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Lutherans and the Social Gospel in Canada in the First Quarter of the Twentieth Century

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Surrounded by a sea of church-propelled social action at the turn of the century, what course did Lutherans in Canada chart for themselves?

Lutherans are not generally mentioned as part of the historic social gospel movement. Since today Canadian Lutherans are active in social involvement, how does one interpret the delayed Lutheran response to the social gospel? Some might argue that Canadian Lutherans at the beginning of this century were involved with pressing practical concerns of their own. Others might argue that the interpretation of Lutheran doctrinal and theological heritage in "the Canadian context" was needed prior to the development of a social Christianity.

Both of these concepts are important to the question raised. This paper focuses on the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Central Canada which existed in Ontario between 1908 and 1925, the peak years of the social gospel movement, and compares its situation and attitudes to social issues with that of social gospel churches.¹

In order to make such comparisons it is necessary first to outline the development of the social gospel and the course it took in the Methodist and Presbyterian Churches, the two main social gospel churches in Ontario. Second, it is necessary to outline the growth of Lutheranism in Ontario, emphasizing the development of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Central Canada (also known as the Synod of Central Canada or the English Synod). This Synod, although small, is important because of its consistent efforts to bring the Lutheran Church into the Canadian scene. Further, it existed alongside the social gospel churches and had close ties with the much larger

German language Synod on the same territory, the Canada Synod, and with the English-speaking Nova Scotia Synod.

The social gospel movement in Canada was part of a wider "Social Christianity" in both Europe and North America, as well as a response to the problems which arose from industrial strife, unequal distribution of wealth and worsening conditions for the poor in urban settings.² It sought to transfer an earlier evangelical emphasis on a transcendent God who saved souls through revival and awakening to an immanent God working through the reform of institutions. Thus would the world be Christianized and the Kingdom of God established in the very fabric of society.³ The leaders tended to be "preachers, proclaimers and educators", as well as proponents of co-operative Christianity and interdenominational work.⁴ Canadian social gospel denominations were characterized by strong British and North American intellectual and religious roots,⁵ a growing liberal approach to doctrine and a declining emphasis on creedal precision—all considerably different from the roots from which Canadian Lutheran development sprang. Acceptance of the controversial biblical higher criticism and the new role of the prophets as critics of the social order rather than as messengers of the coming Messiah opened the door for social gossellers to take on the role of preachers of the day and prophets, using their pulpits from which to speak out against social wrong and industrial strife.⁶

A strong sense of national structure and purpose further characterized social gospel churches; Presbyterians had achieved internal national unity by 1875, Methodists by 1884. Both saw their duty as bringing the gospel to bear to make Canada a righteous nation. These "missions" were informed by the "new imperialism" of the day, fostering the idea that immigrants must be assimilated and Christianized and become English-speaking. These strident messages tended to cause unease among German Canadians especially as World War I loomed on the horizon.

The social gospel in Canada can be described as having three modes: the conservative, the progressive and the radical. The conservatives tended to see issues as personal-ethical: sin originated in individual acts and social strategy lay in legislative reform of the individual's environment. The radicals

saw society in more organic terms: evil was entrenched in society, and radical social change must precede, or at least accompany, personal salvation. Such views brought them into agrarian, labour, and political movements which set out completely to transform society. The progressives, that large, in-between core group, advocated reforms which ameliorated the two extremes and held them in working tension.⁷ This mediating body formed alliances with Canada's business and professional communities, seeking to perfect those systems which had brought success to themselves and the nation. Along with generous medical, educational and social programs, they set about to bring into their own upright middle-class culture the poor, the immigrants and those engaged in the business of vice.⁸ Although the boundaries of these three modes were not clearcut, or even recognized at the time, these distinctions, and the denominational evolution which they represented in the Methodists and Presbyterians, are helpful to the investigation of Lutheran responses to social issues.

The Methodist social gospel has been seen as an example of the conservative personal/ethical development of the movement;⁹ Presbyterians have been described as "the progressive social uplifters".¹⁰ In fact, both denominations portray a blend of the conservative-progressive social gospel. Both programs were buoyed by recent internal unions and the prosperity of their members in the business community; both were propelled by expanding national bureaucracies and strong coteries of theological leaders who pressed for the church's mission of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth.¹¹ Active in their well-established colleges, libraries and clubs, they encouraged the study of social problems and sociology.¹² During the first decade of the twentieth century both Methodists and Presbyterians promoted departments of Moral and Social Reform, developed from earlier temperance committees combined with the new concern for Christian ethics in human institutions. Reports from these Committees had pride of place in the national Churches' centralized presses. Both denominations were energized by a spirit of co-operative Christianity. By 1908 the two groups formed the basis of the Moral and Social Reform Council of Canada, which became the Social Service Council of Canada in 1913. The apex of all this was the Canadian Social Service Congress in 1914, which will be seen to be a point of

contact with Lutherans of the day. All three branches of the social gospel made presentations to the more than 200 delegates at that Congress.¹³ Those efforts in turn spurred on the 1925 union of Methodists, Presbyterians and Congregationalists to form the United Church of Canada, a union considered to be a necessary step for the national success of the social gospel.¹⁴

