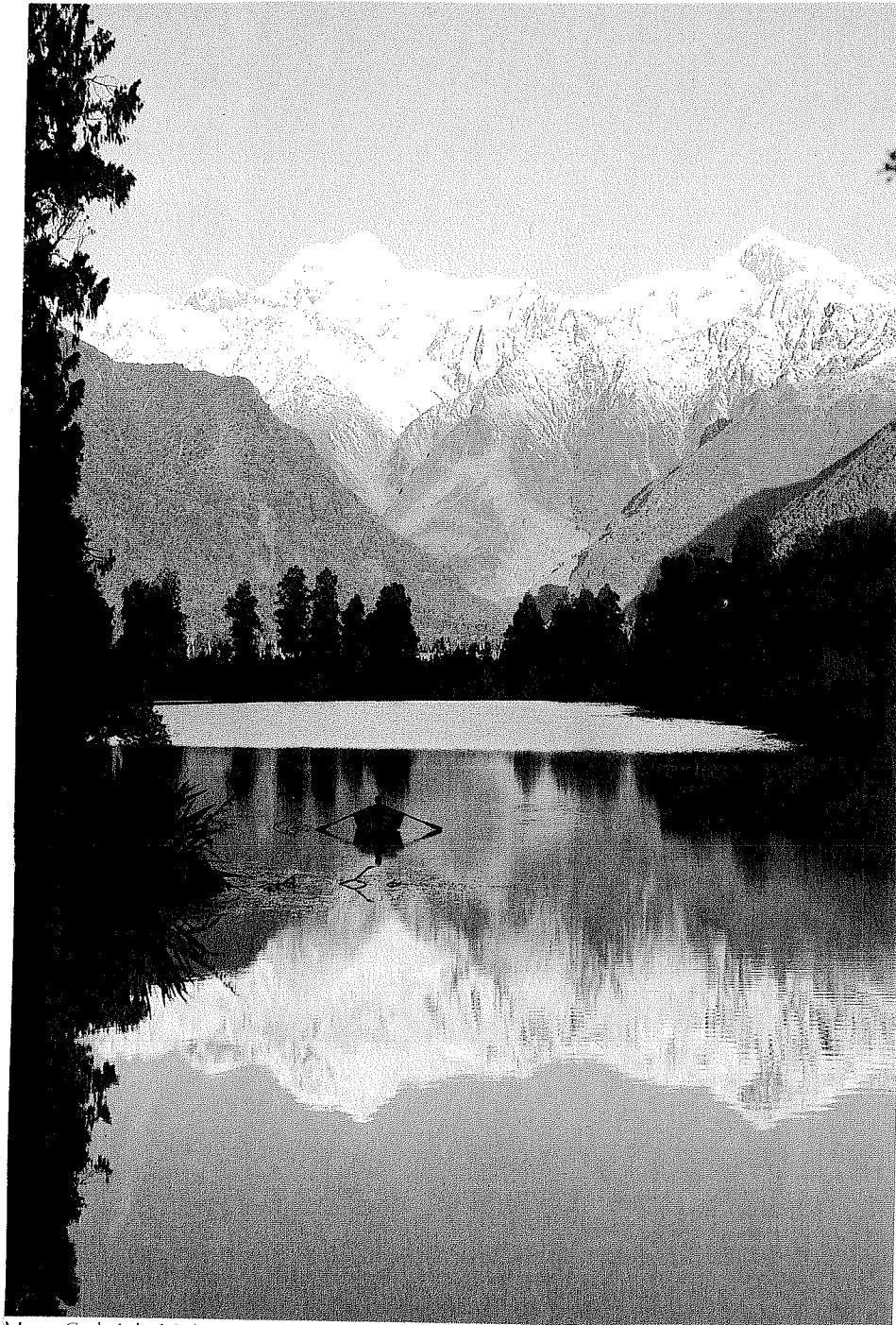


A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH IN NEW ZEALAND

By L. H. Punke

Senior Church History
Prof. E.C. Fredrich
April 23, 1982

