sin itself personified. How this Jesus with His God-blood and His life had paid all guilt and debt, and yet while in the horror of damnation held faithfully and truly to His Father in heaven. They had told how He—because He had poured out His soul unto death and had made judgment and the grave His dwelling place—had brought life and salvation to a world that lay at enmity with God, and how he was consigned to eternal death; that He would come again, would end the dominion of every nation of the world, and would set up

His heavenly kingdom forever.

Many whose hearts were pierced received these words. Many gnashed their teeth and vented their fury by killing those messengers of peace from the Mount of Olives. Peter is already crucified; Paul is beheaded; others have disappeared; the bodies of some had been mutilated; many had suffered and been glorified like their Lord and Saviour. Only John is left, a grey-haired sage, who as a youth had leaned on Jesus' bosom. The wrath of Emperor Domitian had torn him from his congregation and exiled him to the lonely island of Patmos.

But this message had also penetrated the hearts of others. To them was given repentance unto life eternal. In the blood-stained footsteps of the disciples sprouted and blossomed many a congregation, a glory to its Lord. We hear especially of seven nucleus congregations in Asia Minor; light-towers they were, who beaconed the true light from heaven out onto the highways and byways. And now the glorified Master at the right hand of God comes to this lonely disciple whom He loved and reveals to him in vision and in word the present status of the seven churches He loves. John first beholds the picture of the congregation in Ephesus.

*Ephesus* is the portal to Asia Minor and was at that time a harbor city. The missionaries arrive. The local congregation sends them into the hinterland, an exemplary congregation, rich in good works. She retains the doctrine painstakingly pure, the sacraments unpolluted. Stern church discipline is her practice; if an apostle cannot pass the colloquium before the elders of Ephesus, he is not licensed to preach. Unending patience they showed toward the weak; unflinchingly they suffer for Christian doctrine's sake. Untiring and zealous is she in good works. Everything in the congregation at Ephesus appears to be well ordered.

But the Lord with eyes like flames of fire searches the heart. There He finds something: I have somewhat against thee, because thou hast left thy first love. Love, faith are dying away. What now does the Lord say to her? Be more zealous in labor and patience? No, rather—Repent! Change your attitude! An about-face, a return to the first love is the only thing that can save you. Naught else can avail: pure doctrine, zeal, patience, nothing, the Lord will cast down the light-tower, His Word, from off its foundation.

*Smyrna* is outwardly poor, is despised, belittled. But in the Lord's eyes she is rich. She has faith, love, spiritual life. She is worthy in His sight. He holds her securely in His hand.

*Sardis* has the reputation that she lives. Appearances deceive. The Lord says: You are dead. Only a few at *Sardis* have life. To them the Lord says: Be strong and strengthen the others that are dying.

At *Pergamos* is Satan's seat. This congregation also is stained with Balaam's vice. There repentance is needed, lest the Lord come quickly and fight against them with the sword of His mouth. Yet also here are some that deny not His name.

In *Thyatira* there is much faith, zeal, works and patience. But Jezebel's vices are practiced there.

*Philadelphia* has yet a little strength. This the Lord means to strengthen mightily.

For *Laodicea*, however, He has sharp judgment. There the congregation is lukewarm—a nauseating distaste in His mouth. Not that He sees here such great wickedness as in some of the other congregations. But the fact that she is lukewarm, that is more serious in His eyes. Every description and warning closes with the admonition: 'He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches.' This applies to congregations at all times, applies also to us.

We are celebrating an anniversary today: the seventy-fifth of our Synod. This is a most somber day. On anniversaries men are most apt to celebrate themselves. They like to pat themselves and others on the back and kid themselves; and Christians, too, are wont to indulge in self-praise. Let us give ear to the voice of Revelation and hear:

### What the Spirit Saith To the Congregation at Laodicea

LIKE all the cities in Asia Minor, the city of *Laodicea* had developed its own characteristics peculiar to its geographical situation. It lay at the crossroads of two great highways, the one from the west, the other from the south. Seleucus, one of the generals of Alexander the Great who had conquered Asia Minor, had rebuilt the city and assigned to her the mission of carrying Greek culture into Phrygia, the region stretching to the northeast interior. This assignment *Laodicea* had not carried out; she had instead taken care of her own needs.