Methodists and Presbyterians also participated in the growing Canadian deaconess movement, which could trace its origins to Protestant Germany of the 1820s.¹⁵ Many of the 900 Canadian women trained in the Methodist movement between 1894 and 1926 worked in that church's expanding city mission organizations. The largest of these employers by 1906 was the Hart Massey Fred Victor Mission in Toronto. For Presbyterians, St. Christopher's House in Toronto was the showpiece of their chain of urban settlement houses. Deaconesses and urban institutions had become powerful sources in the social gospel's task of saving the masses and making good citizens.¹⁶

Developing alongside but reaching its peak a little later than the conservative and progressive sectors, was the radical wing of the social gospel. It found its milieu in the Winnipeg area. There it allied itself with agrarian revolt, unions and criticism of both the spirit of capitalism and of the Christian church as it was perceived.¹⁷ Although this activity is beyond the geographical parameters of this paper, it will be seen that it was to this radical thrust of the social gospel that the Lutheran Church reacted most strongly.

In addition, it should be noted that social gospel churches harnessed the energy of a variety of existing women's and youth groups which were enlisted to help shape the course of people's lives.¹⁸ Women's Christian Temperance Unions took on the broader mandates of the Women's Missionary Societies. By the turn of the century both Presbyterian and Methodist Women's Missionary Societies had developed Dominion Boards which greatly facilitated the considerable work they took on in communities across Canada. The women often enlisted children in the task, in the form of "mission bands", thus rounding out the social gospel's cradle-to-grave concern for all citizens.¹⁹ Young people's groups, focusing first on character-building, confronted social problems through involvement in church, labour, social service and politics.²⁰ Many participants

moved on to the Student Christian Movement forming on campuses in the 1920s. There they studied social and industrial problems and the social teachings of Jesus, many taking an active part in social gospel efforts, even as the movement was beginning to wane.²¹

To understand Lutheran response is firstly to appreciate something of this denomination's entry into Ontario. In 1783 more than 1,000 German Loyalists came to Upper Canada, settling in the Bay of Quinte area and east along the St. Lawrence. The congregations in the Quinte region followed the pattern of defection to the Methodist fold of earlier Nova Scotia Lutherans; by 1845, all had disappeared from active Lutheran records.²² The St. Lawrence enclaves broke this pattern when the Reverend Herman Hayunga came from Hartwick College in New York State and built up four still-extant congregations. Acknowledging the need, by 1837 Hayunga had begun to preach entirely in English, a point of some relevance to the development of the Synod of Central Canada.²³ In addition, by 1800, Lutheran settlers in the Toronto area began building small churches in Markham and Vaughan, Unionville and Buttonville. In the late 1820s, following an earlier Mennonite trek to "Ebytown", a large migration of Germans established the Ontario Lutheran core in what is now the Kitchener-Waterloo area. Subsequent German settlers moved on to Bruce and Grey counties, to the Huron Tract and to the Ottawa Valley where colonization roads accompanied an active search for immigrants. By 1868, the Rev. L.H. Gerndt, a German missionary, had organized eight congregations and several preaching stations for the over 12,000 Germans who were settling in the Ottawa Valley.²⁴ All of these congregations were dependent on a succession of pastors from the United States and Germany.

These, then, were the rugged beginnings of loosely organized Lutheran congregations in Ontario at the time of Confederation. Socio-economically, the new Canadian Lutherans were generally middle and lower class families who followed their inherited occupations in their new land. The St. Lawrence, Ottawa Valley and Toronto area settlements remained agrarian throughout the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Ebytown settlement, which changed its name to Berlin in 1833, did take on a more industrialized urban character, but the growth was slow enough to minimize the social stresses which were

the social gospel concerns in the faster-growing cities. As in the more agrarian communities, the town was characterized by German culture and values and by industry, self-sufficiency and co-operation.²⁵

