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Forty Years after Seminex: Reflections on Social and Theological Factors Leading to the Walkout

Lawrence R. Rast Jr.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) is a problem—for the historian, at least. And the problem, stated simply, is this: Where exactly does one place the LCMS in the larger landscape of American Christianity? Obviously we're not Roman Catholic. But does that make us Protestant? No, we're *Lutheran*, we answer. But that won't do for the demographers; they need a category. And, so, since we're not Catholic, we get lumped in with the Protestants. However, are we Mainline Protestants or are we Evangelical Protestants? Neither, again we would say. We're *Lutheran*. But what kind of Lutheran?

This definitional tension has been a hallmark of Missouri since its arrival on the American scene. We were drawn to America specifically because of the religious freedom—the confessional freedom—that the United States offered. And yet, the practical results of that religious freedom—every denominational flavor one could imagine, coupled with, strangely enough, unionistic practice that made such denominations largely superfluous—put Missouri in a strange spot. Even the greatest Missourian of all from our German period, C.F.W. Walther, came to be called “The *American* Luther.” Elsewhere, I have tracked the rhetoric of the early Saxon Missourians in regard to what they hoped for in America. And while their polity may not have been drawn directly from American democracy—their children would do that—they were not reticent about seeing the United States as a place particularly well suited to confessional Lutheranism.¹ As the argument sometimes goes, Luther's sixteenth-century German context did not offer him the opportunity to develop a polity consistent with Lutheran confessional teaching. America, however,

¹ Lawrence R. Rast Jr., “Demagoguery or Democracy: The Saxon Immigration and American Culture,” *CTQ* 63 (1999): 247–268.

offered Lutheranism a new possibility to get polity right—and Missouri believed it had achieved that.²

This, then, suggests another problem. Stated directly: Is the LCMS, as some still claim today, a German church? My answer: Of course not! Nor have we been one for quite some time. Few of our pastors and even fewer of our laity read German well, and even fewer speak the language. And fewer still actually care about the issue.

But that leaves us with yet another problem: *Were* we a German church? Linguistically, perhaps. But what about culturally? That is a far more nuanced question. I would like to answer that we were never a German church in the strictest sense. We have always been an American church; but for a significant period of time, we spoke the German language and struggled with its role in creating our self-understanding within the American, denominational setting. To put it another way, the LCMS has always been deeply submerged in American culture, even as it questioned that culture and, at times, tried to hold itself aloof from it.

The *Christian Century*, perhaps unintentionally, captured this tension in 1926 when it wrote:

The Missouri Lutheran church has its strength in the middle west. . . . It represents a distinctly American development in Lutheranism for which there is practically no parallel in Europe. It has isolated itself from other churches with an effectiveness which may be equaled by the southern Baptists but is not surpassed by any other body. Its discipline is iron and it enforces conformity to a theology which may best be described as an ossified seventeenth century orthodoxy. Its conception of salvation is highly magical and the instruments of redemption are the sacraments and "pure doctrine." Like Catholicism it perpetuates itself through the parochial school. The rigid discipline of the church seems to be under the control of the theological seminary faculty which has become a kind of corporate pope. . . . The denomination has had a remarkable growth in America and numbers almost a million communicants. It has the missionary energy which unqualified denominational zeal always supplies. Its social influence on American life is very slight and its ministers are prevented by the many restrictions which hedge them about from assuming positive social leadership in the various communities where they labor. The

² See Carl S. Munding, *Government in the Missouri Synod: The Genesis of Decentralized Government in the Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia, 1947).

church is almost as rigid and unbending as Rome and it consciously isolates itself from the other portions of American protestantism [*sic*].³

To put the question another way: if the LCMS was truly isolated, how could it have grown into one of the largest American denominations within a century of its founding? The usual answer—immigration!—is insufficient. There were other immigrant churches that shared the same doctrinal platform, fellowship practices, and potential clientele—here I am thinking especially of groups like the Wisconsin Synod—and while they grew, they grew neither as quickly nor as much as Missouri.⁴

What, then, was the key? To twist the old phrase *cur alii, alii non* just a bit, why Missouri and not others? My modest first answer to this question is simply this: Missouri was willing to submerge itself fully in American culture even as it maintained a distinct and unique—some might even say peculiar—theological identity.

To demonstrate my point, I will explore a recent example of this long-term Missouri struggle, namely, a limited consideration of the situation in the United States in the late 1960s and early 1970s, when Missouri itself was in theological and institutional turmoil.

I.

There are many who still have vivid memories of the profound changes that the United States experienced during the mid-1960s through the early 1970s. The Civil Rights Movement, protests over the war in Vietnam, the Summer of Love, Feminism, Woodstock, Wounded Knee, and plenty of other events all made the time a period unmatched in terms of turbulence and change. Some of my earliest and most distinct memories of this time are of unrest on the campus of The Ohio State University—where my parents were professors and where I first started school—that reached a peak in the wake of the Kent State shootings on May 4, 1970. That event merely underscored the visible divisions within American culture, as aptly described by one historian:

Obviously, the nation was becoming so divided by August 1968 that entirely different worldviews were emerging. Some people respond to frustration with anger, some with humor, some with silence; some ignore the issue, others get drunk or stoned, and some use repression against those considered the enemy. Such responses were becoming

³ “What Is Disturbing the Lutherans,” *Christian Century* 43 (1926): 909–910.

