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Repentance and Hope: A Missional Appreciation and Appraisal of LCMS Educational Institutions for Training Black Church Workers

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Abstract: The Synodical Conference rightly understood the necessity of training Black workers to engage in missionary efforts throughout the South. This article seeks to investigate the genesis of those missionary endeavors as well as the foundation and dissolution of Luther College in New Orleans, Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary in Greensboro, and Concordia College Alabama in Selma. Furthermore, it aims to assess the strengths and weakness of the mission and its attempts at training and empowering Black workers for the mission. Finally, it will suggest ways this history can help shape present understandings of mission and theological education.

Another Jewel Lost

On April 28, 2018, one hundred forty-seven students received their degrees from Concordia College in Selma, Alabama. Those students would be the final graduating class. In February of that same year, the college announced that it would be closing despite heroic efforts to keep the community afloat. In the midst of the closing, Lloyd Probasco, chairman of the Board of Regents, noted, "It's not just an educational institution. . . . It's a mission . . . and a jewel that unfortunately the church is losing, and I am sad about that."[1] Of course, Concordia College Alabama was not the first jewel of an institution connected to the mission of the church that was lost—it was just the latest, at that point. Luther College in New Orleans, LA, and Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary in Greensboro, NC, were Concordia's forebears in more ways than one. All three institutions grew out of the mission efforts of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America, a federation of conservative

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Lutheran church bodies in the United States which included and was strongly influenced by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The Synodical Conference was only five years old in 1877 when its Mission Board began attempts to reach Black communities in the South with the gospel. Nearly one hundred years later the conference would be dissolved. Prior to its dissolution in 1967, most of the congregations, workers, and schools, including the last remaining educational institution dedicated to the training of workers, had become part of the LCMS. In short, the story of the Synodical Conference's mission efforts is in large part that of the Missouri Synod's mission efforts to reach Black communities.

The legacy of mission to Black communities is one that inspires and scandalizes. This should not, however, be a surprising statement; history often does inspire and scandalize. F. Dean Lueking put it best.

> History is meant to lead Christians to repentance and hope rather than self-satisfaction as they reflect upon their past. The reason for looking back over the missionary enterprise of Missouri Synod Lutherans is neither to glorify nor to debunk the past. Rather, it is to understand it.[2]

Lueking's point is simply that although historical inquiry can lead to an inflation or deflation of reverence for the past, it does not need to. Rather, historical inquiry can and must approach the past in an effort to genuinely understand it. That does not necessitate sitting in judgment over and against the past, but it does mean that historians must engage in a critical inquiry. Such an inquiry does not necessarily lead to triumphalist acceptance or knee-jerk opposition. Rather, it should lead to repentance and hope. The history recounted below does not shy away from assessing racist assumptions and perspectives evident personally and institutionally in missionary endeavors to Black communities. Racist assumptions and perspectives are problematic no matter the age—they must be reckoned with rather than avoided or downplayed. At no point, however, is the recounting of such things an approval of them. We must acknowledge them, repent of them where we can, and learn from them in order that we might not, intentionally or unintentionally, continue to support them.

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It is impossible to condense the history of mission to Black communities into a few thousand words. This article attempts, however, to set the history of theological education for Black communities in the Missouri Synod within the broader context of that Synodical Conference mission. We begin with an overview of the Synodical Conference mission efforts with an overview of Luther College, Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary, and Concordia College Alabama.

Following that overview, the inquiry will proceed along three interconnected realities of the establishment and closure of those institutions. First, the establishment of educational institutions happened because of the recognition of the need for local workers. Second, those institutions functioned as outposts for mission endeavors. Third, the ultimate closure of those institutions resulted from a shift in the perception of their necessity prompted by a broader societal change.

The mission efforts were indeed laudable but the spirit of paternalism, an obvious lack of resources, and a perspective on integration better understood as assimilation stifled the development of theological educational institutions for Black workers in the Missouri Synod. It also reinforced within the broader church body problematic cultural assumptions. Understanding this past has implications for mission and theological education today. Those implications include recognizing the value of having workers indigenous to the community engaged in mission work. Moreover, those workers must be provided space to shape not only the endeavors in which they are engaged but also the church body as a whole. Furthermore, institutions for the training of workers have value beyond pragmatic concerns. Finally, the church should be leading, not following, societal impulses. Ultimately, the aim of this investigation is to understand the history of Black theological educational institutions to embrace the opportunity for repentance and hope, not in order to be judgmental or dismissive.

The Mission to the "Heathen" Begins

The Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America discussed in its July 1877 convention "whether it was not the time for the Synodical Conference to devote attention to heathen missions and bring into being a mission among the Negroes or Indians."[3] Precisely why Blacks were favored as the focus of missionary efforts remains unclear.[4] Lueking suggests that oceanic travel costs and painful memories of previous attempts at mission elsewhere gave perspective and direction to the conversation.[5] What is clear, however, is that the decision to engage in these missionary efforts was not solely because of a desire to spread the gospel to Blacks specifically. "If we make no use of the desire of our Lutheran Christians to do something for heathen missions, they will surely apply their money where we would not like to see it go. For the missionary societies of Germany, just as the State Church, take an increasingly hostile attitude toward us. For that reason we cannot for conscience' sake support them anymore."[6] Lutherans in the Synodical Conference could not abide funds from their constituents to be spent by those outside the conference.