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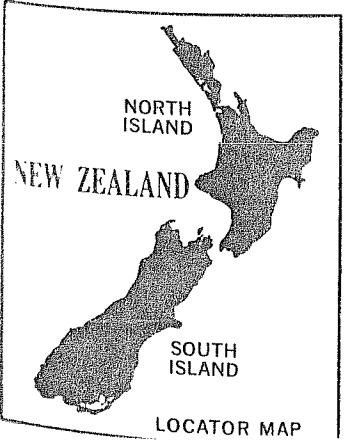
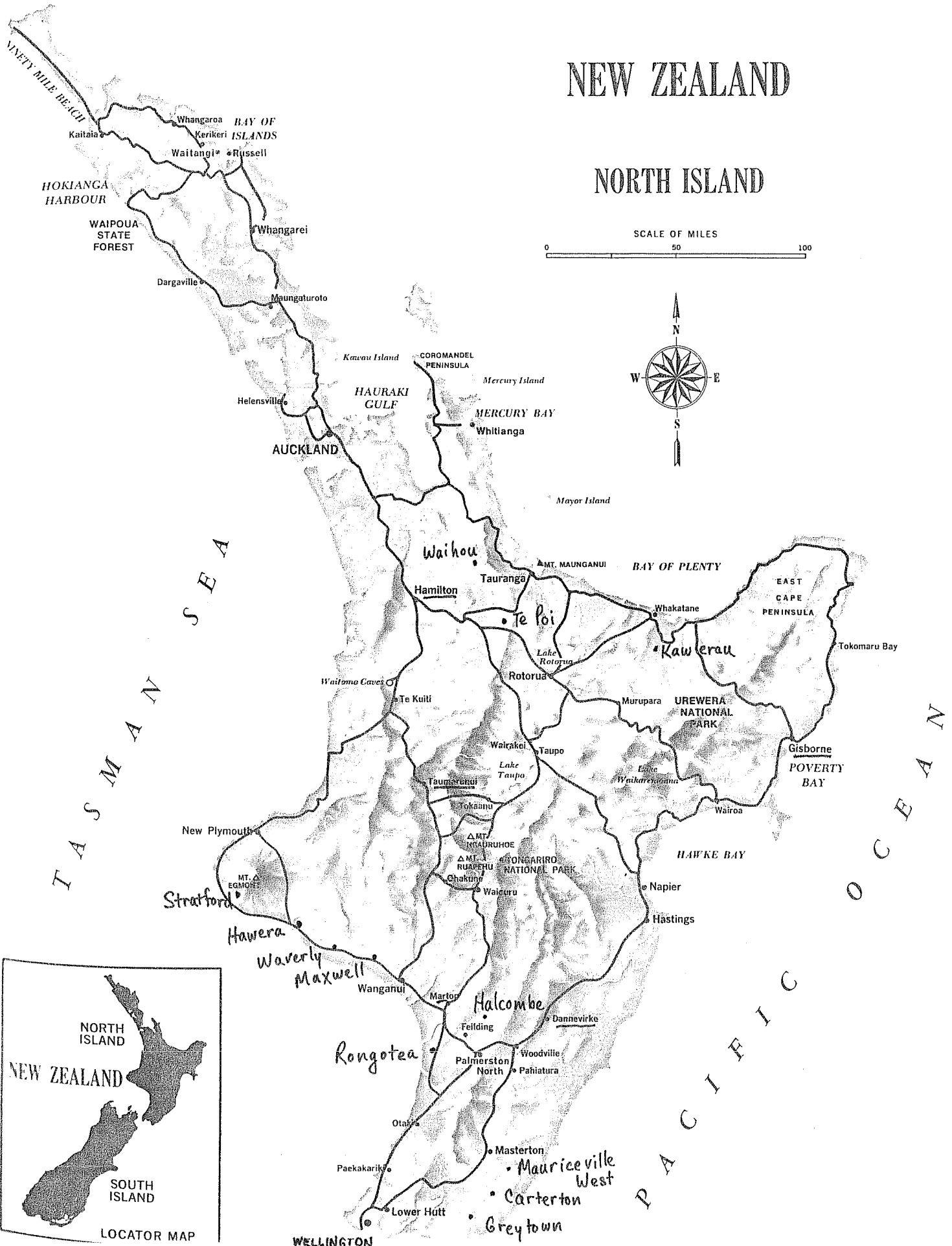
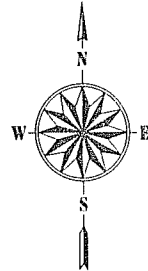
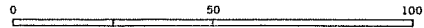


Mount Cook, Lake Matheson.