Ecclesiastically, these scattered Lutherans had made a major step toward organization in 1861 when they formed the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Canada (also known as the Canada Synod, or the German Synod) and joined the General Council of Lutherans in the United States. "Of Canada" simply meant that it was part of an American body on Canadian soil. In fact it existed in Ontario only and perpetuated the use of the German language in the worship and life of its people. It was a far cry from the nationally-structured and nationally-conscious social gospel churches. Meanwhile, the York County congregations had joined the St. Lawrence group's practice of using the English language exclusively in their services and had joined the English-speaking New York ministerium but later switched to the new Canada Synod in 1861. Still not comfortable, they formed the English District of the Canada Synod in 1896 and later appealed to the Synod of New York and New England for an English field missionary (Rev. M.J. Bieber). By 1908 the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Central Canada was formed with thirteen English-speaking congregations and eleven pastors. To those already mentioned were added congregations in Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Brantford, Galt, Guelph, Port Colborne and Hamilton.²⁶ This Synod's goal of Canadianizing the Lutheran church provides an important point of contact with social gospel principles. However, the breaking off of this small synod from the much larger German Synod marks also the division and proliferation of synods which would characterize Canadian Lutheranism for many decades and which would help delay the denominations' participation in national endeavours such as the social gospel. The Synod of Central Canada did, however, take significant steps to unify Canadian Lutherans, to reach out to other denominations and communities and to diminish the need for American affiliations and German liaisons. Critical actions were the production of the Synod's monthly newspaper, the *Canada Lutheran*, the formation of committees, groups and institutions and the leadership of those with a vision for a national, indigenous Lutheran church in Canada.²⁷

Pertinent at this point is the comparison of its older, more conservative European theological and confessional heritage with the social gospel churches' roots in revivalism and nineteenth century liberalism. Two discernible concepts were formative in the Lutheran attitude of the time. Firstly, the emphasis on the church's message was essentially spiritual. This fostered a Lutheran duty to preach a "pure" or individual gospel. Secondly, the interpretation of the doctrine of the two kingdoms confined the tasks of the church to the spiritual realm, as opposed to the work of the state. Both these concepts were at variance with the "social" emphasis on the gospel being preached by the national churches. Although it is said by some that such a Lutheran concentration on the spiritual side "could not be further from what Luther intended", and Lutherans today repudiate such a reading of the doctrine of the two kingdoms, these concepts influenced leaders of the Synod of Central Canada.²⁸ Nils Willison, editor of the *Canada Lutheran* for seventeen years, informed his readers in 1917 that "One thing was always clear in the mind of Luther and in the Confessions of the church: that the Church and State are two separate spheres". For Lutherans the Kingdom of God on earth would be a Kingdom independent of the state and spiritual in nature. That Willison found this working model unsatisfactory was evidenced in his 1916 editorial on "The Pulpit and Politics". In it he asked how Christians could live consistent lives if they didn't apply religion to politics and how they could discern their Christian duties without guidance from the pulpit.²⁹ The division between pulpit and politics nonetheless continued, as evidenced by Dr. Jacob Maurer in 1926, in response to the mayor of Hamilton's welcome to the Lutheran synod convention. Dr. Maurer, president of the Synod of Central Canada from 1912 to 1925, assured the mayor that the Convention would deal with neither the affairs of running the city, nor the provincial liquor problem, nor Dominion Government petitions; Lutheran attention would be centred solely on "spiritual matters".³⁰ Willison responded to this unnuanced interpretation of Lutheran doctrine and questioned the fine line of demarcation between the function of the church and the state, between the actions of the individual as pastor and as citizen and the role of the religious press in influencing moral change. The state and the church, he suggested, should be of

mutual assistance in bringing about greater peace, justice and opportunity for mankind (sic).³¹

An additional characteristic of the Synod of Central Canada, which paved the way for participation in social gospel and justice issues, was its vision of a national church which could communicate with the rest of the country in the English language.

The basis has been laid to indicate the contrast between this national vision and that of the Methodists and Presbyterians of the day, who had achieved national bureaucratic strength and were pressing for interdenominational union, both of which they considered essential for their national mission. Lutherans were in scattered enclaves, dependent on imported pastors, tied to an American parent body and divided by language. Nonetheless, leaders in the Synod of Central Canada had a fervour for a national church and an enthusiasm for nation building. The front pages of the *Canada Lutheran* were often resplendent with flags, crests and pictures of the reigning monarch—albeit with a more liturgical style and a less Anglo-Saxon emphasis than was the case with Canada's Methodists and Presbyterians.³² Bieber and Willison frequently urged Lutherans on to a strong united English church which would go out to care for the unchurched. This meant, of course, an English speaking Lutheran church which would draw lapsed Lutherans back into the fold, not the social gospellers' vision of an ecumenical body which would change the social environment. Willison proclaimed the Lutheran advantage of being able to minister to newcomers in many languages but admonished them to adapt themselves to the English language for purposes of harmony and "fulness of life in Christ".³³ The spirit of nationalism in Lutherans was on the one hand more inclusive while on the other hand more religiously orthodox than the spirit of the social gospel churches.