As a result of the decision to pursue missionary efforts among Black communities, the Synodical Conference elected a three-man mission board to spearhead the effort. In October of 1877, the board chose a missionary, Rev. John F. Doescher, to travel the southern states and assess opportunities for mission. Doescher visited Missouri,

Arkansas, Tennessee, Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Georgia, and Florida with some extended stay in Little Rock and New Orleans. He interacted with Black pastors in the area, preached in local congregations, many of which were not Lutheran, let alone Missouri Synod, and established a few Sunday school outposts.[7] Doescher also suggested that the Synodical Conference establish an institution for theological education in Florida, a suggestion that went unheeded.[8] Although Doescher's tenure as missionary ended acrimoniously, no doubt because of his willingness to preach in congregations outside of the Lutheran tradition, the mission did not stop.[9]

Doescher was replaced by Rev. Friedrich Berg, a recent graduate of Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. Berg was directed to consolidate efforts begun by Doescher in Little Rock. The differences between the two men went beyond the question of altar and pulpit fellowship. "Unlike Doescher, who refused to lump all non-Lutherans in the category of the hopeless, Berg could find no sign of serious Christian belief and life among the 6,000 Negroes of Little Rock."[10] Moreover, Berg's description of daily school life among that Black community is far less than charitable.

> At 8:30 the bell rings and a troop of darkies storms in and begins to make the most scandalous racket. One or the other immediately comes with a complaint about clothing torn either in play or as the result of a thrashing. They often crowd around my desk by the dozen to tell me something trifling and pull at my books. Then at 9 o'clock school begins. All make a lunge, not for their seats, but for the water bucket. After 10 minutes all are finally seated but not until I have roared at them like a lion, thundered out threats at them and soundly thrashed a few. . . . The cane must be raised high. It whistles through the air, landing on the lazy, stupid churl.[11]

Berg's narration suggests at the very least a disdain for those he was called to serve. While the translation might not be the most flattering, and therefore not wholly reflective of Berg's perspective, e.g., the use of the term "darkies," the thrust of it betrays a lack of empathy.[12] The pupils are portrayed as raucous, disheveled, and in need of constant discipline.

Berg's account should not be surprising as it seems to be a common, though not necessarily ubiquitous, attitude among some Lutherans at the time. Notice the term used above by the Synodical Conference, mission to Blacks was a mission to the "heathen." There was no recognition of religious life already in existence in the South. Moreover, on the eve of the 1877 convention which initiated mission efforts to Black communities in the United States, Ferdinand Sievers published an editorial in *Der Lutheraner* in which he states that Black society, "though freed from outward slavery is still in the service of sin and threatens to go down to destruction."[13] Rosa Young's own discussion of her community is also a dire one.[14] More than one account from Young suggests that there was tremendous need among her uneducated and impoverished community both physically and spiritually.[15] The expressed need,

however, does not necessitate the disparaging and dehumanizing attitude exemplified in remarks by Berg and Sievers. Indeed, in the accounts connected to the mission of the Synodical Conference we can often detect condescension, if not outright disgust. Lueking considers Berg's account (given above) to be "enough to suggest that it would be several generations before native leadership could be expected."[16]

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From the start the Mission Board hoped to raise up leaders from within the communities to extend the mission work begun by missionary clergy.[17] Early on, and indeed until 1903, very few local leaders were trained formally at institutions connected with the Synodical Conference.[18] Immanuel Lutheran College began in Concord, North Carolina, in March of 1903 at the behest of the Immanuel Lutheran Conference, an association of white and Black mission workers in North Carolina. A new campus was developed in 1905 thanks to land that had been purchased in Greensboro. Once construction was completed in 1907, a dedication service was held. Immanuel would remain in Greensboro until its closure in 1961. Throughout its tenure, Immanuel offered high school, normal school, and theological education to students.[19] While many students were Lutheran, in 1906 Immanuel allowed its first non-Lutheran contingent of students. By 1920, enrollment climbed to one hundred students and a desperate plea for more room was made to the Synodical Conference.[20] A lack of adequate facilities would plague Immanuel throughout its existence. As George Gude has demonstrated, Immanuel failed to survive not only because of a lack of funding but also repeated questions as to the nature and value of its existence.[21] These discussions included an attempt in 1936 to close the theological department at Immanuel, an attempt that was rebuffed in part by the 1937 Missouri Synod Board of Directors' decision. The closure discussions resumed in 1944 when the Synodical Conference passed a resolution declaring that

> we have come to the firm conviction that we can no longer justify the continuance of Immanuel Lutheran College at Greensboro, North Carolina. We therefore recommend that Immanuel Lutheran College at Greensboro, North Carolina, be closed; that the properties be ordered sold; that the necessary steps be taken to provide for the instructors in brotherly love.[22]

Despite this resolution, Immanuel would remain open until its ultimate closure in 1961. A lack of resources and enrollment coupled with an eye toward integration prevalent in some parts of the country would be the official reasons for its demise. The Synodical Conference hoped that the students would be able to be admitted to

existing synodical institutions wherever possible.[23] That hope, however, does not seem to have come to fruition.