NEW ZEALAND

NORTH ISLAND

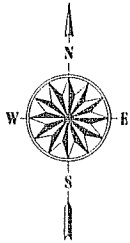
SCALE OF MILES



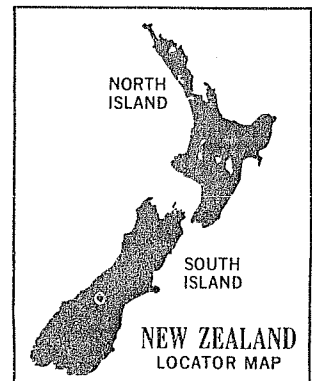
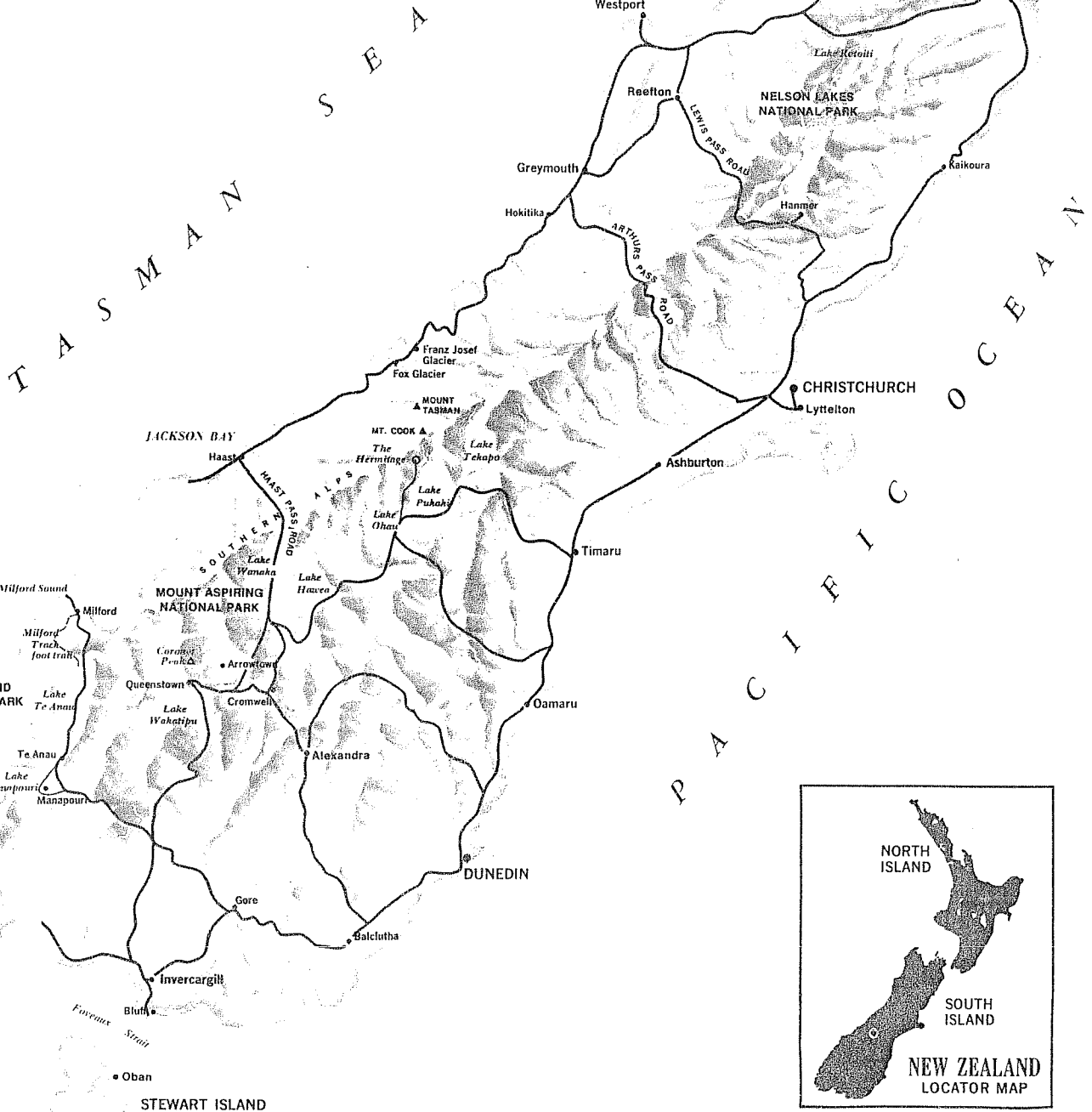
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SCALE OF MILES