A strong example of the young Synod's intentional effort toward ecumenism can be seen in its establishment, by 1910, of a Committee on Moral and Social Reform—an anachronism in Lutheran history, reluctant as Lutherans were to meddle in law and ethical duties. It was such committees in the Presbyterian and Methodist churches which had expanded their bureaucracies, encouraged interdenominational union and formed the Social Service Council of Canada. The Lutheran committee had

tentative beginnings, discouraging the discussion of political matters from the pulpit, but encouraging local congregations to help in social reform movements of the time while maintaining their special mission in the community—their task of preaching a spiritual gospel. By 1912, the committee had joined the anti-Catholic sentiment of other Protestants of the day. It informed its local Member of Parliament and the Ottawa newspapers of the Synod's action against the *Ne Temere* decree. This was a tentative beginning in "talking to the government"—as long as it was about an ecclesiastical matter.³⁴ The following year the committee brought to the Synod's attention the issues of Sunday observance and the naval question, giving only veiled advice on the matters. By 1914 the Lutheran Committee on Moral and Social Reform was more in tune with its social gospel counterparts, proclaiming that the time had arrived when Lutherans should no longer remain silent and inactive about political issues. That was the year of the Social Service Congress, the highwater mark of social gospel development. Pastor J.J. Clemens, chairperson of the committee, had attended the Congress and caught the fervour. He recommended that the Synod join the Social Service Council and that in the upcoming election, members vote for the party in favour of prohibition. Neither of these recommendations was carried. Matters were left to groups and congregations to do as they saw fit.³⁵

This was the last report of the Synod's Committee on Moral and Social Reform. One can only speculate whether its demise was caused by the oncoming war years. Lutherans, along with other bodies, became sidetracked and eventually had to find other ways of relating their theology to their surroundings.

A second response of the Synod of Central Canada to the social gospel was its reaction to the more radical program developing in the Winnipeg area. In 1913 the *Canada Lutheran* published an account of a sermon by Salem Bland, the fiery proponent of radical social principles. In it he denounced the "Modern Christian Church" for wrongly exalting theology and degrading social reconstruction. Clemens, editor of the Lutheran paper, agreed that the church was at times apathetic and that it was the prophet's right to criticize but suggested that the critic who no longer agreed with the church's doctrines and practice should no longer be in the church.³⁶

Lutherans adopted a similar critical stance to the church's involvement in labour problems. The pages of the *Canada Lutheran* warned that "the demands of the dissatisfied labourers are often as arbitrary and inconsiderate as the actions of the employers against whom they are directed". Willison expressed Lutheran confidence that a right preaching of the gospel would result in a sensitive Christian conscience, leading to both fair wages and honest labour.³⁷ In Kitchener, the one growing city where great numbers of Lutherans had settled, no dense working-class ghetto had been created. As the history of St. Peter's Lutheran Church points out, that city had a cozy church-state relationship wherein the two were viewed as allies in a Christian society. The German-Lutheran hegemony withstood the onslaughts of class conflict present in nearby Toronto and Hamilton.³⁸ The Lutheran concept that a pious and industrious citizenship would maintain warm relations between religious life and the workaday world was not so different from the position of early conservative and progressive wings of the social gospel. However, it was markedly distant from the radicals who took a stand with labour against big business interests.

As to the early social gospel concerns for temperance and sabbath observance, it has been seen that the Lutheran Committee on Moral and Social Reform brought both of these to the attention of its constituents. In subsequent years the *Canada Lutheran* reproduced some non-local articles from the Pittsburgh Conference and the Alberta Swedish Synod opposing the manufacture, sale and distribution of alcohol. In the Synod of Central Canada President Maurer in 1915 endorsed a petition to encourage the Women's Christian Temperance Union to fight to discontinue the sale of liquor to Canadian soldiers.³⁹ Similarly, the Synod took a stand against the showing of motion pictures on Sunday. The *Canada Lutheran* stressed the importance of Sabbath rest, warning against the increasing secularization of Sunday and urging readers to adopt a more "spiritual" form of pastime, found in the home, the Sunday School, catechetics and the pulpit.⁴⁰ These scattered responses, however, provided no real Lutheran leadership and no unified response to these two central social gospel concerns.

Martin Marty, in his book *The Lutheran People*, throws light on the unevenness of such responses to moral issues by the

Lutheran people of North America. Except for those Lutherans who had come from Scandinavia or parts of Germany where seventeenth and eighteenth century revivalism and pietism had been strong, the majority of Lutherans accepted the moderate use of alcoholic beverages in their European homes and so never joined temperance forces in their new land. Similarly, in the conviction that recreational enjoyment should go along with spiritual refreshment, Lutherans generally had no qualms about picnics and games following the church service. Both of these attitudes, says Marty, were sometimes disturbing to pietistic Protestants at that time.⁴¹