⁴ Mark A. Granquist, “Exploding the ‘Myth of the Boat,’” *Lutheran Forum* 44 (Winter 2010): 15–17.

apparent in mainstream society and in the movement. In a sense, then, yippies were the most outrageous movement response to the overburdening frustration of 1968, and for the Establishment the most outrageous response would be from Mayor Daley.⁵

One of the ways in which the divisions within American culture showed themselves occurred on college and university campuses, where students began to initiate a series of strikes. One of the most noteworthy was the student uprising at Columbia University from April 28, 1968, to May 5, 1970. Other instances of unrest followed both in the United States and abroad, with students increasingly declaring “strikes” and simply refusing to attend class. One lesser-known but significant instance of this occurred at San Francisco State College in Mill Valley, California.

After Columbia, the San Francisco State College strike was one of the longest lasting student strikes of the 1960s.⁶ It started when African American students confronted the college administration and demanded the establishment of an Ethnic Studies program. For nearly five months in late 1968 and early 1969, near-anarchy at San Francisco State played out on national television as repeated confrontations between students and authorities reached the level of overt violence. As Anderson summarized, “It was amazing that no one was killed.”⁷

The strike had its genesis in the discontent of minority students who were angered over their lack of representation on campus and the fact that there was no ethnic studies department at the college. It began on November 6, 1968. At its opening, most students went to class.⁸ But strikers

⁵ Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties: Protest in American from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 220.

⁶ Dikran Karagueuzian, *Blow It Up! The Black Student Revolt at San Francisco State College and the Emergence of Dr. Hayakawa* (Boston: Gambit, 1971). A detailed chronology of the strike may be found at “The San Francisco State College Strike Collection: Chronology of Events,” last accessed November 30, 2015, <http://www.library.sfsu.edu/about/collections/strike/chronology.html>; a video documentary can be found on Youtube: “Activist State (Documentary: 1968 San Francisco Student Strike),” *Youtube*, last accessed November 30, 2015, <http://youtu.be/aoPmb-9ctGc>. See also Strike Commemoration Committee, “40th Anniversary Commemoration of the SF State 1968 Student-led Strike,” September 24, 2008, <http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2008/09/24/18541121.php>.

⁷ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 299.

⁸ Anderson claims there was an ebb and flow to the student participation in the strike. Immediately prior to the end of the first semester, only about twenty percent of students were in class. However, when the new semester started about fifty percent of students attended class. When hostilities broke out again, class attendance plummeted. Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 293–299.

spread chaos on the campus by banging on classroom doors and threatening to remove students and teachers forcibly if they did not leave. Strikers also cut the cords on typewriters, telephones, and photo copiers in academic offices and clogged toilets and bathroom sinks. The campus was thoroughly disrupted.

Robert Smith, president of the college, responded by calling in hundreds of police in full riot gear. On November 13, police interrupted a student demonstration and began to arrest students and other participants.⁹ Students responded by throwing rocks, and the situation quickly deteriorated. Smith quickly closed the campus.

Governor Ronald Reagan and the California State University Board of Trustees, however, wanted the campus to remain open and ordered Smith to make arrangements. He refused and resigned. S.I. Hayakawa, a professor of semantics, replaced Smith on November 26. Declaring that "I'm in this job for the continued existence of San Francisco State College, and I'm prepared to fight all the way,"¹⁰ Hayakawa immediately banned protests, picketing, and sound amplification. A self-described "liberal," Hayakawa had no patience for what he believed were the theatrics of the protestors. He is quoted as saying, "In the age of television, image becomes more important than substance," and it seems he thought many of the student protestors were simply posing for the cameras.¹¹

Hayakawa closed the school early for Thanksgiving.¹² On Monday, December 2, 1969, Hayakawa reopened the campus under a "state of emergency."¹³ The event that made him famous occurred that same day. Students had outfitted a truck with a public-address system and were using that system to broadcast their condemnations of the college leadership. Wearing his trademark tam-o'-shanter, Hayakawa climbed aboard the truck and pulled the wires out, rendering the system useless. Governor

⁹ Tanya Schevitz, "S.F. State to Mark 40th Anniversary of Strike," SFGate, October 26, 2008, <http://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/S-F-State-to-mark-40th-anniversary-of-strike-3264418.php>.

¹⁰ John Dreyfuss, "Strike-Torn College Will Reopen Today," *Los Angeles Times*, December 2, 1968, http://latimesblogs.latimes.com/thedailymirror/files/1968_1202_cover.jpg (emphasis added).

¹¹ "Colleges: Permanence for Hayakawa," *Time Magazine*, July 18, 1969, <http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,901065,00.html>.

¹² Daryl J. Maed, *Chains of Babylon: The Rise of Asian America* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 53.

¹³ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 297.

Ronald Reagan is reported to have said, "I think we have found our man."¹⁴

The following day, Tuesday, December 3, which came to be known as "Bloody Tuesday," Hayakawa ordered police to remove strikers who had assembled. What was to become an all-too-familiar scene at U.S. colleges and universities followed, with students denouncing the administration, police seeking to disperse the students, and police and students clashing in increasingly violent fashion.