Foreword

The broad scope of this paper did not permit specific insights to be set forth. Rather, what we have is a general observation of the Lutheran mission activities in New Zealand. The latter history of the Lutheran Church in New Zealand is more closely tied to that of Australia, for which reason this writer did not delve into it more deeply. That story is the topic for another paper. The other faults of the paper will become immediately discernible to the experienced eye. The interested reader will want to read on in Under the Southern Cross by A. Brauer. On the other hand, it may be better to go to New Zealand in person so as to get a bird's eye view of what is going on.

The very mention of New Zealand conjures up thoughts of puzzled astonishment and questions inevitably arise. Where is New Zealand? Do they speak English there? How long does it take to fly there? Why would anyone even want to go there? To set the stage, permit me to explain how this topic was chosen. Instead of finishing up at Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary last year, I took a year off to pursue some studies. My original intent was to spend that year off in Australia, but Pres. Schuetze persuaded me to take some classes.

As it all worked out, I attended Phoenix College and among other things I took two semesters of World Geography. The course greatly enhanced my longtime desire to see Australia and New Zealand. Last summer the Lord provided me with a job aboard the "Arctic Wave," a fishing vessel that operated in Bristol Bay in Alaska. The money earned there made it possible to accomplish my dream of going to New Zealand. After preaching on Nahum 1:2-7 at St. Thomas in Phoenix on August 9, I flew to Los Angeles, from where Air New Zealand took me to Honolulu and finally to Auckland, New Zealand.

The above details point to the process by which

I decided on my topic. Now then, we will digress just slightly by briefly telling the story of New Zealand's history. The majority of New Zealand's history, at least what we know of it, begins in 1840. Prior to that the famed Dutch navigator Abel Janszoon Tasman sighted the west coast of the South Island in 1642. As history records it, the next visitor was the Englishman Captain James Cook, who sailed around both main islands in 1769. In 1792 several whaling stations were set up on the South Island and these communities were augmented by seamen who had deserted their ships and convicts who had escaped from the penal settlement in New South Wales, Australia.

Missionaries from Sydney, headed by Samuel Marsden, arrived in the country in 1814, and others came later directly from Europe. Marsden compiled a dictionary and grammar of the Maori language and introduced a settled form of government. Soon, however, the Maori obtained muskets and gunpowder, which enabled them to engage in intertribal wars and fighting with some of the ruthless white men. Anarchy reigned until Captain William Hobson of the British Navy arrived in January, 1840. Hobson proclaimed British sovereignty on Jan. 30, and by the Treaty of Waitangi, Feb. 6, 1840, guaranteed to the Maori chiefs and tribes undisturbed possession of their lands. More trouble ensued later, but the stage had been set for mission work to begin in

earnest.

When a backwoodsman sets out for the mountains, he first of all carefully plans the route he will take. Then he attends to specific details and finally he deals with new developments as they occur. Here then we will take on an overall look at the history of the Lutheran church in New Zealand. After that step we will examine congregational beginnings. And finally we will examine some of the developments in the church which have taken place in our lifetime.

We have already mentioned the Treaty of Waitangi in 1840 and its significance in establishing harmony between the native Maori and the incoming Europeans. That treaty set the stage for the first mission outreach. The first division of time we will examine is 1844-1864. The North German Missionary Society commissioned the first Lutheran representatives to go to New Zealand. Two missionaries and two assistants, Wohlers, Riemschneider, Heine and Trost, arrived together with a group of Lutheran immigrants in 1843. These men were sent, not to minister to the immigrants, but specifically to do work among the Maori people. As we will see later, they were getting a late jump on things.

Nonetheless, these men worked at various places on the South Island, as well as at Taupo and Taranaki on the North Island. They did not always establish missions in the name of the Lutheran church: they were simply

content to win souls. Of the four abovementioned men, Heine remained in the Nelson and Moutere areas where he continued to serve the people who had immigrated and settled there. A congregation was founded at Nelson in 1846, the first congregation of Lutherans in New Zealand.

