

THE WORLD CONFSSIONAL LUTHERAN ASSOCIATION

Identity For A New Era

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For Lutheran's Alert National, now known as the World Confessional Lutheran Association, 1987 was the year that their straight path came to a fork. Starting in 1965, for over thirty years this small band of confessional Lutherans fought a single-minded, David and Goliath-like battle against the liberal, anti-confessional, anti-Scriptural trend within the ALC and the LCA. However, in 1987 the inevitable merger occurred, and now their fight was over. They had made their stand, they had disseminated their message. They had been faithful witnesses to their cause. But now that the congregations and the pastorate of those synods have made their decisions to merge, "[the WCLA alone] can't possibly make much of an impact,"¹ according to Dr. Lloyd Nelson, Director of Ministries for the WCLA, Dean at their Faith Seminary,² and also member of its first graduating class.³ With the merger, the battle front has clearly changed. The editorialist in Lutherans Alert National, the official publication of the WCLA comments,

...in the past we of Lutherans Alert were committed to contend against the eventual merger of three Lutheran bodies at, what we believed to be, the sacrifice of the genuine Lutheran Confession, and especially the fatal denial of Biblical inerrancy. While outwardly our battle was lost and the merger is now in effect, we continue in the militant church and turn our efforts and our talents to promoting the Gospel worldwide. On this we sense a new and, indeed, a liberating sense for the positive promulgation of the Gospel.⁴

In spite of this seeming "defeat," Dr. R.H. Redal, president of the WCLA reports that they are "now moving forward on all fronts."⁵

The WCLA has clearly entered a new era in their history. With the completion of the merger, they could have chosen to disband and find their home in other conservative Lutheran groups. However, it is clear that they have chosen to stay on the scene as a body. So what exactly has become their "front"? Toward what goals are they "moving forward"? Clearly, they see a value or purpose in continuing as a group that makes it worth the effort. But the key to their success, and even their survival, lies in how clearly they identify that purpose, that goal. In short, they must clearly establish their identity. Identity consists in knowing who you are, why you are, and how you go about being so. The materials that they have produced and the insights that Dr. Nelson, as one of the original members of this organization, offered in an interview help us to see how well the WCLA has come to grips with these questions.

I. Foundational Principles

The question of "who are we" is really a matter of determining our essential character--what makes us us. For a church body it rests on its foundational principles. The WCLA leaves little doubt as to what its foundational principles are. In an introductory tract, under the heading, "Our Faith," the WCLA asserts,

The WCLA accepts all the canonical books of the Old and New Testaments as a whole and in all of their parts as the divinely inspired, revealed, and inerrant Word of God, and submits to this as the only infallible authority in all matters of faith and life.

The WCLA accepts the doctrinal statements of the confessional Lutheran Church; namely, the Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian Creeds; and the unaltered Augsburg Confession, the Smalcald Articles, and the Formula of Concord, not insofar as, but because they are true and reliable expositions of the Holy Scriptures.

The WCLA acknowledges Jesus Christ as Head and Lord of the Church, and accepts the Bible, the Holy Scriptures, as his inerrant revelation and directive to His people.⁶

The defense of this position was the very reason for their formation as a group. Dr. Nelson points out that it was this issue alone for which his group contended from the start, the issue upon which all others hinged.⁷ This aspect of their identity--what they stood for--was never in question, nor is it today. This confessional message is still the prevailing message of the organization which they communicate in every possible way. In publications, in articles, in tracts, and in statements of purpose, these are the truths with which they strongly identify. In fact, Dr. Nelson sees the necessity of controlling this doctrine as the key advantage to maintaining their separate identity:

Well, I suppose that the main advantage is the control of the doctrine. And that's the thing we see so easily slips away. If they don't take the same control in inerrancy, then we would hesitate [to join with them].⁸

In spite of the merger and its denial of these principles, they still identify this teaching as their rallying point and its defense as their main purpose:

The World Confessional Lutheran Association is a collective body of concerned Christians who desire to retain the Lutheran distinctives of Word Alone, Grace Alone, Faith Alone in Christ Alone as the hallmark of the true Christian Church on earth.

The individuals, congregations and associated ministries making up the WCLA believe that the doctrine of Biblical inerrancy is of vital importance in accomplishing this goal. These people are working together to help achieve Christ's "Great Commission" in this generation.⁹

Clearly, there is no identity crisis in the WCLA concerning the question, "Who are we?" They have a strong foundation in the

inerrant Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and they have made this stand their mark.

II. Clear Purpose

Knowing who you are is obviously a key element in a person's or an organization's identity. But identity is greatly heightened when one can also see where he as a definable individual fits into the overall picture. So the second key to strong identity is a clear sense of purpose. Purpose is the answer to the question, "Why am I?"

At this point in the WCLA's history, the question of purpose is probably the most difficult to define, but the most critical for its continued existence. Until the merger, Lutheran's Alert National had a simple goal: to prevent a merger that would condone a liberal view of the origin and authority of Scripture. However, the merger having taken place, this purpose became obsolete. It became time to define new goals. Dr. Redal explains,

In our past history wd have been engaged in a warfare with the liberal Lutheran Church from which the liberal churches have departed...Now that the former ALC, LCA and AELC have formed a new synod called the ELCA we feel our mission of protest is over...We, of course, will continue our concern for the church of Jesus Christ to contend for the historic faith of the Lutheran Church.