Over the course of the next several months, the standoff continued. Finally, the college agreed to establish an Ethnic Studies program and to populate it with a reasonably robust number of faculty, some twelve at its inception. In 2008, the College of Ethnic Studies celebrated its fortieth anniversary at what is now San Francisco State University.¹⁵ One historian has summarized the incident this way:

Calm returned to San Francisco State during the spring semester, but the affair demonstrated how divided the campus, and the nation, had become by 1969. While there was some compromise, there was also little middle ground. Both sides now were digging in for the remainder of the second wave: an increasingly frustrated and bold student movement versus a more irritated silent majority that was demanding more repression.¹⁶

¹⁴ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 297. See also Diane Carol Fujino, "Third World Strikes," in *Asian Americans: An Encyclopedia of Social, Cultural, Economic, and Political History*, eds. Xiaojian Zhao and Edward J. W. Park, 3 vols., (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood, 2014), 3:1102. Regan is also reported to have called Hayakawa "my samurai." See John P. Diggins, *Ronald Reagan: Fate, Freedom, and the Making of History* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2007), 144.

¹⁵ "Ethnic Studies 40 Years Later: Race Resistance and Relevance," last accessed November 30, 2015, <http://ethnicstudies.sfsu.edu/fortieth>. Interestingly enough, S.I. Hayakawa went on run for the U.S. Senate, succeeded, and served from 1977 to 1983. He died in 1992. For details on Hayakawa's life and career, see Gerald W. Haslam and Janice E. Haslam, *In Thought and Action: The Enigmatic Life of S. I. Hayakawa* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); and J.Y. Smith, "Obituaries: Outspoken U.S. Senator S.I. Hayakawa Dies at 85," in *From Semantics to the U.S. Senate: Oral History Transcript*, S.I. Hayakawa and Julie Gordon Shearer (Berkeley: The Bancroft Library, University of California, 1994), http://www.oac.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb5q2nb40v&chunk.id=div00215&brand=calisphere&doc.view=entire_text. For an interview with Hayakawa the day after the "speaker incident," see also "Student Unrest at SF State College and S.I. Hayakawa," *Youtube*, last accessed November 23, 2015, <http://youtu.be/rYeCIaVGM9E>.

¹⁶ Anderson, *The Movement and the Sixties*, 299.

Indeed, San Francisco State was not alone—not among colleges and universities, and not among seminaries, either. Throughout the spring of 1969, moratoriums were held around the country. They were, however, largely ad hoc. By October, there was a formal movement toward a moratorium. On October 15, 1969, a planned day off of classes for reflection on the war and how it might end was held. Bernard Weinraub of the *New York Times* reported that “the day of moratorium on hundreds of college campuses began in the chill autumn dawn with memorial services and ended last night on city streets and college towns with silent candlelight marches to honor the nearly 40,000 American dead in Vietnam.” The title of the report is to the point: “Bells Toll and Crosses Are Planted Around U.S. as Students Say ‘Enough!’ to War.”¹⁷

II.

And perhaps here is the best point to transition back to LCMS events. Weinraub’s title, “Bells Toll and Crosses Are Planted,” anticipates events that would occur at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, on February 19, 1974, when Luther Tower’s bells tolled over a quad filled with crosses.



Figure 1 — Students exit the cross-filled Quad of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, as they prepare to leave the campus, February 19, 1974.

¹⁷ Bernard Weinraub, “Bells Toll and Crosses Are Planted Around U.S. as Students Say ‘Enough!’ to War; Campuses Remember Slain G.I.’s,” *New York Times*, October 16, 1969.

The moratorium on classes called by the Saint Louis seminary's students that began on January 21, 1974, is well known. However, when students took that action, they were continuing a tradition that not only had played out at places like San Francisco State, but had, in fact, been part of the seminary's experience since at least 1969.

In *Memoirs in Exile*, John Tietjen notes that students held a "Day of Theological Reflection" in December 1973, as "a practice that had been followed from time to time since 1969."¹⁸ This is somewhat misleading. In fact, on February 10, 1969, Concordia Seminary students petitioned for a three-day moratorium on classes. Some 250 students sought the opportunity "to discuss a number of student issues and grievances." The process they proposed included:

- 1) to respect the position of the students, 2) to begin discussions February 18 in small groups, 3) to extend discussions up to the Communion service February 19, 4) to assess the program through a faculty-student committee Tuesday and Wednesday which will undertake a further process if necessary, 5) that the graduate school continue with such modifications as the instructor will deem possible.

The minutes of the faculty sum things up this way:

After much discussion the motion was made and seconded that the faculty offer up to three days for a procedure of discussion to be used at the discretion of the committee. The amendment was moved and seconded that the first phase of this be up to Wednesday chapel and the procedure thereafter be suggested by the committee. The amendment was lost; the motion was carried.

Dr. Martin Scharlemann, also known as "The General," requested that his negative vote be recorded.¹⁹ Later minutes showed a concern on the part of faculty with student unrest and the historical record. President Fuerbringer "recommended that the Department of Historical Theology provide record of student unrest, the moratorium, and its context, for future reference."²⁰

¹⁸ John H. Tietjen, *Memoirs in Exile: Confessional Hope and Institutional Conflict* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990), 180.

¹⁹ The preceding summary and quotes are from "Special Faculty Meeting of February 12, 1969," Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, *Faculty Journal*, 1968–1969, 60.