After a rocky start, the mission work among the Maoris began to flourish. Riemenschneider, for instance, in his first year of work in Taranaki, listed 234 souls under his care in thirteen villages. Later, this same man established a flourishing mission in the Otago area where a church was erected and dedicated in 1864 with 500 worshipers present. In the meantime, Wohlers had been working on Ruapuke Island. Despite the fact that a fire destroyed his house and belongings, he erected a church building in 1846 and the mission grew. Men like Abraham Honore and Carl Sylvius Volkner also labored among the Maoris, but both of them joined other denominations.

What are the results of the work done between 1844 and 1864? In spite of the efforts of these early pioneers the Lutheran Church as such had grown little. Only the work of Missionary Heine had resulted in the establishment of a Lutheran congregation, St. Paul's, which is still in existence today. This congregation erected a church in Upper Moutere; the foundation stone was laid on Nov. 2, 1864. As you can see, the outward gains were small. At the same time, the gains for the

kingdom of God as a result of this early work were quite considerable. Many souls were won for Christ. As for the other congregations, most of them were handed over to other denominations. The church and work in Otago were handed over to the Presbyterian Church in 1866. Any work that the Lutheran Church was doing among the Maoris at the commencement of the First World War was handed over to the government or other denominations.

The next period to look at is 1865-1900. In 1865 the first real impulse was given to Scandinavian immigration to New Zealand. Bishop Monrad of Denmark arrived in Napier, moved to Wanganui, and finally settled down near Palmerston North. This man was a voluntary exile from his native land because of national and political trouble in Europe at this time. Several other families had accompanied the Bishop and they settled nearby. The Bishop went home in 1868, but in the next fifteen years six to seven thousand Scandinavians immigrated to New Zealand. Unfortunately, no Lutheran pastor was sent until about 1878.

By 1876 several other men had been sent out by the Hermannsburg Mission Society with the express purpose of working among the Maoris. In 1878 Pastor Sass arrived to serve the scattered Scandinavian folk of the North Island. How different the history of the Lutheran Church might have been if these men had been directed to work among the Lutheran immigrants who were arriving in

large numbers at this time, instead of opening up completely new missions! Instead of manning the former Lutheran stations these men were directed by a different mission society to open up new stations.

The Scandinavian settlers concentrated in the Manawata and Wairapara areas, and eventually pastors were provided to serve them. The Evangelical Lutheran Convention of New Zealand, which consisted of Scandinavian congregations and members, was formed in 1889. By the turn of the century the Immanuel Convention had five pastors and three home-missionaries connected with it.

In the meantime, German Lutheran settlers erected a church in Christchurch in 1872. Heine continued to minister in the Nelson-Moutere area. A congregation was organized at Marton in 1877, where a number of immigrant families who had come from Australia and Germany had settled. The foundation stone of a church was laid on September 25, 1877. Work was still going on in Taranaki. Missionary Blaess arrived there in 1893. His headquarters were at Pungarehu where he labored for thirteen years. Just before the mission was closed in 1906 he experienced the great joy of baptizing Hamuera Te Punga. This man later studied in America and rendered sterling service to the Lutheran Church in New Zealand, ministering to the Halcombe congregation for over thirty years.

Thus at the turn of the century we find the fol-

lowing Lutheran pastors at work in New Zealand. Christensen is at Palmerston North and Halcombe (at Palmerston North a church and parsonage had been erected in 1882). Legarth was at Mauriceville and Wellington, Ries at Dannevirke, Topholm at Norsewood and the Hawkes Bay area, Petersen at Makaretu, with Inner Mission workers stationed at Bunnythorpe, Inglewood and Dannevirke. These men were all directly connected with the Immanuel Synod and worked chiefly among Lutherans of Scandinavian extraction. The following men worked without specific synodical connection: Gaustad at Halcombe, Klitscher at Marton and Halcombe, Schwartz at Upper Moutere and Oxford, Theil at Upper Moutere, Waimea and Nelson, Hartwig Dierks at Maxwelltown, while Blaess continued to serve in Tarnaki.

There were eleven ordained pastors and three home missionaries to serve the Lutheran Church of New Zealand. Government statistics at this time listed about 5,000 Lutherans.

