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Background and Beginnings of Organized Youth Work in the Missouri Synod

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BACKGROUND AND BEGINNINGS OF ORGANIZED YOUTH WORK
IN THE MISSOURI SYNOD

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Concordia Seminary
Department of Historical Theology

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Bachelor of Divinity

by
Henry E. Simon
May - 1944

Approved by:

Richard C. Jesse
Thos Lutz

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To One

who by her constant interest has given
the writer steady incentive to search and
write even when the goal seemed distant,

who by her steady enthusiasm has kept his
enthusiasm from waning,

and who in the role of the betrothed has
already proven herself a true helpmeet,

this thesis is dedicated

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FOREWORD

So that the reader may more easily and more fully understand various details described in the following pages it seems advisable to offer a few words in explanation, showing the development of this thesis. It will be noted that the first two chapters deal with the background from which our youth societies began to emerge. We have endeavored to picture this background from the various writings and expressions gleaned from different early periodicals and books. Thus the LUTHERANER, DISTRICT SYNODICAL REPORTS, LEHRE UND WEHRE, and other writings up to the turn of the century were thoroughly scanned for any notices or articles which might add a touch to the background-picture we are attempting to draw for the reader.

As regards the subsequent chapters, the materials were taken directly from records of the society involved, where this was possible, or from church records, anniversary booklets, and the like. The concluding chapter presents an evaluation, which--while it must necessarily be somewhat subjective--the writer believes to be a realistic interpretation based on his research.

The writer expresses thanks to Dean Jesse of Concordia Seminary for his deep interest and valuable advice; to Mr. Vernon Meyr of Altenburg, Missouri, who laboriously investigated the minutes of the Altenburg "Juenglingsverein"; and to many others. May the material on the pages following be a worthwhile if small addition to Missouri Synod Church History.

C. F. W. WALTHER

It is not difficult to find a logical starting point for a treatise on the background and beginnings of Lutheran youth work in the Missouri Synod, for just as C.F.W. Walther overshadows all others among the pioneers of our church, so likewise he merits first consideration as the outstanding leader of the youth movement in our church in the 19th century. To him, of all humans, must go great credit for progressive and farsighted thinking and acting also in behalf of the church's youth. C.F.W. Walther, the "Father of the Synodical Conference", first president of the Missouri Synod, first president of Concordia Seminary, recognized the latent power and energy of youth: Walther it was who fostered the cause of youth personally and in the pages of his LUTHERANER; Walther it was who used his great influence in behalf of youth societies in our synod; Walther it was who appreciated more than anyone else of his day what a tremendous wastage was taking place in the Lutheran Church because the energies of youth were not being employed by the church, were not encouraged, and what is far more serious, were being utilized by the Devil because the church was failing to do so. And C.F.W. Walther it was who did something about it, who had the influence and the prestige to make his opinion and his convictions felt, and who had the God-given ability to tread the right track even while courageously venturing forth onto the unchartered fields which others shunned. The interest of

Walther in the youth of his church proved a marvelous blessing. One shudders to think of what might have happened--- or might have failed to happen---if Walther had not shown this interest and concern, if he had not actively and wisely promoted the cause of youth in our synod. Certainly the non-too-easy path would have been much more difficult. It is, therefore, quite in order that C.F.W. Walther, the pioneer for Lutheran youth, be examined more closely in connection with our thesis.

The prevalent impression of Walther seems to be that he was a slender man, not too tall, with a long face that found it rather hard to break into a grin. Indeed, the writer cannot recall a single likeness of that great man in which he is not pictured as the stern theologian, "Der Herr Pastor", whose business it was to preach the Law in all its severity, and to whom a smile was almost foreign. That is the general impression one gets from pictures and sketches of Walther---and it is probably true that he, in comparison with our present standards, was quite stern and reserved, as was required of one in his position at his time. Nevertheless, Walther also preached the Gospel, Walther also had a kindly disposition, Walther could also smile and be amused. Yes, Walther could understand that the young especially need diversion, and decent amusement, and sociability, and smiles and laughter. What is more important, he realized also that if the church wouldn't offer these things to it's youth there

were many other agencies who were waiting with open arms to welcome youth to un-christian activities and associations. Walther realized that preaching the terrors of hellfire from the pulpit once a week was not enough to keep his young people safe from the temptations of an attractive world. In short, we might call him a far-sighted, christian psychologist, working with both feet solidly on the ground, striving to build the Kingdom of His Saviour, fully aware of the importance of youth in that Kingdom for today and tomorrow, and realizing that this youth required special attention after confirmation as well as before.

It is not surprising that the first youth organization of our synod came into being at the congregation with which Walther was most closely connected, Trinity Ev. Lutheran Church, St. Louis. For years Walther had zealously served there as pastor, and even after he took over the leadership of Concordia Seminary he remained active in the affairs of "his congregation". While it was Pastor Buenger who in 1848 organized the "Juenglingsverein", we can be sure that Walther had much to do with it, and that he was deeply interested.(1) This fact can easily be established from his expressions in various articles in his LUTHERANER, and from several of his sermons which he delivered at youth anniversaries. Let us utilize a few pages to examine what Walther wrote.

L. Walther remained "Gesamtpastor" (general pastor) of the Lutheran congregations of St. Louis, even after he assumed the presidency of Concordia Seminary.

The first anniversary sermon was preached a year after the founding of the Trinity Verein. Walther's text was Matthew 19, 16-22: "What should prompt Christian young men to dedicate their youth, not to the world, but to the service of their Saviour".(2) In his introduction he mentions that the celebrants were gathered together to commemorate something new, namely the anniversary of an organization which has as its novel purpose the support of indigent students at the Seminary. To give the address at such an occasion affords him great pleasure:

Yes, beloved young men, it is with great joy that I step into your midst today. It has always been my wish not to be excluded from such a salutary work as this, which you are pursuing, and to take part also in the blessings wrought thereby. For a long time my heart has been prompting me to speak a word of friendly encouragement to you. For a long time it has been my wish to greet you with "Be blessed in the Name of the Lord. The Lord is with you." Oh, continue in this way! Let not hindrances, that seek to obstruct, hinder or discourage you. The great and the good have never yet been achieved without a struggle.I see in your society not merely a human creation, but a work which is of God. I am convinced that the idea which called your society into being a year ago originated not in a human heart, but in the heart of God himself. I do not doubt for a second that your society is a thorn in the eyes of hell, but a joyous sight in the eyes of heaven, God, and all His Holy Angels. I consider it not merely an embellishment for our church; it appears to me at the same time as a sunrise, and thereby also a promise of a future which not only now gives sweet perfume, but whose good fruits will begin to ripen in the future.(3)

Walther points out to his audience that they are met, however, not to hear mutual compliments, but rather to hear a portion from the Word of God, who alone sends the blessings

2. Walther. KASUALPREDIGTEN UND REDEN. p282 ff

3. Ibid. p283

that make their cause prosper. He stresses, first of all, that the young man who follows the lure of the sinful world does not find true happiness, but that true joy comes only to him who gives himself wholly in service to his Saviour. He shows the blessings a young man can bring about by a consecrated life, by example and by action. He calls attention to the ultimate heavenly goal which is the object of every believer's striving, also that of the youthful believer, and he concludes his address with the admonition that the young men bind even more tightly the ties of this group they have organized.

We note, of course, Walther's wholehearted endorsement of the society, but it is equally noteworthy that he assumes a realistic attitude, warning the youth of the pitfalls over which they must watch, and stressing that their society must ever remain an instrument within the local church, to further the Kingdom. In 1871 he delivered another address at a youth-society anniversary (probably also that of Trinity) in which he further admonishes his hearers to be on guard that their group remain truly God-serving. His text on this occasion was I John 2, 13. (4) He remarks that most of the societies of the day are truly like pestilences on humanity, noting that the most desirable themes of many such groups are that there is no heaven, no hell, no resurrection and no judgment, no God, no life after death. After strongly warning his hearer's against joining such an organization he notes that

4. KASUALPREDIGTEN op.cit. P290 ff.

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it is a distinct pleasure to come to this evening gathering and to address a youth society which has not been polluted by such un-christian elements, but is truly Christian. He shows that Satan's main warfare is not against the comparatively secure and mature adult, but against Christian youth, who are above all the "target at which the hellish archer aims, and at which he shoots his fiery darts. The Christian youth are above all else the choice venison, which this hellish hunter seeks night and day."(5) He cites the example of Joseph, and shows how Satan even today attacks Christian youth in like manner. In answer to the question how a Christian young men's society can rightly and truly bear that name he replies: without a doubt only when it is a victorious spiritual army of Christ. On this thought he closes his address.

Even if these two addresses were the only evidences available of Walther's youth attitude they would permit ~~of~~ several deductions, notably the one that his attitude in 1871 was still the same as in 1849. Certainly he had ample time to watch the workings of the youth group, and most assuredly he did so with an eagle eye. And after twenty-two years he was still "sold" on the idea of utilizing the youth for the church by means of Christian youth societies.

We turn, now, to some of Walther's other writings for further insight into his attitudes towards youth guidance.(6)

5. KASUALPREDIGTEN. P293 op.cit.

6. The mere fact that Walther gave generous space to matters pertaining to youth work in the LUTHERANER indicates his interest in the matter.

In Walther's LUTHERANER of June 1851 he gives frontpage feature prominence to an article which issues a call to the various young people of the Lutheran churches to form youth societies. The article goes "all out" in favor of this thought, and the fact that he published it, plus the manner in which he did, certainly indicates how Walther stood on the matter.(7) His attitude is well summed up in the words of A. T. Hanser:

Dr. Walther once told his students: "You cannot spend your time to better advantage than by adequately serving the young people of your congregation." Many a pastor would like to excuse himself by saying that he has but little time for his confirmed youth. No one dared to come to Dr. Walther with this excuse....On the contrary, he called the attention of these future servants of the Word to the fact that they could not use their time in a better way than by taking sincere charge of their young people. Where was the man with more work than Dr. Walther? Yet he always had time to do something for the youth. Was it a service to be conducted and he asked to preach--he was at once willing. If the members of the young men's society asked him to make a speech at one of their festivities this man, who at this time was burdened with the most important work in the Missouri Synod, yes in the Lutheran Church, did not consider his time too precious to be given most cheerfully at such occasions.(8)

Thus we must leave Walther and go on to examine the attitudes of other men in the second half of the 19th century. We would repeat that the importance of C.F.W. Walther to organized youth work in the early days of our synod can scarcely be over-emphasized. The present Walther League most fittingly bears his name.(9)

7. This article, along with others from the LUTHERANER, will be treated at length in Chapter II.
8. Pastor A. T. Hanser. LUTHERANER LXII p202
9. Walther's genius and importance is recognized beyond the confines of the Synodical Conference. In THE YOUTH MOVEMENT IN THE AMERICAN LUTHERAN CHURCH (1928) Gerald Jenny states on page 18: "DR. Walther must be counted one of the earliest pioneers in young people's work among Protestant denominations in America, and the first to foster a union of young people's societies."