Although the Synod of Central Canada discontinued its Committee on Moral and Social Reform in 1914, it was at the same time developing the Inner Mission Committee, a concept acquired from the Synod's German heritage and its American administrative structure. Even that administrative structure wrestled with Lutheran principles on the task of the church. The Superintendent of Inner Missions of the Buffalo Synod, in the pages of the *Canada Lutheran*, cautioned that the social aim of the church in combatting evil was always subordinate to the spiritual. While social gospel programs did include both goals, Lutherans were firm in their intention not to make the perceived shift to the social emphasis. Superintendent Krumweide did recommend two ways in which the church should become more available for the alleviation of urban distress: church doors should be opened with a ministry of prayer and friendship; lay and diaconal volunteers should be trained to carry out its work in society. Lutherans would not become merely an agent for social change but would first of all bring faith through Word and Sacrament and spiritual education.⁴²

It was the subcommittee on Port and Immigration Work which carried the main thrust of the Inner Mission task. Working with a corresponding committee from the Women's Missionary Society, this group attempted, between 1913 and 1926, to establish a Lutheran Seaman's Mission and Hospice in Montreal. Although co-operation was sought from their own Synod, the Canada Synod, the Nova Scotia Synod and the General Council (later United Lutheran Church in America), the project never came to fruition. Their efforts, however, did lead to a point of contact with the social gospel program, through "women's work".

The Women's Missionary Society of the Synod of Central Canada formed in 1909 with ties to the American Society, itself a kaleidoscopic group of several ethnic bodies. In Canada, the women of the larger German Synod had remained with the Ladies' Aid Societies which existed primarily to support local churches' needs. The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society organized and expanded its work to include home and foreign missions, filling the desperate needs the church was called on to answer before the days of social welfare. Lutheran women often enhanced the transition from German to English in their congregations.⁴³ Unlike their social gospel counterparts, the Lutheran women were a small, scattered group compared with the former's powerful national administration and communication links. To their great credit, they undauntedly worked with those larger groups in the church's task with newcomers, co-operating with the government to establish a Protestant Employment Bureau for immigrant girls. This led to the establishment by 1915 of the Dorchester Home in Montreal. Lutheran women continued to support this home even though allocations to the Synod's Inner Mission Committee were being saved for the still "hoped for" Lutheran Seaman's Home and Hospice. By 1926 a Lutheran port worker, the Rev. Otto Klaehn, was appointed to work in Montreal with European immigrants, and the women were pressing for a Lutheran deaconess to assist him.⁴⁴ Their persistent efforts over the years to have a Lutheran deaconess working alongside other deaconesses in the Dorchester Home had been hampered by lack of funds and lack of commitment from the synods and from the American parent church.⁴⁵ Despite their genuine concern for the needy and their promising ecumenical spirit, their work was limited by their small size and disappointing support.

Just as the social gospel denominations also utilized the energy of youth groups to forward their goals, so the Synod of Central Canada enlisted its youth group, the Luther League, in promoting the mission of the Lutheran church. Begun in 1908, using American study guides, by 1919 the Central Canada Luther League moved to its own program presentations. These carefully crafted lessons were printed regularly in the *Canada Lutheran*. They portray an aim which was similar to that of the early Epworth League and conservative social gospel teaching—character-building moral development. Their

preparation for leadership included lessons on Lutheran doctrine, the meaning of justification, the effect of confirmation. While Presbyterian and Methodist youth were introduced to the progressive and radical message of change and transformation, Lutheran youth were encouraged to be faithful, gospel-centred church-goers, preserving social and political equilibrium. In the realm of labour relations, they were admonished that strikes caused suffering and bitterness; the Lutheran sense of the divine ordinance of the world of work would produce harmony for worker and employer.⁴⁶ In the final analysis, the value of the League must have been to provide fellowship in the English language and opportunity for the young Lutherans to learn about their church. The strong leadership emphasis on church membership and doctrine reflected the primarily evangelical mission of the church.

Finally, the Lutheran attitude toward the role of the Christian makes the practice of "charitable work" more familiar than the role of transforming society. Charitable work is classified theologically in the category of "faith active in love". In their liturgy Lutherans are reminded constantly that they have been saved through the redemptive act of Christ, freed to live for their neighbour. In this spirit, both the English and German Synods in Ontario supported the Bethany Orphan's Home near Bridgewater, Nova Scotia.⁴⁷ This "good work" was a project of the Nova Scotia Synod. It existed from 1901 to 1914, a reflection of longstanding Lutheran interest in orphanages as part of the denomination's social and religious growth.⁴⁸

Other charitable work is recorded in *Canada Lutheran* articles and congregational histories. Generous were the contributions to the religious and social life in individual communities, much of it directed internally as Lutherans established their presence by building and expanding their worship facilities.⁴⁹ St. Peter's Lutheran Church in Kitchener provides an example of how Lutheran efforts gradually spilled out into the community. With the coming of the young Pastor Oberlander to that parish in 1905, community leadership moved from one of cultural endeavours to issues of social charity, especially in hospital and local health concerns.⁵⁰ While Lutherans could be Good Samaritans, they did not generally see themselves as transforming society.⁵¹ On the other hand, as they built new churches and looked after their own and as both English and

German-speaking Lutherans were considered good hardworking citizens, not forming part of urban slum settings, they did not become part of the social gospel focus on recent immigrants.