1900-1945 is the next period we will examine. In 1902 New Zealand received a visit from Dr. A. L. Graebner, one of America's Lutheran leaders. After his visit the work in New Zealand was more closely tied ~~with~~ America. In 1907 the Evangelical Lutheran Concordia Conference of New Zealand was formed, thus giving New Zealand two Lutheran synods. In 1910 the Concordia Conference had five pastors serving seven congregations

and twenty-two preaching places with a membership of 1021 souls and a communicant membership of 429 souls. Negotiations were undertaken between the two Conventions to amalgamate, but these negotiations were unfruitful.

At the convention of the Concordia Conference in 1914 the matter of synodical affiliation was considered. It had been suggested from America that it might be expedient for the New Zealand Church to be worked as part of the Australian Church. The American brethren promised that they would continue to support the work as they had done in the past. The convention agreed to ask the Australian brethren to accept the New Zealand Conference. Thus we find that today the New Zealand Lutheran Church is still operating as a district of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia.

The First World War ruined much of the work that had been done prior to this time. In 1919 there were only three pastors of the Concordia Conference. Some churches had been destroyed by vandals, some newly established congregations had disbanded. In 1922 Christchurch was established as a Lutheran center, although previous efforts had failed there. Occasional services were conducted in Wellington by the Christchurch pastor. In 1927 the first resident pastor, Pastor Noffke, was installed in Wellington before a congregation of eleven people.

Meanwhile Ries and Gaustad (both connected with

the Immanuel Convention) had passed away. Neither were replaced and it is evident that the work of the Scandinavian brethren was steadily on the decline. This decline continued until finally only the Palmerston congregation remained as a stronghold with a few isolated adherents in the Wairarapa.

In 1931 the first Ladies Guild (Marton) was formed and in 1933 the New Zealand Luther League came into existence. The pastoral and numerical strength of the Concordia Conference did not vary much during these years between the World Wars. Although there was little progress in this period, it was not due to a lack of ideas for improving the work. However, many of the ideas never went out the "conference room." Another feature which militated against progress was the isolation of the pastors and the constant change in pastors particularly in the city areas.

During the War years (1939-1945) there were naturally many additional hardships to face, although they were nowhere near as great as those during the First World War.

The next period we will look at is 1945-1964. At the 1945th convention of the Church (Concordia Conference) the matter of calling a missionary to work at large in the North Island was given attention. Thus in 1947 an itinerant pastor for the North Island fields-- Pastor Clem Koch--arrived. Pastor F. Eckert, an assistant

for this work, arrived in 1949. Thus began the big task of establishing the Lutheran Church throughout a major part of New Zealand. Also in 1949 the first displaced persons from Europe arrived in New Zealand, some of whom were Lutherans. One of these, R. Reinfelds, was to become a pastor of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Zealand as it is now known. An impetus had been given to Lutheranism in New Zealand through their arrival.

If it is true to say that the church was in the doldrums during the 1900-1945 period of its history, then it is equally true to say that since 1945 it has a completely new lease on life. In 1948 the Lutheran Laymen's League of New Zealand was established, an organization which was to become instrumental in the establishment of churches in various parts of the country.

In 1950 Lutheranism in New Zealand was represented by the Evangelical Lutheran Concordia Conference with 1054 souls and eight pastors, and by the Immanuel Conference numbering 250 souls and one pastor. There was an overall total of 1300 souls and nine pastors. That the church is on the forward and upward move will be evident when these 1950 figures are compared with the 1963 figures: 2628 souls and thirteen pastors. Nor is the Lutheran Church confined to a small area of New Zealand anymore. It has been the aim of the church in these years to reach out with a vigorous mission

policy. It has been the aim to establish the church in every area of the country. This policy has been followed so that Lutherans moving from one area to another can be served by a Lutheran pastor.

In 1958 the two synods combined and Lutheranism is now a combined force in New Zealand under the name of The Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Zealand. It must be realized that during this latter period of the history of the church a heavy subsidy has been received due to the interest of the brethren in Australia. Without this help much of the expansion work undertaken in the era since 1945 would not have been possible.

Now then, we will consider some of the more recent mission work being undertaken. Although there is a considerable burden due to their internal mission program, New Zealand Lutherans contribute regularly for the work of the Gospel in New Guinea. Since they are denied the opportunity of Dominion-wide coverage with the Lutheran Hour, Lutherans in New Zealand contribute toward the cost of broadcasting on Station JOIL, Japan. They also contribute toward the cost of broadcasting on the only available outlet in New Zealand--4XD Dunedin.