Thus, we start Phase II of our ministry of concern-- the evangelization of the world.¹⁰

When asked what the main goal or purpose of the WCLA was within Lutheranism, Dr. Nelson responded,

Right now we feel it's probably wider than Lutheranism, because we feel that the Lutheran church, by in large, except for [the Wisconsin Synod] and part of Missouri, that by in large it's waning. So we see the goal of

Christ, the Great Commission, our main goal at this point.¹²

It is certainly true that a church body could not do better than to have the Great Commission as its purpose for existence. Such is truly the Biblical approach. But a functional organization obviously needs to have functional goals: goals that are specific, clear, and achievable. The strongest identity is built around the most specific goals. The more unique and specialized the goals of a person or organization are, the more important and needed they become. To build the strongest identity for itself, the WCLA needs to define the goals that they are most uniquely qualified to carry out. There are a number of Lutheran bodies that both defend a conservative view of Scripture, and also view their main purpose as the carrying out of the Great Commission. How well has the WCLA defined their goals? How well has it answered the question, "Why are we?"

The specific goals that the WCLA has established for itself are really quite ambitious. Appendix i gives a listing of ten "immediate objectives" that the organization is striving to carry out. Dr. Nelson's interview and also the organization's publications tend to focus in on three main areas: worker training, missions, coordination.

The unique element in all of their operations seems to be an attempt to quietly exert their position on the religious world through a positive, "supply-side" influence. This approach certainly stands in strong contrast to the highly polemic emphasis of their early history. However, they seem to have come to the

conclusion that as a small group, brute force is not going to be their strongest asset.

This low-profile approach is implied in this response to the question, "Does the WCLA really serve a unique role in the church or is it merely serving its own self-interests?" The response:

It is a unique role since WCLA is not in competition for members and programs. This would be a self-serving view. Instead WCLA is concerned for the Lutheran Church at large and desires to help this church remain true to its name and calling. (cf. appendix ii)

The WCLA wants to work within the Lutheran Church and exert its influence, i.e. "help this church remain true to its name and calling" by operating within the existing structure of the various Lutheran (and even non-Lutheran) bodies, not by disrupting these bodies or removing their members.

This approach is evident in the worker training program. The WCLA actually has only twelve congregations for which they need to supply pastors. Therefore, the demand within their own body is quite low. So most of the men that they train in their Seminary end up in the pulpits of other Lutheran bodies, primarily the Missouri Synod.¹² Dr. Nelson estimates that they have placed as many as forty pastors in the LCMS.¹³

This "quiet influence" approach is not only evident in how they place their men, but in what students they will accept. When asked about enrollment trends at Faith Seminary, Dr. Nelson replied,

...up considerable this year, but it's, as I say, we're drawing from the non-denominal churches primarily. And we get just about every denomination, we get people that are dissatisfied with what's going on in their church and they really want the Bible training and the doctrine that they do get.¹⁴

How does this approach accomplish their objectives? Through direct Seminary training and through the D.Min program, WCLA is sowing their seed right back into the main-line Lutheran bodies. This is the kind of influence Dr. Nelson referred to when asked what the WCLA's greatest influence was.

That one is difficult. I was the first seminarian when I left Boeing. I was the first one to finish the seminary the first three years. We graduated, oh, probably well over a hundred that have gone into the ministry, and some have gone into missions, and some have gone into administrative posts, and some have gone back as laypeople to their churches. It's hard to say. But I know they're really well prepared when they go. And we've had some excellent reports from them. My D.Min program has been attested to by some of the leaders --gone to Yale, to the Missouri Synod. They've earned doctorates in Missouri, and they've come to our seminary and gotten a D.Min from us. So they all recognize the scholarship we are trying to do with our limited facilities, our limited faculty, is pretty high. We've got testimonies to that fact.¹⁵

Perhaps the greatest emphasis within the WCLA right now is the emphasis on mission work. And Dr. Nelson indicated that this was an area that was going to continue to receive more and more emphasis.¹⁶

Once again, even within the purpose statement of the School of Missions this supply-side idea becomes evident.

This school fills a gap for persons in denominations who desire training in every aspect of mission work and who agree with the doctrinal statement below.¹⁷

Once again, by allowing non-Lutherans into the program, the WCLA gets the opportunity to teach them conservative Lutheran doctrine and then to send them out where they will in tern continue to promote it. Dr. Nelson explains,

After they're through they might go with their own group in the interest of another denomination. We do that quite often. We always have. They get strict Lutheran teaching. So they go out of here--and I've had several

that have gone to Robert Preuss in Fort Wayne and he says, "You know, your students are a cut above the rest." ...colloquy. But you wouldn't even take them because they came to us from the Assembly of God. But they're no longer Assembly of God, they're no longer speaking in tongues, but they're now Lutherans. They've been confirmed Lutherans now. They're not all--some of them go into the mission field, they're still under their old banner. I have Missionary Alliance, I have Sudan Interior Mission, I have one person with a Seventh Day Adventist record. It's just a hodge-podge. It's like Robert Preuss told me, "I don't know how you can do that, Lloyd. You're bound to be intimidated." I said, "I'm not intimidated." They learn what we believe. We use Pieper in our dogmatics and they learn that.^{1a}

The role that the WCLA especially would like to take up is that of a coordinating body. They would like to offer themselves as a resource center where the resources of conservative Lutheranism could be cataloged and made available through a "networking" system. This coordinating role is the purpose that the WCLA sees as making itself distinct and unique among Lutheran bodies.

WCLA proposes to be the coordinating agency for a wide variety of conservative, evangelical, Lutheran groups, associations, movements, agencies, institutions, etc., who seek to fulfill the church's prime reason for being, the Great Commission.(cf. appendix ii)

Dr. Nelson has made attempts to initiate such a program among the various conservative groups. His goal is to avoid duplication of resources and to avoid dependency on the liberal bodies.