²⁰ "Faculty Meeting of February 25, 1969," Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, *Faculty Journal*, 1968–1969, 64. A sound recording was ultimately produced. *Class Moratorium at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis: A Documentary* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary Media Services, 1969).

As student unrest over the United States' role in Vietnam increased, it is not surprising to find that the chief question in the moratorium discussion revolved around the seminary's certification to Selective Service of "full time" students. The seminary reduced "full time" to at least twelve hours, yet there were questions over whether it was necessary that students carry "an average load of twelve hours, uninterruptedly." In the end, the faculty resolved to "authorize IV-Year men who drop two three-hour courses, if necessary, to add additional credits reaching twelve hours through supplementary work in the courses which they are taking." Further, President Fuerbringer was directed to "check with Selective Service on the legitimacy of averaging the course hours" and to do so "by next Tuesday if at all possible."²¹ Clearly there was anxiety and a sense of urgency about the matter.

The moratorium came and went. Many of the questions raised during the moratorium were pushed into the Student Life Committee for further consideration. There a request for an annual "moratorium" was rejected. Instead, the faculty encouraged the entire campus community to "rededicate ourselves to the primary task of theological education and service and personal Christian growth." For their part the students admitted that "part of the responsibility for the conditions we dislike lie with ourselves, and that we pledge in Christian love to rededicate ourselves to the goal of preparing to become ministers of the Word, acting in love and honesty toward one another, whatever his position may be."²² Student life went on as before at Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, calmed down—at least for the time being.

However, the larger synod experienced a significant change in its leadership. In May 1969, Dr. John Tietjen was elected president of the Saint Louis seminary. Tietjen came from the public relations office of the Lutheran Council USA (LCUSA) and was a well-known leader among the synod's moderates. In July, J.A.O. Preus, then president of Concordia Theological Seminary at Springfield and a well-known leader among the synod's conservatives, replaced Oliver Harms as Synod President.²³

²¹ "Faculty Meeting, March 11, 1969," Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, *Faculty Journal*, 1968–1969, 72.

²² "Seminary Life Committee, May 19, 1968," Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, *Faculty Journal*, 1968–1969, 111.

²³ There has been a fair amount of speculation over the margin of victory in J.A.O. Preus's election in 1969. John Tietjen is uncertain. Fred Danker, in *No Room in the Brotherhood*, is convinced it was minimal. It was not. These numbers (see below) are attached to a personal note of J.A.O. Preus to his younger brother, Robert. Robert Preus Papers, CTSFW Archives.

Tietjen described himself as “troubled” by Preus’s election because he “had expected to work closely with Harms.” But everything had changed. “Now I was to work with a president whose candidacy had been proposed by people within the Missouri Synod whose understanding of the church’s theology and mission were different than mine.”²⁴

In reality, however, more immediate troubles confronted Tietjen. First, he faced hostility within the faculty. At the faculty’s fall retreat in 1969, Tietjen’s recently published article, “The Gospel and the Theological Task,” formed the basis of reflection and discussion.²⁵ At least one professor, Martin Scharlemann, expressed distress over the article’s method and message.²⁶ Yet, even prior to his formal inauguration as the sixth president of Concordia Seminary in November, Tietjen was also pressed by the student body on another matter. David Carter, one of the editors of the student newspaper, *Spectrum*, sought feedback from the administration on participating in the nationwide moratorium to be held October 15, 1969, which we noted above. Tietjen temporized and asked that any such moratorium be postponed until at least November when he might “evaluate this matter with the faculty.” Carter and the students respected Tietjen’s advice, but remained dissatisfied. They felt “detached from the outside” and expressed a “need to be tuned in on in the world.”²⁷

| | <u>PRESIDENT</u> | | | | | |
|---------------|------------------|-------|----------|-------|----------|-------|
| | <u>Primary</u> | | <u>1</u> | | <u>2</u> | |
| Preus | 436 | 48.6% | 465 | 49.8% | 471 * | 50.1% |
| Harms | 417 | 46.4% | 400 | 42.8% | 416 | 44.3% |
| Behnken | 11 | | 28 | | 27 | |
| Nickel | 10 | | 30 | | 25 | |
| Weber | 9 | | 9 | | | |
| Streifert | 5 | | | | | |
| Heckmann | 3 | | | | | |
| Wiederaenders | 3 | | | | | |
| R. Preus | 3 | | 933 | | 939 | |
| etc. | 877 | 897 | 933 | | 939 | |

²⁴ Tietjen, *Memoirs*, 4.

²⁵ John H. Tietjen, “The Gospel and the Theological Task,” *Concordia Theological Monthly* 40 (1969): 434–443.

²⁶ Martin H. Scharlemann, “SOME ANIMADVERSIONS on the Theme of the Retreat: ‘The Gospel and the Theological Task.’” Cited in Tietjen, *Memoirs*, 20.

²⁷ Student Guidance Council, October 2, 1969, Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, *Faculty Journal*, 1969–1970, 15.