Luther College in New Orleans was established a few months after Immanuel in September 1903. It, too, had a high school, normal school, and theological school under its auspices. In 1908 the theological department was closed, and the students were directed to Immanuel College in Greensboro to complete their theological education. Luther College did not achieve even the longevity of Immanuel or Concordia College Alabama but that was not due to a lack of effort. The level of instruction would vacillate between high school level, a normal school, and as a preparatory school for Immanuel. None of the efforts to establish viable levels of education would produce the results needed to maintain operation, but for their efforts Luther College should be lauded. George Gude cites two reasons for Luther's closure: a lack of resources and a lack of enrollment.[24] He concurs with Dickinson's assessment:

> There was no Lutheran constituency in New Orleans large enough to support a Lutheran secondary school, college, and seminary. . . . The day school enrollment looked promising, but this was quite deceiving. Day schools may survive with a heavy non-Lutheran enrollment, which was the case in New Orleans, but colleges and seminaries must survive on dedicated Lutherans who are training for fulltime work for the Lord in His church.[25]

Luther College survived in some form or another until 1932 when it transitioned into an elementary school, which closed in 1968.

Concordia College Alabama began in 1916 in Selma, Alabama, as a result of mission efforts in the area, especially by Rosa Young. Her efforts led to the establishment of no fewer than thirty schools and thirty-five congregations in Alabama.[26] That expansion of Lutheran day schools supported the need for a high school and normal school.[27] Eventually, during the Great Depression, the level of instruction would be reduced to eighth and ninth grade only for girls as a preparatory school for Immanuel College. By 1946 Concordia had restored both its full high school and normal school levels. Ten years later, Concordia would need to expand in order to support the student body.

Gude has suggested that Concordia College was able to thrive as it did during the same era in which Luther College and Immanuel College closed because of a group of Black Lutherans' investment in higher education.[28] Some of the faculty, students, and staff of what was at one time known as Alabama Lutheran Academy and College played vital roles in the struggle for Civil Rights in Selma. James Gildersleeve and Ulysses Blackmon are rightly the two most famous names because of their connection to the Dallas County Voters League. They were not, however, the only ones who would participate in demonstrations, attend meetings, and march on Bloody Sunday in defiance of the administration.

It is difficult to fathom the loss that occurred in 2018 when Concordia College held its final commencement despite heroic efforts on the part of the Board of Regents, faculty, and staff to keep it open. The official version of Concordia's closure names once again a lack of enrollment and financial concerns as the reasons for its eventual demise. Concordia College Alabama, like Luther and Immanuel, was truly a jewel not only because of the value it provided to its community, serving as a high school and college for an underserved community, but also because it enriched the life of the church body of which it was a part.

The exploration above of the establishment of mission work among Blacks in the South and the founding of institutions to meet the need of training workers is necessarily brief. In establishing that mission, the Synodical Conference began to engage in efforts aimed at gospel proclamation and the uplifting of a community. Practically, this entailed working with those who had been denied the opportunity to be literate or whose education had been stifled due to a lack of publicly accessible educational resources.

The establishment of Lutheran schools was one of the main ways by which the mission flourished in the South.[29] Indeed, Rosa Young's autobiography, *Light in the Dark Belt*, explains the need and value of those schools for Black communities not only in Alabama but throughout the South. Many schools predated the founding of a congregation.[30] Without the schoolteachers and clergy, those schools could not have functioned. The goal in retelling this history is to provide a broader context for the discussion that follows.

Training Workers for Their Field

It is clear that the Synodical Conference recognized at the outset the need for Black workers in mission to the Black community. This is also the first point worth noting when considering the establishment of institutions for the training of Black workers. The question is, however, why were separate institutions necessary? When Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary was founded in 1903, there were in existence in the LCMS two seminaries for the training of pastors as well as two LCMS educational institutions for the training of teachers.[31] Moreover, as late as 1902, eight Black students were in attendance at Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, with three others at the Lutheran Teacher's [sic] Seminary in New Ulm, Minnesota.[32] Richard Dickinson provides insight into the experience of those students, experience which in part necessitated the founding of separate institutions.

> It is clear that it was difficult for Black students, from the racial caste system of the South, to assimilate easily and to relate comfortably in a racially integrated setting; but they did. It was even more difficult for those young people, who could barely speak good English, to quickly learn to converse

> and to learn their lesson assignments, assignments taught in German. They accepted the challenge and soon were masters of the situation.[33]

Although integration into the existing Synodical Conference schools presented a challenge, Dickinson argues that those students met and conquered it. It may indeed have been difficult to adjust to new societal norms and instruction in a foreign tongue, but the students did it.