*Laodicea* became a commerce- and trade-center and had grown prosperously rich. On the surrounding hills grazed a special breed of sheep bearing brilliant black wool, the like of which has never again been known. From this wool costly garments were woven that were famous throughout the world and which brought fabulous prices. Famous physicians and schools of medicine were in *Laodicea*; especially famous was an eye powder produced here that was in great demand the world over.

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(Continued from page 1)

to do with the kerygma is not the church's commission.

b). The identification "critique of the church = ministry in the Word" applies without any qualification whatsoever. Whatever does not belong to this service, whether it appears as service to the congregation, mission service, whatever, is not the church's task.

c). Only under these presuppositions do we have the right, and therewith the duty as well, to speak of exercising critique of the church. It seems to reveal at the very least a most arbitrary way of thinking when a synod through suspensions seeks to take away the right to criticize from men who are compelled in their conscience to speak.

2. As proclamation, critique of the church (it might be better to say, of church conditions) is subject to the same rules as preaching.

a). The herald is nothing, the message is everything. Regarding critique that means: what matters is not the individuals involved, but the message of the Gospel which has been committed to us.

b). The critic and the criticized are always on the same side of the battle, not the one on God's side and the other opposed to Him; but both under judgment, both under grace. That is the meaning of Luther's thesis: We are always in the state of repentance!

(Continued in November/December, page 6)

### Please Note

Even though, for mailing purposes, the September/October and November/December numbers have been set up separately, they are being sent out at the same time as if they made up just one number.

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This city had learned how to deal with all manner of peoples, and its citizens readily accommodated themselves to the strangers that sought to trade there. Anything that might offend had been carefully eliminated. They had learned to be ultra-tolerant. No isolationism in Laodicea. It stood for no conviction, but accommodated itself wisely to all circumstances and events as they approached. Its citizens felt that they had everything well in hand: I am rich and well satisfied and in need of nothing. When an earthquake shook all of Asia Minor, wreaking havoc and destruction during the reign of Emperor Tiberias, the latter offered his aid to all the cities; most of them gladly accepted, Laodicea proudly declined.

A Christian congregation had been founded in this city also, possibly from Ephesus by way of Colosse. Here the city received its new assignment or call: to carry the glad tidings of salvation in Jesus out onto the highways and byways. In the beginning, when the first love still bloomed, she may well have done so. But all too soon she accommodated herself to the spirit of the citizenry. She neglected her heavenly calling, adjusting herself to events and environment. There was no conviction, no definite way of life (*entschiedenes Wesen*); they were carefree and well content with themselves. The church prospered outwardly.

And so, when God, when an earnest Christian, sounded the warning, the church responded: I am rich, have plenty of goods, I am in need of nothing. It was a lukewarm, deceitful, and wavering Christianity. But He that proves men's hearts has eyes like flames of fire. He sees these things with eyes of holy mercy. He is the Amen, the Truthful One, and cannot abide this deceitful way of life. He says: I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot. If you had remained cold, if my love had never warmed you, if the fire of true faith had never quickened you, there would yet be hope for you. If only you were warm in love toward me, zealous in your calling, if you but stood firm and fast to me! But as it is, in this lukewarmness of yours you are an abomination to me; you nauseate me like warm, stagnant water; I will spew thee out of my mouth, discard you totally. That is a terrible judgment the Lord pronounces here. And mark: the Lord doesn't see gross wickedness here in Laodicea, as He did in Pergamos or in Thyatira; this is even more abominable; this lukewarmness is intolerable to Him. The salt of Laodicea had lost its savor; her light shone no more. Oh, how serious is what the Spirit says to the church at Laodicea!