This was probably 7 years ago that I sent letters under Dr. Redal's name, not mine, and invited all these people, Bohlman, you know, and said, let's just get together and see if we don't have something in common, enough in common that we could share and set up some sort of consortium of christian groups, so that if we didn't have it, we wouldn't have to go to the world or to the liberal churches, publishing houses, and whatever else we needed. But we could go to our own collective group and set up another buffer organization that would do the things that aren't being done by any of us. If you had a seminary and we had a seminary, we could have a certain trade-off in certain areas of that seminary--the library, maybe have a revolving library or

something. But this was my plan.¹⁹

Has the WCLA identified its role? Right now its goals are broad and ambitious. They are also goals that are not unique to their association. But what makes the WCLA unique is its quiet approach in influencing christianity. Their "raw materials" come from a broad range, but their "product" is quite uniform. Is the goal of a cooperative network between the various bodies realistic? The past history indicates not. But if they can achieve such a goal even on a limited basis, they will have gained yet another entryway for their supply-side influence.

III. Firm Structure

Dr. Nelson places a great deal of emphasis on the fact that the WCLA does not wish to influence other christians or congregations through any type of hierarchical structure. The only control they wish to exert is on the main doctrinal issues. At one point in the interview Dr. Nelson was asked if the WCLA was leaning toward becoming a synod of its own. Dr. Nelson replied,

A synod in a sense. In fact, I think we're going to be leaning more and more in that direction. We don't want to be a hierarchical synod, we don't want to tell the congregations, we don't want to have to police them on the adiaphora and the day-to-day routine stuff. That's up to the congregation. We don't want to run their property. We don't want anything to do with their property.²⁰

But at this point, they see their structure more as an association. Within this more loosely organized system they see themselves able to carry out their work more effectively. Dr. Nelson explains,

You see, we're an association. We're a little different than a hierarchy in a denomination. In an association, people can choose to associate with us, and they're not

breaking the dual membership code. They don't have anything to do with us unless we should call them to one of our churches, then, of course, they would have to leave their denomination.²¹

A more firmly structured organization will probably become necessary as they continue to grow, however. As an organization grows and becomes more complex, more structure is naturally required to operate in an orderly manner. While this does not have to necessarily lead to a "hierarchy," a more structured approach may strengthen the WCLA in a number of areas.

First of all, giving an organization structure encourages a succession of leadership within the organization. Dr. Nelson identified this particular aspect of the WCLA as a troubling problem. When asked about the source of leadership within the body he responded,

It's the men that we have trained, and are now in the field, starting churches or manning congregations. We now have 12 congregations, and we have another three or four that are pending. And we've got missionaries in the field, and we have others that are being trained to go, so we say after a man's been out in the field maybe 5 years learning how to be a pastor, maybe he could come back. But this is a real burden for me when I think, "Who am I going to hand the baton to?" you know.²²

Structure helps establish an organization on principles rather than personalities. A personality-dependent organization will suffer badly if that person leaves. But with structure there is continuity.

Secondly, a more structured organization could possibly lead to more congregational support. People like to be able to identify with an organization. Although they rarely appreciate interference, they do identify with leadership and support. How the congregations of the WCLA view their leadership, I can't say. But anything that

could increase congregational involvement in the organization would certainly strengthen it.

One area where this might become especially beneficial would be in providing a larger supply of young men from which the Seminary could recruit. Dr. Nelson pointed out the urgency of this need when he commented,

Well, because we do not have a feeder school, or a feeder system, You see, like Wisconsin has the undergraduate schools. We don't even have the Bible institutes, which should be sympathetic. But I was the vice-president at one of those Bible institutes... And they won't send their students to us or even appeal to their students to come to us, because they're so desperately in need of staying with a large synod, and they have chosen to stay with the major group, the new ELCA.²³

The WCLA continues to add congregations to their roster by picking up remnants of split congregations and by planting their own. They have certainly identified an important area to strengthen. But an emphasis on structure within the organization, and not a structure dependent on the drive and personalities of the leadership, will be important to a strong growth pattern within the organization.

Conclusion

Has the World Confessional Lutheran Association become less confessional? When you read the statements of doctrine, you can hardly say so. They are faced with a fork in the road. Which path will they take? What role will they choose for themselves? What will they do to preserve what they consider the "Awakening Remnant Church?" these are the questions that an adolescent-stage church body must face as it enters a new and more mature stage in its existence.

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Dr. Lloyd Nelson, Telephone interview with Scott Mosher on February
26, 1988. Used with permission.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Nelson, Lloyd. Telephone interview, transcript line 732.
- 2 Ibid., 1.49.
- 3 Ibid., 1.696.
- 4 "Editorial," Lutherans Alert National, February 1988, p.11.
- 5 "President's Page," Lutherans Alert National, March 1988, pp.2-3.
- 6 Introducing the World Confessional Lutheran Association. (Tacoma, WA.: World Confessional Lutheran Association.)
- 7 Nelson., 1.210.
- 8 Ibid., 1.594.
- 9 Introducing the World Confessional Lutheran Association.
- 10 "President's Page," Lutherans Alert National, February 1988, p.2.
- 11 Nelson., 1.630.
- 12 Ibid., 1.164.
- 13 Ibid., 1.342.
- 14 Ibid., 1.196.
- 15 Ibid., 1.697.
- 16 Ibid., 1.717.
- 17 Faith School of World Missions. (Tacoma, WA.: World Confessional Lutheran Association).
- 18 Nelson., 1.656.
- 19 Ibid., 1.513.
- 20 Ibid., 1.319.
- 21 Ibid., 1.173.
- 22 Ibid., 1.264.
- 23 Ibid., 1.120.