IN HIS FOOTSTEPS---A FEW

In the Fourth Synodical Report of the Missouri Synod in 1850 there appeared a small item under the caption, "Individual Resolutions":

Pastor Buenger has been commissioned to write an article concerning the St. Louis Young Men's Society, from which Synod has received a communication, so that through this article the impetus for the establishment of similar commendable societies in other congregations may be given.(10)

As early as 1850, accordingly, the attention of Synod had been called to the establishment of youth societies, and Synod had reacted favorably. A subsequent chapter will go into detail showing the rapid growth in societies during the period of the fifties of the 19th century.

Buenger became the resident pastor at Trinity congregation when Walther assumed his duties as president of Concordia Seminary, and it was under Buenger's direct leadership that the first society for youth was organized at Trinity in 1848. The article which Synod had commissioned him to write appeared in the June 24th issue of the LUTHERANER under the title, "A Call for the Establishment of Young Men's Societies", and was given cover and first-page prominence by Dr. Walther.(11) Buenger briefly relates how the first society came into being. In the spring of 1848 one of three St. Louis students at the old log-cabin Seminary in Perry County (the institution had not yet been moved to St. Louis) was in such dire financial straits that it seemed he could not continue his studies for lack of funds. The youth, writes Pastor Buenger, was filled with a great zeal to become a preach-

10. SYNODALBERICHT. p150

11. LUTHERANER. VII pl69 ff

er of the Word so that it would have been a shame if he would have been kept away for lack of financial help. The thought came that the many young men of Trinity congregation could easily solve the situation if they joined forces for that purpose. The idea at once captured the fancy of several young church members. Their enthusiasm was contagious. One told another about it, and on a Sunday evening an organization meeting was called. Thus originated the first youth society in the Missouri Synod, called forth by the need of, and for the express purpose of assisting financially distressed students in their preparation for the ministry.

Buenger relates that the youths (of the society) are now happy in their work, and have expressed the Synod-approved desire that similar groups might be organized in other congregations. He waxes enthusiastic in behalf of societies which have been organized to further God's Kingdom, especially when this occurs among youth, for all Christian hearts rejoice at this:

For this God is thanked and praised, who has brought such an organization into being: there every Christian father and mother will greet the society with joy because of their sons: then every youth can joyously and with a clear conscience be admonished to join, or to help organize. It is an undertaking well-pleasing to God.(12)

Buenger furthermore points out that as the sinful and pleasure-seeking world unites more and more the Christians must do likewise to bolster each other, and he shows how impossible a situation is created when a youth, who desires and has the

ability to become a good minister, is kept from this because of lack of funds. What a fine incentive for young people to work together! What a blessing if a group supports such a future worker of the Lord's vineyard! And what blessings from the association with one another in such a Christian society! "Christian youth, start now! Now! Do not delay. Do not wait until your number is large. Join hands that your number may become large."(13)

Apparently no other expressions concerning youth on the part of Pastor Buenger are extant. The article referred to certainly leaves little doubt where he stood on the matter, however, and the healthy growth and consecration of the Trinity Verein bears mute testimony that Buenger lead his group wisely and well. The society could never have attained the heights a subsequent chapter will describe, even with Dr. Walther's backing, if its pastor had not given his whole-hearted support.

Our attention next focuses on an article which appeared in the LUTHERANER of October 4th, 1859, under the heading: "Invitation to all Ev. Luth. Young Men".(14) Apparently the article is a reprint of a pamphlet issued by the society at Baltimore, which exhorts all youth of the Synod to organize and join congregational youth societies so that the pure doctrine may be spread ever further (15) , and also for the personal soul-welfare of each youth. This pamphlet seems to

13. LUTHERANER V/17. P172. These words are sometimes incorrectly ascribed to Dr. Walther.

14. LUTHERANER XV/4. P30,31. Walther adds this footnote: "This splendid invitation is at present being circulated in pamphlet form by the Baltimore Young Men's Society.

15. By supporting ministerial students.

have been a follow-up to an attempt to organize the existing societies into one general group in the late fifties.(15) It quotes large portions of Pastor Buenger's article (without using quotes), and in general reiterates his admonition and invitation that the young men join in societies. The main difference seems to be that this article carries the additional burden of urging the existing societies to affiliate with the general organization.

Walther and Buenger beyond question of doubt rank one-two in the beginnings of our youth organizations, and with their passing there came a pronounced dearth of interested, progressively interested, men. At least it is not until the turn of the century that we find the various publications once again taking up the matter of youth organization. And by then it was high time! While we know nothing of their actual view-point, since we have found no writings by or about them, we can assume that during the middle of the 19th century there were a number of pastors more or less actively interested in the cause. An examination of the statistics of the LUTHERANER 1850- 1856 shows, for example that the following pastors had societies in their congregations, which regularly or otherwise contributed toward the support of students. It would appear that the societies of Pastors Buerger (Buffalo), Hattstaedt (Monroe, Michigan), Wunder (Chicago), and Sihler (Ft. Wayne, Indiana) were especially active. Others whose names are mentioned are Pastors Fick (Detroit), Rich-

16. Cf. Chapter IV of this thesis

mann (Fairfield Co., Ohio), Nuetzel (Wittenberg, Ohio), Seidel (Neudettelsau, Ohio), Steinbach (Town Mosel, Wis.), Sievers (Frankenlust, Mich.), Schöferdecker (Altenburg, Mo.), and Mueller (Chicago). All these men had youth organizations in their congregations in the fifties. We know, also, that Pastor Schwan had an active society in Cleveland, and there were doubtless others. It seems evident, however, if one would judge from the scarcity of writings and their contents after the period of the fifties, that after the initial fifteen years or so the cause of youth made little progress until the turn of the century, and then it had a long, bitter fight of it.

The writer made it his purpose to systematically and thoroughly^{to} examine the indices of the various periodicals of the Missouri Synod from their beginning, and between the year 1859 and 1883 we were able to locate just one short article concerning itself with youth, which appeared in LEHRE UND WEHRE, unless one would choose to count a brief notice of the St. Louis Trinity society which "made" the LUTHERANER in 1878. The article in LEHRE UND WEHRE is quite concise, used to fill in the bottom third of a page, and treats of "youth". The editor (LEHRE UND WEHRE was at this time edited jointly by Dr. Walther and C.H.R. Lange) notes an expression appearing in a non-synodical periodical concerning the deplorable conditions of youth in the church in Germany, namely that even as Luther saw in youth the hope for the church, so today the opposite is true. The editor then adds that also here, in our country, we must join in this complaint. Es-

pecially in our older congregations the survey of youth fills one, not with hope, but with fear. Is perhaps the main fault with the "Christian" parents?(17)

Two things stand out in the foregoing: one, that the youth situation admittedly was bad, the other, that the article, beyond bemoaning that fact and placing the suspicion on the parents, does nothing, offers nothing, not a single constructive note, not a syllable as to any possible remedial measures. And one is strongly tempted to speculate whether we have here perhaps a blueprint of the average sermon of the day---one which minced no words in exposing and condemning the activities of youth, but which fell woefully short when it came to doing something constructive about the admittedly bad situation. Yes, one is tempted to omit the word "speculation", in suggesting that the average "Herr Pastor" thought duty toward his youth done if he diligently castigated their excesses and tendencies toward worldliness from his pulpit.

The first auspicious sign that the clergy, or a few of them, might be becoming conscious of their youth obligations, and the possibilities offered by youth organizations appears in a Southern District Report in 1883 by Pastor Schwan, then president of Synod. He delivered a paper discussing the question of whether societies could be permitted in a congregation, and drew the deduction that some, including youth societies, were permissible. (18) In the same year a book of

17. LEHRE UND WEHRE XIX. P288

18. MO. SYNOD DISTRICT REPORTS XIX. P88,89

sermons written by Dr. W. Sihler of Ft. Wayne was published, containing a sermon delivered at a youth society anniversary, indicating that Pastor Sihler's society had continued to function thruout this time.(19)

In 1886 the LUTHERANER once again published a pertinent article, this time entitled simply, "Something about Societies". The article was submitted by Ch.L.(20) The writer begins with the thought that the age in which they are living is the age of societies: hardly a man is to be found who does not hold membership in some society or lodge. Most of these are bad,, but there are also good societies, such as our youth organizations, which serve to assist indigent students. And then comes a significant part of the article. The author argues the case for the Christian youth society, and in addition to the admittedly valid argument of the blessing of supporting students he brings in several new points. He shows how societies through their libraries(21) give their members good reading matter to counteract the shoddy stuff sold on the open market. Thereupon he goes into detail to show the need of youth for companionship and "Unterhaltung" (sociability): it isn't natural to keep youth away from association with others of their age. The thing is to guide the inexperienced: the parents should be active here, for their's is the job of getting their child started in the right direction. *This point is of the utmost importance for our

19. Sihler. PREDIGTEN. Pl28 ff.

20. Very likely Ch. Loeber: the LUTHERANER followed the policy of giving only initials for contributed articles at this time.

21. A society library was considered a highly essential part of society-equipment.

beloved youth:

Just through evil companions most young people are weaned from the church....Here a number of young men or women join to form a society under guidance of their pastor, with the aim of furthering the cause of the Kingdom through regular gifts, of maintaining decency and moderation among themselves, and of nourishing Christian sociability. Is not this something commendable, if young people associate with each other in such a Christian manner? ~~Certainly~~ ~~tainly~~ it is. May the parents permit their children to join with a clear conscience? There is no doubt as to that.... Oh, what a blessing redounds not only for the members, but also for the congregation, if a society is well conducted. **IT IS A FACT THAT CHRISTIAN YOUNG MEN WHO HAVE BEEN FAITHFUL SOCIETY MEMBERS LATER BECOME THE BEST CONGREGATION MEMBERS.** (Italics ours) What good are our many Christian day schools, if the confirmed youth is neglected, the majority lost in worldliness, and so turn their backs on the church?....Do we seek to build God's Kingdom among us? Then let us above all concern ourselves with our youth.... And this can be done partly through the right type of society organization.

Why, then, are most of our societies in such a deplorable condition? Partly the fault lies with the failure of parents and congregation to support their pastor in his youth-efforts: partly the fault lies in the manner in which the societies are conducted.[22]

The writer even suggests that it might be a good idea to conduct evening schools for the more mature youth, where this is possible. He closes with the thought that methods of handling youth may, and should, differ with place and condition, and points out that if a congregation has true zeal for its youth the method and means of caring for them will be found.

Ch. L.(20) was a man of vision. He realized how vastly important it is for the church to guide the older youth. Nowhere in synodical writings have we, up to this period, been able to find anything remotely akin to his clear analysis of the emotional and psychological needs of youth. His article sets the stage for the "Re-awakening" to be treated in Chapter III.

III.