Much energy is directed toward the home mission program in New Zealand. Since 1947 many new fields have been opened in the populous areas of the Dominion. Of the twelve areas where missionaries are working only

four are self-supporting. Five of these areas have been opened and worked vigorously since 1955 with the result that in these areas there are now serviceable plants including manse, chapel and the equipment necessary for the efficient working of the Parish. Each of these centers has a flourishing congregation which in turn helps to bring the Gospel to others.

Pivotal and basic to this mission outreach has been the loyal support of the self-supporting congregations and the annual subsidy received for many years from the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia. In addition, the establishment of the Lutheran Laymen's League of New Zealand has made it possible for cheap capital to be made available to mission fields for the erection of a plant. The building program of the Church since 1955 will give some indication of the spread into new areas:

Hamilton, Chapel, 1955; Auckland, Church Centre, 1956; Mauriceville West, Church, 1958; Lower Hutt, Chapel, 1959; Auckland (Panmure), Chapel, 1961; Palmerston North, Hall, 1961; Taumarunui, Chapel, 1961; Wanganui, Church and Hall, 1962; Whakatane, Chapel, 1963; Kawerau, Chapel, 1964.

Information from a pamphlet of the LCNZ.

The auxiliary organizations of the Lutheran Church also deserve mention. Founded in Marton in August, 1931, the New Zealand Luther League concerns itself with the welfare of the youth of the church. Despite having a small membership scattered over large areas, there is considerable activity. Dominion-wide and Zone

Camps and Rallies are held regularly. Particular stress is laid on Bible study and devotional aids.

In 1947 the Lutheran Laymen's League came into existence. Its aim is to provide interest free loans to mission congregations for capital expansion. Initial operations were small, but by 1960 the Laymen's League had total funds of £75,000(N.Z.). Almost all capital expansion has been financed through this organization.

The New Zealand Women's League was founded in October, 1956. The object of the League is to coordinate the efforts of the ladies of the Lutheran Church in fostering fellowship and rendering regular and systematic assistance to the church, its missions and other projects.

The printing department of the church has become an important arm in its outreach program. Begun in 1962 with the gift of a printing press, the volume of work has grown considerably. Major publication is "The New Zealand Lutheran," a sort of official organ of the church. There is a growing volume of business in tract printing and the other printed needs of the church.

Finally, we will briefly examine the doctrinal position currently held by the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Zealand. The things we discover will not differ greatly from what we have seen in American Lutheranism. Only the names and places will be new to us.

In 1958 a merger took place when St. Lukes Lutheran Church joined the Evangelical Lutheran Church of New Zealand. Since that time there has been a united Lutheran Church in New Zealand. Later the ELC of New Zealand merged with the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia.

On October 29, 1966, discussions and negotiations reached a climax in a constituting convention at Tanunda, South Australia, where the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (ELCA) and the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia (UELCA) consummated an organic merger under the name: Lutheran Church of Australia. Previously both groups had voted approval of the Document of Union, the ELCA at its Toowoomba Convention on March 15, 1965, the UELCA at its Horsham Convention on October 22, 1965. Earlier unity was not possible due to the membership of the UELCA in the Lutheran World Federation. There was also a problem with the involvement of the UELCA in unionistic practices in the conduct of missions in New Guinea. Apparently both of these issues were ironed out in the discussions conducted prior to the merger.

Prior to this merger, the ELCA had been in fellowship with the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod. Naturally, our Synod's Commission on Doctrinal Matters was interested in the discussions that led up to the merger. Apparently all of the doctrinal matters were

not worked out prior to the merger. The resulting doctrinal position was one with which our Synod has had difficulty. The photocopied letter written by Prof. Lawrenz points out some of the problems that still require our attention.

In view of the theological climate in our country, this writer does not predict that the near future will see our Synod in fellowship with the Lutheran Church of Australia. The liberal tendencies evident in their doctrinal position will undoubtedly ease the way for more errors to creep in. On its own power perhaps the old ELCA would have maintained a position more in line with Holy Scripture. Due, however, to their association with the more liberal Australian church some of their standards have been compromised. It is usually easier for false doctrine to increase than to be checked and that unhappy fate will most likely befall the Lutheran Church of Australia. When the ELCA merged with the UELCA we might say that it won the battle but lost the war.