What changed? In 1896 the Supreme Court of the United States handed down the infamous *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision which enshrined the doctrine of separate but equal. This decision impacted the entire country, especially the South, as segregation became legally defensible. Again Dickinson offers insight.

> All over the nation, in the South in particular, the rush was on to separate the facilities and services rendered for the races. The Evangelical Synodical Conference of North America could not resist the swelling tide for long. When the Reverend Calvin P. Thompson, of Louisiana, was on his way to catch the train for Springfield, he was stopped and told to stay in New Orleans. A seminary would be organized in that city for the Black students who wanted to go into the ministry of [the] Synodical Conference.[34]

The legal status of segregation opened the doors for its enshrinement in the educational institutions of the Synodical Conference. Soon after the decision was handed down, there was a call to establish at least one institution in the South to train Black workers.[35]

Dickinson's assessment above is confirmed by a study of the founding of Immanuel Lutheran College and Seminary. The last president of Immanuel Lutheran College, William H. Kampschmidt, prepared an article for *The Journal of Negro Education* entitled, "Why the Evangelical Lutheran Church Established and Maintains a College for Negroes?" In it he recounts no fewer than fourteen reasons why an educational institution like Immanuel was necessary for Black mission work. It is not feasible to enumerate with specificity all fourteen reasons within this work, but they are worth highlighting in part.

The first reason listed is the most important, "The number of white Christians willing to serve as missionaries and teachers among Negroes is acutely meagre."[36] For Black mission work to be possible, workers were necessary. If White Christians were not willing, Black ones would be.

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Reasons two through eight were rooted in the assumption that Black workers not only would be more familiar with the lived reality of Black communities, but they would also have an easier time acclimating to communities and gaining the trust of people within those communities.[37] It also noted

the difficult racial tensions in existence during the formation of Immanuel in 1902.

The ninth reason given states, "It would cost the Church less to use only Negro pastors and teachers, and this would not impair the work if the 'right kind' of Negroes were properly prepared and trained. It was contended that Negroes can and do live cheaper than a white man primarily because the cost for housing, food, clothing, auxiliaries, etc. is less."[38] Perhaps that was merely pragmatic, as it was hoped that by using Black pastors congregations would be able to be self-supporting sooner rather than later.[39] It is difficult, though, not to see the highly offensive legacy of economic racism at play.

Reasons ten through thirteen argue that the costs of establishing institutions in the South would be considerably less and that those institutions would be able to be structured in such a way as to produce workers at a quick pace and avoid intimidating prospective students by lessening the "rigor" of the curriculum.[40]

The last reason given by Kampschmidt for the establishment of Immanuel deserves to be read in full:

> It was deemed of the greatest importance that Negro students live and associate with people of their own race for psychological reasons. Tensions would be reduced, race consciousness would not develop so readily, differences of opinion could be settled more amicably, common problems would be lessened, lines of demarcation would be eliminated, and in general the life and atmosphere of such an institution would be more congenial and wholesome and everyone would be more normal and happier.[41]

It should be noted that for Kampschmidt to make the statement does not mean he believed it; he was relaying the reasons given at the inception of Immanuel not establishing them. However, for anyone to state the above and mean it is to embrace the idea that Blacks and whites live better apart than they do together, which affirms in some way the value of segregation.

Lest one gets the idea that this was only a statement made in isolation with regard to the beginning of Immanuel, a 1937 decision by the Board of Directors of the Missouri Synod affirmed that Immanuel was necessary for this expressed purpose. "We would advise against the arrangement of opening our colleges to colored students and therefore the closing of the Greensboro college would be out of the question as long as no other provisions are made for the training of colored workers."[42] The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod embraced segregationist attitudes prevalent in American society.[43] In fact, the Board of Directors upheld their problematic decision

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one year later by "barring all negro students from Synod's preparatory schools, colleges, and seminaries."[44]

While the Synodical Conference should be commended for their recognition of the need for Black workers, the reasons given above for the establishment of Immanuel, coupled with the embrace of segregationist attitudes, demonstrate a deficient understanding of the value of the Black worker. This is no more apparent than in the system of supervision set up by the Synodical Conference.

Richard Dickinson, among others, has argued convincingly that the system of supervision set up by the Mission Board became an insurmountable hindrance to work among Black communities. "If there is any key to understanding why Black work has encountered the problems it has, then that key lies in the refusal to allow local churchmen to judge what is best for their area. The imposition of white control stifled Black work almost from its inception."[45] Black workers would not be trusted to judge the needs of their community.[46] (A description and analysis of what this supervision amounted to in practice is beyond the scope of this work. It does, however, need to be noted that in practice, if not also in theory, mission to Black communities was paternalistic in spirit.)

White supervisors severely restricted Black workers and created an environment in which Black workers were subjugated as opposed to liberated or empowered. Richard C. Dickinson has marshalled account after account of that paternalism in action in his work *Roses and Thorns*.[47] This is not a small point and is absolutely integral for understanding the theological education institutions connected with that mission.