Telephone Interview with Rev. Lloyd Nelson of the WCLA on 3/26/88
S=Interviewer, Scott Mosher
L=Dr. Lloyd Nelson

line #

1 S:
Basically what I'm doing is I'm writing a paper and I want to
look into your organization as to how it perceives itself in the
conservative lutheran movement and what its goals are, what its
5 function is within that role. So I guess I'd like to start out
with a little backround information if that's okay with you.
OK, first of all, for you personally, so I can understand where
you're coming from a little bit, how long have you been with the
WCLA?

10

L:
Since the beginning.

S: Which would be at 1969?

15

L:
Well, at 1969 I was at.....and it actually was before that,
it was 1965....when Lutherans Alert National was formed in
Cedar Falls Iowa. Oh, I suppose 10 pastors and 2 or 3 laypeople
20 attended that meeting because they were upset because of certain
things that were starting to crop up in the ALC. So they
started an organization named "Lutherans alert" and they held
meetings within each area where they had one of these people and
formed a group they held meetings and they started a little
25 magazine right away, "Lutherans Alert National
Magazine".....mostly....aberration... the church... And it
involved ALC primarily, but it also got into the LCA... At that
time Missouri was also starting to go along the same route, so
at that time we would also have Missouri Synod people, too.

30

S:
OK, so that would have been approximatly the same time as the
ELIM,

35 L:
Right.

S:
-some of those movements, and so there was some sympathy there.
40 OK, so at that time you would have been a layperson.

L:
I was a layperson--I was a Boeing engineer.

45 S:
I see, OK. What is your position currently at the Seminary?

L:
50 Well, I was called to be the dean of the Seminary in 1978, and
now I serve as the director of ministries of the WCLA. And I'm
the day-to-day director of all of the WCLA employees.

S:
55 OK, and I guess this is due to a bit of a lacking of
understanding on my part exactly how the organization fits
together. Is the WCLA a larger entity other than the Seminary,
or is it primarily the Seminary that is the central focus of the
WCLA?

60 L:
Right now it's primarily the Seminary and the School of
Missions. But we also have a congregational arm that was under
a separate name, "The Conservative Lutheran Association." But
at our last convention last year in Minnisota, we voted that it
65 was too confusing to have "The World Confessional Lutheran
Association" as the parent and "The Conservative Lutheran
Association" as the congregation. So we called the whole thing
"WCLA." We also had a radio arm which we are not serving right
now directly, a media arm, lets call it, it's called "Words of
70 Faith," and we also have a missions arm and Lutherans Alert
National, the magazine, is still one of the major outreaches we
have, the apologetic arm, you know. And then we have other
educational areas. We have an education study correspondance-
type thing, for the Seminary and for other degrees. We have the
75 mission school which just started. That ventures into secondary
education as well, high school. But we're not doing that right
now. But we are looking into a full series of educational
facilities right now.

80 S:
I see. OK. So would you have a function within the broader
group of the WCLA besides your function at the seminary, or is
that..

85 L:
Yes. I'm the director of all of the ministries. I'm the only
full-time man that they have to do this because we're still just
a small group. We don't have that many people working for us.

90 S:
Certainly. OK. Now just a few questions on the Seminary
itself. How many students are enrolled currently at the
seminary?

95 L:
It's 25.

S:
100 OK. Where do you find they primarily come from?

L:
....the map, we're getting people from all different countries.
But we primarily are getting non-Lutherans, because Lutherans
are not available. We have maybe 4 Lutherans right now out of
105 25.

S:
I see.

110 L:
A great number of them certainly get awfully close to being
Lutherans, but we would not certify them or anything else until
they were truly Lutheran.

115 S:
I see. OK. And what do you attribute as the main cause of there
not being Lutherans available for your program?

L:
120 Well, because we do not have a feeder school, or a feeder
system, You see, like Wisconsin has the undergraduate schools.
We don't even have the Bible institutes, which should be
sympathetic. But I was the vice-president at one of those Bible
institutes... And they won't send their students to us or even
125 appeal to their students to come to us, because they're so
desperately in need of staying with a large synod, and they have
chosen to stay with the major group, the new ELCA.

S:
130 OK. How many of your graduates--I noticed, are you anticipating
9 this year? Is that correct?

L:
135 Well, we think we might have 9 counting our D.Min. Our D.Min is
an external degree which is for pastors in the field, that did a
major project and then wrote a major dissertation.

S:
140 ...And had come back for their Masters or for their doctorate?

L:
They didn't come back. This is awarded in the field.

S:
145 I see.

L:
They come here for graduation and for testing, and for defending
their dissertation.

150 S:
OK. Now out of the men that graduate, how many would then be
eligible for ordination into a parish position, then?

155 L:
From this year, I don't think we'll have any. Last year I think we had three.

S:
160 OK. Where would you say these men find positions? Do they go back to the LCA and ALC and try to find congregations?

L:
165 No. I'd say most of our men have gone into the Missouri Synod.

S:
Ok, mostly Missouri.

L:
170 I have on my clergy roster, I have 28, which I call my "active clergy roster." And I have another 18 or so on what I call the "associate roster." This is made up of people from your Synod and from other synods. You see, we're an association. We're a little different than a hierarchy in a denomination. In an
175 association, people can choose to associate with us, and they're not breaking the dual membership code. They don't have anything to do with us unless we should call them to one of our churches, then, of course, they would have to leave their denomination.