All of the foregoing considerations of Lutheran response to social gospel issues have provided an indication of the denomination's own interests during the first quarter of the twentieth century, reflecting a gap of several decades between Lutheran national development and that of the social gospel churches. The Synod of Central Canada directed its energy to that development, pressing always for increasing co-operation with the Canada Synod. Much of that development has been well-documented and is well-known to Lutherans.⁵²

Because the growth of the Lutheran church in Canada depended on immigration it was in a sense closer to newcomers than were the Anglo-Saxon social gospellers. Lutherans reached out to newcomers by building churches, a task carried out under the aegis of the prominent Home Mission Committee. It was the American Home Missions who sent M.J. Bieber to develop English congregations and who also sponsored German Home Mission development. The motivation was evangelical and denominational rather than social and ecumenical, but it was in these parishes, increasingly in urban settings, that Lutherans did most of their community work.⁵³

Key to providing their spiritual message and promoting a national vision was the establishment of a Lutheran seminary in Canada. The development of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary is important in this investigation for being the example *par excellence* of the real interests of Canadian Lutherans in the early part of the century and for providing contrasts with the churches of the social gospel. Clergy, laity, organizations and individuals poured their energy and finances into the support of their seminary, which produced its first graduate in 1914.⁵⁴ The early years of the seminary were characterized by a strong orthodoxy and doctrinal Lutheranism, compared with the liberal teaching and social tendencies of their ecumenical counterparts. Lutheran emphasis on the spiritualized interpretation of the prophetic messages of the Old Testament being actualized in the coming of the Redeemer prevented for them the social justice application which social gospel proclaimers found in such messages.⁵⁵

The *Canada Lutheran* was instrumental in bridging the gap between a scattered ethnic church dependent on American leadership and a Canadian church with a national voice. While social gospel churches had long since had well-organized and -financed national presses, the Synod of Central Canada regularly published its paper through the efforts of overworked, isolated individuals without benefit of a publishing house, a synodical office or a fulltime executive. The communication links this paper provided among its own Synod members, the Canada Synod, the Nova Scotia Synod and other synods in the west were crucial to the establishment of a Lutheran presence on Canadian soil.

Further draining the energy of Ontario Lutherans in the first decades of this century were their efforts toward internal union, a process already accomplished by social gospel churches. Marked by differences in ethnic background, doctrine and piety, Canadian Lutherans presented a confusing picture.⁵⁶ The Synod of Central Canada championed two mergers between 1908 and 1925. The first was the merger in 1918 of the parent body, the General Council, with other American synods, to form the United Lutheran Church in America (ULCA). The second was its own merger in 1925 with the Canada Synod which also had visionary leaders who laboured for a more unified presence on Canadian soil.⁵⁷ Although strengthened inner unity initially helped Lutherans to stand apart from the programs of other churches, in the longer historical view it contributed to their Canadian identity and ecumenical co-operation.

As noted throughout this paper, the Synod of Central Canada also championed the use of the English language as part of its national vision.⁵⁸ The use of the German language among Lutherans was one of the crucial factors leading to the traumatic experience of that denomination during World War I—the sudden change of mood of Canadians and “the utter lack of reason behind it all”.⁵⁹ The anguish was most pronounced in the Canada Synod, and especially in the core city whose name was changed from Berlin to Kitchener.⁶⁰ The *Canada Lutheran* refrained from reporting the more painful experiences taking place but expressed Lutheran obligation to the country and the Empire, maintaining its role as spiritual guide and loyal citizen.⁶¹ Despite the turmoil, the war helped Lutherans come

to a better understanding of who they were, hastened the use of English in their midst⁶² and encouraged them to work together and reach beyond the doors of their church. In 1918 a cooperative of many Canadian Synods and the National Lutheran Commission (U.S.) formed the Canadian Committee for Soldiers and Sailors Welfare. A chaplain was appointed to represent the Canadian Lutheran Church overseas, and Lutheran pastors were designated to serve in Canadian military hospitals. Lutheran Commissioners joined other denominations in relief work in Europe. The Canadian Lutheran Immigration Board was formed in 1924 and in 1926 placed an Immigrant Chaplain in Montreal.⁶³

On the long voyage from scattered immigrant beginnings at the start of the century, buoyed by a strong Lutheran heritage, the Synod of Central Canada from 1908 to 1925 was instrumental in forming a Canadian Lutheran identity. While interpreting its theological and doctrinal heritage, it helped shape a church which sought to be true to its traditional calling to preach a spiritual gospel. Pouring its energy into the unifying of Lutheranism on Canadian soil, it made limited but significant points of contact with its Protestant neighbours who were riding the crest of the social gospel. In the process of addressing the changing needs of Lutherans in Canadian society, it charted a course for a denomination which today is committed to social justice.

