Dialogue

This is a regular feature in which we share correspondence from our readers in order to extend the discussion created by articles in previous issues of CHARIS. Letters are generally reprinted in their entirety. However, personal or extraneous material is usually excised. The editor reserves the right to provide a response to any letter when providing a balanced perspective calls for it. Readers are invited to write or email comments and reactions to the editor. Any correspondence addressed to the editor may be included in Dialogue at the discretion of the editor without seeking permission of the writer.

Editorial Policy

In regard to the paper developed at the Shoreland Pastors Conference of the Southeastern Wisconsin District which was prepared by Pastor A. Christie at the request of the Conference. Concerning certain points in the sections entitled: “The argument in light of the Lutheran Confessions,” “Concerning the necessity of remaining faithful to the oath,” and “The argument in light of Luther’s own history.”

Concerning the fact that Luther was a Catholic priest.

If I nail “95 Theses” on a Lutheran church door, am I not being a Luther?

Was it not a Catholic church on which Luther nailed his 95 Theses?

Was Luther not a Catholic priest and theologian?

Had Luther not taken “a free oath” to uphold the Pope, Catholic doctrine and practice?

Did not Luther disregard his oath to define, defend and promote the truth of the gospel?

Did Luther not publicly dispute the Pope, Catholic doctrine and practice?

Did Luther not abandon the “incestuous scholarship” of the Catholic church and rely on Scripture alone?

Did Luther not attack long held Catholic doctrines (confessions) and practices?

Did Luther base his attack on the Lutheran Confessions?

Did Luther consider the Pope or Catholic doctrine and practice infallible?

Did Luther not attack the Pope, Catholic doctrine and practice on the basis of Scripture alone?

Have the Lutheran Confessions become the “Pope” of the WELS?
Thank you for replying to our Conference's concerns.

Our Conference addressed the matter of “recourse” in the Response that was forwarded to you. A number of times in our Conference discussions Pastor Christie and others reminded the brothers that if we were concerned with matters of content or opinion expressed in Mr. Eberle's article - as you suggested - Mr. Eberle was the one who needed to be contacted.

Our matter of concern was the editorial policy, the mechanics and philosophy employed by CHARIS. The practical question exists: if there is a question concerning content, who and how would one pursue proper recourse, the following through of Matthew 18. In the case of someone as well connected with WLC as Mr. Eberle, this may not pose a serious problem, but what if it is someone of a more anonymous background? If that pursuit would begin with an inquiry to the editorial board, shouldn't some responsibility for the article's propagation also begin there?

This practical example, I personally think, also illustrates why a different level of responsibility exists for the printed media as opposed to guest artist and scholar presentations. In those latter occasions the opportunity for recourse is immediate.

Thank you for sharing our Conference's Response with your advisory board and also for the stated practical policy of issuing caveats when warranted. This is not included in the magazine's printed editorial policy.

Within the bounds of privacy as you stated, thank you for the opportunity to share your reply with the members of our Shoreland Conference. I will share your presentation of our concerns as well as your stated practical policy. As regarding the right to disseminate the Response that was forwarded to you, it was sent to you and is subject to your discretion. I would please request, however, that the matter that was addressed, the matter of recourse and editorial policy, remain the focus.

Pastor David Wierschke
Caledonia, Wisconsin

The Wauwatosa Gospel

There are things in the recent issues of CHARIS that deserve study and comment in the future. For right now I would like to comment on the article "The Wauwatosa Gospel." Although the Wauwatosa theology correctly emphasized exegetical study of the original languages and did not like the dogmatics of a simple listing of proof passages nor did they like theology based on the citation of Lutheran church fathers rather than on a study of Scripture, there was still a high opinion of dogmatics in Wauwatosa. August Pieper wrote in a review of Schaller's book Biblical Christology,
Owing to the fact that the older men of the present generation of ministers have been fed a little too exclusively on dogmatical theology, public opinion in our own circles may be prejudiced to some extent against a book of this kind. The natural reaction largely turned their minds towards exegesis and historical studies. But it would be one of the gravest mistakes the Church could make, to underestimate the value of doctrinal theology. No theological education is complete without a thorough dogmatical training. If exegesis and history are to form the foundation, and to furnish the body of a full knowledge of the Gospel, systematical theology must shape its form, and give it the proper finish. It is the accuracy of thought and the precision of logical expression peculiar to dogmatical work, which make it an indispensable study and a most potent factor in the training of masterly minds. Dogmatics is but the systematical presentation of Gospel truth stated in exact terms, the coinage of the divine gold into pieces of definite value. Of all theological departments, it is the most efficient in preserving the purity of the Gospel (WLQ Vol. 16, #4, p. 298,299).

We need to be careful not to make "one of the gravest mistakes the Church could make," according to a Wauwatosa theologian, and "underestimate the value of doctrinal theology." The Wauwatosa theology that says, "Of all theological departments, it (dogmatics) is the most efficient in preserving the purity of the gospel" has a high regard for dogmatics.