This land in which we live, in which our synod was founded and grew, the state of Wisconsin, is a beautiful, prosperous area. Our highways and our

mode of travel are certainly far superior to that of Laodicea. Our country is rich. We live in panelled houses, are clothed in costly garments, and feast on sumptuous meals. Our physicians treat almost every curable disease with success in palatial hospitals and clinics. We are enjoying what the world calls prosperity in full measure! I am rich, I am satisfied, and lack nothing: that is the general sentiment. We as a people know how to woo the good will of all the world. We are adept at adjusting ourselves to all circumstances. In short, we are good world citizens.

The church, *i.e.*, the congregation of Christians, is not exempt from the trends and activities of her particular times. In one way or another, Christians are children of their times and environment. We as a synod have grown from very small and meager beginnings to a relatively large body in a short time. Our schools, colleges, and seminaries represent a respectable figure. And for the future our plans call for still greater things; and the execution of those plans is altogether possible. We have retained the doctrine pure and the sacraments untainted according to Christ's institution. Most certainly it is meet that we thank God today and praise and glorify Him by confessing: The Lord hath done great things for us, whereof we are glad. Praise His Holy Name! O, that we might also remember our teachers, who have spoken the word of God to us, who have done the pioneer work, whose fruit we now enjoy! They are resting from their labors, and on that great day, that final anniversary, the righteous Judge will grant them according to their faith and also according to their works.

#### For Us — the Handwriting on the Wall

**B**UT FOR US the handwriting on the wall, the handwriting of scriptures and history: *Mene, mene, tekel*. We are being weighed today by Him Who has eyes like flames of fire and Who searches out the innermost recesses of our hearts. It is He that writes our unspoken thoughts and unfulfilled plans into the book of His omniscience with indelible script. On that day He will speak the final judgment concerning all things, even the most obscure and insignificant things, also those in the church.

It is of vital concern for us today, in the earnestness of eternity, to go into judgment with ourselves, so that we be not judged. The only proper and correct way of celebrating the anniversary is that we examine ourselves and count the pulse of our spiritual life; that we see and hear what hour has struck in the watchtower of God's kingdom; that we recognize the signs of the times. Let us

hear what the Spirit says to the churches, the congregations, the synods, especially what He says to the congregation at Laodicea; according to this let us prosecute ourselves, lest we, too, be finally judged and found wanting.

Today, on the anniversary, it is vital that we first and foremost practice self-criticism. All sincere Christians lament that we no longer have the spirit of the fathers; the first love has chilled, spiritual life is dying: we have become lukewarm. We have lost the scent for those things which are above, otherworldliness, and have set our affection on the things of this world, we have lost appetite for poor sinners' porridge; we are slothful in the real business of the Kingdom: daily to apprehend, to grasp Christ anew in faith and to receive from His fulness grace upon grace. We have already learned to be satisfied with a lukewarm Christianity. Delilah has put Samson to sleep with strong wine and cut off his seven locks. We learn to take our conscience in hand as a potter the clay, shaping it to conform to the circumstances.

The spiritual life is no longer as sincerely a matter of the heart, but it is predominantly a matter of the intellect. We know and hold it to be true: I am a lost and condemned sinner and have earned only temporal death and eternal damnation. That's what we learned; we are convinced of it. But do we believe it? Ah, to believe is something quite different from knowing it intellectually. We all know and hold it to be true, are convinced that Jesus is God's Son, and that there is salvation in none other. Whoever denies that is severely disciplined, and justly so. But do we believe that? Has Christ taken form in us? Does Christ live in us? Faith, believing, is altogether different from intellectual knowing.

There are so many in Christendom that live blamelessly. They hear the word, partake of the sacrament, sing and pray diligently; die with hymns on their lips and Bible passages on their tongues, yet their soul is pitifully lonely, poor, blind, and naked. But when the miserable soul reaches eternity, it finds the pearly gate dark, and heaven's door is barred; fearfully trembling, it knocks and cries: Lord, open for me. But only a muffled answer sounds through the door: I know thee not; get thee hence. Then, but alas, too late, the soul confesses: Yes, once He knew me, and I knew Him. Then He lived in me and I in Him. But slowly, gradually, without my really becoming aware of it, I became lukewarm—and then cold; the spiritual life, faith-life, died. He warned me often enough, but I didn't take it seriously. I retained the appearance of a God-pleasing life, but the power was gone.

