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The Wilhelm Loehe—Neuendettelsau Influence in the Lutheran Church of Australia

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FROM FAR-OFF AUSTRALIA we congratulate the Concordia Seminary of Springfield, Illinois, which is celebrating the 125th Anniversary of its establishment: a long history extending from Neuendettelsau to Fort Wayne (Indiana), St. Louis (Missouri) and eventually to Springfield (Illinois). It is our hope and prayer that God, Who has so richly blessed this seminary from which quite a number of students entered the service of the Lutheran church in Australia, may also set this seminary as a blessing to The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod and other Lutheran churches.

The idea of a training seminary in Fort Wayne was born in the mind of Wilhelm Loehe of Neuendettelsau in 1846, and of one of the men whom Loehe sent to the United States, Wilhelm Sihler, who became its first President. In 1847 Wilhelm Loehe handed over this practical seminary as a gift to the then newly-formed Missouri Synod.

It is not easy for the writer to take up the pen in completely impersonal fashion and evaluate the influence of Loehe—Neuendettelsau in the Lutheran Church of Australia. The writer's father was born in Neuendettelsau and baptised by Wilhelm Loehe; his great-grandfather being a brother of Wilhelm Loehe. The writer's grandmother was one of the deaconesses who trained in Neuendettelsau under Wilhelm Loehe, and we have her complete diary of her years of training. The writer's grandfather was a pastor of the Church in Wuerttemberg, a great admirer of Wilhelm Loehe and of C.F.W. Walther, who sent all his daughters to the Christian Girls' School at Neuendettelsau (Grueneschule). As a twenty-year-old pastor, the writer's father came to Australia on the completion of his studies in Neuendettelsau in 1889. In 1921 he was elected as the first President-General of the then newly-established United Evangelical Lutheran Church in Australia. In 1923 he was appointed Director of Immanuel College and Seminary, situated in North Adelaide, South Australia; at that time the only college and seminary of this particular church.

Lutherans Arrive in Australia

Australia was the last great continent to be discovered. Its actual history began with the landing of Captain James Cook at Botany Bay, on the east coast of Australia on April 28, 1770. Here he hoisted the British flag and proclaimed the Colony of New South Wales. The populating of Australia by the white man began in 1788 under the auspices of Captain Arthur Phillip who established Port Jackson as the centre, later developing into the city of Sydney.

Apart from the settlers who came to Australia, there were many convicts. After the War of Independence in the United States, Great Britain was no longer able to transfer convicts and criminals to the USA and found the newly-established colony of New South Wales and later also Tasmania and Queensland as convenient dumping places for these elements.

Fifty years later, in 1838, the first Lutherans arrived in Australia, especially in South Australia. The reason for this was inscribed in 1888 on a tablet affixed to one of the oldest Lutheran churches of Australia, Langmeil, Tanunda, South Australia: "In order to preserve it in the memory of coming generations, be it herewith made known that the first German Lutherans, under the leadership of their faithful pastor, August Ludwig Kavel, emigrated to Australia in 1838 by reason of severe religious persecution in Prussia." The persecution of Lutherans in Prussia was a result of the establishment of a Union Church of Reformed and Lutherans by King Friedrich Wilhelm III. He introduced an edict, incorporated in the new church book, compiled by the King and his spiritual advisers, containing the liturgy of the Holy Communion in which everything of the Lutheran Confessions had been excluded particularly in the Holy Communion service. Even though the Agenda found approval by the majority, yet many Lutherans in Silesia objected to this compromise and upheld the Confessions of their Fathers, and their own Confessions, so that they could not consent to celebrating the Sacrament of the Altar together with the Reformed. After much persecution, arrangements were made through the generosity of Mr. George Fife Angas of London, a convinced Baptist, for finances to enable the first Lutherans to journey to Australia. They landed in Port Adelaide, South Australia on November 20, 1838, together with their pastor and leader, Pastor A. Kavel. Hundreds of the persecuted came to Australia, and more and more people from other parts of Germany found their home in South Australia, from where they spread into other States—Victoria and New South Wales. From the 1850's onwards large numbers settled in Queensland.

Pastors Were Needed

Three years after Pastor A. Kavel arrived, Pastor G. Daniel Fritzsche, together with other persecuted Lutherans, landed at Port Adelaide in October 1841. Two missionaries from the Dresden Society, C. W. Schuermann and C. G. Teichelmann, arrived just before Kavel and they worked amongst aborigines in the Adelaide area. They were followed by two others from the Dresden Society, S. G. Klose and H. A. E. Meyer. In 1838 another group of missionaries from the Gossner Mission Society Berlin arrived in Moreton Bay, Queensland. Their task was to work amongst the aborigines. When this mission work failed, they served Lutherans in several Australian States.