180 S:
So, it would be no different than belonging to the Smithsonian Institute or something like that.

L:
185 Right. Or the National Rifle Association--except that we have some rather strict doctrinal positions that you'd probably feel comfortable with 99% of.

S:
190 Ok. I'm going to come to that, too, in a few minutes, and we'll approach that. What would you say your enrollment trend is at this point? Do you see an increase in interest or participation, or...

195 L:
...up considerable this year, but it's, as I say, we're drawing from the non-denominal churches primarily. And we get just about every denomination, we get people that are dissatisfied with what's going on in their church and they really want the
200 Bible training and the doctrine that they do get.

S:
205 OK. I want to get into a little bit of the background now on the formation. We've touched on that briefly, and I just want to pick up a few extra points here. What were the main doctrinal issues that led to the formation of the WCLA or Lutherans Alert at its onset.

L:
210 The inerrancy of God's Word.

S:
That, you'd say, is the primary point.

215 L:
That, we felt, that was basic to all the other doctrines.

S:
220 OK. Were there other doctrines that were key bones of
contention?

L:
That was the key. All of the aberrations that were coming out,
we felt, were hinged to that particular fact, that the church
225 was no longer abiding by the inerrancy of God's Word.

S:
Yes, as soon as you throw that out you open the window to...

230 L:
...everything!

S:
235 ...everything else. OK. Why did the men who formed this
association choose to take this course of eventually opening a
seminary, starting a new association, and so forth, rather than
just disseminating into the other bodies that were maybe more
sympathetic to their positions?

240 L:
Well, because there is a difference in polity between, for
instance, Wisconsin and the Old ELC is where we came out of.
The Evangelical Lutheran Church, which had Scandinavian roots.
And there was enough of a difference in the polity where they
245 just felt, the people felt more comfortable in that climate. So
they decided that they would set up their own organization that
would be just like the old ALC or ELC, and we would tell people,
"Hey, you don't have to be liberal ALC. You can come to one
that has all of the basic good things and still maintain those
250 with us." We had, for many years, we had a number of ALC and
LCA churches that banded with us. Gradually as these retiring
pastors retired, they'd get a new man and they wouldn't be
interested.

255 S:
I see. Ok, now who do you see primarily as the successors to
these
men who are at the Seminary as these men go on to different
positions or they retire and so forth? Who do you see as being th
e
260 replacements? Are their people who are waiting to come into the
Seminary program and take these places?

L:
265 It's the men that we have trained, and are now in the field,
starting churches or manning congregations. We now have 12
congregations, and we have another three or four that are
pending. And we've got missionaries in the field, and we have
others that are being trained to go, so we say after a man's
270 been out in the field maybe 5 years learning how to be a pastor,
maybe he could come back. But this is a real burden for me when
I think, "Who am I going to hand the baton to?" you know.

S:
Yes. I can see...
275

L:
It's getting harder and harder to find young people your age,
for instance, what you sound to be. How old are you?

280 S:
I'm 25.

L:
Yes. We get some. And boy, when we get some that we can take
285 all the way through and they're Lutherans in the beginning and we
can train them all the way, it's just a joy to my heart to see
what we can put into the field. When they can come back after 5
years, that would be our way of continuing.

290 S:
-Perpetuating what you've got going.

L:
Yes.
295

S:
OK, now when you mentioned that you have 12 congregations and so
forth that you have, these would be ones that have disassociated
with other bodies, and are then, therefore, solely connected with
300 this organization?

L:
Right. Well only some of these. We planted some ourselves. We
plan to plant more. We find when we take a church out, it
305 usually is a split church. And that usually comes with the
problems of a split church. So we usually start from scratch.
But we have several that we're getting right now. One major one
in the Los Angeles area, and another in El Campo Texas. But the
one in El Campo started from scratch, and it had both Missouri
310 and ALC predominantly that didn't like what they were getting in
their own districts.

S:
So these- would you say that therefore the congregations that
315 are associating themselves together in this way, then, will form
or are forming or have formed a synod in a sort of a way?

L:
320 A synod in a sense. In fact, I think we're going to be leaning
more and more in that direction. We don't want to be a
hierarchical synod, we don't want to tell the congregations, we
don't want to have to police them on the adiaphora and the day-
to-day routine stuff. That's up to the congregation. We don't
325 want to run their property. We don't want anything to do with
their property.

S:
You're strictly- you see your role as regulating doctrine-

330 L:
That's right. And banding together as an association to do the
things that we couldn't do individually. Missions especially.

S:
335 Ok, now you broached the subject of your function or your role
now,
I want to start with, how would you compare your doctrinal stand
with that of other conservative Lutheran groups such as Missouri,
Wisconsin, and some of the smaller splinter conservative Lutherans

?
340 L:
I'd say we're very close to Missouri today. That's why we've
placed 30-some men in the Missouri Synod in the last....40
probably. We went right down the line in most areas. I suppose
345 the only area we might be a little bit different would be the
area of election, and that would just be in a minor point, even
within Missouri they have this same problem with Ft. Wayne
Seminary, Walter A. Mayer has a little different view. He
challenges Pieper on subjective versus objective justification.
350

S:
Would you say, then, that you do not, you would not be in line
with
an objective justification?
355

L:
We believe totally in objective justification, but we do believe
there's the response, that man can refuse the objective
justification, and resist it, it's like really along the same
360 lines. Then in the other areas, Oh, what would it be--a firm
position on some of the, what we call, adiaphora. Like on the
Lodge, we have had a lot of flack between Missouri and
ourselves. It's not that we hold that Freemasonry is a great
thing or anything else, we believe just what Missouri does. And
365 I talked about Preuss on this. The only difference is, that we
don't enforce with an ironclad rule, saying that if you don't
agree with this, get out of the Lodge in 6 months, you're out.
Because the Old ALC said that if you do that, you lose not only
the man but you lose the family. And it's more important to
370 minister to the family than to kick the guy out, so you minister

to the guy, and eventually if he hears the Good News enough, and he hears the Law, and you get the right balance he will see the error of his ways and finally do something about it. But Missouri has this idea that you have to do it now.