Are we not aware of this in our inner life? Are we not now and then suddenly cast into a moment of horror, when death and eternity come rushing at our soul? Then we see; I cannot stand this way before the throne of God. We vow repentance, a change of heart, an about-face. But when the danger has passed, a few days perhaps, then also our concern has passed. In the next hour of danger things don't bother us quite so much any more. Do you realize what that means? There is not much strength left in us, the new righteous man in us is too weak to rouse himself. He is dying unnoticed, but dying steadily. We have eaten of the tree and the word of judgment will fulfill itself on us: You will surely die, die the spiritual death.

We preachers, we teachers, we parents, we notice this on ourselves. And we know that this process of becoming lukewarm will progressively grow more and more on our children. It has become nigh impossible that anyone should be saved. Frightened souls, when searching out their own inner self, are prompted to ask: What is this coming to? Is the day of the final judgment at the door, or will yet a greater catastrophe come upon us?

Laodicea lies in ruins, the Turk did that. He stands in history as the scourge of the Lord. Where Islam once has set his foot, nevermore will there bloom forth the garden of God. The most pitiful aspect around Laodicea is a small group of people, who have outwardly accepted Mohammedanism, only as much as was forced upon them. They would like to be Christians. But that is punishable by death. They have not the life-energy openly to accept Christianity and go into death for their convictions.

Today a fearful waiting is pervading the world. The wounds she inflicted on herself in the great war refuse to heal. She has lost all self-respect, but will not admit it. Secretly she is floundering for a footing, something to lay hold of. We Christians have a great calling today. The Church should be that firm rock where the world could safely cast anchor, whither the nations and peoples could fly for refuge from the destroyer, the avenger. Alas, she is not that. We, too, are still licking our self-inflicted wounds of that war; in deference to the world and out of fear, we vowed her loyalty and in general applauded her aims. Now she despises us for it.

The world is trembling at the prospect of her annihilation. An Oswald Spengler grants Western civilization at most 150 years. The Western world is quaking before Japan. [Today, 25 years later, China and Russia!] Will the Mongols take on the role of the Turk? The Church should have converted them. But the Christian nations instead of

teaching the heathen to fear and honor the Name of Jehovah have caused them rather to blaspheme. What if the trembling and fear of the nations should become a reality, and our children be butchered by the hand of these heathen, because of our lukewarmness?

Oh, that we would repent today, and with the little life-energy we still have, lay hold with violence on the Kingdom of Heaven. Let's not deceive ourselves that we are beyond judgment; by descent we are the wild olive branch from the heathen, grafted into the holy trunk; we are Japheth, dwelling in the tents of Shem. If then God spared not His own children, He will still less likely spare the strangers. The history of the Church, the Spirit, speaks thus to the congregations.

But why does the Spirit say this to the congregations? Is it the proclamation of the eternal, unchangeable judgment? So reasons man; no created spirit can think otherwise, unless it be that the secret of God's heart be revealed to him: Where sin abounded, *i.e.*, grew strong, powerful, there grace did much more abound, became much mightier. Ah, grace and love are straining mightily to gain entrance at Laodicea. God is not arbitrary. God is always the God of Grace. But that is just why the preachment of judgment is so terribly serious. Listen and hear how earnestly the Spirit continues to speak to the congregations: 'And knowest not that thou art the wretched one, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. I counsel thee to buy of me gold refined by fire that thou mayest become rich; and white garments that thou mayest clothe thyself and that the shame of thy nakedness be not made manifest; and anoint thine eyes with eye salve, that thou mayest see.' The everlasting love and grace has no pleasure in death. It loves life and gladly creates life, gladly recreates it where it threatens to die, where it has already died. How can this be? To understand that we must reach way back to the beginning.