It would be more than unfair not to note, however, that despite the paternalism and segregationist tendencies, white clergy on the local field, including the supervisors, faced discrimination from local communities, including suffering harassment from the Ku Klux Klan.

> All over the South, "carpetbaggers and scalawags" were being hounded, captured, tortured, persecuted, and executed. Many felt lucky if they were simply run out of town. Since the south had not beat the North, the decision was to beat the "niggers," and they were not about to let some Northerner stand in their way.[48]

Even if the spirit of paternalism is problematic, the dedication to pursuing missionary efforts among antagonistic communities is more than laudable. It exemplifies a commitment to preaching the word "to those who like or like it not."[49]

The paternalism discussed briefly above was not limited to supervision. Closing the schools connected to the training of Black workers happened in part because of a decline in enrollment. Richard Dickinson has argued that part of the reason for the

decline in enrollment at schools, especially at Immanuel, was because of the decision to close several feeder schools in the area during the Great Depression.[50]

This is not, however, the only reason. Enrollment also suffered due to a lack of visible Black advancement both in the administrative levels of the institutions and for graduates of the institutions.[51] A lack of Black professors and administrators turned out to be a subtle signal that advancement was not possible. One has to wonder if the current numbers of Black clergy and church workers both in the field and enrolled in Concordia University System schools suffers today for the exact same reason.

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The Synodical Conference rightly recognized the need for workers indigenous to their communities. On the one hand, those workers would be in a better position to understand and engage with their community. On the other hand, they would be able to serve as a bridge to the church body to help communicate the needs, attitudes, and perspectives of the community they serve. In communicating those needs, local workers could have a hand in shaping the broader church. Black workers were not given the opportunity to do the latter.

In some respects, they were not even trusted to do the former either. Part of the Synodical Conference's recognition of the need for workers was because white workers were unwilling. Black workers were necessary apart from their ability to engage in the community. The paternalistic supervision demonstrates the lack of trust in the worker to speak for their community or to their church.

Education as Mission

As mentioned previously, mission work in the South thrived because of schools. Those who were uneducated or undereducated as a result of the Jim Crow South had, with the work of someone like Rosa Young, an opportunity to grow. Teachers for those schools were necessary and thus the establishment of training institutions for teachers was equally necessary. Those institutions themselves, however, served a community broader than those who were studying to be teachers and pastors.

For example, Luther College, when it was established in New Orleans in September of 1903, had three different departments, or levels, of instruction: high school, normal school, and a theological seminary. While students studying at the seminary would likely be engaged in the life of the Lutheran church in the area, the

same could not be said of the high school or normal school. Immanuel College, established a few months prior to Luther College, also had students not connected to theological instruction or Lutheran missionary efforts in the area. Concordia College Alabama had been the most successful of any of the three colleges in having students in the high school and normal school levels of instruction. Put another way, these institutions were not simply a place to train workers they were missionary outposts reaching into communities in order to lift communities up.

There is no better example to demonstrate such a point than the argument for Immanuel Lutheran College in Greensboro to be coeducational. Famous missionary Nils J. Bakke urged Rev. John C. Schmidt to submit an argument to the Immanuel Lutheran Conference in favor of coeducational efforts. Schmidt offers five points: first, that instruction of women would prevent them from engaging in improper activities and help them to avoid false doctrine; second, that instructing women would increase their ability to be contributing members to church and society; third, that training girls to be teachers would help meet the need for teachers throughout the missionary endeavor; fourth, that female teachers would not cost schools as much money as male teachers; and fifth, the yield from the instruction of Black women would be higher overall for Black communities than the yield from the instruction of Black males.[52]

He goes on to argue the fifth point more than any other and suggests that his statement is true because Black women would be the ones to raise children. Essentially the point he makes is that when you educate a Black woman you also give her the ability to educate her children too and thus lift up the next generation. Some might balk at Schmidt's assertion or judge it sexist on the basis of current standards, but that is not germane to the present investigation. His argument demonstrates that at the inception of at least one of the educational institutions connected to mission work in Black communities, those connected with the institution saw it as mission to the community. Moreover, Schmidt was so convinced of the necessity of coeducational instruction that he states that, "we are not to follow, but to create public opinion in regard to the needs of our mission among the Colored people."[53]

The value of education in the life of a community should not be underestimated. The Synodical Conference missionaries understood the need for the education of Blacks even if some, like Berg mentioned above, did not have a generous perception of their pupils. Education as mission not only provides an opportunity to share the gospel, it carries with it the opportunity to reach into and meet the needs of a community. Moreover, it empowers the community to shape its present and future.