RE-AWAKENING

The last decade of the 19th century stands in marked contrast to the preceding ones in the matter of giving attention to the youth problem. Where there had been a dearth we now find a marked increase in writings and articles centering on the youth of the church. Thus we discover various district pastoral conferences listening to papers treating matters in various ways connected with young people. To be sure, the percentage is still small, and the papers are by no means all marvels of understanding and progressiveness, but they are there, and the mere fact that we have an upsurge in ~~in~~ the amount of material indicates that at least a few of the clergymen were finally waking up to the fact that the youth was getting away from them, yes, had been doing that very thing for years: the clergy was discovering that there must be something wrong with the customary, routine methods which the average pastor had been following with the youth of his congregation. One suspects that bitter experience caused more than one "Seelsorger" to pay a little extra attention to the spiritual preservation of his young people, caused him to examine his procedures and try to ascertain in what way they were found wanting. Let us turn to the different writings of this decade for a closer scrutiny.

Our first subject is Pastor F. Lochner, who in 1889 delivered a paper at a district conference in Wisconsin. His treatise is noteworthy for several reasons. He stresses the

idea of offering a replacement to youth for the worldly pleasures it must be asked to forego, and he submits the novel idea that a youth society should have a good meeting-place, preferably built by the young people themselves. We quote several pertinent passages:

The instruction in God's Word during school and confirmation time may have been very thorough: still the confirmed youth is not well-established in the Truth, and left to itself it will not increase, but decrease spiritually.... To safeguard growing youth it is not enough, however, to keep them from deceiving companions, dangerous contacts, dishonorable and unchaste affairs....To this safeguarding belongs also the attempt to offer them a substitute: not merely taking away the harmful, but also giving them something good and useful in its place, so that we may not only forbid, but also permit, where this can be done with a good conscience. One such welcome substitute offers itself in a Christian youth society. If young people organize such a society, as has taken place also here in the last several decades, then pastor and congregation, in recognition of the good purposes of such a society, must turn their charitable interest and concern toward it, so that it is purposefully organized and led, and that it is patronized by the youth of the congregation....The first and most important purpose of all Christian young men and ladies' societies in our church originally was to assist poor theological students. A second no less important object must always be to foster the sociability-needs of youth.(23)

We turn, next, to the conferences of the Illinois District, where Pastor L.Hoelter delivered a series of theses during the sessions of 1891 and 1892. His dissertation bore the impressive title: "Concerning the Duties of the Family and the Church in Christian Upbringing of Youth, so that it is Preserved to the Word, and eventually Saved." The paper covers 184 well-filled pages of small print, so we may assume that the pastors in attendance at the sessions of these conferences

took away some thoughts from this series of dissertations whether they wanted to or not, even if there were those who felt that the entire thing wasn't worth the time of one conference session. Let us look more closely at Pastor Hoelter's remarks. He states that his topic is a very timely one because "our youth, our beloved youth is to a large degree becoming worldly, and being lost to the church!"(24) He points out that not all the blame for the deplorable falling away of youth can be fixed on youth, but that the ministers above all are responsible. How can a pastor fulfill his responsibility and at the same time save the youth? By bringing up the youth in a truly Christian way. His paper embraces six main points: It is an old and now rather general and sad experience that the youth to a large extent is worldly-minded ("Gottentfremdet"); the fault does not rest with God, but first of all with the parents; next the church is responsible; a requisite of the responsible party is that it be Christian itself; God's Word shows that parents should rule their home in a God-pleasing manner; the church must assist the parent's in this. We are interested particularly in the last named point, and we find there also a brief reference to societies. In approved style the writer first speaks some words of warning concerning the danger of such societies when they get out of hand. He does, however, call to attention a comparatively unknown idea. "If", says he, "the meetings are correctly conducted they will be an aid in bringing up con-

gregation/members who know how to talk, who can defend the cause of Christ, and who are skilled to take their part in conducting the affairs of the congregation."(25) A few sentences later comes the interesting statement that where the necessity presents itself the church has the duty of establishing English congregations to care for the needs of the maturing youth. What strikes us as particularly noteworthy, however, is the rather significant fact that the writer evidently considers the society-idea as something outside the immediate sphere of the pastor's special responsibility, for two pages after he has mentioned the society in connection with the care of the congregation for its youth he comes to a section which he begins with: "We come now to the duties of the pastors in the care of the youth".(26) Hoelter next discusses how a pastor should be especially intent on having a cordial relationship with his young people, but he completely neglects to point out what to us seems such an obvious fact, that the same idea of a society, to which he devoted one whole paragraph in his 184 page paper, has in it perhaps the outstanding opportunity for the pastor to establish such a cordial approach to his youth. To him the youth society evidently is an insignificant and unimportant means in the youth-preservation equipment of church and pastor.

We now center our attention on the Sixteenth Volume of the MAGAZIN DER EV. LU. HOMOLETIK, published in 1892, and

26. Hoelter. Pl65

27. Ibid. Pl67

containing a sermon delivered by "York.", delivered at the anniversary service of a young men's society. It is a very impressive sermon, in which the preacher admonishes the youth to have the mind of Christ, and to carry their honest-to-goodness Christian faith also into their society-life, yes, into their daily life:

Should not a society, in which the spirit of Christ fills all members, bring the richest blessing to its own members and also to the congregation? Yes, indeed. It is certain, however, that even as rich blessings must go forth from such a society that is composed of truly Christian members, so only a society of such members can bring such blessing. ...Let us briefly enumerate why such societies are supported in the Christian congregation. In the first place the members are to strengthen each other to remain true to their confirmation vow, and to Christ....and not to become a prey of the devil.(28)

The second purpose is the support of ministerial students. We note that while student-support is still considered an essential purpose of the society it has now given over the place of first importance to the other purpose of fostering Christian life among the members through their association with each other.

In this same year of 1892 the LUTHERANER broke a long silence with respect to youth by a front-page article from the pen of "G"(29) entitled: "To Our Young Readers". The article is written for the post-confirmation issue, and carries a ringing warning to youth not to join membership with any of the various non-Lutheran societies of the day--Brotherhood of St. Andrew (Episcopalian), Epworth League (Metho-

28. York. MAGAZIN DER EV.LU. HOMOLETIK. XVI. pl72ff

29. Doubtless Dr. A.L. Graebner.

dist), Y.M.C.A., Christian Endeavor. as well as Lutheran organizations outside the Synodical Conference. The article is good, what there is of it---but the writer fails to point these young people, to whom he is addressing the warning, and who have all the customary enthusiasm and energy and desire of youth for sociability, to the youth societies within our church! Why does he content himself with the admonition to the newly confirmed that they have no association with those who do not believe as they do? The answer seems to be that the writer, at least at this time, was still among the many who failed to see the positive potentialities for keeping youth with the church as presented by truly Christian young people's societies. They saw only the one side, the bad one.(30)

A bit more than a year later, in July of 1893, the same writer featured another article in the LUTHERANER dealing with the organization of the Walther League at Buffalo two months previously.(31) He points out the usual danger---that the congregation is the real society, and that no other group dare be permitted to take its place. However, he adds, if the young men, by society membership, bolster their own Christian life, and if they draw closer rather than farther away from the congregation, then certainly the society idea for youth is not to be rejected. A good beginning, adds G, is not enough, however. The society must remain good, and to this end the congregation and the pastor must be especially

30. LUTHERANER XLVII.P70 ff.

31. Ibid. XLIX. P113 ff.

concerned. The pastor in particular is to guide the society. Dr. Graebner hereupon considers the recent organization of the general league formed at Buffalo, and withholds judgment pending future developments. The article gives the impression that the writer is conscious of the possibilities of church youth societies, but that he rather feels that the possibilities toward evil results may outweigh those toward good.

This seems to have been quite a prevalent attitude at this time. Pastor M. Luecke told the Illinois District Sessions in 1895:

We Lutherans in particular have the high calling of showing to the world that Christian youth societies can exist and confine themselves to the limits set by God's Word, without being victimized by worldliness or enthusiasm ("Schwaermerei")....The fact that pastor and congregation very rarely and eventually never come into contact with the confirmed youth should arouse us to work for the organization and participation in respectable youth societies. A threefold goal should be the objective:

1. The continuation and furtherance of Christian and church attitudes, and the fear of God, thru public lectures and private admonitions on part of pastor and teacher.
2. The need of youth for sociability answered.
3. Growth in intellectual information and knowledge.(32)

What a scathing indictment of the situation: "Pastor very seldom and never comes into contact with his confirmed youth"! Small wonder that Pastor Luecke should want to stress the fact that youth societies can be God-pleasing and an aid to the church. Small wonder that he should try to awaken an interest in youth societies, for there lay one, if not the perfect solution.

In the meantime the LUTHERANER was continuing its warnings to youth against joining societies of groups not one with them in doctrine. Volume 51 (1895-96) has five such separate admonitions!(33) Now it certainly is not the purpose of this thesis to belittle these warnings. The editors of the LUTHERANER knew what they were about, and we can be sure that these warnings were not printed just to fill in space, but that they were necessary. This indicates quite conclusively, however, that at least some of our young people were flirting with the idea of membership in some of these groups. And have we not, then, a situation similar to a case in which a hungry person is warned that the food before him is poisonous, without being offered something edible and healthful in its place: the warning may be true, but as the person sees the food before him and becomes hungrier and hungrier he is tempted more and more to take a bite, and eventually he will, if nothing wholesome is offered him in place of the admittedly poisonous food. And so youth is warned to avoid these societies. ~~God!~~ That is as it should be, but where a substitute? Youth evidently likes the idea of societies, has a hunger for such sociability as they offer: why not at least a little indication in our periodicals pointing them toward God-pleasing societies in their midst?

An indication that A.L. Graebner gradually, through study of the problem, began to see the situation in it's true light

33. LUTHERANER V. LI. PP5, 92,155,162,196.

we garner from some utterances he made in 1899:

Who is to guide a boy past school age and assist him by advice, encouragement, and instruction, and with whom is to join hands and keep in step and touch in his earlier endeavors towards church membership? If left to pick his own solitary way, it is hardly probable that he will make steady and encouraging progress in his course, and if he does not, there will be those who will show him ways and offer him assistance and associations for progress in other courses. Forward is the watchword of youth. There is no standstill in life, and least of all in the life of young people in America.(34)

Certainly these words point to a sound realization of the needs of youth, and at least indirectly indicate the writer's opinion, namely, that forbidding in itself will not safeguard youth from the dangers of worldliness, that an acceptable substitute must be offered. Nor is this a matter of volition, dependant upon the pastor's whim: "If he does not, there will be those who will!".

.....

And thus we come to the turn of the century.(35) This chapter does not present the complete background in the nineties. Several men who exerted a strong influence are directly concerned with the beginnings of the Walther League, and will be treated in the chapter on that organization.

34. Graebner. THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY. III. p209

35. It is not the purpose of this thesis to enter into articles produced after the turn of the century. Attention should be called, however, to two writings showing a deep understanding of the youth problem. The one is a conference paper later published in tract form, by Pastor Aug. Brunn, entitled, "The Need of and the Practical carrying forward of the Work with the Confirmed Youth", published in 1908 by the Martin Luther Orphanage, West Roxbury, Mass. The other is an article by A. T. H. (Hanser) appearing in three issues of the LUTHERANER under the title, "The Largest and Most Important Missionfield of Our Synod". cf. LXI, p118: LXII, p201, 387.