IN THE bosom of eternity the everlasting love and grace spoke thus. Let us make man in our image! After our likeness. And when time was created, and the morning of the sixth day dawned, God bowed down to the earth, and out of the moist dust fashioned an image with His own hands and with great care. It was very good. And again, the great God bent down to the image and breathed into the lifeless form the breath of His own life. And man became a living soul. He arises, and his first glance beholds the eye of God, looks into the heart and soul of God. And out of God's heart, out of His innermost soul, poured forth a stream of His holy divine love, thus creating in

man holy love toward God.

The beautiful bond of mutual love united the two: God and man. In man, God saw again the likeness of His Son, namely, faith, love, and child-like trust. In man, God saw his own image, the image of the most beautiful among the children of men. Even as the Son has communion with the Father, so the first Adam had communion through the Son with the Father and the Holy Ghost. Then God was all in all. Adam had the gold of faith, of trust in God. He carried the likeness of the Son of God as a garment, his eyes beheld his God. He knew God and understood His speech. His Word was truth to him, and in His Word he heard the ring of love. Therein lay the blessedness of paradise: pure communion in love with God.

Then there arose from the pit of darkness the spirit of doubt, of suspicion, of the lie, and sowed these tares into man's heart. Said the serpent: You think God means it only well with you and is solicitous in warning you when He says: Do not eat of the tree. This is not so! Danger is threatening God himself should you eat of the tree, then you will be like unto God and you can put him out of paradise and be God yourself.

This dragon seed germinated with explosive power, its roots like tentacles enmeshed man's soul. Doubt concerning God's love, unbelief, suspicion tore into the soul of man. Thus the fall was accomplished. Faith was strangled and died; love was extinguished. Eve looked upon the tree and became blind and knew God no more. There man died spiritually. Terribly was the word fulfilled: Thou shalt surely die. Man's soul shrivelled and died. Then evil conscience commits the folly of fabricating clothing of fig leaves to cover man's shame of his nakedness. Adam now bears Satan's gruesome image, is like unto him.

In the cool of eventide, as He was wont, the Lord God walks in the garden. They meet Him not as before with rejoicing. They have only one wish: If only God would never come again, if only there were no God any more. Surely it is the same voice of love that calls, Adam where art thou? Where are you, my poor lost child? Adam does not understand. No created spirit could understand that. Even the angels hear it with trembling and expect nothing but a repetition of the judgment they had once before witnessed over the dragon. Adam stands before God and lies. But the Lord God opens the mystery of eternity. What no eye had seen, no ear had heard, neither had entered into any created spirit's mind now rises out of the depth of the Godhead: God's holy and blessed mystery of the Woman's Seed, the mystery of salvation. This Word creates at once a great miracle.

### Paradise Regained

With the wonder and awe the holy angels behold it, the Lord God sees it with innermost joy: in the spiritually dead hearts a new life springs forth; out of death arises faith; the Word creates love anew. The scales of blindness fall from their eyes; they see and know, yes, they know their Lord God again. The shattered image arises anew in man. Communion with God, blessedness, is again restored. That is the working of the mighty power of grace. Where sin abounded there grace hath much more abounded.

What then does this grace signify? Grace is the very quintessence of God. All His other virtues are insignificant compared with grace. The unfathomable depths of the wonders of God's grace, the wonder of its being, the wonder it performs, that is the theme the angels meditate upon, causing them to burst forth in loud acclaim: 'Glory to God in the Highest.' He to whom they thus did sing—He it was that fashioned grace.

There went forth a man through this world, to whom the Highest God through His angel gave the name Jesus, and called Him the Son of the Highest. In appearance He was made in the likeness of His brethren according to the flesh, and found in fashion like a man, yet not by sin distorted. As such He received in the temple at the age of twelve the revelation of the mystery of His person: Son of the Highest. Here He pronounces His sublime calling: 'I must be about my Father's business.' There lives among men one true man in the most blessed love-communion with God. As gold seven times purified, so is His faith toward God. Here lives in man's flesh the blessedness of paradise.