The article "The Wauwatosa Gospel" also quotes August Pieper as saying, "Many a student outdid the master (Walther), producing a theology of the fathers with a vengeance." Note 21 then tells us that Jordahl's view is that "the student who most outdid Walther was August's brother Franz Pieper. It was in his Christian dogmatics that the 'fatal flaw' in Missouri theology most clearly shows. The lack of historical consciousness, the atomistic and wooden Biblicism, the dependence on the fathers, the pervasive simplitism, and the naive unawareness of presuppositions, as well as the air of infallibility that attended orthodoxy of this sort all are apparent in Pieper." This may be who Jordahl thinks of when August Pieper said many a student outdid the master in poor dogmatics, but it is not who August Pieper meant. In the review of Schaller's book August Pieper said that it contained an important feature it shared with Vol II of Franz Pieper's Christian Dogmatics that had recently been published. August Pieper said that in both works there was a "clear distinction between what is Scripture truth and what the author calls human reasonable-rational, we should call it - constructions." WLQ Vol 16, #4, p. 300. It should be noted that Jordahl's opinion about August Pieper's words, does not reflect August Pieper's view.

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Dr. Braun responds:

Thanks to Pastor Frey for sending August Pieper's remarks from Volume 16 of the Quartalschrift. Pieper's comments in his review of John Schaller's Biblical Christology add nuance to his and J. P. Koehler's critiques of C.F.W. Walther and the Missouri Synod of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

I agree that it will not do to correct an overemphasis on doctrinal theology by undervaluing the role of systematic study and organization of the truths of Scripture. One reason I would say that the
Wauwatosa theology is still practiced in Mequon is that it was a common occurrence in Dogmatics classes in the 1970s that professors such as Siegbert Becker, Wilbert Gawrisch, and Joel Gerlach (the three professors I had for Dogmatics) would regularly delve deeply into the exegesis and context of significant Scripture texts. In my recollection, they were never guilty of engaging in any sort of "citation theology" or "an unprincipled rummaging for proof texts."

Leigh Jordahl's opinion regarding Franz Pieper is just that--- Jordahl's opinion--- which is why it was cited as an aside in the endnotes rather than in the body of the article. The fact that Jordahl's opinion does not reflect August Pieper's view of his brother Franz is duly noted.

Mark Braun

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**YOUR CHURCH: Wanted Dead or Alive!**

Live churches are constantly changing,
Dead churches don’t have to.
Live churches have lots of noisy youth,
Dead churches are fairly quiet.

Live churches’ expenses ALWAYS exceed their income,
Dead churches take in more than they ever dream of spending.

Live churches are intense and earnest about worship,
Dead churches aren’t.

Live churches are filled with tithers,
Dead churches are filled with tippers.

Live churches dream great dreams for God,
Dead churches relive nightmares.

Live churches plan for the future,
Dead churches worship the past.

Live churches don’t have “can’t” in their vocabulary,
Dead churches have nothing but . . .

Live churches have fresh winds of love blowing . .
Dead churches are full of bickering and complaining.

(National Church Consultant – Dr. K. Hunter)
More Comment on *Gesetzlich*...

I've just been able to finally begin reading the fall edition of Charis, and I am amazed at how well Koehler hits point after point that Church and Change has been struggling with! 100 years have passed and nothing has really changed - which is good and bad all in one!

It also puts a whole new perspective on why Koehler "left" the synod with the Protestant Conference back then - realizing that with more stress on dogmatics and the pulling out of certain proof passages from their context to prove we're right and "they're" wrong destroys the ecumenical spirit, as he defines it. I don't know how you or anyone else found the article in order to reprint it, but I hope many in our circles read it. The good part is that, as proved by the Church & Change conference, there are still many in our midst who do have the "right" ecumenical spirit and are not ready to surrender our synod to the stance of "we're right and the rest of Christendom is wrong, so let's not have anything more ever to do with them - including not speaking to any."

Ironically, the very thing that Koehler fought against in his article on behalf of the Wisconsin Synod is what he himself wound up doing by withdrawing into an even smaller sect, which to this day claims to be the real Wisconsin Synod, yet won't have anything to do with the rest of us! I wish everyone in the WELS could realize that the only way that we can have an impact on strengthening the entire Church on earth is by TALKING to the rest of Christendom (and doing so as Koehler suggests - by beginning with all of our similarities in faith and REJOICING in our fellow Christians - and then only secondarily, if necessary, to get down to nitty-gritty differences.)

Keep up the good work. God's blessings in your ministry there.

Rev. Bruce Wietzke
Hollywood, Maryland
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Those wishing to express a viewpoint, render an opinion, provide a reaction to any of the articles published in CHARIS, or react to previous letters in DIALOGUE may do so by emailing their submission to the editor at:

john_bauer@wlc.edu

or

by mailing the text to the editor at:

The CHARIS Institute
8800 West Bluemound Road
Milwaukee, WI 53226

or

by faxing the material to the editor at:

(414)443-8510.

Submissions should be clearly identified as intended for DIALOGUE. Letters are generally reprinted in their entirety. However, personal or extraneous material is usually excised. The editor reserves the right to provide a response to any letter when providing a balanced perspective calls for it. Authors of articles may be asked to comment or defend themselves when a reaction seems warranted.