THE FIRST SOCIETY

We have already noted the immediate cause for the formation of the first youth society in the Missouri Synod, namely that in answer to the dire financial need of a theological student Pastor Buenger of Trinity, St. Louis, called a meeting of his young men after services one spring morning in 1848, laid before them the case, and showed how a number of young people of the congregation, if they combined their efforts, could easily help the student^s to continue his studies. The idea "took", and resulted in the formation of the first "Juenglingsverein" in our circles.(36) The usual assumption that "Old Trinity" church of St. Louis fathered this first society is correct, but bears modification. It seems quite clear that this group of young men also included some youths from Trinity's daughter congregation, Immanuel.(37) "The society was organized from youth of both Lutheran congregations, Trinity and Immanuel, on May 7th, 1848, by Pastor Buenger."(38)

According to Pastor Buenger's article in the LUTHERANER in 1851 the constitution of the group read as follows:

The purpose of this society is to provide one or more students desiring to prepare themselves for the ministry with the necessary means. Eligible for membership (in the society) are confirmed young men who belong to the Lutheran Church. If a member gives offense through open sins, particularly through drunkenness, attendance at balls, or by exhibiting a heretical mind, he shall be expelled if he has disdained admonition. Meetings shall be held every first Sunday of the month. The monthly dues shall be

36. At this time Dr. Walther held the rather unique position of "Gesammt Pastor", that, is, pastor of all the Lutheran Churches of St. Louis, though the Seminary took most of his time. Certainly he had much to do with this first society.

37. We know that Immanuel had a society as early as 1851.

38. EV.LU.SCHULBLATT. 1898. p251

at least ten cents. The society shall choose a chairman, secretary, and treasurer.....Whenever an indigent student has need of something beyond the usual monies the society accords him he is to make his request by letter, and his letter must have the signature of the director of the institution. (39)

Just how well the society fulfilled its avowed purpose of supporting students is not accurately known, but it seems that they did a fine job. The article above-quoted mentions that, besides the student for whose cause they had organized, the society was soon able to support another. A thorough inspection of the LUTHERANER of 1848 and subsequent years gives a general picture, for we find in the different issues mention made of the monies sent in by the society. We were not able to ascertain whether all the society gifts are thus recorded, and it is not certain that the LUTHERANER followed the policy of printing acknowledgments already in 1848. We know that the society grew rapidly, and that Walther and Buenger speak highly of it, hence there seems little doubt that their commendable work began very soon after their organization. As stated, somewhat of a picture may be pieced together from the notices of receipt in the LUTHERANER, even if the periodical doesn't mention all the society gifts. It should be remembered that we shall be giving a "minimum-picture", that is, we are certain that the society did all for which we give it credit: it is quite likely that it did more. We shall quote the figures as taken directly from the synodical treasurer's page, and the reader may then judge for himself. The first indication is

found in the LUTHERANER of December 27th, 1849, where mention is made of \$24.50 "received from the St. Louis Verein for Synodical Mission Purposes" (Synodal Missions Kasse"). It may be that the treasurer considered student support as part of synodical missions, but within the year he had a special section of his report for "student support", so it seems more likely that the Trinity society contributed the \$24.50 over and above the amounts they gave for student support. That the society already at this time was on a sound financial basis seems evident from their gifts in the following years:

<u>Amount Given</u>	<u>Time</u>
\$139.60.....	June 1850-June 1851
17.30.....	November 1851
39.50.....	December 1851
18.85.....	January 1852
148.85.....	August 1852-January 1853
21.95.....	February 1853
2.00.....	March 1853
54.70.....	April 1853
142.80.....	August 1854-January 1855
239.35.....	February 1855-December 1855
<u>\$824.90.....</u>	Total June 1850-December 1855

These are rather impressive figures. The reader may notice one large gap between May, 1853 and July 1854, and a smaller one from February 1852 to July 1852.

Taking our cue from the previous figures in both cases it seems that a conservative estimate would place the earlier gap at \$80.00, and the latter at \$180.00. This is taking into consideration the summer slack in each case. This would give us a grand total of \$1084.90, or \$1100.00 in round figures. When one considers that this amount was given in the period

from June 1850 to December 1855, less than 5½ years, the figures become truly amazing. The average is \$200 per year, at a time when a dollar was worth perhaps four times as much as it is today.(40) Even if we want to assume that all society gifts were recorded in the LUTHERANER and deal only with known figures we would still have the total of \$824.90. The reader may gather a better idea of how much this was from the knowledge that the approximate needs of a student for one year at this time ran between fifty and sixty dollars. It is, therefore, not surprising to read in Buenger's article that now (1851) the society is in a position to "completely care for poor students (plural) and provide them with board, clothing, books, and other needs."(41)

In 1851 the society numbered more than 70 young men, who "meet diligently":

After the business has been conducted the members are entertained by the reading of a practical or useful book. The experienced ones help the less-experienced along. When necessary Christian admonitions are given in a brotherly manner. The start has also been made to build a society-library. The anniversary of the society on May 7th is celebrated with a service, for which the church is decorated. ...That day is a real holiday for young and old.(42)

Yes, Trinity's "Juenglingsverein" was an important institution at its church, and when the young men petitioned the general meeting of Synod to give an impetus for the organization of similar groups in other of Synod's churches, Synod showed its approval of the idea by commissioning Buenger to write

40. This is purely an estimate. The figure probably runs higher.

41. LUTHERANER VII. pl69

42. Ibid. pl69, .170

the article which appeared in the LUTHERANER IN 1851, from which we have been quoting in this chapter, and in which Buenger exhorts the youths of the various congregations to form societies for the glorious purpose of supporting ministerial students, noting that at this same time there are several students being kept from their studies by financial worries.

How much influence this appeal had cannot be ascertained. We do know that in the next years a number of societies were organized, at least one (Altenburg, Missouri) in the same year 1851. Of special interest is the attempt on the part of Trinity's society to bring together the various individual societies into a sort of loose federation headed by a president. Such a federation was effected in 1856, and its president, M.P. Estel, through the LUTHERANER, issued a call for all societies to join hands. As reasons he lists that thereby the societies would be brought into closer contact and friendship with one another, that newlyorganized societies who at times were at a loss as to a specific student to support could be assisted, and that indigent students could apply to the federation for aid. The plan was to have the president act as connecting agency between parties who lacked the necessary information. Estel also admonishes the many youths of Synod not yet affiliated with a church society to form or join such a group:

Forward, you youthful Lutherans! Let us become serious in our Christian duty...and briskly attack our work.
Let us combine our resources and abilities...for the

spread of God's Kingdom. If, with our pennies, we would only accomplish this, that one strong and blessed shepherd and fighter is gained, who would otherwise have to bury his talent, then our sacrifices are already richly repaid."(43)

The constitution of this federation covered these points:

1. Each society is to send in a semi-annual report, indicating its size, income and expenditures, and the name of the student supported.
2. In case a society has lost an object of support through graduation or otherwise, it should turn to the president, who has a list of those desiring assistance.
3. To avoid confusion no one should be supported who has not previously applied to the president and been recommended to a society.
4. Each society is to receive a yearly report of the activities of all societies.
5. Each society has the charge to see that the general president does his duty.
6. The treasury remains in the hands of each individual society to be used as it sees fit.

As regards the president:

1. He is elected by all societies for three years.
2. He serves as advisor and contact man, so that each society retains its freedom.
3. He receives the applications of poor students, and bases his subsequent suggestions on his knowledge of individual society conditions in advising them where to give their monies. (44)

Estel did not remain president of the federation very long. He entered into the marriage estate, and apparently this automatically terminated his presidency. At any rate, the LUTHERANER of August, 1857, carries a short notice by a new president, August Ude, who explains Estel's situation, also that he (Ude) has been elected to serve as the new president by means of the special electoral power vested in the St. Louis society, and that the various societies should con-

43. LUTHERANER **VXII**. P158

44. Ibid.

tinue their work. The complete name of the federation is here listed as: "Ev. Luth. YuenglingsVereine in der Synode von Missouri, Ohio, und andren Staaten."(45)

It seems that this general federation did not last. Nothing further concerning it appears in synodical publications. Had it flourished the LUTHERANER doubtless would have carried occasional announcements. Reasons generally given for the failure of the project are the conditions of travel and intercommunication, and the Civil War. Another reason, probably just as good, is that the idea of a society federatkon did not find much support among the clergy, many of whom were apprehensive that even their local society would become too strong in the congregation, a "congregation within a congregation", etc. Suffice it to say that the first attempt to consolidate the various societies of the Missouri Synod ended in eventual failure. The second, successful attempt did not originate with Trinity's society, and will be discussed in a later chapter.

Beyond what has been mentioned little is known of the activities of the society after the fifties, with the exception of one period, from which the original society minutes have been preserved.(46) These minutes cover the period from January, 1875 to May 14, 1879. While it is regrettable that an earlier set of minutes has been lost we are, nevertheless,

45. LUTHERANER XIII, P207

46. Until recently Trinity Church boasted of two volumes of minutes. Within the last years the earlier volume has disappeared, and while hope is being held out for its rediscovery, it was, of course, not available to your writer. The original minutes are written in German script.

~~we are~~ quite fortunate to have the one set. The almost universal state of affairs is that a church has no records whatsoever of its early youth society. The writer contacted a goodly number of pastors at older churches in the hope of obtaining some original minutes of their first youth organization, but in only one case (excluding Trinity, St. Louis) were the earliest society-minutes still in existence, namely the society at Altenburg, Missouri. The Trinity minutes now before us are therefore all the more valuable, and will be dealt with in detail, so that we may gain a detailed picture of social activities and Christian fellowship as it existed in this society during the seventh decade of the last century.

Included in the minutes-book are several letters, one of which is herewith given in English translation. The original is in excellent German script:

"Concordia College, Sept. 19, 1874

Respected Young Men's Society,

With confidence in your universally acknowledged care for needy students I am venturing to present a respectful request to you. I have about forty dollars of debts, which, despite my best intentions, I am not able to pay at present. I plead, therefore, that you might help me out of this embarrassment, if possible. Excuse my importunity in bothering you with this: I am at a loss for any other solution to my problem. Depend on my heartfelt appreciation, and rest assured that I am with unchanging obedience

your Carl Baller"

The reverse side of the letter contains an itemized statement of the expenses incurred, and what is more interesting, a note in the hand of Dr. Walther:

Luther's Kirchenpostille.....	\$4.00
Lange's Lehrbuch.....	1.00
Kurtz Kirchengeschichte.....	1.00
One coat ("Rock").....	7.00
One Summer coat ("Sommerrock").....	3.85
House slippers.....	2.50
Shoes.....	3.50
Table and chair.....	2.50
Board.....	12.00
	<hr/>
	\$40.35

Upon request ("Ersuchen") the undersigned witnesses that the petitioner actually has need of what he requests.

C.F.W. Walther"

We note that the request has Dr. Walther's signature in accordance with the society constitution stating that no request could be honored without the proper endorsement. The minutes make mention of another petition in which the student failed to enclose the written approval of Dr. Walther. He was directed to obtain this, and nothing granted him until he did so.

Perhaps the best way to catch the gist of what went on at Trinity Verein's meeting is to consider the minutes chronologically, noting the particularly significant items. We start, then, with the minutes of the meeting of January 30th, 1875, which are the earliest such minutes available at present.