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Societal Change

Equally as famous as the *Plessy v. Ferguson* decision of 1896 is the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision in 1954 that repealed it. Prior to that decision, the Synodical Conference recommended in 1946 that Black congregations, schools, and workers should be received into the local districts of the constituent bodies.[54] That did not mean, however, that the recommendation was put into practice uniformly or expediently. Richard O. Ziehr chronicled the implementation of that recommendation in the Southern District of the LCMS in his book *The Struggle for Unity: A Personal Look at the Integration of Lutheran Churches in the South*. He frames the book, and his conclusion, with a simple question, "Did the Church affect the social change of the time, or did the social change move the church to action?"[55] His answer is that it was a "two-way street."[56] He notes that "change was to come, but it did not come quickly."[57] He explains this further in his conclusion.

> Did the Church lead or follow? Speaking specifically of the Southern District, it followed. The District felt the pressure of the isolated black workers and congregations within its territory, and it felt the pressure of the social changes. It knew that things were going to change, but it had to chew on it a while, because fearful of social change, it went forward and followed "with due, deliberate caution."

The two-fold pressure described above stalled integration efforts. The question for many was not where the workers belonged within the scope of the district's administration but if they belonged at all. Societal change precipitated change within the church. Although the Synodical Conference recommended inclusion in 1946, and although Supreme Court outlawed segregation in 1954, the Southern District would not welcome workers, congregations, and schools into membership until 1963.

Not all Lutherans, however, were as cautious as the Southern District. Even before the Synodical Conference gave their recommendation, Rev. Andrew Schulze carried the banner for integration.[58] As a pastor serving Black congregations, Schulze knew that his Black members were not readily welcomed in white congregations.[59] Some would be denied communion or forced to receive it either last, after everyone else had communed, or in the sacristy, apart from the congregation.[60] This was for no other reason than the color of their skin. Schulze is an admirable figure in some ways for his work, but his legacy also contains elements of paternalism and a deficient understanding of integration evident in his famous work, *My Neighbor of Another Color: A Treatise on Race Relations.*[61] In some ways, Schulze's legacy mirrors that of the efforts of LCMS with regard to the question of integration. One way he does not mirror those efforts, however, is that he was an early supporter of it.

The difficulty with integration efforts in the LCMS generally was a problem of understanding precisely what integration meant. A 1994 Commission on Theology and Church Relations report entitled *Racism and the Church: Overcoming the Idolatry*

states that "The reason for the apparent failure of the Synod's longstanding policy of carrying out black ministry through integration may in turn be due in large part to a failure to give careful thought to precisely what integration means, not only theoretically but also practically."[62] The report goes on to state that, "Integration, as popularly understood, means 'opening up the system, letting in those who desire to come in.' A review of black ministry programs in the history of the Synod reveals, however, that integration has in fact been understood as 'assimilation.'"[63] By assimilation the CTCR means that, "Integration *as assimilation* is perceived by many among ethnic minorities, including especially African Americans, as a call for the surrender of one's heritage and identity in order not only to 'get in,' but also to become what others label as fully 'human.'"[64]

For our present considerations, this trend toward assimilation is seen by the fact that the official determining factors for closure of the aforementioned institutions were a lack of funds and a low enrollment. The repeated hope was that students would simply find another place within the educational system of the Synodical Conference, or more specifically the Missouri Synod, to compete their studies. Not only does this hope and the official reasons for closure completely ignore the value of those institutions for their community, it expects students who were once deemed unworthy of attendance on account of their skin color to simply join something already in existence. In other words, closing the institutions forces assimilation.

It also does something more, though, it assumes that assimilation is even possible. In part the establishment of educational institutions for Black worker training was a pragmatic solution to the problem of race relations. Closing the institution in the name of integration does not automatically undo racist or paternalistic attitudes. Not only did Lutherans, even those in favor of integration, have difficulty understanding integration, and they lagged behind society in implementing it. Some argued that segregation was an *adiaphora*,[65] others that it was rooted in the order of creation.[66] Even when it was implemented, Black workers did not have space to belong and contribute; they only had a place to exist.

Even when it was implemented, Black workers did not have space to belong and contribute; they only had a place to exist.

Repentance and Hope

The above inquiry shows that the Synodical Conference and the LCMS did things for which they should be commended. They rightly identified the need for workers indigenous to their communities, some also understood those institutions as mission outposts, and some even tried to lead the church in integration. That does not mean, as

has been shown above, that those endeavors are above critique. The efforts are laudable, not incontestable. The evident racism, paternalism, and deficient understanding of integration not only hampered missionary work but contributed to reinforcing problematic attitudes in both church and society. Case in point is the prolonged support of segregation by the Board of Directors of the LCMS. Critical historical inquiry of this kind does not deny the working of the Holy Spirit or the power of the Gospel to save those for whom Christ died. It does, however, give pause to consider how we might learn to move forward with theological education in the twenty-first century.

The current effort to establish the Institute of Black Lutheran Studies and Center for Applied Justice is a major step against assimilatory integration. It aims to provide a place to engage Black history and perspectives within the Lutheran context. It is not, however, the only step. While it may be beyond an individual's purview to create space institutionally for other voices to be equal contributors, as I argue is necessary, any person can and should advocate for such things. Each of us needs to consider how we have intentionally and unintentionally contributed to the, at times, racist, paternalistic, and deficient structures of our church body and society. This does not mean we seek absolution in our works to combat those problems, but rather, the absolution we receive from Christ should work within us that we might shape the church and society of which we are a part—no matter how provisional that change might be.