375

S:

OK, so you would not differ so much in your teaching or your, the doctrinal point, but more on the application.

380 L:

Right.

S:

385 OK. How would you-- now I know that one of the burning issues within the conservative Lutheran camps right now is the position on church and ministry. It seems to be an ongoing friction.

L:

(Laughter)

390

S:

Where would you find your sympathy most closely aligned. What would you see as your position, basically?

395 L:

Well, we believe in the priesthood of believers, which is, every many is a priest. We also believe-- in fact I've used The Shepherd Under Christ. I teach the course on--

400 S:

-pastoral theology-

L:

405 Yes, I use The Shepherd Under Christ, and I could go along with that book, I've used it for 4 years. And I have no problem with any of the doctrines, except maybe when you get to the registration of communion. And even the author, Schuetze, says that in a larger church it's a little difficult to get the right one-on-one position where you can test a man's sincere view
410 before he takes communion. So we just say, we leave that up to the Lord. Here's the Lord says, you have to have your heart right, and you better have your heart right when you take communion. We don't have closed communion. That's the one difference. Closed communion. We have a semi-open, but we hold
415 communion at a separate time so that the people that are there are coming just for the communion service.

S:

420 I see. So you're much less likely to pick up people on a spur.

L:

Right. Then we warn them, too, that you have to recognize the real presence of the Lord.

425 S:
Would you say that there are other forms of the ministry besides the parish pastorate?

L:
430 Oh sure. And that's one of the areas where we would differ from Wisconsin. Where we have people in the chaplaincy, and most of the people I have in the chaplaincy right now are the military chaplains, are either out of Wisconsin or the ELS.

435 S:
So I would say that you would not differ in the point of view that there are other forms of ministry.

L:
440 Oh, no.

S:
You would differ there basically with the Missouri position.

445 L:
The pastoral call and the call of a teacher and a missionary, they're different calls. I believe that the call of a pastor, that it is a distinct call, that it is set apart. The pastor is the shepherd, he's going to be the watchman, he's responsible to
450 God. The educator, the person that's the full-time teacher, we don't normally address that. We don't have many of those that come to us. Missionaries, we do. And some go out as lay missionaries, but we feel that is a different call than the
455 pastoral call. We center that the pastoral call is a special call.

S:
Do the professors at your seminary, do they hold parishes besides their position?
460

L:
They have. Most of, yes, right now the two Missouri men we have both do. And that's the other thing. We have our professors come from Missouri predominantly, and right now I've got two out
465 of the ALC, including myself.

S:
Ok, now you've compared yourself to the LCMS, are there any other points of comparison that you would draw with the
470 Wisconsin Synod for me to get a handle on.

L:
I suppose it's the fellowship aspect, the fact of prayer fellowship and things like this, where we don't feel the same
475 reserve you do.

S:
Alright. What communication do you have with other Lutherans,

both in the liberal camp and in the conservative camp?

480

L:

Well, we tried to talk to them, at least until they had the merger. That's what we mainly were doing. And I was out in the field quite a bit, talking, debating with district bishops and
485 with local groups who really wanted to hear what we really felt was wrong in the ELCA that was forming. We tried to communicate on the parish level, as many as we could. We also published articles in the Christian News, and we also have our own journal that we would give out and we had a lot of tracts. And being
490 that I was an engineer in the planning, an engineer for the Boeing company, I used a lot of charts and things like this and would go from church to church to show the thing with the hierarchics of the other groups. But the smaller groups, I tried to set up an association that would be wider than our own,
495 where we could come together and share with each others' resources, publishing houses. I invited the president of your group, and the ELS, and all of the groups to meet with us, but they won't even respond to the letters, you know, let alone come to a convention. And so I suppose we're so little that they
500 feel that we're not worth the effort. I felt for a long time that there could be certain--in fact this is the structure of our whole organization. It's not a hierarchy, its a group a functions that center around us, as being nothing more than the coordinator--and I suppose that's the best word--just to
505 coordinate the efforts of the seven major areas of ministry that every church has to get involved in.

S:

Ok. Now when you mentioned the president--so I can follow this--
510 did you mean President Mischke?

L:

This was probably 7 years ago that I sent letters under Dr. Redal's name, not mine, and invited all these people, Bohlman,
515 you know, and said, let's just get together and see if we don't have something in common, enough in common that we could share and set up some sort of consortium of christian groups, so that if we didn't have it, we wouldn't have to go to the world or to the liberal churches, publishing houses, and whatever else we
520 needed. But we could go to our own collective group and set up another buffer organization that would do the things that aren't being done by any of us. If you had a seminary and we had a seminary, we could ahve a certain trade-off in ceratin areas of that seminary--the library, maybe have a revolving library or
525 something. But this was my plan. I did go to the smaller groups, like the Bretheran and the Association of Free Lutheran Congregations and presented this to their officers. And normally they seemed to say, "Yes. It sounds great, but..." Nothing ever came out of it. Right this next two weeks we're
530 going to meet with the AAL(C), which I tried dearly to woo so I didn't have to form a new group, but could set up their group, that's the American Association of Lutheran Congregations. That's in Minneapolis, Waterloo. The president's goint to be

here to talk to our president about sort of an inter-Lutheran
535 conference of at least the pastors getting together so we can
have fellowship. My pastors feel the weakness that we don't
have fellowship. And you're stuck out in the middle of Texas
and you don't have any place to rap with another.