St. Louis, January 20, 1875

- Meeting held in the school on Barry Street.
 The Pastor opened the meeting with prayer.
1. Mr. Keller was chosen chairman.
 2. The meeting's minutes of last time read and accepted.
 3. Declamation by student Aron: The Witch of Endor.
 4. The Pastor refuted the stand of the Swedenborgians on the soul of man, and Swedenborgianism generally.
 5. A debate was held on the question: which is the most useful animal. The victory was accorded the side which upheld the cause of the dog.

6. Declamation by student Luedemann: The Miller and the Farmer, by Dunkel ("Der Maler und der Bauer").
7. A declamation by Mr. Weking: English (by Emmet).
8. Resolved as general debate for the next meeting: Which can be borne longer, hunger or thirst?
9. Furthermore, as special debate: Who was the greater general, Napoleon or Frederick the Great. Aron and Buetner to espouse Napoleon, Gruene and Weking Frederick the Great. Up for declamations are A. Brauer, F. Schuricht, and B. Hoffmann.
9. The choir of the students and the mixed choir would like to have their rehearsals in the school hall on Wednesdays; since another evening is not possible for them they ask if the society could not hold its meetings somewhere else. The society decided to conduct the next meeting in Teacher Almstaedt's school---or at least to try.
10. Adjournment with prayer.

C. Keller, chairman

C. Brauer, secretary."

The above appears to be a fairly good specimen of what transpired in an average meeting. It leaned heavily toward debate, declamation, and short discourses by the pastor, as we shall also see. Thus in the meeting of February 17, 1875, the pastor "answered the question, whether speculation were permissible." His interesting answer was that if one thinks of speculation as planning how to get rich, that is sin: if one means speculation in the sense of improving one's business so as to better serve one's fellowman, that is all right.

There follow, now, interesting excerpts from the minutes:

1875

April 7: Report of librarian: books used in January-89, February-88, March-88.
 Penalties for overdue books: January-\$1.20, February-\$0.60, March \$0.60.
 Income from bookrentals to non-members: \$1.75.
 Sale of library lamp: \$.25.
 Total: \$4.40. Outstanding Fines:\$1.00

Fred Belz, Librarian.

April 28: Pastor explained the sin against the Holy Ghost. What it is, and why it cannot be forgiven. It was remarked that some society members repeatedly had left church services before the close. The Pastor admonished the Verein to watch over each other, so that this evil might be averted.

July 7: Treasurer's quarterly report:

Cash on hand January 1st.....	\$30.95
Monthly dues.....	10.10
Note held with congregation.....	150.00
Repayment from a member.....	13.00
Income from the "Kamien Kasse".....	4.25
	<u>\$208.30</u>
Total expenditures.....	10.25
	<u>\$198.05</u>

Nov. 10: Debate on question: Which is more dangerous to Protestantism, Heathenism or Catholicism? The decision was gained by the party holding that the Catholics were the more dangerous.

1876

Jan. 5: Expenditures for students: Keller - \$25.00, Bredesmann - \$10.00, Johannis - \$5.00.

June 14: Debate: Which is the more comfortable mode of travel, walking or train-riding? The committee declared the "walking" side victorious.

Sept. 13: The Pastor answered the question: How can one meet the arguments of heathen naturalists who claim the world to be many years older than Scripture teaches.

1877

Jan. 17: Debate: Should women-suffrage be supported. The Pastor spoke several heartening words, showing how a society is God-pleasing, and how it must be considered un-christian when members stay away from the meetings without valid reason.

Apr. 18: As declamation one gentleman offered the following: "A man who is compelled is a slave. Because I am compelled to declaim something I am a slave. Since, however, all slaves are now free, I am also free"(from declaiming).

Sept. 5: Mr. Harnich commented that winter was approaching

and broached the matter of adding something to the library. After some discussion the Verein decided to buy the following:

"Die Geschichte Amerikas".....	10	volumes
"Olle Lamellen"; Fritz Reuter..	1	"
"Deutsch"--Walter Scott. (More probably Scott's works trans- lated into the German).....	5	"
Charles Dickens.....	4	"

Nov. 7: Resolution passed not to buy books by Dickens, and to get Fritz Reuter's complete works instead.

1878

March 6: A request from the Hon. Young Men's Society of Omaha, Nebraska, requesting a copy of the constitution.

March 13: A report from the "Luth. General Verein" read and discussed.(47)

The original main purpose of the society to support needy students seems to have been carried out religiously. For the occasion of the "Fiftieth Anniversary of Trinity Church" Pastor C.F.Hanser wrote:

In her midst Women's, Young Ladies', and Young Men's societies were organized, the latter existing without interruption for the last forty years, and having as special project the purpose of helping outfit young men for the office of the ministry. Your writer and his already departed brother, along with many other pastors of our Synod, who today are fulfilling their office with marked blessing, are indebted to this Young Men's Society for enabling them to undertake the study of theology at the Seminary.(48)

The guest-speaker at the fiftieth anniversary of the society's organization in 1898 very appropriately was the first student who had been enabled to finish his theological studies through the aid of the society. He was the Rev. C.Gross, for many years pastor in Ft. Wayne, Ind., where he also fostered a youth society in his congregation.

47. Just what this "General Verein" here mentioned was is not explained. It doubtless was not the federation we have already described, since the Trinity Verein later sent for its constitution.

48. C. F. Otto Hanser. 1889. p77

The minutes give no clue as to the size of the society at this time, but the LUTHERANER again comes to the rescue:

At present (April 15, 1878) the Juenglingsverein of the local Ev. Lutheran Trinity congregation numbers sixty-four members.(49) It holds two meetings per month. In the one current business of the society is conducted, in the other debates are held on previously submitted questions. For support of indigent students \$124.00 was expended. The treasury contains \$180.75. The Verein possesses a library, which is open every Wednesday evening.(50)

Definite information is lacking to ascertain exactly when the society adopted the system of having two different (as to content) meetings per month. Indications are that this took place around the early part of 1876. The first meeting to be called an "Unterhaltungs Versammlung"(51) in the minutes is that of January 12, 1876. Thereafter the term is used quite regularly to designate alternate meetings. It is possible, of course, that this system of alternate meetings was used earlier, and that the secretary failed to differentiate. The entire question hinges on the use, or failure to use the term "Unterhaltungs --" in the line which introduces each set of minutes. From the content your writer could draw no definite deductions, since it seems that both types of meetings ran along the same general lines. Support is lent to the probability that the social meeting was officially inaugurated at this time by the presence of the constitution for these social meetings among the minutes of 1875-79. It is found on a loose sheet of paper, however, and so does not positively be-

49. According to the anniversary folder found with the minutes the society numbered 55 members in 1898.

50. LUTHERANER. XXXIV. p62.

51. This is the rough equivalent of our modern "social" meeting, and will be thus styled hereafter.

long to this period. It reads thus:

"Constitution for the Social Meetings of the JuenglingsVerein"

Article I

1. The meetings shall be devoted to declamations, debates, the answering of questions handed in by members, and other suitable social activities.
2. Special and general debates shall take place.
3. Special debates will be undertaken by those so designated, but can be thrown open to the entire group if it so desires.
4. The entire society takes part in the general debates.
5. Time limit for the speakers at special debates is 10 minutes, at general debates 5 minutes.
6. The chairman shall name four persons to take part in the special debates.
7. Having appointed them, the chairman must parcel out to each member his particular portion of the debate.
8. Every member who has been called upon or volunteered to debate is obligated to do his part, and can be excused only for legitimate reasons.

Article II

1. Officers shall be: chairman, secretary, and a standing committee of three, chosen by the society, with the pastor as chairman.
2. The chairman is chosen for each meeting, the secretary for six meetings, the standing committee for three months.
3. Duties of officers: the chairman will conduct the meeting and keep strict order. The secretary is to take exact minutes. The committee is to examine all questions and declamations with respect to their suitability for declamatory purposes, and it is to decide the outcome of all debates.

Article III

1. The meetings are to be held every second Wednesday of each month from 8 to 9:30 P.M.

The society conducted its affairs on a large scale, and worked on a comparatively large budget. In the spring of 1875 they laid plans, for example, to celebrate their annual society picnic by renting the excursion boat "East St. Louis" for the rather respectable sum of \$125.00. These annual pic-

nics evidently were conducted in true picnic style, for they had special parades, music, and games. The games listed for one such picnic were: "Zahnschlagen", "Korbsitzen", "Wettrennen", "Sackspringen".

The membership age limit evidently extended from the time of confirmation until the member married. There is ample evidence in the minutes that confirmands were taken in immediately after the rite. All met in the same society-meeting, of course: there is no thought of separate junior and senior divisions whatsoever in all the material we have been able to examine.

The society also had its troubles. Two of the chief troublemakers apparently were the Ahner brothers. In the October 4, 1876, meeting one of them asked for his dismissal from the society without stating his reasons therefor. When pressed he remarked that the society had wronged him. Upon investigation it developed that the previous meeting had seen a discussion pro and con on tuning a piano. Ahner deemed it unnecessary, whereupon another member had whispered that Ahner had no ear for music. Ahner had heard this and called the whisperer a fool. Upon remonstrances of the society Ahner had admitted his unseemly conduct, but brought in another reason for his desire to leave the Verein, stating that a certain clique was running the society. Since he could not prove this, but would not retract his accusation, the society resolved to strike his name from the lists.(52)

52. The Ahner here referred to apparently is C. Ahner.

This was only the beginning of trouble with the Ahners. In the meeting of November 1, 1876, member Bohne accused H. Ahner of telling him to "go to h--l". It seems that Ahner and another member had been arguing rather forcefully after the last meeting, and Bohne had tried to conciliate them, suggesting that they break up the argument and go home, whereupon--so charged Bohne--Ahner had breathed his pious thought. He had since ignored Bohne's repeated admonishings to retract his words. The society asked Ahner whether he had said the words. Ahner answered that he didn't remember, but when several members substantiated Bohne's story, Ahner, evidently excited, said that he would have apologized long ago, if Bohne had not spread the story far and wide. At once Ahner was accused of indirectly admitting his guilt, and consequently of trying to mislead the society-members into thinking he didn't remember. Ahner now replied that he wasn't compelled to let himself be called a liar by any society, regardless of type. His whole behavior became stormy, and turning to the entire group he directed them all to "go to h--l". With that he took his hat to leave. Mr. Harnish remonstrated that he couldn't leave the society in that manner, but Ahner clenched his fists, at which several society members decided that he needed an escort, and accompanied him down the steps. The society resolved to expel him from the organization. The group also resolved to notify the parents of what had transpired, and the president was commissioned to report the entire incident to the pastor.

The affair had a happy ending, however, for in the minutes of January 7, 1877, we find that C. Ahner (through Mr. Harnish) asked the forgiveness of the society for his bad deportment against the society. The society forgave him, and declared themselves reconciled with him. In the same meeting H. Ahner was present and asked the society to forgive him. This was done, and he was again taken up into membership.