The faculty, somewhat ironically in light of later events, was uncomfortable with the word "moratorium," which they felt was a loaded term and too tied to the question of Vietnam.²⁸ One person went so far as to suggest that "perhaps at least a total of twelve different books would have to be read before one could really know sufficiently about the war in Vietnam to make judgment." The faculty also wondered about "the genuine concern that church people have re[garding] the actions of Seminary students and the effect these actions may have upon their respect for the Seminary and their support of same" and worried whether this matter was "something in which the Seminary should be involved?"²⁹

On October 21, 1969, just after the national moratorium, the faculty considered a plan titled: "A PROPOSAL TO DESIGNATE NOVEMBER 13, 1969, AS A 'DAY OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION ON ISSUES OF WAR AND PEACE'" (that would be just three days after Tietjen's inauguration, which occurred on November 10, 1969). It read as follows:

WHEREAS President John Tietjen has appointed a special student-faculty committee for a Day of Theological Reflection on Issues of War and Peace, and

WHEREAS the President has outlined the objectives of this committee as follows: "To devise and implement a day's program, approved by the faculty, that will produce reflection on major current issues related to the Vietnam war and their implications for the church and its theology and ministry," and

WHEREAS the committee has agreed to recommend that Thursday, November 13, 1969, be designated as the date for the proposed Day of Theological Reflection (after learning that the Registrar is ready, at the request of the Faculty, to reschedule II-Year winter quarter registration from November 13 to November 14, thus clearing the schedule on November 13), and

WHEREAS the committee has designated, with the help of a questionnaire circulated among members of the campus community, four major topics which in its opinion "will produce reflection on major current issues related to the Vietnam War and their implications for the church and its theology and ministry," and

WHEREAS the Proposal to provide this type of "concentrated educational experience relating the task of the seminary to a particular issue of major current concern" is in keeping with the approach which

²⁸ Tietjen later embraced the word. See Tietjen, *Memoirs*, 189.

²⁹ "Student Guidance Council, October 2, 1969," *Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Faculty Journal*, 1969–1970, 15.

favors utilizing this year of the Seminary's "Interim Curriculum" as a year "in which experimental approaches to the curriculum will be encouraged," therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Faculty designate Thursday, November 13, 1969, as a "Day of Theological Reflection on Issues of War and Peace" on the campus of Concordia Seminary; and be it further

RESOLVED that the program on that day include the following four topics: A. (Selective) Conscientious Objection; B. Civil Disobedience; C. The Church's Ministry to People Who Differ on Issues of National Policy; D. The War in Vietnam;

RESOLVED that the special student-faculty committee appointed by the President be authorized to implement the program in a practical way.

After "considerable" discussion, the motion carried.³⁰

My reason for citing this at length is that seminary students, like their colleagues at colleges and universities throughout the United States, were deeply involved in contemporary cultural questions and issues. Further, it showed that they were moving in directions that challenged at least some of the faculty and, in fact, the students' efforts revealed differences within the faculty.

Divisions were also apparent within the broader LCMS when members of the Ohio National Guard opened fire on students protesting the war at Kent State University on May 4, 1970. Four students were killed. Concordia Seminary students reacted by planning a vigil to recognize the seriousness of the event. They may have also connected this to the killing of students at Jackson State College in Mississippi.

In fact, whether this event actually occurred or not became a point of contention. The original draft of President Preus's Fact Finding Committee Report, that of June 1971, may have addressed this issue. This edition of the Fact Finding Committee's report was never publicly disseminated. When the official Report was published on September 1, 1972, the so-called "Blue Book," the Kent State/Jackson State matter was not a part of the Report. Strangely, John Tietjen's response to the "Blue Book," which was titled *Fact Finding or Fault Finding* and appeared on September 8, 1972, actually did address the issue.³¹ To put it another way, because *Fact Finding or Fault*

³⁰ "Faculty Meeting, October 21, 1969," Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, *Faculty Journal*, 1969-1970, 29.

³¹ John H. Tietjen, *Fact Finding or Fault Finding? An Analysis of President J. A. O. Preus' Investigation of Concordia Seminary* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1972).

Finding was 1) largely prepared as a response to the unpublished first draft of the Fact Finding Committee Report; and 2) issued hurriedly before revisions were made on the basis of President Preus's published report, the result was that President Tietjen put on the table an issue that was absent from the Blue Book and at the very least made the seminary appear to be engaged in radical activities.³²

An Addendum on the Kent State and Jackson State Memorial Service in *Fact Finding or Fault Finding*, Tietjen claimed:

The president's Committee did not even do us the courtesy of finding out the "facts" on which it is supposedly reporting. It is reporting as fact what did not in fact occur. There was no "all night vigil." There was no service in "the Central Quadrangle." There was no joint worship. The announced event was cancelled. Why didn't the Committee find out what really happened? They would have had one less case against the seminary.³³

Pastor Tom Baker later contested Tietjen's assertion. He noted that "when several students read what had been written [in *Fact Finding*], they sent a letter to the persons most affected by Dr. Tietjen's charge."³⁴ Here is what they said, as cited by Baker:

That a service of worship (speaking to God, hearing Him respond) took place cannot be denied. Although technically it did not take place in the Quad, such a cop-out seems to miss the real issue. It did take place. President Tietjen and other professors (Kalin, Klein) were present and took part in speaking the worship litany, women presumably from Fontbonne, were present (unionistic), and there were those present who continued to remain awake during the whole night discussing the issues and taking action (witness—I myself remained with one group until six in the morning while another group spent their vigil in enclosing the Quad with barbed wire).