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The history of mission briefly explored above needs to be taught in depth to the next generation. This is not done to shame the generation that came before but to open the eyes to the possibilities of what might be. In doing so, we will see that workers indigenous to their communities must also be empowered to serve their community and effect change in the broader church or cultural institutions. That includes placing those workers in supervisory roles and appointing them to the faculty of institutions. Indeed, at the very least the recruitment concerns can be mitigated if people from different cultural communities see the future possible in church work, not only in serving congregations or schools but also in advancement at colleges and universities.

This also speaks to the value of institutions beyond serving as a training ground for workers. Educational institutions whether those are preschools, elementary schools, middle schools, high schools, colleges, or seminaries reach into the

community in which they find themselves. They serve as places which can empower communities to shape their own present and future. Their value outpaces their pragmatic relevance. The church understood this once before, at least John Schmidt did, and in doing so, he was able to lead public opinion rather than follow it. Andrew Schulze, too, tried to lead the church to break with societal impulses. This is a good thing. The church is in the world but not of the world. Ultimately, engaging with our past in this way provides an opportunity for repentance and hope. We can see the good even as we try to avoid the problematic opinions, attitudes, and decisions made before us. Repentance is born of hope: hope that sees what is and imagines what could be.

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Endnotes

[1] Quoted in Pamela Nielsen, "Concordia College Alabama Closes: 'Nevertheless,' Dr. Rosa J. Young's Legacy Continues" *Reporter* (May 16, 2018), https://blogs.lcms.org/2018/concordia-college-alabama-closes-nevertheless-dr-rosa-j-youngs-legacy-continues/. Accessed Sept. 1, 2020.

[2] F. Dean Lueking, *Mission in the Making: Missionary Enterprises Among Missouri Synod Lutherans 1846–1963* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1964), 3. The quote continues:

> The truth about these particular Christians in their particular past is at heart no different from any other group of Christians of any era, past or present. They were at one and the same time sinners and the redeemed people of God. Both facts need steady focus if we who receive the legacy of their past are to know what we are to repent of and hope for as we take up the mission of the blessed Gospel of Jesus Christ in our own time. St. Paul noted that the treasure of the Gospel was present in earthen vessels, and it shall ever be so with the church in the world. If history shows how earthen the vessels were from time to time, this should not be construed as a betrayal of some damaging secret. Christians, when true to the most basic tenants of the Biblical faith, are the one people on earth who can bear the truth about themselves and their forefathers: we live by divine grace and not by works.

[3] *Verhandlungen der Sechsten Versammlung der evangelisch-lutherischen Synodal-Conferenz von Nord Amerika zu Fort Wayne, Ind., 1877*, 44. Quoted and translated in Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 85.

[4] 1877 also marks the end of Reconstruction and the beginning of Jim Crow. This certainly created an opportunity for Midwestern Lutherans to serve Blacks who were being driven from white churches throughout the South, including from white Lutheran churches like that of the United Synod South.

[5] Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 86.

[6] *Verhandlungen*, 44. Quoted and translated in Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 85.

[7] For a fuller account of Doescher's efforts, see Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 87–93; George Gude, "The Home Mission Work of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference: A Description and Evaluation," (ThD. Diss., Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, MO, 1991), 21–

25; Richard C. Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns: The Centennial Edition of Black Lutheran Mission and Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1977), 41–47.
[8] Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 89.
[9] Again see Lueking and Gude's accounts referenced above for a fuller description of Doescher's tenure, specifically its end.
[10] Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 93.
[11] *Missionstaube* I, 25–26. Quoted and translated in Lueking, *Mission in the Making:* 95. Lueking states the following before he quotes Berg: "Though much of the pointedness of Berg's writing is lost in translation, the following conveys the spirit in which the young missionary approached his task."
[12] Contrast Berg, a white male's perspective, with that of Rosa Young on the plight of her community expressed in her memoir, *Light in the Dark Belt: The Story of Rosa Young as Told By Herself* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950; St. Louis: Concordia, 2014). Young demonstrates an empathy and concern where Berg's seems to suggest nothing but contempt.
[13] Ferdinand Sievers, "(*Eingesandt*) Mission" *Der Lutheraner* 33, no. 13 (July 1, 1877): 1. Quoted and translated in Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 39.
[14] Young, *Light in the Dark Belt*, 1–13. All quotes from Young's work are from the 2014 revised edition.
[15] See, for example, Young, *Light in the Dark Belt,* 53–63.
[16] Lueking, *Mission in the Making*, 96.
[17] Robust accounts of the strategy necessitating the raising of local church workers are found in Dickinson, Gude, and Lueking's works referenced above.
[18] Female teacher candidates were to attend the Lutheran Teacher's [sic] Seminary at New Ulm, Minnesota and there is indication that Black males were in attendance there. Pastoral candidates were to attend Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield and there were eight in attendance as late as 1902. For a fuller discussion, see Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 157.
[19] "Normal school" is a term used to describe the training of teachers. Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 103.
[20] See Gude for a more complete history of Immanuel, specifically on this point. Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 108ff.
[21] Gude, 109ff.
[22] "Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth Convention of the Evangelical Lutheran Synodical Conference of North America Assembled at Cleveland, Ohio August 1-4, 1944" (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1944), 76–77.
[23] "Proceedings of the Thirty-Eighth Convention," 81.
[24] Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 106–07.
[25] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 161.
[26] Rev. Dr. Roosevelt Gray, "The History of LCMS Mercy Work with African Americans," (St. Louis: The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod, Black Ministry, 2018), 9, accessed September 20, 2020, https://blogs.lcms.org/2018/history-lcms-mercy-work-african-americans/.
[27] Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 129.
[28] Gude, 137.
[29] See Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 52ff.
[30] See, for example, Rosa Young's account of the congregations she assisted in planting, *Light in the Dark Belt,* 127–45. This phenomenon is common even among schools and congregations outside of the missionary efforts to Blacks in the South. Anecdotally, the