Notes

- ¹ In a brief paper, only contours of this study can be given. The reader who wishes to become acquainted with the fuller investigation is referred to the writer's M.T.S. thesis. Elaine Scott-Thomas, "The Lutheran Church and the Social Gospel: The Response of the Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Central Canada 1908-1925" (M.T.S. Thesis, Queen's Theological College, 1993).
- ² Robert T. Handy, ed., *The Social Gospel in America 1870-1920* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1966) 3-5.
- ³ Richard Allen, "The Social Gospel and the Reform Tradition in Canada, 1890-1928," *The Canadian Historical Review*, 49:4 (December 1968) 384.
- ⁴ Handy, *Social Gospel in America*, 11-13.
- ⁵ Robert T. Handy, *A History of the Churches in the United States and Canada* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) 360-361.

- 6 Richard Allen, "The Background of the Social Gospel in Canada," in *Interdisciplinary Conference on the Social Gospel in Canada*, ed. R. Allen (Ottawa: National Museum of Man Mercury Series, 1975) 19-34.
- 7 Richard Allen, *The Social Passion: Religious and Social Reform in Canada 1914-1928* (University of Toronto Press, 1971; paperback reprint, University of Toronto Press, 1990) 17; Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 16-17.
- 8 Brian J. Fraser, *The Social Uplifters; Presbyterian Progressives and the Social Gospel in Canada, 1875-1915* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988) xiii; Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 17-18.
- 9 W.H. Magney, "The Methodist Church and the National Gospel," *The Bulletin* (Committee on Archives of the United Church of Canada) 22, 25-28, 33; Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 19-20.
- 10 Brian Fraser characterizes the Presbyterian development as progressive compared with the more conservative pattern described for the Methodists. See his *Social Uplifters* previously cited.
- 11 Fraser, *Social Uplifters*, 23, 32.
- 12 Ibid. 34; see also Magney, "Methodist Church and National Gospel".
- 13 Richard Allen describes the scene at this Congress in *Social Passion*, 20ff; see also his *Interdisciplinary Conference*, ed. R. Allen.
- 14 Allen, *Social Passion*, 252-253.
- 15 John D. Thomas, "Servants of the Church: Canadian Methodist Deaconess Work, 1890-1926," *Canadian Historical Review* 65:3 (September 1984) 374.
- 16 Ibid. 371, 374, 379, 388. By the 1920s Methodist diaconal ranks were dwindling, partly due to the effects of the social gospel itself in opening up many more enticing roles for women in the expanding secular social service field.
- 17 Allen, *Social Passion*, 43-49, 59-61.
- 18 The reader can get a larger picture of this development of groups and societies by referring to *An Interdisciplinary Conference*, ed. R. Allen. See especially his "Background of the Social Gospel," 13-18.
- 19 See Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 23-25 and references.
- 20 Allen, *Social Passion*, 26, 40, 339; and "Background of Social Gospel," in *Interdisciplinary Conference*, ed. R. Allen, 13-14.
- 21 Allen, *Social Passion*, 213-214, 219-224.
- 22 Gerhard P. Bassler, *The German Mosaic Today and Yesterday* (Ottawa: German-Canadian Congress, 1991) 128-134; Carl C. Cronmiller, *A History of the Lutheran Church in Canada* (Kitchener: The Evangelical Lutheran Synod of Canada, 1961) 73-100, 54-55, 58; Erich R.W. Schultz, "Early Lutherans in America," in *A Time for Building: Essays on Lutherans in Canada*, Barton Beglo, ed. (Kitchener: St. Mark's Press, 1988) 5-6; K. Vanderbaaren, *St. John's Church Riverside Heights: 200 Years* (Riverside Heights: Printed by E.O.G.L.) 13-18, 63.