A strong point in the society program doubtless was the custom of answering questions on matters of practical, Christian problems. Thus a member handed in this question: Are the women, who during the Christian persecutions took their own lives to escape being ravished, lost and damned, or not? A long discussion followed this particular question, and the pastor finally terminated the matter with the remarks that there is a difference between sins of weakness and sins of ~~maliciousness~~ maliciousness, and since taking one's own life must be designated a sin of weakness these women are not to be condemned. (53)

The pastor during this period was the Rev. E.A. Brauer. In November of 1878 he accepted a call to a pastorate at Crete, Illinois. The society in a writing declared its thanks to him for all he had done for them, deplored their great loss in his departure, resolved to partially support his two sons in their ministerial studies, and presented him with a gold watch.

53. Neither should we condemn the pastor for this statement. Suicide in itself certainly cannot be sanctioned, and it is not likely that Pastor Brauer claimed this. It is probable that the secretary missed some fine points of distinction in the argument.

An interesting note is found near the end of the minutes. In the spring of 1879 the congregation gave the society permission to equip and use an unused room for society purposes. This is probably the first instance on record telling of a society which had its own exclusive room, a circumstance which even in 1944 is still somewhat of a rarity in Missouri Synod circles. The Verein at once resolved to make some improvements in the room, chiefly with respect to lighting.

In 1898 the Verein celebrated the golden anniversary of its founding, as already mentioned. The program was indeed an elaborate one. Trinity's pastor at this time was the Rev. A. Fuehler. In the morning service Pastor C. Gross from Ft. Wayne delivered the sermon. Guest speaker in the afternoon service was the Rev. C.J. Otto Hanser, whom, incidentally, the anniversary leaflet lists as an honorary member of the Verein. In the evening Teacher Rupprecht, supported by choir, soloists, and organ, gave a concert. Concerning the reception of this evening's presentation the SCHULBLATT at the end of a rather lengthy report of the festivities speaks as follows:

"In the churches of the German Lutherans there still is a bit more of respect for the sanctity of the place than in English churches, and so the applause was dispensed with ("streng untersagt"). It need hardly be stated, however, that the preferred musical numbers were received appreciatively."(54)

The total membership of the society at this time, after fifty years of existence, totalled fifty-five persons.

Little is known of the history of the Verein in the early days of the present century, nor does this paper cover that

period. Pastor Rudolph Meyer, current (1944) pastor of Trinity, reports that since his time there has not been a Senior society, (55) altho several attempts were made at reorganization.

And thus we must affix a rather sad addenda to the report of the early, flourishing days of the Trinity JuenglingsVerein: On May 7, 1948, the youth society of Trinity Lutheran Church, St. Louis, Missouri, would be celebrating its centennial---if it had not passed out of existence.

55. Trinity does have a Junior group at present.

OTHER EARLY SOCIETIES

The attempt to obtain information regarding the history of early societies of youth in our synod might almost be compared to the search for the proverbial needle in the haystack. We are quite fortunate in the case of the Trinity Verein just discussed, for there the LUTHERANER has preserved for us some of the pertinent facts concerning organization, and the set of original minutes gives us a fairly detailed picture of society activities a little later. While we know that a number of Vereine existed within a few years after the formation of the one at Trinity, we know precious little of these groups beyond that fact. In most cases the clue which testified to their existence at this early date was the LUTHERANER acknowledgment by students or by the synodical treasurer to the effect that a certain society had given so much for student so-and-so, or for student support in general. Thus we have been able to compile a "minimum list" of societies which were active in the fifth decade of the last century. The groups indicated in the accompanying graph all existed between 1848 and 1856: very likely there were more. Several considerations enter into the picture. It should be pointed out that the first LUTHERANER acknowledgment came in the summer of 1851, indicating that prior to this time whatever society gifts came in were not listed, and while it is not very probable that other societies contributed this early the possibility is there: we can feel reasonably certain that Trinity did

contribute as early as 1849, at the latest. From 1851 to 1856 the reports in the periodical are quite extensive, and probably do a fairly good job of covering the field. In 1856 there seems to be a drop in gift-acknowledgments. This might indicate less activity on the part of the Vereine, but it probably means the LUTHERANER, perhaps in the interest of space conservation, began to pursue a different policy with respect to these notices ("Quittungen und Dank"), and after a few years they seem to disappear entirely. We do know, however, that the Trinity Verein was active for several decades after this time. We must consider also the likelihood ^{that the Gifts} which went directly to the students were in like manner acknowledged by them, instead of being submitted to the LUTHERANER, and this may easily have become the general practise around 1857. At any rate the reader will now understand why we say that the figures we give for the number of societies existing in this period are minimum. They are by no means maximum. The reader will note that in many cases the society is identified merely by its location: sometimes the pastor's or the congregation's name following in parenthesis. Thus we have under 1852: "New York (Brohm 1854)". This means that the LUTHERANER lists a gift simply as "From the New York JuenglingsVerein" in 1852, whereas in 1854 we have a listing of a gift from "Pastor Brohm's JuenglingsVerein in New York." The significance of this is that the two may not have been identical: it is possible that Rev. Brohm's was the second Verein in New York. We don't know. Chances are that his and the one listed in 1852 are one and the

Increase in Societies: 1848 - 1856

1848: M 1
1850: MF 2
1851: MF MMF 5
1852: MFMMF MMMMMFF 13
1853: MFMMFMMMMMMFF MMM 17
1854: MFMMFMMMMMMFFMMMM MMM 21
1855: MFMMFMMMMMMFFMMMMMMMM MM 23
1856: MFMMFMMMMMMFFMMMMMMMMMM MMFFFF 31

M indicates Young Men's Societies: F Young Ladies' Societies.

Earliest Society-references in the LUTHERANER

1848: Trinity M, St. Louis
1850: Ev.Lu. Young Ladies' Society of St. Louis.
(South District in St. Louis, '55)
1851: Buffalo M (P.Buerger '52: Trinity '54)
Altenburg M, Mo. (Altenburg & Frohna '54)
Ft. Wayne, F, Ind.
1852: Immanuel F, St. Louis
Chicago F, (P.Wunder)
Chicago M, (P. Wunder '53)
New York M, (P. Brohm '54)
Cleveland M
Monroe M, Mich. (P. Hattstaedt)
Cincinnati M (Trinity, '53) ~~Richmann~~
Ft. Wayne M, Ind. (P. Sihler '56)
1853: Fairfield Co M, Ohio (Trinity,)(P. Richmann)
Detroit M (P. Fick '55)
Wittenberg M, Ohio (P.Nuetzel)
Neudettelsau M, Ohio (St. Johns, P. Seidel)
1854: Collinsville M, Ill.
Baltimore M (St. Pauls)
Pittsburg M
Paitzdorf M, Mo.

- 1855: Sheboygan M, Wis.
 Buffalo M (Not P. Buerger)
- 1856: Town Mosel M (No state mentioned: P. Steinbach)
 Frankenlust F, Mth. (P. Sievers)
 Milwaukee F
 Chicago M (Immanuel: P. Mueller)
 Frankenmuth F, Mich.
 Collinsville F (no state: doubtless Illinois)
 Cleveland F
 Trinity M Memphis (56)
-

same. The failure on the part of the LUTHERANER to identify a society other than by the city in which it existed, however, creates this possibility of two societies existing where only one can be credited with certainty. Here again we have kept our figures down to an absolute minimum: that is, we have counted also the multiple possibilities as only one, except in the case of Buffalo, where there was actual proof of two separate societies.

The amounts given for student-support by these societies add up to the following, exclusive of the gifts from the Trinity, St. Louis, Verein: 1851 - \$8, 1852 - \$206.55, 1853 - \$190.55, 1854 - \$205.75, 1855 - \$333.65, 1856 - \$451.89. This gives us the impressive total of \$1396.60. Add to this the amount given by Trinity's Verein up to 1856, and you arrive at a total well above two thousand dollars. May we remind the reader that this was ninety years ago, when a dollar would still buy a good dollar's worth,

\$6. Trinity society, Memphis, is not mentioned in the LUTHERANER. Pastor Victor Brugge sends us this interesting note: "I have a large banner hanging in my church hall which the young people have made, stating organized 1856, reorganized 1874. This means Civil War and Yellow Fever interfering."

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when a student was estimated to need between \$50 and \$60 per year, exclusive of tuition, which then, as now, was furnished by Synod. ~~and~~

The amount of money involved indicates that a large number of students received aid, both at Concordia College in Ft. Wayne, and at the Seminary in St. Louis. We have no way of ascertaining whether every supported student completed his studies and entered the ministry. Doubtless there were some losses on the way, however. Among the names listed in connection with the acknowledgments in the LUTHERANER are:

L.Doeffner, Bodemer, J.P.Beyer, F.Foehlinger, O.Ernst, H.Koenig, H.Perelewitz, G.Loeber, J.Moll, F.Seiger, F.Jungck, H.Graetzel, H.Lemcke, Juengel, J.L.Daib, H.Bauer, C.Luecke, H.Doermann, H.Koch, Schultz, L. Lochner, F.A.Ahner, Schaefer, H.Jor, C.Grebel, H.Loszner, G.Gruber, W.Engelbert, H.Gils, Grupe, Seigmann, E.Rolf, G.Weiler, F.Funk, A.Mennicke, A.Menke, J.Herrmann, G. Brandstettner, C. Winterstein, F.Kahmeier, C.Graeber, G. Dieterly, A.Selle, G.Keller.

In addition to the monies the students occasionally received other gifts. For example the September 12, 1855, issue of the LUTHERANER carries an item stating that the Young Ladies of Detroit sent four shirts and three pair socks for student C. Schultz, and in 1856 students Doeffner and Bodemer were the recipients of two quilts, while in 1853 student Graetzel received a violin from the Young Men's Society of Cincinnati.

As already noted, nothing but the bare fact that they existed is known of by far the majority of these societies. In isolated cases ~~were~~ were able to garner a few facts, one such instance being the society of Altenburg, Missouri, which

Pastor Schieferdecker organized in 1851, and which still possesses its original minutes.(57)

On July 20th, 1851, a group of seventeen young men met and formed a "Young Men's Society for Supporting Students" ("Juenglings-Unterstuetzungs Verein"). As model for their constitution they used a copy obtained from the "Immanuel Districts Juenglings Verein in St. Louis".(58) According to this constitution the purpose of the society was the support of needy ministerial students. Membership was limited to young, unmarried males, but gifts would gladly be received from "other friends of the cause." Membership in the Altenburg congregation was not required, but each member of the society had to "hold to the Truth" as preached by the Ev. Lu. Church, and lead a respectable life. A minimum fee of 5¢ per month was required. Society officers included a "Kassenrevisor", who checked the figures of the treasurer every month. The first student to receive support was student Beyer, who was granted \$2.00 per month: later G. Loeber received \$1.00 per month. The annual anniversary celebration took place on July 4th. In 1854 the society had a special collection to help a young man, Mennicke by name, to come to America from Germany to study for teaching. Frohnd soon organized a society of its own, and at times the two groups met jointly. In 1872 the membership at Altenburg reached 57. On July 5, 1868, a group of young ladies from

57. Much thanks is due Mr. Vernon R. Meyr, present president of the Altenburg Walther League society, who was kind enough to supply the writer with the source material used in the account of the Verein's history. Mr. Meyr went to much work to translate the constitution, and excerpts from the minutes, 58. Indicating its existence already at this time.

from the Altenburg congregation formed a separate society. It became active in purchasing necessary items for the church, and to some extent supplemented the activities of the Young Men's Society.(59)

Perhaps typical of the result of the writer's quest for information from different churches where societies are known to have existed in the early days of our synod is the answer received from Pastor W.C.Meyer, Immanuel Lutheran Church, Milwaukee, Wisconsin, who answered our letter with: "Am sorry but we have no materials to send you. At the time of our church's anniversary (75th) a thorough search was made, but nothing could be found. So we have no records, and we regret it ourselves." It seems that our Missouri Synod members just weren't minded to preserve records.