He comes to the baptism of John; there the Father rends the heavens and proclaims: This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. He is clothed in a garment of heavenly glory and godly purity, such wherein even the almighty omniscience of God, with eyes like flames of fire, can detect neither spot nor wrinkle. As a testimony and witness to this, the Holy Ghost descends upon Him, enters into Him, and makes Him His temple. The why and wherefore is answered the next day by John, the greatest of the prophets. Pointing with his finger, he speaks: Behold the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sins of the world.

### Through the Victory of Jesus Christ

**B**UT THIS Holy, this heavenly man of paradise, moves and has His being where Satan's kingdom lies. Will He there be able to retain faith, and fidelity, and heaven-born innocence? Satan beholds him and hears the godly and

prophetic witness. His wrath is kindled and his hatred bursts forth with hellish fury. His kingdom is at stake. If this one keeps faith, and so carries away the world's sin, then the world is His and also all mankind. He prepares war against this faith in Jesus. He clothes himself as an angel of light and comes to Jesus, Who is weakened after His prolonged fasting in the wilderness: Are you hungry one the Son of God? The revelation in the temple, the voice at the Jordan, the testimony of John, were these not perhaps only figments of imagination and hallucination? Here the faith of Jesus was sorely tried. He is being tempted even as we; but His soul labors and beats down the temptation.

Satan shows Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. The waters of His soul are deeply troubled (*schwere Anfechtung das*). Jesus believes in the heavenly kingdom of his Father, but this kingdom is nowhere in evidence. Yet here He could fulfill with but a single stroke the most audacious unfulfilled dreams of the greatest of men: merely a barter for His faith. But He holds fast to faith and trust in the Father.

On the pinnacle of the temple the deceiver's voice whispers: This people will never believe salvation. I have blinded their eyes. They love the drama of a miracle. Perform some sign before them and they'll all be yours. But His soul labors and defeats the temptation.

Soon He sees with joy the fruit which His soul in labor brought forth. Soon He enters the lists for His friend John, who is sorely beset by great doubts, He fells the temptations, and gives him of His fulness refreshing power of faith to be victorious in death. In the sick and the maimed of His people He overcomes the power of sin, and on His word they are healed. In the corpses He overcomes the death and decay, life He creates anew in the dead. Indeed, He carries away our disease; He suffers the penalty, and the results of the penalty vanish from Satan's slaves. He preaches repentance, change of heart, and behold in the spiritual dead arises life, faith in Him; the spiritual dead arise.

However, He must yet be perfected through suffering. In Gethsemane all hell, all terrors of Satan break loose upon Him. He is crushed and ground as wheat between the millstones of fear and terror, anguish pierces His soul, so that like a worm ground under foot in the dust, He squirms in the sweat of His blood. There he surrenders His holy divine will to the will of His Father. There His own, yea the salvation of all the world is at stake. But trust and faith prevail. He clings to the Father until He receives the blessed strengthening of the

angel. He enters into the Holy of Holies on Calvary both as the highpriest and as the sacrifice. But the Most Holy clothes Himself in the garment of darkness, and the Holiest in the shadow of night. He is cast out into the hell of eternal damnation. He is cast out into the terror of eternal damnation. Into the waste and burning pits of hell His soul must sink and He must suffer the dread pangs of the forsaken of God. He, the pure and innocent, drinks the dregs of God's full wrath.

What then does He do there? There hell experienced it for the first and also for the last time, and to their terror, the devils heard it for the first time: Jesus prays in hell. A condemned one, forsaken by God, abides in faith and trust in that God. My God, my God—and if you cast me out into hell, you are yet my God. I will leave thee not, no, not even in damnation. Such a soul cannot remain in hell, such a man shall not see death eternally; damnation cannot claim Him. He is taken out of prison and from judgment, never again shall He enter therein.