By the way, after the service, one of the speakers thanked President Tietjen for attending. At that time, President Tietjen made comments to the effect that he thanked this group for their work and thought that more of the students should be made aware of the war and its effects. His amiable personality and smiling countenance gave witness to the fact that he certainly did not disapprove of what was going on.³⁵

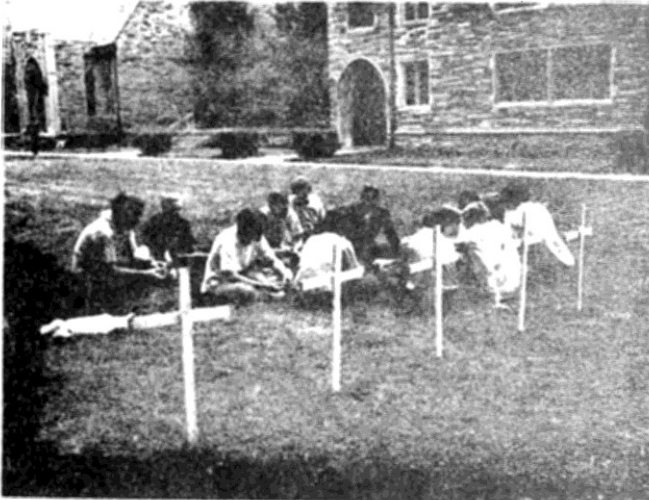
³² Tietjen, *Memoirs*, 110–113.

³³ Tietjen, *Fact Finding or Fault Finding?*, 34.

³⁴ Thomas A. Baker, *Watershed at the Rivergate: 1,400 Vs. 250,000* (Sturgis, MI: [n.p.], 1973), 67.

³⁵ Baker, *Watershed at the Rivergate*, 67.

Whether the event occurred as advertised or not, what is clear, however, is a picture that appeared in the *Spectrum* on Wednesday, May, 6, 1970 (see below). In an act that mirrored what was happening in institutions of higher education throughout the U.S., Concordia students placed crosses in the Quad of the campus in honor of those slain at Kent State.



Students gather around the crosses erected in the Quad in memory of the slain Kent University students to discuss problems of war and oppression.

STUDENT DEATHS OBSERVED

The slaying of Kent State University students was observed quietly at Concordia Seminary.

Students carrying five white crosses led a procession into the regular chapel service. Afterwards a small group gathered in the quad for a service of prayer and meditation.

The five crosses were then erected on that spot. Throughout the day smaller groups gathered around the crosses for discussion.

The students were slain by National Guardsmen during demonstrations protesting against American military involvement in Vietnam and Cambodia.

Figure 2 — "Student Deaths Observed," *Spectrum*, May 6, 1970, 1.

As the 1969–1970 academic year moved towards its close, the *Spectrum* continued to feature calls for action and, increasingly, expressions of frustration on the part of some students. To the first, for example, a letter co-authored by Mark O. Hatfield (R-Oregon), Charles Goodell (R-New York), Alan Cranston (D-California), and Harold Hughes (D-Iowa) encouraging students to "do all in your power to generate public support" to cut off further funding for the war, withdraw the troops, exchange prisoners, and offer asylum to those who felt threatened in the face of the proposed U.S. withdrawal appeared in the May 8, 1970, *Spectrum*. Commentary on the letter expressed exasperation with the student body. "Everybody's talking but no one is acting. Here's the chance to be a constructive participant. . . . Act for once!"³⁶

The same issue featured the announcement that Bill Durkin, a member of the Chicago 15 anti-war protesters, would be speaking on the campus that same day. The article also included a long statement by Durkin, which read in part: "Every court struggle is the same battle, between those who want to be free and those who want to keep them enslaved. The dialogue is different but the struggle is the same."³⁷ In the same issue, correspondent R. Balint answered the question posed by an earlier

³⁶ *Spectrum* (May 8, 1970): 1.

³⁷ "Chicago 15 Member Speaks Friday," *Spectrum* (May 8, 1970): 4, 5. The "Chicago 15" entered the Federal Building in downtown Chicago on May 25, 1969 and burned I-A draft files. See "Group Burns Draft Files in Chicago," *Janesville Daily Gazette*, May 26, 1969, <http://www.newspapers.com/newspage/11077393/>.

correspondent, “Won’t someone bring us together?” “They’ve tried,” he responded. “Jesus, Gandhi, Martin Luther King; but we didn’t listen. . . . We have God’s own Son; the Mahatma; a twentieth-century saint; and many, many more. Even if someone were to return from the dead we would not hear him.”³⁸

Subsequent editions encouraged students to participate in the boycott march against California table grapes, to work for social justice, and to help fight discrimination.³⁹ One strong indication of the level of students’ immersion in contemporary culture is the following:

I went to Washington on the dollars of friends. I joined in rallies, got tear-gassed, took pictures, talked to policemen and demonstrators, visited Senators, Representatives and their offices, slept on floors, walked blocks and returned. The S.E. Asian war still goes on in the green paddies and brown hills and the muddy waters. Concordia Seminary still goes on behind the green lawns and brown walls and the muddy minds of us all. Will there come a time when saying no to one means saying no to the other? Or am I to retreat once again behind church and state, rich and poor, establishment and movement, professor and student, violence and non-violence, Law and Gospel—simply because life is that way? I saw graves of dead men in Washington beside the Potomac and the Pentagon. I’m sorry, but I returned to see the walking dead between the DeMun and Big Bend in Clayton. It’s not that I don’t have some perspective. It’s my eyes. They’re tiring under the strain of constant short-sightedness. I guess I’m just not the right type for handling the Seminary’s vision for the world. There’s just too many minutes for thinking between the Pentagon and 210 N. Broadway. I’m sorry brothers and sisters. The greens and the browns and muddy waters around here keep showing Pax Americana.⁴⁰

All of this occurred four years before the actual “walkout.” It was, however, contemporaneous with the catalyst for the walkout, namely, President J.A.O. Preus’s announcement in July 1970 that he intended to investigate the seminary, after having received Martin Scharlemann’s letter

³⁸ “Letters to the Editor,” *Spectrum* (May 8, 1970): 6.