540 S:
Yes, I can see where you feel kind of alone in the...

L:
All alone!

545 S:
Ok. I think you've answered my next question, in a way. But
maybe I should ask it anyway. Is there a desire, then, to unite
with other groups that you would share doctrinal stance with or
550 do you wish to remain independant?

L:
We have invited them to unite, and they always see the fact that
we've been around so long, that we've gotten a rather negative
555 identity--that we're militaristic, or authoritarian. And really
we're only a few people, like Dr. Redal and myself, and maybe
three or four others, that are involved in the day-to-day work.
So we're not any of those things. But we've taken a stand, and
when you take a stand you're going to get lumps. So even some
560 of the conservative pastors that have come out of this merger,
they still are suspicious. They don't want to get too close to
us. So I even made the overture: what if we said that we won't
be in charge? Can't we just say that we want to get together?
And they still have that feeling, "Well, maybe we could in
565 certain areas." And that's one of the reasons we're going to be
at this 18 day... see if we can do some of this, because they
don't have a seminary and we do. We could certainly train their
men as well as our own.

570 S:
That's the AALC you're speaking of?

L:
Yes. I've said the same with the AAFLC. I even told them that
575 we had these twelve--in fact I may even have 13--congregations.
"Maybe you should take those over." "But," I said, "I wouldn't
just turn them over carte blanche, you know, without... would
want to." But they said, "Well, we're not that interested in
growing in that area, so..." And of course that's because the
580 AAFLC has a stance on piety that is a little different than
ours. And they are afraid of getting too many people that don't
believe that way, because then their elections have issues that
people who don't understand piety wouldn't be voting for the
right thing. So they wanted to control those. We're open to
585 saying, "Let's get together as an association. We aren't
controlling the polity within the congregations, just the overall
polity."

S:

590 I see. Is there an advantage that you see to remaining, to maintaining a separate or distinct identity?

L:

Well, I suppose that the main advantage is the control of the
595 doctrine. And that's the thing we see so easily slips away. If they don't take the same control in inerrancy, then we would hesitate. And we even saw that in Missouri. And we, of course, had Seminex when it broke away, there was enough evidence that this was going on right at the home base. So we
600 just feel that we want to keep that one main thrust, inerrancy, in our Seminary and our school of missions, but we certainly are wide open in practice part in letting people try new methods that might work, and not try to, sort of, litigate how they're going to do it.

605

S:

So You'd say that there is a certain fear on your part that a group that may say, "Yes, we believe the same thing" but at the same time might not actually inforce...

610

L:

No, the Charismatics, for instance. We have charismatic students come to us. In fact, we have Pentecostal students that come to us. But after they've been with us a year, they're
615 starting to see the importance of doctrine and really getting into the exegesis of the words rather than on the subjective feelings. But we...the AALC of being...that they're already opening the doors wide to the Charismatic new groups. Where the'll have Charismatic congregations. We might have people
620 within the congregations that are charismatic, but we don't want to structure ourselves around that sort of point of view. I would suggest that that would be a danger. We wouldn't want to get too close to that.

625 S:

So what do you perceive as your main goal or purpose within Lutheranism?

L:

630 Right now we feel it's probably wider than Lutheranism, because we feel that the Lutheran church, by in large, except for your group and part of Missouri, that by in large it's waning. So we see the goal of Christ, the Great Commision, our main goal at this point. And that's why we're training people that are not
635 Lutheran to be missionaries, to go out and win the world for Christ by the year 2000. We've tied in in that respect to the U.S. Center for World Missions in Pasadena. We're sort of a north-west school that they recognize, and we teach some of the courses that they teach, and I've had some of their professors.
640 We started our mission school in 1980. But it is more of an inter-denominational sort of thing. But we are truly Lutheran. And we plan to plant churches to the best of our ability,

teaching the newest methods, and planting these wherever we can
find a place to plant them with the limited resources that we
645 have. Financially we're doing very well. For some reason, this
last year the Lord just poured open the treasure house. Many of
our supporters are dying, and there leaving us property all over
the place. I can't believe it.

650 S:
When you mention the training of non-Lutherans, do you mean that
they are not Lutheran before they begin, or even after they're
done with your program?

655 L:
After they're through they might go with their own group in the
interest of another denomination. We do that quite often. We
always have. They get strict Lutheran teaching. So they go out
of here--and I've had several that have gone to Robert Preuss in
660 Fort Wayne and he says, "You know, your students are a cut above
the rest." ...colloquy. But you wouldn't even take them
because they came to us from the Assembly of God. But they're
no longer Assembly of God, they're no longer speaking in
tongues, but they're now Lutherans. They've been confirmed
665 Lutherans now. They're not all--some of them go into the
mission field, they're still under their old banner. I have
Missionary Alliance, I have Sudan Interior Mission, I have one
person with a Seventh Day Adventist record. It's just a hodge-
podge. It's like Robert Preuss told me, "I don't know how you
670 can do that, Lloyd. You're bound to be intimidated." I said,
"I'm not intimidated." They learn what we believe. We use
Pieper in our dogmatics and they learn that. Now many of those
people are what we call special students, they're going to be
missionaries, and they don't take all the courses. But we're
675 trying to offer them complete mission training as good as any in
the country.