COMMISSION ON INTER-CHURCH RELATIONS
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

Professor Carl Lawrenz, Chairman
11822 N Seminary Drive 65 W, Mequon
WI

April 20, 1981

Dr. E. W. Wiebusch, Editor
Board of Publications
Lutheran Church of Australia
205 Halifax St., Box 1369
Adelaide, S.A. 5001

Dear Dr. Wiebusch:

At its last meeting the Commission on Inter-Church Relations (CICR) of the Wisconsin Ev. Lutheran Synod (WELS) received a report of its subcommittee which had been asked to review the *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions* prepared by the Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations of the Lutheran Church of Australia. After studying and discussing this report our CICR asked its chairman to submit the following observations:

Among the forty-seven doctrinal statements and/or theological opinions which your LCA Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations has produced, our WELS Commission considers the *Theses of Agreement*, the *Document of Union*, *The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy* and *Genesis 1-3: A Doctrinal Statement* to be the key statements. We find that the doctrinal assertions made in these four basic statements are quite naturally reflected also in many of the subsequently drawn up LCA statements as they touch upon the same subject matter. Hence, in any attempt to establish a basis for church fellowship we consider it vital that efforts should first of all be concentrated on reaching full agreement concerning the four basic LCA doctrinal statements.

Our CICR (which at the time was still called the Commission on Doctrinal Matters) made a thorough study of the first two of these statements in 1968, and of the second two in 1972. Our evaluation of the *Theses of Agreement* and of the *Document of Union* was submitted to your Commission on Theology and Inter-Church Relations in an eleven-page letter dated January 23, 1968, and addressed to the Rev. Harold D. Koehne, vice-president of the LCA. Our CICR evaluation of *The Theses of Agreement and Inerrancy* and of *Genesis 1-3: A Doctrinal Statement* was published in the January 1973 issue of the *Wisconsin Lutheran Quarterly*, volume 70, number 1, pp. 56-66. We note that the aforementioned four basic LCA doctrinal statements, as included in *Doctrinal Statements and Theological Opinions*, have not been revised in any way since they were previously studied by our CICR. Thus we are once more enclosing copies of our two documents of evaluation dated January 23, 1968, and January 1972. They still set forth both the doctrinal points on which our CICR finds itself in agreement and those for which it is not able to find a scriptural basis and which it is therefore not able to include in its confessional witness. We are also sending you three copies of *Doctrinal Statements of the Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod*, and three photostatic copies of a 1980 statement entitled *On Defining Church Fellowship*. This material will provide you with additional information concerning our WELS doctrinal positions which should be helpful in understanding our evaluation of your doctrinal statements.

April 20, 1981

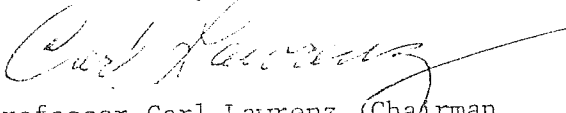
The following are some of the specific doctrinal assertions in the four basic LCA statements with which our CICR does not find itself in agreement:

1. A non-scriptural distinction between joint prayer and prayer fellowship,
2. A restriction of church fellowship to a joint use of the means of grace,
3. Consensus on the doctrinal content of the *Book of Concord* as the only requirement for Lutheran unity,
4. The identification of the local congregation as the only divinely instituted form of the church,
5. The identification of the pastorate of the local congregation as the only divinely instituted form of the public ministry,
6. A seemingly undue emphasis upon "the servant form of the written Word of God,"
7. The refusal to insist upon a literal six-day creation, allowing room for some form of evolution, and
8. An unclarity in certain eschatological statements, leaving possible room for certain millennial teachings.

We shall await your reaction to this review and your suggestions as to how our respective commissions might proceed upon this initial exchange of doctrinal statements.

Fond memories stay with me concerning the very hospitable reception which President O. J. Naumann and I received from you and the Melbourne convention in 1962.

With cordial greetings,


Professor Carl Lawrenz, Chairman
Commission on Inter-Church Relations
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

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enclosures

Sources of Information

Various pamphlets, reports, and other periodicals from Rev. R.J. Wiebusch, President, Lutheran Church Of New Zealand.

Correspondence of Prof. Carl Lawrenz relating to his work as chairman of the Commission on Inter-Church Relations.

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