³⁹ “Grape Boycott March Tomorrow,” *Spectrum* (May 15, 1970): 1; “Work for Social Justice,” *Spectrum* (May 20, 1970): 1; “Students Help Fight Discrimination,” *Spectrum* (May 27, 1970): 1.

⁴⁰ Dan Kunkel, “Letters to the Editor,” *Spectrum* (May 18, 1970): 4. 210 North Broadway was the location of the Lutheran Building, headquarters of the LCMS and location of President Preus’s office.

of April 9, 1970.⁴¹ For many students, it simply seemed that Nixon and Preus were one and the same.

Temperatures rose to the boiling point over the next several years. The *Spectrum* shows how deeply seminarians were submerged in their culture. That is not a theological assessment; it is a historical one and is not intended to be pejorative. They reflected their deep immersion in the cultural upheaval of their time.

The *Spectrum* continued to be a vibrant place of interaction between “moderate” students, “conservative” students, professors, seminary administration, and even Board of Control and Synod administration. The whole campus was in on the act—a model of the engaged community. As Preus’s Fact Finding Committee continued its process, tensions heightened. A popular young professor’s contract was not renewed and demands that the Board of Control explain its action were not addressed. The faculty responded to Preus’s *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*. The Board of Control exonerated all faculty members—some by the barest of margins.⁴² The 1973 New Orleans Convention resolved that the faculty held positions that “cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less excused and defended.”⁴³ The faculty issued a formal “Declaration of Protest and Confession” on July 24, 1973. The protest read:

We protest the convention’s judgment that we teach false doctrine which “cannot be tolerated in the church of God.”

We protest the convention’s violation of the procedures for evangelical discipline clearly outlined in the Synod’s constitution and bylaws.

We protest the convention’s breach of contract in judging and condemning us by a doctrinal standard different from the doctrinal article of the Constitution (Article II),

We protest the convention’s violation of the principle of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone) in elevating tradition above Scripture.

We protest the convention’s use of coercive power to establish the true doctrine of the Scriptures.

⁴¹ Robert Teuscher broke the story in the *St. Louis Globe Democrat* on July 13, 1970. Scharlemann’s letter may be found in Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, *Exodus from Concordia: A Report on the 1974 Walkout* (St. Louis: Concordia Seminary, 1977), 151–153. See Tietjen, *Memoirs*, 33, and “Hunting Lutheran Heretics,” *Newsweek*, August 3, 1970, 43.

⁴² For a tally of the votes, see Tietjen, *Memoirs*, 135–136.

⁴³ LCMS 1973 *Proceedings*, 40, 133–139.

We protest the convention's unconstitutional act of altering the Synod's confessional standard.⁴⁴

The Board of Control (BOC) suspended John Tietjen in August 1973, then vacated the suspension shortly thereafter. In November 1973, Paul Goetting's contract was not renewed and five seasoned professors were retired—one of them, Arthur Carl Piepkorn, died in the midst of the controversy. To say that things were tense would be an understatement.

And then matters came to a head. On Sunday, January 20, 1974, at about 10:00 p.m., the news emerged that the Board of Control had formally acted to suspend John Tietjen as president of Concordia Seminary, effective immediately. Martin Scharlemann was named as Acting President.

The following day, Monday, January 21, 1974, Tietjen issued his document titled "Evidence," in which he sought to demonstrate the duplicity of the Board of Control and, especially, J.A.O. Preus. More importantly, however, that day the students gathered together at about 10:00 a.m.⁴⁵ "Almost 300 students," just about a half of the student body, declared a moratorium on attending classes.⁴⁶ The resolution reads:

A STUDENT RESOLUTION by students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri

1. Because members of the "faculty majority" of Concordia Seminary have been publicly accused of teaching doctrine which is "not to be tolerated in the Church of God,"
2. Because members of the "faculty majority" have publicly protested these accusations and have declared [*sic*] "teach what the Scriptures teach,"
3. Because Dr. John H. Tietjen, who defended the "faculty majority" against these accusations, has now been suspended from his office as president of Concordia Seminary,
4. Because the members of the "faculty majority" are either guilty of teaching false doctrine and, therefore, not fit to be our teachers or innocent of these accusations and, therefore, worthy of exoneration [*sic*],

⁴⁴ The entire document may be found in *Exodus from Concordia*, 163–164. See also Tietjen, *Memoirs*, 169–170.

⁴⁵ Tietjen, *Memoirs*, 187–189.

⁴⁶ Michael W. Friedlander, Karlfried Froelich, and Walter H. Wagner, "Concordia Seminary (Missouri)," *AAUP Bulletin* (Spring 1975): 52, <http://www.aaup.org/sites/default/files/Concordia-Seminary.pdf>.