In order to supply the increasing number of Lutherans arriving

in South Australia with pastors, Pastor Fritzsche set up his own seminary and trained a number of pastors. As in the USA, immigrants were arriving by the hundreds and thousands but the State Churches, from which these people came, left them shepherdless.

The turning point came in 1862 when the first pastor from the Mission Seminary of Basel came to serve Lutheran congregations in Victoria and in other States. The action in calling pastors from a Union Seminary such as Basel was the cause of bitter contention for many years. From 1866 onwards there was a steady flow of missionaries and pastors from the Hermannsburg Mission Seminary, Hannover, Germany. The first were sent by Pastor Theo Harms to establish mission stations amongst the aborigines.

A new chapter in pastor-supply began in 1881 when the first pastor from Concordia Seminary St. Louis, USA, arrived. He was followed by a number of other pastors from the St. Louis and Springfield seminaries of the Missouri Synod. A number of the sons of Australians also studied in these two seminaries.

Neuendettelsau Provides Pastors

Prior to 1860 certain Lutheran pastors in Australia had read of Pfarrer Wilhelm Loehé of Neuendettelsau, but the first pastor to come to Australia who had had contact with Loehé was Pastor J. F. Meischel. Although he had trained in the Basel Seminary and was a missionary on the Gold Coast of Africa from 1846-1850, he returned to his home in Augsburg, Bavaria, and resigned from the Basel Mission for confessional reasons. He visited Wilhelm Loehé in Neuendettelsau, who after consulting with other Lutheran friends asked Meischel to go to London with a view to opening a Lutheran Free Church in that city. In a letter of November 13, 1850, Meischel described his experiences to Wilhelm Loehé, who subsequently encouraged him to enter the pastorate of the Breslau Free Church in Duesseldorf. He was pastor here from the end of 1850 to 1853. However, the urge to enter mission work caused him to join the Leipzig mission in India in 1853. Later he found his way to Australia, arriving on June 12, 1860. He was called to the Lutheran congregation in Adelaide, South Australia. In a letter of December 13, 1860 to Inspector F. Bauer of Neuendettelsau, a relative of his, Meischel ordered fifty copies of Luther's Catechism with the explanations of Wilhelm Loehé. Already in the 1860's Literature written by Wilhelm Loehé had entered Australia. It was this same Pastor Meischel who in 1861, through the pages of the church paper, delivered a rallying call to the Lutherans of South Australia to begin mission work amongst the aborigines.

The first reference to the name of Wilhelm Loehé in an Australian Lutheran church paper appeared in "Der Australische Christenbote," of June 1861, with the following news item:

"In Neuendettelsau, Bavaria, Pfarrer Wilhelm Loehé was suspended from his office as pastor for two months in 1861 because for scriptural and conscience reasons he refused to offi

ciate at the marriage of a divorced man. Subsequently the suspension was lifted and his attitude vindicated. According to Professor Hengstenberg, Pfarrer Loche should long since have been selected as a pastor of one of Nuernberg's larger churches. We, however, claim that the Lord, according to His will, would not permit him to be called to Nuernberg without reason; much more the small village of Neuendettelsau would be just the right centre from which the blessings of Loche's ministry would extend not only beyond Nuernberg and Bavaria, but far beyond the seas. May the Lord God preserve Pfarrer Loche, this apostle-like man, for the Lutheran Church of Germany for many years."

These were prophetic words by Pastor M. Goethe, the Editor of this church paper. Little did he and others, who undoubtedly read about Loche in German papers and perhaps even American church papers, realize how these words would be fulfilled in Australia.

During early 1875 or perhaps even before, the Pastors G. J. Rechner and J. C. Auricht, president and secretary respectively of the Immanuel Synod, at that time in fellowship with the Breslau Free Church of Germany, had correspondence with Inspector F. Bauer, of the Mission Seminary in Neuendettelsau. The purpose was to investigate the possibility of acquiring pastors from the Mission Seminary. They submitted to Inspector Bauer the doctrinal basis of their Synod, which proved acceptable to Neuendettelsau. The approaches to Neuendettelsau per letter were supported in 1875 by the personal representations of Pastor H. Herlitz, President of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Victoria, which at that time was in organic union with the Immanuel Synod. He had been instructed to "Negotiate with Neuendettelsau that in future we also may be able to call regularly from your seminary the necessary pastors for our Synod."