Lutheran school I attended for most of my formative educational years predated the congregation to which it was attached by four years.
[31] Concordia Seminary in St. Louis, MO was founded in 1839; Concordia Theological Seminary, then in Springfield, IL, was founded in 1846; Addison Teachers Seminary, now known as Concordia University—Chicago, was founded in 1864; and the Evangelical Lutheran School Teachers Seminary, now known as Concordia University Nebraska was founded in 1894.
[32] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 157.
[33] Dickinson, 158.
[34] Dickinson, 158.
[35] Dickinson, 158.
[36] William H. Kampschmidt, "Why the Evangelical Lutheran Church Established and Maintains a College for Negroes?" *The Journal of Negro Education* 29, no. 3 (Summer 1960): 301.
[37] Kampschmidt, "Evangelical Lutheran Church," 301–02.
[38] Kampschmidt, 302.
[39] Kampschmidt, 303.
[40] Kampschmidt, 303.
[41] Kampschmidt, 304.
[42] The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, December 20, 1937. In the possession of Concordia Historical Institute. Quoted in Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 115–16.
[43] George Gude's dissertation explores several incidents of segregation including one involving Ruth Smith at what is now Concordia University—Chicago where she was not only accepted and enrolled, she had moved into the dorms only to be told by President Klink that she was not allowed to stay the night because she was one quarter black. Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 140ff.
[44] The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Board of Directors, minutes, May 18, 1938. In the possession of Concordia Historical Institute. Quoted in Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 140.
[45] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 73–74.
[46] Consider this from Dickinson, "The administration and supervision of Black work became rigidly controlled. Apparently the missionary board had also decided, off the record of course, that only white workers would be considered for supervisory positions. No Negro presbyters were ever appointed." Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 74.
[47] George Gude's dissertation has an entire section dedicated to demonstrating the nature of the supervision. Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 64–87.
[48] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 43.
[49] Martin Franzmann, "Preach You the Word," in *Lutheran Service Book* (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2006), 586.
[50] Dickinson, *Roses and Thorns*, 163–64.
[51] Dickinson, 168–70.
[52] John C. Schmidt, "A Plea to Educate Colored Girls, Delivered at the Private Session of 'Immanuel Conference' at Salisbury, N.C., July 8th, 1903," 2–3. On file at the Greensboro Historical Society.
[53] Schmidt, "A Plea to Educate Colored Girls," 3.
[54] Gude, "The Home Mission Work," 190–93.

[55] Richard O. Ziehr, *The Struggle for Unity: A Personal Look at the Integration of Lutheran Churches in the South* (Milton, FL: CJH Enterprises, 1999), 8, 198.
[56] Ziehr, *The Struggle for Unity*, 8, 198.
[57] Ziehr, 7.
[58] Kathryn Galchutt's work is invaluable in understanding the life and career of Schulze. Kathryn Galchutt, *The Career of Andrew Schulze 1924–1968: Lutherans and Race in the Civil Rights Era* (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 2005).
[59] Andrew Schulze, *My Neighbor of Another Color: A Treatise on Race Relations* (St. Louis: Self-Published, 1941), 3–11.
[60] Schulze, *My Neighbor of Another Color*, 3–11.
[61] Schulze not only approaches the question of intermarriage with diffidence, he argues that Blacks need to be approached sympathetically because of mitigating circumstances that contribute to their immoral and destitute situation. Schulze, *My Neighbor of Another Color*, 129–43.
[62] *Racism and the Church: Overcoming Idolatry* (St. Louis: The Commission on Theology and Church Relations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, 1994), 26.
[63] *Racism and the Church*, 26.
[64] *Racism and the Church*, 26.
[65] Ziehr, *The Struggle for Unity*, 139.
[66] Ziehr, 105.