We do have an excellent account of the history of the Trinity Young Men's Society of Buffalo.(60) This society was organized in 1875, and is particularly noteworthy because it is the parent-society of the Walther League, and also the foster-society of DER VEREINSBOTE.(61) The man who gave the impetus for the organization of this society was Pastor Carl Gross, whom we have already identified as the first theological student supported by St. Louis' Trinity Verein to become a minister. The original name of the group was "The Young Men's Society of the First Ev. Luth. Trinity

59. Of interest is the fact that the Altenburg societies did not affiliate with the International Walther League until December 1st, 1943, less than a year ago.

60. VEREINSBOTE. VI. P67 ff.

61. The magazine published in the interests of organizing the various societies into one larger league.

Congregation at Buffalo, New York". In 1878 the name was changed to "Lutheran Young Men's Society"(or 'association': "Lutherischer Jungmaenner Verein"), and on May 8th of that year the society was legally incorporated. The membership was divided into three classes: actives, passives, and honorary. All unmarried men between the ages of 16 and 30 could be actives, and marriage did not necessarily rule a member out of this class. Rather unusual is the charge of \$1 as entrance fee. Dues were 25¢ per month. The first debate dealt with the relative importance of cow and horse! The library received an immediate prominent place in society plans, and by the end of the first year it had 492 volumes.(62) The society stressed music as a means of keeping its members occupied, especially in the winter months, sponsored a choir, and bought a "Klavier" for \$370.00. By the end of the first year the membership had risen to 40 actives.

Since the young ladies had often helped at "socials", a ladies section of the society was organized in 1891.(63) It had its own organization, officers, and meetings, but was associated with the young men's group in so far that it shared and helped care for the same meeting-place, and it was active in general society projects together with the young men, such as socials and outings. "This arrangement has shown itself to

62. In 1898 the library contained 3496 volumes valued at more than \$2000.00. The total society property at this time was estimated at \$4477.46.

63. Is this the first instance of a "mixed" group? We know of none earlier.

be a very blessed one for the youth of the congregation."(64)

Significant in the history of this society, and of all other societies as well, is the year 1893, for it was at this time that the federation later called "Walther League" was organized. The organization was materially aided by the VEREINSBOTE? which made its initial appearance a year earlier. Let us now consider the genesis of the Walther League.

64. VEREINSBOTE V I. P67 ff. The writer of the history of the Buffalo society was R. Braunlich, first secretary of that group.

THE BIRTH OF THE WALTHER LEAGUE

Already in 1881 Trinity Young Men's Society of Buffalo had appointed a committee to look into the prospects of a general organization, and to encourage the establishment of societies in all congregations of the Missouri Synod, as well as their affiliation with such a general organization.(65) The result was a circular letter addressed to all societies, inviting their comments and suggestions on the matter. Three years later the Detroit societies responded with an invitation to the Buffalo youths to visit Detroit to talk over plans. The visit did not come about, but the invitation kept alive the idea of organization. In 1891 the Trinity young people of Buffalo resolved to try again:

The man obsessed by the idea more than anyone else, was Herman C. Gahwe... With Trinity Young Men's Association (society) behind them, he and Fred W. "Daddy" Burow began to spread the idea in earnest. In June, 1892, the Lutheran Young Men's Association MESSENGER ("VEREINSBOTE") made its appearance--with one of its advertisements printed upside down for an entire volume. For a year M. Gahwe, "The Father of the Walther League", wrote reams of correspondence, working until two and three o'clock in the morning day after day. Whenever an unorganized group of young people expressed a desire to form a society, Gahwe and Burow boarded a train--and another society was born. No expense-paid executive secretary in those days! More than once their pockets were drained for the cause. Thus for eleven years the first pioneers of Pioneer District prepared the soil and sowed the seed. By February, 1893, the first signs of life began to show. "After we got societies formed," said Mr. Burow the other day, "It was easy to bring them into synodical association.(66)

65. cf. O. H. Theiss. WALTHER LEAGUE MESSENGER. LI. p48lff.

66. R. Menzel. REMARKS FOR REVIEW AND PREVIEW PROGRAM. Robert Menzel served as student-vicar at Trinity Church in 1943, and

The first society to join in answer to Trinity's call was St. Andrew's, also in Buffalo: a preliminary organization of Buffalo societies was then formed. This group began issuing the VEREINSBOTE, which was printed by F. Burow and Son.(67) The first issue featured a call to all synodical Vereine to join. Pastor A. Senne of Trinity contributed an article "clearly setting forth the reasons for the proposed organization."(68) In July of 1892 another call was printed, plus an article by Pastor J. Sieck of St. Andrew's Church, on the obligations of societies to their congregations. Various societies now began to manifest interest. Emmaus of Buffalo, groups in Danbury, Conn., Ft. Wayne, Ind., New York City, Rochester, and others. The interested pastor at Emmaus was The Rev. A.T. Hanser, who contributed an article: "The Concern of the Congregation for its Youth."(69) Hanser later wrote a number of articles in behalf of the cause of youth, both in the VEREINSBOTE and in the LUTHERANER.

By December, 1892, seven societies were listed as members: the three Buffalo groups, Immanuel of Ft. Wayne, Immanuel of Danbury, St. Matthew of New York, and St. Matthew of Rochester. In answer to a question regarding society-entertainment Pastor Senne suggested the following six-point program in the VEREINSBOTE: debates, reading exercises, declamations and dialogues, singing, question-box, and lectures by pastors,

gathered much of his information from the lips of "Daddy" Burow, the sole surviving member of the initial group which organized the Walther League.

67. WALTHER LEAGUE MESSENGER op.cit.

68. Ibid.

69. Ibid.

other professional men, and government officials.

February 21st, 1893, the three Buffalo societies held a massmeeting at which they decided to issue the call for a national convention. They did, and the convention took place from May 20 to May 23rd, when the constitution was adopted. The elected officers were: Herman Gahwe, president; Charles Bartelt, Milwaukee, vice-president; C.J. Beuermann, New York City, secretary; F.W. Burow, Jr., treasurer. The executive board consisted of Pastor A.T. Hanser and Dr. C.W. Fritz of Buffalo, F.C. [?]Speigel of Ft. Wayne, and J. Kaltenstein of Danbury, Connecticut. Twelve societies were represented. Trinity, St. Andrew, and Emmaus of Buffalo; Immanuel and St. Paul of Ft. Wayne; Immanuel of Danbury; St. Matthew of New York; Trinity of Reserve, New York; the Affiliated Young Men's Societies of Milwaukee; St. Matthew of Rochester; St. Matthew of Cleveland; and the society at Tonawanda, New York. They represented a total membership of 418.(70) The general organization was given prominence in the LUTHERANER article we have already quoted, which recognizes the value of a general league, but stresses the importance of its subordination to the local congregation.(71)

By the time the convention met at Ft. Wayne in 1894 the league numbered fifteen societies with total membership of 708. This convention adopted the name "Walther League", originally suggested by Pastor Sieck of St. Andrew's in Buffalo, and chosen, of course, in honor of Dr. Walther. The

70. WALTHER LEAGUE MESSENGER op.cit.

71. LUTHERANER IX. P113 ff. Cf. this thesis P22 ff.

1895 convention at Cleveland adopted the plan of dividing the League into districts. 1896 saw the writing of the first Walther League song by J.H.Ungemach of Ft.Wayne.(72) The 1900 convention at Cleveland adopted the motto PRO ARIS ET FOCIS. By this time the League numbered fifty societies in the districts of Indiana, Milwaukee, Cleveland, New England, and Southern California. At this same convention the ladies were given voting-rights, and the hospice-idea ("Inn-question") was brought to the fore. The first Walther League sponsored hospices were established in connection with the Pan-American Expositions in Buffalo in 1901, and in St. Louis in 1904. In 1905 the League began active support of tuberculosis sufferers by furnishing the Tent Number One at the Lutheran Sanatorium at Wheat Ridge, Colorado.(73)

The subsequent history of the Walther League is well-known and easily accessible. Especially excellent is the article by Prof. O.H. Theiss, the Executive Secretary of the Walther League, to which we have referred extensively in this chapter. It appeared in the WALTHER LEAGUE MESSENGER, and can be found in volume 51, page 480 and following. See also the "Short History of the Walther League" in the WALTHER LEAGUE MANUAL.

We have before us---through the courtesy of Walther League Headquarters at Chicago---the first fourteen volumes of the

72. The present official song "Walther Leaguers, Walther Leaguers, One and All are We", was published in 1928, words by W.G.Polack. Cf. WALTHER LEAGUE MESSENGER LI.1 P483.

73. Cf. WALTHER LEAGUE MANUAL. 1935. P14 ff. The Walther League has since greatly extended its support of Wheatridge.

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Growth of the League

<u>Year</u>		<u>Societies</u>	
1893	x	12	
1898	X	49	
1903	Xx	74	
1908	XX	85	
1913	XXx	133	
1918	XXXx	310	
1923	XXXXXXXXXXXXX	1182	
1928	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	1509	
1933	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	1809	
1938	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	2211	
1943	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX	2600	

Graph and figures taken from FIFTY YEARS, the golden anniversary book published by the Walther League in 1943. See Page twenty-six.

extremely valuable and scarce VEREINSBOTE. These earliest writings of the Walther League are not generally available, and since they present some matters of unusual interest we shall thumb the pages, and devote a few lines of this chapter to a few of the more interesting and pertinent items occurring in the period from 1892 to 1900.