Faith such as that draws with it all those for whom He held faith and for whom He gave His soul as a burnt offering. Surely, we are dearly redeemed! God martyred and scourged unto death for us! We are bought with a great price; God's blood seeped out for us in nameless woe and untold wrestling of soul. The price was high to save and ransom our soul. With a great cry God gives His soul, His life, into death that we might live. Out of death, hell and the grave he wrought for us life and immortality. Grace is now His, as recompense for His labor. He impregnated His Word, His Gospel, with His almighty Saviourhood, the power of God to save from death.

### 'Behold, I Stand at the Door'

**T**HIS you have experienced; in this your soul has lived. You once were small, yet even then a man dead in sin. All the waters of the world could not have washed away your guilt. All the soap plus all the lye could not have cleansed your sin. Then He came with water, but not with water only; He came with water and with blood. Men spoke a few words and poured a little water. He, however, cleansed you with His blood in the Word and clothed you with His innocence. Then was the Father pleased with you. He said: This princely child shall be My child, shall be heir to My salvation. The Holy Ghost was not idle; He created in you faith, that new life. There your little soul arose, as first man did in the beginning, a new man was created in you, and you looked into the eye of your Saviour, your mouth praised Him: 'He has

clothed me with the robe of His righteousness and covered me with the garments of salvation, that I might appear like a bridegroom, in princely attire, as a bride bedecked with jewels.' Behold, thus He creates in us spiritual corpses the new spiritual life by His Word, by His God-might, by His almighty Saviourhood, by the Grace which He wrought with His labor when He kept faith.

Do you still have that faith? Does His life still live in you? Or has all that become weak, dying? Is it all lukewarm? Those whom I love I rebuke, I chasten. He rebukes and punishes, indeed. He chastens whom He loves. He punishes the old Adam, that killing worm in us. He must die. The judgment on our flesh must continue to the grave. He nourishes, He weans, He brings up the new man in us. He should live, grow strong, be perfected to manhood in us: He goes with you, follows you, comes to you. Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

Behold, there stands One before your heart's door even now, as so often before. He has come a long way, not on a heavenly chariot in the triumph of cherubim, but along the rugged road of Calvary. Look you well at Him: there is indeed no form or comeliness to please the eye of the world. His feet are bruised and blood-stained from the rock-strewn path and torn with rugged nails. His head still bears the scars of the gruesome crown of thorns. The hand with which He raps, and raps more loudly still, as years fly by and nearer comes eternity, and the danger of forever being lost grows greater, and being saved well nigh seems impossible—that hand is pierced. He minds it not. He longs but for your soul. He sees you through the frosted window, sitting on the seat of sinners. You frolic with the serpent on your bosom, and you know it not: that viper's poison waits beneath its tongue. Sure death lies there. He would prevent just that. Will you not open unto him? Must He so pass you by?

### It Is yet the Season of Grace

**O**NE DAY there, then, will climb through the window one that will not knock. His name is death. He wants to snatch you into eternal damnation. But also He who now knocks on your heart's door will one day come again. Then will He be fearfully glorious, enthroned on the seat of judgment, with eyes of flame and girded with the sword of vengeance. Then all must rise and appear from out of the pit of the grave, from the clefts of the rock, from the depths of the sea, when His words resound: Ye dead, arise! Arise unto judgment!

It is yet the season of Grace. Jesus is still knocking, so that His last advent might be a blessed one

for you. Will you cause Him the anguish that He must pass you by? Is it not enough that our sin once pierced His heart? Oh, open the door for Him! Then you will behold His glory, then you will experience wonders. Your soul will be healed. He wants to sup with you in communion. Wherever in this deceitful, distrusting world a heart is set aglow with but a spark of faith, there His heart wells up with joy, as only the heart of God knows joy. There He enters. Such an heart means more to Him than heaven itself. His heart's desire is toward mankind. He spreads out His richest treasure: forgiveness of all sins. That is the precious price of His tears, His struggle, His blood. Let your soul but eat of this and it shall live. Let your soul believe this and it shall never die. He drowns your guilt, has long since drowned and annihilated it. Let your soul believe that, then it shall not taste of death forevermore.