The personal negotiations by Pastor Herlitz were successful, as at the end of 1875 the first Neuendettelsau pastor arrived in Australia in the person of Pastor J. M. Stolz. With his arrival a steady stream of pastors and missionaries from Neuendettelsau began, so that from that time on forty-five pastors, including several missionaries, arrived, mainly to serve the Immanuel Synod of South Australia and Victoria and subsequently the Synod in Queensland. With them came the rich heritage of Wilhelm Loche of Neuendettelsau. The influence of Neuendettelsau on Australia came via Wartburg Seminary, Dubuque, Iowa, where, prior to 1921, a number of sons of the Immanuel Synod studied under Dr. M. Reu, a graduate of Neuendettelsau and a classmate of Pastor J. P. Löhle.

The Missionary Impact of Neuendettelsau

The missionary spirit had always been alive in Wilhelm Loche and this was evident from the fact that he instructed the colonists who went from Neuendettelsau to the Saginaw Valley to

do mission work amongst the Indians of the USA. It was the founding of the Society for Inner and Foreign Missions which was instrumental in cultivating a missionary spirit amongst very many people and also amongst the students at the Neuendettelsau seminary.

One of Wilhelm Loche's mottos was: "Missions are the Church in Action," and this spirit permeated the lecturer and also the students who subsequently entered on missionary endeavours in Oceania manning two established aboriginal fields and opening two new fields. In 1878 the first missionary from Neuendettelsau arrived in Australia. He was Johannes Flierl, one of the great missionary figures of the last century and whose mission activity is recorded in the history of various missions. He, Flierl, had been assigned for service in the Bethesda-Killalpaninna Mission in arid country, 480 miles north of Adelaide. Here he laboured amongst the Dieri Tribe for seven years and undertook three journeys involving hundreds of miles into desert and semi-desert areas to seek more aborigines of the Dieri and other tribes,—surely an evidence of his missionary spirit. He provided a book for the Dieri Tribe so that they would be able to read Bible stories in the Old and New Testaments and learn the hymns which he had translated. He erected the first church in 1881. J. Flierl left Bethesda in 1885. He was succeeded by other missionaries from Neuendettelsau, particularly J. G. Reuther, (1888) who, apart from his missionary tasks, assisted in documenting the Dieri language, customs and tribal ceremonies, material of more than 2,000 pages; and C. F. T. Strehlow, (1894). In 1897 the Dieri New Testament, translated by Reuther and Strehlow, was published, the first New Testament to be printed in an aboriginal language in Australia. (Note: Several years ago a copy was sold at the high price of \$560 at a sale in London.) The last Neuendettelsau missionary to serve amongst the Dieri was W. Riedel (1907-1914). In 1917 this Mission was closed, due to continued drought, decline in native population and the inroads of white civilization.

In 1894 C. F. T. Strehlow took over the aboriginal mission work of the Finke River Mission, centering on Hermannsburg, Central Australia in the so-called "Dead Heart" of the continent. Strehlow's ministry amongst the Aranda and other tribes was outstanding, and his literary achievements, amongst them the translation of the Aranda New Testament, and his anthropological works, received high commendation. (The Aranda New Testament joins the Dieri New Testament as the only ones published in Aboriginal languages in Australia.) A number of other Neuendettelsau missionaries joined Strehlow in his tasks.

Today the Finke River Mission is the largest and most famous of all aboriginal missions in Australia.

In 1885 J. Flierl left the Bethesda-Killalpaninna Mission when it became known that there were large populated areas in German New Guinea. On his journey to New Guinea he was detained for six months in the northern port of Cooktown (Queensland). He

immediately began mission work amongst the Koko-Yimidir Tribe, establishing the mission station known as Elim (later Hope Valley). Flierl's successor from Neuendettelsau was G. H. Schwarz who laboured in this hot and humid area from 1887 to 1942. Other Neuendettelsau missionaries also laboured in this mission which today is still expanding.

In 1887 the small Immanuel Synod of South Australia opened another aboriginal Mission, south of Cooktown, Bloomfield, manned by Neuendettelsau and also Australian missionaries. It still exists today. In June 1886, J. Flierl was permitted to enter New Guinea and began the work of the Neuendettelsau Mission Society, a Mission which has expanded tremendously.

Thus, the Immanuel Synod, whose pastors had come exclusively from Neuendettelsau, supported five missions, four of them aboriginal, the other Lutheran Mission New Guinea. The latter was directed from Neuendettelsau, but the Immanuel Synod supported it. When in 1921 the United Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia was established, it took a leading part in sustaining and supporting the mission in New Guinea, which had experienced difficult periods during the first world war. From 1921 until 1945 the Director of Lutheran Mission New Guinea was Dr. F. O. Theile, also a Neuendettelsau graduate.