S:
Ok. I guess you've also made reference to this. Would you
680 characterize the reaction from other Lutheran groups as
essentially negative, then?

L:
No, I think that the Missouri Synod has been very positive. I
685 even say that this new AALC recognized that we are identical
with them at their outset. But they just have this reserve,
that they say that some who have come over haven't been
convinced, and that's one of the reasons they told me. I still
think that there could be a merger of the two groups down the
690 line.

S:
And what would you say has been your impact, or your effect on
Lutheranism, or christianity in general?
695

L:
That one is difficult. I was the first seminarian when I left

Boeing. I was the first one to finish the seminary the first
three years. We graduated, oh, probably well over a hundred
700 that have gone into the ministry, and some have gone into
missions, and some have gone into administrative posts, and some
have gone back as laypeople to their churches. It's hard to
say. But I know they're really well prepared when they go. And
we've had some excellent reports from them. My D.Min program
705 has been attested to by some of the leaders --gone to Yale, to
the Missouri Synod. They've earned doctorates in Missouri, and
they've come to our seminary and gotten a D.Min from us. So
they all recognize the scholarship we are trying to do with our
limited facilities, our limited faculty, is pretty high. We've
710 got testimonies to that fact.

S:

Looking ahead, do you see a change in the role of your
organization?

715

L:

More and more, I think, it's going to be centered on world
evangelism. And we're going to start opening new avenues for
lay leadership, because Preuss also told me they're just
720 desperate, wondering what what they're going to do five years
from now. They're not getting any new students into the senior
colleges that are going to feed them, and they don't know what
they're going to do. Well, we see the same thing, and we don't
have a feeder school. So we want to start a Bible college, a
725 high school, and have this small feed and set up patterns where
we could do this in other parts of the country. We have a
school, for instance, in California. It's just a regular
Christian school, but it's got some patterns we feel we could
expand then, we could tie in with the Simon Greely school,
730 ...John Montgomery. We're not at this moment because... We sort
of see ourselves as reaching out and trying to have an
association. At least my vision is this: that we can't
possibly make much of an impact, but if we could tie together
with other conservative Lutherans throughout the world, in an
735 association where we all agreed on the basic doctrinal
principles, then we start working what they call networking. I
don't like the word because it's used by the "libs," but we
could start networking as conservatives, saying, "Hey, we've got
a project in Kenya and you've got something going in Kenya, why
740 can't we plug in and send one of our teachers to your school,
and keep track of this on a world-wide basis, with a registry of
all of these Christian, Lutheran, groups that are doing things
for the kingdom and could plug them somehow all together to get
the big job done. And where there's a hole in the system we
745 could identify it. We're working right now with part of our
group. We have a large Korean division. We built a dental
clinic in Manchuria province, up in China, and the dentists that
are going there from here, and the dental technicians and
training others over there are christians and have been trained
750 at our seminary. Now they have access to go over from Manchuria
directly to North Korea without visas. Nobody else, no mission
group on earth is sending anyone into North Korea. We could do

that from the Manchuria base. Now that's the kind of networking--we're not tied very closely to the Korean group, but
755 he's on our board, he's under the egress of Faith Seminary, so I just sort of see this networking of all areas of missions and evangelism and publications and you name it, and these could become sort of an alliance of groups, and we would find a Bible institute in Norway, for instance, that started up a Lutheran
760 Bible institute that holds to the same doctrinal tenets we do, we would plug together with them and say, " Ok, let's see what we can do together."

S:

765 Now corresponding, then, with a shift in your role, what changes do you see within the organization itself on the way, coming up now?

L:

770 That's difficult, because we can't find men your age that are interested in doing any of this that I told you. Very rarely--I might get one or two a year. That's not going to multiply very fast, because I'm getting to that age where I'll soon have to retire, and Redal is close to 70...

775

S:

So it seems that this business of establishing a feeder program seems to be the key.

780 L:

That would be the key. We're just starting to work in essence, we're getting some of the money to do these thing now, that's designated for scholarsdhips to the Semianary proper. Missions training--we this is where we feel we're going to put up money
785 for church planning and have a pool there that we can draw on when we have debts.

S:

790 What currently do see that the WCLA is doing to strengthen its own cause?

L:

Well, we've gotten off our, what would I call it, our apologetic emphasis. We're still going to print whenever there's an
795 aberration that we see. We're going to print it. But more and more we're going to tend toward missions and outreach. Our journal might change it's name. We don't know yet. -to "The Misissionary" or something like that. Where the name, "Lutherans Alert" had this polemic, apoligetic nature, if we get
800 to this other picture, missions and evangelism, we know that the people respond to that in a different way. We get a different clientel. Instead of based on a ministry that's naggy, and trying to correct all of the time. Like Herman Otten and I are pretty close. Well I'll call him and he'll call me, and he'll
805 criticize things that he's heard about us, and I'll call him and say, "Hey, that's a bunch of balony!" And we'll negotiate. Not that he ever backs off. And that's where people see us coming

from, and they've identified with us as being the ones that are
always blowing the whistle. And now we're going to try to be
810 the other side and say, "We couldn't turn the ELCA around, we
tried desperately. We got ourselves kicked out." But now we're
going to say, "Let's finish the job and forget." Being always
harping on that, let's just forget that part and go about what
Jesus told us to do. It's up to him, it's up to the Lord to
815 open up the doors, he has opened doors we can't believe at times
for opportunities, like we've got men now in Nigeria and Kenya
and all over there's people we have correspondence with
regularity to set up schools such as Faith Seminary. They did
at our school, and now they want to set these schools up other
820 places.