5. Because The Seminary Board of Control has not yet decided which, if any, of the members of the "faculty majority" are guilty of teaching false doctrine,

6. Because we, as students of Concordia Seminary, are currently being taught by members of the "faculty majority,"

7. Because we, as students, have the right to know which members of the "faculty majority," if any, are false teachers and what Scriptural and Confessional principles, if any, have been violated, before we continue our theological training,

8. And because our whole theological education has been seriously disrupted and jeopardized because these issues have not been resolved,

We, the undersigned students of Concordia Seminary, therefore resolve:

I. To declare a moratorium on all classes until such time as the Seminary Board of Control officially and publicly declares which members of the faculty, if any, are to be considered as false teachers and what Scriptural and Confessional principles, if any, have been violated.

II. To spend our class hours, until The Seminary Board of Control informs us of its decisions, communicating to The Board of Control and to the synod at large what we have been taught at this seminary, especially the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

III. To complete our academic requirements for those classes which we will miss according to procedures which are acceptable to those who are responsible for course accreditation.

We make this resolve mindful of the possible consequences of our actions and asking God's blessings upon our labors.⁴⁷

The faculty followed the students. On Tuesday, January 22, 1974, the faculty of Concordia Seminary wrote to President Preus, stating, "The Board of Control of Concordia Seminary has emptied the classrooms and silenced the teaching of the Word of God on our campus." It tacitly recognized the students' moratorium but largely defined the catalyst in terms of the person of John Tietjen. "By condemning President Tietjen's confessional stand and suspending him from office," they stated, "the

⁴⁷ "A Student Resolution by Students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis," January, 21, 1974. Robert Preus Papers, CTSFW Archives.

Board of Control has condemned our own confession and has suspended all of us from our duties as teachers and executive staff members."⁴⁸

The Board disagreed. When the faculty majority did not return to the seminary classrooms by 12:00 p.m., Monday, February 18, 1974, their contracts were terminated. In what in some ways might be viewed as one of the last flowerings of the 1960s protest movement, the majority of students, faculty, and administration of Concordia Seminary "walked out" of the campus at 801 DeMun Avenue at midday, February 19, 1974. The event was well choreographed, and the tolling of bells and planting of crosses linked this event to the earlier protests of "The Movement."

III.

The examples we have considered are only that—examples. I could have multiplied them and chosen any number of different cases to make my point about Lutheranism being submerged in culture. A few samples that could serve as case studies of the LCMS interacting with its culture might include Walther's Fourth of July Address of 1853, Franz Pieper's wonderful "The Laymen's Movement and the Bible," the Synod's move from German to English as the waves of German immigrants began to wane, or P.E. Kretzmann's *While It Is Day: A Manual for Soul Winners*, just to name a few.⁴⁹

But I chose Concordia Seminary purposefully. Why? It has now been more than forty years since the bells in Luther Tower tolled and crosses were planted in the seminary quad as students, in what might be construed as the last act of the 1960s, declared themselves "Exiled" from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and walked out of the campus to establish Concordia Seminary in Exile, or Seminex. The intervening years have produced a considerable number of analyses of these events. Whether my interpretation of events is plausible or not is certainly fair game for debate. The wonderful thing about history is that it allows for many readings of the same events.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Members of the Faculty and Executive Staff of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis to the Rev. J.A.O. Preus, January 22, 1974.

⁴⁹ "Fourth of July Speech to a Christian Youth Group, July 4, 1853," John Drickamer, trans., *Christian News*, June 30, 1986, 16–18. (A translation from *Lutherische Brosamen*, 362–369).

⁵⁰ There are a number of works that address the controversy. Kurt Marquart's *Anatomy of an Explosion* remains, in my opinion, the most helpful theological treatment of the controversy in the Missouri Synod written from the perspective of a leading "conservative." John Tietjen's *Memoirs in Exile* is an invaluable resource as an

However, whatever one's reading of those events, my purpose has been to show that they are fully engaged in the flood waters of American consumerist culture. What does this mean for our present situation? By now we know that the fastest growing religious category in the United States is "none." Where previously Protestants (including Lutherans) comprised a majority of Americans, today we are a culture of religious minorities. Things have changed and are changing. This, of course, is nothing new. The church always has and always will face change in its life in this world. And it will do so from within the context of being submerged in the prevailing culture. The challenge for us is to face those challenges critically, first of all examining our own posture within/against our culture. It is too easy to point the finger and say "why can't those people see what they are doing?" The first question must be to ourselves; we must challenge ourselves to consider the ways we have embraced our culture—for good and/or for ill. Only when we've done that can we begin to see whether we are up to our necks or in over our heads in the cultures in which the Lord has given us the opportunity to serve.

historical/theological treatment provided by one of the key participants, which is also the case with Paul Zimmerman's *A Seminary in Crisis*. James Burke's *Power, Politics and the Missouri Synod* has been criticized for only treating these events from a political point of view, and that from only *one* of those political viewpoints. However, it is a far more valuable treatment than Frederick Danker's very subjective *No Room in the Brotherhood*. And there are many other useful studies: James Adams' *Preus of Missouri*, Tom Baker's *Watershed at the Rivergate*, The Board of Control's *Exodus from Concordia*, as well as a number of dissertations and theses.