- 23 Cronmiller, *Lutheran Church in Canada*, 82-100.
- 24 Bassler, *German Mosaic*, 105-109, 122-125; Cronmiller, *Lutheran Church in Canada*, 108-123, 150-158; Brenda Lee-Whiting, *Harvest of Stones: The German Settlement in Renfrew County* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1985) 3-30.
- 25 Oscar L. Arnal, *Heeding the Call: St. Peter's Lutheran Church 1863-1988* (Kitchener: St. Peter's Lutheran Church, 1989), 1-6; Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 30-33.
- 26 Schultz, "Early Lutheranism in Ontario," 6-9; Cronmiller, *Lutheran Church in Canada*, 195-200.
- 27 For further discussion on these developments and people, see Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 40-46.
- 28 Welf H. Heick, "The Lutherans of Waterloo County, Ontario, 1850-1959" (M.A. Thesis, Queen's University, 1959) 168, 191-192, 13, note; Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 47-50 and end-notes.
- 29 *Canada Lutheran*, August 1916, 4; June 1917, 2.
- 30 *Canada Lutheran*, July 1926, 4.
- 31 *Canada Lutheran*, July 1926, 4-5.
- 32 *Canada Lutheran*, May 1916, June 1916; July 1917.
- 33 *Canada Lutheran*, March 1915, 2-3; April 1915, 13; November 1924, 1.
- 34 *ELSCC Minutes*, 1912, 40.
- 35 *ELSCC Minutes*, 1913, 48-49 and 1914, 39-40; *Canada Lutheran*, July 1913, 12-14 and July 1914, 12-14.
- 36 *Canada Lutheran*, September 1913, 4-5.
- 37 Allen, *Social Passion*, 24-28, 81-103; *Canada Lutheran*, September 1916, 4; August 1920, 6; October 1920, 8; May 1921, 6; September 1923, 4; November 1926, 13; Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 61-63.
- 38 Arnal, *Heeding the Call*, 7-10, 33-34.
- 39 *Canada Lutheran*, April 1915, 11-12; May 1915, 5; September 1915, 5; August 1916, 3; March 1923, 2; September 1923, 3.
- 40 *Canada Lutheran*, February 1913, 11; July 1913, 12-14; October 1922, 6.
- 41 Martin Marty, *The Lutheran People* (Royal Oak, MI: Cathedral, 1973) 14-15.
- 42 *Canada Lutheran*, April 1916, 14; December 1916, 14-15; January 1917, 14-15.
- 43 Lani L. Johnson, *Led By the Spirit: A History of Lutheran Church Women*, a brochure provided by Mrs. K. Knauff. Also "Evangelical Lutheran Women" in *A Church of Christ for Every Age* (Waterloo: St. John's Lutheran Church, 1987).
- 44 *Anniversary Album* (Kitchener: United Lutheran Church Women, Canada Synod, 1958); *Canada Lutheran*, May 1915, 14; August 1916, 12; January 1921, 9; December 1922, 10; June 1920, 10; June 1924, 7; June 1925, 6.

- 45 For an account of the development of the deaconess movement see Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 73-75.
- 46 Luther League topics appear in the *Canada Lutheran* from September 1919 and throughout the period under study. For topics dealing with church-state relations and social implications see especially November 1919, 13; November 1920, 13; August 1923, 13; March 1925, 10; October 1913, 13-15. For labour relations see September 1919, 13; October 1919, 15; July 1920, 9; June 1921, 11-12; June 1925, 9.
- 47 *Canada Lutheran*, April 1913, 1, 7; Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 78-79.
- 48 *Canada Lutheran*, May 1916, 2-3; August 1921, 12-13.
- 49 Cronmiller, *Lutheran Church in Canada*, 192; *Canada Lutheran*. June 1919; July 1920, 6; February 1923, 12; *ELSCC Minutes*, 1917, 2-3.
- 50 Arnal, *Heeding the Call*, 20-25.
- 51 Marty, *Lutheran People*, 28-31.
- 52 See for example Cronmiller's *Lutheran Church in Canada*; Oscar L. Arnal, *Toward an Indigenous Lutheran Ministry in Canada: The Seventy-Five Year Pilgrimage of Waterloo Lutheran Seminary (1911-1986)* (Waterloo: Waterloo Lutheran Seminary, 1988); *A Time for Building*, ed. B. Beglo.
- 53 Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 85-89 with notes including interviews with the Reverends Erich Schultz and Roy Grosz, and *Canada Lutheran* references.
- 54 This history is adequately and sympathetically recorded by Arnal in *Toward an Indigenous Lutheran Ministry in Canada*.
- 55 Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 90-93.
- 56 See Notes 21, 22 and 23 with *Canada Lutheran* references in Scott-Thomas, "Lutheran Church and Social Gospel," 129.
- 57 See Willison's articles in *Canada Lutheran*, June 1916, 4.
- 58 Heick, "Lutherans of Waterloo County," 119.
- 59 Welf H. Heick, "The Lutherans of Waterloo County During World War I," *Journal of Waterloo Historical Society* 50 (1962); W.R. Chadwick, *The Battle for Berlin: An Historical Drama* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1992).
- 60 *Canada Lutheran*, December 1914, 2; January 1915, 13; August 1915, 13; June 1916, 14-16.
- 61 Heick, "Lutherans of Waterloo County," 130-136.
- 62 *Canada Lutheran*, April 1919, 9; July 1918, 6-9.
- 63 *ELSCC Minutes* (1918), 10; *Canada Lutheran*, July 1918, 6-9; Cronmiller, *Lutheran Church in Canada*, 233.