Jesus brings you the beautiful, happy gift of hope, eternal blessedness. Let your soul believe this, then it shall have an inheritance unspotted, incorruptible, which no thief can steal, no moth nor rust consume. Eternal life would He give you, to you for whom death is decreed. In the midst of death you shall have life unending: from Him, in Him, preserved by Him eternally, even though the mouth of hell yawn hungrily to devour you. He speaks to you: Peace be with you! The peace of God that passeth all understanding, greater than our heart, which ever whines, despairs, and grovels in the dust. Peace in all the tempests of doubt. Content is he who has Jesus with him; daily he sups with Him. Do you believe that? Blessed are you whose life is in faith. Oh, that this treasure were yours!

You shall see greater things. "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne." "He that overcometh." There is a struggle, a battle ordained to those hallowed in the Lord. They that bear the treasure are pursued; they that have received life have death as their foe. The nearer the goal, the greater the pursuer's zeal to snatch the soul before it reaches its final haven of peace. Who can save his panting soul, this brittle vessel holding such precious treasures? With man that is impossible. But He that holds aloft the prize and beckons with the victory palm, He also gives the power to achieve the victory. He glories most when triumphing in them that are the least. His eye sees every danger, His battle-practiced hand is mighty to protect, to guard, to lead. His pierced foot will surely crush all serpents on your way. Let but the eye of faith look steadfastly on Him. Jesus has prepared a place for you, for which He fought. There, clothed in princely garments, as victor on a

throne, with praise and glory you'll be crowned. 'Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb.' Amen.

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\*EDITOR PAUL HENSEL'S NOTE in 1954: The Laodicea sermon, preached in the Wisconsin Synod Jubilee year, 1925, while Ruediger was still professor in good standing at the Wauwatosa Seminary, and printed in tract form by Immanuel's Lutheran Congregation of Marshfield, was in general not well received at the time. "Zu methodistisch," commented Plocher, Sr. and Thurow; and the latter, voicing the prevailing sentiment of the day, added: "We want no part of this Laodicea repentance."

The students of the Seminary were also stirred up by someone against the sermon of their teacher and led to pass irresponsible judgment upon it. Thereupon a New Year's sermon on Romans 12:12 by Professor William Henkel, Ruediger's colleague, was published in tract form. Whether there is any causal connection between the two publications cannot now be established. But to feature a sermon like this one of Henkel's, probably his worst, altogether banal in its outline and contents, and positively feeble-minded in its introduction, startlingly signalled the precipitate decline of Wauwatosa's high level of theology, an ill omen, warning the church of the tragedy that Wauwatosa was now bedridden and had experienced its first paralytic stroke, upon which then, further strokes and more violent fell in the form of the *Gütachten* and the *Antwort*, which sounded the death knell of the Wauwatosa gospel.

May the reader study and pass judgment on the Laodicea sermon and on its contemnners. (F-L, May, 1954, pp. 4-9)

## Pieper and Koehler on the cause of World War I

By PHILEMON HENSEL

THE YEAR 1917 saw the publication of J. P. Koehler's *Manual of Church History*, perhaps the single greatest volume on any subject since the appearance of Luther's works, in that after the muster of Scripture it evaluates all men and events by the criterion of the understanding of the Gospel and marshals them under the head of Christ Jesus, the Lord of lords, of whom, and for whom all things consist. It was the year the United States entered World War I, the year of the Russian Communist Revolution, exactly 400 years after Luther posted his 95 Theses against the sale of indulgences to increase church revenue. That year too witnessed the external reconstitution of the Wisconsin Synod as the Joint Synod of Wisconsin and Other States, and the evaporation of the Laymen's Movement (*Laienbewegung*), which had foamed up in the ferment of the times in 1913 in the hope of animating the interest of the laity in the needs of the church, and then had subsided under the threat of the horrendous storm in the offing. The following year the reluctant unbeliever Oswald Spengler would publish his monumental *The Decline of the West, Perspectives of World His-*