During the first world war the Iowa Synod, established by Wilhelm Loehe, came to the aid of Neuendettelsau, as did the UELCA; and from that time the UELCA, the Iowa Synod and later the American Lutheran Church, and Neuendettelsau were partners in the mission venture in New Guinea. Later the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Australia and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod were invited to participate in this mission endeavour. (Note: For a more detailed account of the Mission in New Guinea consult the three volumed work by Dr. G. Pilhofer: "Seventy-Five Years of Neuendettelsau in New Guinea" which gives abundant evidence of the great blessings of God which have been spread in New Guinea.) The spirit which motivated the missionaries and pastors who came to Australia from Neuendettelsau has had a monumental influence. They assumed leadership in education, in medical work and in the production of anthropological material, whether in Australia or in New Guinea. Their wonderful pastoral and missionary training, coupled with their dedication, was always in evidence. The legacy of Wilhelm Loehe and Neuendettelsau has remained in the Lutheran Church in Australia to the present time.

Theological Emphases of Wilhelm Loehe—Neuendettelsau

Pastors and missionaries who came to Australia and New Guinea were trained by men who worked together with Wilhelm Loehe and under his guidance. They understood Loehe and supported him in the controversies within the Bavarian Landeskirche. They realized that indifference to biblical truth and the Confessions of the Church would sound the death-knell of the Lutheran Church.

Wilhelm Loche had forwarded one petition after the other to the General Synod of the Bavarian Church. At the same time he had conscientious scruples and struggles whether he should remain in that church. These struggles continued for many years despite the fact that his friends in the Breslau Free Church and theological professors of Erlangen and other friends advised him to remain within the church. They claimed that his witness for biblical truth and the confessions would receive God's blessings. Once he stepped beyond the pale of the Landeskirche, his influence would be comparatively nullified. His struggles concerned the following matters: The binding nature of the Lutheran Confessions for the pastors, not quatenus, but quia; not only de jure but de facto; the Abendmahls-mengerei (unionism) at the altar by Reformed and Lutheran communicants; the composition of the Synod of Bavaria where Lutherans and Reformed had voting rights; the lack of discipline in the church; the lack of biblical and confessional content of the liturgy, the hymn book and the Agenda. As a result, all the students at the seminary in Neuendettelsau were steeped in the richness of biblical truth and of the Confessions of the Church.

This sound, theological basis provided also by a thorough grounding in the biblical and classical language, to which must be added the sound pastoral training that the students received, proved of incalculable benefit to the ministry of these pastors when they entered the mission fields and the service of the Lutheran Church in Australia. From Loche himself and from his co-labourers, they learned thorough sermon preparation. They received outstanding instruction in the care for souls. Neuendettelsau itself, with its deaconess institution, its hospitals, its homes for the mentally retarded, its institutions of mercy, gave all the students ample opportunity for practical training. The pastors and missionaries had before them the example of Loche and his sanctified life as a pastor. They imbibed his passion for missions. Because Loche's love for the liturgy and worship was always predominant, they brought with them Loche's Agenda, which was widely used, as also his devotional literature. During the synodical controversies of the 1880's and onwards the Neuendettelsau-trained pastors took a leading part in the debates.

When the United Evangelical Lutheran Church in 1921 decided to establish a seminary the two appointed lecturers were pastors from Neuendettelsau, Pastor J. P. Loche and W. Riedel, the former being the Principal of the Seminary and of the College for 22 years. His successor, a son of a Neuendettelsau pastor, was Dr. S. P. Hebart, noted for his monumental work: "Wilhelm Loche's Lehre von der Kirche, ihrem Amt und Regiment." Unfortunately, the hopes of many of the pastors from Neuendettelsau to establish a deaconess institution in Australia were never realized.

One thing which motivated pastors and missionaries was the motto which Wilhelm Loche gave to his deaconesses and the motto which permeated the students at the seminary: "What do I want? I want to serve. Whom will I serve? The Lord in His poor and

neglected creatures. And what is my reward? I serve neither for reward nor thanks, but out of love. My reward is that I may serve. And if I perish thereby? Yet I perish, I perish."

Conclusion

On January 2, 1872 Wilhelm Loche passed away, after a rich life of service devoted to his Lord and Master, Jesus Christ. The intensive church struggles, the fiery trials and the untimely death of his wife, sapped his strength. He worked while it was day because he knew that the night cometh when no man can work. He leaves a rich legacy to those who call themselves Lutheran. His example of service and devotion to the Scriptures and to the Confessions of the Church in the difficult days of Rationalism, are as a beacon to us who are confronted with identical problems. His sermons, his devotional and theological literature—we include in the latter his three books on the Church which have now been translated into English and are worthy of continued study—and his confession before men—is worthy of emulation in our time. We would do well to once again study this man, his life, his work, his publications and his example: "Missions are the Church in Action!" He has been a blessing to the Lutheran Church in Australia, and we pray that he will continue to be a blessing.