May, 1893, marks the application and acceptance into membership of the "Young People's Society of Zion's Church, Dallas, Texas." This is the first English-name society to appear on the membership list. It regularly sent in its announcements in English, and the VEREINSBOTE consistently

printed them in that language, amid all the other German materials.....The November, 1893, issue carries an up-to-date advertisement of a washing machine in German, by the Horton Mfg Co.:"If a person loves his wife, let him bring a "Western Washer" into his house. This washmachine is a blessing, etc., etc.".....Other ads were placed by organ concerns, watchmakers, tailors, contractors, bakers, and even an insurance concern!.....In August of 1894 the VEREINS-BOTE refutes the charge of the "Buffalo Lutheran" (organ of the Buffalo Luther League, consisting of societies of the General Synod) that the Walther League is an "Opposition League". The BOTE points out that the two groups work in entirely different spheres because of the doctrinal laxity in General Synod circles.....The issue of October, 1894, lists a "Good Program": three songs, one recitation, four instrumental solos and duets, seven dialogues, three declamations, an operetta, and a "Gesang". Of course the numbers were arranged in different order.....The February, 1896, issue carries a detailed description on "How 'Baseball' can be played Indoors in Winter" complete with diagrams.....The BOTE also had its amusing moments, especially one centered on an article appearing in Low-German in the issue of March, 1896. The contributor is the secretary of the Wyandotte (Michigan) Society, sending in his report of a society meeting. His subject matter is a debate that has taken place in the society on the question of the relative usefulness of steamship and

train. To preserve the effect we quote the report in the original:

Am 22 Januar versammelten sick de Juengens un debattirten oever de Frag: "Wellet is dat nuetzlichste, en Dampschipp oder ene Isenbahn?". Na, dat woer di averst ein Spasz; dat Dampschipp wull ja mit recht hebben, un dei Juengens up de Isenbahn wollen ok recht hebben. Nu woeren dre Richter erwaeht, un de muesten dann entscheiden, wer recht kriegt. Na, nu debattirten un debattirten de Juengens darup los, un ick dacht manchmal, dat't noch Slaeg geben wuer, averst so wit suen se doch nich kamen; de Juengens up't Dampschipp woeren all ganz rot in't Gesicht, averst de Juengens up de Isenbahn wullen gornicht nachlaten. Toletzt wuer de Frag de Richters oevergeben, un de hewt de Isenbahn den Sieg toerkannt. Herr H. Groene schrift dat he up hoge Scholen gahn ist. Na, so wit bin ick nich kamen, denn von use Scholen in Wyandotte is de hoegste man dre Stock hoch, un ick ben bet in tweiten Stock kamen, averst dennoch hoffe ick, dat ick duessen naechsten Sommer doch so wit doerch Amerika kam, dat ick de Convention in Milwaukee besoecken kann.

Fred. Classon, Sec.

The April, 1897, issue carries the result of a questionnaire on society life sent out by the League entertainment committee, and answered by fifteen societies. In 33% of the cases the opposite sex was admitted to the society. Social games such as the following were played: Charades, Peanut Hunts, The Prince of Whales has lost his Hat, Fruit Basket, and others. Most of the societies had a place on their program for gymnastics, with a pretty good line of equipment.

The early success of the Walther League, in organization and generally thereafter, must be credited to its leaders. Especially if this true of the pastors who helped guide the league, particularly in its infancy. Great credit should go to A. Senne, the Hanser brothers, Sieck, and J. F. K. Lochner, "The Friend of Youth".

VII

EVALUATION

We have reached the conclusion of our brief thesis. At the suggestion of others this evaluation is presented. We would ask the reader to remember that such an evaluation is necessarily subjective. The writings in the period covered are few, and we have no way of determining absolutely how complete a picture they present. On the other hand, certain conditions seem to be indicated rather conclusively. The following, then, is our attempt at a composite picture of the youth situation in our church during the second half of the 19th century.

The blessings which the cause of youth in our church found in C.F.W. Walther can scarcely be over-estimated. Certainly if there is one man who stands head and shoulders above all others it is he. His was a farisghted mind, a mind decades ahead of those who followed and floundered in his wake. Let no one undervalue the blessings which have come to the church through Walther, also because he favored the idea of student support from Vereine. Walther had no precedent to go by: whatever of societies existed in his early days was bad, but he had the vision to see that Vereine could be made to serve a good purpose. And he it was who doubtless greatly influenced Buenger and many others, for numerous are the references to his stand on youth questions in various sermons and papers.

After the passing of these two men there seems to have appeared a period of drouth--a drouth of men to carry the torch which Walther had ignited and Buenger had helped nourish.

Now the references to youth in synodical publications become markedly conspicuous by their absence. The youth problem was there--it is perpetual--and the articles which began to appear later, in the nineties of the last century, indicate that the situation was grave, and getting worse. These scattered articles are almost unanimous in their agreement that our church's youth was falling away with alarming rapidity, and that something had to be done about it.

What was the cause for such a situation? It was not unfaithfulness on part of the pastors. Our church has been signally blessed with faithful shepherds. The faithful pastor, however, was a very busy man. In addition to the routine congregational duties, he probably taught his parochial school, and supplied one or more preaching stations. His was a case of doing "first things" first, and perhaps not finding time to do church-work which he considered of secondary importance, into which category he placed special, post-confirmation youth-work. (74) It seems evident that the pastor relied too strongly on the parents. This had been accepted procedure with the fathers, and when youth conditions became bad, the temptation to fix the blame on the parents for youth's failings certainly was there, (75) and doubtless often justifiable.

The average pastor conscientiously and sincerely believed that he was discharging his full duty when he conducted

74. LUTHERANER LXII. cf. p 9 of this thesis.

75. LEHRE UND WEHRE IX. cf. p 15 of this thesis.
LUTHERANER XLII. cf. p 17 of this thesis.

Christenlehre every Sunday for his youth, and when he admonished them as they came to announce for communion. This attitude, in the humble opinion of the writer, brings us to the source of much of the trouble. The average pastor was satisfied that the methods of his predecessors were still the best, and adequate. While the laity was becoming less an isolated community and so in closer contact with the world, and while it was forming decadent living patterns of its own, the clergy contented itself with the continued usage of the simple and negatively glazed technique of the past, instead of adopting the forward-looking technique of Walther, which held promise of developing into a much more adequate means of dealing with the youth problem. Because many pastors did not stop to consider that their young people were coming into ever closer ^{CONTACT WITH THE WORLD} ~~er~~ and that the youthful mind was becoming ever less satisfied with the 1850 outlook to which they were to conform, therefore they failed to understand why their youth seemed to be growing farther and farther away from the church. And not realizing the source of the trouble they, with the best intentions, could do little to remedy the situation.

And then, around the ninth decade of the 19th century, isolated voices began to be heard. Most of the voices were woe-begotten in their decrying of the deplorable status of the youth of our church.(76) Nothing strikingly constructive in the outcry, but at least some few were beginning to realize that the time-honored bill-of-fare wasn't adequate for

76. MO.SYNOD DISTRICT REPORTS. 1895. cf. p24 of this thesis.

energetic, growing youth living in an advancing world.(77)

A few other voices began to speak, voices which looked below the surface and felt that there must be a reason for youth's swerve away from the church, voices which dared to suggest that we must reexamine our working tools with youth, and somehow get closer to the junior members of the congregation. How?

Better christenlehre, cried some. We must make our Sunday catechetical classes more interesting in order to get the youth back where they belong. And yet, there was an air of pessimism about this line of thought. Christenlehre was--and is--a fine method--IF the youth come to take part in it. But the ones who needed it most not only came last, but least of all.(78) In the eyes of many pastors, however, there was no remedy other than christenlehre and the pulpit.

In 1901 the MAGAZIN DER EV. LUTH. HOMOLETIK carried a long thesis on the youth problem. The writer intelligently and excellently discussed the admittedly bad situation. He dealt at length with christenlehre, used several pages showing its excellencies, and how pastors should prepare for it. He asserted that the sad experiences of poor attendance were quite general: he cited several district reports as convincing proof, and remarked that he could produce a number of others. And now please note: the writer summed up his arguments as to

77. The appearance of these various articles all deploring the condition of youth certainly permit the assumption that the youth situation was becoming increasingly desperate, and demanding attention. The prominence given these articles at district conventions indicates that the fact was being recognized.

78. The manner of dealing with absent youths is interesting. Older men tell us that it was common procedure for the elders to visit youths absent from christenlehre, and to admonish them and their parents. When this admonition was evangelical it was a fine thing, but often, we are told, the approach was legalistic.

why christenlehre should be placed next to the sermon as a means of keeping the youth with the church by saying: "Even tho it might seem as tho everything is in vain we should not relax our efforts. Our work will not be entirely in vain. Once in a while we will succeed again."!(79)

Was christenlehre inadequate? Our pastors did not think so. Christenlehre was a Lutheran institution, used by the fathers--there was no doubt that it was a good thing.(80) The youth society, on the other hand, was something foreign, and idea born in non-lutheran minds; better steer clear.(81) Many a pastor did not see the necessity of doing more for his youth than the fathers had done, and so our clergy tried to lead their youth by telling them to ignore the lure of the wicked world, tried to tell their youth to stifle that youthful energy, instead of providing opportunities for sublimating youth's energies into church-approved channels.

Sectarian origin was only one of a number of arguments advanced against the youth society. Another was the danger of a society becoming "a congregation within a congregation".(82) A third manifested itself in apprehension that a society would become a center of pleasure and worldliness.(83) The un-Christian attitudes of many non-lutheran groups made other pastors fear that such a group would be fostered in their congregation.(84)

79. MAGAZIN DER EV LU HOMOLETIK. 1901. p285

80. The writer agrees that christenlehre was a good thing, and at one time perhaps adequate, but whether it retained its adequacy in the face of changing conditions and attitudes is an entirely different question.

81. LUTHERANER LI. cf. p25 of this thesis.

82. LUTHERANER LII. p34: also IX. cf p57 of this thesis. ^{thesis.}

83. Ibid. cf. also MO SYNOD DISTRICT REPORT. 1895. cf.p24 this

84. Cf. footnote #20 of this thesis.

And let us not forget a fourth point, namely the age-old human tendency to stay with the status quo, the "wir bleiben beim Alten" idea, even if the status quo shows ample room for improvement.

While these and other reasons doubtless kept many pastors from espousing the cause of youth societies in their church the turn of the century saw a few wide-awake clergymen take up the cause of youth. Several factors enter in. Not to be underrated is the fact that a number of pastors in our synod had been society-supported in their training. It was but natural and human that at least some of these men should have a kindly interest in youth and in youth societies. Another factor was the increasingly evident fact that something had to be done with and for youth, and out of sheer desperation, if from no other motive, pastors were forced to admit to themselves that even a youth society could hardly make things worse: moreover, the success of some Lutheran church youth societies began to grow evident. Pastors in growing numbers began to appreciate the very important psychological truth that mere forbidding is not enough, that the youth society offered a needed outlet for youthful energy, and a needed answer for desired Christian sociability.(85)

These men who in the nineties saw the situation in its true light were, comparatively speaking, not many: but there

85. THEOLOGICAL QUARTERLY III. cf p26 of this thesis. Cf. also footnote #35 of this thesis.

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were some, and among them a few forward-looking ones who once again began to champion the cause of youth as had Dr. Walther, and who, in spite of the apathy of a vast majority of their colleagues, and the hostility of not a few, went forward.

From the beginning of our church, down through the period treated in this thesis, and up to the present time the cause of youth has had a hard fight of it. Even as in 1875, so also in 1944 the apathy of shepherds for the lambs of their flock between confirmation and emotional maturity is appalling, however less frequent in occurrence it may be. We should realize, on the other hand, that the Lord of the Church has greatly blessed our church with gifted and consecrated men, men who in the past as also today have striven mightily for the cause of the young lay workers in His Kingdom. May He continue to bless us thus in the future!

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